



## Global Islamism Monitor No. 94

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**Related Categories:** Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; Europe; Middle East; North Africa; West Africa

### IN MOROCCO'S ELECTIONS, AN ISLAMIST ROUT

Earlier this month, Moroccans went to the polls to elect a new parliament in a highly-anticipated national election. The results were a resounding "vote of no confidence" in the Justice and Development Party (PJD), the Islamist political faction which has dominated Moroccan politics for the past decade. The biggest winner of the September 8th poll was the liberal National Rally of Independents (RNI), which managed to secure 102 of the Moroccan legislature's 395 seats. The centrist Progress and Modernity Party, or PAM, came in a close second, obtaining 86. And the conservative Istiqlal Party came in third, with 81 mandates. But the PJD, which won 125 seats in the country's last legislative contest five years ago, managed to secure just 13 - a massive repudiation of the group's political stewardship and socio-economic priorities on the part of the Moroccan electorate. (*Radio France International*, September 10, 2021)

[EDITORS' NOTE: The electoral results represent a dramatic reversal for the PJD, which rose to power a decade ago as part of broader political currents of the "Arab Spring" that saw Islamist forces gain ground throughout the region. But in the ten years since, the Moroccan electorate cooled on the PJD as a result of a variety of factors, among them the party's lackluster handling of the national economy and its traditionalist moral code. Problematic, too, has been its poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic over the past year, which served to further highlight its social and economic failures.]

### EGYPT CRACKS DOWN ON EXTREMIST LITERATURE

The government of Egyptian president Abdel Fatah al-Sisi is expanding its efforts to eliminate extremist thought in the country's mosques and religious institutions. In late August, the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments issued an urgent order banning literature promoting extremism or the Muslim Brotherhood, which the government deems radical, in mosques nationwide. The Ministry will also establish committees to review publications in mosque libraries to ensure compliance with the order. The Ministry also plans to prompt all *imams* to take a formal pledge not to permit such literature into facilities under their purview. (*Arab News*, August 30, 2021)

### FOREIGN FIGHTERS GO TO GROUND IN AUSTRIA

Officials and policy institutes in Austria are raising the alarm over the whereabouts of ISIS fighters presumed to be in the country. Following last year's high-profile terrorist attack in Vienna - in which four people were killed and dozens injured in a series of shootings - growing attention is being paid to tracking and apprehending so-called "foreign terrorist fighters" (FTFs) returning from the Middle East. To date, however, the results have been decidedly lackluster. This summer, an expose by the *Uncensored* newsmagazine laid out that the whereabouts of some two-thirds of FTFs currently believed to be in Austria is still unknown. In 2020, Austrian security forces logged a total of 336 FTFs as being present in the country. Yet at the time, the country's Interior Ministry knew the actual locations of just 136 of them - raising serious worries among the local population and significant questions about the ability of the Austrian government to track, let alone apprehend, terrorist actors. (*Uncensored*, July 14, 2021)

### ISIS GROWS IN AFRICA

African states need to seize a vital opportunity to thwart the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad region, before the ISIS affiliate grows stronger, a leading South African think tank has argued. A new analysis by the Praetoria-based Institute for Strategic Studies shows that, following the death of rival militia leader Abubakr Shekau, ISWAP is now poised for restructuring and growth. The changes include the formation of four caliphates, "each with its own semi-autonomous leadership," as well as a newfound focus on the welfare of its fighters and the accountability of its commanders. These changes have proven appealing to fighters, who have begun to rejoin ISWAP's ranks in significant numbers (130 or more between April and June of this year).

"It is vital that ISWAP, and by extension Islamic State, is denied the space to operate in the region," the study, by analyst Malik Samuel, concludes. "Lake Chad Basin countries should collaborate with other states, especially in the Sahel, to boost intelligence on returning fighters travelling through their territories." (Institute for Strategic Studies, August 3, 2021)

## **THE AL-HOL NIGHTMARE, CONTINUED**

Violence and radicalization are accelerating within the notorious al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria. Home to the families of many ISIS fighters, the camp has seen over 70 people killed since January, largely by women affiliated with the Islamic State, who have begun to impose - and enforce - draconian religious rules within the sprawling facility on their fellow detainees. Dealing with the situation at al-Hol remains a vexing problem for regional states, who are loath to repatriate former citizens interned there. As a result, conditions at the camp are continuing to fester. (*Washington Post*, September 19, 2021)