

Jihadi Ideology in Eastern Kurdistan/ Iran And Its Influences on The Southern Kurdistan Region/ Iraq

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Abstract

In eastern Kurdistan, extremism sought to replace the Kurdish national identity or Kurdish nationalism, which was struggling for Kurdish legal, political and cultural rights, into a Sunni sectarian identity in front of the Persian/sectarian state identity. The emergence of Kurdish radical extremist ideology in response to the Islamic Republic's unhindered threat in Iran has been greatly delayed. There were only two Kurdish Islamist organisations which played a key role in preventing the development of this radical thought, the Quran Office and the Islamic Brotherhood movement. How did these two movements first attempt to stem the tide of Islamic extremism in eastern Kurdistan, and what caused them to fail in their efforts? Ultimately, the extremists were able to break into the ranks of Kurdish society, attacking Kurdish nationalism and Islamic ideology and at the same time confronting the sectarian state ideology with a more extremist sectarian ideology. Regarding the methodology of this paper, two trends have been studied. First, there are the discourses of Ahmad Muftizadah, the leader of the Quran Office, and of Nasir Subhani, the leader of the Islamic Brotherhood movement in eastern Kurdistan. Second, there is the study of radical discourse and its attitudes. This constitutes an attempt to assess the emergence of extremist ideology among the Kurdish people and to explore its structure.

Keywords: Iran, eastern Kurdistan, Islamic Republic, Islamic Ideology, Kurdish nationalism, Kurdish radicalism and Sectarianism.

Introduction

Jihadism, along with its ideology, has become one of the most controversial political, academic and media topics, in some ways because of its association with the ideology of terrorism. In certain circles, it has become synonymous with the term terrorism itself. It has, furthermore, become a global phenomenon, with the result that those who proclaim it are able to recruit supporters from the farthest points of the world. Jihad as an Islamic term falls within the term for violence. Scholars in this field have approached this concept from different aspects. It has been defined by Lorenzo Magnani on different levels; as he states: Violence is morally and/or legally and politically justified, not only at the level of more or less legal institutions but also at the level of individuals (for example through law, revolutionary instances, terroristic "reasons", 30 shared religious norms or more personal religious convictions, etc. (Magnani, 2013:20) Thus, the issue for jihadists is how to justify the multi-layered nature of this violence to individuals. Religion, with its easy and clear structure and capacity to give convincing answers to many complex questions, can provide an idealised dimension to violence. Committing any kind of violence can simply be to please Allah in Islam; as Nidal Hasan explains: "Fighting to establish an Islamic State to please God, even by force, is condoned by Islam" (Hasan, 2009:48). There are dozens of texts in Islam that provide evidence to justify violence. In this regard, as Magnani has confirmed, "moral perception typically has to do with how a person feels/thinks/judges what the world as a whole should be" (Magnani, 2013:16). Here, in this research, jihadist actors are not seen as exceptional, particularly when they find that their society has been neglected by and oppressed by Iran's religious Shi'ism, justified under the pretext of a revolutionary legitimacy directed against non-Persian elements. Hence, in this research we have a specific and difficult fieldwork to conduct and investigate. On the one hand, eastern Kurdistan is known as an open and tolerant society. On the other hand, Islamic identity has always been used as a trap that

creates a kind of antagonism towards one component of that society. There is a dominant religious identity in the country, which increases sectarian identity and intolerance. The Iranian state, in other words, has its own sectarian Persian identity which belongs to the Shia component, and which has been imposed on the non-Shiite Muslims in Iran. Hence, the Kurdish man is located between two opposing identities. The first one is the sectarian Persian state identity. The second one is related to his Kurdish identity, and thus to the Kurdish conflict which began as a way to establish the Kurds' political, legal and cultural rights. Thus, the Kurds refuse to accept the former, and struggle to achieve the latter. Here, a separation begins where the "we-image", as defined by some clerics, stands out markedly as a way to replace the Kurdish national identity with a Sunni sectarian identity. This new identity goes even further: it demonises the Kurdish national identity, an identity which has formed the nucleus of the Kurdish fate in its struggle with the state. In this regard, the situation of the people in eastern Kurdistan can be located within the frame of Norbert Elias' philosophy which considers the problem of we-identification, as Jonathan Fletcher has stated: Violence is often the infringement of a group norm and is bound up with we-images, although Elias does not always make this explicit. Different kinds of violence affect different we-images of groups. (Fletcher, 1997:49) Here, external factors, including the long-term suppression of the Kurds enforced by the state, depend on national and sectarian identity, affecting the conscience of people and driving them to search for an alternative identity. The region suffers this situation in general, and this is what the Iranian Islamic state wanted: to get rid of the crisis of nationalism and turn the conflict into a sectarian one between the Kurds and the state, and thus ensure that the following two factors exist.

First: to find the appropriate justification for beating the Kurds and accusing them of loyalty to outsiders.

Second: to increase sectarian pressure in order to decrease the Kurds' national sensibility.

Thus, the we-image has been created where the situation is suitable for Salafist clerics to find hundreds of supporters in the short term.

Where is the problem?

A simple question for this field work, which looks at the struggle of the people for freedom, self-determination and democracy, is: why have the people been resorting to Salafism and its ideology? The remarkable point in this regard is that the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 was a sufficient cause for the rise of jihadist ideology among the Kurds in eastern Kurdistan; but it did not occur immediately, and it has lagged far behind its emergence elsewhere in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The next question then is: why was the emergence of jihadist ideology in eastern Kurdistan belated? The answer lies in exploring two figures of Kurdish Islamic thought from eastern Kurdistan; and their views on jihad, and the term "infidel", or "Takfeer" in Arabic, have to be addressed. These two figures have in the past been able to impose their dominance on the thinking of Sunni Islamist Kurds in Iran. After the Khomeini's coming to power, the Kurdish Islamists, led by Ahmad Muftizadeh, participated in political activity to such an extent that Muftizadeh received a promise from Khomeini that he would give the Sunnis their rights and grant autonomy to the Kurdish people (Nada, Thompson, 2013:78). In the beginning, Muftizadeh (McDowall, 2010:267) and Imam Khomeini were very close to each other, to the extent that the first speeches after the revolution were delivered by Imam Khomeini, and the second speech was delivered by Ahmad Muftizadeh (Kud Amargir, n.d.). He asserted that he had received promises from Khomeini, saying that "self-rule was in my pocket" (3). Thus, the two names were always mentioned together. It was said that (Khomeini and Kak Ahmad, Salli Ala Muhammad)⁶¹. The "we-Islamic identity" among the Kurds was rooted here. However, this we-identity, including the strong relationship between Kurdish Islamists and Khomeini's movement, led to the involvement of the young Islamic Kurds in political activity as a means to Islamize Kurdish society. Additionally, and what is remarkable here, is that when both sides, "Muftizadeh" and "Khomeini", divided and fell into a sectarian conflict, the Kurdish Islamists did not resort to violence

⁶¹ This was a motto of both personalities, *Khomeini* and *Ahmad Muftizadeh*. People were elevating the two personalities to the same position. The second syllable means "mercy on Muhammad", and does not discuss the qualifications of the two prominent figures to lead the revolution.

and did not choose jihad against the Islamic Shiite republic. After the Islamic Revolution chose the Shiite religion for the state of Iran, Imam Khomeini issued an advisory opinion against the Kurdish National Movement. It was supposed that the Kurdish Islamists would resort to violence as a reaction to their marginalization and persecution against the Kurdish people and declare jihad against the Shiite state; but they did not. Why they did not is also one of the questions that needs to be answered. As a consequence, the two Kurdish figures who created the we-image identity were able to impose their knowledge on the Islamists of eastern Kurdistan. The first figure, as previously mentioned, was Ahmad Muftizadeh (Abdullah, 2010)⁶², the owner of the Quran office. The second was Nasser Sabhani, the prominent leader of the Islamic Brotherhood in eastern Kurdistan. The perspective of these Islamist leaders was generally seen as categorical and definitive to many Islamists in the 1980s and 1990s. They were against encouraging the Kurdish Islamists to resort to any kind of violence under the name of jihad for Allah.

Ahmed Muftizadeh

Ahmed Muftizadeh was imprisoned for 10 years (from 1982 to 1992) for his religious and Kurdish opinions. After prison, he lost his faith completely, succumbing to a lack of faith in Islam and even atheism. He had lost his faith at the very borders between atheism and belief. After his release from prison, his health deteriorated, and he died only six months later. One of the most important of his lessons was: “No one is an infidel, even if they are not Muslims; it is the hollowest perception and the most abstract and selfish of conceptions ...” (Mufti Zada, 2012)⁶³. Even if a person is not a Muslim, he should not necessarily be considered an infidel. An infidel can be a person who can tell right from wrong and then accept what is right. Therefore, he generalized about infidelity to encompass the whole, because he believed that infidelity is a characteristic that exists in all of us. Infidelity is thus “a trait and can exist in all of people”, and faith also is a character that “exists in an infidel but in different quantity”. At 35m, 57s of one of his speeches he stated: “There is no conflict between infidelity and Islam”. This recognition by a religious scholar is a qualitative evolution from religio-centrism towards embracing a wider world, one which removes the dependence of religion on conflict, instead basing it on tolerance. In other words, he meant that freedom is the foundation of individual relations, and other values do not constitute any real structures within human interrelations. Muftizada, by his own admission, went further, adding: “I am sure that there is no infidel on the ground, because they have not heard Islam correctly”. In this way, Muftizada returned a kind of respect to those who are stigmatized as infidels. This vision was a blow to jihadist ideology, freeing it from the spell of jihad interpreted in the sense of violence. This means that when he was released after ten years of imprisonment and torture he disassociated himself from the ideology of infidelity and religious violence. He also abandoned the term “infidel”, and tried to legitimize his religious views, thereby hoping to remain inside the theological system by emptying jihad and violent conflict of their meanings. From here it can be said that Muftizada got rid of the general stereotype of the Kurdish population and made amnesty and tolerance the basis of human conduct, not loyalty and disloyalty, which are principles of Islamic faith important to and held by Jihadists. This position can be seen as a triumph for the general picture upheld by Kurdishness.

⁶² Ahmad Muftizada, born in 1933 in Sine city. His father was the “Mufti” of Sine city and he was a wealthy man. He studied in the 1950s in Biyara and was taught by Abdulkarim al-Muderris. He had a good relationship with Imam Khomeini before the revolution and was close to the Shi’a Islamists. In the beginning, he was a strong supporter of the Islamic revolution; therefore, at the end of 1978, in Tihran and in Bahashti Zahra square, he was the second person after Khumeini to give a speech. He was the founder of the Quran Office. In 1982, when he planned to negotiate with the Islamic authority, he was arrested and imprisoned. In 1992 he was released from prison because through illness, but six months later he died, and is buried in Hama Baqir’s cemetery.

Hassanpour, Amir. “Book Reviews Kurdish Studies: Orientalist, Positivist, and Critical Approaches”. Middle East Journal © 1993 Middle East Institute. Available at:

⁶³ See the reference “What is Belief & Disbelief”.

Nasseri Sobhani (Revolvy, 2012)⁶⁴

Before and during the formation of the Islamic movement in Iraqi Kurdistan, Sobhani opened up a deep discussion with a group of jihadist figures in Kurdistan. One of these jihadists was Mullah Kirekar, with whom he disputed the issues of jihad and fighting. With his subtlety and breadth of knowledge he explained the dangers of jihad, particularly if transposed into an act and exploited by incompetent people, arguing that it is a matter of great concern. He was an exceptional religious thinker, explaining his fears of jihadist thought from the 1980s onwards. At first, he began to talk about jihad and attempted to explain his views in three-hour lectures. It is true that he was an ideological person within the framework of the Muslim Brotherhood. What is significant here is that he was not against the ideology of jihad, but believed that jihadist thought was a Quranic principle, and that we should be faithful to those verses. The importance here, according to Sobhani, was: who should be responsible for implementing these verses in the political and social reality of the present? Here, he believed that there should be a group of persons “Mujtahidin” who should follow the following conditions:

First, this group must carry out God’s commands as they are revealed. As he declared: “The group that executes God’s commands, must do so as God commands”.

In more detail: After they understand all of the Koran’s wholeness, the parts that are quoted from this wholeness, at the political, economic and social sphere levels, must be closest to God’s understanding.

He added: “This group must understand the commands as God sent them” (Subhani 2012). This means that their understanding of religion, if not their shared understanding of God, should be closest to the versions sent by God.

Thus, Sobhani made the task difficult to such an extent that he claimed that among the six thousand verses, nobody can claim he/she has a divine understanding of one verse among those of six thousand verses, so, how can someone claim to have divine understanding of all of the Qur’an? This seems an impossible task; however, we must recognize that Sobhani was a scholar of the Qur’an who memorized it by heart and read nine well-known interpretations of the Quran through careful study. Subhani’s view was the same as that of the “Surviving Group”⁶⁵, but the existence of such a group, according to Subhani, is almost impossible, and they can never shine on the earth. Any group claiming that they are the surviving group does not speak the truth, because these characteristics cannot be achieved and cannot appear at this stage of life.

Second. All of the desires and motives of the *Mujtahidin* must surpass the wishes and motives of individuals or groups and must be transformed into the pure will of God (Subhani & Tawihidi, 2012). In this regard, he confirmed that “the desire of the group must be turned over to the pure will”. This is to be beloved of God, and not vice versa. The term “jihad” should not be the source of the desires and motives of people towards evil (as an example); if the motive is hatred towards a person, the desire of the people in such cases amounts to nothing.

Third. This person or group must know the Arabic language, having the same inclinations and understanding that Arabs had in the pre-Islamic era. Just as the author of the Book of the Emirate and

⁶⁴ Nasser Subhani was born in the village of Dorisani of the city of Pawa in eastern Kurdistan. He has three books and 700 hours of recorded sermons. This information is taken from the Kurdish Wikipedia.

⁶⁵ The Holy Prophet tells us that the Jews and the Christians were very dispersed, that the Muslims would be differentiated from them greatly, and that these teams would be subject to fire and deviance from the book of their Lord and the Sunnah, and that only one group of survivors will enter paradise: the group that adheres to the true book and the Sunnah, and the work of the Prophet’s companions (Zeno, n.d.:8).

Statehood⁶⁶ says, they must “taste in the same way as those people in that era savored and understood” (Subhani & Tawihidi, 2012).

Fourth: This group must know and understand the reasons behind legislation, its purposes and legitimate interests.

Fifth: This group, when striving to create a society, must understand their society and its structure, to the extent, as Nasser says, that they “engrave their ideas in the formation of their society”.

Six: They have to have lived this way in their heart, and practically. If Subhani testifies against a group that they do not follow the truth, they must prove that they do, presenting Islam theoretically and practically. For example, when they talk about justice, they should be an example of justice within themselves, and when they talk about honesty, they should show people an example of honesty (Subhani, 2012)⁶⁷. Subhani believed that jihad was the easiest way to God and not the most difficult. Calling to God (*Al-da'wah*) is never compatible with coercion. Thus, as long as jihad is part of *Al-da'wah*, then jihad is not a way to force people to enter Islam. He believed that “*Al-da'wah* is incompatible with commitment and coercion, and they are always contradictory” (Subhani, 2012)⁶⁸. Thus, when jihad becomes a curse and an obligation, it is incompatible with the spirit of the invitation to God. From his perspective, as long as jihad is part of the call, it should not be directed against individuals and society, and there should be no anger from the people. Jihad is not against people, but against the regime. Subhani was one of the few intellectuals who had the ability of prediction. Behind his analysis of the term jihad he saw a great disaster, similar to what is happening today in practice. Because of his researches, since the early days he predicted the emergence of jihadist movements in the eighties. And he believed that if these movements resembled the Islamic movement in Iraqi Kurdistan⁶⁹ they would cause great harm, and that before they declared jihad they would pay with their dignity. In the first hour of his talk, in order to explain the essence of the fighting Subhani gave a brief introduction to the subject and started with the following:

When talking about insect movements, starting from their weakness towards their own completeness, at the beginning there must be a willingness to receive; and to activate this readiness they should have three stages:

1. This creature has to take food from its outside and from others and be at harmony with its nature.
2. It must integrate this food into a part of its nature, and activate its ability in order to produce it, which means to take this food to make it part of its composition.
3. This creature then must be of benefit to all. For example, when we find a nut ready to be turned into a walnut tree, it takes its food in a suitable environment, and then gives this food to the rest of

⁶⁶ **This book is one of the prominent books of Subhani.**

⁶⁷ Subhani believed that in social life there should be a group of people who bear witness on the people and argue against them. As he also said: “These groups of people should be talking according to the verses of Qital, to be witnesses on the people. How? There should be one community in social life. They should be early adopters. They should be a group of people in all areas of life. What the Lord Highness wants, should be achieved by people in economics, politics, society and education. Then there will be an argument by the people to say not that these groups were just talking, they were just theoretical, but that there was a reality we followed.” 3 hrs, 9 mins.

⁶⁸ **“What is Jihad? A conversation between Nasir Subhani and Abdulqadir al-tawidi”.**

1 hour, 37 mins.

⁶⁹ **The entire speeches of Subhani were given during the period of the formation of the Islamic movement in Iraqi Kurdistan with the help of the Islamic Republic, when they received money and weapons from Iran. He believed that the money and the weapons were being sold to guarantee their dignity. Therefore, the Islamic movement hated him. Subhani also had a similar conversation with Mullah Kirekar on jihad and qital, but it could be that this conversation was not recorded or has been lost. It has been announced that he won the conversation against Kirekar. Nevertheless, Kirekar still insisted on calling for jihad, despite the bloodshed of the Da'is and the other jihadists. Thus, Subhani became a victim of his views, and Krikar is engaged in *Rawti Shakh* from within Norway.**

the body to become a walnut tree and gives us fruit from walnuts with a beautiful view. (Subhani, 2012) Subhani used these three stages to interpret jihadist thought. He came to the conclusion that the Mujahedeen could not adopt the right approach in choosing jihadist ideology, and so the result would not be beneficial and joyful; instead, it would be a disaster for the people, and a disaster for Muslims who do not believe in violence. Or, as he said, it would be a disaster for those who do not believe in desire and fear (*Tergeeb* and *Tarheeb*). Following the rise of the jihadist groups from Afghanistan – al-Qaeda, the Islamic state and Ahrar al-Sham – we can see the outcome of jihad based on violence. Therefore, we can say that Subhani made a very accurate prediction. The thoughts and visions of Subhani about jihad and fighting (*alqital*) approached the subject of the illegality of fighting, in the sense of being the most difficult obstacle for its application. Thus, by its nature illegality became an obstacle to the occurrence of jihad until late in eastern Kurdistan. Therefore, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the ideology of jihad in eastern Kurdistan could not be heard. Here, the important question is, when did these groups appear, and what were the main reasons for their appearance?

The emergence of jihadists in eastern Kurdistan

In order to understand the essence of jihadists in eastern Kurdistan, we must refer first to the jihadists in northern Kurdistan, the groups that sprang up along the border between northern and eastern Kurdistan and which emerged from the womb of the Islamist movement in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Jund al-Islam (Soldiers of Islam) in Kurdistan

The Islamic movement was a kind of a front, with various Islamic movements under its wing. The divisions were large between these wings. Their differences began to grow, and their interests took on different dimensions. Some of these wings were more extreme than others. For example, the wing of Mullah Usman, and those who were close to him, was more open to the Kurdish political parties than the other wings. A personality such as Sheikh Muhammad al-Barzanji in his relationship with non-Islamic political parties – who were considered nationalist or secularist – was very flexible and harmony-seeking. He called these political parties national parties because of the kind of aggression they directed against secularism among Islamists. When Ahmed Kaka Mahmud released a book in which he considered music to be halal, after a short period of time the extremist wing inside the Islamic movement responded to him with a book “The Rejected Words of Ahmad Kaka Mahmud”. Additionally, some of the other groups, such as Krikar’s group, the second force of Soran and al-Tawhid, were very influenced by the Afghan jihad. They considered the non-Islamic parties to be infidels; some of them even considered some Islamists who thought differently in this way. And as the Islamist movement drew closer to other, non-Islamist movements, the extremists moved away from it. For example, the agreement between the Islamic movement and the PUK made in 1997, known as the Tehran agreement, caused a major rift between the Islamic movement on the one hand and al tawhid and Hamas on the other. Three groups formerly within the Islamic movement have completely disengaged from that movement and formed a new Jihadist party: Hamas, al-tawhid and the second force of Suran⁷⁰. Omar Baziani of Hamas and Abu Basir (or Bakhtayari Tawhid) from the al-tawhid group became members of the Shura, and Omar Baziani became responsible for the Islamic section. Also, Muhammad Hassan Hawleri, known as Abu Abdulla al-Shafi’i, became Amir for the group Jund ala-Islam. He was a member of the second force of Soran and is now imprisoned in the Kurdistan region. The new group relocated to Biyara and started a radio station there. They often rely on the fatwas of jihadists in the Arab world, such as Abu Basir and the Palestinian Abu Qatada. These fatwas were sent out by fax and telephone. Later, when they were defeated in the Battle of the Shenrue mountains with the PUK, they transferred their radio station to Sargat village and began to practice Islamic Sharia in its worst formulations. Jund al-Islam was the first group to resort to a so-called

⁷⁰ This group belonged to the Islamic Union Movement. Their presence was in Biarah, Tawela, Zardahal, Dugashekhan and other areas. They were dissatisfied with the signed agreement between the PUK and the Islamic Movement on April 4, 1997 in Tehran. This group, in their criticism of the movement and the Mala Ali Halabja’s family, was closest to Ali Babir. A conference has been organized, with the result that this group has also moved away from Ali Babir.

“martyrdom operation”. For the first time, two members of the group, named “Muqatil and Husayn” (Kirekar, 2001), carried out a suicide attack, in Halabja. The name Jund al-Islam was changed to Ansar al-Islam after the unification of Jund al-Islam and the Islah Group⁷¹ in December 2001. Ansar al-Islam took control of Biyara, Dagashikhan, Zardakhal, Khargelan, Gachena, Gulb, Sargat, Bakhakon, Narenjla, Darauke and Benji Drra⁷². In 2001, on Eid al-Adha, the al-Jund al-Islam distributed al-Adha meat among the citizens of the village of Hanagermala (Kirekar, 2001) in eastern Kurdistan, but this was not the only relationship between jihadists on both sides. The relationship was more influential and wider.

The development of the interrelationship

The interrelationship of the Kurds from eastern Kurdistan with Jund al-Islam, and later with Ansar al-Islam, has taken on new dimensions in the transition to the other side. According to Mukhtar Hoshmand, in his book “Islamic Salvation in Eastern Kurdistan”, some Kurdish Islamists from eastern Kurdistan contributed to the formation of “Sayid Salam” (Hoshmand, 2017). This was a jihadist militia under the supervision of Jund al-Islam and then Ansar al-Islam. However, in our investigation we found that the people of that region did not believe this story. There is a high terrain called (Sayyid Salam), which is a historic place and has nothing to do with the Jund or Ansar al-Islam. But about 20 Kurds from eastern Kurdistan have joined Jund al-Islam, and there are many who have contacted al-Jund and al-Ansar to help them. For example, they have traveled between Iran and Afghanistan to help Arab Afghans such as Abu Wael, Zarqawi and Abu Abdul Rahman, to transfer them from Afghanistan to Biyara via Iran. Early 2003 was the beginning of the end of these groups in these areas of the Kurdistan region, when the US-led attack and the Peshmerga inflicted a severe blow to the supporters of Ansar al-Islam. Following this defeat, the Iranian authorities opened their doors to those who fled the strikes. Many of those militants and their families entered Karmashan city, its environs and the city of Mariwan. Hence, if we want to talk about the jihadist communities in eastern Kurdistan we need to consider the appearance of Jund al-Islam and al-Ansar there and in the immediate proximity to these areas. However, their emigration to Iran is considered as the direct cause of jihadists. It reminds us that it was the arrival of some Egyptian extremists in Iraq in the 1980s, along with thousands of Egyptian workers, including an Egyptian jihadist, to the city of Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan which led to the spread of this idea among the Kurds in the region. These were the reasons for the establishment and development of organized groups and the construction of special camps by Egyptian extremists who then trained Kurds within Iranian territory, specifically in eastern Kurdistan. These were reasons why Kurds were given assistance; but they were not decisive reasons, because previously there were some imams affiliated with the Salafist jihadist approach. In addition to benefiting from Ansar al-Islam’s organizational activity and military action, these callers (imams) had a clear role in the emergence of jihadist groups.

The mosque as a platform for jihadists to spread the ideology of jihad

Here, the Salafi jihadists use the pulpit as a platform to monitor and transform eastern Kurdistan into a hotbed of jihadism; a large group of imams embraced Salafist ideology and turned their pulpits into important platforms to spread jihadism. At the same time, they turned eastern Kurdistan into a battleground against nationalists, leftists, secularists and other Islamists, such as the Office of the Quran, Sufi Muslims and traditional Muslims, considering them all as infidels and outsiders to their constituency. When the Islamic Republic of Iran arrested the Salafist jihadists in 2007, there were more than 13 imams among the detainees, including Abdulrahman Fattahi, Ali Karimi, Jamal Qadri, Farhad Salimi, Ahmad AbduIlahi, Masud Rasuli, Muhammed Kalhur, Muhammad Brayl,

⁷¹ On January 14, 1995, this name was given to the followers of Mula Kirekar within the Islamic Movement. At that time, he presented a project to reform the Islamic movement under the name of al-Islah.

⁷² **Tawele and its surroundings was under the hegemony of the grandsons of Salahaddin, led by Tahsin Mula Ali.**

Muhammed Yasin Sharafi Pur, Kawa Waysi, Khasraw Dibistan, Husam Muhammedi and Husaini Karimi (HRA New, 2017). The campaign to arrest these imams charged with Salafism shows that this ideology was spread widely throughout the Kurdish society of eastern Kurdistan and was not random behavior. To reveal more of the influence of the platforms they used to spread Salafist ideology, some jihadist imams, who were able to recruit many people to jihadist ideologies, pointed out that they worked through their mosques. These are just examples, but many were active in this area.

First: Mullah Abdul Rahman Fatahi:

This imam was from Mahabad city, and he was the imam of the mosque (*Sur*) in Mahabad. He was one of the first jihadists. He then migrated with his wife and children and joined Jabhat al-Nusra (Nusra Front). Until his arrest in 2009 he continued to disseminate his jihadist messages via the jihadist digital media of the Nusra Front.⁷³ Fattahi became a prisoner in Rajaii prison inside the city. His discourse was about the role of the prison in education, comparing it with the imprisonment of Prophet Yusuf. Fattahi's speech, which we have in our hands, appears as the words of one of the most radical jihadists, and in it he uses all the terms that have been used by jihadists, such as the virtue of imprisonment in the service of God because of their preoccupation with unification with God (Fattahi, n.d.). After he was released from prison, he moved to the front lines of Jabhat al-Nusra and soon became one of the preachers of al-Jabha, urging the jihadists to migrate to al-Sham and to sacrifice all that they had, both of money and blood, for jihad. He also demanded that women and girls sacrifice their gold for jihad (Fattahi, n.d.). He also called on young people to migrate to the front lines of Jabhat al-Nusra. Additionally, he criticized those who do not accept the invitation to jihad. He believed that they have no argument for rejecting jihad (Fattahi, n.d.). Fatahi also attempted to play a reformist role when it came to the issue of unity among the Mujahideen. This is an indication of his attempt to address the conflict between jihadist groups such as Ahrar al-Sham and ISIS. In his discourse, he talks about successive victories and the idea that the arena of jihad is constantly expanding (Fattahi, n.d.). According to this video, which was produced within the Nusra Front, he speaks about jihad ideologically and attempts to promote it according to the vision of Jabhat al-Nusra or later (*Ahrar al-sham*). In addition, in terms of the quality of the recording the videos are somewhat advanced.

Fatahi, as imam of a mosque and a jihadist, believes in the power of sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. He talks about the problems of the two parties, drawing on the words and deeds of Abu Bakr al-Sadr and Omar Ibn Khattab (Ali, n.d.) to present his views on the Sunni-Shiite conflict. He also talks about Salafi morality and behavior, some parts of which are Islamic, such as covering the bodies of women (Fattahi, n.d.).

Second: Mullah Abdul Hamid 'Ali', or Abd al-Hamid 'Ali Muhammad':

He is from the village of Sannaw, in Marwan (Ali, n.d.). He is a Kurdish cleric of a mosque that follows the approach of the Salafist jihadists, and he has delivered religious seminars and sermons in the mosque. He originally came from a religious family (Malazadah), and his father was one of the followers of the Sufi method of Sheikh Osman Bayara. However, unlike his father, he became a follower of the Salafist jihadist ideology and became one of its most radical advocates in eastern Kurdistan. He accused Sufism of creating an idolatrous approach to God and for worshiping graves (Ali, n.d.). He has supporters among the Kurds, the Bulgarians and all Sunnis in Iran. At first, he was given many facilities to spread his thoughts⁷⁴. He was then arrested by the authorities and detained for six months in a prison in the city of Sanandaj. He now lives in Malaysia, has earned a PhD in Sharia law, and teaches at Medina University (Ali, 2014). He has presented talks on many subjects on the TV channels of Wisal al-Haq, Wisali Farsi, Sunni news, the Tawhid network and al-Kalima

⁷³ Naji Kord and Mullah Abdul Rahman Fattahi Mahabadi (2010) were arrested along with nine others.

⁷⁴ The Islamic Republic encouraged the emergence of Jihadists in eastern Kurdistan, but when they became strong enough they started killing and destroying inside Sanandaj city. They killed two Imams and judges, and they turned against the Islamic Republic; the process of finding and detaining them has begun.

television. He lectures in Kurdish and Persian. He continues to attack Shiites and the authorities in Iran. Abdulhamid's jihadist speeches have had a significant impact on the youth of eastern Kurdistan and are intended to develop the ideology of jihad. His activities are confined to the cities of Mariwan and Sanandaj. In his speeches he emphasizes, by way of his ideology, his desire to refute Shiism and to label Shiites as apostates (Ali, 2014). He also emphasizes the injustice that the Sunnis have suffered in Iran. He has another group of lectures about the Survivor Group of Islam (Ali, 2014). In other lectures, he considers democracy to be infidel (Ali, 2013). He also speaks on the appearance of the Dajjal and the signs of the day of standing up and becoming martyrs in the name of God. On another topic, he talks about the conditions the jihadists suffer in Rajayi prison in the city of Karaj in Iran (Ali, 2013). He also talks on other subjects: about Abubakir al-Siddiq, Hussein bn Ali (Ali, 2013) and Omar Ibn Al Khattab (Ali, 2013). In these matters, he exposes the differences between Shiites and Sunnis and points out the hostility between them. The sum of these subjects is put in the service of jihadist ideology. One of the principles of jihadist ideology is to confront the international authorities with modest weapons and equipment. This principle is related to the religious fiction that a small group, with the support of God, can defeat a large group. This type of religious narrative is partly why jihadists quickly put themselves into unbalanced confrontations that will eventually exterminate them. For example, Abdelhamid Ali, in a series of presentations which he published on YouTube, talks about the story of Isa and Yajoj and Majoj (Ali, 2014). According to this story, Isa and his companions were trapped in Jebel Tour and there was no way for them to survive, especially with regard to the weapons and numbers available to them, because there was a huge disparity between them and their enemies, which included increasing hunger. Thus, Isa and his companions asked God to save them. God responded and sent a creator, looking like the bird which was sent to help the Kaaba against Abraha al-Habashi, the most powerful man of the time. In the end, the army of Abraha was defeated. In the same way, Yajuj and Majuj were defeated at the height of their power, as God sent them a worm which brings sickness to the camel, and as a result the worm struck their necks and they were destroyed. So, Isa won victory in that battle.

In his new speeches, Abd-alhamid focuses on two issues:

1. The sectarian conflict:

Within the sectarian conflict in the Middle East, in the Islamic countries and in eastern Kurdistan, through Abdul Hamid this sectarian conflict has become an alternative to national and Kurdish issues. In his lectures, the topics that oppose Shiism and the ideological response to the Islamic Republic are highlighted, as well as considering Iran as infidel (Al-Alawi, 2013).

2. The disagreement over the meaning of jihad and the incitement of the young people of eastern Kurdistan to adopt jihadist thought (Al-Alawi, 2013). Thus, he is one of those who believes only in Islamic rule in the sense promoted by Sayyid Qutb and Almododi. Therefore, he rejects democracy and considers it a religion of disbelief (Al-Alawi, 2013).

Three: Mullah Mohammed Al-Alawi

Alalawi is also known as Mala Muhammad Yakshawa. He is one of the Salafi Jihadists in eastern Kurdistan, in the city of Saqiz. He became the imam of the mosque in the village of Surin, in the city of Banah. In the beginning, he became the mosque's imam in the village of Yekshawa in the city of Bokan and had a great influence on the youth in that region.

Mohammed Alawi was strongly opposed to the Kurdish parties, such as Nawruz (Al-Alawi, 2013) and 13 Badar, and of Kurdish dancing (Al-Alawi, 2013). He considered anybody who studied at university (Al-Alawi, 2013) to be a source of deception and disbelief in God.

Alawi was someone who possessed a harsh tone of language and used it against his opponents. For example, in the case of someone who does not pray, he would say to him directly: You are one who does not pray, you are dirtier than the pig. You are dirtier than anything. You are the most un-valuable person, and you are dirtier than anyone who has leprosy. So, because you are not praying, you are dirtier than anyone who bears leprosy. So, you have to spit on yourself, your heart, your character and your ethics. (Al-Alawi, 2013) Here, he does not hold back from using dirty and rude language,

and he stigmatizes his enemies with a language that is far beyond being shaming. This kind of ugly discourse is part of the jihadists' speech used to scorn their enemies.

In the context of conspiracy theories, this man links the American and European conflict with the Third World and their presence in these countries with the conspiracy to annihilate Islam, not to secure oil and trade. In this regard, he maintains: Do not be a fool if they tell you that they are coming for oil, for trade or for the economy; for example, they are bringing down the rulers like Saddam or the others, and they have called them terrorists: the question is clear that they are against Islam. I swear to God, this war is against religion and against Islam. Wherever there is an inch of Muslim land, Muslims should consider it as war against religion, etc. (Al-Alawi, 2013)

This means that Alawi neglects all national and political conflicts. As a jihadist, he works from his radical perspective; as he says, the infidels are sitting in one trench, facing the trench of Islam, just as Osama bin Laden believed when he declared: "The world is divided into two front lines; there is not a third. The frontline of infidels and the frontline of the faith" (Al-Alawi, 2013). This is the sense that non-belief continues to fight Islam and works to destroy it.

In addition, Alawi considers that Kurdish forces are part of the American and the Crusaders' conspiracy. He warns them by concluding:

First of all, the parties that have first been a socialist entity, Communists, Marxists, or anything else – now you have put your hands in the hands of Americans, Israelis and non-Muslims against the Muslims. My speech is to the Peshmerga and the soldiers who serve as their guardians, not by being coerced or arrested. They are carrying their weapons and they have been sent into confrontations. Why do you stand with the non-believers, the Israelis and the Americans, on one front line? Look, there are many of these wretched Peshmergas praying; they love God, they love the Apostle more than themselves, but on the other side they become shameless in this life and in eternity. I am telling them for the sake of God, and for fear of Him, because that is the basis of your religion: this prayer does not rescue you, and this fast does not rescue you, and this kind of faith does not save you either. I swear by the glory of Allah, there is a grave and a resurrection, and God will remove the skin of your head with fire ... etc. (Al-Alawi, 2013) Elsewhere in his speech, in which he goes on to consider all Kurdish parties as infidel, he publicly defends jihadists and threatens those who stand against jihad and the mujahideen. In this regard, he continues: These groups, the mercenaries, the liars, on the pretext of not fearing God, they are resorting to rulers and tyrants, their tributaries and institutions, their livelihood, in order to enjoy their life and food. They take millions of dollars, Tumans, and entertainments. They license those naive groups to represent Islam in order to enjoy their trivial life. Thus, they talk about the Mujahideen, the Mujahideen of the world. In this regard the Prophet has said, there is a sect of my nation which is still right, so there are Mujahideen from the nation of Muhammad who were armed men in front of infidels. How do you say there are no Mujahideen? How do you say their way is wrong? When you say what you say, is there in your heart the intention of jihad? Is it in your heart to attend the land of jihad? I tell you that you have a disease. Have you said those who strive in the nation of Muhammad are considered sinners, and they are regarded as haters, extremists, stigmatized as separatists, etc? (Al-Alawi, 2013)

This speech is an attack on the Peshmerga indirectly; he delivered it when the Peshmerga was fighting ISIS. He was talking about the greatness of jihad and the Mujahideen and their courage (Al-Alawi, 2013), and considering the Mujahideen to be followers of the true Islam (Al-Alawi, 2013). Alawi, in his audiotape entitled "The Doctrine of the Office", which contains 71 episodes, talks about the Muftizah's doctrine, and clearly accuses him of being an infidel. He says in his introduction that "his thought includes a set of jokes, that is a war with God, with the Messenger of Allah and a war with the religion of Islam" (Al-Alawi, 2013). Thus, Al-Alawi considers Muftizadah's thought to be evil, and that it is possible to find this in the Muftizadeh's discourse. Then he says: "There are hundreds of jokes, in hundreds of places, which are in direct conflict with the religion of Allah, and the religion of the Messenger of Allah. I swear to God, if someone carried in his heart as much as an atom of faith, conscience and equity, it is returning to the religion of God and not following his previous thought any more. If religion and conscience do not remain as much as an atom, no one expects anything from this person" (Al-Alawi, 2013). Here he addresses two themes. The first theme is about

the creation of Adam, and the second is about the Muftizah's perceptions of truth and non-belief (Muftizada, 2012). This conversation dates back to 2005, in the village of Yekshawa in Bokan city (Al-Alawi, 2013). The Shura of the Quran Office at that time published a CD that contained a response to Mala Mohammed Alawi. A large number of Muftizada supporters from the towns of Saqqiz and Bokan went to Yakshawa village in their cars with the intention of preventing this mullah and his supporters from considering Muftizada as an infidel (Al-Alawi, 2013). This helps us understand the attack by Muhammad 'Alawi on Muftizada, which followed his realization that Muftizada's vision was obstructing and limiting jihadist and radical thought. Therefore, in order to develop jihadist ideology in eastern Kurdistan he needed to undermine and destroy Muftizada's reputation. Yet at the same time, Alawi considered Sufis to be disbelievers who worshiped graves and dead people (Al-Alawi, 2013). Mullah Alawi's sermons were published on different ISIS and other jihadist sites. They were interested in his sermons as part of the Islamic publication of Islamic thought. In addition, the Krikar group (Rawti Shakh) also took care of Aalawi's speeches and considered them as part of their group's ideology.

Islamic chants as a way to spread the ideology of jihad

Jihadist groups carefully construct their chants to draw the attention of young people and stir their emotions and drive their enthusiasm to become involved in jihadist thought. The Kurdish jihadists in East Kurdistan understood the importance of jihadist songs, so they chose the right ones to sing and then to publish on CDs. One of these jihadists was Shahrami Ahmad, a resident of the city of Sanandaj. He was born in 1987. He belonged to the group Unification and Jihad (*Tawhid and Jihad*), and he was one of the advocates of the Salafist Islamic ideology in Sanandaj. Shahram's brother, whose name was Baram, also followed the same Salafist approach; he was arrested on 27 December, 2012 and executed in Qizilhasar prison (Kurd, 2013). Shahram himself was arrested in 2016. He was executed in Rajayi City prison.

Shahrami Ahmadi had a good singing voice, and so he had an influence on people, being able to spread his ideology through his soft voice. His songs can be classified as follows. One style was a chant (*nasheed*) in Arabic or in Persian about Omar ibn al-Khattab (Ahmadi, 2013). There was a chant, "your son's body has returned, my mother comes to greet him, my body is full of blood for happiness" in Kurdish (Ahmadi, 2013). There was a chant about Abu Bakr in Persian (Ahmadi, 2013), a chant about Aisha, the Prophet's wife, in Persian and Kurdish (Ahmadi, 2013), a chant about Fatima, daughter of the Prophet (Ahmadi, 2013), a chant about Ali ibn Abi Talib in the Persian language (Ahmadi, 2013), and a chant about Osman in Persian (Ahmadi, 2013). If we check all these songs, we see that all have been mobilized for the conflict between Shiites and Sunnis: especially the chants about Aisha, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman, who are hated by Shiites. The Kurdish station Wisal is one of the Persian Kurdish channels which broadcasts a large number of jihadist songs in the Kurdish language (Kurd, 2015), and it has a great influence on spreading the ideology of jihad. One of the songs is "Raise the Flag of Islam" (Kurd, 2015).

The influence of jihadists in eastern Kurdistan in the Kurdistan region

The influence of jihadist ideology on the Kurds in eastern Kurdistan has become a major source of Islamic thought, as well as jihadist ideology, among the Kurds in the East, affecting the Kurdistan regions. First: disrupting the security of the Kurdistan regions has become a target for these groups, because this has happened in the past in practice. For example, after the emergence of the "Brigades of al-Qaida Kurdistan" in eastern Kurdistan, they began activities against Kurdistan regional guards and carried out terrorist operations on the border between Iraq and Iran. This group killed people in the village of Siyajwez in Penjwen, including two border guards named Mohamed Fattah Fares and Ferman Sadraddin Ahmad. In the area of Sartaki Bamu they put a bomb into the car of some Kurdistan regional intelligence officers and killed the five crew members. Also, in the Kannikhani district of Penjwen, 10 guards were killed at the border, one of whom was a lieutenant named Saber Rashid Saleh. It is reasonable to assume that the boundaries of these groups, their places of readiness, and their plans, were all within Iran's Islamic borders. Iran wanted to use them as a way to place pressure on the Kurdistan region, and thus to benefit from them in its negotiations. But their activities were

blocked through the intervention of the KRG, and many of them turned towards the areas where Sunni Islamic forces were active in Iraq. These activities and movements were an attempt to destabilize the energies of the citizens of Kurdistan and delay all of their attempts to manage themselves and get rid of the domination of the states that control the Kurdish people. Second: For as long as the number of Salafi jihadists increased, so also did the number of Kurds from eastern Kurdistan within the Islamic state. They were sending many of these jihadists to the Salah al-Din al-Kurdi brigade directed against the Kurdistan region. The brigade was stationed in the Beiji area, and most were responsible for a specific task within the brigade, including Muhammad Amin Mahabadi, commander of the Salah al-Din army. The Kurds within the Islamic state participated twice in slaughtering the Peshmergas. The first time was when they decided to slaughter three Peshmerga prisoners. The first prisoner was called Peshtivan Chamchamali, who was killed by a person from eastern Kurdistan called Abu Israa. Another prisoner, named Fakher Asi Ahmed, who was captured on 30 December, 2015 in the Kirkuk region, was put to death on March 31, 2016 by a Kurdish ISIS fighter called Mohammad Ibrahim from Kamyaran, of the Kurdistan province in Iran (Myktar, 2017). Third: One of the points uniting the Kurdish fighters from southern and eastern Kurdistan is that officials and Kurdish Peshmarga in southern Kurdistan consider them to be apostates who have converted. The non-affiliated parties in southern and eastern Kurdistan are also considered to be apostates. They consider themselves to be a survivor group. For example: Mala Hadi Salih ibn Haj Sa'id Hermidoli is a Salafist from Saqiz. He has been imprisoned in Iran for 18 years. He considers all Kurdish forces from eastern and southern Kurdistan to be infidels, that all these forces are enemies of God, and that their law is a war against God. In one of his speeches he said: "These parties say that 'the Quran must be destroyed'". Within the terms of loyalty and enmity, he aligns the Kurdish parties with the enemy parties and disowns them. He places his loyalty with the jihadists and aligns them with what is right. The Kurdistan region of Iraq is described as "non-blessed Iraqi Kurdistan".

He then said: Well, if you cannot deter your wife, your daughter, who loves this party or that law, or tell them, "My son, sit, if you follow him, I will kick you out and, I am ashamed. Are you not afraid to die?" If your family and people follow a law other than the law of God, or if someone of us accepted a law other than the law of God, or followed it, or loved it, God would make us mouldy. (Harmidul, 2013) This cleric continues to pour scorn on the parties of southern and eastern Kurdistan without hesitation and consider them shameless infidels and traitors. In the same way, Muhammad Alawi, whom we have talked about in detail, considers the laws of the parties in Kurdistan as the laws of infidels, as determined within the framework of loyalty and disavowal, and in particular tells them: "We disavow you, because you are a disbeliever, and between us and you are enmity and hatred". Then he says to them: When you are serving this program and this basic law, then you know it is an insult to the religion of God. And its leaders are putting their hands in the hands of the infidels. You are now their soldier, their Peshmerga, and serve their situation. If you pray daily a thousand times, you are [still] a loser, because you are defending something that is against God. You are a member of a party that opposes God. And you serve a program which is put into the hands of infidels, and you are accepting it, when they say their law is bountiful, and the law of Islam is not useful. The laws of Islam are not enough. What the atheist and the secularist parties are saying is attenuation to the religion of God, and our people are helpless. This type of discourse, in the context of considering the authority of the Kurdistan region as infidel, has created a suitable ground for the jihadists of Kurdistan to go into the Kurdistan region, without harm to their conscience; though they bear responsibility for the killing of the Peshmerga, they consider it to be good and jihad to kill those who are their fellow citizens and have one shared fate.

Results

The results we have found are as follows:

First: Over the long term, the ideology of jihad in eastern Kurdistan has clearly developed and has established a footing among the Kurds, and it is developing continuously.

Second: These groups use jihad to represent a permanent hammer with which they are prepared to counter their enemies in the Kurdistan regions and the Kurdish liberation movement in eastern Kurdistan, as in the past.

Third: All democratic and national issues in eastern Kurdistan have been changed by these groups and replaced by the issues of jihad, the Kalifate and the authority of jihadist Islam. This is with the aim of Afghanising eastern Kurdistan.

Fourth: There has been a socialization of understanding the concept of jihad in Kurdish society. Or, in other words, creating a fictitious conflict between traditional Islam and jihadist Islam among the citizens of Kurdistan. In this way, they want to turn eastern Kurdistan into a sectarian arena and prepare people for the belief that Shiites are a danger to the Sunnis in the midst of a war between the Sunnis and the Shiites.

Fifth: The sum of these points is the readiness of young people for war and mobilization, to migrate to any place where they want to wage a sectarian war against their enemies.

Sixth: The growth of these Salafist jihadist movements brings Kurdish society directly into confrontation with the global political and legal system, and affects the reputation of a people known for their openness and faithfulness.

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