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From the Editors

The Doron Halpern Middle East Network Analysis Desk is happy to present the October issue of **Beehive**. The issue begins with a review of the public discourse on Turkish social networks surrounding the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul, and the release of American pastor Andrew Brunson from a Turkish prison, and the increased antagonism towards the US and its ally, Israel. We continue with the online campaign led by the Al-Azhar Institute, with the encouragement of the Egyptian government, to reduce the high divorce rate in Egypt, and the ambivalent attitudes towards the campaign among Egyptians users of social media. Finally, we expose the activity of Balushi terrorist organizations in Sistan-Baluchistan in Iran, and the ideological changes they have undergone, adopting the ideology of Salafi jihad organizations, especially Al-Qaeda.

Enjoy!

Increases in Anti-American & Anti-Israeli Sentiment in Turkey following the Khashoggi & Brunson Cases

Dr. Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak

Reports concerning the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul on October 2, and the release of American pastor Andrew Brunson from Turkish prison on October 12 drew the world's attention to Turkey. As expected, Turkish social networks did not remain indifferent to these extraordinary events. Amidst the mixed reactions of the Turkish users, antagonism towards the United States and Israel stood out, and were common factors uniting the Turkish online community.

When Turkish authorities were updated about the disappearance of the Saudi opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, the "cold war" between Turkey and Saudi Arabia returned to the headlines, with Syria being the primary issue that divides the two countries. While the Saudis consider Iran's involvement in Syria to be unbearable, Ankara cooperates with Tehran and considers it a partner for advancing its interests in northern Syria, primarily maintaining the status of the Syrian rebels in their areas of control. In addition, Turkey, under Erdoğan's government, provides political and military support to Qatar which is deeply enmeshed in crisis with Saudi Arabia. Turkey also hosts Saudi, Egyptian and UAE expatriates in its territory. The mystery surrounding the fate of Jamal Khashoggi added to the tension between the two countries, and social networks became a central focal point for the discussion about Khashoggi's probable fate.

While there some voices who claimed that Khashoggi had been smuggled out of the consulate through a tunnel and then flown to Saudi Arabia for interrogation, most users assumed from the outset that Khashoggi had been murdered at the consulate, his body hacked into pieces, packed in suitcases and smuggled out of the consulate by the assassins. In either case, many users emphasized that the Saudi operation on Turkish soil was intended to humiliate Ankara because of its generally anti-Saudi stance, and especially for its support of the Muslim Brotherhood. They demanded that members of Saudi diplomatic corps who were in Turkey at the time of the murder be imprisoned. The users called on the Turkish government to enter the consulate immediately, and put an end to the mystery surrounding Khashoggi, as eventually happened, but only when the Saudis granted permission.¹

At the same time, conspiracy theories proponents disseminated the claim that the Saudis had murdered Khashoggi on orders from the Americans and Israelis who wanted to create hostility between the Arabs and the Turks. Some of them even claimed that Egypt and the UAE cooperated with the murderers.² In order to ostensibly prove the conspiracy theory, users relied on a tweet by Israeli journalist Yossi Melman of Haaretz, who wrote that he hoped that the Israeli Mossad had not intervened in the murder of Khashoggi, similar to the

assistance once supplied to Morocco with assassinating a rival of the administration in Rabat.³ The discourse gained momentum after Melman deleted the tweet, which was perceived as a move by the Israeli government to attempt to obscure traces of its role in the murder. Many users emphasized the similarity between the Mossad's assassination methods and those of the Saudis, but in the same breath they mocked the Saudis for their lack of professionalism, which led to their being caught, unlike the professionalism shown by the Israelis. As a way to "prove" an Israeli connection to the affair, users pointed out that Israel remained silent on the matter for a long time, and chose not to express a position.

As Turkish media and social networks focused on the mystery of Khashoggi's disappearance, Andrew Brunson, an American pastor, was released from Turkish prison. Brunson, a missionary who had lived in Izmir for 23 years to spread Christianity among the local population, found himself at the heart of a diplomatic crisis between Turkey and the United States when the Turkish government accused him of espionage. Brunson was jailed in October 2016 on suspicion that he had collaborated with adherents of Fethullah Gülen, who the Turkish government accused of masterminding the botched coup attempt of July 15, 2016.⁴ Brunson's name returned to the news when a Turkish citizen, Ebru Özkan, was released from Israeli prison last July, after being arrested on charges of aiding Hamas.⁵ According to the Americans, the release of Özkan was made possible by the request of President Donald Trump, who expected Brunson's immediate release from Turkish prison in return. But that did not happen. Meanwhile, Brunson's trial became a battleground for a clash of egos between Erdoğan and Trump that was exacerbated when a Turkish court sentenced Brunson to 79 days of house arrest, opening Turkey up to US sanctions.⁶

Although many users expressed their support for the Turkish government's position and its refusal to succumb to American pressure, there was a swell of complaints about the price increases caused by the collapse of the Turkish



Picture 1: Portrait of the American pastor Andrew Brunson on a dollar bill, [from Twitter](#).

currency exchange rate against the US dollar, which reached an unprecedented low of 7.24 Turkish liras per dollar. Erdoğan's supporters stressed that Turkey was under economic attack from imperialists, to include the United States and the "the Jews," and that the time had come to unite against the threats, and strengthen the Turkish economy.⁷ Many Turks called for a boycott of American products, and photographed themselves smashing iPhones, in an attempt to send a deterrent message to the American economy.⁸ Conversely, other users protested against the Erdoğan administration, and explicitly called for Brunson's

release so as to end the episode that was causing such damage to the Turkish economy. Among other things, users shared a poster showing a dollar bill featuring a portrait of Brunson, in order to illustrate the connection between the economic crisis in Turkey and the Brunson affair (see picture 1).⁹ However, others argued that the economic crisis was unavoidable and the Turkish government was using the Brunson case to create an artificial crisis vis-à-vis the United States, and thereby present the economic slump as a result of an American attack, rather than a result of the government's failing economic policy.¹⁰

After Brunson was released by the Turkish authorities, Erdoğan's opponents did not cease to attack the administration, and began a barrage of derisive reactions. They disseminated an image of Trump grinning, against the backdrop of a mosque in Istanbul, ostensibly celebrating the pastor's release on Friday, October 12, and the greeting "Blessed Friday." The image is similar to one shared by conservative users with Friday greetings (see picture 2). Erdoğan's supporters, on the other hand, repeated the claims made the Turkish government, which emphasized that Brunson had been released because of a ruling issued by an independent Turkish court, and not because of American pressure.¹¹



Picture 2: "Blessed Friday": Comparing a [conservative poster](#) (left) and one shared by [opponents of Erdoğan](#) (right), from Twitter

This online discourse exposes the intensification of anti-American sentiment among the Turkish public, with Israel also mentioned. This finding is consistent with a survey conducted last year by the Turkish Kadir Has University, which showed that 60% of the Turkish public views the United States as the main threat to the country. In the same survey, 54% ranked Israel as the second most serious threat.¹² While the release of the American pastor was supposed to reduce tensions between the United States and Turkey, the Khashoggi affair sharpened the conflicting interests of the two countries. The United States is striving to distance its ally, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, from accusations of direct involvement in the Khashoggi murder, while Turkey is doing its best to deepen the investigation into this case, and link the murder directly to bin Salman in order to do unprecedented damage to the image of the Crown Prince.

“Live with them Equitably”: Al-Azhar Institute & Social Networks as Platforms for Lowering the Divorce Rate in Egypt

Dr. Michael Barak

On September 8, the Al-Azhar Institute launched a network campaign entitled “Live with them Equitably” (#وعاشروهن_بالمعروف), with the aim of reducing the high divorce rate in Egypt, and strengthening the stability of the family unit.¹³ The launch was welcomed by the establishment, because it considers the campaign to be part of its effort to eliminate the scourge of divorce in Egypt. In contrast, the online discourse surrounding the campaign reveals that the Egyptian public has an ambivalent attitude towards the involvement of Al-Azhar in the realm of family life. On the one hand, the discourse was characterized by praise for the initiative, and on the other, there is a lack of confidence in the Institute’s ability to bring about a fundamental change in this area. Moreover, many citizens accuse Al-Azhar of supporting family laws that discriminate against men. A conspicuous component of the discourse is the traditional struggle regarding the status of women in the family, between forces of progress who promote processes of modernization in this area as well, versus conservative forces that wish to sanctify tradition.

According to a February 2018 report published by Egypt’s official Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, Egypt has the third highest divorce rate in the world, with 192,000 divorces registered in 2017 alone.¹⁴ Egyptian President Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi has expressed great concern about the high divorce rate, and called for its eradication on several occasions. For example, last July, he declared that the high rate of divorce (44%) threatens Egypt’s social resilience and leaves millions of children without a father or mother, as he put it.¹⁵ In September 2018, the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity initiated a meeting with the Al-Azhar Institute, in order to examine ways they could cooperate on reducing the divorce rate.¹⁶ Al-Azhar launched its online campaign following this meeting.

As part of the campaign, Al-Azhar uploaded to social media over ten videos dealing with the causes of divorce, and which provided advice on how to maintain the stability of the family unit. For example, an authority on religious law from Al-Azhar pointed out that some couples choose to divorce because they lack suitable tools for dealing with various obstacles in their lives, such as the severe economic crisis that has gripped Egypt.¹⁷ Another video referred to parental involvement in their children’s marriages as a central cause of divorce, and stated that preserving the institution of marriage should be the highest priority, even at the price of disobeying parents.¹⁸ Still another video emphasized that during a quarrel, it is important to discuss the dispute, and not rush to divorce as a “solution.”¹⁹ Al-Azhar further warned couples to not publicize details about their private lives in order to show-off and brag, because this threatens the stability of the family unit.²⁰

Sheikh Ahmad al-Taib, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, declared that the campaign expresses a broad effort to strengthen the institution's ties to Egyptian society. Through the campaign, Al-Azhar seeks



Picture 3: Logo of Al-Azhar's online campaign entitled "Live with them Equitably," [from YouTube](#)

to "go to street level" and offer a response to the social problems that plague the ordinary citizen.²¹ It should be noted that this desire was already evident in April 2018, when Al-Azhar established a new "Family Unity" department for mediating disputes between spouses through telephone and home visits. Further to this general goal, social networks serve as a public platform for strengthening values such as solidarity among family members, and the importance of devotion to the family unit.²²

Although Egyptian citizens praised the online campaign, they also expressed criticism of Al-Azhar. Khaled Montasser, a prominent Egyptian journalist who praised the Al-Azhar initiative on his Facebook page, added that it is insufficient given the Institute's firm refusal to accede to Al-Sisi's request to require that divorces made by oral proclamation (prevalent in Islam since the days of the Prophet Muhammad) be officially registered with competent authorities in the legal system, in the presence of both spouses.²³ Montasser stressed that the renewal of religious discourse by Al-Azhar ought not be expressed by videos but rather through creative legal rulings adapted to the challenges of the present day.²⁴ Other users argued that the conservative nature of Al-Azhar is unchangeable, because Islamic law ("*shari'a*") will always be the basis for its thinking and rulings. Therefore, its ability to influence change in religious discourse is limited. In their view, the solution is for the Egyptian parliament to balance their influence by enacting appropriate laws that suit the spirit of the times and meet the needs of citizens.²⁵

Many Egyptian users, including divorced fathers, even accused Al-Azhar of encouraging divorce, in light of its support for family laws that strengthen the status of women at the expense of the husband's. Since the Sadat era, and especially during Hosni Mubarak's time, attempts were made to improve the status of women in the family. For example, a law passed in 1985 granted a woman the right to apply for divorce if her husband married a second wife. A user from Cairo said that under the current family laws, a woman can rebel against her husband and the existing order, and not fulfill her obligations.²⁶ A user, from Alexandria, claimed that the law allows a woman to leave her home, kidnap her children, and prevent them from seeing their father while still claiming alimony.²⁷ Others demanded that Al-Azhar change the law that allows divorced mothers to have custody of their children

until age 15, and some sought to reinstate the previous family laws that stipulated that divorced mothers were entitled to guardianship of their children only up to the age of seven or eight.²⁸ One user from Ismailia even called for the adoption of Saudi family laws in Egypt, because of their compliance with *shari'a*, thus ensuring, from his perspective, balanced family law for all members of the family.²⁹

In the opinion of some users, the Al-Azhar Institute is betraying its intended role; rather than being faithful to the teachings of Islam it instead chooses to follow the dictates of the government,³⁰ and those of other countries and various international organization that are supposedly meddling in Egypt's internal affairs.³¹ As background for this claim, users cited the cooperation between Al-Azhar and the National Council for Women that was established by Suzanne Mubarak (wife of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak) to promote the rights of women, and which they think destroyed the Egyptian family.³² According to these users, the campaign was aimed at a society other than traditional Egyptian society.³³

In response to such criticism, the voices of both men and women who defended the family laws were prominent. Egyptian women claimed that men are stronger than women in many ways, and therefore the law is intended to benefit women and prevent their humiliation.³⁴ One user from Sawhāj noted that Egyptian society depicts women in a sexist, stigmatized way, "As if she has no opinion, any subject, cannot discuss any subject with her husband, as if she was not at home...." He claimed that movies and television series instill and perpetuate this perception in Egyptian society. In his view, the solution lies in redefining the meaning of masculinity, with an emphasis on positive qualities such as the fair treatment of women.³⁵

In conclusion, the Al-Azhar Institute's online campaign to prevent divorce exposes the dissatisfaction of Egyptian citizens and their lack of confidence in the Institute's ability to bring about real change in this area. On the one hand, it views the principles and traditions of Islam as binding; on the other hand, it does the regime's bidding by promoting women's rights in society, *inter alia*, by supporting laws some consider discriminatory towards men. They accuse Al-Azhar of actually increasing the rate of divorce. This discourse reveals a struggle between two schools of thought regarding family law and the status of women in Egyptian society. The first promotes the status of women through the enactment of appropriate laws, while the second supports the restoration of women's traditional status. It seems that this struggle will be exacerbated by Al-Azhar's willingness to continue supporting laws guaranteeing women's rights.

Al-Qaeda in Baluchistan and its Connection to the War in Syria

Dr. Ariel Koch

The Baluchistan region, which spreads across Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, is the site of a little-known jihad sector known as Sistan-Baluchistan, which is concentrated in the Iranian part of the region. In this arena, Sunni terrorist organizations, composed of members of the Baluchi minority, operate against Iran, which they consider to be an occupying Shi'i force. Some of these organizations, which began their path as separatist organizations seeking the establishment of an independent Baluchi state, have adopted Salafi-Jihadist rhetoric, with social networks playing a significant role in documenting ideological changes they have undergone, and exposing their connections to the global terrorist organization Al-Qaeda and to combat sectors outside of Baluchistan, especially in the Syrian arena.

Diverse terrorist organizations, motivated by Marxist, nationalist, or Islamist ideologies, or some combination thereof, have been operating in Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution. These include both Shi'i organizations like *Jamaat al-Furqan*³⁶ and *Mujahidin-e Khalq*, and Sunni organizations, like *Jundullah*, that began operating in 2003. In recent years, particularly after Iran succeeded in attacking the leadership of Jundullah,³⁷ another organization, *Harakat Ansar Iran* (The Movement of Iran's Supporters) appeared. It is a Sunni Jihadist group that began operating in late 2011, and strives not only to establish an independent Baluchi state, but also to take control of Iran, which it calls "Persia," by destroying the regime of the Ayatollahs and returning the country to the Sunni fold after about 500 years of Shi'i rule. The first statement issued by organization's leader Abu Yassar Muskootani stated that the its operatives are determined to "destroy the [Iranian] regime" and that in recent years "the soul of jihad and combat have only increased in Baluchistan." Moreover, he declared that as long as the rights of the Baluch population are under attack, the Iranian regime "will never feel comfortable or secure."³⁸

Over the years, Ansar Iran has proven that it knows how to exploit internet-based communication technologies. The organization and its supporters operate blogs in Arabic, Persian and English, in addition to Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter accounts,³⁹ that have helped recruit activists for jihad.⁴⁰ The person likely responsible for the organization's online activities was Hashim Azizi, also known as Abu Hafs al-Baluchi. Considered one of Ansar Iran's founders, Azizi was an experienced jihadist who, according to the biography published by the organization, had links with anti-Shi'i terrorist organizations from Pakistan. He was also a central figure in the construction of media networks for other Baluchi organizations, including Jundallah, as early as 2005.⁴¹ This experience served him well in Ansar Iran. His publications were distributed by the al-Farooq Media, founded in December 2012 and included mostly anti-Shi'i materials in English and Arabic that were widely distributed among jihadists who support Al-Qaeda.⁴² Today, most of the organization's publications are

disseminated via the Morasel Ansar Al-Furqan Telegram channel. This channel has approximately 190 followers,⁴³ which may be indicative of the group's modest size.

Beginning in November 2013, evidence emerged suggested that the organization is identified with Al-Qaeda and its teachings. Its flag, which had included Baluchi national symbols and the word "Iran," was replaced by a black flag with a white circle in the center, and the *Shahada*, the basic declaration of Islam ("There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger") inscribed in the circle. Beneath this, the organization's name appeared as "Harakat al-Ansar," without the word "Iran" (see picture 4). Apparently "Iran" was omitted on the grounds that its mention might indicate recognition of Shi'i sovereignty, and as an indication of the organization's aspiration to avoid territorial limitations, which is typical of Salafi jihad organizations striving to establish a Muslim state that goes beyond Iran's borders.



Picture 4: [Flags of Ansar Iran](#), before (left) and after (right) the change

In December 2013, Ansar Iran, which had cooperated with various jihadist groups in Baluchistan⁴⁴, announced its merger with another Baluchi jihad group, *Hizb-ul-Furqan*, and the establishment of *Harakat Ansar al-Furqan fi Bilad al-Fares* (The Movement of Supporters of the Koran in Persia).⁴⁵ The first announcement issued by the new organization declared that its goals are "to overthrow the Iranian regime, lift up the word of Allah, remove oppression and provide aid to the oppressed (in our land and all Moslem lands influenced by the corruption of Shi'i Iran), and implement the law of the Lord of the world" by means of jihad for the purpose of "restoring the caliphate that our beloved Prophet Muhammad promised us."⁴⁶ Expanding the organization's activity beyond Baluchistan and including the return of the Caliphate as one of its goals reflected innovations that were not included in the organization's previous rhetoric, but are consistent with ideas of Salafi jihad organizations and Al-Qaeda in particular. Moreover, after the establishment of Ansar al-Furqan, the organization began operating a training camp named after Osama bin Laden, the mythical founder of al-Qaeda.⁴⁷ Posters published by the organization included quotes

from Bin Laden's teacher, the Palestinian cleric Abdallah Azzam (1941-1989), who laid the ideological foundation for the establishment of Al-Qaeda.

In April 2015, Azizi was assassinated by Iran, but his organization continued to operate against it, both online and offline, albeit to a lesser extent than in the past. For example, the organization carried out a series of attacks against Iranian targets in the Sistan-Baluchistan region between September 2015 and June 2016.⁴⁸ The expansion of its activity into Iran was evidenced by the detonation of an oil pipeline in the Arab city of Ahwaz in December 2017, and documentation of the incident that the organization published on the internet.⁴⁹ It should be noted that other attacks in this area were carried out by the Arab separatist underground.

If the Baluchi arena is unfamiliar to many, the existence of Iranian-Sunni groups fighting against Assad and Iran in Syria, within the framework of Al-Qaeda, is even less known. For example, there is the *Harakat al-Muhajirin Ahl-Sunat Iran* (The Sunni Immigrant Movement of Iran), which is also composed of Sunni minorities from Iran, among them ethnic Baluch, Kurds and Arabs. They arrived in Syria by air and land, and joined *Jabhat al-Nusra*, which later changed its name to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.⁵⁰ The group's media wing is called Al-Qadisiya after the battle in which the Muslims defeated the pagan Persians; and its Telegram channel has now accumulated about 2,000 followers.⁵¹ In an exclusive interview granted by one of the group's members and published on the *Long War Journal* website, the interviewee declared his wish that he and his comrades would have an opportunity to return to Iran and implement his worldview, including "destroying the infidels [referring to the Iranians]."⁵²

The evidence of the link between the Baluchi organizations and Al-Qaeda illustrates the way in which the Salafi-Jihadist ideology penetrates local spaces around the world, and even manages to mobilize them for other jihad arenas around the world. Furthermore, this connection also illustrates how jihadist ideology exploits parties in local conflicts whose essence is not religion, but ethnicity, discrimination against minorities, and the like. However, it is important to distinguish between the online resonance generated by the local organizations, which allows them to leverage their message, and their actual size, which is negligible. It is possible that propaganda disseminated by Ansar al-Furqan resonated with al-Qaeda supporters because of its anti-Shi'i discourse, and because it transmitted messages in English and Arabic. This propaganda helps recruit activists for jihad and expand the Baluchi-Jihadi activity into Syria, which might ultimately have an impact on the Sunnis in Iran and neighboring countries.

¹ See the hashtag: Suudi Konsolos, #Kaşıkçı

- ² İbrahim Karagül, “Cemal Kaşıkçı cinayeti bir DEAŞ zihniyetidir. O uçakla kaç ülkeden suikastçılar getirildi? BAE-İsrail sabotajı: Bu da Rus uçağı senaryosu mu?” Yeni Şafak, 8 October 2018, <https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/cemal-kasikci-cinayeti-bir-deas-zihniyetidir-o-ucakla-kac-ulkeden-suikastcilar-getirildi-bae-israil-sabotaji-bu-da-rus-ucagi-senaryosu-mu-2047612>. Last accessed 22 October 2018.
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- ²² “Everything you want to know about the Family Unity unit of Al-Azhar for Limiting Divorce,” *Al-Yawm al-Sab’a*, 9 August 2018.
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- ³⁹ Various platforms of Ansar Iran: Blog <http://www.ansariran.blog.com/>; English blog: <http://ansariran-en.blogspot.com>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/408493015879164/حزب-انصار-ایران>; YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheAnsartv>; <http://www.youtube.com/user/ansariran1>. Last accessed 23 December 2013.
- ⁴⁰ See, for example: "Ansar Iran Member Recruits Through Twitter", *SITE*, October 12, 2013. <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/ansar-iran-member-recruits-through-twitter.html>
- ⁴¹ "Abu Hafs Al-Balushi and His Role in the Jihad in Baluchistan", *Ansar Iran's Blog*, May 19, 2013, <http://ansariran-en.blogspot.com/2013/05/abu-hafs-albalushi-and-his-role-in.html>. Last accessed 15 July 2014. The blog has since been closed, but his full biography can be found on at Onlinejihadexposed.com. http://www.onlinejihadexposed.com/2014/07/blog-post_16.html.
- ⁴² For an example of this, see the video "The Way of Jihad" produced by al-Farooq Media, published on al-Qaeda platforms and distributed by the Global Islamic Media Front, an important media outlet for al-Qaeda. The video was uploaded to Risala.biz, a distribution platform for Al-Qaeda and related organizations. See: <https://risala.ga/2ji2/>; The video was also distributed on the Gazwa website, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent. See: <http://gazwah.net/?p=3640>. Last accessed 27 October 2018.
- ⁴³ There is no shareable link available for this channel. Last accessed 27 October 2018. Among the platforms that served Ansar al-Furqan in the past are: https://twitter.com/FURQAN_ANSAR; the Twitter account of al-Farooq Media: https://twitter.com/media_alfarooq; the Twitter account of Abu Hafs al-Baluchi https://twitter.com/rpg_5.
- ⁴⁴ "Harakat Ansar Iran Announce Cooperation with Sepah-e-Sahaba", *Ansar Iran's Blog*, December 17, 2012,

<http://ansariran.blog.com/2012/12/17/harakat-ansar-iran-announce-cooperation-with-sepah-e-sahaba/>

Last accessed 23 December 2012.

⁴⁵ Zambelis, "The Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency in Iran", p. 19.

⁴⁶ "Important Announcement: Merger of Hizbul-Furqan and Harakat Ansar Iran," *Ansar Iran's Blog*, December 7, 2013, <http://ansariran-en.blogspot.com/2013/12/important-announcement-merger-of-hizbul.html>

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⁴⁷ See the blog: http://www.onlinejihadexposed.com/2014/07/blog-post_16.html.

⁴⁸ For reports on the attacks by Ansar al-Furqan and its online activity, see:

[https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/index.php?option=com_customproperties&view=search&task=tag&tagName=Groups:Ansar-Al-Furqan-\(Harakat-Ansar-Iran](https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/index.php?option=com_customproperties&view=search&task=tag&tagName=Groups:Ansar-Al-Furqan-(Harakat-Ansar-Iran)

⁴⁹ "Ansar al-Furqan Claims Bombing Oil Pipeline in First Operation in Iranian City of Ahvaz", *SITE*, December 30, 2017. <https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/Statements/ansar-al-furqan-claims-bombing-oil-pipeline-in-1st-operation-in-iranian-city-of-ahvaz.html>

⁵⁰ Lars Hauch, "Interview with an Iranian Fighter in Hayat Tahrir al-Sham", *Long War Journal*, September 18, 2018. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/09/interview-with-an-iranian-fighter-in-hayat-tahrir-al-sham.php>.

⁵¹ There is no shareable link available for this channel. Last accessed 27 October 2018.

⁵² Hauch, "Interview with an Iranian Fighter in Hayat Tahrir al-Sham", *Long War Journal*, September 18, 2018.