



Global Islamism Monitor No. 65

May 23, 2019 **Ilan I. Berman, Jacob McCarty, Ritika Bhat**

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Islamic Extremism; Africa; Central Asia; China; Iran

DEBATING A BROTHERHOOD BLACKLISTING

On the heels of its blacklisting of Iran's clerical army, the IRGC, the Trump administration has signaled that it may also designate the Muslim Brotherhood a Foreign Terrorist Organization under U.S. law. The news revives a years-long debate regarding approaches to the Islamist movement, which many have charged as being directly connected with - or at least a conduit to - Islamic terrorism. The classification now being considered by the White House would carry with it hefty sanctions, banning companies and individuals from providing any material or financial support to the movement. It would also have the effect of strengthening U.S. ties to the staunchly anti-Brotherhood government of Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, as well as to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which both vociferously oppose the movement.

Critics, however, have counseled a more measured approach - most directly because the Brotherhood has branches in more than a dozen countries around the world. An overly broad or generalized designation, experts say, would have the effect of disrupting American relations with multiple countries in the Middle East and North Africa, such as Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, where Brotherhood branches occupy prominent positions in the ruling government. (*Wall Street Journal*, April 30, 2019)

CHINA TARGETS UIGHUR MOSQUES

New intelligence indicates that as part of its campaign against religion broadly, and Islam specifically, China's government has intensified its campaign against the Uighurs in its western region of Xinjiang through the razing of mosques. The PRC has long been suspected of the destruction of hundreds, if not thousands, of Muslim holy sites. Until now, however, a lack of evidence prevented corroboration of these claims. But fresh satellite imagery has shown conclusively the systematic deconstruction of Muslim holy sites throughout the province. This offensive, which is being carried out in tandem with the forced relocation of millions of Uighur Muslims to official internment and "reeducation" camps, has shed new light on the extent of the Chinese government's efforts to force the cultural assimilation and political subservience of its Uighur minority. (London *Guardian*, May 6, 2019)

WILL SUDAN CONTINUE TO CLING TO ISLAMISM?

If it is up to Sudan's interim government, Islamic laws will continue to be enforced throughout the country. The 10-person Transitional Military Council of Sudan, which took power following the ouster of long-serving strongman Omar Al-Bashir last month, has signalled that it believes *sharia* principles should continue to prevail in the African state. "Our view is that Islamic Sharia and the local norms and traditions in the Republic of Sudan should be the sources of legislation," a spokesman for the TMC has told reporters.

Whether or not this happens, however, remains to be seen. On the one hand, Sudan's deep ties to Gulf states like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, as well as the legal framework established by Al-Bashir during his tenure as the country's dictator, have helped enshrine Islamic law in the country. On the other, opposition protestors have rejected Gulf State influence and are seeking a more independent political future. As recognition of this fact, the draft constitution created in recent weeks by the TMC omits overt references to Islamic law - despite the Council's support for their perpetuation. (Doha *Al-Jazeera*, May 8, 2019)

TAJIK PRISON RIOT: UNREST, OR TERROR?

Tajikistan's government is claiming that Islamic State members were responsible for stoking the unrest at the heart of a May 20th prison riot near the country's capital, Dushanbe. Convicts with links to the Islamic State terrorist group initially killed three guards before turning on other prisoners, initiating the mass violence that, in total, killed 32 people. The riot is part of a pattern, identified by Tajik observers, of Salafist group members instigating prison violence. Others, however, are not so sure - pointing to the fact that the Tajik government has historically been quick to label political opponents as terrorists as a way of discrediting and criminalizing them, and suggest that this incident might be one of those cases. (*Eurasianet*, May 20, 2019)

A POSITIVE SIDE EFFECT OF TRUMP'S IRAN STRATEGY

Lebanon's Hezbollah militia is feeling the effects of the Trump administration's Iran policy. The White House's "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic - entailing a blacklisting of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and a revocation of sanctions waivers previously granted to Iran's oil customers - is having a trickle-down effect on the finances of the regime's chief terror proxy. Fighters for the Shi'a militia are said to be going without pay more and more often, as Iranian funding (which accounts for as much as 70 percent of the group's revenue) begins to dry up. Faced with this harsh reality and anticipating a drawn-out U.S. sanctions campaign against Iran, observers say that the group can be expected to begin looking for alternative funding sources - including, potentially, returning to its roots as a narco-terror organization. (*Washington Post*, May 18, 2019)