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significant and influential books, based on the doctrines of Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab, and there is no coincidence.² The affiliation with al-Zarqawi and Al-Maqdisi and the dedication in the opening to the leadership of Al-Qaeda, is very much emphasized. It is not the first time the MYM declares its affiliation, or publicly follows Al-Qaeda, but the focus here on Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad is relatively new. It seems as if MYM deliberately joins the pattern set by other Jihadi groups, which emerged on a local basis, and affiliated themselves with AQ only after a period of several years of terrorist/guerrilla/insurgent activity. The same has been done by Zarqawi himself.



A group calling itself the Brigades of Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (*Kataeb al-Tawhid wal-Jihad*) emerged in Somalia in early 2007, following a move of several tens of Arab Jihadi volunteers to Somalia. In 16 March 2007, they posted in Jihadi forums the first declaration and logo, where they took responsibility for an attack against the presidential palace of the newly elected Somali president Abdallah Yousef, who was backed by Ethiopia.³ The discourse of the statement was very similar to AQ statements from Iraq, including a threat to target everyone who takes part in the efforts to stabilize the Somali government under the support and direction of “foreign elements.”

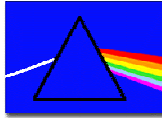
In April 2007, the group managed to unite 70 Somali clerics to sign a Fatwa against the “Crusader occupation” of Somalia by the Ethiopians.⁴ Once again, the discourse of the Fatwa was similar to declarations from Iraq.

In December 2007, an active Arab member in Jihadi forums posted an analysis and explanation of the differences between MYM and its mother movement, the Islamic

² See the book in English translation in: http://www.e-prism.org/images/Millat_Ibrahim_-_English.pdf The book was written in the late 1980s during Al-Maqdisi’s stay in Afghanistan, in the training camps of AQ.

³ See the declaration in Arabic on-line in: <http://www.alfirdaws.org/vb/showthread.php?t=28990> (not active in recent months), and in Somalian in: http://www.qaadisiya.com/view_contents.php?articleid=579.

⁴ See on-line in: <http://www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=114095264c25c488ea78cdaa2ff56a34&threadid=50627> (not active for a long time).



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Courts Union (ICU).⁵ According to him, MYM was aiming to establish an Islamic State according to the model set by the Taliban state. They see all the rulers of the Islamic world as one wing of the global conspiracy against Islam and therefore, regard them all as infidels who should be fought. The MYM seeks to expand their Jihad to the entire Horn of Africa, especially the Christian states there, in order to expel the infidels from the region. They take the model of AQ, which said “let us expel the infidels from Arabia,” and through a military Jihad only. They look for establishing a Somali Islamic Emirate. At the bottom line of his analysis – MYM is the total opposite of ICU and follows the steps of AQ, since many of their activists were trained in Afghanistan. Following the dismantling of ICU in early 2008, and its merging into the “Alliance of Asmara Party,” MYM remained the only Jihadi group in Somalia to follow the steps of AQ.

In 1 June 2008, Mukhtar Abu Zubayr—the successor of Adan Hashi Ayro, the military leader of MYM who was killed in a US air strike in Somalia on 1 May 2008—published the first audiotape of the group. The audio message was entitled “We Conduct Jihad so There Will Be No Sedition; Worship Solely Is for Sake of Allah.”⁶ In the message, Shaykh Abu al-Zubayr sent out his greetings to Mullah Omar of the Taliban, the leaders of AQ, the Islamic State of Iraq, and the Mujahidin in Algeria and throughout the world. Among AQ leaders he sent his special greetings to Shaykh Abu Yahya al-Libi, who revived the Al-`Usrah Army, and whose words “have had a stronger impact than 1,000 jihadist soldiers in your brothers' battle against the global Crusade.” Then he stated:

“First, the objective of their [MYM] struggle is to uphold the word of God, and the establishment of a Caliphate based on the methodology of the prophet. Narrated in Sahih Bukhari...(Hadith)

“Second, there is no dialogue or negotiations with the ignorant secularists, nationalists, and all apostates. Shaykh Muhammad Bin Abd-al-Wahhab stated: ‘These tyrants, whom people believe it is a duty to obey instead of God, are all apostates from Islam. How can they not be considered so, as they deem permissible what God has not permitted and vice versa? Islam would not be correct unless we declare our innocence from these people and consider them as infidels.’

“Third, they [MYM] are an integral part of the vanguard of global jihad. God Almighty stated: ‘Truly, Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure’(Qur’anic verse; Al-Saff 61:4). The Islamic Caliphate remained when the Muslims were united, and disintegrated and collapsed when the Muslim nation was broken. It will return only with unity under the banner of monotheism and the creed allegiance and enmity.

⁵ See on-line in: <http://www.alhesbah.net/v/showthread.php?t=156555> (not active since November 2008).

⁶ English translation by FBIS, see: Document Number: 200806041477.1_2bab02776c32b8a7, 4 June 2008.



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"Finally, I greet the brothers in the Global Islamic Media Front, who have supported and championed us. I say to them: do not let any Islamic cause, however small, pass you by.

In 25 July 2008, GIMF posted in Jihadi websites the first videotape by MYM -- an obituary for the late Amir of the group, Adan Hashi Ayro. The video shows statements being made by Ayro on the importance of jihad, while MYM Spokesman, Shaykh Mukhtar Robow Abu Mansur, appeared in the video to praise and detail Ayro's Jihadi activity.

During 2008, the involvement of GIMF in the MYM machinery of propaganda became obvious and the Somali group published all its statements through this Jihadi institute only. The recent publication of Millat Ibrahim was just a further stage in the activity of the MYM.



Independent MYM

The main process of developing the independence of MYM from the former Somali Islamist group of The Islamic Courts' Union (ICU) took place during 2007, on the background of personal rivalries and the readiness of ICU to engage in peace talks with other rival factions, including secular government elements. These peace efforts were made under the initiative of the African Union and neighboring countries such as Eritrea.

However, the primary sign of this independence, as clearly reflected in the new magazine, was the Jihadi Arabization of MYM, in contrast with the Africanization of other factions, including ICU, during 2008. Another sign, was the globalization of the Somali Jihad, which was expressed not only by its loyalty to AQ and its leadership, but also by adopting the Zarqawi's *Modus Operandi* in Iraq, and the changing discourse in their statements, interviews, and now in the new magazine.

The Somali society and its past governments have always moved between Africa and the Arab world. Past political pressures from Egypt and Sudan placed Somalia traditionally as part of the Arab world, and member of the Arab League. Social, religious, financial, and cultural long-time influences from Arabia and Yemen, encouraged this trend. In recent years, the African involvement in the anarchy in Somalia, primarily by Christian Ethiopia and the African Union, has shaken the Arab-African swing, and pushed MYM toward the Arab most extremist interpretations of Jihad against the African influence, which encourages African national tendencies.



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The public declaration of MYM's independence was made on January 8th, 2008, in a written communiqué in both Arabic and English, by an American trainer active within MYM—Abu Mansur al-Amriki—which was published and distributed by GIMF too.⁷ Abu Mansour al-Amriki, similarly to another US citizen, who is active in Afghanistan—Adam Gadahn aka Azzam al-Amriki—took since then, a prominent part in the propaganda of MYM.⁸ In the statement “to the Muslims in general and the Mujahidin in particular,” Abu Mansour raised a significant element to present the problems between MYM and ICU – the foreign volunteers, who were received by ICU with hostility, and *persona non gratis*. This volunteers have had a leading role in pushing MYM to AQ and global Jihad's open arms, and the adoption of the global Jihadi perceptions of their struggle. Abu Mansur added that “while the Courts used to judge over each individual tribe, the Shabab were made up of many different tribes and they used to cooperate with the Muhajirin from the outside. Also, while the Courts had a goal limited to the boundaries placed by the Taghout, the Shabab had a global goal including the establishment of the Islamic *Khilafah* in all parts of the world. This difference did not go away in the days of victory nor has it gone away even up till today.”

Abu Mansur's statement followed an earlier long document, which detailed the principles and doctrines (*Minhaj*) of MYM, which was posted in Jihadi forums on 20 December 2007, not by GIMF but by a Somali activist.⁹ The doctrines of MYM, as posted in the document, are identical to those of other Jihadi-Salafi groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda. The discourse is strict Salafi, and seems to be written by a scholar who graduated the Wahhabi school of *Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah*.

On this background, Millat Ibrahim, the first magazine by MYM, seems as a further stage in the group's way to follow AQ, or at the same time to serve as AQ base in the Horn of Africa.

On 8 May 2008, GIMF magazine Sada al-Jihad, posted an interview conducted with Shaykh Abu-Mansur—Mukhtar Ali Rubu—the official spokesman for the MYM, in which he talked about the progress of the jihad in Somalia.¹⁰ Abu Mansur claimed that the Somali jihad “belongs to the global jihadist movement and called for more foreign fighters to come to Somalia.” When asked about his group's relations with other jihadist factions, and if MYM belongs to the people of Sunnah and Jama'ah, Abu Mansur replied: “The relationship between the Salafi jihadist trend and other Islamists is a

⁷ See on-line in: <http://ekhlaas.ws/forum/showthread.php?t=120507> (currently not active)

⁸ Another US citizen who joined MYM and was killed by an American bombing in 2008, was Ruben Luis Shumpert from Seattle, aka Amir Abdul Muhaimin. His story appears in details in the issue of *Millat Ibrahim*.

⁹ See online in: <http://www.alhesbah.net/v/showthread.php?t=157898> (not active since November 2008)

¹⁰ English translation by FBIS, Document Number: 200805271477.1_65cc26fcb45b6f89



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reciprocal relationship based on exchanging experiences, modeled on the better one, and following the one that invents a good tradition. The people of the jihad assume the leadership, provide the example, and lead others to a proper understanding and better actions than the other Islamists. Thus, the Mujahidin often undertake what is described as regeneration operations, through which they revive what is abandoned of this religion. They are strangers facing predicaments at the beginning of the way. However, after the relief and after ending the estrangement, it will be easier for others to pass along the smooth road.” In another place he added: "Concerning goals, we attempt to revive the spirit of Jihad among Muslims, unite their ranks in adherence to the truth, and implement the Shari'ah rulings on the people. The jihad in Somalia is therefore, completely the same as the global jihad in everything. However the jihad in Somalia lacks immigrant Mujahidin, as there are not enough numbers of non-Somali brothers. **We are in need for Somalia's Zarqawi, Khattab, and Abu-al-Layth. O heroes, how long should we wait?**"

On 7 December 2008, GIMF posted in Jihadi forums a statement of the establishment of “the Islamic Province (*Wilayah*) of Shabelle.”¹¹ The declaration of the new province in the southern part of the country, was made during a popular ceremony, held in 6 December 2008, with a large crowd. The MYM claimed that the province of Lower Shabelle was occupied by the mujahidin “at the invitation of the people.” The latter “were subjected to harm and persecution by the tribal criminal gangs linked to the government of apostasy, who imposed taxes on residential houses, let alone shops. The mujahidin promptly responded to the demands of the people and mobilized brigades from the soldiers of God in support of the oppressed to deter spoilers from spreading corruption on the land.”

The declaration included the names of the new administration of the province: Sheikh Abd al-Rahman Sirah – governor (*Wali*); Sheikh Sultan Muhammad Aal Muhammad – head of the Da’wah and education; Sheikh Hasan Abd al-Rahman – head of security and proper behavior (*Hisbah*); Qadi Abdallah Ahmad Muhammad – head of the justice system; Sheikh Ibrahim al-Maqdisi – head of Treasury and development. The statement further declared that "The idea of establishing Islamic provinces is a good omen for the worshippers and the country, and these provinces succeed in a very short time to apply the Islamic law on all aspects of life, the spread of security, and the application of Islamic punishments and justice. After consulting with the knowledgeable people in the region, the General Command of MYM decided to declare an Islamic province for the region.”

One of the first typical actions of MYM in the region, as well in other regions they occupy, was to destroy sacred graves, worshiped by the local Sufis and graves of

¹¹ See online in: <http://www.al-faloja.info/vb/showthread.php?p=180508#post180508>



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prominent individuals, claiming this phenomenon is against the rules of Shari'ah.¹² At the same time they killed local robbers who harassed the local inhabitants. The destruction of sacred graves raised the opposition of local Sufi groups, which in some cases were violent.

Nevertheless, it seems that the MYM is doing its best to be popular among the occupied population and recruit their support. In 13 November 2008, in a large gathering in the town of Marka, the capital of Lower Shabelle Province, they declared that "they do not take revenge except if God's sanctity is violated, and that they will deal with mercy and compassion with their brothers."¹³ In another statement, posted by GIMF, from 14 November 2008,¹⁴ the MYM's Al-Hisbah Army (*Jaysh al-Hisbah*) "was able, thanks to God, to cleanse the main road between the areas of Cadaado and Caabudwaaq in Galguduud Province in central Somalia, of highway robbers and bandits. Brigades from the Al-Hisbah Army conducted Da'wah work inside Caabudwaaq city, which is close to the Somali-Ethiopian border. The Al-Hisbah Army is conducting Da'wah work in the areas of the central province after their liberation from the hands of the occupiers and their supporters. Teams were established in all the main cities to conduct the Al-Hisbah work daily, in order to raise the understanding of our Muslim nation so that it will be a large thorn in the sides of the enemies of Islam."

The establishment of Al-Hisbah army to supervise the implementation of Islamic Shari'ah laws in new controlled regions, coincided with the establishment of Al-`Usrah (distress or hard-times) army (*Jaysh al-`Usrah*), as the military arm of MYM. The title Al-`Usrah army appears in recent months on every statement by MYM. The term,¹⁵ which is not used by any other Jihadi group, was first coined in March 2007, by Abu Yahya al-Libi in a videotape addressed to the Somalian Mujahidin.¹⁶ Since then, the involvement of Al-Libi, the chief ideologue of Al-Qaeda in recent years, in Somalian affairs and the MYM has been steadily intensified.

¹² <http://allafrica.com/stories/200812100134.html>;

http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia_27/Somalia_Al_Shabaab_fighters_destroy_graves_in_Kismayo.shtml

¹³ English text of MYM statement posted in Jihadi forums on 13 November 2008. FBIS, Document Number: 200811141477.1_a1f5005be6e518d9

¹⁴ English text of MYM statement posted in Jihadi forums on 13 November 2008. FBIS, Document Number: 200811141477.1_d8150044bd9b096c

¹⁵ The term *Jaysh al-`Usrah* is taken from early Islamic history. This was the army that was formed by `Uthman Ibn `Affan in 630, prior to the battle of Tabuk against the Byzantines.

¹⁶ See online in: <http://www.ikhwan.net/vb/showthread.php?t=29913> and <http://www.as7apcool.com/vb/showthread.php?t=88978>



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Millat Ibrahim

The magazine opens with the editor's explanation of its goals. The reference to Zarqawi is clear-cut:

Naming our center after the "Martyr of the nation" Sheykh Zarqawi is our statement of following his method of al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, and his way of slaughtering the apostates. Through this name the reader understands that we shall never accept any compromise, whatever the world might do. The Sheykh was the symbol of Millat Ibrahim in his times. He challenged the Arab and foreign despots despite the hits and darkness that surrounded him, the same as Ibrahim disavowed his parents and his people.

The globalization of MYM is symbolized by the slogan – "together we confront the nation of Crusade."

The first article confronts the efforts made by other Somali groups, which formed the unity of the Liberation Party, and which are regarded apostates following their readiness to talk to the foreign occupiers. The author bases all his arguments in excommunicating the other parties, on a famous Fatwa of the Egyptian Sheykh Ahmad Muhammad Shaker (1892-1958) against any cooperation with the British occupation in Egypt, which is a Takfiri fatwa without using in those times, the term Takfir.

An interesting article compares, in the form of a table, between the MYM and the Liberation Party on various topics. In the rubric of "terrorism" MYM claims that terrorism against the infidels and apostates is a duty. The other party "pleases the infidels, run away from the term terrorism, and condemn the Mujahidin."

Three pages are dedicated to the US citizen "Amir Abdul Muhaimin," who was recently killed. The bottom line of the report about his story is the quite desperate call for volunteers from outside of Somalia.

A quite surprising article to note was in the corner of book recommendation. The chosen book was the monumental "Call for a World Resistance" by Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri. The book is recommended since "unlike other authors of books on Jihad who have never shot one bullet, Al-Suri had a rich experience of Jihad." The choice is quite surprising since Al-Suri has not been part of Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, and contains some controversies with the orthodox Al-Qaeda. We can also ask ourselves how many Mujahidin of the MYM can read 1600 pages in Arabic. Nevertheless, Al-Suri, who was arrested in Pakistan in October 2005, was one of the most experienced trainers and doctrinaires in Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan until 2001.



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The magazine ends with a short citation from the book of Millat Ibrahim by Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, to pay tribute to his influential role in establishing the trend of Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad.

Conclusion

The Jihadization of Somalia has been for a long time a publicized goal of Al-Qaeda. In 2008, Somali Jihad was approached and praised by the most senior leaders of AQ, such as Al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi. Beside the “heroic” memories of AQ led by Osama bin Laden from the defeat of the United States in Mogadishu in 1993, the organization has always longed for turning Somalia into the “Land of Savagery” (*Ardh al-Tawahhush*), and use it as the principal Jihadi base in the Horn of Africa. The emergence of MYM in about a decade, as the most powerful Jihadi group out of several Islamist other groups, is viewed by AQ as a follow-up of similar processes of purification through Jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq. The establishment of an independent Somali province, where Shari’ah law is strictly implemented, on the model of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), is therefore, a natural development.

Some of the leading figures of Al-Qaeda and Global Jihad, including Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Kuwaiti Hamed al-Ali, the Syrian in exile in London Abu Basir al-Tartousi, and above all Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi himself, have publicly criticized Al-Zarqawi for his “savagery.” However, the “Zarqawi savage heritage” remained the most popular one in Jihadi circles, especially amongst younger supporters of Global Jihad, who wish to skip the phase of education/indoctrination (*Tarbiyyah*) recommended by the spiritual fathers, such as Abdallah Azzam or Maqdisi. They seek only the bottom line – the Jihadi savagery. So far it seems that the MYM walks in the footsteps of Zarqawi, but in their case no one is criticizing them. On the contrary, they gain the full support of Al-Qaeda and its ideologue Abu Yahya al-Libi, as acting in one of the most important geo-political regions for the Jihadi struggle.
