



## Global Islamism Monitor No. 85

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**Related Categories:** Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; East Africa; Middle East

### AFRICA'S EXTREMISM WOES

Africa is rising in significance as an extremist hotspot, as incidents of militancy spike across the continent. In its *African Youth Survey*, released back in December, the Ichikowitz Family Foundation noted that "in the next five years, concerns of terrorism will be the sixth-biggest issue facing the continent." These growing concerns have led to a flurry of counterterrorism activity on the part of the regional states - in particular in East Africa. For instance, Tanzania and Mozambique (which has seen a significant rise in Islamic extremism over the past year) teamed up late last year to launch a joint operation to combat terrorist attacks and infiltration along their shared border.

However, serious problems still linger. One is the existence of militant fighters (like those of Nigeria's Boko Haram) who, while demobilized and deradicalized, remain the subjects of discrimination in local communities. Another is that the continent's youth remain major targets for recruitment and indoctrination by extremist groups; the *African Youth Survey* found that nearly ten percent of young people in Africa have been approached by recruiters from various militias. (VOA News, November 26, 2020; *The East African*, December 5, 2020; *Christian Science Monitor*, December 12, 2020)

### SAUDI TEXTBOOKS START TO TURN THE PAGE

As part of societal reforms and modernization efforts within the Kingdom, Saudi authorities are beginning to overhaul the country's textbooks. Over the past several months, observers note, Saudi textbooks have begun to be scrubbed of objectionable content, such as misogyny and anti-Semitism. Expunged passages include those praising martyrdom as the highest aspiration of Islam, and calls for Muslims to "fight Jews." The changes have been lauded by groups such as the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se), which monitors school curriculums, as a welcome step set against the backdrop of warming ties between the Kingdom and Israel. (*Washington Post*, January 30, 2021)

### BIDEN BACKTRACKS ON THE HOUTHIS

As one of its first major Middle East policy moves, the Biden administration has rolled back its predecessor's designation of Yemen's Houthi rebels as an international terrorist organization. The determination, made in the final weeks of the outgoing Trump administration, blacklisted the Houthis on account of the extensive political and material aid the Shi'a rebels received from the Islamic Republic of Iran. The practical effects of the designation were to curtail U.S. aid to Yemen, parts of which are now under Houthi control.

Now, however, the Biden administration - citing humanitarian concerns - has rolled back the designation. "Our action is due entirely to the humanitarian consequences of this last-minute designation from the prior administration, which the United Nations and humanitarian organizations have since made clear would accelerate the world's worst humanitarian crisis," a State Department official has said. (Associated Press, February 5, 2021)

[EDITORS' NOTE: The move appears to have little to do with the status of the Houthis themselves, who continue to receive extensive support from the Iranian regime. Rather, it reflects the new U.S. administration's changing policy toward Saudi Arabia, which for years has waged a military campaign in Yemen as part of efforts to roll back Iranian influence on the territory of its southern neighbor. That effort was approved of by the Obama administration, and the Trump administration both continued and strengthened American backing. By contrast, the new White House has changed course as part of its broader review of policies toward the Kingdom.]