



August 21, 2012

The Gaza-based Salafist jihadi network Tawhid wal-Jihad carried out the terrorist attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border on June 18, 2012, in which an Israeli civilian was killed. The attack emphasized the threat to Israel from the Sinai Peninsula and Egypt's difficulty in governing the region.



Scene from a video showing two of the Tawhid wal-Jihad terrorist operatives killed in the attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border on June 18, 2012. Left: the terrorist calling himself Abu Salah al-Masri, from Egypt. Right: the terrorist calling himself Abu Hazifa al-Hudhali, from Saudi Arabia. They represented the terrorist attack as a double suicide bombing attack whose objective was to hurt the "Zionist enemy" on the "Egyptian-Palestinian" border. According to a different video, the two had recently returned from Libya where they fought in the ranks of the global jihad against Gaddafi's regime.

Overview

1. On June 18, 2012, a terrorist attack was carried out on the Israeli-Egyptian border which was supposed to include the detonation of a massive explosive device. **An Israeli civilian was killed in the attack.** A new umbrella network of Salafist-jihadi groups operating in the Gaza Strip calling itself **The Shura Council of the Mujahideen of Greater Jerusalem** claimed responsibility for the attack. In reality, it was carried out by **Tawhid wal-Jihad** ("oneness and jihad"), a Salafist jihadi network which has been operating in the Gaza Strip since 2008. Its "emir" (leader) is an Al-Qaeda operative

named Hisham Saidani, **who in the past spent time in Jordan, Iraq and Libya** (where he joined forces with global jihad operatives). In March 2011 he was detained by Hamas and released on August 2, 2012.

2. The shooting attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border, which, according to the statements of its perpetrators was supposed to be a suicide bombing attack, was **the first successful terrorist attack in recent years by the global jihad networks operating against Israel from the Gaza Strip**. The attack and the attack near the Kerem Shalom crossing in which 16 Egyptian soldiers were killed, **were an indication of the efforts being made by the networks** to use the Sinai Peninsula as a springboard for their attacks against Israel. To that end they **exploit the rampant anarchy and chaos prevalent in Sinai**. They are encouraged in their efforts by **Ayman al-Zawahiri**, Osama bin Laden's heir and current head of Al-Qaeda.

3. Global jihad networks operating in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula **seek to turn Sinai into an arena for intensive activity**, relying on long-distance logistic support from countries like **Libya** (which after the fall of Gaddafi became an important source of weapons), **North Sudan and Iraq**. The Palestinian terrorist networks operating in the Gaza Strip **have easy access to the local Sinai Bedouin tribes which have affiliated themselves with the global jihad** and whose motives are both financial and ideological.

4. The June 20, 2012 Tawhid wal-Jihad **attack joins the series of attacks against Israel carried out this past year from the Sinai Peninsula**, an exploitation of **the anarchy and Egypt's governmental difficulties the area**. The most prominent attacks were the combined attack on a number of Israeli vehicle north of Israel's southernmost city of Eilat (August 18, 2011), the launching of three 122m Grad rockets targeting Eilat (the night of April 4, 2012), the June 18 attack and the shots fired at a bus full of IDF soldiers north of Eilat (July 22, 2012). **The attacks were carried out by terrorist organizations known to be operating in the Gaza Strip (the most prominent of which is the Popular Resistance Committees) and by networks in the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula affiliated with the global jihad**. The terrorist attack on August 5, 2012, in which 16 Egyptian soldiers were killed, can be added to the list.

5. **Hamas** generally tries to enforce its policy of restraint in terrorist attacks on organizations affiliated with the global jihad and on the rogue organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, although not often rigorously or with the determination it exhibits when

its vital interests are challenged. On the other hand, **Hamas tries to promote attacks of its own, keeping a low signature**, and allows the other terrorist organizations to carry out similar attacks anonymously. One of the aspects of that policy **is finding indirect routes to carry out attacks on Israeli soil through the Sinai Peninsula** (rocket attacks, attacks on Israeli targets along the Israeli-Egyptian border, infiltrating or smuggling weapons into Israel). Hamas and the other terrorist organizations are careful to hide most of those attacks, and sometimes even deny their existence. **They do so not to expose themselves to Israeli responses and not to complicate their relations with Egypt**, especially now that Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood has been elected president.

6. Three appendices follow:

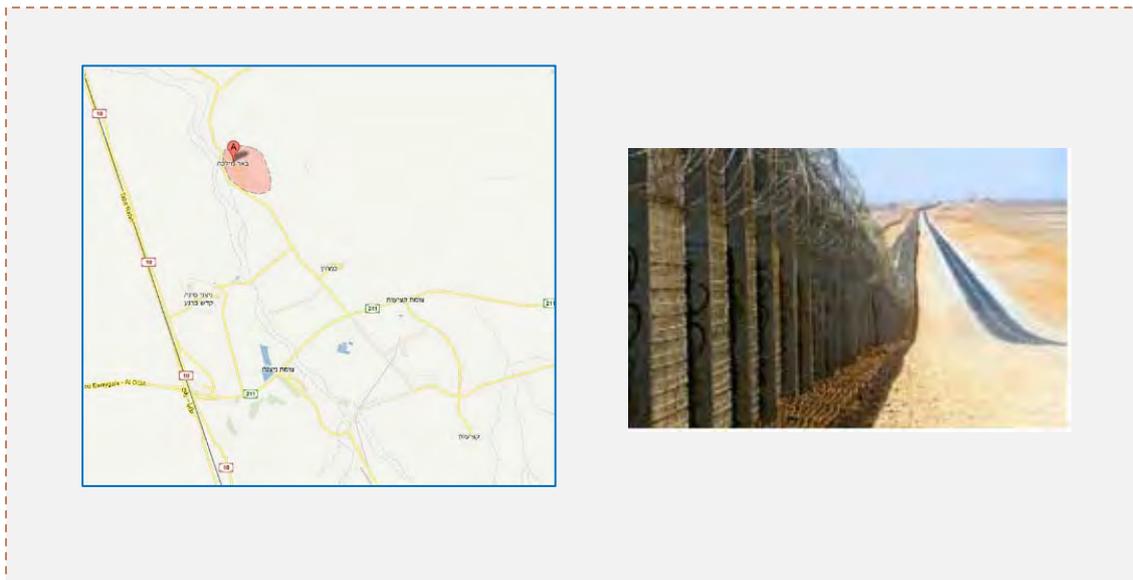
- I) The June 18, 2012 attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border and the aftermath
- II) Tawhid wal-Jihad in the Gaza Strip
- III) Tawhid wal-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula

The June 18, 2012 Attack on the Israeli-Egyptian Border and the Aftermath

The Event – Overview

7. On June 18, 2012, near the Israeli village of Beer Milca close to the Israeli-Egyptian border, **a three-man terrorist squad infiltrated into Israeli territory**. They crossed the border at a site where the security fence had not yet been constructed **and opened fire with light arms and RPGs**, targeting two vehicles belonging to the contractors building the fence. The attack killed one Israeli civilian employed by the contracting company. **Two of the terrorist operatives were killed**.

8. When the shooting began, an IDF force engaged in routine security activities was brought to the scene of the attack. The soldiers identified the terrorist operatives inside Israeli territory and opened fire. **A powerful explosive device in the possession of one of the terrorists was detonated by the gunfire**. Kalashnikov assault rifles were found on site (IDF Spokesman, June 18, 2012). The attack was carried out by **Tawhid wal-Jihad**, a network in the Gaza Strip affiliated with Al-Qaeda. In a video made public after the attack, the two terrorist operatives killed stated their intention to carry out a suicide bombing attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border.



Left: The area of the attack. Right: The security fence under construction along the Israeli-Egyptian border (Pictures from the IDF Spokesman, June 18, 2012).

Tawhid wal-Jihad Terrorist Operatives Killed by the IDF

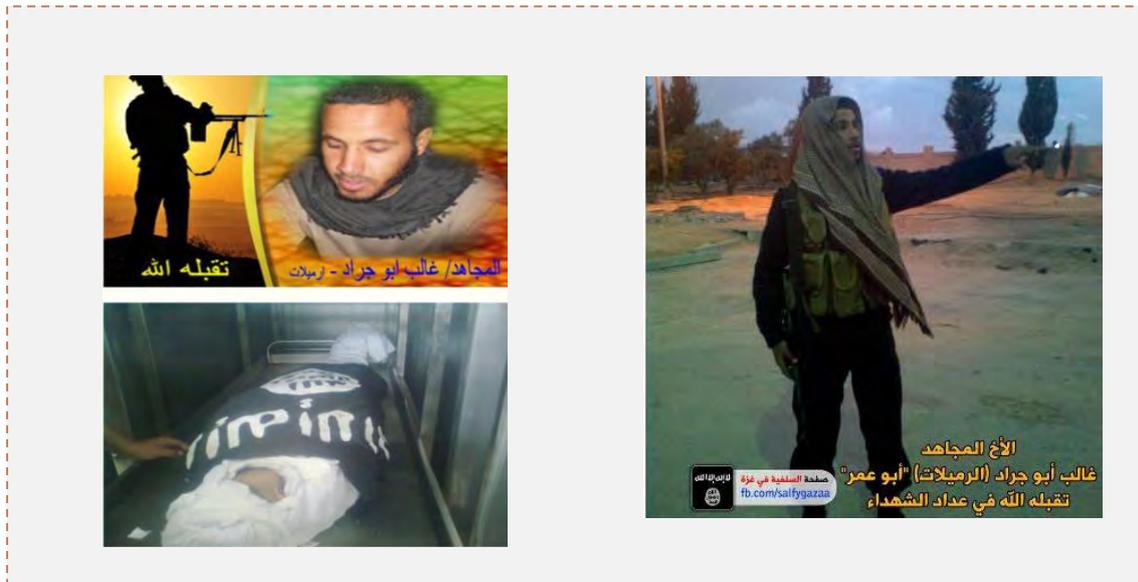
9. The attack which took place on the Israeli-Egyptian border signaled the beginning of another round of escalation from the Gaza Strip, lasting from June 18 to June 23. Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked several terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. On the afternoon of June 20 Israeli aircraft attacked **two Tawhid wal-Jihad operatives** riding a motorbike in Rafah. One of them, **Ghaleb al-Ramilat** (Abu Jarad) was killed on the spot and another, **Muhammad Rashwan**, was seriously wounded.

10. **Muhammed Rashwan** was involved in the June 18 attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border in which an Israeli civilian was killed. His activities included helping transfer weapons, supplying terrorist operatives with IEDs, firing rockets and mortar shells into Israeli territory, sniping, and infiltrating terrorist operatives into and out of the Gaza Strip. In the days prior to the attack Tawhid wal-Jihad was planning to carry out another (IDF Spokesman, June 21, 2012).



The motorbike ridden by Ghaleb al-Ramilat and Muhammad Rashwan (Hamas' palestine-info website, June 21, 2012).

11. On August 15, 2012, Muhammad Rashwan was released from the hospital and immediately detained by Hamas' internal security service. **Abu Abdallah al-Muhajer**, senior activist in the jihadist network in the Gaza Strip, claimed that in addition, other jihadist operatives were interrogated regarding the attack in which 16 Egyptian soldiers were killed. He added that the Salafist-jihadi networks in the Gaza Strip had no connection to the attack (Ma'an News Agency, August 17, 2012).



Top: Ghaleb Ramilat on a forum affiliated with Al-Qaeda, where he is represented as "the lion of the oneness [of Allah]" ("Assad al-tawhid"). Bottom: Ramilat's corpse wrapped in an Al-Qaeda flag.

Tawhid wal-Jihad operative Ghaleb Ramilat, killed in an IDF attack (Picture from the snam-s.net website)

Claiming Responsibility for the Terrorist Attack on the Israeli-Egyptian Border

12. A new umbrella organization calling itself the **Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem** composed of networks in the Gaza Strip affiliated with the global jihad **claimed responsibility for the attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border**.¹ Its establishment was proclaimed in a video immediately after the attack by Islamic forums affiliated with Al-Qaeda. In our assessment the Council includes the **Tawhid**

¹ Majlis shura al-mujahideen fi iqnaf bait al-muqdas in Arabic. The expression iqnaf bait al-muqdas can be translated as "greater Jerusalem," but it is also another name for the land of greater /Palestine. It comes from a hadith, part of Islam's oral tradition ascribed to Muhammad. Inspiration for the expression majlis shura al-mujahideen comes from **the activities of Al-Qaeda in Iraq**. In the past it referred to an umbrella network of various Islamic organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda operating in Iraq. In recent years the umbrella network has been calling itself "the Islamic state of Iraq."

wal-Jihad network (which carried out the attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border) and another jihadist network called **Ansar al-Sunna**.

13. The video posted by the Council **used Al-Qaeda terminology and signature trademarks**. The masked speaker said that after "Pharaoh" (i.e., Mubarak) had been toppled in Egypt, and after the destabilization of the "Alawite dictatorship" (i.e., Bashar Assad's regime), and now that in Lebanon and Jordan Sunni Muslims were evidently dissatisfied, **"the wind of tribulation is blowing towards the Jews from the Sinai Peninsula and the foothills of Mt. Sinai."** He called on the Islamic nation and the Palestinians to "join ranks and plan the next stage" to "restore the rule of Allah." According to the video, the upheavals in the Arab world **led to the decision to found the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem as a basis for jihad activity whose objective was to restore the Islamic Caliphate**. The video ended with threats against Israel: "...With the cup you gave the Muslims to drink from throughout Jerusalem we will give you strong poison to drink...We will not return [our swords] to their sheaths until they are covered with your blood, until we annihilate you..."



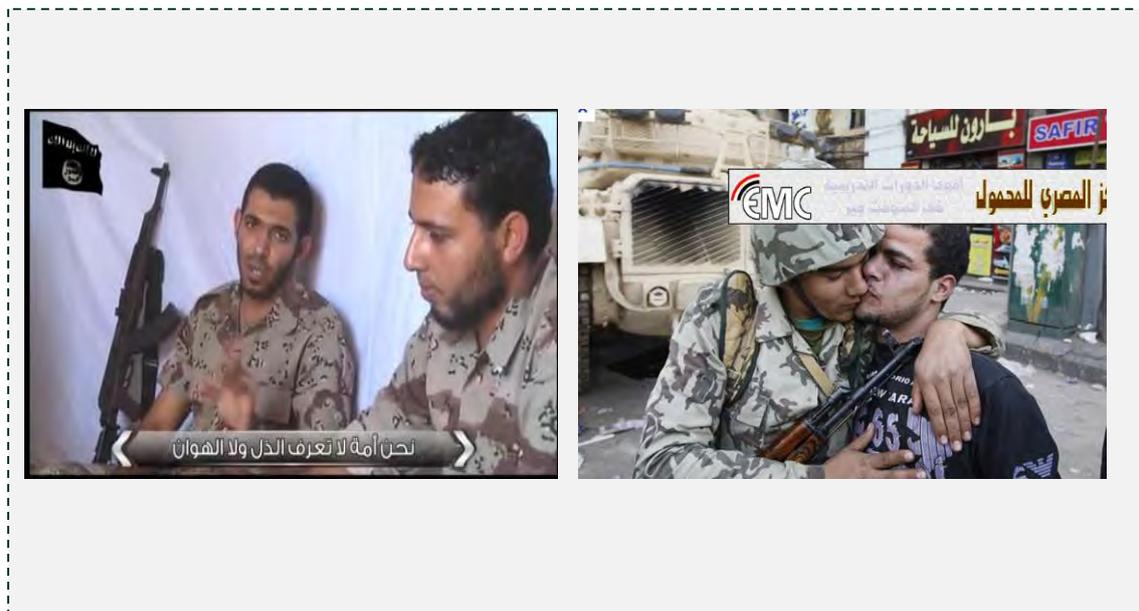
A spokesman for The Shura Council of the Mujahideen of Greater Jerusalem reads the announcement of the establishment of the new umbrella network, after the terrorist attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border (YouTube).

14. The video was accompanied by another, **the second one featuring the two terrorist operatives killed during the attack, both members of Tawhid wal-Jihad. They appear wearing uniforms very similar to those worn by the Egyptian army.**

Both operatives referred to themselves as "**living martyrs (shaheeds)**" who intended to carry out a **suicide bombing attack** as part of their "jihad against the Jews." One **claimed to be an Egyptian** from the Mersa Matruh governate and called himself **Abu Salah al-Masri**. The other said his name was **Abu Hazifa al-Hudhali** and that he came **from Saudi Arabia** (Jeddah, according to another video). According to al-Hudhali, they were planning a double suicide bombing attack on June 18 to "hurt the Jewish enemy on the border between Egypt and occupied Palestine."

15. After the attack it was reported that Abu Salah al-Masri **had spent a number of months in Libya**, where he joined one of the **jihadist networks working to overthrow the Qaddafi regime**. After five months of fighting he was shot in the leg and returned to Egypt for medical treatment (Al-mashhad.com and Ynet.co.il websites). After receiving medical treatment he was released from jail in Egypt and went to the Gaza Strip, where he joined Tawhid wal-Jihad.

Similarity of Uniforms



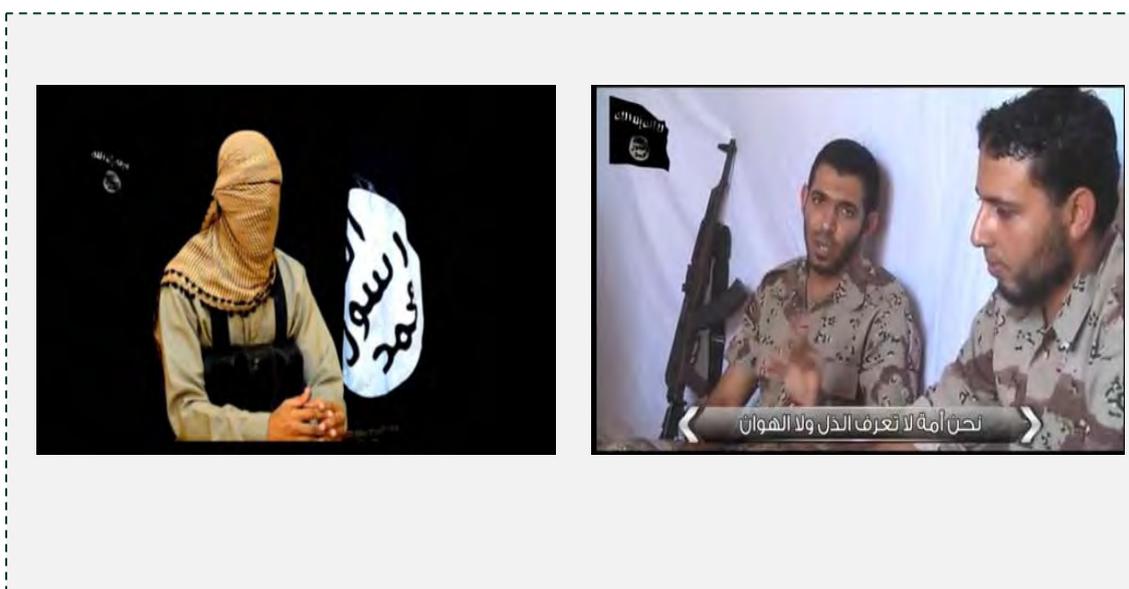
Saudi Arabian jihadist al-Hudhali.

An Egyptian soldier

16. For further information about the Gazan Tawhid wal-Jihad as an organization, see Appendix II.

Preparations for the Terrorist Attack

17. On July 27, 2012, the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem, which claimed responsibility for the attack, issued another video. It featured Abu Hazifa al-Hudhali, the Saudi Arabian terrorist operative killed in the attack, who said, "**...sons of Zion, we have travelled thousands of kilometers to come and fight [you].**" After him a masked terrorist operative calling himself Abu Osama al-Muhajar appeared, saying, "**More jihad fronts must be opened and the enemy must be attacked from his borders.**" The video ended with **Abu Yahya al-Libi**, who was a senior Al-Qaeda commander, speaking in favor of jihad and "death as a martyr for the sake of Allah."



Masked terrorist: "More jihad fronts must be opened and the enemy must be attacked from his borders" (YouTube)

Saudi Arabian terrorist al-Hadhli: "...we have travelled thousands of kilometers to come and fight [you]" (YouTube)

18. According to the Arab media, the full name of the Saudi Arabian terrorist operative is **Adi Saleh Abdullah al-Fudhayli al-Hadhli**, and the full name of the Egyptian terrorist operative is **Khaled Saleh Abd al-Hadi Jadullah** (Alweean.com and elwatannews.com websites). According to the video, the two recently returned from Libya where they fought in the ranks of the global jihad against Gaddafi's regime.

19. Pictures documenting preparations for the attack (from YouTube):



Three terrorist operatives near the Israeli security fence carry out a reconnaissance mission



Observing the area before the



The terrorists photograph an Israeli bus a few meters from the border on the Israeli side. The narrator notes that both IDF activity and Egyptian army posts were observed



Observing an IDF jeep.



Al-Hadhli during terrorist fitness exercises



Terrorists near the fence, one of them apparently cutting through it.



Planning the attack using a mockup. The plan included exploiting a hill near the fence, detonating an IED to attack the first Israeli jeep and launching an RPG at the second. Observations showed that Israeli jeeps patrol one in front of the other.



Watching videos on a computer during the planning stage.



Terrorist operatives wearing uniforms during pre-attack training. Terrorist operatives wearing uniforms during pre-attack training.



Preparing the IED to attack the first Israeli jeep.



The IED, filled with explosives and ball bearings.

Tawhid wal-Jihad in the Gaza Strip

Overview

1. Since early 2008 a Salafist jihadi network in the Gaza Strip called the Oneness and Jihad in Greater Jerusalem (i.e., Tawhid wal-Jihad) has been active. The name is taken from the initial name of the Al-Qaeda network in Iraq, headed (until his death in June 2006) by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Tawhid wal-Jihad **is currently headed by Ali Saidani**, an Al-Qaeda operative who was active in Jordan, Iraq and Libya. He was detained by Hamas in March 2011 and released on August 2, 2012. In recent years the Tawhid wal-Jihad network has carried out a number of shooting attacks against Israel. **The June 18, 2012 attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border was the network's most conspicuous successful one in recent years.**

2. **Tawhid wal-Jihad is one of several Salafist jihadi networks operating in the Gaza Strip.** Other such networks include the **Army of Islam** (Jaish al-Islam), the **Army of the Supporters of Allah** (Jund Ansar Allah) and **Ansar al-Sunna**. There are also several smaller Salafist or Salafist jihadi groups in the Gaza Strip. **Note: A jihadist network affiliated with Al-Qaeda also called by the shortened name Tawhid wal-Jihad has been operating in the Sinai Peninsula since 2000.**

Terrorist Attacks Carried out by Tawhid wal-Jihad

3. As noted, the terrorist attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border was the most notable of those carried out by Tawhid wal-Jihad in recent years. Previously the network had claimed credit for the launching of dozens of rockets and mortar shells into Israeli territory (Israj.net website), which did not cause casualties and were not widely reported by the media. The most notable attack previously carried out by the networks was on **January 27, 2009**, when an IED was used to attack an IDF jeep near Kissufim in the southern Gaza Strip (Israj.net website). One IDF soldier was killed and an officer was critically wounded; two soldiers sustained slight injuries. The attack was carried out **to sabotage the ceasefire** declared by Hamas and Israel on January 21, 2009, ending Operation Cast Lead.

Tawhid wal-Jihad Claims Responsibility



Tawhid wal-Jihad operatives fire rockets. The narrator, referring to the Gaza Strip, says, "It will become, with the help of Allah, [another] Afghanistan...and the grave of every infidel..." (Picture from YouTube).

Attacking Nahal Oz (north-central Gaza Strip) (Picture posted to YouTube on May 29, 2012). In the background can be heard the voice of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, representative of Al-Qaeda in Iraq until he was killed in a targeted American attack.



Tawhid wal-Jihad claims responsibility for rocket fire targeting the southern Israeli town of Sderot (Posted to YouTube on July 17, 2011).

The Murder of Vittorio Arrigoni

4. Another terrorist attack carried out by Tawhid wal-Jihad was the murder of pro-Palestinian Italian journalist Vittorio Arrigoni, an NGO activist in the Gaza Strip.

On April 15, 2011, Tawhid wal-Jihad posted a video to announce that it had abducted Vittorio Arrigoni **in response to Hamas' detention of Tawhid wal-Jihad leader Hisham Saidani** (See below).

5. The network demanded Hamas reassess its relations with the Salafist jihadis operating in the Gaza Strip and **change its policy of torture and detentions. Later Arrigoni's abductors murdered him**, as noted. Tawhid wal-Jihad denied having carried out the murder, apparently fearing a Hamas reprisal and public condemnation in the Gaza Strip (YouTube).



A different video. It depicts the last moments of Vittorio Arrigoni's life (YouTube).



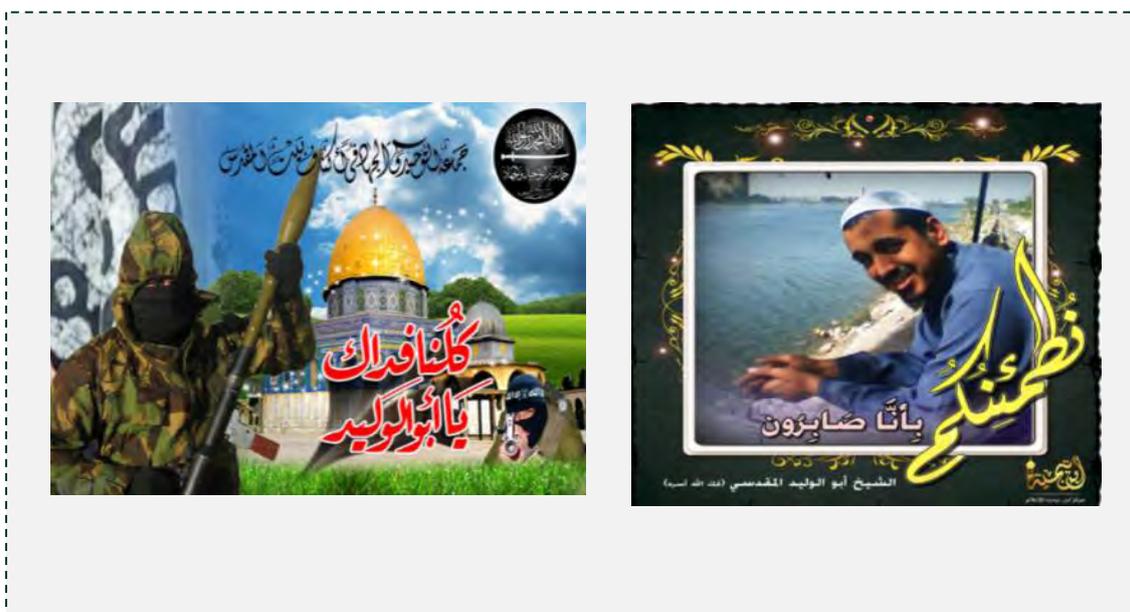
The video posted by Tawhid wal-Jihad about the abduction of Vittorio Arrigoni and the demand for the release of Hashem Saidani (YouTube).

Tawhid wal-Jihad Leader, the "Emir" Hashem Ali Saidani

6. **Hisham Ali Saidani**, aka **Abu al-Walid al-Maqdisi**, is the leader ("emir") of Tawhid wal-Jihad. On March 2, 2011, he was detained by Hamas **for violating its restrained terrorist attack policy**. On August 2, 2012 Hamas released him after Jordanian mediation. Tawhid wal-Jihad applauded his release but also demanded Hamas immediately release all its other detained operatives and abductors. It also thanked the elders of the Jordanian tribes and other individuals who had worked to secure al-Saidani's release.



Hashem al-Saidani (Picture from the Voice of al-Tawhid forum, June 14, 2012)



Tawhid wal-Jihad announces, "We are all prepared to sacrifice ourselves for Abu al-Walid [i.e., Hashem Saidani]" (Picture from israj.net website)

A call for the release of Hashem Saidani posted on an Islamic forum (From the alahad.com website)

7. Hisham al-Saidani, in his 50s, is of Palestinian descent and was born in Cairo, where he spent his childhood and youth and holds **Egyptian citizenship** (Today.almasryalyoum.com). According to another version, he was born in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, moving to Egypt with his parents when he was two years old. During his youth he spent a lot of time in the mosque near his home,

where **he was introduced to Salafist ideology**, which seeks to restore the concepts and lifestyle of the earliest stages of Islam. He studied in the religious law (Sharia) department of **Al-Azhar University**, married, and after a number of years moved to Jordan.

8. In Jordan al-Saidani joined **Abu Muhammad Assem al-Maqdisi**,² one of Al-Qaeda's most important ideologues, and **considered the ideological mentor of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi** (a Jordanian Al-Qaeda operative who was its representative in Iraq until he died in an American targeted killing). Al-Saidani was influenced by al-Maqdisi and that is apparently why he chose the nickname "al-Maqdisi." After 9/11 and the outbreak of the battles between the United States and its coalition against the jihadists in Afghanistan and Iraq, **al-Saidani decided to take an active part in jihad**. He moved to Iraq in 2003 along with other Al-Qaeda operatives who had come with him from Jordan. He later returned to Jordan, from there went to Egypt, and from Egypt to the Gaza Strip (The israj.net, as-ansar.com and muslim.net websites).

9. When al-Saidani wanted to leave the Gaza Strip through the tunnels and go to Iraq via Egypt he was detained by the Egyptian security forces, imprisoned and released. **In January 2008 he returned to the Gaza Strip and set up the Tawhid wal-Jihad network**, whose first members were Gazan Salafist jihadi operatives. The activities of the networks affiliated with the global jihad challenged Hamas, and al-Saidani was detained on March 2, 2011. The attempt made by his men to secure his release by abducting Vittorio Arrigoni led, as noted, to the Italian activist's murder. However, although the murder sullied the image of the de-facto Hamas administration, Hamas did not take determined action against Tawhid wal-Jihad (as it did, for example, against Jund Ansar Allah in 2009), but it also did not release al-Saidani until recently.

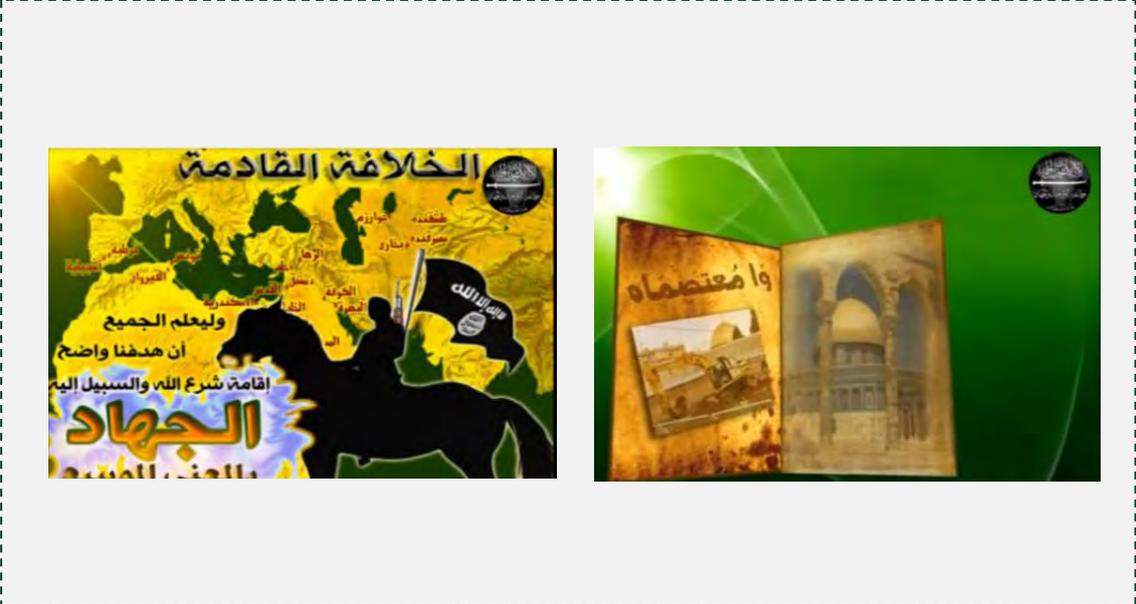
The Battle for Hearts and Minds

10. Tawhid wal-Jihad often uploads videos to the Internet both on Islamic forums and video sharing sites. The videos disseminating its Salafist jihadi ideology and claim responsibility for terrorist attacks are of high technical quality. **They are edited in exactly the same way as those of the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs**

² **Abu Muhammad Assem al-Maqdisi** is a jihadist ideologue who wields enormous influence and is considered Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's ideological mentor. He is a Palestinian born in Nablus in 1959. His family moved to Kuwait when he was a child. He studied at the university in Mosul, Iraq, where his Islamist worldview was formed. **He went to Pakistan and Afghanistan**, where he joined jihadist groups. In 1992 he went to Jordan and began activities to subvert the Jordanian regime. He was arrested and sent to prison (1995-1996), where he met al-Zarqawi. Released in 2005, he was rearrested in 2010 and released in November 2011. He has a **website** which is, in expert opinion, Al-Qaeda's main online library.

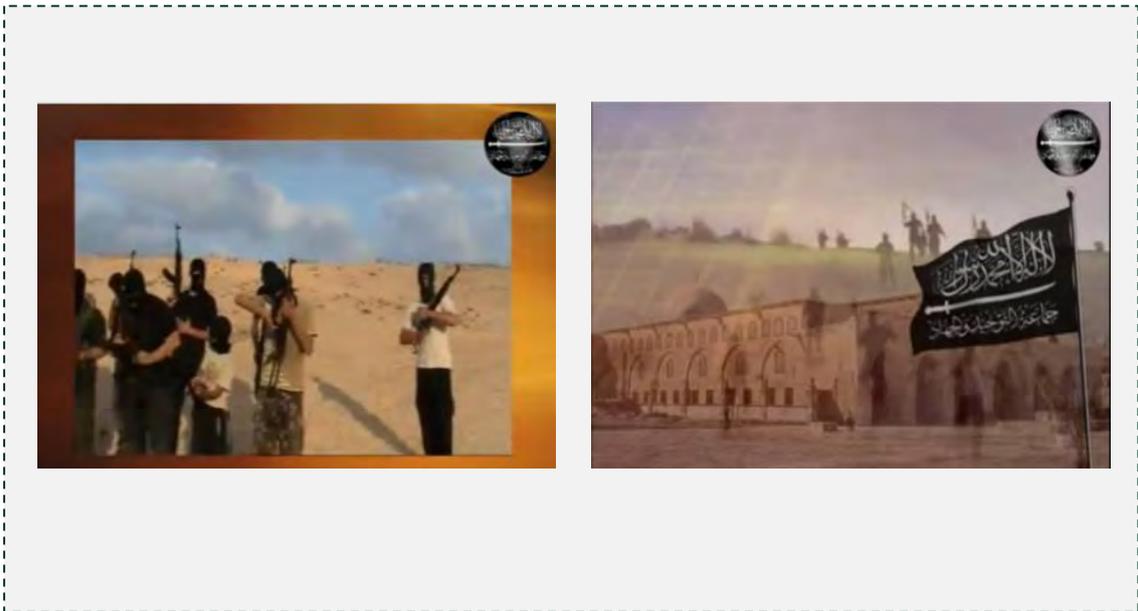
of Jerusalem, the umbrella network which claimed responsibility for the attack on the Israeli-Egyptian border, **indicating strong ties between them.**

11. The following are pictures from videos posted by Tawhid wal-Jihad in recent years:



Map showing the aspirations of a future global Caliphate (YouTube)

Video with strong criticism of Hamas for making operational difficulties for the Salafists in the Gaza Strip, detaining them and even allowing them to be killed (YouTube)



Tawhid wal-Jihad operatives training in the desert (YouTube)

A transparency of armed, running Tawhid wal-Jihad operatives overlaid on Al-Aqsa mosque and the organization's flag (YouTube)

Collaboration with Other Jihadist Networks in the Gaza Strip

12. Tawhid wal-Jihad is only one of several Salafist jihadi networks operating in the Gaza Strip. On June 3, 2011, the Egyptian newspaper **Al-Masri Al-Yawm** interviewed one of the Salafist jihadi leaders who had co-founded the Army of Islam. The network was described as "the most extreme and violent of all the organizations." One of the reasons, according to the interview, was the nature of its leader, Hisham Saidani, who until recently was detained by Hamas (Almasryalyoum.com website).

13. The interview revealed that **there are more than 11,000 operatives in the ranks of the Salafist jihadi networks in the Gaza Strip.** The first one to organize was the **Army of the Supporters of Allah** (Jund Ansar Allah), and after it, the **Army of Islam** (Jaish al-Islam), which is the largest network and has the most weapons. Other networks include **Tawhid wal-Jihad** and **Ansar al-Sunna**. According to the operative interviewed, the networks are ideologically affiliated with Al-Qaeda, but do not have an established organizational connection to it.³ **Note:** In addition, there are other networks not mentioned in the interview, including the **Army of the Nation**, headed by **Abu al-Hafs al-Maqdisi**, who was released by Hamas at the beginning of August 2012 (detained in July 2012 for his involvement in firing rockets into Israeli territory).

14. Asked if the networks might unite into one organization, the operative answered that **"we are currently working on the merging of four [leading] networks into one."** The announcement of the establishment of an umbrella organization a year after the interview **may indicate that Salafist jihadi groups in the Gaza Strip, like those in Iraq, have reached an agreement to coordinate and even collaborate in their attacks against Israel.**

³ A document dating from 2006, found in Osama bin Laden's computer after he was killed, may indicate that Al-Qaeda ties to the **Army of Islam** and possibly other networks went beyond a purely ideological affiliation. The document revealed **correspondence conducted between the Army of Islam and Al-Qaeda leadership.** The Army of Islam had made a religious-political enquiry, asking if it were permitted to accept financing for terrorist operations from other Palestinian organizations and "infidel" states such as Shi'ite Iran. Al-Qaeda answered in the affirmative. For further information see the June 14, 2012 bulletin "Documents captured by the United States army in an Al-Qaeda safe house in Pakistan expose the ambivalent relations between Al-Qaeda and Iran."

Tawhid wal-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula⁴

Overview

1. **Tawhid wal-Jihad in Egypt⁵ is one of the most prominent Salafist jihadi networks operating in the Sinai Peninsula.** It was established in 2000 by a Bedouin dentist from El Arish and its name has been shortened from the original for everyday use, true for most networks operating in the Gaza Strip. The network in the Sinai Peninsula was **responsible for a number of showcase terrorist attacks between 2004 and 2006** targeting Israeli, Egyptian and Western tourists along the Red Sea.

2. The network was established in El Arish and is composed of **local Sinai Peninsula Bedouins** as well as Palestinians, Egyptians and Sudanese. **They maintain operational collaboration with the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip** and ideologically identify with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad. So far Tawhid wal-Jihad has shown itself to be **a survivor, despite the detention and killing of some of its operatives** by the Egyptian security forces (after its 2004-2006 showcase terrorist attacks). Since the network has not been completely destroyed, operatives who were not detained are liable to attempt to carry out terrorist attacks in the future.

⁴In preparing this section we were aided by a study carried out by **Dr. Ahmed Ibrahim Mahmoud** of Tawhid wal-Jihad which appeared on the Muslim.net website in 2005.

⁵ **Al-tawhid wal-jihad fi ard al-knana** is the full name of this network. **Al-knana** is another name for Egypt, taken from a hadith (the Muslim oral tradition).



Terrorist operatives affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula (Picture from the researchertruth.blogspot.co.il)

The Establishment of Tawhid wal-Jihad

3. Tawhid wal-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula was established by a **Bedouin dentist from El Arish named Khaled Massaad Salem, known for his religious orthodoxy. He was a member of the al-Sawarka tribe, one of the best-known tribes in the Sinai Peninsula.**⁶ He studied dentistry at Zagazig University, joining a group called the Young Muslims Association. Later another activist named **Salem al-Shanoub** joined the network and eventually **became responsible for its military activities.** Tawhid wal-Jihad has been active since 2000 and had matured operationally in 2003, after the United States invaded Iraq.

4. Originally the network's founders planned to send operatives to Afghanistan and Iraq to participate in the jihad against the United States and its allies. However, because of the many risks and great expense involved, **they decided to focus their attacks on foreign tourists in Egypt, and initiated a wave of attacks commanded by Khaled Salem.** Their success made them the object of intensive preventive activities carried out by the Egyptian security forces. **In 2006 the network's founder, Khaled Salem, was killed in an exchange of fire with the Egyptian security forces.**

⁶ The **al-Sawarka tribe** is one of the largest in the Sinai Peninsula, centered in the north around El Arish, Sheikh Zuwaid and the El Arish airport. According to the tradition, it is an offshoot of the Quraysh tribe (the tribe of the prophet Muhammad) and its founder was one of Muhammad's comrades. With the conquests of Islam the tribe migrated to the Sinai Peninsula and what is currently the kingdom of Jordan.

5. Interrogations of detained network operatives conducted by the Egyptian security forces revealed that **Salem al-Shanoub had smuggled weapons for the network from Sudan**. He had contacted operatives from the global jihad in Ismailia, who helped him acquire the weapons. **Khaled Salem recruited supporters through activity in the mosques in El Arish and Ismailia**. He also handled **recruitment for the network, based on family, clan and tribal connections**. In 2003 the network began financing its activities by stealing cars and electronic equipment from the Egyptian administration in the Sinai Peninsula.

Terrorist Attacks Carried Out by Tawhid wal-Jihad

6. Between 2004 and 2006 Tawhid wal-Jihad carried out three showcase attacks in the Sinai Peninsula, targeting tourist facilities along the Red Sea and intending to launch a mass-casualty attack against as many tourists as possible from Israel, Egypt and the West. They included the following:

- 1) **Terrorist attacks at Taba and Ras al-Shitan (on the Red Sea shore), October 8, 2004: The attacks killed 34 civilians, among them 19 Israelis on vacation in Sinai**. One of the terrorist operatives who commanded the cell which carried out an attack was a **Palestinian from El Arish** named Ayad Said Salah. The cell was composed of three Bedouins, at least two of whom lived in El Arish, and were aided and abetted by a number of El Arish residents (Elaph.com, al-arabeya.net and ahram.org.eg websites).



The Taba Hilton after the terrorist attack (Picture from the Xlance2010.blogspot.co.il website)

2) **Terrorist attack at Sharm el-Sheikh, July 23, 2005: Two car bombs and explosives concealed in a bag caused a series of explosions which killed 88 civilians and wounded more than 200.** Among the casualties were ten tourists from the Gulf States and Europe; the rest were Egyptian. Some of the terrorist operatives involved had also participated in the 2004 attack at Taba (Aawsat.com website).

3) **Terrorist attack at Dahab, April 25, 2006: Three explosive devices** detonated by remote control were used to attack tourists. The attack killed **23 people**, 20 Egyptians and three foreign nationals (none of them Israeli). An estimated 70 people were wounded.

Connections with Terrorist Organizations in the Gaza Strip

7. In 2006 the Egyptian ministry of intelligence stated in an announcement that two Tawhid wal-Jihad terrorist operatives, suspected of involvement in the attack at Dahab, **had received weapons and explosives training from terrorist operatives in the Gaza Strip.** The name of the Gazan organization was not mentioned, although the media reported that the organization in question was the **Popular Resistance Committees**, which had connections to networks affiliated with the global jihad (Agence France-Presse, May 23 and Al-Akhbar, May 24, 2006).

8. The **Popular Resistance Committees is a terrorist organization in the Gaza Strip** which carried out the terrorist attack north of Eilat on August 18, 2011. The PRC is a fairly small organization but with high operational capabilities, and two of its three factions collaborate with Hamas and operate under its aegis. A Salafist-jihadi network which formerly belonged to the PRC is the **Army of Islam**. It is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, and **in the past also carried out attacks against Egypt.** An examination of the methods used by both the PRC and the Army of Islam reveal **how important the Sinai Peninsula is for the two groups as a launching pad for terrorist attacks against Israel**; both are provided with substantial aid and support by local Bedouin tribes.⁷ **Tawhid wal-Jihad** in the Sinai Peninsula, and another Al-Qaeda-affiliated network called **The Supporters of Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula**, applauded the terrorist attack north of Eilat but did not claim responsibility.

⁷ For further information see the August 22, 2011 bulletin "The Popular Resistance Committees: Portrait of the Terrorist Organization Responsible for the Series of Combined Terrorist Attacks North of Eilat, Israel's Southernmost City." Apparently at least three terrorist operatives killed in the attack were **Egyptian citizens, and possibly local operatives of jihadist networks operating in the Sinai Peninsula.**

Activity of Other Jihadist Organization in the Sinai Peninsula

9. In February 2012 an "Egyptian security source" reported that the number of operatives affiliated with **Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula** had recently grown considerably due to the support they received from the **Palestinian [terrorist] organizations (apparently in the Gaza Strip), which were providing them with weapons and training them.** Some of their weapons, according to the source, are **very advanced.** The source also stated that there were a number of *takfir* groups in the Sinai Peninsula and that they supported the *takfir* activists arriving there **from various districts in Egypt.**⁸ Some of the weapons, it continued, were **stolen**, some came from **Palestinian organizations** in the Gaza Strip, and some came from **Libya** after the fall of the Gaddafi regime (Masress.com and almasryalyoum.com websites).

The Links between the Networks in the Sinai Peninsula and Al-Qaeda

10. Tawhid wal-Jihad and other jihadist networks in the Sinai Peninsula are **ideologically affiliated with Al-Qaeda**, as can be seen from their postings and statements. **So far it is unclear whether their ideological affiliation extends to significant operational collaboration and the acceptance of formal instructions from Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri:**

1) **Al-Qaeda does not yet have an established framework in the Sinai Peninsula.** It has not yet recognized the global jihad networks there as official branches. However, **its ideological inspiration is clearly in evidence:** Al-Qaeda's current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, publicly issued cassettes congratulating the operatives who blew up the gas pipeline from Egypt to Israel and calling for attacks on Israeli targets in the Sinai area.⁹

⁸ **Takfir** is another name for fundamentalist jihadi groups seeking to apply the model of Muhammed to contemporary life and to physically separate itself from the "infidel" society, to be able to return to it as conquerors. **Tawhid wal-Jihad** in Egypt is the most well-known of the groups. They accuse their Muslim opponents of heresy and betraying the principles of Islam, and some of the groups use violence against them. The *takfir* groups in Egypt have carried out many terrorist attacks, especially targeting the regime (the army, courts, public institutions) to topple it and establish an Islamic Caliphate.

⁹ According to the nationinterest.org website. **Since 2011 the pipeline delivering gas to Israel (and Jordan) has been sabotaged 15 times**, most recently on July 22, 2012. According to Egyptian sources, *takfir* networks and groups operating in the Sinai Peninsula have been responsible for the attacks (Al-Yawm Al-Saba'a, July 22, 2012). Ayman al-Zawahiri has praised the attacks at least twice.

2) A jihadist organization called **The Supporters of Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula**,¹⁰ announced its founding in December 2011 and swore allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri. **The network claimed responsibility for blowing up the pipeline delivering natural gas to Israel**, praised the combined terrorist attack against Israeli vehicles north of Eilat and threatened to attack Egyptian governmental and American targets (Elaph.com and snam-s.net websites). In a statement made on July 24, 2012, a network calling itself **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdas** claimed responsibility for sabotaging the pipeline. However, Egyptian security sources claimed that the "armed gangs" that blew up the pipeline and were mentioned in videos had come from the Palestinian side, and that "a lot of signs" pointed in that direction (Al-Yawm Al-Saba'a, July 31, 2012).



Claiming responsibility and filmed documentation of the attack on the pipeline by Ansar Bayt al-Maqdas (YouTube)

El Arish as a Focal Point for Jihadist Activity in the Sinai Peninsula

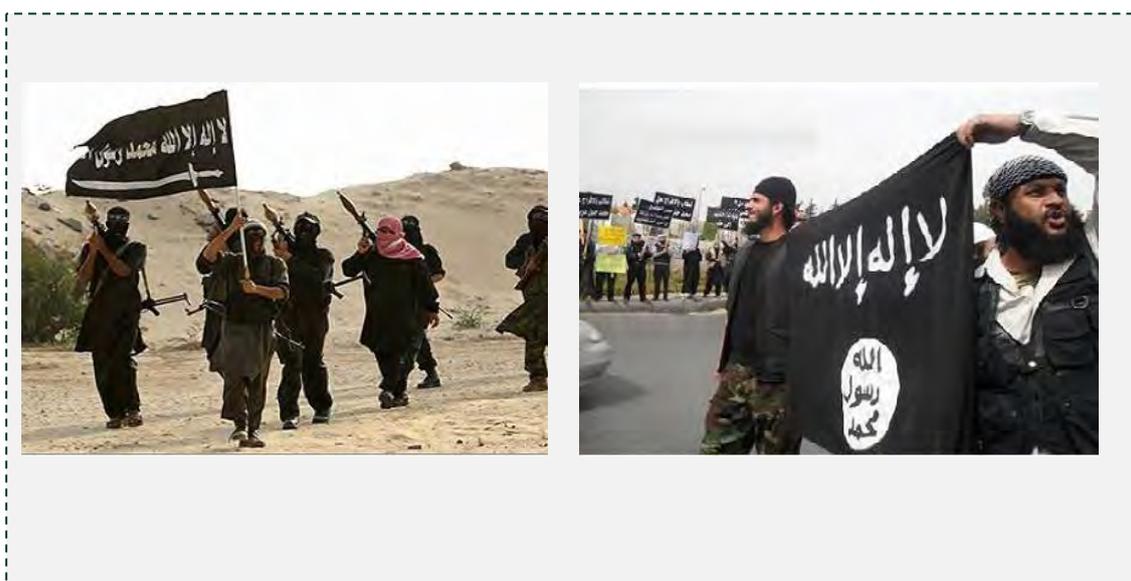
11. As noted above, Tawhid wal-Jihad was founded in El Arish. The network recruited operatives there, **among them those who had been involved in the mass-casualty terrorist attacks at the Red Sea tourist sites**. El Arish is the largest city in the Sinai Peninsula and serves as the administrative capital of the northern Sinai Peninsula district. It has an estimated 150,000 inhabitants and **hundreds of mosques**. The city's population includes Bedouins, Egyptians from the Nile Valley and families originating in

¹⁰In Arabic, Ansar al-jihad fi jazirat sinaa.

Turkey and the Caucasus who settled there during the Ottoman Empire (ar.wikipedia.org). Other residents are Fatah activists and their families who fled the Gaza Strip after Hamas took over the Gaza Strip.

12. In recent years **El Arish has become a center for activities affiliated with the global jihad**. In our assessment, that is because it has an extensive religious infrastructure and is close to the Palestinians terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip, making operational collaboration easy for them. The al-Sawarka tribe, the founders of Tawhid wal-Jihad, is concentrated in the region of El Arish and other areas in the northern Sinai Peninsula.

13. **On July 29, 2011 a call was issued in El Arish for the establishment of "an Islamic emirate in the Sinai Peninsula,"** (about two years after an attempt to establish the "Islamic emirate in Palestine" was suppressed by Hamas). The call was accompanied by **an armed attack on an Egyptian police station** and the distribution of manifestos by "Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula." The manifestos included a call for the establishment of an Islamic state based on the Sharia (Islamic religious law), the revoking of the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel and the cessation of the Egyptian governmental discrimination against the Bedouins in the Sinai Peninsula (The simainews.worldpress.com, almasryalyoum.com and nationalinterest.org websites). At the time the Egyptian authorities accused the **Army of Islam** operating in the Gaza Strip of involvement in the attack on the Egyptian police station in El Arish (assakina.com website).



Terrorist operatives in El Arish affiliated with Al-Qaeda declare an Islamic emirate in the Sinai Peninsula (Picture from the eldameer.com website).