

ARAB DISPATCH

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North Africa

#Libya – The Head of the Presidential Council holds talks with LNA's commander



Source: The National

On the 12th of February the newly elected Head of the Presidential Council, Mohammed Younes al-Menfi, met with the commander of the Libyan National Army (LNA), Khalifa Haftar, at his army's headquarter in the village of Rajma, east of Benghazi.

His visit follows the United Nations-sponsored Libyan Political Dialogue Forum during which the country's warring sides selected the interim government that will guide the country to the national elections, scheduled for the 24th of December.

Al-Menfi, a Libyan diplomat with support in the country's east, was picked as Head of the three-person Presidential Council, while Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, a businessman from the western city of Misrata, as interim Prime Minister. Each representative of the Council represents a region: Tripolitania in the west, Cyrenaica in the east, and Fezzan in the southwest. The interim government aims at leading the country to a national reconciliation process.

During the meeting Haftar underlined his support to the Presidential Council and his commitment to a peaceful transition while Al-Menfi stressed the necessity to *“achieve unity and true reconciliation and to collaborate with all in order to end the suffering”*.

According to some observers although Al-Menfi is originally from Tobruk, on Libya's eastern Mediterranean, he is politically aligned with western factions, fact that might undermine the country's peaceful transition. The Libyan Democratic Party in this regard stated that the newly elected Al-Menfi with his visit betrayed the Libyan revolution.

To know more about this topic:

- *The Arab Weekly*, Libyan delegates choose interim prime minister, presidential council, 07/02/21, available at: <https://thearabweekly.com/libyan-delegates-choose-interim-prime-minister-presidential-council>
- *Al Jazeera*, Libya's new interim leader holds talks in Benghazi, 12/02/21, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/12/libyas-new-interim-leader-arrives-in-benghazi>
- *Asbarq Al-Awsat*, Menfi meets Libyan National Army commander in first visit to Benghazi, 12/02/21, available at: <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/2800486/menfi-meets-libyan-national-army-commander-first-visit-benghazi>
- *The Libyan Express*, Democratic Party: Al-Manfi is an enemy of the February 17 revolution, 13/02/21, available at: <https://www.libyanexpress.com/democratic-party-al-menfi-is-an-enemy-of-the-february-17-revolution/>

Levant

#Jordan – Amman reinforces partnerships to bolster economic growth in the region



Sources: The Daily Sabah – Tripartite talks in Cairo between the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry and his Jordanian and Iraqi counterparts, Ayman Safadi and Fouad Hussein

On the 13th of February Jordan and Iraq held talks in Amman to strengthen their economic cooperation in the trade and investment sector. The meeting between the Jordanian Minister of Industry, Maha Al Ali, and her Iraqi counterpart, Manhal Aziz, was attended by the ministry's Secretary General, Yousef Shamali, and Iraqi Ambassador to Amman, Haider Athari.

On the occasion, the Jordanian Minister stressed the importance of implementing strategic projects capable to create new commercial opportunities and economic growth. The two ministers also attended a meeting with representatives of Jordanian and Iraqi private sectors, in the presence of the Chairman of the Board of Jordan Chamber of Commerce, Nael Kabariti, President of the Jordan Chamber of Industry, Fathi Jaghbir, representatives of the Jordanian Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, and the Chairman of the Iraqi Business Council, Majed Saadi.

The meeting highlighted that the two countries, already cooperating in the field of energy, agriculture, health, education and trade, need to work on economic partnerships and economic integration, addressing the challenges that undermine free trade exchange between the parties.

The economic cooperation followed a series of Jordanian-Iraqi-Egyptian tripartite talks between the Egyptian Foreign Ministry, Sameh Shoukry and his Jordanian and Iraqi counterparts, Ayman Safadi and Fouad Hussein, with the last one held in Cairo early this month to “*push forward the frameworks of tripartite cooperation and promoting joint Arab action.*”

The three countries discussed possible political solutions to the conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya in addition to a possible joint economic zone and the feasibility of an oil pipeline linking Basra to Aqaba and then Egypt.

To know more about this topic:

- *Middle East Monitor*, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq hold talks in Cairo, 08/02/21, available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20210208-egypt-jordan-iraq-hold-talks-in-cairo/>
- *The Jordan Times*, Industry minister, Iraqi counterpart meet to bolster economic cooperation, 13/02/21, available at: <https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/industry-minister-iraqi-counterpart-meet-bolster-economic-cooperation>

Gulf

#Bahrain – Manama to witness a difficult economic recovery



Source: Asharq Al-Awsat – Local market in Manama

On the 14th of February the International Monetary Fund announced that Bahrain's economic recovery from the Pandemic and the fall of oil prices will be slow and gradual with an economic growth estimated at the 3,3 % for 2021 after a 5,4 % contraction in 2020.

Bahrain's economy, mainly based on oil-revenues, has been severely hit by the 2014-2015 oil price shock followed by the 2020 health crisis. The public debt accumulated rose to 133% of GDP in 2020 from 102% in 2019. The country has already benefitted from a five-year zero-interest 10,25 billion dollars package offered in 2018 by Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, however, in 2023, Manama will most likely need extra financial aid from its neighbouring countries.

The small Kingdom is trying to build a less oil-dependent economy and last month, following the US-sponsored Abraham agreement, has stipulated bilateral economic deals with Israel to bolster economic cooperation between the two countries. The two biggest Israeli banks, Bank Hapoalim and Bank Leumi, signed Memoranda of Understanding with the National Bank of Bahrain (NBB). The three banks will be using a common banking platform in order to allow costumers' banking transactions in both countries,

fostering, by doing so, cooperation between regional businesses as new economic opportunities will soon arise following the Abraham Accords.

To know more about this topic:

- *Al Arabiya*, Bahrain's economy to grow 3.3 percent this year, must cut public debt, 14/02/21, available at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/business/economy/2021/02/14/Economy-Bahrain-s-economy-to-grow-3-3-percent-this-year-must-cut-public-debt-IMF>
- *Arab News*, Analysts: Gulf economic recovery to continue in 2021, 26/01/21, available at: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1798561/business-economy>

#ArabInsight

By Maria Bagnara

IslamicWorld – The radicalisation of Takfir



Source: Institute for Global Change

As pointed out by [Al-Arab](#), Islamic fundamentalism has often decontextualised, in specific historical period, jurisprudential concepts and interpretations of the Holy Qur'an for political and religious interests.

The concept of Takfirism, is a significant example of the distorted interpretation made by Islamists and jurists, since early days of Islam until today, of theological issues for authoritarian goals.

[أنت كافر](#) (Anta kafir), the charge of being a كافر (Kafir infidel) against a Muslim or non-Muslim, also known as تكفير - *takfir*, represents in Islam a strong accusation with immediate consequences. The Kafir, a Muslim who does not properly follow Islam is immediately banned from the أمة الإسلام - *ummat al-Islām* (the supra-national Islamic community) and, according to certain interpretations of the Qur'an, sentenced to death.

The concept of [Takfir](#) dates back to the first century of Islam marking the very first Fitna (civil war) within the Islamic community during which a small group, known as the Kharijites (which means those who exit, the outsiders), strongly opposed the Umayyad Caliphate (756-1301 AD) and accused the ruler of being a Kafir, infidel.

The sect engaged in a campaign of terror against any Muslim or Muslim government that did not strictly follow their literal interpretation of Islam. Any Muslim who did not accept their vision was accused of apostasy and killed. With the Kharijites, the Takfir practice was codified in the theological discourse and adopted to justify wars and violent actions against other Muslims, a practice forbidden by the Holy Qur'an in accordance with the Islamic vision of the world divided in Dar al-Islam (territory under the Islamic law) and Dar al-Harb (territory of war).

For their systematic use of the Takfir practice against Muslim individuals and governments and their extremely violent actions many observers consider the Kharijites the precursors of the modern-day terrorist groups.

In the 14th century the Salafi scholar [Ibn Taymiyyah](#) (1263-1328 AD) re-elaborated the practice of Takfir to condemn the Mongols that, after the defeat of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258, corrupted Islam with their folk customs. In this context Ibn Taymiyyah condemned the Mongol authority of Kufr and admitted the practice of Jihad against it. By doing so he transformed the concept of Jihad (that literally means “to make an effort” and not “holy war”) so far limited to the defence of the Dar al-Islam or in some cases to expand the Islamic authority on the Dar al-Harb, in an obligatory effort to fight the corrupt rule.

Following Ibn Taymiyyah, the Sunni Indian-Pakistani Jurist, Abu Ala Mawdudi (1903-79) and the Islamic theorist and leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) elaborated further the theological discourse regarding the practice of Takfir against Muslims.

Most significantly Mawdudi and Qutb transformed the concept of Jihad against corrupt rulers in a mandatory practice, necessary to restore the Islamic Caliphate and the period of the *سلف* - *Salaf* (ancestors), the first three generations of Muslims, said to know the pure form of Islam. The school of thought of both Ibn Taymiyyah, Mawdudi and Qutb influenced the Salafi movements, like the Wahabism in Saudi Arabia, and the modern Salafi-Jihadist movements that aim at recreating a utopian Islamic state throughout offensive Jihad.

The rejection of a corrupted modern reality and the need to recreate the first generations of Muslims' Caliphate along with the primary role assumed by the practice of Jihad, codified by radical Islamists, deeply influenced modern and contemporary global terrorist movements like Al-Qaeda and more recently ISIS.

While Qutb encouraged Muslims to embrace Jihad against foreign colonialist structures, Osama Bin Laden, founder of the takfiri organization known as Al-Qaeda (the base), moved his focus on the United States and the apostate Arab regimes supporting it, transforming the interpretation of Jihad into a global movement.

Under Osama bin Laden's leadership, al-Qaeda represented the culmination of Takfiri movements. Al-Qaeda absorbed a broad spectrum of jihadi schools of thought that developed between the 1980s and Ayman al-Zawahiri's ascension to leadership, followed by the Islamic State's declaration made in 2014 by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Although IS agrees with al-Qaeda, from which it split in 2013, on basic principles, it disagrees with Bin Laden's focus limited to the US. Al-Qaeda, by contrast, accused the Islamic State of being an extension of the Kharijite sect for its misinterpretation of Jihad and its bloody strategy, extended to both Western and Muslim countries. ISIS goal was indeed much wider than fighting the enemy. Its main goal was to establish a real functioning Islamic State in accordance with its Interpretation of Islam and Sharia Law.

With the leadership's transfer from Bin Laden to a less charismatic Zawahiri and the Arab uprisings, presenting not only a model of change through peaceful protests but also the Muslim Brotherhood model as a valuable alternative, the Takfir networks supporting a worldwide struggle started its decline.

The Islamic State, adopted the principles of Al-Qaeda and supplemented it with the Takfir ideology listing by doing so a much longer catalogue of enemies. Exploiting internal divisions, sectarianism and unstable governments, IS was able to create a Caliphate stretching from Aleppo in Syria to Diyala in Iraq whose ideology even after its defeat in 2019 remains alive.

In fact, Daesh followers still call for the establishment of a "caliphate" in other parts of the world for example, in Southeast Asia.

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