



## Global Islamism Monitor No. 100

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**Related Categories:** Democracy and Governance; Economic Sanctions; Energy Security; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; International Economics and Trade; Islamic Extremism; Public Diplomacy and Information Operations; Terrorism; Resource Security; Afghanistan; Africa; East Africa; Israel; Turkey

### **TURKEY FLIRTS WITH THE TALIBAN...**

In October, a delegation from the Taliban traveled to Turkey for consultations with the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which – despite its status as a NATO member – has long had a cozy relationship with Islamic militants of various ideological stripes. The Taliban ranks among them, and the movement's spokesman, Zabihulla Mujahid, has termed Turkey a "close friend." The country has also become a hub of sorts for coordination between militants; while in Turkey, Mujahid and other Taliban delegates met with representatives of Hamas, the extremist Palestinian movement that rules the Gaza Strip. The two sides discussed "several regional issues" (including developments in Jerusalem and the West Bank), according to a press release that was issued by Hamas after the meeting. (*Long War Journal*, November 10, 2022)

### **...AS THE U.S. QUIETLY PROVIDES AID**

Since its return to power last August, Afghanistan's radical Taliban movement has reneged on its early pledges to roll back support for Islamic extremists within its borders and govern in a more moderate, inclusive fashion. The results have been a retraction of international engagement with Afghanistan, and a growing humanitarian crisis there. The Biden administration, despite its formal pledges not to engage with Afghanistan's new rulers absent a change in behavior, is quietly attempting to ameliorate those conditions. This summer, the White House spearheaded a plan to "transfer billions in foreign-held Afghan central bank assets into a proposed Swiss-based trust fund." All told, some \$3.5 billion in previously frozen funds are to be liberated under the scheme in a bid to provide humanitarian aid to the beleaguered Afghan people. Critics, however, have pointed out that the initiative has the potential to dramatically enrich the Taliban, allowing it to consolidate its hold on power at home and reduce any urgency it feels to compromise its tenets or accede to international demands. (Reuters, August 22, 2022; *Foreign Policy*, September 20, 2022)

### **ISIS EYES CRYPTO...**

The Islamic State is diversifying its finances. The world's most notorious terror group is getting into crypto-currency, and in particular non-fungible tokens (NFTs). NFTs are unique digital objects verified by blockchain that hold value, and which have become a novel way for businesses and entrepreneurs to generate revenue from interested investors. ISIS, apparently, is getting in on the action. An NFT depicting the Islamic State emblem and emblazoned with text praising the current ISIS fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan recently appeared on the internet, promoted by pro-ISIS social media accounts. While there's no evidence that the NFT was actually purchased, the episode has heightened worries among security analysts that terrorist organizations are adapting to use new technologies – including those that are increasingly difficult to track and regulate – to bypass sanctions and finance their operations. (*Cointelegraph*, September 5, 2022)

### **...AND THREATENS AFRICAN ENERGY**

The Islamic State's growing footprint in Africa, meanwhile, is imperiling the continent's energy development. Over the past dozen years, the east African nation of Mozambique has emerged as an energy hotspot, with more than 1000 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in proven offshore reserves – a capacity that makes the country a potential natural gas giant. But over the past half-decade, the emergence of ISIS-Mozambique, the Islamic State's regional franchise in east Africa, has destabilized security in the country and cast plans to develop these energy reserves into doubt. In the wake of attacks by ISIS-Mozambique in the Cabo Delgado region last year, for instance, France's TotalEnergies declared *force majeure* and shut down a major gas development project in the country.

Against this backdrop, neighboring Rwanda has played an increasingly important role, backstopping a struggling Mozambican military and police in their fight against the militancy. So has South Africa, which has lent forces of its own to stabilize the country. Combined, this regional assistance has allowed Maputo to carve out a swath of relative stability in the country. Nevertheless, ongoing militancy threatens Mozambique's security – and its economic potential. (*CNN*, October 28, 2022)

## POTENTIAL CONSOLIDATION IN THE PALESTINIAN ARENA

New signs of unity are emerging among the Palestinian Authority's principal extremist groups. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, has issued a joint statement with the smaller Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) urging Palestinians to step up their "resistance" to Israel and the Israeli military. The call to arms follows Israeli military operations against PIJ targets earlier this Fall, which included the elimination of PIJ leader Khaled Mansour.

Hamas is also moving to mend fences with Fatah, which controls the West Bank. Meeting in Algiers in mid-October, representatives of Hamas and Fatah (the party of Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas) signed a reconciliation deal between the two factions, which have long been rivals for political influence. The deal ostensibly paves the way for new elections in the Palestinian Authority, which have not been held since 2006, when Hamas unexpectedly gained control over Gaza, as well as laying the groundwork for a prospective "unity government" between the two sides – although such an affiliation has been explored before, to no avail. (*Jerusalem Post*, September 7, 2022; Agence France Presse, October 13, 2022)