



Egyptian Initiative  
for Personal Rights



# **STATE'S ISLAM AND FORBIDDEN DIVERSITY**

SHIA AND THE CRISIS  
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS  
IN EGYPT

**2011-2016  
ANALYTICAL REPORT**

# **State's Islam and Forbidden Diversity**

## Shia and The crisis of Religious freedoms in Egypt

### **2011-2016 Analytical report**

Issued by the Civil Liberties Unit

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## Introduction

This report documents and analyzes the state of religious freedom for Shia Egyptian citizens and violations of their human rights from January 25, 2011 to May 2016.

The report takes 2011 as its starting point because that year constitutes a turning point in issues of religious freedom and challenges in the country as a whole, particularly for Egyptian Shias. This period highlights the strong link between freedom of religion and broader state policies and the interlocking nature of religion and politics in Egypt as well as across the region and world.

The report attempts to trace the evolution of religious freedom for Egyptian Shias, not only because of its direct import for the rights of this particular religious community, but also because violations faced by this community demonstrate the nature of barriers to the exercise of freedom of religion and belief for other communities and the citizenry as a whole.

The case of Egyptian Shias also sheds light on the predicament of diversity within Islam and how diversity can be understood and freely practiced in the face of the official, dominant rite. Islam enjoys a special status as the religion of the state, which raises questions of official state religious policies in Egypt. The Sunni-Shia split, as a particular type of difference within Islam, also highlights the fusion of religion and politics seen throughout history and in the development of contemporary Islamic states and societies, with ramifications for the future of any democratic development of Arab and Islamic states. This issue is closely linked with progress in the field of human rights, particularly for freedom of religion and belief.

Researchers of the “Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights” documented 70 incidents related to the topic of this report, which taken together provide an outline of state religious policies, demands and actions by Shia Egyptians, and the violations, restrictions, and incitement they encounter as a result. The report also highlights incidents in which several of the most fundamental rights of citizens were violated over the last five years by various state institutions due to their Shia beliefs or practices and expressions associated with Shia Islam.

These violations center on seven constitutional and international rights protected under conventions ratified by various Egyptian governments, which under Article 93 of the Egyptian constitution are considered part of

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national legislation. These rights are the right to life, the right to bodily safety and security, the right of freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, the right of religious freedoms, the right of privacy, and the right of non-discrimination.

The report situates these violations in the context of incidents of incitement to hatred, violence, and discrimination against Egyptian Shias by various bodies, first and foremost official religious institutions such as the Ministry of Islamic Endowments (awqaf), the Azhar Administration (Mashyakhat al-Azhar), the Fatwa Office, and state-owned media, as well as major Islamist political currents like the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis, and small groups dedicated to incitement against Shias. Private media also featured biased coverage that included hate speech and devoted substantial space to speech inciting to discrimination against Shias. Reporters with one private paper even participated in the violation of the privacy of the home of a Shia leader in Egypt, in cooperation with anti-Shia activists.

This report is divided into two main parts. The first, the analytical part, is in turn divided into four major subsections.

Section one traces the historical roots of problematic religious policies as they were constituted in the historical Islamic context and in the modern Egyptian state, looking at the how they are reflected in contemporary legislative and political practices. These are the roots of the crisis of religious freedom for Muslims in general and heterodox communities that differ from the state-sanctioned rite.

Section two contains an analysis of the political, statutory, and regional context that took shape after January 2011. It looks at the emergence of Egyptian Shias' demands and activity, the controversy this provoked, and the subsequent rise of anti-Shia discourses and practices under the various political regimes from 2011 to 2016.

Section three offers an analysis and typology of the most significant violations against Shia citizens, as well as cases of incitement to hatred, discrimination, and violence, which tend to perpetuate and foster such violations. Violations typically have two trajectories. The first starts with locally based harassment by other citizens or often incitement by organized political forces or religious groups and ends with official discriminatory or liberty-depriving actions that rely on conservative interpretations of religious and/or legal texts that infringe the principle of freedom of religion and belief, the right of non-discrimination, or the right to a fair trial. The second, less common type involves direct targeting by security agencies based on investigations by information gathering bodies. It typically culminates in the violation of the same set of constitutionally protected rights based on the same conservative interpretations.

Section four offers recommendations for urgent steps to be taken by state institutions and civil society to stop these violations, curb incitement, and defuse potential sectarian strife, as well as recommendations for a radical reconsideration of religious policies to allow progress toward the guarantee of freedom of religion and belief for all religious communities.

Part two, the documentary section, contains a detailed description of the incidents observed and documented by EIPR researchers on which the analysis is based. This section examines violations and judicial developments if the incident reached the courts, cases of incitement by official and civic bodies, demands and actions by Egyptian Shias, and related domestic and foreign political events.

Two annexes are appended to the report: the first is the six-point test used by “Article 19 organization” to identify incitement to hatred, discrimination, or violence, and the second is an application of this test on an example of hate speech against Egyptian Shia.

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## PART ONE

I. Roots of the crisis

II. Five years after January 2011: major shifts and stations

III. Violations of seven basic rights in a climate of incitement

IV. Recommendations: radical reform and urgent measures

# I. Roots of the crisis:

## Religious freedom curtailed by restrictions on recognition, the public order, and conflicts between the imam-states

It is common to approach the issue of the religious freedom of Egyptian Shia as a sectarian problem or the problem of a Shia minority, but approaching it from the perspective of freedom of belief and religion offers a broader, more comprehensive perspective that situates it within the larger context of religious freedom, which is generally curtailed by religious policies and legal practices that do not guarantee freedom of belief and related liberties such as freedom of expression, assembly, association, and worship. These policies proceed from the principle of restriction and proscription, with some of liberties granted within limits as an exception to the rule.

Muslims' religious freedom is of a distinct kind. Seen as an extension of Muslims' sovereignty over others, it is grounded in practices from the pre-modern caliphal state and Islamic juridical principles that curtail the religious freedom of others (protected minorities, "ahl al-dhimma", or "people of the book") in accordance with what such sovereignty allows. These jurisprudential rules were translated into administrative practices and norms that were passed down from the caliphal state to the state established by the family of Mohammed Ali and then to the July 1952 state.

Muslims' religious freedom is predicated on the assumption that Muslims are a unified and uniform religious group whose religious affairs and rites are administered by the state. The state sets limits on and monitors the bounds of religious expression, dealing with intra-Islamic religious diversity with policies primarily focused on guaranteeing political allegiance.

The state occupies the position of the religious and political imam of Muslims, affirming its legitimacy and entitlement to the position through official religious bodies that are subordinate to the state. This imamate has two interrelated dimensions: political, which affirms the political legitimacy of the state as the legitimate imam of Muslims and protector of Islam, and the religious, insofar as the state sponsors and monopolizes Islam and restricts its practice within the bounds of what the state views as correct religion, attempting to extend its control to the entire religious sphere. If it is unable to do so, it places limits on dissident religious expressions to ensure that they cannot undermine its political legitimacy, as seen in the state's handling of Salafi currents, for example.



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As both the political and religious sovereign, the state grants some religious freedoms to some confessions. This doling out of religious privileges is an extension of the pre-modern millet system and Hamayouni decree, under which the Ottoman state granted the freedom to establish houses of worship and freedom of congregation and association to non-Muslim communities in the empire based on a permit from the Ottoman Porte, then the imam of the Muslims. This arrangement persists in the Egyptian state in the present day, with the state, president, and government having supplanted the role of the caliph or imam.

In practice, only Sunni Muslims are granted religious freedom as a matter of principle, under the administration and supervision of the state. Privileges of a lesser degree and with additional rules and restrictions are also granted to several recognized Christian rites and the Jewish community. All other confessions and rites are in principle unrecognized and thus restricted, at times through legal action and prosecution.

The increasingly centralized nature of the modern state and its administration has more severely circumscribed religious confessions and the margin of freedom than under the Ottoman state. Whereas once loyalty to the imam/sovereign was ensured by the granting a one-time concession to the representative of a particular confession, usually its religious leaders, today this allegiance must be regulated by repeated interventions by the security establishment, which polices the relationship between confessional religious leaders and the state. Moreover, as the modern state evolved, the concept of the individual citizen emerged, who by his nature has greater room to act and express himself outside his religious community or in the context of newly formed sub-communities. Further interventions by the security establishment, state oversight, and judicial practices are thus needed to confront these individual initiatives and subordinate them to the state or the individual's religious community. (See, for example, the state's withholding of recognition from factions breaking with the Orthodox Church and its refusal to license schismatic churches.) At other times, the state may join with religious bodies to circumscribe and suppress Islamic religious expressions that deviate from what is considered proper religion. This has been the fate of the Shia confession, adherents of Quranism, and writers and journalists who adopt ideas that diverge from the official orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup>

Egyptian Shias' attempts to exercise religious freedom face all of the compound obstacles described above: the problem of recognition, the paradoxes of the caliphal state model, and restrictions imposed by the centralized modern state, whose arms control and regulate religious affairs in the absence of a firm foundation for the protection of privacy, personal freedom, and freedom of religion and belief.

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1. For a critique of state religious policies, see "Tarkhis bi-l-salah: azmat hurriyat ittikhadh dur al-'ibada fi Misr," EIPR, Dec. 2014, [http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/the\\_permission\\_to\\_pray\\_in\\_egypt\\_.pdf](http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/the_permission_to_pray_in_egypt_.pdf); "The Turbaned State," EIPR, Aug. 2014, [http://www.eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/to\\_whom\\_do\\_the\\_mosques\\_of\\_today\\_belong\\_finalized\\_version\\_ae.pdf](http://www.eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/to_whom_do_the_mosques_of_today_belong_finalized_version_ae.pdf).

An EIPR report from 2004 addressed violations of Shia rights as essentially a violation of the right to privacy. At the time, many Shia citizens were harassed and their private meetings monitored. They were detained for varying periods, some were tortured, and they were closely questioned about their beliefs, in an attempt to extract confessions that would allow them to be charged with working for a foreign body (namely, Iran) and threatening national security.

But none of these cases ever reached a courtroom. This changed after 2011, as will be detailed below.

The 2004 report observed that some Shia citizens sought official recognition as a religious confession with the right of worship. Such applications ultimately end up with the security establishment in the Interior Ministry for a decision, but no response was forthcoming.

It is significant that the Ottoman millet system never included the Shia rite among those confessions whose religious liberty was recognized, a demonstration of the assumption of Muslims' religious unity as a pillar of politico-religious legitimacy in the Muslim polity. Sectarian divisions among Muslims would call into question the unity of Muslims and thus the religious and political status of the imam. Instead, Shia communities were ignored or at times persecuted, depending on political considerations. According to some researchers, the Ottoman state's repression of Shia scholars at many junctures led many to immigrate to Iran before it officially adopted Twelver Shiism, and this was one factor in the increasing influence of the Twelver Shia confession, later adopted by the Safavid state during its long conflict with the Ottoman state.<sup>2</sup>

The issue of recognition brings us to the imamate, which poses two problems for the religious freedom of Shia.

First, the imam-state sees diversity within Islam as a threat to its legitimacy, since its authority is linked to the sovereignty of a particular religious community or confession over which the imam presides. The state attempts to reproduce this sovereignty and resists any encroachment on or diminishment of it. It thus views the propagation of any heterodox Islamic confession to be a threat to the state's religious and political legitimacy.

Second, the problem of Muslim diversity is especially keen when it comes to the Sunni-Shia split, since this was the most momentous division in the history of the polity and also because it was occasioned specifically by conflict over the politico-religious leadership. The historical schism between the first generation of the prophet's companions and his family over who was entitled to lead the Muslim polity saw the creation of two religious communities that adopted two distinct politico-religious theories of the imamate. While the Sunni tradition

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2. For more details, see, "al-Madhhabiya fi-l-sharq al-'arabi al-hadith: al-hala al-'uthmaniya al-safawiya," *Umran for Human Sociological Studies* no. 3/11, Winter 2015, published by the Arab Center for Political Research and Studies, Doha.

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requires certain religious conditions to be met, in practice it accepts the leadership of the person who imposes his authority over Muslims, provided he is not remiss in or hostile to religion. In contrast, the Shia tradition holds that the politico-religious leadership of Muslims is the right of the prophet's family.

The Sunni-Shia split thus remained a conflict with both political and religious dimensions, just as authority in the Muslim polity was both religious and political. Shia confessions continued to be treated as religiously heterodox and politically dissident, and the spread of Shiism remained a religious, political threat to the Sunni majority. This remained the case in most of the countries that arose out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire and later European colonial states. The situation in Iran was the same, but reversed, with a Shia majority and Sunni minority.<sup>3</sup> In other states, such as Lebanon, a different system emerged due to the different sectarian balance.

The conflict for regional influence between Iran and its allies and the Sunni Arab states can thus be seen in part as an extension or expression of the crisis of the imamate—a conflict of competing imams. As such, the spread of Shiism in Sunni-majority countries is seen as a politico-religious threat to the authority and legitimacy of the state. In modern parlance, it is articulated as a threat to national security. Iran sees the spread of Sunnism as a similar threat. This sentiment is apparent in the political and media treatment of Shia minorities in Egypt and their attempts to win their religious freedom or their right of expression and association, which is persistently depicted as a threat to national security.

The conflict between the two confessions is alternately expressed in political and legal terms as a threat to the public order, insofar as the religious expression of each party constitutes a provocation to the religious beliefs of the other, which in turn threatens sectarian strife and clashes that may destabilize state and society. The historical conflict over the imamate gave rise to concepts and expressions that remain contentious. Shia Muslims believe that some of the prophet's companions betrayed his wish that the imamate pass to his family, and Shia literature consequently includes imprecations against some companions, such as Abu Bakr, Omar Ibn al-Khat-tab, Uthman Ibn Affan, and Muawiya Ibn Abi Sufyan. Similarly, some Sunni literature depicts Shia Muslims as following a religion other than Islam, seeing them as a cover for a Jewish conspiracy against Islam designed to fragment the community, or a cover for Persian resistance to Muslim Arab civilization.

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3. The Iranian constitution declares that Islam, in the form of Twelver Shiism, is the state religion. Although it recognizes the four major Sunni schools of law and gives them the right of worship, the constitution explicitly states that "Muslims are one nation," and that the Iranian republic seeks to realize the unity of Muslims. Adopting a confessional system, the constitution allots non-Islamic rites with seats in the parliament, but it does not allocate seats for non-Shia Islamic confessions, although Sunni Arabs constitute a greater proportion of the population than non-Muslim communities. See Articles 12, 13, and 64 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

These ideas provoke members of the other confession and are the basis for much sectarian friction, which is fed by the official and populist media and the official religious discourse. Legal measures taken to preserve the public order and stability tend to punish and suppress the weaker, minority party instead of the stronger one. Most Sunni countries maintain legal statutes that punish insults to the companions of the prophet, while in Iran, slandering the twelve imams and Fatima, the prophet's daughter, is a crime punishable by death.<sup>4</sup>

This is the broader, historical context of Shia religious freedom, and it is still salient today. But rapid, critical transformations in Egypt since 2011 offer a wealth of details that further expose and reveal the features of this context.

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4. Article 262 of Book 2 of the Islamic Penal Code of Iran.

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## II. Five years after January 2011:

### Major shifts and turning points

The period from early 2011 to the writing of this report can be divided into three, overlapping stages: the first stage of 2011–12, when Egyptian Shias began to demand or exercise their religious and political rights, thus sparking a popular and official backlash; the second stage of 2012–2013, which saw the Muslim Brotherhood government, led by President Mohammed Morsi, witnessed the emergence and escalation of anti-Shia Islamist movements, reactions to bloody incidents, and even stiffer court sentences; the third stage starting in 2013 saw the movement for Shia demands ease, but violations against Shia Muslims did not cease, though after the reconstitution of the security apparatus, the popular anti-Shia backlash faded.

### 2011–2012: attempts to win recognition and popular and political responses

In the wake of the January 2011 uprising, as the security establishment retreated from the scene and various political, religious, and social groups claimed greater freedom of expression, association, and assembly, some Shia Egyptians began to grow more active as well.

Liberated from security surveillance and control, groups of Shias began meeting, openly worshipping, and engaging in religious rituals, largely in private homes and other private spaces. A few of these places were designated *huseiniyat*, Shia places of worship, with a religious marking. This sparked tensions with local residents and some Salafi activists, but the tensions did not devolve into acts of violence.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the tension did spark a media controversy, especially in the village of Harbit<sup>6</sup>—the hometown of prominent Shia Sheikh Hassan Shehata—and in the village of al-Ragdiya, home to the family of leading Shia figure Emad Qandil.<sup>7</sup> There was no security backlash in the first year after the revolution. One Shia activist told EIPR researchers that he called the officer who used to monitor him incessantly to inquire about the lack of the usual surveillance and if that meant they were able to congregate and worship. The officer responded that the matter no longer concerned him.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Interview with Mohammed Ghoneim, Jan. 2012.

6. See the documentary section, §12.

7. Ibid, §9.

8. Interview with a Shia activist who requested anonymity, Dec. 2014.

A matter that did garner a security response, however, was the announcement by some Shia Egyptians that they planned to participate in the establishment of a political party known as the Tahrir (Liberation) Party.<sup>9</sup> Many of the Shia activists involved said this was an attempt to exercise their rights as Egyptians in the framework of a party. While it would not be limited to Shias, the party would be a basic tool to secure their recognition as citizens with inalienable rights.<sup>10</sup>

The party founders said that their application for a party was ultimately denied, affirmed by a judicial ruling, due to actions taken by sovereign bodies, in particular Homeland Security. These bodies contact lawyers responsible for collecting endorsements for the party and threatened them, as well as the founders, pressuring them to withdraw their endorsements. Ultimately, the party application was denied for not submitting the required number of endorsements, but Rassem al-Nafis said in a press interview that Homeland Security personnel told the founders that they would not allow such a party to be established because it was unwanted.<sup>11</sup> The reaction of Islamist activists and media figures such as Khaled Abdullah was to accuse the party founders of working for Iran. Islamist media devoted segments to discussing Shiism and stressing the danger of allowing Shia Muslims to organize and express their ideas.<sup>12</sup>

Some Shia activists were able to establish associations, despite the refusal of employees at the Ministry of Social Solidarity to license any associations with names like al-Hussein, al-Zahra, or Al al-Beit. For example, one association, the Thaqalayn Association, was registered with Shia activist al-Taher al-Hashimi as a founder.<sup>13</sup> Later, the Center for Fatimid Egypt was established by a group of Shirazi activists, a Shia current opposed to the Iranian government and the guardianship of the jurist system and close to Sheikh Hassan Shehata. In mid-2012, a research center, the Center for Al al-Beit Sciences, was opened.<sup>14</sup>

The most significant effort by Shias to claim their right to worship was their attempt to assemble at the mausoleum of the Hussein Mosque on the holiday of Ashoura, the tenth day of the Islamic month of Muharram, on which Shia Muslims commemorates the martyrdom of Hussein. In 2011, this attempt ended with the arrest

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9. See the documentary section, §1.

10. Interview with Mohammed Ghoneim, Jan. 2012; interview with al-Taher al-Hashimi, Dec. 2014.

11. See the documentary section, §1.

12. Ibid.

13. Interview with al-Taher al-Hashimi, Dec. 2014.

14. See the documentary section, §13.

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of seven Shia Muslims, among them prominent activist Mohammed al-Dereini,<sup>15</sup> following arguments with people around the mosque. The Shia activists say that some of them were Salafi activists present on the scene specifically to cause trouble.

Some Shia activists also traveled to Iran, where they attended religious and scholarly gatherings. They were also more active on social media, which prompted many Salafi activists to respond and debate them. Some recent converts to Shiism announced their conversion, which sparked a media uproar in which some media outlets employed the phrase “the Shia tide.”

The incident that garnered the biggest popular and official response was a visit to Egypt by Shia scholar Sheikh Ali al-Korani, who took part in Shia assemblies and meetings in more than one place. The Azhar Administration issued a statement declaring “the pride of the Egyptian people and Muslims in Egypt in the unity of their religious community and their adherence throughout their history to the Orthodox Sunni school.” The press carried angry statements by religious scholars and parliamentarians asking the state to take decisive measures to hold back what they called “the Shia tide.”<sup>16</sup>

This coincided with an incident in which correspondents with al-Watan, in cooperation with anti-Shia Salafi activists, stormed a house owned by Emad Qandil, a Shia activist, in the village of al-Ragdiya in Tanta. The journalists published a photo expose accusing him of founding a husseiniya that was inaugurated by al-Korani. Salafi activists were quoted accusing al-Korani and Shia Egyptians of working for Iran and participating in the Iranian plot to spread Shiism in Egypt to destabilize it.<sup>17</sup>

In the wake of the incident, the Azhar Administration held a meeting, the first of its kind, attended by representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi currents, in which it was announced that Azhar was forming a committee to confront Shiism in Egypt.<sup>18</sup> Participants all declared their adherence to “the religious unity of Muslims,” and denied the existence of Islamic religious diversity. The press carried quotes from participants such as, “We have no canonical or religious schisms here in Egypt,” and phrases such as “juridically uniform Sunni societies.” They also warned of the danger of diversity or difference between Muslim schools of thought, saying this would inevitably lead to infighting and weaken the national fabric. The Islamic Research Academy also met and decided to ban imams with al-Azhar and the Endowments Ministry from visiting the holy shrines

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15. Ibid, §5.

16. Ibid, §7.

17. Ibid, §9.

18. Ibid, §10.

in Iraq or Iran and taking part in any religious activities there.<sup>19</sup>

During this phase, the first sentence was given to a Shia Egyptian for declaring his beliefs and engaging in some Shia rituals outside a mosque; he was sentenced to three years in jail with labor, reduced to one year with labor on appeal. The popular backlash was the prime motivator in the case. Eyewitnesses said that Mohammed Fahmi Asfour had boldly declared his ideas and challenged local sheikhs and scholars and some Azhar scholars to a debate. He attempted to pray in the local mosque manifesting certain Shia rituals, which caused tension between him and local residents, who attempted to assault him and insulted him on more than one occasion. Locals filed several complaints against him, accusing him of cursing the companions and Aisha (one of the prophet's wife) and publicizing provocative Shia ideas. On one occasion when he attempted to pray in the mosque by the Shia rite, they fought with him and attacked him. Saying that he had desecrated a house of worship, the court sentenced him to jail; no other person who had carried weapons, threatened him, and attempted to assault him was charged.<sup>20</sup>

The court sentence, the first of its kind since 2011, presaged events to come in the second phase of the crisis of Shia Egyptians' religious freedom. The security establishment had ceased to suppress the community, but a popular, sectarian backlash was on the rise, along with incitement to discrimination, to which many media outlets contributed with their sensational coverage. The discourse of the official religious establishment and Islamist movements increasingly depicted Shia as a threat and part of a conspiracy.

## 2012–2013: increasing sectarianism under the Brotherhood administration

Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohammed Morsi's assumption to the presidency was not a direct cause of the escalation of sectarianism, but it can be seen as part of the rise of the Islamists and their growing influence and activity in the public sphere.

Shortly before Mohammed Morsi assumed the presidency, the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Companions and Prophet's Family announced the beginning of its activities. The most active anti-Shia coalition, it was composed of several activists who focused exclusively on persecuting Shia Muslims and confronting their demands.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Ibid, §11.

20. Ibid, §3.

21. Ibid, §10.



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This coincided as well with increasing activity by al-Azhar and the Endowments Ministry, both of which cooperated with representatives of Islamist currents in confronting Shias and inciting to discrimination against them.<sup>22</sup>

In this period, state institutions become further involved in sectarian affairs, increasingly pursuing security and then judicial approaches with Shia Egyptians, despite government attempts to improve relations with Iran. This rapprochement was ultimately thwarted by stiff opposition from Salafis and the Azhar Administration.

The Egyptian constitution written and adopted in this period contained the first explicitly sectarian reference in Egyptian constitutional history. Article 219 of the 2012 constitution refers to “Sunni doctrines and the larger community” as a source of Islamic law.<sup>23</sup> Also for the first time, the spokesman for the presidency said, “Egypt is Sunni and will remain a Sunni state.”<sup>24</sup>

Salafi groups, most importantly the Salafi Call, escalated their anti-Shia advocacy in this period, organizing committees and rallies under the rubric of “Shia are the enemy, beware.”<sup>25</sup> Some of these rallies and marches targeted neighborhoods and villages inhabited by Shia, including in the village of Zawya Abu Muslim. There Salafis marched around the homes of Shia families, including the home of the family that hosted Sheikh Hassan Shehata before he was killed with three of his students.<sup>26</sup>

The Brotherhood government and presidency attempted to improve ties to Iran’s government and invited the Iranian president to visit Egypt and resume tourism between the two countries, in the context of tense relations with Arab regimes that feared the rise of the Brotherhood. Yet, the Egyptian government affirmed that this did not imply any tolerance for Shia religious activity.<sup>27</sup> Still, this affirmation did not stave off Salafi<sup>28</sup> and Azhari<sup>29</sup> protest and opposition. Islamist groups organized a demonstration in front of the home of the acting Iranian representative in Egypt and attempted to storm it as they repeated anti-Shia chants.<sup>30</sup> The Ministry of

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22. Ibid, §14 and §15.

23. Ibid, §19.

24. Ibid, §29.

25. Ibid, §30.

26. Ibid, §34.

27. Ibid, §24.

28. Ibid, §22.

29. Ibid, §20.

30. Ibid, §25.

Tourism backtracked on the plan to accept Iranian tours, saying it was suspending the activity and would meet with Salafi leaders to reassure them that these tours would not include any religious tourism.<sup>31</sup>

Groups of Shias in this period attempted once more to celebrate Ashoura at the Hussein Mosque, prompting an energetic response from anti-Shia activists. The Coalition for the Companions and Prophet's Family and the Muslim Revolutionaries movement announced they had filed complaints asking the state to prohibit any Shia ceremonies on that day at the Hussein Mosque. Supporters of the two groups assembled around the mosque, saying they had formed committees to monitor any Shia activity. Al-Azhar issued a statement linking Shia intentions to go to the Hussein Mosque on the anniversary of Ashoura with what it called "purported Shia tendencies, which is a cover for sectarian objections and regional expansion."<sup>32</sup>

The cooperation and collusion between anti-Shia activists and the security apparatus was made clear in an incident in which a home in Doqqi was stormed and a group of Shias belonging to the Mahdiya rite were arrested and detained; they were ultimately released and the foreigners among them deported. Before the arrest, newspapers close to the Islamists and anti-Shia social media published details of their meeting, saying they had established a husseiniya and "a Shia school."<sup>33</sup>

The most significant incident in this phase was the killing of Sheikh Hassan Shehata and his students in Zawya Abu Muslim, located in the Giza governorate. The run-up to the crime laid the groundwork for the crisis. There was rising incitement and resentment against Shia, stoked especially by Salafi groups. The Azhar Administration and the Endowments Ministry also repeatedly warned of the Shia threat. A few days prior to the incident, a conference was organized in support of the Syrian revolution. Attended by President Morsi, the conference featured hate speech and incitement against Shia by a Salafi sheikh.<sup>34</sup> Witnesses in Zawya Abu Muslim pointed to anti-Shia incitement in the village from various parties, including from the imam of the mosque run by the Endowments Ministry and various Salafi groups. Activists with the Salafi Call and the Nour Party organized a march a month earlier in which they roamed the village, stopping at various Shia homes to chant inflammatory slogans. Shia villagers were warned against coming to the mosques or attempting to speak with youth, fearing they may proselytize them. Activists hostile to Shia rights also stepped up their activities. They monitored Sheikh Shehata's visit to the village and used social media to urge their supporters to assemble

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31. Ibid, §27–28.

32. Ibid, §17.

33. Ibid, §18.

34. Ibid, §33.

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there. Some did indeed organize assemblies that surrounded the house, and they called on local residents to expel the Shias and put an end to their practices, linking their meetings with deviant sexual practices based on *mut'a*, or temporary, marriage, and saying they were slandering the companions and Aisha. Although security was present during the siege on the house, it did not intervene or respond to appeals for assistance by persons inside the house. The people in the house were ultimately forced to turn over the sheikh and his students, who were beaten to death and dragged to the entrance of the village, where the corpses were given to police forces deployed there. None of the mob was arrested.

Despite the harsh condemnations that issued from all parties, statements by representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Call were more circumspect. The Brotherhood spokesman condemned the killing of four people “with alien opinions,” while a Salafi Call leader in Abu al-Nomros said that the incident was the fault of the police, who did not take action to prohibit the Shia gathering in the first place, although local residents had filed complaints against them.<sup>35</sup>

Although this incident and the run-up to it were used against the Brotherhood administration by protestors on June 30, the Brotherhood was just one part of a broad Islamist current that increasingly employed anti-Shia sectarian rhetoric, in addition to al-Azhar and the Endowments Ministry, whose officials oversee official religious policy, which continue to engage in anti-Shia discrimination and incitement to the present day.

## 2013–2016: return of the security establishment as regional, sectarian tensions cast their shadow

Starting with the ouster of Mohammed Morsi and his replacement with a military-backed transitional government until the election of Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi as president, the security establishment began again gradually monitoring the Shia issue, taking over from various Islamist groups and attempting to curb their activities, although there were signs of some cooperation between the two. This period was defined by increasing violations against Shia Egyptians in the context of a general authoritarian turn that prioritized security and the preservation of order, especially in light of the conflict for power and legitimacy with the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters. Regional conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen also had implications for the domestic status of Shias, who repeatedly faced accusations of collaboration with foreign powers and treason.

This time, Shia attempts to visit the Hussein Mosque on Ashoura prompted cooperation between security bod-

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35. Ibid, §34.

ies and the activists with the Coalition for the Companions, according to several witnesses. EIPR researchers in the environs of the mosque saw coalition activists and their supporters repeatedly stop people they suspected of being Shia and turning them over to security. All of them were released except for Amr Abdullah, the Shia activist with the Fatimid Egypt Center. Coalition activists announced that they were the ones who identified Abdullah and turned him in to the police. They also filed a police report to which they appended CDs, printed matter, and the writings of Abdullah, claiming that they show him slandering the companions and the mothers of the believers (the prophet's wives).<sup>36</sup>

During the interrogation and trial of Amr Abdullah, he was questioned about his religious beliefs and ideas. In February 2014, he was sentenced to five years in prison with labor—the maximum sentence under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code—and the court recommended increasing the penalty for this type of crime. The judgment was upheld on appeal.

The written judgment included phrasing that eroded the content of freedom of belief and expression. Blurring the lines between the limits of thought and belief in Islam and freedom of thought and religion in the constitution, the court wrote, “While the constitution and after it the law have guaranteed the individual freedom of belief, opinion, and thought, the provisions of the constitution and law do not provide for it without bounds. Indeed, it is restricted such that this freedom should not lead the individual with the opinion, thought, or belief to oppose the rules and foundation of religion, revealed law, or morals...and the freedom of thought and expression was restricted in the constitution. The esteemed principles of Islamic law, though they allow independent reasoning and freedom of thought and belief, make this conditional on not denying or forswearing what is established in the book of God and the tradition of His prophet.” The judgment also noted that the court convicted the defendant “for propagating thought and a belief that contravenes that which the overwhelming majority of Egyptians and Egyptian society belong to and believe.”

Since the doctrines of various religious confessions and sects tend to be in opposition, the logic expressed in the judgment would allow the punishment of any expression of any religious thought or idea that diverges from the belief of the majority and the dominant Islam, which wholly subverts the very concept of freedom of religion and belief.

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36. Ibid, §36.

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The court, without any basis at all, also alluded in its judgment to “conspiracies” that seek “to penetrate society” by “hired hands” and “plants” with the goal of “fomenting strife,” thus replicating anti-Shia sectarian rhetoric.<sup>37</sup>

This was the second judicial ruling against Shia Egyptians because of their beliefs after Mohammed Fahmi Asfour was convicted of desecrating a mosque in 2011. It was followed by a third judgment in December 2014 against a prominent Shia doctor and two of his colleagues in Daqahliya, who were sentenced to five years in prison (reduced to six months on appeal). Unlike the previous cases, this one was generated solely by the security apparatus, reflecting the return of the security establishment’s role and the concomitant decline of civic or communal activism. The defendants were arrested while carrying books with Shia ideas to the doctor. They were all charged and convicted under Article 98(f) for propagating extremist ideas with intent to blaspheme a revealed religion.<sup>38</sup>

In another case, the security apparatus arrested a Shia lawyer in Sharqiya who was charged with blasphemy before he was ultimately released and the case closed. The arrest came following interviews he gave to Shia satellite channels that “crossed all red lines,” as Homeland Security officers told him. In the interviews, he declared his Shiism using his full name, and on a program with Shia preacher Yasser al-Habib, he declared that his two daughters were also Shias.<sup>39</sup>

Although the sentence was reduced in one of these cases and the other one never went to court, Shia groups noted that security surveillance was back and they were again warned against holding any meetings or making provocative statements. Their activities, which had been on the rise from 2011 to early 2014, began to wane. The Fatimid Egypt Center closed after the arrest of Amr Abdullah, and the Thaqlayn Association began operating more cautiously after it was raided and its founder, al-Taher al-Hashimi, was detained for several hours.<sup>40</sup> A Shia Egyptian also accused Homeland Security in Alexandria of detaining and torturing him before and after a trip to Iraq for the purpose of religious visit and study.<sup>41</sup>

Despite signs of cooperation between Salafi activists and the security apparatus, there were indications that the security establishment wished to curtail such grassroots activities. For example, a mass rally organized by the Salafi Call in Shubra al-Kheima on “the Shia danger” was cancelled at the behest of security bodies, according to Salafi Call sources quoted by the press.<sup>42</sup>

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37. Ibid, §38.

38. Ibid, §49 and §54.

39. Ibid, §45.

40. Ibid, §55.

41. Ibid, §61 and §69.

42. Ibid, §46.

The position of official religious agencies remained unchanged, and the sheikh of al-Azhar,<sup>43</sup> the chief mufti,<sup>44</sup> and the minister of endowments<sup>45</sup> continued to advocate discrimination against Shias. In fact, the rhetoric became more strident against the backdrop of regional sectarian conflicts. A statement issued by Azhar in which it attacked the Popular Mobilization Forces fighting the Islamic State (IS) provoked an official Iraqi protest.<sup>46</sup> In the statement, al-Azhar accused the Popular Mobilization Forces, composed of Iraqi regular forces in cooperation with popular, largely Shia militias, of perpetrating abuses and massacres against Sunni Iraqis in the context of their conflict with IS. The statement was a continuation of stances repeatedly taken by the Azhar Administration to set Shiism and expression of it in the context of regional political conflicts or conspiracies seeking to destabilize Egypt and the region.

Egypt's support for the Saudi-led military offensive against pro-Iranian, Shia Houthis in Yemen coincided with rising hate speech and incitement against Shias in the Egyptian press. News stories leveled accused Shias of working for Iran, based on the relationship between some Shia Egyptians and their religious leaders in Qumm, Iran and because some Shia Egyptians had opposed the military intervention against the Houthis and condemned the increasingly close ties between Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>47</sup>

In general, the increasing security presence after June 30 and an ascendant populist, nationalist media, combined with the state's desire to bring the entire religious sphere under control and centralized state administration meant that the movement for Shia Egyptians' demands ebbed markedly.

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43. Ibid, §44 and §50.

44. Ibid, §41.

45. Ibid, §39 and §60.

46. Ibid, §51.

47. Ibid, §52.

### III. Violations of seven basic rights in a climate of incitement

The most serious violations seen are those that directly infringe the right to life and the right to physical safety. A group of Shia citizens were subject to such violations while meeting for a small celebration in a home in the village of Zawya Abu Muslim in Giza in June 2013. The incident ended with the killing of Sheikh Hassan Shehata and three of his disciples after they were surrounded and threatened, then beaten and dragged through the village streets for several hours while the police, despite appeals for help, refused to intervene. Some police personnel even came to the scene of the siege on the house and refused to intervene and disperse the mob. The incident took place days after a provocative march led by representatives of the Salafi Call, in which they roamed the village streets and stopped in front of homes inhabited by Shias and repeated inflammatory chants.<sup>48</sup>

In another case, Homeland Security in Alexandria was accused of twice detaining and torturing a Shia Egyptian before and after a trip to Iraq, once in November 2015 and again in May 2016.<sup>49</sup>

The incident in Zawya Abu Muslim was preceded by several similar, though not as severe incidents. For example, a mob gathered around several homes of Shias in the village of Harbit in Sharqiya, the hometown of Sheikh Hassan Shehata, and urged security to intervene to stop Shia worship in those homes.<sup>50</sup> Many Shias were also harassed numerous times in front of the Hussein Mosque when attempting to commemorate Ashou-ra, for example.<sup>51</sup>

In a violation of freedom of expression, five Shias were convicted in relation to their expression of their beliefs, the exercise of Shia rituals, or the circulation of printed matter containing Shia ideas. Four were tried under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code on charges of propagating extremist beliefs that blaspheme revealed religions. They were all given the maximum allowable sentence of five years in jail in the first-instance courts.<sup>52</sup> The sentence of one defendant was reduced to six months on appeal.<sup>53</sup> Mahmoud Dahroug served his six-month sentence, while Amr Abdullah is still serving his five-year sentence and two other convicted persons are fugitives.

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48. Ibid, §34.

49. Ibid, §61 and §69.

50. Ibid, §12.

51. Ibid, §36.

52. Ibid, §49.

53. Ibid, §54.

The fifth person, Mohammed Fahmi Asfour, was sentenced in June 2011 to one year in jail on the charge of desecrating a house of worship after attempting to pray in a mosque.<sup>54</sup>

This is in addition to other cases of arbitrary arrest and detention on various grounds, such as giving interviews to Shia satellite stations and engaging in certain activities or rituals inside association offices or private homes. These cases ended without legal action after the suspects were detained for questioning for various periods.<sup>55</sup>

Several public institutions also initiated disciplinary proceedings against some employees for expressing their opinions in contentious religious matters. Mohsen Abu Zeid Mohammed, a preparatory school teacher in Esna in the Qena governorate, was referred to disciplinary trial at the State Council in January 2012 after a complaint was filed accusing him of “impugning established principles of religion and fomenting strife in the town. He is saying that the caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar Ibn al-Khattab and Aisha are dissolute hypocrites.” The court ruled to suspend him for six months at half salary.<sup>56</sup>

These incidents constitute a serious violation of a constitutionally protected freedom under Article 65 of the revised 2014 constitution, which imposes no restriction on freedom of expression. Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by Egypt in 1981, restricts freedom of expression only as necessary for national security and the public order, morals, and health. The committee responsible for interpreting the ICCPR issued General Comment No. 34 on September 12, 2011 interpreting these restrictions in a way that does not render the article meaningless. In Paragraph 26, the committee said, “Laws restricting the rights enumerated in article 19, paragraph 2...must also themselves be compatible with the provisions, aims and objectives of the Covenant. Laws must not violate the non-discrimination provisions of the Covenant. Laws must not provide for penalties that are incompatible with the Covenant, such as corporal punishment.”<sup>57</sup> Regarding the definition of public morals, the committee referred to a previous general comment, noting that “the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations...for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition.” It added, “Any such limitations must be understood in the light of universality of human rights and the principle of non-discrimination.” This understanding is at odds with the narrow definition of public morals in Egyptian legislation or that used by the security and administrative bodies, which defines morals by reference to the opinions of the Sunni majority.<sup>58</sup>

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54. Ibid, §3.

55. Ibid, §18 and §45.

56. Ibid, §6.

57. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 34, Sep. 12, 2011, p. 7.

58. Ibid, paragraph 32, p. 8.



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Paragraph 48 of the same comment addressed laws proscribing blasphemy, or the defamation of religion in Egyptian legal parlance. The committee notes that such laws may not “discriminate in favour of or against one or certain religions or belief systems, or their adherents over another, or religious believers over non-believers. Nor would it be permissible for such prohibitions to be used to prevent or punish criticism of religious leaders or commentary on religious doctrine and tenets of faith.”<sup>59</sup> This is the opposite of judicial applications of the law in Egypt, which clearly discriminates against adherents of the Shia rite. Paragraph 49 prohibits a “general prohibition of expressions of an erroneous opinion or an incorrect interpretation of past events.”<sup>60</sup> This is also at odds with Egyptian practice, which denies Egyptian citizens their freedoms or levies administrative sanctions for expressing their opinions about events related to the Sunni-Shia split that took place centuries ago.

Moreover, the charge of propagating extremist ideas under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code is itself a violation of the freedom of religion and belief and freedom of expression. Trials of Shia citizens have overall lacked fair trial guarantees. Defendants were questioned by the prosecution and in courtrooms about their religious beliefs and opinions and how they worship. The written judgments against them also level political and religious charges, in addition to rhetoric that generally diminishes freedom of religion and belief, as seen in the case of Amr Abdullah and Mahmoud Dahrouq.<sup>61</sup> In both cases, the court disclosed its own belief and examined that of the defendants, judging the veracity of their own reasoned interpretation of contentious points of doctrine.

This report also documents violations of the right to establish houses of worship and engage in religious rituals, a fundamental part of freedom of religion and belief as defined by the Egyptian constitution in Article 64 and the ICCPR in Article 18. Official policy restricts Muslim worship to that which conforms to the traditional orthodoxy of the Sunni rite, which al-Azhar considers “correct and moderate piety” and under the direct administration or supervision of the Endowments Ministry, which refuses to recognize mosques of other non-Sunni sects or rites. As the Endowments Ministry said in November 2013, a few days before Ashoura, it “rejects any religious rite affiliated with the Shia school in any mosque,” and it asked the Interior Ministry to confront the practice.<sup>62</sup>

In addition, the security apparatus intervenes to forcibly prohibit any Shia worship, as seen with the closure and of the Hussein Mosque mausoleum for four straight years, enforced with a heavy security presence, while

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59. Ibid, p. 12.

60. Ibid.

61. See the documentary section, §38 and §49.

62. Ibid, §36.

also tolerating assemblies by inflammatory Salafi groups, which prevent Shia from marking the occasion inside the mausoleum, the mosque, or the environs.<sup>63</sup> The first custodial sentence issued against a Shia citizen after January 25 came following his arrest in a mosque in the city of Kafr al-Zayyat, in the Gharbiya governorate, in June 2011.<sup>64</sup> Amr Abdullah was arrested and tried after attempting to commemorate Ashoura in the Hussein Mosque in November 2013.<sup>65</sup> This is in addition to several cases in which local residents gathered in front of or attempted to storm other citizens' homes because they suspected that Shia worship was going on inside, as seen in the village of Harbit or at the home of Emad Qandil in al-Ragdiya, located in the Tanta district, in May 2012, which was photographed and then published as a story in al-Watan.<sup>66</sup>

This prohibition of worship contravenes Article 64 of the Egyptian constitution, which places no restrictions on the freedom of belief or the right to establish houses of worship by adherents of the Abrahamic religions. Article 18, paragraph 3, of the ICCPR restricts these freedoms only as necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or others' fundamental rights and freedoms. The committee tasked with interpreting the covenant said in paragraph 8 of General Comment No. 22, issued on September 27, 1993, "Limitations imposed [on these freedoms] must be established by law and must not be applied in a manner that would vitiate the rights guaranteed in article 18...Restrictions may not be imposed for discriminatory purposes or applied in a discriminatory manner. The Committee observes that the concept of morals derives from many social, philosophical and religious traditions; consequently, limitations on the freedom to manifest a religion or belief for the purpose of protecting morals must be based on principles not deriving exclusively from a single tradition."<sup>67</sup> This interpretation is clearly inconsistent with Egyptian security, administrative, and judicial practices, which are derived from a single tradition—the Sunni tradition—as defined by al-Azhar, as demonstrated by judicial rulings and other official positions.

This report further documents how the security apparatus raided several private homes owned by Shias or failed to prevent other citizens from storming them in the wake of reports that they were hosting Shia religious practices. This is a violation of the right of privacy, protected by Article 58 of the Egyptian constitution. In addition to the killing of Hassan Shehata and his companions in plain view of security forces, the home

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63. Ibid, §58.

64. Ibid, §3.

65. Ibid, §36.

66. Ibid, §9.

67. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 22, paragraph 8, pp. 2–3.

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of Emad Qandil in al-Ragdiya, located in the Tanta district, was stormed in May 2012, on the grounds that he had converted it into a husseiniya.<sup>68</sup> Security forces also arrested a group of Shias in a house in the Doqqi neighborhood of Cairo in November 2012 while they were performing the Friday prayer; they were released two days later.<sup>69</sup>

This report describes several cases of discrimination against Shia Egyptians in the workplace or school because of their beliefs as well, among them the case of a university professor, a preparatory school teacher, a student at al-Azhar, and a ma'zoun, or marriage official. An Azhar professor and several Quran reciters and imams were also questioned for taking part in celebrations of a Shia nature outside of Egypt, while a number of Shias were detained upon returning from religious visits or conferences related to Shiism. In many of these cases, public bodies and institutions levied various disciplinary sanctions on these citizens based on their profession of their religious beliefs and opinions, as seen in the case of Mohsen Abu Zeid. In November 2012 Dr. Ahmed Mohammed al-Sayyed, the dean at the Faculty of Humanities at Minya University, banned Dr. Yunis Khodari from teaching due to objections from Arabic and Islamic studies students to the content of his lectures on Islamic history.<sup>70</sup> These incidents are all flagrant violations of the right to non-discrimination, upheld by Article 53 of the Egyptian constitution, insofar as they entailed penalties for the expression of an opinion or the attempted exercise of a ritual that does not constitute an infringement of the public order or morals.

## Typology of violations: communal harassment and security targeting

A review of the foregoing violations reveals that they typically arise in one of two ways. Most commonly, they start with local, community-based harassment. Locals begin fights or form mobs that appeal to the security forces or administrative bodies to undertake a series of violations of Shia citizens' rights. Of 18 direct violations document by EIPR researchers, 11 began with local disputes. While official bodies should protect citizens' as they exercise their constitutionally guaranteed rights, in fact they either collude with communal mobs, as in the killing of Hassan Shehata, or they fail to provide protection. Less commonly, violations begin with direct targeting by security based on investigations conducted by various information-gathering bodies, as is the case of the detention and torture of S., a Shia in Alexandria, and the detention of Dr. Mahmoud Dahroug, which was

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68. See the documentary section, §9.

69. Ibid, §18.

70. Ibid, §16.

based on information from the security apparatus about his activities in his village.<sup>71</sup> Al-Taher al-Hashimi, who was detained in May 2015 for 48 hours after a raid on an apartment used by the legally registered Thaqlayn Association in Doqqi, which he heads, said that his interrogation by the Public Prosecution was based on information collected about his travels and various activities.<sup>72</sup>

Both of these trajectories overlap with incitement of hatred, discrimination, and violence by official religious institutions or influential political organizations and religious associations. Article 53 of the Egyptian constitution criminalizes incitement of hatred, while Article 20, paragraph 2, of the ICCPR prohibits “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.” Drawing on Article 19’s six-point test, the Association of Freedom of Thought and Expression defines incitement as “calling on the public, directly or indirectly, to undertake actions against individual or groups with the use of a public means of expression, provided this speech is directed against specific individuals or groups, even indirectly, as is the case with the use of figurative language.”<sup>73</sup>

As is clear from Article 20 of the ICCPR, incitement is of three types: incitement to hatred/hostility, violence, and discrimination. The Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality define hatred as “a state of mind characterized as intense and irrational emotions of opprobrium, enmity and detestation towards the target group.”<sup>74</sup> Incitement to discrimination can be defined as “every call to the public using a public means to undertake any act likely to weaken or prevent individuals or groups from enjoying on equal footing with others human rights and fundamental liberties, whether political, economic, social, cultural, or any other sphere of public life.”<sup>75</sup> The World Health Organization’s Global Campaign for Violence Prevention defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.”<sup>76</sup>

Article 19 designed a six-point test for all three types of incitement, which considers the speaker, the context

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71. Ibid, §49.

72. Ibid, §55.

73. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, “Khitabat al-tahrid wa hurriyat al-ta’bir: al-hudud al-fasila,” Cairo, Jul. 30, 2013, p. 9, <http://afteegypt.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/afte001-30-07-2013.pdf>.

74. Ibid, p. 9.

75. Ibid, p. 10.

76. EIPR and Nazra for Feminist Studies, “al-Istiqtab wa-l-’unf al-mujtama’i fi Misr,” Cairo, Dec. 2013, p. 5, [http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/gender\\_based\\_violence\\_report\\_ar\\_2013.pdf](http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/gender_based_violence_report_ar_2013.pdf).

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of the speech, and other elements.<sup>77</sup> Applying this test, it is clear that various official institutions, party organizations, and religious and civic associations were involved in one or more the three types of incitement, which created a climate amenable to wide-scale violations of the rights of Shia citizens. The incidents detailed in this report's documentary section are simply illustrative examples of this speech.

EIPR researchers documented several examples of incitement disseminated by representatives of the Coalition in Defense of the Companions and Prophet's Family, a Salafi group established in May 2012 with the goal of "responding to Shia ideas, defending the Sunni confession, and defending the companions and mothers of the believers," according to the group's founding statement. The group was engaged in broad incitement which ended with the killing of Sheikh Hassan Shehata and his comrades. For example, in an interview with al-Watan, after the newspaper's reporter had made his way into the home of Emad Qandil in Ragdiya, in the Tanta district, to investigate what the paper called "the conversion of the house into a husseiniya," Walid Ismail, the coalition coordinator, said, "We had decided to set a date to march on this husseiniya and demolish it, by mobilizing pure Muslims, zealous in their defense of Islam and the Sunna, to keep the Shia in line. But after consulting some noble scholars, we discovered that the current situation in Egypt cannot bear such a huge demonstration. After the presidential elections, we may reconsider the idea."<sup>78</sup>

If it could be argued that the coalition was a marginal player, the same cannot be said about other, much more influential Salafi groups and figures, who were also involved in incitement to hatred and discrimination in this same period. Starting in March 2013, one of the biggest Salafi groups, the Salafi Call, organized several mass rallies to confront what they called "the Shia infiltration." All the rallies bore the same title: "Shia are the enemy, beware." At one of these rallies held at the Amr Ibn al-As Mosque on April 3, 2013, to mark a visit by an Iranian tourist delegation," Sherif al-Hawari, a member of the board of the Salafi Call, said that Shia "enter through such doors via money and women, and we will never be silent about this. We can bear hunger and want, but we cannot bear transgressions of our belief and identity."<sup>79</sup> On April 20, 2013, Sheikh Ahmed Farid, a member of the board of trustees of the Salafi Call, said, "Official bodies, represented by the army and intelligence, understand the Shia danger to national security because Shias are not only a danger to doctrine, but a security, health, and social danger."<sup>80</sup> The hate speech was even repeated in the presence of former President

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77. See the annex.

78. See the documentary section, §9.

79. Ibid, §23.

80. Ibid, §30.

Mohammed Morsi at the conference to support Syria, organized by several Islamist forces on June 15, 2013. At the conference, inaugurated by Morsi, Salafi preacher Sheikh Mohammed Abd al-Maqsoud said, “Mr. President, as much as we can do without this filth who curse the companions of the prophet, however much we can do this, let us do it. The free woman does not live off her own breasts.”<sup>81</sup>

Official religious and media institutions also engaged in such incitement on more than one occasion. Most seriously, Sheikh Sabri Ebada, a deputy endowment minister, was hosted on program “10 pm” on Dream on September 22, 2014, when he said, “Iran will not get one speck of Egypt after such a wise presidency. The rafida must be expelled into the sea and killed here and there,” using a derogatory term to refer to refer to Shias.<sup>82</sup> Several publishing houses subsidiary to state-owned newspaper also released pamphlets and promotional materials that contained hate speech and incitement to discrimination against Shias. For example, the state-owned Dar Akhbar al-Youm in May 2013 published a book titled *The Shia Are Coming*, written by Said Ismail, with an introduction by Sheikh al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb; the book was filled with incitement to hatred.<sup>83</sup>

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81. Ibid, §33.

82. Ibid, §43.

83. Ibid, §32.

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## **IV. Recommendations: radical reform of state religion policies and urgent measures to alleviate sectarian tension**

This report has attempted to set the crisis of the rights of Egyptian Shias in the context of the broader crisis of freedom of religion and belief, as well as the crisis of diversity within Islam, a product of the religion policies of the pre-modern state that persist to the present day combined with authoritarian innovations of the modern state, such as the concept of recognition and the narrow definition of the public order. Addressing this crisis requires action on two fronts.

### **Fundamental reform**

State religion policies must be reviewed. When the state adopts an official religion in line with current dominant practices it will necessarily adopt a specific rite and ideas, giving the state a sectarian identity. Sectarian tensions are therefore liable to emerge at any time as the state continues to suppress citizens with divergent ideas and monitor the general population to ensure that it does not deviate from the prevailing orthodoxy.

Moreover, as the state continues to position itself as the legitimate imam against other states/imams, it sets the scene for a state-religious conflicts in which any cultural or religious dialogue is destined to fail, as long as each party sees the ideas disseminated by others as a threat to its stability and its politico-religious legitimacy. Citizens who are linked to religious authorities in other states are thus accused of treason and foreign collaboration.

There is thus no other solution but to reform state policies on religion and create a legislative and administrative order based on enacting the constitutional guarantees for freedom of belief and worship, applying them equally to all citizens regardless of their ideas, and confronting discrimination.

As long as the state does not abandon its current relationship with its religious institutions, which attempt to monopolize the practice and expression of Islam, giving religious freedom to any one Islamic group would allow that group to use state religious policies to the advantage of its own ideas and school of thought. Liberating Islam from state shackles is thus a prerequisite for the genuine establishment of freedom of religion for all, including Sunni Muslims.

To further this fundamental reform, the state's adoption of an official religion or confession can be transformed

to contribute positively if the official religion is not practiced exclusively, but permits diversity within it; if the state is driven by democracy and human rights and takes care to assure that its adoption of an official religion is not at odds with this; and if it adopts a version of the official religion that is not in conflict with its basic functions as a state and its protection of basic rights.

In this context, the concept of recognition would be rendered meaningless, because recognition would be a guaranteed right. The concept of the public order could also be reconstituted as the basis for the protection of all religious practices in line with democracy and human rights considerations, rather than as the basis for the protection of the majority's sectarian benefits or the punishment of persons with heterodox ideas who provoke the religious sentiment of the majority.

The intellectual and religious division between Sunni and Shia are like those between various Christian denominations—irreconcilable schisms and diversity within one religion. But some of the expressions and concepts that most provoke the other side could become trivial if there were a baseline of acceptance and coexistence between the two and between them and the state, which guarantees freedom for both sides and acts to stop violations and aggression. The clash between the divergent beliefs increases, however, when one side stands next to the state and the other is not recognized.

No incident was documented, for example, in which Shia formulaic curses of the prophet's companions were declared willfully and in public, except in the context of Shia religious literature—classical and contemporary—as well as private meetings in closed places, programs on specifically Shia satellite channels, and specifically Shia social media, some of which is marginal and has few followers. This stands in contrast to the preponderance of Shias who publicly refuse to manifest such beliefs in order to prevent strife.

Religion should not be the basis of mutual acceptance and coexistence, as is the case in various inter-confessional initiatives. Rather, the basis should be respect for the difference in a democratic context protected and monitored by the state. Acceptance and coexistence will face major challenges if Shia and Sunni thought and practice remain tied to state sponsorship. We cannot wait for “religious reform” projects to yield fruit and settle the historical overlap between religion and politics in Islam. This cannot be expected from state bodies or their official religious institutions, which are the embodiment and extension of this problematic overlap. The solution must come through democratic reform that thwarts such aspirations and adopts religion policies based on respect and guarantees for religious freedom while also confronting religious practices involved in incitement to violence or discrimination, or which overall impede democratic reform and guarantees for rights and freedoms.



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## Urgent measures

First and foremost, the state must take a firm stance against incitement to hatred, violence and discrimination against Shias, whether by Salafi groups, state-backed scholars, or media figures. The many complaints filed against activists inciting against Shias were not seriously addressed. At the very least, disciplinary measures should be taken against state employees who make statements containing incitement to hatred, violence, or discrimination against any group of citizens. Supporters of freedom of belief must take similarly firm positions, engage in lobbying, and refuse to tolerate incitement and hatred, which could again lead to an incident like Zawya Abu Muslim.

Article 98(f) of the Penal Code, used to prosecute Shias and others with heterodox religious ideas, must be reviewed.

The right of all religious doctrines and rites to establish houses of worship must be respected, without a requirement for prior state assessment or intervention. At the very least, temporary measures are needed to protect freedom of assembly by Shias and other religious groups that are still unrecognized, to enable them to assemble to engage in rites or study ideas as associations or research centers.

Relatedly, the performance of the security and administrative apparatus must be monitored to ensure they respect privacy and private life and are not involved in discriminatory practices against persons with dissident religious views in places of study or work.

Institutional frameworks, in the form of a commission to confront discrimination, provided for in Article 53 of the constitution, should be created, while ensuring that its establishing law equips it with the prerogatives needed to identify and address cases of discrimination.

Advocacy and political groups must adopt the cause of freedom of religion and belief and struggle for its establishment in tandem with the struggle for democracy. They should incorporate demands of Shias and other groups claiming their rights in a broader, rights-based, democratic framework, so that in the short term they can bring concerted pressure to bear for the enactment of urgent measures and to mobilize more of the public in support of the radical reforms needed to establish genuine freedom of religion and belief.

## PART TWO: DOCUMENTATION OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING SHIA EGYPTIANS FROM 2011 TO 2016

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1) March 1, 2011

## Shia activists apply to establish political party

Weeks after the uprising of January 2011, a group of Shia activists led by Ahmed Rassem al-Nafis announced their intention to participate in the formation of a political party, the Tahrir Party. Nafis said that it would not be a sectarian party and would include Muslims and Christians.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, observers said the party primarily aimed to claim the rights of Shia Egyptians, which the Egyptian state refused to recognize or guarantee. The party founders filed their papers with the Political Parties Committee, which denied the application. The founders appealed the ruling, but the State Commissioners Body upheld the committee's ruling, on the grounds that some of the legal endorsers claimed by the founders had not appeared before the Political Parties Committee and one of the endorsers had withdrawn, along with several founders. As such, the number of remaining endorsements did not meet the required 5,000 threshold and was insufficient to complete procedures for the party's establishment under the law.

Nafis said that the party founders had received calls from Homeland Security, starting in July 2011, telling them that their party was unwanted and would not be approved. The attorney responsible for the collection of party endorsements refused to submit them, which Nafis said was due to threats from Homeland Security.

The attempt sparked various reactions, some entailing incitement against Shia Egyptians, hate speech, and accusations of collaboration with Iran.<sup>85</sup>

2) May 21, 2011

## Administrative Court denies suit to prevent transmission of Shia Fadak channel on Nilesat

The Administrative Court on May 21, 2011 denied a suit (no. 49695/64JY) seeking to prevent the transmission of the Fadak channel, filed by Tareq Mohammed Abu Bakr against the minister of information and others, on the grounds of the absence of an administrative decree. The court said in its written judgment that the General Authority for Investment is the body granting satellite transmission permits in the free zone. It added that the Nilesat had issued no license to any channel by this name and that the channel was not owned by any

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84. Interview with al-Wafd, Nov. 2011.

85. For one response, see the episode of "New Egypt" on al-Nas channel, presented by Khaled Abdullah, Nov. 2011, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTahl4\\_IPMA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTahl4_IPMA).

company operating in the free zone. The court said that the case pleading contained no evidence that a license had been granted to the channel to transmit over Nilesat. The court thus denied the suit since there was no administrative decree to challenge.

Abu Bakr filed the suit on September 22, 2010. Accepted on form, the suit petitioned for the suspension of a decree by omission and legal action to stop the transmission of Fadak on Nilesat, on the grounds that the channel sought to discredit the Quran and insulted the companions of the prophet.

In his suit, Abu Bakr argued that the channel posed an imminent threat to the belief of Muslims and that the decree under appeal contravened the established principles of Muslims and the legislator's philosophy as demonstrated in the radio and television law, the law licensing Nilesat, and the law establishing the media free zone. As such, he added, the decree under appeal contravened the regulations set forth in these laws.<sup>86</sup>

### 3) June 18, 2011

#### Shia citizen from Kafr al-Zayyat prosecuted for manifesting ideas and practices associated with Shiism

Several residents of Abu al-Gharr, located in the Kafr al-Zayyat district, filed a complaint on June 18, 2011 against Mohammed Fahmi Asfour, a teaching in the Azhar school system, saying that he engaged in acts inimical to custom and religion and insulted and cursed the prophet's family in a mosque, which provoked some local residents. The police closed the mosque and dispersed the assembled crowd. The Public Prosecution charged Asfour with desecrating buildings dedicated to religious worship and sought a sentence under Article 160 of the Penal Code.

Sources told the EIPR that the incident in question began when worshippers objected to the defendant praying in the mosque, on the grounds that he was Shia. Several citizens then assembled in front of the mosque, and some of them contacted the security forces, which arrived to disperse the crowds and close the mosque.

On April 24, 2012, the Kafr al-Zayyat Summary Court, headed by Judge Osama Moussa, sentenced Asfour to three years in jail with labor, setting bail at LE100,000 and referring the civil suit to the competent court. The court said it was persuaded by the investigation report and witness statements that the defendant was guilty as charged. On July 26, 2012, the Kafr al-Zayyat Appellate Court accepted Asfour's appeal on form. On the

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86. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, "Hurriyat al-i'lam fi Misr wa buldan ukhra: dirasa qanuniya muqarina," p. 31.

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merits, it overturned the sentence and reduced it to one year in jail plus court costs.

The court said that Asfour engaged in acts such as praying in the mosque and beating himself on the chest, which is “evidence of his adherence to Shiism, which made the worshippers in the mosque uneasy. As a result, arguments with the defendant erupted and subsequently a house of worship was desecrated.”

The EIPR appealed the appellate judgment with the Court of Cassation on September 22, 2012, stating its grave concern with the judgment’s infringement of freedom of belief and freedom of expression and its furtherance of incitement and security harassment against citizens.

The written judgment against Asfour, a copy of which was obtained by the EIPR, said that he was the cause of “arguments inside the mosque in which weapons were used. Though the defendant did not bear any weapon, he nevertheless precipitated, by his actions in the mosque, which are inimical to the Suuni school, the eruption of the argument and the desecration of God’s house.” The court also said that Asfour committed actions, such as praying with prayer beads and beating his chest, which are “evidence of his adherence to Shiism, which made the worshippers in the mosque uneasy. This is in fact what happened. The worshippers in the mosque began to vent their anger at the defendant, which resulted in arguments with the defendant and, in turn, the desecration of a house of worship.”

The EIPR appeal and the defense pleading for Asfour argued that the court’s judgment was arbitrary and flawed insofar as it concluded that the defendant’s affiliation with Shiism and his use of prayer beads in prayer would inevitably provoke the anger of Muslims and lead to the desecration of a house of worship. The appeal cited a fatwa from the former Sheikh of al-Azhar Mahmoud Shaltout, which stated, “The Twelver Shia rite is a legitimate rite of worship like the other Sunni rites. Muslims must abandon their unwarranted zealotry for certain rites.”<sup>87</sup>

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87. See EIPR press release, Sep. 27, 2012, <http://eipr.org/pressrelease/2012/09/27/1500>; EIPR report, “Besieging Freedom of Thought: Defamation of Religion Cases in Two Years of the Revolution,” Aug. 2014, [http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/besieging\\_freedom\\_of\\_thought\\_0.pdf](http://eipr.org/sites/default/files/reports/pdf/besieging_freedom_of_thought_0.pdf)

#### 4) September 29, 2011

### Sheikh of al-Azhar describes attempts to spread Shiism in “Sunni states” as a vicious assault that serves the interest of Israel and the West and fragments the Islamic community

Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb received a delegation from the Hakim Foundation in Lebanon and representatives of the Iraqi High Council on September 29, 2011. During the meeting he announced his rejection of the spread of Shiism in Islamic countries. Tayyeb said that the many appeals for rapprochement between the Sunni and Shia rites is blocked by “energetic attempts” to spread Shiism in Sunni states, especially Egypt and next to the minarets of Azhar, the bastion of Sunnism. Tayyeb said that the spread of Shia books in Egypt was promoted by “malicious hands” and that these books cast doubt on “the faith of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Omar” and cursed Aisha. “Al-Azhar continues to restrain itself to preserve Muslim unity,” he said. “But if this situation is not brought under control, al-Azhar has other options to defend the sanctum of orthodox Sunnism.”

Tayyeb said, “The assault of some Shias on Sunnis is a strong, vicious assault. We, as al-Azhar, cannot extend our hand to those who cast aspersions on our beliefs, curse the companions of our prophet, and speak ill of our lady Aisha.” He added, “Al-Azhar, which represents more than one billion Sunnis, will be on the alert for this alien expansion.” Tayyeb said that content broadcast on Shia channels “serves the interest of Israel and the West and fragments the Islamic community.” He urged religious authorities in Najaf and Qumm to distance themselves from every person who curses the companions and Aisha, if they truly sought to preserve the unity of the Islamic community.

The same day, al-Tayyeb met a delegation of scholars and representatives of Islamist outreach groups, including Salafi preacher Mohammed Hassan, to discuss the Azhar document, a declaration of principles to be enshrined in the constitution to be drafted after the parliamentary elections later that year. Tayyeb said, “The document is a guiding framework that comprises all religious, cultural, and political segments of society, to work for the construction of a modern constitutional state whose constitution is based on Islamic law as a principal source of authority.”<sup>88</sup>

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88. Sep. 30, 2011, [www.sis.gov.eg/Ar/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?ArtID=51867#.VQGPj3yUeSo](http://www.sis.gov.eg/Ar/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?ArtID=51867#.VQGPj3yUeSo).

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5) December 5, 2011

## Interior Ministry breaks up Ashoura celebrations at Hussein Mosque; Endowment Ministry: Egypt is a Sunni state and we reject the fanatic Shia tide

Groups of Shias attempted to assemble and commemorate Ashoura at the Hussein Mosque by performing certain rituals. Arguments and some friction ensued between the groups and other mosque patrons before the security forces dispersed the groups. Security detained seven Shias, including Shia activist Mohammed al-Dereini, in the Gamaliya police station. They were released the following day.

Groups of Shias carried and hung banners related to the Ashoura commemoration and brought in loudspeakers. Some assembled at the mausoleum and mosque courtyard and repeated hymns indicating their Shia affiliation, sparking arguments with the mosque custodians from the Endowment Ministry, mosque patrons, and street peddlers. Some of the mosque custodians told the press that they contacted the police to break up the arguments and expel the Shias because the latter had not obtained the permits needed to hold such assemblies from the Endowment Ministry. After security forces arrived, the Hussein mausoleum was cleared and shut down, and visitation suspended for the day.<sup>89</sup>

Shia activist al-Taher al-Hashimi said that the celebrations that year took place in a climate of intellectual freedom prevalent in the country after the revolution and motivated by Shia Egyptians' interest in changing the negative view of them created by the former regime's media. He said that Egyptian Shia would openly manifest their religion and would not conceal it as they had before the revolution. According to al-Hashimi, several Egyptian and Iraqi Shias gathered around the Hussein mausoleum chanting religious hymns "that champion the imam and seek his guidance."

Sheikh Shawqi Abd al-Latif, the first deputy endowment ministry, told the press, "Egypt is a Sunni state and it rejects the fanatic Shia tide." He said that Egyptians were Sunnis and they were more worthy of Imam Hussein than Shia. "Egypt is known for its love of the prophet's family, who lived in it and whose people welcomed them warmly," Abd al-Latif said. "They taught its people the proper moderate religion, far from fanaticism and extremism."<sup>90</sup> He added, "The celebrations of Ashoura the day before yesterday at the Hussein Mosque are an assault on the sanctity of mosques—in fact, an assault on Egypt's security." He said that the Endowment Minis-

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89. Based on interviews with Shia eyewitnesses who attended the celebration and requested anonymity, Dec. 2011, as well as a lengthy interview with Shia activist Mohammed Ghoneim, Jan. 2012.

90. "al-Dakhiliya tafudd ihtifalat bi-zikra 'ashura" al-Ahram, Dec. 2011, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/The-First/News/117194.aspx>.

try would not allow this, seeking to preserve the fabric of the nation and proper religion and combat fanaticism and extremism. "Ministry imams and preachers will stand up to such events with the proper thought," he said "The Egypt of al-Azhar strongly rejects this and advocates for moderation."<sup>91</sup>

## 6) January 24, 2012

### Suspension of Shia teacher because of manifestation of his religious belief

On January 24, 2012, Mohsen Mohammed al-Saghir, from the village of al-Qaraya, filed a complaint with the director of the Esna Education Department against Mohsen Abu Zeid Ahmed, a resident of al-Nimsa in the district of Esna, who worked as a science teacher at the Kumir Preparatory School in Esna and was seconded for three days to the al-Qaraya Coed Preparatory School. The complaint accused Abu Zeid of infringing established principles of religion and fomenting strife in the town by saying that Caliphs Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Omar Ibn al-Khattab, and Aisha were degenerate hypocrites. On February 27, 2012, the Esna Education Department forwarded complaint no. 301 to the Administrative Prosecution relaying the complainant's allegations. On May 12, 2012, Ahmed Sayyed Qenawi, the chief of the Esna Administrative Prosecution referred to Abu Zeid to a disciplinary trial. According to the prosecution, on January 20, 2012, the defendant, in the home of his brother in the village of al-Nimsa, engaged in conduct unbecoming to his position, using defamatory and inappropriate language about Abu Bakr, Omar, and Aisha in front of Mohsen Mohammed al-Saghir Bahnas, a teacher at the Qaraya preparatory school. The Administrative Prosecution asked the head of the disciplinary court in Qena to set a date for a disciplinary hearing under Articles 76/3, 78/1, 80, and 82 of Law 47/1978 on state civil employees, amended by Law 115/1983.

On December 24, 2012, the disciplinary court in Qena, headed by Judge Ahmed Farouq Qayed, ordered a six-month suspension at half pay for the defendant. The court relied on the statements of the complainant, Ahmed Mohammed Metwalli, and Khaled Atiya al-Naggar, although the defendant denied the allegations during questioning. The judgment stated that the penalty was not directed at the defendant's Twelver Shia belief, but at his insult of Aisha, Abu Bakr, and Omar in front of Muslims, which is a challenge to religion and shakes the belief of orthodox Sunni Muslims.<sup>92</sup>

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91. al-Masry al-Youm, Dec. 7, 2011, <http://today.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=320096>; see part of the ceremony at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JipNu6amEm>.

92. EIPR, "Besieging Freedom of Thought."



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7) May 4, 2012

## After Shia religious authority Ali al-Korani's visit to Egypt, Azhar states that the spread of Shiism in Egypt serves regional expansions; MP demands decisive measures against Shiism in Egypt

Al-Azhar and the Ministry of Endowments condemned Lebanese Shia Sheikh Ali al-Korani's visit to Egypt and his lectures. Several Shia Egyptians welcomed al-Korani on his five-day visit to Egypt, met with him, and organized private lectures, seen by some as the beginning of activity to establish Shia husseinyas.

A statement from al-Azhar described the visit as "unacceptable interference and conduct." Dr. Mohammed Gamiya, the secretary-general of the sheikh of al-Azhar's technical office and the media director for the Azhar Administration, said, "The Islamic Research Academy has already issued a statement in this regard in which it affirmed that Sunnis are not permitted to spread their rite among Shia and Shia may not spread their rite among Sunnis." He added, "Al-Azhar will never permit the creation of tendencies that use the alleged Shiism of the prophet's family as a cover for their sectarian objectives, confessional delusions, and regional expansions."

The statement said, "Al-Azhar, troubled by Western manifestations and strife that have begun to emerge and dare to encroach on mosques and undermine their sanctity, affirms once more the need for the Egyptian people and Muslims in Egypt to hold fast to the unity of their religious fabric and their adherence throughout their history to the school of Sunni orthodoxy. This is the school in whose shadow they have lived and whose tolerant belief and moderate thought they have adhered." Affirming that it would confront all malicious, criminal attempts, al-Azhar said, "Egypt has no need of such confessions that sow division and propagate enmity of the prophet's companions and caliphs based on false myths and obsolete historical views."

Dr. Salem Abd al-Galil, deputy endowment minister for outreach affairs, said, "The Shia authority's visit to Egypt at this time is in my view suspicious. Perhaps if the visit had been official, with a publicly announced, specific program, we would not have objected or questioned its objectives. But since it was unofficial, I believe it has ill-intended objectives that do not serve the stability, security, and safety of the nation. I fear that the Shias may attempt to exploit the unstable situation in Egypt to sow the seeds of strife and spread the Shia rite in a country whose Muslims know they are orthodox Sunnis in their very core and where Azhar for more than 1,000 years has anchored this rite in Egypt and the entire world. I do not think we will permit the spread of any rite that is contrary to the Sunni rite in our beloved country, especially the Shia rite. I hope that the children of the nation gather around the moderate Sunni course (the course of al-Azhar) and that all religious

currents who share the Sunni rite, though they differ in some academic branches or preaching methods, rally around it.”

Several members of the Islamic Research Academy also condemned the Shia religious authority’s visit. Dr. Nasr Farid Wassel, a member of the academy, said, “If these seminars concerned purely jurisprudential matters, there is no objection, and they must be made public to all without secrecy. But if they were to spread Shia thought, they are absolutely not permissible. It is wholly unacceptable to publicize the rules and principles of this thought from the religious and political perspective.” Affirming the prominent role of al-Azhar in confronting such ideas and rites, he said, that it was “the sole bulwark against the spread of the Shia rite, or any other rites. Al-Azhar studies all rites, such as Shiism, al-Abaziya, and al-Zahiriya, from a comparative perspective without prejudice to any one of them.”

A member of the People’s Assembly, Yasser al-Qadi (independent) said that he would ask Mohammed Saad al-Katatni, the speaker of the assembly, to send an urgent statement to the prime minister and the ministers of interior and endowment seeking decisive action against “the Shia tide in Egypt.”<sup>93</sup>

## 8) May 2012

### Anti-Shia coalition initiates activities

As Shia Egyptians began claiming their religious and political rights and participating in public life and more individuals began announcing or manifesting their Shia faith on social media, a group of activists, researchers, and students of Islamic law close to Salafi currents announced the establishment of the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Companions and Prophet’s Family.

The founders of the coalition said they were “a group who took action to respond to the assertions of adherents of Shiism on the Bi-I-Tuk website. They then established a Facebook page in 2010, and after the January revolution, began thinking about establishing the coalition.”<sup>94</sup> The founders of the coalition said their objective was to respond to Shia ideas and defend Sunnism and what they considered a defense of the companions and mothers of the believers in the face of the Shia rite’s opinion of them. They also sought to stand up to the “Shia

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93. Al-Ahram, May 4, 2012, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/Religious-thought/News/147228.aspx>.

94. Riad al-Sona network, May 2012, <http://www.riadalsona.com/play.php?catsmktba=9597>.

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tide” in Egypt and what they saw as Shia Egyptians’ attempt to proselytize.<sup>95</sup>

Coalition members incited against Shia Egyptians’ attempt to manifest their beliefs and worship. On its own page and the social media of members, the coalition publicized places that some Shias had been gathering for the purpose of worship or to hold small, private religious services, and they called for protests and assemblies to foil attempts by Shias to visit the tombs of venerated figures on various occasions.

## 9) May 2012

### Home of Shia leader in al-Ragdiya stormed based on allegations that he had established a husseiniya; a journalist and MP incite against Shia Egyptians

Reporters with al-Watan broke into a house owned by the family of leading Shia Emad al-Qandil in the town of Ragdiya, located in the Tanta district, without the permission of the owners and filmed the inside of the house. On May 19, 2012, the newspaper published a story titled “al-Watan Exposes with Photos the First Shia husseiniya in Egypt.” The story said that the paper had “pierced the barrier of secrecy imposed by Egyptian Shias around the location of the first Shia husseiniya to be opened recently in Egypt. What they call a husseiniya was inaugurated in the presence of Iranian scholar Ali al-Korani during his visit to Egypt.” The paper described books and publications of Shia literature as well as audio equipment allegedly used in religious celebrations and meetings. Speaking of al-Korani’s visit to Egypt, the story accused him of maintaining ties with Iranian intelligence and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, describing al-Korani’s visit as “a step on the road of the Iranian plot to spread Shiism in Egypt.”<sup>96</sup>

Al-Watan also published an interview with Walid Ismail, the coordinator of the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Prophet’s Companions and Family. Ismail said in the interview that the coalition “had decided to set a date to march on this husseiniya and demolish it, by mobilizing pure Muslims, zealous in their defense of Islam and the Sunna, to keep the Shia in line. But after consulting some noble scholars, we discovered that the current situation in Egypt cannot bear such a huge demonstration. After the presidential elections, we may reconsider the idea. If we remain silent about al-Korani’s visit, as if it’s normal, matters will develop and the

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95. Interview with Walid Ismail, a founder of the coalition, el-Saba7, <http://www.elsaba7.com/NewsDtl.aspx?Id=114593>.

96. Al-Watan, May 19, 2012.

Shias will be able to penetrate further and establish husseiniyas openly and frankly.” Ismail accused al-Korani of being an Iranian agent and accused Egyptian Shias of loyalty to Iranian Shia religious authorities. He said that al-Korani’s visit to Egypt was part of “a serious, important plan in the Iranian plot to spread Shiism in Egypt.”<sup>97</sup>

The ONA news agency quoted Brig. Gen. Asaad Zakir, an inspector with General Security Inspections, who said, “General Security in Gharbiya has no knowledge of an intention by Salafis in al-Ragdiya and Tanta city centers to organize a march to demolish the Shia house in the village of Ragdiya, following news reports that it had been converted into a Shia husseiniya and as a place to propagate Shiism.”<sup>98</sup> Emad Qandil told EIPR researchers that he filed a complaint about the break-in and the incitement against him, but it was not investigated and no suspects were summoned for questioning.<sup>99</sup>

Al-Watan published another story on May 20, 2012, titled “Shia Husseiniyas Spark Anger and Fears of a Shia Invasion of Egypt,” in which it reported that the establishment of the first husseiniya to propagate Shiism in Egypt had sparked angry reactions in Islamist circles.

The story carried statements from deputies in the People’s Assembly, among them independent MP Yasser al-Qadi, who submitted an urgent request for information to Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri, the ministers of interior and endowments, and Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb demanding swift action to stop “the Shia tide after the inauguration of the Shia husseiniya, the misguided exploitation by some of the freedom prevailing in Egypt after the January revolution on the grounds of freedom of religion, and the catastrophic impacts of the political Shia tide in Egypt, which is still targeted by foreign bodies.” He said that the country had become “a playground” for all the world’s intelligence agencies, specifically Iran, which was spending huge sums to promote Shiism, he alleged.

The story also reported that lawyer and MP Nizar Ghorab filed a lawsuit against the prime minister, the minister of interior, the sheikh of al-Azhar, the Fatwa Office, and the Endowment Ministry, challenging their failure, by omission, to confront what he called “the Shia tide and invasion of Egypt.” He added, that the spread of Shiism was a threat to Egyptian national security and constituted a serious danger to social peace.

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97. Al-Watan, May 20, 2012.

98. ONA, May 21, 2012.

99. Interview with Emad Qandil, Dec. 2014.

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10) May 20, 2012

## Meeting at Azhar Administration with representatives of Salafi currents and the Muslim Brotherhood to discuss response to spread of Shiism in Egypt

The Azhar Administration hosted a meeting with representatives of the Islamic Research Academy, the syn-  
dicate for the prophet's descendants, the central administration for Sufi orders, the Muslim Brotherhood, the  
Salafi Call, and several independent Islamic bodies to discuss "the dangers of Shiism" in Egypt. Based on the  
meeting, Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb decided to form a committee, which he would head, to confront  
the spread of Shiism in Egypt. Hassan al-Shafie, the head of Tayyeb's technical office, said, "The new directions  
that have emerged in Egypt, including husseiniyas, and the Shia tide threaten the unity of the religious, social,  
and spiritual fabric in Egypt, and this is the dimension that concerns al-Azhar. What concerns us is to protect  
the Egyptian religious landscape. Some wish to make the situation in Egypt like that in some neighboring Arab  
countries with sectarian and communal conflict, although we have no sectarian or religious schisms in Egypt."  
He added, "Scholars are not opposed to Shias living in Egypt, but we cannot recognize a sectarian schism in  
the Egyptian fabric, and we will work to uproot it. We will also not allow actions by some to call into question  
some Quranic verses or curse the companions or Aisha. This, we will be alert to."

Salafi preacher Mohammed Hassan welcomed Azhar's position and said that al-Azhar would continue to guard  
Sunnism. "The meeting with al-Azhar concluded with several practical steps, most importantly stemming the  
Shia tide, because al-Azhar utterly, unequivocally rejects the establishment of any husseiniya on Egyptian soil,"  
he said. "We will not accept even a speck of Shiism on the land of Egypt. The destructive, false rites will be  
broken on the rock of Egypt, so that sectarian, communal fighting does not enter our land."<sup>100</sup>

Dr. Mohammed al-Mukhtar al-Mahdi, a member of the Islamic Research Academy and the president of al-  
Gam'iya al-Shar'iya, said, "al-Azhar is the guardian of orthodox Sunnism. Sunni society cannot be penetrated  
by Shia ideas that wholly contravene it and even shock the sentiment of Sunnis with curses of the compan-  
ions and claims of infallibility for non-prophets, which are the two main points of disagreement between us."  
Al-Mahdi said that confronting "the Shia invasion of Egypt" could only be done by "combining all educational,  
media, governmental, and security efforts to monitor the issue of foreign funding for the propagation of rites  
that affect the unity of the Islamic community and sectarian harmony in it." He urged all print and audiovisual  
media to not disseminate Shia thought and to redouble efforts to spread the principles of Sunnism dominant  
in Egypt. He also asked the Ministry of Education to teach books that explain the Sunni rite without offend-

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100. World Association for al-Azhar Graduates, May 20, 2012, [http://waag-azhar.org/news\\_archive1.aspx?id=979](http://waag-azhar.org/news_archive1.aspx?id=979).

ing other states that adopt other rites, to avoid inflaming hatred and hostility toward them. “Let us compare thought to thought, provided that freedom of thought is regulated by general law, the country’s constitution, and moral guidelines.” He called on “all religious institutions, imams, and preachers to spread the fundamentals of the Sunni method and explicate the sanctity of the companions of the prophet, God’s prayers and peace upon him, who transmitted to us Islam, its judgments, and its laws.”

Dr. Abd al-Rahman al-Barr, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Guidance Bureau, said that the meeting “represents the whole spectrum of scholars in Egypt under the aegis of al-Azhar, to reject the presence of husseiniyas.” Mohammed Emara, a member of the Islamic Research Academy and then the editor of al-Azhar magazine, said, “Many non-Muslims want to transform juridically unified Sunni societies into sectarian societies, especially in Egypt, which represents the backbone of the Islamic world, to make this world a sectarian world of severe infighting, so that it is not strong enough to arise and carry the banner of civilization. The meeting of scholars convened by al-Azhar thus recommended standing up decisively to all attempts to split Egyptian ranks by creating sectarian entities that have no presence in Egyptian society and confronting all attempts to shake domestic security and weaken the national fabric.”<sup>101</sup>

## 11) June 22, 2012

### Al-Azhar and the Endowment Ministry warn ministry imams against visiting Shia holy sites

In its monthly meeting of June 22, 2012, the Islamic Research Academy, headed by Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb, warned Egyptian imams and preachers against responding to invitations to visit Iran, ostensibly to tour holy sites. The academy said that these invitations had been accompanied by the distribution of books promoting Shia doctrines that were unacceptable to Sunnis. Al-Azhar cautioned against responding to such efforts, which sought to rend “the unity of Sunni societies” and turn them into “sectarian societies” with severe infighting or realize “the intent of the enemies of the Islamic community.”<sup>102</sup>

The Ministry of Endowments, in a statement to mosque imams and preachers, also warned against accepting invitations to visit “holy sites” in Iran, highlighting the need to report such invitations immediately. The ministry said in its statement, “It has been recently observed that some Iranian figures are visiting mosques associated with the prophet’s family in Cairo and the provinces and presenting invitations bearing the signature of

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101. Al-Ahram al-Masa’i, May 20, 2012.

102. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Jun. 22, 2012.

some Iranian religious figures asking preachers and imams to visit the so-called holy sites.”

The statement added that the goal of such “dubious” invitations is “to confuse the faith of the Islamic community and foment strife in it,” adding that the ministry would take harsh action against any imams or preachers who responded to these invitations.

Gamal Abd al-Sattar, the general coordinator of the Preachers Syndicate (under establishment) and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, said that the syndicate “rejects all forms and attempts to spread Shiism in Egypt and it will coordinate with the Ministry of Endowments to hold to account any imam who responds to such invitations.”<sup>103</sup>

On July 22, the Endowment Ministry reiterated its rejection of visits by imams and preachers to holy places in Iran, saying in a statement that severe measures would be taken against any person who violated the ministry’s directives and accepted these “dubious” invitations. The ministry said the invitations aimed to confuse the faith of the Islamic community.<sup>104</sup>

## 12) July 2012

### Controversy on practice of Shia rites in Harbit, Sharqiya

Several residents of the town of Harbit, located in the Sharqiya governorate, filed a complaint with the security directorate accusing Sheikh Hassan Shehata and his followers of establishing a husseiniya and engaging in Shia rituals over several days in a house owned by his family. Al-Youm al-Sabia reported that the complainants warned that the performance of such “alien” rituals would lead to Sunni-Shia massacres.<sup>105</sup>

Harbit is the hometown of Hassan Shehata, who was killed by a mob in June 2013 in the town of Zawya Abu Muslim after taking part in a meeting there with some local Shias.

On “10 pm,” a program aired on the Dream Channel, Wael Ibrashi aired a report in which some local residents of Harbit rejected the “husseiniya” allegedly established by Shehata.<sup>106</sup>

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103. Al-Ahram al-Masa’i, Jun. 22, 2012.

104. Al-Ahram, Jul. 22, 2012, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/The-First/News/161686.aspx>.

105. al-Youm al-Sabia, Jul. 2012, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2012/7/7/%D8%BA%D8%B6%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A3%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B7-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9/725745#.VxI0i3BlqfV>.

106. al-Bashayer, Jul. 2, 2012, <http://elbashayeronline.com/index.php?page=viewn&nid=201929>.

Sources in Hassan Shehata's family told EIPR researchers that many of Shehata's family and followers lived in Harbit, where they continually attempted to meet and worship in small-scale, private services, but they were subjected to persistent incitement by what the sources described as Wahhabis and Salafis in the village.<sup>107</sup>

### 13) July 18, 2012

#### Inauguration of the Center for Al al-Beit Sciences

Several Shia leaders opened the Center for Al al-Beit Sciences for Human Studies in the Sayyed Zeinab neighborhood of Cairo. The center's website says it is a limited partnership company (license no. 3857) operating to prepare, publish, and distribute research and studies in various intellectual, cultural, media, economic, and social spheres, along with cassette tapes, videos, CDs, and all manner of publications that serve the center's objectives. Dr. Assem Fahim, the CEO of the Center for Al Beit Sciences, Dr. Ahmed Rassem al-Nafis, a professor at Mansoura University, and Demerdash al-Aqali helped to launch the center.<sup>108</sup>

### 14) October 2012

#### Al-Azhar magazine distributes book (The General Features of the Shia Religion); its introduction says Shiism is a religion whose people conspire against Muslims

Al-Azhar magazine, published by the Islamic Research Academy, re-released Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib's *The General Features of the Shia Religion* and distributed a free copy with the October issue of the magazine. Mohammed Emara, then the editor of the journal and member of the academy and later a member of the Senior Azhar Scholars Board, wrote the introduction. "Shiism is not a rite or a sect, but a religion," Emara wrote. "Its followers allied with the Crusaders, Hulagu, the American Empire, and Zionist Christianity against Muslims."<sup>109</sup>

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107. Interview with a member of Hassan Shehata's family who requested anonymity, Jun. 2012.

108. See the center's website, [https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:tsl2kMOICjUJ:moalyalalbit.arabblogs.com/sawt.html+%&cd=1&hl=ar&ct=clnk&gl=eg&lr=lang\\_en|lang\\_ar&client=Ubuntu](https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:tsl2kMOICjUJ:moalyalalbit.arabblogs.com/sawt.html+%&cd=1&hl=ar&ct=clnk&gl=eg&lr=lang_en|lang_ar&client=Ubuntu).

109. al-Azhar magazine, Oct. 2012.



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15) October 8, 2012

## Azhar organizes lecture series featuring prominent Salafis to confront Shiism; state mufti Ali Gomaa says spread of Shia rite in Egypt undermines security of society

On October 7, 2012, al-Azhar, acting through the Islamic Research Academy and the Senior Azhar Scholars Board, launched a lecture series to confront Shia thought and “intellectual currents pouring into society.” The series featured lectures by Azhar scholars and prominent Salafis and Sufis.

The lectures were held under the aegis of Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb and featured several members of the Senior Azhar Scholars Board, including Dr. Ali Gomaa, Ahmed Omar Hashem, Mohammed Emera, Mohammed Mukhtar al-Mahdi, Ahmed Maabad Abd al-Karim, Mohammed Kamal Imam, and Dr. Ali al-Salos.

According to Sheikh Ali Abd al-Baqi, the secretary-general of the Islamic Research Academy, “The lectures, which will continue until mid-October, are part of the Islamic Research Academy’s efforts to assume its role in engaging with the intellectual and cultural problems facing Egyptian society and the entire Islamic community, based on the directives of his eminence, the high imam.”

In the first lecture, Mohammed Emara, a member of the Senior Azhar Scholars Board, said that Sunni societies were facing “a Shia tide” and he stressed the need to confront “Shia zealotry” to protect society from these ideas. He added that sectarian divisions and the fragmentation of cultural unity achieve the goals of Zionism and imperialism.<sup>110</sup>

In a lecture on October, Chief Mufti Ali Gomaa warned of the spread of Shiism in Egypt. Directing his words to “reasonable Shias,” he said, “Spreading Shiism outside its environment in Sunni states will cause strife and instability and shake the security of society.”<sup>111</sup>

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110. Al-Ahram, Oct. 8, 2012, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/Religious-thought/News/175609.aspx>.

111. al-Ahram, Oct. 11, 2012, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/Religious-thought/News/176302.aspx>.

## 16) November 2012

### University professor barred from teaching after discussing Aisha, the prophet's wife

Students in the Arabic language and Islamic studies departments at Minya University organized a protest in front of the Faculty of Humanities on November 7, 2012 asking for the dismissal of Dr. Younes Khodari, an assistant professor in the Islamic studies department. Students condemned the professor's teaching and presented a brief to the dean saying he had promoted Shiism and defamed the prophet's companions and Aisha in his lectures and notes. Students objected to some portions of Khodari's book, *Studies in the History of Arab States*, which he had taught the previous year, but had not distributed to students in the current academic year.

In a statement to EIPR, Khodari denied defaming the prophet or the companions or propagating Shiism, saying he was a Sunni and had taught Islamic history since 2001 to students in the Arabic language and Islamic studies departments at Minya University. His specialty is in three eras of Islamic history: the prophetic state, the state of the rightly guided caliphs, and the Umayyad state. He relies on strong academic sources, such as Tabari's text, and is a specialist in Quranic exegesis before he is a historian. He said that the students wanted to change history, deny facts, and set the curriculum in line with their own ideas. According to him, a professor at the university had played a role in provoking the students, to further his ambition for the post of assistant dean for teaching affairs, which had been empty since October 25. He added that the university president and the faculty dean gave in to the students' demands simply to calm the waters.

On November 13, students in the history department organized a protest in front of the dean's office asking that Khodari be barred from teaching "history texts" to the second-year students on the grounds that he defamed the prophet the previous year, even though the curriculum contained religious material and focused on the Islamic conquests of India and Andalusia.

On November 8, 2012, Dr. Mohammed Ahmed al-Sayyed, the dean of the Faculty of Humanities, issued a decree relieving Khodari of his teaching duties due to objections from the students to his Islamic history curriculum. University President Mohammed Ahmed Sherif also formed a committee to examine the history textbook Khodari used to teach second-year students of Islamic studies and Arabic, to determine the nature of the academic and historical information therein and whether it deviated from the rules and norms of university teaching.

Khodari was informed by telephone of the investigation and the teaching ban, though he was never questioned. This is in violation of the university law, which does not permit the university administration to levy sanctions without first questioning the faculty member in question.<sup>112</sup>

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112. This incident was discussed in depth in "Besieging Freedom of Thought."

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17) November 24, 2012

## Interior Ministry prevents Shias from gathering at Hussein Mosque on Ashoura; Azhar issues statement: Shiism is cover for regional expansions

The security apparatus prevented several Shia Egyptians from entering the Hussein Mosque in Cairo to mark Ashoura and perform Shia rituals in the mausoleum. A police force with the Gamaliya station was deployed at the main gate of the mosque and searched worshippers before the afternoon prayer.

The Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Prophet's Companions and Family announced that it had joined the Muslim Revolutionaries movement in filing a complaint with the Gamaliya station, asking police to bar Shia rituals inside the Hussein mausoleum and prevent Shias from commemorating the martyrdom of Hussein at Karbala. The coalition announced that it was organizing surveillance groups around the Hussein Mosque to confront Shias and distribute books and papers responding to their ideas.<sup>113</sup>

Al-Azhar commented on the incident in a statement issued on December 9: "The Egyptian people and Muslims in Egypt hold dear the unity of their religious fabric and their adherence to the orthodox Sunni rite." The statement added, "Al-Azhar is the academic, historical, and major referential edifice of Sunnis," and it declared its "lawful adherence and spiritual fidelity to the noble family of the prophet." Azhar said it would never permit "the creation of tendencies that use the alleged Shiism of the prophet's family as a cover for their sectarian objectives, confessional delusions, and regional expansions." The statement said that al-Azhar "will be on the alert for those who seek to tear the religious unity and spiritual fabric of the Muslim people in Egypt."<sup>114</sup>

18) November 16, 2012

## Arrest of Shias assembled in a home in Doqqi; foreigners among them deported

The security forces raided an apartment in the Doqqi neighborhood of Cairo while a group of Shias was holding prayer services. A force with the Doqqi police station and other Interior Ministry directorates, including the Passports and Emigration Department and Homeland Security, raided the apartment.

The security forces divided the persons in the apartment into two groups, one Egyptian and the other non-Egypt-

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113. Al-Ahram, Nov. 25, 2012, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/archive/Incidents/News/184880.aspx>.

114. al-Ahram al-Masa'i, Dec. 9, 2012, [web16.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=729415&eid=682](http://web16.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=729415&eid=682).

tian. The foreigners in the apartment were asked for their passports and the reasons for their presence in Egypt, and personal information was collected from all people in the apartment.

The building owner had rented five apartments in the building to foreign Shias of various nationalities since November 2011. Since that year, they had been organizing a congregational prayer every Friday for their friends from outside the building. When the apartment was raided, there were five Egyptians present, including two minors, as well as two Egyptian-Americans and an Egyptian-Lebanese.

Four hours after the security forces entered and collected the personal information of all persons present, they arrested eight people, two Egyptians and six foreigners (a Tunisian, Briton, Swede, Serbian, Spaniard, and Tunisian).

A police report was filed on the six non-Egyptians (no. 15585/Doqqi station misdemeanors) for violations of residency renewal requirements. The defendants appeared before the Doqqi Prosecution, which released them after bringing them before the Passports Department. They left Cairo on Sunday, November 18, 2012, based on the request of the Interior Ministry's Passports and Emigration Department.

H. al-Kholi, one of the people present in the apartment at the time of the raid, told EIPR researchers that they were a group of Mahdiya, followers of Imam Ahmed al-Mahdi, a small schismatic sect of the larger Shia rite, and that they had met over the internet. M. al-Hilal, one of the persons released, said they had been meeting in the apartment for a year for prayer and to discuss their ideas without any problem.

El-Mesryoon carried a story on November 4 on Mahdi Shia gatherings in a school, to teach their rite's beliefs in Doqqi. The story alleged that security reports said that the group was involved in the death of Egyptian soldiers on the eastern border.<sup>115</sup>

## 19) Article 219 of the 2012 constitution refers to "orthodox Sunni rites"

Article 219 of the constitution adopted in late 2012 stated, "The principles of Islamic law [shari'a] include its general proofs, its foundational legal precepts, its rules of jurisprudence, and its reputable sources in the orthodox Sunni rites." The article acted as a gloss on Article 2 of the constitution, marking the first sectarian reference in an Egyptian constitution.<sup>116</sup>

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115. El-Mesryoon, Nov. 4, 2012.

116. See EIPR's commentary on provisions of the 2012 constitution, Dec. 16, 2012, <http://www.eipr.org/pressrelease/2012/12/16/1565>.

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When the 2014 constitution was drafted and the article was removed, Salafi leader Yasser Borhami wrote an article titled “Why Do We Insist on Article 219?” He said that the article’s reference to “orthodox Sunni rites” was “a protective hedge against the danger of fanatic Shia thought that seeks to invade our society.”<sup>117</sup>

## 20) February 5, 2013

### Sheikh of al-Azhar to Iranian president: the Shia tide in Sunni countries must be stemmed

Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb urged then Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to stop “the Shia tide in the countries of orthodox Sunnism,” noting the need to respect Bahrain as an Arab state and not interfere in its affairs and also to stop the bloodshed in Syria. He also called on Ahmadinejad to give Sunnis in Iran their full rights as citizens, as required by Islamic law and enshrined in international laws and customs.

Al-Tayyeb made the statement when he met Ahmadinejad on February 5, 2013 on the sidelines of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.<sup>118</sup>

After the meeting, a press conference was held with Hassan al-Shafie, al-Tayyeb’s advisor, and Ahmadinejad. Al-Shafie said that Tayyeb had addressed meetings between Shia and Sunni scholars with the objective of bringing the two rites closer, which, Shafie said, served the interest of the Shia side more than the Sunni side. Speaking for al-Tayyeb, Shafie said that among the difficulties barring rapprochement between the countries was respect for the prophet’s companions. Shafie said that it was unfortunate that the companions and prophet’s wives were denigrated, which affected relations between the two countries.

“These issues are not historical, but contemporary,” al-Shafie said. “We must not put our heads in the sand. To be faithful to a unified position, we must remove them.” When Shafie raised the issue of the companions, Ahmadinejad interrupted him saying, “We didn’t agree to this. We agreed to unity.”<sup>119</sup>

On February 21, 2013, the Iranian Fars News Agency released a statement from Ahmed Mousavi, the head of the Hajj Organization, who had accompanied Ahmadinejad on his visit to Cairo. Addressing the press conference with Ahmadinejad, Shafie, and some Azhar leaders, the statement was titled “Unpublished Details on Iranian President’s Talks with Azhar Professors.”

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117. Ana Salafy website, Jun. 9, 2013, <http://www.anasalafy.com/play.php?catsmktba=42834>.

118. Al-Akhbar, Feb. 6, 2013, <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Ar/Templates/Articles/tmpArticles.aspx?ArtID=67518#.VxJWeXBlqfV>.

119. YouTube, Feb. 5, 2013.

Mousavi said that the press conference, held in the Azhar Administration following Ahmadinejad's meeting with al-Tayyeb, was organized to discuss Shia-Sunni problems and the Syrian issue. The Iranian president was not scheduled to hold this press conference, and there was a prior agreement not to raise controversial issues publicly, which al-Azhar denied.

Mousavi said, "I felt at the press conference that it had been planned in advance, which led us to threaten to leave the conference if controversial issues were brought up publicly." Mousavi said they, the Egyptians, "were trying through the press conference to bring up Shia-Sunni problems and the Syrian issue."<sup>120</sup>

Al-Azhar issued a statement the same day responding to Mousavi's statements. "Al-Azhar has one face, one discourse. Transparency is our beacon," it said. "It is not true that the press conference was a surprise to anyone. The chief of protocol or the Iranian ambassador could have offered to explain the proceedings of the meeting to journalists and relieve the president of this, but this is a matter for the visiting delegation and has nothing to do with al-Azhar, which knows the rights of hospitality and honors Islamic mores."<sup>121</sup>

## 21) March 2013

### Minister of endowments: Egypt is closed to Shia thought

Former Endowments Minister Talaat Afifi stated that Egypt was a moderate, Sunni state and was "closed to Shia thought." He said that he did not fear incidents of Shiism in Egypt or the spread of Shia thought in Egypt, but at the same time, he was against opening up Egypt to Iranian religious tourism.<sup>122</sup>

## 22 ) March 2013

### Nour Party leaders oppose rapprochement with Iran, seeing it as an opening for Shiism, and attack Muslim Brotherhood government

Khaled Alam al-Din, a Salafi leader with the Nour Party, told Youm al-Sabia that his party firmly rejected "the Shia tide," adding that they would resist by all means any Shia presence in Egypt.

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120. BBC, Feb. 21, 2013.

121. Al-Masry al-Youm, Feb. 21, 2013.

122. Yaqin news network, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EogqnAdshKs>; CNN Arabic, [http://archive.arabic.cnn.com/2013/middle\\_east/2/21/afifi.egypt/](http://archive.arabic.cnn.com/2013/middle_east/2/21/afifi.egypt/).

Salah Abd al-Maboud, a Nour Party leader, said that the party rejected ties with Iran in general. “We fear that relations with Iran would open the door to a Shia expansion inside Egypt and that we will not permit,” he said. He added that the Brotherhood thought cooperation with Shias was possible and they have rules for it, “so it’s no wonder that we have this state of rapprochement with Iran. It’s old and is not new.”

The opposition came after the president and the government initiated a thaw with Iran by encouraging tourism between the two countries.<sup>123</sup>

## 23) April 2013

### As Iranian tourist delegation arrives, the Salafi Call and Nour Party hold rallies in several governorates under the slogan of “Shia are the enemy, beware”

In early April, an Iranian tourist delegation reached Egypt, while the Salafi Call and the Nour Party organized several rallies in various Egyptian governorates that entailed incitement against Shias. On April 3, the Salafi Call organized a conference at the Amr Ibn al-As Mosque during which Sherif al-Hawari, a member of the board of the Salafi Call, said that the group would take forceful, decisive action to protect the people from “the Shia invasion,” especially in the critical transition period given the economic crisis. “Shias enter through such doors via money and women,” he said, “We will never be silent about this. We can bear hunger and want, but we cannot bear transgressions of our belief and identity.” Al-Hawari said that Egypt was “the Shias biggest target because it is the leader of orthodox Sunnis. It is also a Shia belief that their awaited Mahdi will not emerge until Egypt is subordinate to them. With God’s permission, this will not happen. Egypt has lived Sunni and it will live and die Sunni.”<sup>124</sup>

The Salafi Call organized a similar rally under the same slogan in Kafr al-Sheikh on April 26, attended by Salafi leader Ahmed Farid. Farid said that letting Shias into Egypt is “a betrayal of Egyptians’ belief.” He added that those in charge of the country wanted to establish ties with Shias and open the country to Shia tourism, which diverged from the agreement made with President Morsi after his meeting with the Salafi Call. According to Farid, Morsi had vowed that Shias were a red line that would not be crossed.<sup>125</sup>

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123. al-Youm al-Sabia, Mar. 31, 2013, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2013/3/31/%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7-%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%87/999986#.VxJwrHBlqfX>.

124. al-Ahram, Apr. 3, 2013, <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/329309.aspx>.

125. Ahwal Misr website, Apr. 26, 2013.

On May 9, the Salafi Call organized a rally in Abu al-Haggag Square, near the Luxor Temple using the same slogan. Several members of the group's board of trustees were in attendance, including Sheikh Ahmed Farid, Sheikh Mahmoud Abd al-Hamid, and Sheikh Adel Nasr, as well as members of the group's board and Sheikh Anwar al-Saadani, the high sheikh of Salafi Call in Alexandria. On the sidelines of the rally, Salah Dahmash, the secretary-general of the Nour Party in Luxor, said that the party had observed "Shia hotbeds" in the Karnak area of Luxor that involved 30 people; a security official in Luxor denied this to al-Ahram.<sup>126</sup>

## 24) April 4, 2013

### Morsi meets with the Islamic Law Body for Rights and Reform and pledges to confront the spread of Shiism in Egypt

In a statement, the Islamic Law Body for Rights and Reform said that President Mohammed Morsi assured the group during a meeting that he was concerned to confront any attempts to spread Shiism in Egypt. The group, which includes scholars and sheikhs from the Muslims Brotherhood and Salafi currents, as well as professors from Azhar University, added that the president said that "preserving the faith of the Islamic community is his first priority. He also affirmed his rejection of all attempts to spread Shiism in Egypt and his interest in maintaining parallel political ties with various parties."<sup>127</sup>

## 25) April 5, 2013

### Salafi demonstrators attempt to storm seat of the Iranian representative in Cairo while repeating anti-Shia chants

Members of two Salafi groups attempted to storm the office of the Iranian representative in Cairo on Friday, April 5, 2013, to protest growing ties with Tehran and the resumption of Iranian tourism in Egypt, but the police stopped them, according to Reuters.

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126. Al-Ahram, May 10, 2013, [www.ahram.org.eg/News/815/60/209122/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A/%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%82%D8%B5%D8%B1.aspx](http://www.ahram.org.eg/News/815/60/209122/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%8A/%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%85%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%82%D8%B5%D8%B1.aspx).

127. al-Bidaya, Apr. 5, 2013.



Some 100 members of Salafi groups, including the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Prophet's Companions and Family, demonstrated against recent steps by Egypt to improve ties with Tehran. The protestors ripped up the Iranian flag in front of the Iranian representative's office and replaced it with the flag of the Syrian revolution, to protest Iranian support for the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad; the police later removed the flag. Demonstrators chanted slogans against the Iranian regime and in support of the Syrian revolution, as well as general anti-Shia chants, and they condemned recent government decisions to permit Iranian tourists to visit Egypt. Some protestors carried banners saying, "The people want the expulsion of the Magis," "No to Shias in Egypt," and "We will give the filthy Shia no foothold in Egypt." Mamdouh Ismail, a Salafi MP for the Asala Party, took part in the demonstration.<sup>128</sup>

## 26) April 8, 2013

### Reports that student at Azhar University questioned on suspicion of performing the call to prayer in the Shia manner on campus

Al-Shorouk reported that Dr. Mahmoud Shehata, the dean of the Islamic College for Women in Assyout, referred a student to legal affairs for questioning after other students accused her of performing the call to prayer following the Shia rite in the campus student mosque. The dean said that if the student were proven to be an adherent of Shiism, legal action would be taken against her.<sup>129</sup> The student's family preferred not to give EIPR researchers any information about the findings of the investigation, saying they feared further action against her.<sup>130</sup>

## 27) April 8, 2013

### Ministry of Tourism announces two-month moratorium on Iranian tourism

In a statement in April 2013, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism said that a two-month moratorium had been imposed on tourism from Iran to Egypt, until the second half of June 2013. The announcement came two days after Salafi protests against improved ties between Egypt and Iran, during which protestors attempted to storm the office of the Iranian representative in Cairo.

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128. Reuters, Apr. 5, 2013, <http://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARACAE9B21P420130405>; see a video of the demonstration at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IpPPmZTM8>.

129. Al-Shorouk, Apr. 8, 2013, <http://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=08042013&id=2abc8268-f796-4c62-9503-81410b281795>.

130. Telephone communication with a member of the student's family, Apr. 2013.

According to the statement, Minister Hisham Zazou decided to suspend incoming Iranian tours after the first group of Iranian tourists had reached Egypt in late March. The Akhbar Misr website, citing the official Middle East News Agency, reported that the minister said, “We will seize this period to reassess and reconsider the tourism experiment and program with the Iranian side.”<sup>131</sup>

## 28) April 9, 2013

### Tourism minister: we will meet with Salafi figures to affirm rules for Iranian tourism

Hisham Zazou, the tourism minister in the government of Hisham Qandil, said that Egypt was working with the Iranian market, given the tourism sector’s need for this type of high-spending tourism. The minister told al-Watan that talk about the spread of Shiism in Egypt was “a delusion, a figment of the imagination,” and that Iranian trips were suspended until mid-June to reconsider the experiment following strong objections from some Islamist currents to Iranian tourists in Egypt. He added that the coming period would see meetings with figures from the Salafi current to affirm specific rules set by the state.<sup>132</sup>

## 29) April 10, 2013

### Presidential spokesman: Egypt is a Sunni state and will remain a Sunni state

Ambassador Ehab Fahmi, the official spokesman for the presidency, said that Iranian tourism in Egypt had raised several questions which were being addressed within the framework of foreign tourism. At a press conference at the presidency, Fahmi said, “Our first goal is that visits by Iranians should not undermine Egypt’s particularity. Egypt is Sunni and will remain Sunni, the bastion of moderation in Islam.”

The spokesman denied that the tourism minister’s decision to suspend Iranian tourism exchange with Iran for several months came as a result of pressure from Islamist forces, especially Salafis. “We are a state open to all

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131. CNN Arabic, Apr. 8, 2013, [http://archive.arabic.cnn.com/2013/middle\\_east/4/7/egypt.iran/index.html](http://archive.arabic.cnn.com/2013/middle_east/4/7/egypt.iran/index.html).

132. Sky News Arabic, Apr. 10, 2013, <http://www.skynewsarabia.com/web/article/181841/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%95%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A9>.

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currents,” he said. “But it is unacceptable to say that the presidency was pressured by this or that current. We do not operate under pressure from anyone.”<sup>133</sup>

### 30) April 20, 2013

#### Salafi Call announces committee to confront the Shia tide and calls on official bodies to confront Shias

Sheikh Ahmed Farid, a member of the board of trustees of the Salafi Call, said that the group had formed a committee, the Committee to Confront the Shia Tide, under his chairmanship. Its goal was to “insulate the people against Shia thought.” Farid said that official bodies such as the army and intelligence service were aware of the threat of Shiism to national security because Shias “are not only a doctrinal threat, but a security, health, and social threat.” He said that the Salafi Call was assisting official bodies in reporting husseiniyas and the official bodies were responding to these reports.

Farid said the committee organized four major symposiums to warn about the Shia danger, in the Amr Ibn al-As Mosque, Cairo Station in Alexandria, Fayyoun, and Kafr al-Sheikh. Farid said the committee had distributed a half million warnings about the Shia threat through preaching and advocacy caravans roaming the streets. Discussing the committee, Farid said the deputy head was Ahmed al-Sisi, the Salafi leader from Alexandria. The ten-member committee had an officer in every governorate, and each officer would have officers on the district and village level.

Farid said the committee was engaging in media pressure to warn the public of Shias, and it had an official Facebook page.

Farid made the statements to the Nour Party media committee in Kafr al-Dawwar, after the Salafi Call organized a conference on the Shia threat, attended by Hassan Omar, a member of the education and scientific research committee in the Shura Council for the Nour Party, and several leading members of the Salafi Call in Kafra-Dawwar.<sup>134</sup>

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133. Al-Watan, Apr. 10, 2013.

134. Video of the conference, Apr. 20, 2013.

## 31) May 2013

### Salafi protests at the appointment of a marriage official in Daqahliya alleged to be Shia

Salafi parties and movements attacked the appointment of lawyer Ahmed Sobh as a marriage official in al-Asafira, located in the Matariya district of the Daqahliya governorate, claiming he was a Shia and demanding his dismissal. Alaa Mansour, an officer with the Nour Party in Mansoura, said in a statement reported by several news websites that Sobh's appointment was "a step that cannot pass in silence, as it attempts to empower Shias in some positions that assist them in spreading Shiism." Describing the decision as ridiculous, he wondered, "Has the world become so small that they can't find a marriage official for Muslims except a Shia?"

Sheikh Nasser Radwan, the founder of the Coalition for the Companions' Grandchildren and the Prophet's Family, called on local residents to prevent Sobh from doing his job and he attacked the Muslim Brotherhood, saying the move "illustrates the outright ignorance of the Muslim Brotherhood, which does not distinguish the Shia religion from Islam." He added, "By God, we will not be silent about this folly, and we will call on all the Egyptian people to stand up to this carelessness by the Brotherhood government."<sup>135</sup>

The Salafi Call and the Nour Party also collected signatures from village residents rejecting Sobh's appointment. Al-Ahram reported that the petition would be forwarded to the Endowment Ministry, the Justice Ministry, and the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Ahmed al-Sobh told Aqidati that he was Sunni, not Shia, saying the reason for the campaign against him was his multiple visits to Iran. He said those attacking him wanted to ban such visits, and anyone trying to promote ties was accused of being Shia and subjected to smear campaigns.<sup>136</sup>

## 32) May 2013

### Akhbar al-Youm publishes book with preface by Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyeb, The Shia Are Coming

In mid-May, the governmental Akhbar al-Youm publishing house released a book by Said Ismail, *The Shia Are Coming*, as part of its Book of the Day series, with a preface by Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb. Tayyeb

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135. Al-Watan, May 29, 2013.

136. Aqidati, Jun. 11, 2013, <http://www.masress.com/akidaty/1306111901>.

said in the preface that the Shia penetration of Sunni countries was significant and he expressed al-Azhar's unequivocal rejection of such penetration. He said that he would not like to see Egyptian youth become Shias and added that Shiism was a threat to the unity of the national, cultural, and social fabric in Sunni societies. "Exporting rites to another's society is folly, and everyone must condemn and stop it," he said.

Sanaa Abu al-Magd, the editor of the Book of the Day series, said in his introduction, "What led Akhbar al-Youm to publish *The Shia Are Coming* is to raise the alarm and warn of the Shia danger, which deprives Muslims of correct religion and belief." He concluded the introduction saying, "The book is a warning to those who advocate, knowingly or not, outreach to Shias. The matter is serious and grave."

### 33) June 15, 2013

#### Anti-Shia sectarian rhetoric at forum to support the Syrian revolution, attended by the president

Sheikh Mohammed Abd al-Maqsoud described Shias as "filth who curse the companions" at a conference held to support the Syrian revolution in the Cairo Stadium, attended by then President Mohammed Morsi. Abd al-Maqsoud said that Syria was the target of conspiracies seeking to remove it from the Sunni map and that these conspiracies are failed attempts and a tribulation for all Muslims.

Abd al-Maqsoud urged all Muslims to take up jihad, saying that a jihad waged with money at times took precedence over jihad through one's person.

He concluded with an appeal to President Mohammed Morsi: "Mr. President, as much as we can do without this filth who curse the companions of the prophet, however much we can do this, let us do it. The free woman does not live off her own breasts."<sup>137</sup>

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137. Video of the conference, "The Egyptian Nation and Support for the Syrian Revolution," Jun. 15, 2013.

## 34) June 26, 2013

### Killing of Sheikh Hassan Shehata and three of his disciples in an attack on a Shia gathering in Zawya Abu Muslim, Giza

The EIPR issued a report on the attack on a Shia gathering in the village of Zawya Abu Muslim, located in the Abu al-Nomros district of the Giza governorate, which ended with the death of four people and the injury of others. An EIPR team contacted the besieged Shias on Sunday evening, June 23, 2013, at the time of the incident. The team of researchers also visited the town on Sunday and Monday and interviewed and contacted several Shias living in the village and eyewitnesses.

Events began when dozens of residents of Zawya Abu Muslim attacked a home owned by a local resident known for his Shia faith while a religious gathering was underway, attended by Shia preacher Hassan Shehata and several of his followers on the afternoon of June 23, 2013. The mob surrounded the house amid incitement by Salafi preachers. The crowd threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the house and then attempted to storm it. They demolished part of the roof before managing to bring out Hassan Shehata, his two brothers, and one of his followers. The mob beat them with sticks and sharp implements and dragged them through the streets before turning them over to the police, who were present from the beginning but did not intervene, according to Shia eyewitnesses in Zawya Abu Muslim and other local residents. The Ministry of Health announced the death of four people: Hassan Mohammed Shehata, his brothers Mohammed Shehata and Ibrahim Mohammed Shehata, and his follower Emad Rabia Ali.

A Shia resident of Zawya Abu Muslim who requested anonymity told EIPR researchers that they had had invited Sheikh Shehata for a religious commemoration (the birth of a Shia imam) in the home of Farahat Ali. Shehata arrived on the afternoon of June 23 and several Shia residents, about 24, began to gather in the house.

Mohammed Farahat, the son of Farahat Ali, said in a phone interview with EIPR researchers that his father invited Shiekh Shehata for the celebration of mid-Shaaban, as well as Mohammed's impending wedding. Both witnesses said that they saw preachers known in the village for their Salafi leanings—preachers at the Tawhid Mosque—approaching the house when Shehata arrived and making phone calls. They said that the mob began to gather than afternoon, surrounding the two-story house.

Hazem Barakat, a photojournalist and a resident of Zawya Abu Muslim, said he was in the area of the crowds and saw local residents surround Farahat Ali's house. He said the crowd included members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafis, and many locals, who filled the two narrow streets in front and behind the house. Barakat

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saw them chanting at the house, saying, “Shias are infidels,” “They curse the companions and Aisha,” and “They are wife-swappers.”

Mohammed Farahat said they contacted the police for help when the siege began, and his father went out to try to calm down the crowd, telling them he had guests and it was no one’s concern. Mohammed saw people in the crowd curse and beat him. Some in the crowd chanted that they were infidels and so their property was lawful for Muslims. Mohammed added that when he tried to defend his father, they beat him as well before storming the ground floor of the house.

A Shia source said that while he was inside the house and after the crowds stormed the bottom floor, he and the residents of the house fled to the second floor and locked the door. The mob followed them and tried to break down the door, but they were initially unable to do so. They made a small opening in the door through which they tossed in Molotovs at those inside the room. Their clothes caught on fire and some sustained burns.

Mohammed Farahat said that six officers were present at the beginning of the siege, but they left after local residents threatened to beat them up. Another Shia source added that one officer came up to the second floor of the house during the siege and they let him in. He stayed with them for a few moments and then left and attempted to persuade the assailants to retreat. He returned to the room and told those inside that he could not intervene then he left as the crowd surrounding the house grew. Hazem Barakat said that he saw Central Security Forces deployed on the main road leading to Zawya Abu Muslim about 300 meters from the house, but they did not advance on the house at any time during the siege.

A video published by al-Youm al-Sabia shows local citizens surrounding the house. In the middle of the crowd, a bearded man chants into a loudspeaker, “What are Shias? Infidels!” Salafi websites, including the site of al-Mesryoon, reported that a delegation of Salafi leaders was on its way to Zawya Abu Muslim to address the crisis.

The Shia source added that some of the assailants jumped on the roof of the house from the house next door and began using a metal hammer to make two holes in the concrete roof, through which they threw Molotov cocktails and bricks at the people inside, injuring more of them.

The source said that the assailants asked them to send out the women and children, but they refused. They then told them they would not harm the local residents, but wanted the people who had come from outside the village, meaning Sheikh Shehata and those with him. The assailants ultimately managed to break down the

door on the second story. The source said that some of the assailants identified Sheikh Shehata and pointed him out. They attempted to pull him outside the house while his brothers and his disciple, Emad Rabia Ali, tried to stop them.

The EIPR obtained video footage showing the moment that the assailants brought Sheikh Shehata out of the house, beating him as his brothers and follower tried to save him. Another video filmed by eyewitness Hazem Barakat shows Sheikh Shehata being dragged through the streets.

Barakat said that he saw the assailants between 5 and 6 pm dragging the four men in the street toward the main road, beating them with sticks and stabbing them with sharp implements. A video published by Veto shows the assailants dragging the four corpses and turning them over to police forces, who put them in their vehicles.

Barakat added that police forces reached a site near the house after the four bodies were given to them. Barakat argued with one of the officers, asking him why they did not set up a cordon around the house or fire teargas to disperse the mob. The officer told him, "The locals hit us with homemade swords and threatened us," adding, "Don't tell me how to do my job." Barakat said that the locals passed around the news of Sheikh Shehata's death, sparking celebratory chants and congratulations.

Sources from the Interior Ministry told the press that the police took the bodies to the Hawamdiya Hospital. The Ministry of Health announced their death and moved the bodies to the Zeinhom Morgue in Cairo.

Sayyed Muftaf, Sheikh Shehata's lawyer, said he saw the bodies of the four men at the morgue. They bore the marks of violent injury all over their bodies, as well as traces of severe burns.

EIPR researchers visited Farahat's home on Monday, June 24, with his wife. They observed that the contents of both floors were destroyed and saw traces of fires and holes in the concrete roof. Mohammed Farahat said that the first floor of the house contained the furniture and appliances for his new house; some were stolen and others were destroyed.

EIPR researchers saw flyers posted by the Salafi Call warning of "the Shia danger" and saying, "They are the enemy, beware" and "Shias are more dangerous than Jews."

The Shia source said that on Friday, May 24, Salafi groups in Zawya Abu Muslim organized assemblies and marches around the town to warn of Shia residents, after a Salafi website published a video showing a group of Shias in Zawya Abu Muslim with Sheikh Shehata visiting the mausoleum of Imam al-Shafie on May 12.



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The source added that the marches throughout the town stopped at the homes of local Shias and chanted anti-Shia slogans. Mohammed Farahat said that they stopped in front of his house as well. Hazem Barakat said that he saw the march moving through the village, led by Salafi sheikhs who ran the Tawhid Mosque, chanting “Shias are damned and infidels.” Barakat added that Sheikh Maher al-Sharbatli, the preacher at the Ahl al-Taqwa Mosque, run by the Endowments Ministry, dedicated his sermon that day to discussing the threat of Shias and their ideas. Barakat gave EIPR researchers a copy of a video of the march.

The EIPR documented calls that went out on Salafi websites urging their followers to head to Zawya Abu Muslim that day. The page of the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Prophet’s Companions and Family published a notice at 5:44 pm saying, “Urgent: all honorable Sunnis close to Zawya Abu Muslim in Cairo should go there to aid their brethren against the Shias there because we have received news that the Shia have begun to assemble to go there.”

The page of Students of Islamic Law posted at 7 pm, “A short time ago 1,000 of our brothers in al-Haram surrounded the place where the Shia Hassan Shehata the infidel and some of his companions were located. They killed some and injured others and left the bodies for Central Security Forces to collect...joy prevails among the townsfolk.”

The Shia source said that dozens of Shias live in Zawya Abu Muslim, maybe more than 200 in his estimation, but he said that their biggest assembly drew only about 30 people.

He added that most of the Shias in Zawya Abu Muslim met Sheikh Shehata when he worked as the imam in a mosque in the Beni Soueif military camp near Zawya in the late 1960s. They learned about Sufism and Shiism from him and became his disciples. They would meet with him on religious occasions outside of Zawya Abu Muslim and he visited them from time to time, but before the last visit, he had not come to Zawya in 15 years.

The source said that Shias in Zawya Abu Muslim were subjected to constant harassment. Nine of them, along with a tenth person, were detained from 2008 to February 2011. After their release, Salafis began to warn the people about them, and they threatened Shias and prohibited them from praying in local mosques.

A statement issued by the presidency said that it would not deal lightly with those who undermined the nation’s security and unity. The unfortunate incident, the statement said, was utterly inimical to the spirit of tolerance and respect for which the moderate Egyptian people are known. The statement expressed the presidency’s rejection of any law breaking or bloodshed whatever the motive and its rejection of such criminal actions. It affirmed that the competent state bodies had been instructed to pursue and apprehend the perpetrators of this heinous crime and quickly bring them to justice.

Then Prime Minister Hisham Qandil condemned the incident and said it was a heinous crime that violated the principles and teachings of all divine laws and stood at odds from hundreds of years of religious tolerance in Egypt. He rejected hate speech, incitement to violence, and the fomenting of sectarianism, alien to Egyptian society. Qandil said that he was following the investigations with the competent bodies to ensure justice was done and the offenders were properly punished, to stand as an example to any person who took it upon himself to tamper with the national fabric.

Shia leader Dr. Ahmed Rassem al-Nafis said that the incident was “a lynching perpetrated in plain view of the security apparatus. It will have an enormous impact.” In a phone-in interview with “The People Want” on the Tahrir Channel, he said that the lynching and killing of the Shias was not a sudden event, but the consequence of sectarian incitement and appeals by citizens to kill Shias.

Gehad al-Haddad, the media spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood and an advisor to the Freedom and Justice Party, condemned the incident and attacked police. Haddad, speaking over his English-language Twitter account, said that any form of premeditated violence against any Egyptian should never pass in silence. If the police could not perform this task, he said, others should intervene.

Nader Bakkar, the deputy head of the Nour Party for media affairs, said, “The party does not accept the shedding of Egyptians’ blood or being set upon in this way, which shocked us all.” Bakkar added, speaking over the personal Twitter account, “The Nour Party condemns the events at Zawya Abu Muslim and demands that the law be enforced against those involved in this strife.”

Mohamed ElBaradei said on his Twitter account, “The killing and mobbing of Egyptians because of their belief is a heinous result of disgusting religious rhetoric run amok. We await decisive steps from the regime and al-Azhar before we lose what remains of our humanity.”

Sheikh Eid Azouz, a leader of the Salafi Call in the village of Abu al-Nomros, said, “The attempt to link Salafis with the killing of Shias is the utmost mendacity. There is nothing that would urge or compel them to do so.” Azouz said that hidden hands were striving to undermine Salafis’ popularity and implicate them in matters with which they had nothing to do in order to portray them as terrorists and to foment a sectarian war in Egypt like that seen in Iraq, Iran, and other Arab countries. In a press statement, Azouz added that in light of the current state of tension, conspirers were actively sowing discord, aided by some malicious bodies, first and foremost the unprincipled media. Azouz condemned security’s failure to stop the incident when it began, noting that the chief of investigations and the security chief only engaged with the incident after local residents informed them that Shias had come to the village, just four hours before the clashes. He said that security’s failure to act when Shias first came to the village was a provocation for local residents, particularly Islamists in the village.<sup>138</sup>

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138. EIPR report on the killing of Shias in Zawya Abu Muslim, Jun. 26, 2013, <http://eipr.org/pressrelease/2013/06/26/1750>.

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35) June 26, 2013

## Arrest of Shia leader Mohammed al-Dereini, charged with possession of unlicensed weapons

The security apparatus arrested Shia activist Mohammed al-Dereini on June 26 from inside his apartment in the Haram neighborhood. Security announced it had found two automatic rifles in his possession, along with 28 rounds of ammunition and a digital camera. The public solicitor with the South Giza Prosecution, Ahmed al-Bahrawi, told Reuters, “Police investigations found that he was in possession of weapons. The police obtained a warrant from the Public Prosecution to search his home and arrest him.”<sup>139</sup>

Members of Dereini’s family told EIPR researchers that they had been threatened by “Salafi groups” and had recently filed several complaints with the public prosecutor and security bodies regarding threats of physical harm to his family. The security apparatus took no action and offered no protection, prompting Dereini to secure his house with weapons.<sup>140</sup>

The Haram Prosecution, headed by Judge Wael Khashaba, remanded Dereini for four days pending investigation. Prosecutor Amr Safwat questioned al-Dereini about the reason for his possession of the weapons. Dereini responded that he was panicked and alarmed after the killing of Sheikh Hassan Shehata in Abu Muslim in Giza and decided to procure weapons to protect himself.

On July 11, the petitions judge in the Haram Misdemeanor Court renewed al-Dereini’s detention for 15 days on charges of possession of firearms. Al-Dereini’s family told EIPR lawyers that he was tortured and mistreated in detention, and his lawyer filed complaints to the prosecution.

In the session of May 18, 2014, al-Dereini was released pending a decision on the constitutionality of Article 37 of the firearms and ammunition law.

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139. Al-Masry al-Youm, Jun. 26, 2013.

140. Telephone interviews with members of Dereini’s family, Jun. 2013.

## 36) November 14, 2013

### Shia activist arrested in the environs of Hussein Mosque on Ashoura and referred to trial on blasphemy charges

Police arrested Shia activist Amr Abdullah in Fatimid Cairo while he was in the environs of Hussein Mosque on November 14, following arguments with Salafi activist and members of anti-Shia groups. He and a group of Shias were attempting to visit Hussein's mausoleum that day.<sup>141</sup>

Amr Abdullah told EIPR researchers that he and his friends wanted to go to the Hussein Mosque to commemorate the death of Hussein. Denying that he intended to engage in any specific rites, he said he wished to engage in prayers and remembrance, part of his and all Egyptians' freedom to manifest their beliefs. He said he was threatened by the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Companions and Prophet's Family.<sup>142</sup>

The Ministry of Endowments said it rejected any rite associated with Shiism in any mosque and asked the Interior Ministry to confront such practices. On the occasion of Ashoura, the ministry announced it had closed the Hussein mausoleum and would close the mosque doors between prayers to prevent any gathering there.<sup>143</sup>

EIPR researchers went to the Hussein Mosque, where they observed groups of Salafis standing at the entrance to the mosque in plain view of security forces that were deployed on the scene since the morning. The Salafis were passing out flyers about "the Shia danger" and stopping any passersby they suspected of being Shia and handing them over to security. According to EIPR observers, the Salafis repeatedly stopped a number of individuals and turned them over to security, which later released them all with the exception of Amr Abdullah. According to statements from officials with the Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Companions and Prophet's Family, they formed committees to be on the alert for the Shia presence at the mosque on Ashoura.<sup>144</sup>

Shia activist Mahmoud Gaber said that he went to the site to commemorate Ashoura. Salafi youth identified him and another Shia activist, al-Taher al-Hashimi, in courtyard of the Hussein Mosque, along with Amr Abdullah and several other known Shia youth activists. He added that several Salafis began to verbally and physically assault Shia youths at the site, prompting an argument. They subsequently took Amr Abdullah to security,

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141. Al-Masry al-Youm, Nov. 2013, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/338674>.

142. Telephone communication, Nov. 13, 2013.

143. Al-Masry al-Youm, Nov. 2013, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/337205>

144. See their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=590156207716355&set=a.555920421139934.1073741828.523354117V9A9A&type=1&theater>.

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which moved him to the Gamaliya police station. The coalition announced on its Facebook page that they were the ones who had turned over Abdullah to police and filed complaint no. 7654/Gamaliya misdemeanor against him, after which he was referred to the Zeinhom Prosecution for questioning.<sup>145</sup>

Lawyer Sayyed Muftah, who was present during Abdullah's questioning by the prosecution, said that as is typical in cases involving Shia defendants, blasphemy charges were filed against Abdullah and he was remanded to custody pending investigation.

### 37) January 2014

#### Endowments minister: Shiism in Egypt threatens Egyptian national security

Endowments Minister Mohammed Mukhtar Gomaa said that Shias were proselytizing in Egypt, which required resistance and joint efforts, and Azhar was making great efforts in this regard. Speaking to Nisf al-Dunya magazine on January 11, 2014, he added that some countries were attempting to promote Shiism in Egypt and were spending huge sums of money to this end. Gomaa said that the dissemination of Shia ideas was leading to divisions in Egypt, which, he said, was "a moderate, Sunni, Azhari country." "The proliferation of husseiniyas and Shia material support constitute a threat to the security and safety of society," he said. "We must all therefore be alert to this because at times the issue assume political dimensions. There are states that wish to gain a foothold, so we must understand that the issue is not only one of Islamic law, but of the security, safety, and strength of this nation and Egyptian national security."<sup>146</sup>

### 38) February 26, 2014

#### Shia activist Amr Abdullah sentenced to five years in jail on charges of blasphemy and cursing the prophet's companions

The Gamaliya Misdemeanor Court sentenced Shia activist Amr Abdullah to five years in jail with labor on charges of blasphemy and defaming the companions, under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code. Abdullah was a student at the American University in Cairo at the time and the son of Egypt's former ambassador to Sudan.

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145. Telephone communication with Mahmoud Gaber, Nov. 14, 2013.

146. Ahram online, Jan. 11, 2014, [gate.ahram.org.eg/News/441413.asp](http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/441413.asp).

A security force with the Gamaliya police station arrested Abdullah near the Hussein Mosque on the day of Ashoura, November 14, 2013, following days of sharp debate on social media and in the press, during which a number of Shia citizens declared their intention to go to the Hussein Mosque and engage in rituals associated with Ashoura. The Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Prophet's Companions and Family declared their rejection of the celebrations, saying their members would prevent Shias from assembling there. Arguments erupted between coalition members and several Shias, while Salafis identified Abdullah and turned him over to the police, who detained him and charged him with blasphemy.

Abdullah's lawyer, Hamdi al-Assyouti, said that Abdullah was referred to trial under Article 98 (f) of the Penal Code, based on the fact that he affirmed he was a Shia Muslim during questioning by the prosecution. Assyouti said the prosecution deviated from the normal course of criminal interrogation and asked Abdullah about his beliefs and opinions of religious rituals, demonstrating prosecutorial bias. Condemning that line of questioning, Assyouti said, "The objective and goal of the interrogator is to find the truth, whether this implicates or exonerates the defendant. As such, a prosecutor can show no bias on the allegation until the charge has been officially filed with the court."<sup>147</sup>

The Gamaliya Misdemeanor Court, presided over by Judge Talal Radwan, said in its judgment, "Before addressing the substance of the crime in question, the court wishes to draw attention to an important matter: the Egyptian judiciary, on this land honored specifically by name by the Lord of the Worlds in the seven heavens in the revealed word, where such mention is a token of preservation even before it is an honor and favor—this judiciary was, remains, and will continue to be, God willing, the bastion and platform of justice, issuing its verdicts to realize justice among the people, without distinction or discrimination and setting nothing above justice that it might prevail and truth that it might be championed by that which guides its custodians and that which is affirmed by religion and revelation, which aspires to the highest ethics, forswearing all violence, fanaticism, or deviation from the straight path and fine conduct and elevating justice among the people to ensure their security and satisfaction with the rulings of this judiciary."

The court added, "The land of this nation has been set upon by paid agents, who, acting on the initiative of sick souls, seek to undermine its glory and dignity, so agents were planted among the good people of this nation, believers by nature and instinct since the dawn of their civilization, which embraced the great Islamic conquest that opened Egypt to the light of Islam, a tolerant, guiding, worthy religion that absorbs all religions and cul-

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147. EIPR statement, Feb. 26, 2014, <http://eipr.org/en/pressrelease/2014/02/26/1974>.

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tures of this land, which was fated to be the cradle of religions. Its people make no distinctions between this one and that one, but only between evil and good, using the inspiration they found in human heritage and a culture from which the world and the peoples of the earth has greedily imbibed. With its Noble Azhar, it was and remains a beacon of Islam and a platform for the spread of the Islamic religion, science, jurisprudence, and method throughout the world and even in the country in which Islam was revealed. This fact is denied only by the genuinely ignorant, the envious fool, or those harboring a sick purpose who do not realize the greatness of this worthy religion and the greatness of this nation and its people, who have elevated and esteemed religions.”

The court continued, “As to the substance of the charge in this incident, the court was shocked, upon reading the case and the examining all aspects of the facts, by the flagrant infringement, exceeding all bounds, of the freedom of belief or thought affirmed by revelation and permitted by law as a basic individual right guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution, as legislation in a state in which legislation is based on the esteemed principles of Islamic law. These principles, though they allow independent reasoning and freedom of thought and belief, make this conditional on not denying or forswearing what is established in the book of God and the tradition of His prophet, may God’s prayers and peace be upon him, meaning that which is necessarily known from religion and cannot and may not be defamed or blasphemed.”

The court continued, “The court, considering the dimensions of this case, found that it exhibits the features of a conspiracy which seeks to penetrate society and foment strife among individuals under cover of religion. It is in fact a fabrication and slander intending to advance dubious goals that aim to undermine this nation and even the sanctity of religion in it to strike it at its heart by casting doubt on its foundations and established principles. The judiciary has no choice in this instance but to confront these conspiracies, which are clearly manifested in crimes against which the constitutional legislator has provided protection and which the criminal legislator has criminalized and for which it has prescribed explicit sanctions.”

The court said, “In its judgment, the court urges the legislator to stiffen the penalty in proportion to the severity of the criminal consequences of these crimes, especially after such criminal practices have become a feature of this age, in which strife is inflamed, which is a fact that cannot be reasonably denied or disavowed. The hand of the law therefore should be unfettered in enforcing the spirit and letter of the law through judgments issued by the judiciary to deter and censure those who would take it upon themselves to trifle with the capacities of this nation and undermine its security, stability, and the gains of this people’s revolution, through which it corrected its course and was thus able to turn the page on strife, fanaticism, and violence and to realize a dignified present, moving to a future that suits its civilization.”

The court added, “While the constitution and after it the law have guaranteed the individual freedom of belief, opinion, and thought, the provisions of the constitution and law do not provide for it without bounds. Indeed, it is restricted such that this freedom should not lead the individual with the opinion, thought, or belief to that which opposes the rules and foundation of religion, revealed law, or morals or that which has a negative impact on public security in society by propagating ideas characterized by extremism and fanaticism in a particular direction or belief, under cover of religion, thereby seeking to realize an unlawful crime that would entail the defamation of religion, as explicitly defined by the constitutional and criminal legislator, and going further to defame a one of the sects of this religion in a way that harms national unity among society’s communities or sparks strife, insofar as the offender takes recourse to acts, words, or any means of expression liable to lead to blasphemy or contempt of religion or one of its sects.”

The court continued, “The court was satisfied in its belief and persuaded that the charge was proven against the defendant, having considered the totality of the case documents and the evidence and proof they contained, as cited in this judgment. The actions committed by the defendant and the words that issued from him can rightly be described as defamation of the Islamic religion and insult and disparagement of its symbols, which are an integral part of it. He propagated thought and a belief that contravenes that which is believed and embraced by the overwhelming majority of Egyptians and Egyptian society, which in no way tolerates any infringement or presumption against the inviolability and status of the revered companions or the status and esteem of the mothers of the believers and wives of the prophet, may God’s prayers and peace be upon him, as they are intrinsic to the honor of the seal of the prophets and messengers, Mohammed, may God’s prayers and peace be upon him, pure and innocent of all insult or suspicion, their status being inseparable from that of the prophet, may God’s prayers and peace be upon him, insofar as their status and esteem is no less than the status and esteem of the person of the prophet himself, may God’s prayers and peace be upon him. This is among the matters necessarily known from religion which cannot be denied, as it is among the established principles of Islam, the noble Islamic law, and the faith of Muslims in Egypt, most of whom belong to the Sunni school and lean toward moderation in religion. As such, the defendant has committed the crime punishable under Article 98 (f) of the Penal Code, its material and moral elements having been proven. The court is thus obliged to convict and sentence the defendant pursuant to the charge and Article 304/2 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. As stated in the pronouncement of this judgment, the court sentences the defendant in presence to five years in jail with labor and orders him to pay all criminal costs.”<sup>148</sup>

148. Text of the judgment published in al-Youm al-Sabia, Feb. 2014, [www.youm7.com/story/2014/2/26/%D9%86%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%AB%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%AD%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86/1528209#.VeNgt94s3X](http://www.youm7.com/story/2014/2/26/%D9%86%D9%86%D8%B4%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%AB%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%85-%D8%AD%D8%A8%D8%B3-%D9%86%D8%AC%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A8%D9%82-%D8%A8%D8%AA%D9%87%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D8%B2%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86/1528209#.VeNgt94s3X).



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## 39) March 7, 2014

### Endowments minister in article in al-Ahram: the spread of Shiism is a danger to Egyptian national security

The state-owned al-Ahram published an article by Endowments Minister Mohammed Mukhtar Gomaa, titled “Political Shiism, Brotherhoodization, and the Warning Bell,” in which he said that Shiism was an imminent danger to the pillar of society and that Iran was supporting “the Shia tide” to extend its influence and use Shiism for its political, sectarian, and military ends. He added that states covetous of the wealth of the Arab nation were exploiting the Shia tide to undermine the security of stable Sunni societies. Gomaa said that the spread of Shiism threatens national security and the components of social peace.<sup>149</sup>

## 40) March 2014

### Reports of communication between Aswan governorate and security bodies and anti-Shia activists for the purpose of confronting husseiniyas

On March 26, 2014, al-Youm al-Sabia online quoted Nasser Radwan, the founder of the Grandchildren of the Prophet’s Companions and Family, a group hostile to Shia rights. Radwan warned of a Shia husseiniya in the village al-Karaba Fouq in Ramadi in Edfu, located in the Aswan governorate, called the Courtyard of Imam Moussa al-Kazim, which, he said, was operating while using Sufism as cover. The next day, the website reported that Col. Tareq Lutfi, the director of the Crises and Accidents Directorate in Aswan, had contacted Radwan for further information on the alleged husseiniya.<sup>150</sup>

According to the website, Lutfi asked Radwan about the location of the Shia husseiniya, what those in charge of it did, and what their goals were. Radwan said that governorate leaders had promised to take appropriate action in coordination with the security bodies.<sup>151</sup>

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149. al-Ahram, Mar. 7, 2014.

150. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Mar. 26, 2014.

151. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Mar. 27, 2014.

41) June 28, 2014

## Chief mufti: spread of Shiism in Egypt causes unrest and shakes security of society

Chief Mufti Shawqi Allam said in an interview with the state-owned al-Ahram, “The attempt to spread Shiism out of its own environment will yield no fruit or development. On the contrary, it will cause strife, turmoil, unrest, and instability and shake the security of society.”

He added, “I direct my words to those who wish to spread Shiism in Egypt: you will not succeed in spreading your rite in a country raised love of the Prophet’s family and nourished by moderation by al-Azhar. Egypt is not fertile ground for your rite. Indeed, it is barren land in which Shiism will not grow. Converting Egyptians away from Sunnism to Shiism is impossible and will not be achieved, so leave Egyptians, Sunnis, who love the family of the prophet, God’s prayers and peace upon him, and esteem the companions of God’s prophet who had the honor of carrying on the message after the prophet and assumed the duty of calling to God, until God inherits the earth and those on it.”<sup>152</sup>

42) September 16, 2014

## Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs freezes membership of Azhari professor for traveling to Iran and giving lectures at Shia seminaries

The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, on September 16, 2014, froze the membership of Dr. Ahmed Karima pending the conclusion of an investigation conducted by the administration of Azhar University, after Karima traveled to Iran and gave lectures at Shia seminaries without coordinating with the university, according to a statement from the university. The council said it would make a final decision based on the findings of the university’s investigation.<sup>153</sup>

On November 1, 2014, Azhar University President Abd al-Hayy Azab said that the investigation concluded that Karima should be suspended for three months. In a statement to the Aswat Masriya website, Azab added, “The decision to suspend Karima from work came after an investigation by the university’s legal affairs department. The punitive action was taken based on an action he committed and in accordance with university bylaws.”

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152. Al-Ahram, Jun. 28, 2014, [www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/300740.aspx](http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/300740.aspx).

153. Awqaf online, Sep. 16, 2014.

Azab said, “Dr. Karima should have obtained permission to travel from the university and a specific program for the visit from al-Azhar, which was not the case. Karima designated himself as a representative of al-Azhar although he traveled to Iran without the knowledge of the institution in which he works.”<sup>154</sup>

On January 29, 2015, university President Abd al-Hayy Azab issued a decree reinstating Karima in his position in the Faculty of Islamic and Arabic Studies, Cairo branch, starting on February 1. Karima said he asked for a vacation from the university to travel to Iran to give lectures on Islamic jurisprudence, not to speak on behalf of al-Azhar, adding that the decision to allow him to resume his work came after he met with the university president.<sup>155</sup>

### 43) September 22, 2014

#### Deputy endowments minister incites to killing of Shias on television program

Sheikh Sabri Ebada, a deputy endowments minister, said during an appearance on “10 pm,” a program aired on Dream, on September 22, 2014, “Iran and those behind it will not harm a speck in Egypt after a wise presidency. The rafida must be expelled into the sea and killed here and there.” Using a derogatory term to refer to Shias, he added, “The rafida and Shia spread the spirit of hatred and strife in Egypt. Their goal is not Islam. The higher goal is to occupy Egypt, disturb its stability, and to sow fear, alarm, and sectarian strife in Egypt.”<sup>156</sup>

The episode was taped immediately after a video spread in which the family of a Shia lawyer in Sharqiya declared their Shiism directly on the air on a Shia channel.

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154. Al-Youm al-Sabia, quoting Reuters, Nov. 1, 2014, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2014/11/1/%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81-%D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%A8%D8%A8-%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%A7/1932120#.VR1Lct93M3U>.

155. al-Watan, Jan. 29, 2015.

156. Episode of Sep. 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXUM8HWZVxI>.

#### 44) September 23, 2014

### Sheikh of al-Azhar: there is financial support of the spread of political Shiism, the walls of Azhar will remain strong

Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb said that internal and external plots were being spun against Egypt and al-Azhar. He said that these attempts received much financial support to spread takfiri thought and political Shiism, which was attempting to demolish the walls of al-Azhar, though it remained lofty and strong throughout its long history.

#### 45) October 19, 2014

### Arrest of Shia in Sharqiya charged with blasphemy after phone-in statements on Shia satellite channels

The Deirab Nagm Prosecution in Sharqiya, headed by Judge Ibrahim Sirri and overseen by Judge Ahmed Daabas, the public solicitor for the South Sharqiya Prosecutions, remanded Shia lawyer Rabia Tantawi to custody for 15 days pending investigation on charges of defaming Islam and propagating extremist ideas, under Article 98(f) of the Penal Code.

Al-Youm al-Sabia reported that investigations by Cpt. Mohammed Mahmoud, with Homeland Security in Sharqiya, found that Tantawi, a resident of the Deirab Nagm district, along with his wife and three children, declared their Shia faith during a phone-in statement on a satellite channel. The Public Prosecution's investigations, conducted by Judge Ibrahim Sirri, found that Homeland Security had arrested the defendant previously and found books and papers in his home containing Shia thought.<sup>157</sup>

Tantawi told EIPR researchers in a telephone interview after his release that the case was closed after he was detained initially for four days and then 15 additional days pending investigation.<sup>158</sup> Members of Tantawi's family who requested anonymity told EIPR researchers that Homeland Security informed him that his phone-in interviews to television outlets had stirred up controversy and crossed red lines.<sup>159</sup>

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157. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Oct. 19, 2014.

158. Telephone communication, Sep. and Oct. 2014.

159. Telephone communication, Dec. 2014.



## 48) December 23, 2014

### Cairo Airport authorities detain a group of Shias for several hours after a religious visit to Iraq

The Cairo Airport authorities briefly held 35 people upon their return from a religious visit to Iraq, confiscating all books, souvenirs, and gifts of a religious nature in their possession.

One of those detained told EIPR researchers that a security body detained 35 travelers for several hours at the airport on Tuesday, December 23, 2014. The body questioned them about their activities in Iraq and whom they met. It then searched them and confiscated all items in their possession related to Shiism.<sup>163</sup>

Security sources at the Cairo Airport told al-Ahram online that the travelers were detained for three hours to determine the purpose of their visit, the places they visited, and the persons they met. The authorities also seized books and pamphlets in their possession related to Shiism. The sources said that the Shia group had applied for visas to Iraq from the Iraqi embassy in Cairo and had stated that they wished to visit Shia holy sites. They left Cairo on Turkish Air, heading to Istanbul and from there to Baghdad on December 12. Al-Ahram reported that the airport authorities concluded the travel arrangements for the group after communication with several high-placed security bodies, which offered no grounds to prevent the group from leaving the country, especially since this was the first time that a Shia Egyptian delegations apply for travel to Iraq to visit Shia holy sites.<sup>164</sup>

## 49) December 24, 2014

### Three Shias sentenced to five years after Shia books found in their possession

The Talkha Misdemeanor Court on December 24, 2014 sentenced Mahmoud Dahroug, a Shia medical doctor, along with Shadi Marzouq Abd al-Hamid and Taha Marzouq Abd al-Hamid, to five years on charges of blasphemy, defaming the prophet's companions, fomenting strife, and harming national unity, pursuant to Article 98(f) of the Penal Code. An appeal session was scheduled for May 12, 2015.

The facts of the case began at dawn on January 25, 2014, when a force with the Talkha police station raided

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163. Interview with one of the detained Shias, Dec. 28, 2014.

164. Al-Ahram online, Dec. 24, 2014, <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/576315.aspx>.

the home of Mahmoud Abd al-Khaleq Dahroug, a Shia, in the village of Miyyit Zanqar, located in the Talkha district of Daqahliya. The force searched the home, arrested him, seized his personal papers, and confiscated books, his personal computer, several CDs and photos, and 18 round stones used by Shias in their religious rituals. He was detained for several days, released, and then arrested again, before being released a second time.<sup>165</sup>

Earlier, Talkha police forces had searched a pick-up truck without license plates and found several Shia books inside. Security forces arrested Karim al-Borai Abdullah, the 29-year-old driver of the truck, and Taha Marzouq Abd al-Hamid, also 29. The two men said they were on their way to visit Dahroug in Miyyit Zanqar to give him the books.<sup>166</sup>

According to the arrest report, when the police force went to Dahroug's home to execute the arrest warrant from the prosecution, "it found the defendant standing in front of his house and in his possession: 1) a photograph of Hassan Nasrallah in a wooden frame, and 2) an HP box holding 14 various books, a newspaper, 35 CDs, and 18 beige colored round stones." Dahroug's defense counsel argued that the arrest report was unbelievable and it was inconceivable that the defendant would wait for the arresting force in the street while having all these items in his possession.<sup>167</sup>

Dahroug told EIPR researchers that he had stopped socializing and praying in mosques after he was harassed by numerous local residents and because of harassment by security due to his Shia faith. He said that the seized items were taken from his home.<sup>168</sup>

The prosecution report stated that Taha Marzouq had accused police officers of beating him and causing injuries to his face and neck. The prosecutor observed in the report, "Upon examining the defendant, traces of redness were found on his neck and part of his left cheek."<sup>169</sup>

A report from Homeland Security appended to the case file said that undercover investigations had found that the defendants believed "in militant ideas and concepts that contravene correct Islam, encourage blasphemy, and advocate and lead to the fomenting of sectarian strife among the people of one nation." The report added that Dahroug, Shadi, and Marzouq were engaged in "disseminating their militant ideas and beliefs among their

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165. Telephone interview with Dahroug, Dec. 2014.

166. Al-Masry al-Youm, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/392806>.

167. Defense pleading of Mahmoud Abd al-Khaleq Mahmoud Ibrahim in case no. 3014/2014/Talkha misdemeanor, session of Dec. 24, 2014.

168. Interview with Dahroug in Miyyit Zanqar, Nov. 2015.

169. Report 27-1-2014, obtained from Dahroug in Nov. 2015.

social circles in their places residence and work, which inflames sectarian strife and leads to the disparagement of the teaching of tolerant Islam.”<sup>170</sup>

The prosecution asked that the seized books be forwarded to the Azhar Institutes Directorate in Daqahliya for an opinion “as to whether they contain extremist ideas that exploit religion, inflame strife, harm national unity, and blaspheme a revealed religion.” The prosecution said that the directorate responded that the Islamic Research Academy in Cairo was the body competent to offer an opinion on the content of the books, and the prosecution ordered the books sent to the academy.<sup>171</sup> Another report establishes that the academy received the books,<sup>172</sup> but the prosecution records no response from the academy anywhere in the case files, a fact noted by Dahroug’s defense pleading.<sup>173</sup>

According to the referral order from the Public Prosecution, the three defendants “exploited religion through their possession of publications and CDs containing the propagation of extremist ideas with the intent to foment strife and harm national unity, as described in the interrogations.”<sup>174</sup>

Dahroug’s attorney argued that there was no proof of the element of propagation since the possession of books cannot be criminalized and the books were sold at the Cairo International Book Fair.<sup>175</sup>

## 50) January 15, 2015

### Sheikh of al-Azhar: the spreading of Shiism in Egypt is of malicious intent and motivated by political considerations, not freedom to choose one’s religious rite

In the second part of a two-part interview with Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb, published on January 15, 2015 by al-Masry al-Youm, the interviewer asked al-Tayyeb if he feared the spread of Shiism in Egypt. “I don’t believe this is possible,” al-Tayyeb responded. “It may succeed at best with a small number with no real

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170. Report of Homeland Security officer, Maj. Ahmed Abd al-Fattah, 28-1-2014, appended to the case files.

171. Report 27-1-2014.

172. Report 3-2-2014.

173. Defense pleading filed by Mahmoud Abd al-Khaleq Ibrahim in case no. 3014/2014/Talkha misdemeanor, heard in the session of Dec. 24, 2014.

174. Referral order from Chief Prosecutor Yasser al-Rifai with the Talkha Plenary Prosecution, Daqahliya governorate, Jun. 1, 2014.

175. Defense pleading.



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influence. What I fear is that attempts to spread Shiism in the current state of resentment and tension will cause rifts and clashes that could negatively affect the stability and homogeneity of the people of Egypt. Such movements will spark other movements that may be of an extremist nature and could lead to a slide down an uncertain path. Attempts to plant Shiism in Egypt are in fact ill intentioned attempts. I don't think the motive is freedom to choose one's religious rite as they say. Rather there are political motivations behind it."<sup>176</sup>

## 51) March 11, 2015

### Azhar statement condemns attacks on Sunnis in Iraq by "Shia militias"

The Azhar Administration issued a statement on March 11, 2015 expressing its concern at actions perpetrated by "the Shia Popular Mobilization militias," allied with the Iraqi army, including "the massacre and unjust assault on peaceful Iraqi citizens that do not belong to Daesh or other terrorist organizations." The statement condemned the fact that "extremist militias" had perpetrated "barbaric, heinous crimes in Sunni areas in which Iraqi forces had begun to exercise control, particularly in Tikrit, Anbar, and other Sunni-majority cities. The expulsions, murder, field executions, massacres of Sunni civilians, the burning of their mosques, and the killing of their children and women in cold blood by these groups on the pretext of fighting Daesh is a brutal crime that shames all of humanity."

The statement urged the international community and human rights organizations to immediately intervene to stop these massacres, and it called on the Iraqi government and moderate religious authorities to clearly condemn such attacks and intervene at once to stop them and ensure they were not repeated.

In the statement, the Azhar Administration urged the Iraqi army to carefully select the forces with which it was fighting and ensure that they were fighting the Islamic State (IS or Daesh) and not Sunnis. Azhar called on the army not to permit extremist militias to fight under its banner and to unite efforts to confront extremist groups and sectarian militias, to preserve the unity and stability of the country.<sup>177</sup>

On March 17, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry summoned the Egyptian ambassador in Iraq to submit an official letter of protest regarding recent statements by Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb in which he condemned massacres of Sunnis committed by pro-government Shia militias.

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176. Al-Masry al-Youm, Jan. 15, 2015.

177. Ahram online, Mar. 11, 2015.

In a statement, the ministry said that in the letter of protest submitted to Ambassador Ahmed Darwish, it had asked for clarification of Cairo's official position on al-Tayyeb's remarks, which it said "harmed the distinguished fraternal relations between the two brother nations." The ministry added that the "heroes" of the Popular Mobilization Forces "responded to the nation's appeal to liberate its territory from the desecration and control of gangs that have rebelled against the values of religion and humanity."<sup>178</sup>

## 52) March 2015

### Inflammatory news stories against Egyptian Shias with the war on Houthis in Yemen

As Egypt declared its support for Operation Decisive Storm, the Saudi-led military offensive against the Houthis in Yemen, there was an uptick in news stories and articles containing hate speech and incitement to discrimination against Shia Egyptians, who were accused of being willing to commit treason.

Albawaba News published a story titled "Decisive Storm Exposes the Treason of Egypt's Shias." Quoting sources with the anti-Shia Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Prophet's Companions and Family, the story said, "Shias in Egypt are Iranian minds in Egyptian bodies. Their loyalty to their religious authority is stronger than their loyalty to the nation." The report said that Egyptian Shias primary loyalty was to the Shia confession rather than to the nation and that Decisive Storm had exposed this "volatile image." Some Shia activists' rejection of Egypt's support of Saudi Arabia in Decisive Storm raised questions about their loyalty to the Egyptian state, the article said.<sup>179</sup>

The same outlet carried another story titled "The Houthis' Strife Exposes the Beliefs of Islamist Currents: the Brotherhood of Egypt and Yemen and the Shia Are One Hand against Decisive Storm." The report alleged that the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Yemen rejected the war on the Houthis, linking this with the stance of "the Egyptian Shia current," which also rejected the war. The story quoted Yasser Borhami, the deputy head of the Salafi Call, saying, "The Shias and Houthis are a great danger to the Arab region and to Egypt in particular."<sup>180</sup>

178. Al-Jazeera, quoting the Anadol news agency, Mar. 17, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2015/3/17/%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%B4%D8%A3%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1>.

179. Albawaba News, Mar. 29, 2015, <http://www.albawabhnews.com/1200473>.

180. Albawaba News, Mar. 27, 2015, <http://www.albawabhnews.com/1196366>.

A story published in al-Tahrir, titled “Yemenis in Egypt: Houthis Destroyed Our Country and We Must Confront the Shia Tide,” surveyed the views of Yemenis who supported Decisive Storm. It quoted one Yemeni who wanted to join the war against the Houthis to “stop the spread of the Shia tide, which has become a danger threatening the entire Arab nation.”<sup>181</sup>

Younes Makhyoun, the head of the Salafi Nour Party, wrote on his Facebook page, “Egyptian Shias quickly exposed their identity and the truth of their loyalty, removing the mask from their conspiring faces, especially after Operation Decisive Storm, which the entire Egyptian people—indeed, all Arab peoples—supports, but for a few.” In the end, he asked that everyone stand against the Iran-backed “Shia tide.”<sup>182</sup>

On his TV program “It’s Possible,” anchor Khairi Ramadan condemned Gulf officials for allowing Arabsat to carry 24 Shia channels, urging them to suspend transmission.<sup>183</sup>

The Lebanese al-Modon website reported that anti-Shia activist Nasser Radwan had filed 22 complaints since May 2015 against Shia television channels, accusing them of spreading and propagating Shiism and asking the Public Prosecution to intervene to suspend the channels by decree of the public prosecutor or judicial order. It should be noted that the Egyptian authorities have no jurisdiction over Arabsat and Nilesat does not permit the transmission of any Shia channels.<sup>184</sup>

## 53) April 30, 2015

### Kindergarten director in Sharqiya jailed on charges of teaching children Shiism

On April 30, 2015, security agencies in Kafr Saqr, located in the Sharqiya governorate, arrested al-Sadeq

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181. Al-Tahrir, Apr. 1, 2015, <http://www.tahrirnews.com/posts/187035/%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%20%D9%81%D9%8A%20%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1:%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%20%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%A7%20%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%86%D8%A7%20%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%AF%20%D9%85%D9%86%20%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AF%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A>.

182. CNN Arabic, Apr. 2, 2015, <http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2015/04/02/yemen-egypt-sunni-shiite>; al-Masry al-Youm, <http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/news/details/696776>.

183. Al-Watan, May 20, 2015, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/734239>.

184. Al-Modon, Jun. 27, 2015, <http://www.almodon.com/media/2015/6/27/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%B5%D9%84-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B2%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87>.

Shuaishaa, the director of a kindergarten in the village of al-Mawansa, accusing him of teaching the kindergartners Shiism.<sup>185</sup>

Gen. Meleigi Futtouh, the director of Sharqiya security, received a notice from the head of the Kafr Saqr police station to arrested Shuaishaa, a resident of the village of al-Mawansa, on charges of teaching children Shia rituals in the kindergarten he oversaw, operated by the Fatima al-Zahra Association, after local residents had filed a complaint and a video spread showing the children slapping their faces in a movement resembling a Shiaritual.<sup>186</sup>

On May 3, the Kafr Saqr Prosecution, headed by Judge Hani Tag al-Din, the public solicitor for North Sharqiya Prosecutions, renewed Shuaishaa's remand pending investigation.<sup>187</sup>

## 54) May 12, 2015

### Sentence for Shia doctor reduced from five years in jail to six months

On May 12, 2015, the Talkha Appellate Misdemeanor Court in Daqahliya reduced the sentence against Mahmoud Abd al-Khaleq Mahmoud Dahroug, a Shia medical doctor, from five years in prison to six months, for his conviction on charges of blasphemy and possession of books and publications likely to foment sectarian strife and threaten the country's security, pursuant to Article 98 (f) of the Penal Code on the defamation of religion.<sup>188</sup>

## 55) May 19, 2015

### Leading Shia detained for 48 hours after offices of the Thaqlayn Association raided and he is charged with propagating Shia thought

Security forces raided the offices of the Thaqlayn Association on Monday, May 19, 2015, located in the Doqqi

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185. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Apr. 30, 2015, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2015/4/30/%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B6-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A8-%D8%AD%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%AA-%D9%84%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%89/2162866#.VcCImB9h03V>.

186. Sada al-Balad, <http://www1.el-balad.com/1516388>; Veto Gate, May 3, 2015, <http://www.vetogate.com/1613257>.

187. Al-Watan, May 3, 2015, [elwatannews.com/news/details/722497](http://elwatannews.com/news/details/722497).

188. Telephone communication with Dahroug's lawyer, May 2015.

area of Cairo, arresting Shia activist al-Taḥer al-Ḥaṣhīmī, the president of the association's board, and confiscating several books and computers at the offices. The Doqqi Prosecution ordered al-Ḥaṣhīmī released on bail of LE1,000 after holding him for 48 hours, charging him with possession of books without a permit that carry ideas to spread Shiism.

According to investigations by the prosecution, headed by Judge Sherif Tawfiq, police forces raided the Thaqlayn office, which was reportedly spreading the Shia faith and was the seat of transmission for a satellite channel operated by the association. Police forces found no transmission equipment, but they seized several books, some of them inciting against Sunnism, according to investigations by the security apparatus.

Police forces had requested a judicial warrant to search the association premises and confiscated several documents for examination, after a committee formed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity confirmed irregularities in the association.<sup>189</sup>

After his release, al-Taḥer al-Ḥaṣhīmī issued a press statement, a copy of which was sent to EIPR researchers. Al-Ḥaṣhīmī said he received a phone call on the afternoon of May 18 informing him of the raid. When he reached the office at 3 pm, he found several policemen at the property. Upon going into the office, he found some 15 policemen with Artistic Publications division and criminal investigations sealing up three cardboard boxes of seized items. He said that security officials informed him that their investigations had confirmed the existence of studio stages equipped with cameras, an editing unit, an SNG device for satellite transmission. Al-Ḥaṣhīmī said that no such equipment was found in his home or anywhere else. He added that security forces accused him of “directing clandestine activities for an association that propagates Shia thought, printing and issuing books without a depository number, and propagating ideas against the public order.” The forces confiscated several books and a computer.

Al-Ḥaṣhīmī continued, “They escorted me to vehicles that were not marked as Egyptian police cars, but rather as ‘Cairo customs.’” He was met at the Doqqi police station by a senior police officer, who voice his hatred of Shias and their presence in Egypt. The officer told him, “There will be no rapprochement between the Sunni and Shia Islamic rites, and the Thaqlayn Association you head will be shut down and will not spread to governorates in the republic.” He added, “I know everything about you and your movements. I know about your travel to Syria and from there to Iran.”

Al-Ḥaṣhīmī added that the next day, he was brought before the Public Prosecution to be questioned about the

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189. Albawaba News, May 19, 2015, <http://www.albawabhnews.com/1300480>.

evidence in custody. He claimed that the items in custody were not taken from his home and he knew nothing about them. He told the prosecution that the only items that belonged to him were a set of books he had purchased at the most recent Cairo book fair, all of which had depository numbers, as well as a set of Qurans published by al-Azhar and a Quran issued by a Saudi publisher.

Al-Hashimi said the prosecution ordered his release on bail of LE1,000, but the police station did not release him because he was “detained by Homeland Security and it was awaiting a signal to release him.” Al-Hashimi spent a second night, Tuesday, at the police station, and on Wednesday morning, his lawyer went to the Public Prosecutor’s Office to inform them that he had not been released. He then went to the Interior Ministry inspector to have him examine the station and facilitate the release procedures.<sup>190</sup>

Walid Ismail, the coordinator for the Coalition in Defense of the Prophet’s Companions and Family, said that following his recent communication with several security leaders, Shia leader al-Taher al-Hashimi was arrested and his association raided, which was working to spread and disseminate Shia thought in Egypt.<sup>191</sup>

## 56) June 2015

### 23 people sentenced to 14 years for murder of Hassan Shehata and his disciples

The Giza Felony Court, presided over by Judge Motazz Khafagi, issued a judgment in mid-June convicting and sentencing 23 people to prison for 14 years and acquitting 8 others, on charges of killing Shia leader Hassan Shehata and three of his students and attempting to kill 13 others in Zawya Abu Muslim in Giza.

The court stated in its judgment that victims Hassan Shehata, Mohammed Shehata, Ibrahim Shehata, and Emad Rabia were in the home of victim Farahat Ali Mohammed in Zawya Abu Muslim, located in the district of Abu al-Nomros, to celebrate the middle of Shaaban, since they belonged to the Shia rite and since the first victim was a leading figure of the rite. The defendants learned of the victims’ presence in the home, and their fear

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190. Statement from al-Taher al-Hashimi about the facts of his arrest and detention.

191. Al-Masry al-Youm, May 20, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/737201>; Dot Masr, May 22, 2015, <http://www.dotmsr.com/details/%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B6-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%85%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-48-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%89-%D9%82%D8%A8%D8%B6%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%B2%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86>.

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of the spread of Shiism and the adherence of many local residents to this rite provoked them. They therefore assembled and made for the home of the victim with the intent of assaulting those inside and expelling them from the village, carrying with them wooden and iron sticks, bladed weapons, and bottles carrying flammable substances. They surrounded the house and attacked those inside.

The judgment said that the defendants caused vital injuries to the victims on the skull, lacerations on the brain, and various other injuries, and that the facts had been proven against the defendants by the testimony of 21 persons during questioning, observations from the Public Prosecution, and the court's viewing of CDs.

The judgment cited the testimony of citizens and policemen. It noted that video footage showed a large assembly of people bearing bladed weapons and sticks in front of the home of Farahat Ali and then shows these persons assaulting a person. Another piece of footage showed a large assembly in front of the house and two injured persons. The demonstrators can be heard saying, "God is great" several times. It showed a person in bloodstained clothing carrying a stick, whom Farahat Ali identified as defendant Mohammed Ismail al-Gamal. The second, third, and fifth videos showed victims Shehata Mohammed Shehata and his brother lying on the ground injured.

According to the judgment, the court also screened footage showing a march. At the end of the march is a tok-tok, one of whose passengers was saying, "O Shia, you who are cursed until the day of judgment." Another passenger is saying, "He who curses Abu Bakr is an infidel, he who curses Omar is an infidel, he who curses the prophet is an infidel."<sup>192</sup>

## 57) June 2015

### Sheikh of al-Azhar condemns "Shia proselytization" and calls on Shia and Sunni scholars to meet at al-Azhar to promote "peaceful coexistence"

Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb called on Sunni and Shia scholars to meet and sit at one table to issue fatwas prohibiting both Sunnis and Shias from fighting on sectarian grounds, as well as fatwas to promote a culture of coexistence and peace. Tayyeb issued the appeal on the final episode of his Ramadan program, "A Conversation with the Sheikh of al-Azhar," aired on the Egyptian Satellite Channel.

In statements to Sawt al-Azhar, al-Tayyeb stressed the need to end "Shia proselytization in strongholds of Sun-

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192. Al-Tahrir, Jul. 2015, <http://www.tahrirnews.com/posts/251846>.

nis, who constitute 90 percent of all Muslims in the world.” He added that he did not wish to see his Muslim people become two sects fighting for their rite and sect. He also stressed that “weak-willed Shias” must stop seducing Sunni youth with money to act as a base for Shiism.

Al-Tayyeb expressed his fears that Egypt would become a country divided between Sunnis and Shias killing one another, as was currently seen in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. He added that there are no Shias in Egypt, but strife was being created by some seeking to form a youth base for the Shia rite.

During his Ramadan program, al-Tayyeb addressed several issues of contention between Sunnis and Shias, such as the Shia imamate and the Shia view of some of the prophet’s companions. He told Sawt al-Azhar that he did not wish to inflame hatred between Sunnis and Shias by raising these issues, because al-Azhar was a religious institution interested in uniting the Islamic community. His goal, he said, was to explore and speak frankly, without false compliments, in order to stop the bloodshed in the region.<sup>193</sup>

## 58) October 22, 2015

### Endowments Ministry closes Hussein mausoleum on Ashoura to prevent Shia visitation

The Cairo Endowments Department shut down the mausoleum at the Hussein Mosque for three days, from Thursday, October 22, 2015, to Saturday, October 24, 2015, in order to “prevent Shia vanities” that take place on Ashoura, according to a statement on the ministry’s official website. The statement added that certain Shia rituals are associated with the day that have nothing to do with Islam and that the ministry would take all possible legal action against those who violated the decree.<sup>194</sup>

Mohammed Abd al-Razeq, a deputy endowments minister and the head of the religious division, told al-Masry al-Youm that they had coordinated with the security apparatus in the environs of the Hussein Mosque to head off any assembly by Shia individuals and prevent them from staging any celebrations.

He added that all imams, especially imams at mosques that hold mausoleums of members of the prophet’s family, such as Hussein, Sayyeda Zeinab, and Sayyeda Nafisa, had been alerted to not permit any celebrations. Workers in the mosques were also told to be on the lookout for any mosque-goers who performed any odd

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193. Sawt al-Azhar, Jun. 12, 2015.

194. Ministry of Endowments website, <http://www.awkafonline.com/portal/?p=22538>.



rituals or actions.

“Egypt is the country of the Noble Azhar, the platform of moderation and the proper path,” Abd al-Razeq said. “There is no place for those with militant ideas or extremist rites.”<sup>195</sup>

The anti-Shia Coalition in Defense of the Prophet’s Companions and Family announced that it intended to invite its members and followers to form committees to monitor the Shia presence at the Hussein mausoleum, but it changed its plans after the ministry announced the closure of the mausoleum. “To deny all the grandstanders any opportunity and after the announcement of the Endowments Ministry, which we appreciate, to close the mosque affiliated with Hussein, may God be pleased with him, except for the Thursday prayers, we announced that we have suspended our activity to be present in front of the Hussein Mosque this year. We hold state agencies responsible for preventing any Shia practices or Shia insults, curses, and declarations of unbelief of the companions or mothers of the believers, or any appeal to the false Shia religion in and out of the mosque.”<sup>196</sup>

Haidar Qandil told EIPR researchers that a group of Shias calling themselves the Coalition of Egyptian Shia Youth distributed bottles of water in major mosques in several governorates to mark the death of Hussein at the battle of Karbala. Qandil, the coordinator of the group, along with several members of the coalition, distributed water in the Sayyeda Zeinab and Hussein Mosques in Cairo.<sup>197</sup>

## 59) October 23, 2015

### Muqtada al-Sadr criticizes “the derision shown by the Endowments Ministry to Egypt’s Shias”; the ministry responds

Muqtada al-Sadr, the leader of the Sadrists in Iraq, criticized the Ministry of Endowments’ decision to close the Hussein mausoleum on the occasion of Ashoura, comparing it to the closure of Jerusalem to Muslims. “It is not the government that decides whether such conduct is rooted in Islam or not,” he said in a statement. “The government is the father to all. Such conduct is divorced from this principle, from democracy, and from freedom of belief and worship.”<sup>198</sup>

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195. Al-Masry al-Youm, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/831061>.

196. Al-Watan, <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/588755>.

197. Telephone communication with Qandil, Oct. 2015.

198. Muqtada al-Sadr’s official website, <http://jawabna.com/index.php/permalink/8506.html>.

In response, Mohammed Abd al-Razeq, the head of the religious division in the Endowments Ministry, said that Sadr's statements would not influence Egyptian religious institutions and would not change their position on the Shia tide in Egypt. Abd al-Razeq said that al-Azhar and the ministry were united and would not permit the Shia tide in Egypt no matter what. Minimizing the Shia presence in Egypt, Abd al-Razeq said there were only three Shias in the country and they did not constitute a danger. The mausoleum was closed, he said, in fear that a militant might be planted there to politically exploit the scene.<sup>199</sup>

Al-Sadr issued another statement in response to Abd al-Razeq, saying his remarks were "disparaging" when he said that Egyptian Shias were only three in number and thus posed no threat. "Such disparaging words should not be said about the people of Egypt," al-Sadr said. "Do three people deserve such security measures?" al-Sadr added, "I hope that Egypt remains Sunni and does not become a militant, Daeshi, Wahhabi state. Egypt is moderation, Egypt is fair Sunnism. Since Egypt is Sunni, it means the Sunni community must be the father to all Egypt's Christian and Shia rites, though there be only three Shias as they claim."<sup>200</sup>

## 60) October 25, 2015

Endowments minister: we are being subjected to "an orchestrated Shia campaign"; we are not against freedom to choose one's rite "under the umbrella of al-Azhar"; if we give Shias free rein, there would be strife between them and Salafi currents

Commenting on the controversy sparked by the ministry's decision to close the Hussein mausoleum on Ashoura and Muqtada al-Sadr's statements, Minister of Endowments Mukhtar Gomaa said in a phone-in interview on "10 pm," aired by the Dream channel on Sunday, October 25, 2015, that Egypt was being subjected to "an orchestrated Shia campaign." He said that the Egyptian authorities did not close the mausoleum, but simply stepped up security measures, which is the right of the Egyptian state and requires no permission. He said that those who point to the closure of the mausoleum on Ashoura are seeking to foment confusion and strife in Egypt. "We did not close the mosque," he said. "But given that in previous years there was some friction that nearly ended in misfortune and deviated from that which the Sunni rite accepts, which Egyptian public taste does not accept, such as bloodshed, assault, carrying bladed weapons and unlicensed knives—I'll mention two

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199. Sada al-Balad, <http://www.el-balad.com/1761165>.

200. Muqtada al-Sadr's official website.

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confirmed incidents. A group of Shia brothers arrived while the prayer was underway, and they refused to pray behind the imam. They waited until the prayer was over and prayed by themselves, as if they are dividing the Egyptian people.”

The endowments minister asked Egyptian Shias to issue a clear statement to prove their good faith and show their patriotism: “I ask that Egypt’s Shias issue a clear statement because rights bring duties, and patriotic duties are above all—a clear statement in which they declare that they forswear any external authorities, especially Iran, and that they have no ties with it, and in which they respond to Muqtada al-Sadr and tell him not to interfere in our affairs, to say, We are patriotic Egyptians and we are not subordinate to you. We do not take our instructions from Iran or any other body. We here are prepared to study the Shia rite as taught by al-Azhar and to be under the umbrella of Azhari studies and Azhar scholars’ study of the Shia rite as al-Azhar teaches it. There is no doctrinal or spiritual problem if it is simply a ritual disagreement and not about a sect being used for the interests of a state that seeks to extend its influence in the region and whose leaders make clearly racist statements against Arab capitals. When a leader of Iran says, ‘We hold the power of decision making in four Arab capitals,’ and no one responds. When they say, ‘the capital of the Persian empire is Baghdad,’ and no one responds—that’s when everyone far and near realizes that this is a political tendency. We are accusing no one, but please, people, stand apart, so we can know the truth of you.”

The minister added, “It’s an issue of national belief. We’re not against freedom of belief, we’re not against ritual freedom. If we accept various religions and even non-revealed religions, will we cut our ties with states that have no religion? Islam did not order us to cut our ties even with pagan states. But when confessionalism poses a danger to our national security, this is a red line. The nation is above all. We are not proceeding from racism, but from a patriotic sensibility, when confessionalism is used to divide the nation, we will give our lives to stop it.”

The minister said that some Salafi currents would stand up to Shia currents if they were given the latitude to do, which would certainly lead to strife. “If you want evidence of this, go on social media, the ambushes and counter-ambushes. The Shias say they are marching on Hussein Mosque, and some members of the Salafi currents say they will be on the alert. Information we have suggests there will be friction and strife with unfortunate consequences, so to preserve all Egyptians, Sunni and Shia, and to preserve national security, we took this decision motivated by patriotic concerns.”<sup>201</sup>

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201. “10 pm,” Oct. 24, 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buUr\\_hiKY\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buUr_hiKY_c).

## 61) November 19, 2015

### Shia man detained and tortured before travel to Iraq

Sources in the family of S.,<sup>202</sup> an Egyptian Shia, told EIPR researcher that S. was taken from his home in Alexandria by security forces on Thursday, November 19 and was held until dawn on Monday, November 30, 2015.

Just days earlier, S. had applied for a visa to Iraq at the Iraqi embassy in order to visit Karbala and other Shia holy sites. He obtained the visa.

S. went to Lebanon to study Shiism at the al-Mustafa University for a year in 2013.

Lawyer Mohammed Eitiwa told EIPR researcher that he went to the Muntazah 1 police station to inquire about S., where he was told that S. had been detained by Homeland Security.

EIPR researchers met with S. in Alexandria after his return from Iraq on May 10, 2016.

S. told EIPR researchers that about 12 security personnel of various ranks raided his home in the Abu Hiba area of Alexandria's Sidi Bishr neighborhood. They took off his glasses, blindfolded him, his father and brother, and then beat and insulted them. The security personnel damaged some furnishings in the home and confiscated S.'s books then took him to Homeland Security headquarters in Alexandria.

S. said he was questioned about his ties to Hezbollah, Iran, and various groups of Egyptian Shias and whether he received funding from any bodies. He added that he was brutally beaten throughout his interrogation.

S. said that he was detained, interrogated, and beaten and insulted daily for a week. He was suspended naked from his arms by a rope from the ceiling and given electroshocks on various parts of his body, including his genitals, after which water would be thrown on his naked body.

S. said his interrogator asked him if he would travel to Iraq if he were released. S. said that yes, he intended to travel because he was doing nothing that harmed his country or violated the law. S. asked the interrogator about the money that was taken by the security personnel who arrested him in his home. According to S., the interrogator said, "That's the fee for the men's trouble. Isn't it enough that you're getting out of here?"

S. said that he was put in a microbus and left on the road at Dawran al-Suyuf at dawn on Monday, November 30, 2015.

No charge was brought against S., and he left Egypt heading to Iraq on Thursday, December 3, 2015.

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<sup>202</sup>. The sources requested anonymity.

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62) November 26, 2015

## Endowments Ministry announces “Shia books” seized at a Minya mosque

Mahmoud Abu Hatab, the deputy endowments minister in Minya, told al-Youm al-Sabia that a mosque inspection committee had seized Shia books in the library of a mosque in Minya. Abu Hatab said that during an inspection of the Omar Ibn al-Khattab Mosque in Damaris, located in the Minya district, books associated with Shia thought were found. He added that the books defame Aisha, the prophet’s wife, and several of the prophet’s companions.

Abu Hatab said the books were seized and the Ministry of Endowments notified by fax. The ministry decided to form a committee to review the seized books. Abu Hatab said the Minya endowments department is conducting inspections of mosques and preachers in all mosques in the governorate. According to Abu Hatab, the discovery of Shia books was “an isolated incident” and there is no Shia thought in the governorate.<sup>203</sup>

63) December 5, 2015

## Shia Egyptians take part in mourning commemoration for Hussein in Iraq

Several Shia Egyptians, including Emad Qandil and Ahmed Rassem al-Nafis, took part in the annual commemoration of the 40th day after Imam Hussein’s death in Karbala, Iraq.

Qandil published a video on his personal Facebook account showing him dressed in black and reading a special prayer on a visit to the adjacent tombs of Hussein and Abbas. He then recited several hymns about the virtue of visiting Hussein’s tomb.<sup>204</sup>

Muqtada Sadr, the leader of the Sadrist in Iraq, joined Shias from several countries in a march to commemorate the occasion for the first time that year. In a statement issued by his office, he said the annual march was different this year due to the marked increase in the number of participants from various countries, including Egypt.<sup>205</sup>

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203. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Nov. 26, 2015, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2015/11/26/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%B6%D8%A8%D8%B7-5%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B3%D9%89%D8%A1-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B4%D8%A9-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AE%D9%84-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%B1/2462528>.

204. See Qandil’s Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/emadyusufkandil/videos/vb.100002338445384/923268907761049/?type=3&theater>.

205. Muqtada Sadr’s website, <http://jawabna.com/index.php/permalink/8584.html>.

Ahmed Rassem al-Nafis said that Cairo airport security stopped him on his return from Iraq. In press statements, al-Nafis said that airport security officials held him and his traveling companion, journalist Ehab Shawqi, for one hour. Security searched their bags more than once looking for Shia books or studies they brought back with them.<sup>206</sup>

A security source at the Cairo International Airport denied that al-Nafis had been stopped or detained by airport security and had his passport taken without citing a reason. The source told the press that the normal procedures were undertaken on his arrival and that al-Nafis cleared customs without any trouble.<sup>207</sup>

Salafi activist Nasser Radwan urged Egyptian security forces to stop all Shia Egyptians on their return from commemorating the mourning ritual for Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq. Radwan said that Egyptian security should stop and question all Shias before flying out of the airport because they are spies and agents of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and were traveling to receive instructions from their Revolutionary Guard masters.<sup>208</sup>

## 64) December 11, 2015

### Azhar research contest on “the spread of Shiism in Sunni society”

The Azhar Administration announced a contest for foreign students on the topic of “the spread of Shiism in Sunni society: causes, dangers, and how to confront it.”

The contest involved two sections. The first academic part entailed writing a book report on two books dealing with Shia thought, of at least five pages per book and following the example provided by the Azhar administration.

The book report was required to identify ten prominent Shia sources and their authors, as well as ten Sunni figures who responded to Shia thought with citations of their most important works. In addition, participants were asked to write an academic essay on the efforts of al-Azhar and its scholars to confront the “Shia tide.”

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206. al-Youm al-Sabia, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2015/12/4/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B3--%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81%D9%86%D9%89-%D8%A7%D8%AB%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%AA%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%83%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-/2475005>.

207. Al-Shorouk, <http://www.masress.com/shorouk/875545>.

208. Al-Bawaba News, <http://www.albawabhnews.com/1654888>.

The second part involved an artistic component, requiring the composition of a play addressing and responding to Shia thought in dramatic form; the preparation of a paper or electronic file containing mental maps, concepts, and images about Shia thought (artistic composition); the preparation of a speech detailing Shia claims and ways to respond to them (oratory); the preparation of a poem of at least 20 lines “refuting Shia sophistries and responding to their falsehoods”; and the composition of a short story about two friends, one who embraces Shiism and the other who attempts to bring him back to Sunnism.<sup>209</sup>

The Shia Endowment Office declared it would provide Azhar students with the Shia books they needed for their research free of charge.

The head of the Shia Endowment Office, Alaa al-Mousawi, said, “Despite our reservations on the provocative manner in which the contest on Shia research was raised by the Azhar Administration, we are nevertheless willing, in service of truth and in demonstration of Islamic brotherhood, to provide all Shia sources required by our honorable Azhar students to reach the truth. They can contact us at the email on the office’s website with their requires, and their requests will be met all due haste and without charge, as we wish them success in their endeavor in order to serve the unity of the Islamic nation and enlighten it with facts in a pure academic, objective spirit.”<sup>210</sup>

The Azhar Media Center issued a statement in response to the Shia Endowments Office, saying that the Azhar library was filled with Shia books that students specialized in schools of thought could consult at any time without academic or scholarly reproach. As such, the statement said, the Azhar student researchers had no need of assistance. The statement added that the contest had nothing to do with Shiism as it is embraced by its adherents. In contrast, the topic of the contest was limited to attempts by some to spread Shiism in Sunni societies. Al-Azhar therefore has a responsibility to fortify the doctrines of Sunnis and preserve the unity and stability of their countries. The statement said that the suggestion by the Shia Endowments Office that the contest was a critical response to Shia doctrine was inaccurate and false. The title of the contest as announced by al-Azhar was “the spread of Shiism in Sunni society: causes, dangers, and how to confront it,” clearly indicating that the contest addresses the expanding Shia tide, the

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209. Al-Youm al-Sabia, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2015/12/11/%D9%85%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D9%81%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85/2485142#.Vm258k-p97IV>.

210. Shia Endowments Office, <http://www.alwaqfalsheai.gov.iq/ar/%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D9%84%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%87-%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A8-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B0%D9%87%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D8%B9%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%A9-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%81>.

creation of Shia cells in Egypt, and objectionable political interference in Sunni countries, which Azhar opposes.<sup>211</sup>

The Shia Endowment Office in Iraq subsequently issued a statement in which it said that during a meeting with Iraq's ambassador in Egypt, the sheikh of al-Azhar had announced that he would cancel the contest due to the uproar on the topic and motivated by the sheikh of al-Azhar's interest in making al-Azhar an advocate for Islamic unity and harmony among all Muslims.<sup>212</sup>

Dr. Abd al-Moneim Fouad, the dean of the Faculty of Islamic Sciences for foreign students at al-Azhar, denied reports that al-Azhar would cancel the contest. Fouad told EIPR researchers that the contest would continue, that the claims of the Shia Endowments Office in Iraq were unfounded, and that all research by Azhar students is academic and does not intend to attack anyone. He added that the aim of the contest is to prevent the erosion of the security of society; it is not aimed at Shia in their countries, but at the Shia invasion of Egypt.<sup>213</sup>

## 65) February 1, 2016

### Salafi groups attack minister of culture due to presence of "Shia books" at the Cairo book fair

Salafi forces in Egypt launched a furious attack on Minister of Culture Helmi al-Namnam for his refusal to confiscate Shia books from the Cairo International Book Fair.

The Salafi Coalition of Muslims in Defense of the Companions and Prophet's Family threatened to bring suit against al-Namnam on charges of spreading Shiism.

Younes Makhyoun, the president of the Nour Party, joined the attack on the culture minister, saying that his selection for the post was "one of the greatest errors committed by the government in the recent period."

Speaking on the al-Asima channel, Makhyoun added, "al-Namnam habitually states that Egypt is by nature secular, which indicates that he is out of touch with reality and the people."

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211. Ahram Online, <http://gate.ahram.org.eg/News/835471.aspx>.

212. al-Youm al-Sabia, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2016/1/29/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%89-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%8A%D8%B2%D8%B9%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D9%84%D8%BA%D9%89-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D9%81%D9%89/2560767>.

213. Phone interview, May 12, 2016.



Al-Namnam denied reports that Shia-related books were being marketed in the official pavilions by publishers at the book fair, although he allowed that perhaps such books were available through stalls operated by used book sellers.

Speaking by telephone to the program “Tahrir Studio,” aired on Sada al-Balad, al-Namnam added that any publisher with proven involvement in printing any extremist books would be banned from the book fair for two years. He said that there are academic books on Shiism as a confession of Islam that cannot be banned and which no one has a right to ban.

“The Shia confession is an Islamic confession,” al-Namnam said. “It is studied at Azhar University and by students in the philosophy department. I can’t ban academic books that speak about Shiism, and I’m not required to ban Shia books. I have no dispute with it as a confession.”<sup>214</sup>

## 66) February 22, 2016

### Sheikh of al-Azhar prays next to Shias in Indonesia and warns of “Shia threat” to Sunni societies

Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb said that when he calls for unity, he does not mean the adoption of a specific confession or fighting other confessions. When he urges the unity of Muslims, he said, he is advocating coexistence between all confessions. “I don’t think anyone who knows al-Azhar’s role throughout history is expecting al-Azhar to fight a particular confession,” al-Tayyeb said. “Azhar has no interest in promoting a particular confession or fighting a confession.”

During a lecture at the Azhar Mosque in Jakarta, al-Tayyeb warned about the spread of Shiism in Sunni countries, even as he said that “Shiism and Sunnism are the two wings of Islam. Shias are Muslims, though some have gone astray.”

Al-Tayyeb had prayed with several Shias in Indonesia, including the Lebanese Shia religious authority Ali al-Amin.<sup>215</sup>

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214. Al-Namnam’s remarks can be heard starting at minute 35 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkB-t6Z4YEQ&list=PLfd97LjbR12khFhED-v15P-vQOfWPzi4bz>.

215. Al-Youm al-Sabia, Feb. 23, 2016, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2016/2/23/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%83%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%8A%D8%B5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A8%D8%AC%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%89-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%88-%D9%84%D9%84/2598403>.

Abbas Shoman, the deputy head of al-Azhar, told al-Ahram that Tayyeb's meeting and prayer with some Shias demonstrates his clear, explicit stance of distinguishing Shiism as an acceptable school of doctrine and jurisprudence from his rejection of political practices and the use of Shiism to harm Sunnis, and his urging of Muslim scholars to forswear disagreements and unite to achieve the hopes and stability of peoples from his rejection of major state policies and their expansionist aspirations in Arab and Muslim countries.

"The sheikh of al-Azhar, and all of us, reject the use of Shiism in service of political ends, to interfere in Sunni affairs, or to persecute and harass Sunnis," Shoman added. "We similar reject Iran's occupation of some Arab territories or its attempt to extend its control to Arab states by supporting armed conflicts in many of their countries. The distinction between Shiism as a confession and spreading Shiism as a practice resolves the problem with the sheikh of al-Azhar's comments for those unable to understand them." Shoman said that the sheikh of al-Azhar being honored in Indonesia reflects the world's view of al-Azhar and its symbols. Shoman added that the visit was one stop on an Asian, African, and European tour, and that the Vatican had again invited him to visit.<sup>216</sup>

## 67) March 15, 2016

### Sheikh of al-Azhar to the European Parliament: Sunnism and Shiism are two wings of Islam, but confessionalism is being exploited to stoke wars and regional expansionism

Speaking to the European Parliament in Berlin, Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmed al-Tayyeb said, "The relationship between Sunnis and Shias is the tie of one religion and brotherhood. Al-Azhar always calls for this. I have a phrase I always repeat, that I repeated last week in Indonesia: Sunnism and Shiism are two wings of the Islamic nation. There can be no argument about this."

Al-Tayyeb added, "Sunnis cannot expel Shias from Islam, and Shias cannot expel Sunnis from Islam. We lived together for 14 centuries, and history has recorded no relentless wars between Sunni and Shia in the East."

Al-Tayyeb continued, "But unfortunately, this confessionalism is being exploited to stoke wars that can serve regional expansionist goals." He added, "What is happening between Sunnis and Shias now—I'm certain it is vanishing, and when the political and military storms abate, all brothers will return to one religion."<sup>217</sup>

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216. Al-Ahram, Feb. 27, 2016, <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/481914.aspx>.

217. The video of the speech, Mar. 15, 2016, can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5Lypbzu7IA>.

68) May 2, 2016

## Endowment official attacks Shia “individual” participation in the Sayyeda Zaynab moulid as “a cowardly style, and no extension of Shia thought will happen in Egypt”

Speaking to Dotmsr, Sheikh Hamada al-Mataani, the director of the Sayyeda Zeinab endowments, described individual Shias taking part in the moulid of Sayyeda Zeinab, as “a cowardly style,” commenting on a video showing Emad Qandil reading a Shia-inspired prayer for Sayyeda Zeinab inside the Sayyeda Zeinab Mosque.

Al-Mataani added that Shias engaged in this practice as individuals, not a collective, since they know their error and fear the reaction of those around them. He added that if they entered the mosque as a group, they would be discovered and dealt with, but they entered it as individuals, like any of the other millions of people who attended the moulid, or the celebration of Sayyeda Zeinab’s birthday.

Al-Mataani said that Shias were not present at the moulid, since those present identify themselves, like the Sufi orders, and form prayer circles or engage in collective activities. He added that Shias engaging in such behavior as individuals demonstrates their strong fear and their desire to “take an image” to send the message that they are indeed present, which is utterly wrong. “Egypt is protected,” al-Mataani said. “No extension of Shia thought will happen in it because the men of al-Azhar, the endowments, and the Sufi orders stand vigilant against this thought.”<sup>218</sup>

Shia activist Haidar Qandil told EIPR researchers that several Shias wanted to join the moulid as individuals and made no attempt to assemble, to avoid creating any problems.<sup>219</sup>

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218. Dotmsr, [http://www.dotmsr.com/details/%D8%A3%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A8-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A8-%D8%AC%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86](http://www.dotmsr.com/details/%D8%A3%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%AF%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B2%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A8-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81-%D8%A3%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A8-%D8%AC%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86).

219. Telephone interview, May 3, 2016.

## 69) May 1, 2016

### Shia man detained and tortured on his return from Iraq

Shia Egyptian S.<sup>220</sup> told EIPR researchers that security personnel detained him upon his return from Iraq at the Cairo airport on May 1, 2016. He was sent to the Homeland Security headquarters in Alexandria where he was detained and tortured and attempts were made to recruit him to inform on Egyptian Shias for security. He was released on Monday, May 9, 2016.

EIPR researchers met with S. in Alexandria on Tuesday, May 10, 2016.

S. was earlier detained, tortured, and interrogated about his intention to travel to Iraq for religious purposes and was subsequently released without charge.<sup>221</sup>

S. told EIPR researchers that airport employees informed him that his name was on the arrival watch list. He was questioned by a Homeland Security officer, who asked him about his visit to Iraq and why he overstayed his visa there. S. responded that he went for religious purposes and to study Shiism. He admitted that he did overstay his visa and paid a fine to the Iraqi authorities on exiting the country. He said he intended to stay longer, but was compelled to return due to his father's death.

S. added that he was sent to the Homeland Security headquarters in Alexandria where he was detained and suspended from the ceiling by his arms for long periods. He said that officers proposed he work for Homeland Security and supply them with information about various Shia groups in exchange for LE3,000 per month. S. said he refused their offer and that he was released on Monday afternoon, May 9, 2016.

## 70) May 27, 2016

### Shia family detained for eight hours for taking photos with a "supreme hand" banner in front of al-Azhar Mosque

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220. S. requested anonymity.

221. See §61.

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Sherif Ismail Shehata told EIPR researchers<sup>222</sup> that he, his father Ismail Shehata, and his mother were detained at the Darb al-Ahmar police station for eight hours, during which time they were questioned about their religious beliefs and the sources of their ideas about Shiism, after they attempted to take a photo in front of al-Azhar Mosque with a small banner.

Shehata added that while they were in front of al-Azhar Mosque on Friday morning, May 27, they attempted to take a photograph with a small black banner inscribed with the phrase “the supreme hand,” a name for Imam al-Mahdi among Twelver Shias. They were stopped by police and asked about the banner, the meaning of “supreme hand,” their ties with Shiism, and their ties with Sheikh Hassan Shehata.

Sherif Ismail Shehata is the brother of late Shia preacher Hassan Shehata, who was killed in Zawya Abu Muslim in June 2013 while taking part in a religious meeting with a group of local Shias.

Shehata said they were taken to the Darb al-Ahmar police station, where they were detained for eight hours and all questioned repeatedly by station officers and officers who said they were with Homeland Security. They were asked about their beliefs, the significance of the flag and Imam al-Mahdi, whether they believed in the prophethood of Mohammed or Ali, and about the books and websites they read about Shiism.

Shehata accused the interrogators of defaming and insulting their ideas and beliefs during the questioning, but they were not physically assaulted or directly verbally abused. They were released without charge.

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222. Telephone interview, May 28, 2016.

## Appendix 1

Article 19's six-point test to identify criminal incitement

Adapted by the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression

## Appendix 2

Application of Article 19's six-point test to two cases of incitement against Shia Egyptians

Example

Sheikh Sabri Ebada, a deputy endowment minister, was hosted on the program "10 pm," aired on Dream on September 22, 2014, when he said, "What that rafida presented on this poisoned channel is some of those people they brought with money.<sup>223</sup> But go back to Egypt. Egypt is stability, it has built and given. Iran and those behind it will not get one speck of Egypt after such a wise presidency and great leadership. The rafida must be expelled and their followers, too, into the sea. They must be killed here and there, because Egypt will survive."<sup>224</sup>

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223. He is referring to the Egyptian people who declared their Shiism on a program hosted by prominent Shia preacher Yasser al-Habib. Rafida (literally, 'rejectionist') is a derogatory term for Shias.

224. "10 pm," Sep. 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXUM8HWZVxI>.

Standard used to determine when the speech constitutes incitement to violence and discrimination that should be criminalized		Extent to which standard met in this case
1. Context of the speech	Conflicts exist between groups or individuals concerned by the speech	<p>The statement was made in an episode dedicated to discussing an Egyptian family's declaration of their Shia faith in a phone-in interview on a Shia satellite channel.</p> <p>The statement was made amid sectarian tension over expressions of Shiism and angry statements and threats against members of the family and Egyptian Shias in general. The police arrested the father and charged him with promoting extremist ideas that blaspheme a revealed religion. He was later released and the case closed.</p> <p>Prior to this, there was general tension related to any expression of Shia ideas, practices, or jurisprudence. Some Egyptian Shias were subjected to attacks by the state or individuals and groups.</p> <p>As a deputy endowments minister and an Azhari preacher and imam, the speaker represents the view of two official institutions, the Azhar Administration and the Endowments Ministry, which declare their rejection of any practice or expression associated with Shiism.</p>
	A history of institutional discrimination against the group at which the incitement is directed	Institutional discrimination exists against Shias in connection with religious freedom and the right to expression and worship; there is full institutional tolerance of incitement against them.
	A history of conflict between the group to which the speaker belongs and the group at which the speech is directed	<p>There is a history of conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims, always associated with discrimination and violations by persons in power of either party toward the other.</p> <p>In Egypt there is a history of violations by the state, which adopts Sunnism, toward Shia citizens.</p>
	Existence of a legal framework regulating discrimination and freedom of expression respected by the state, individuals, and groups	The constitution and law criminalizes the advocacy of violence or discrimination, but these provisions are typically used against political Islamists. The legal framework for freedom of expression is not respected when it comes to religious groups that are unrecognized by the state and incitement to violence or discrimination against them.

	Diversity of the media landscape, and its treatment of social diversity and every person's ability to arrive at divergent opinions about the issue that is the subject of the speech	The Egyptian media landscape largely does not deal honestly with issues of religious diversity. In the episode in which the statement was made, the Shiism of the family was discussed by two guests, both opposed to Shias' right to religious expression and practice. In addition to Sabri Ebada, the deputy endowments minister who made the statement, the episode featured Walid Ismail, the coordinator of the Coalition in Defense of the Prophet's Companions and Family, a sectarian group dedicated specifically to incitement against Shias.
2. Person responsible for the speech	The speaker's official or political position	The person responsible for the speech is an Azhari preacher and imam and a deputy endowments minister.
	Extent of the authority of his speech or its influence on the public	The speaker has no special influence, but speakers from within the official religious establishment and wearing Azhari clothing have a general, major impact on segments of the public, and the state cements this authority and influence with the force of law.
	The statement was made while the speaker was in an official or political position	The statement was made when the speaker was a deputy endowments minister.
3. Intent of the speaker	Language, tone, and clarity of the incitement	The speaker explicitly stated that the rafida, a derogatory term for Shias, and their followers should be ejected into the sea and killed here and there, in a strident, angry tone.
	Objective and motives of the speaker	The context indicates that the speaker is making a non-specific appeal to deal with Shias by expelling and killing them, but the context of his speech suggests that the Egyptian government in its official capacity will assume the mission of confronting Shias and Iran. The context suggests that motives of the appeal are his anger at Shia expressions against the companions of the Prophet Mohammed and that he believes the goal of the spread of Shiism is "to occupy Egypt" and "spread strife."
	Extent to which the speech was circulated over its medium	The speech was made on "10 pm," one of the most prominent talk shows carried by Dream, a satellite channel with broad reach. The program is aired at peak viewing time, at 10 pm.



4. Content of the speech	Extent to which speech contains a direct invitation to the public to engage in a specific action	<p>The statements, which commented on an Egyptian family declaring its Shia faith, included “expelling Shias into the sea,” which at the very least calls for their figurative expulsion. The speaker also explicitly advocated their murder, saying they should be killed here and there. Nevertheless, Azhar and Endowments Ministry officials consistently say that they are directing their appeals to the state and that the public should not apply such juridical orders itself, as this infringes the authority of the ruler. Some claim that the reason for sectarian attacks by the public is the state’s failure to apply Islamic legal codes.</p> <p>The speech could be prosecuted as providing justification for sectarian violence or allowing leniency or impunity for its perpetrators.</p>
	The cultural background of the public at which the incitement is directed and whether it feels threatened and thus prepared for preemptive violence.	The dominant, prevalent feeling in the media and cultural landscape in Egypt, due to the official and private media and the discourse of religious institutions, is that Shiism poses a threat to Egypt’s stability and is connected with Iranian political conspiracies against Egyptian social cohesion.
	Was the group against whom the incitement was directed explicitly named?	The episode of the program was clearly dedicated to a discussion of the Shia faith of some Egyptians, and Sabri Ebada used the terms “Shias” and “rafida” in his speech.
	Extent to which the speech is designed to provoke a reaction	Sabri Ebada made his statements in a sharp, angry, agitated tone, warning of “the Shia danger” and the need to confront it and crying after he completed his statement.
	Can the ostensible incitement be denied as part of an academic discussion, artistic or religious expression, or part of a scientific or political discussion that contains criticism in the public interest and not direct incitement against an individual or group?	The statements cannot be considered indirect speech in an artistic, religious, or scientific context or political criticism. They contain a direct appeal to incitement to violence against a specific group.
5. Impact of the speech	Directed indiscriminately at the general public by a public means	Sabri Ebada’s statements were made on a talk show discussing public affairs, directed at general viewers.

	Circulation of the publication medium	The program is aired live on one of the most watched channels at peak viewing hours.
	Space and repeated publication given to the speech	Statements by Sabri Ebada and another guest, all of them anti-Shia, occupied the majority of the program and included other examples of incitement to discrimination and hate speech. The episode was re-aired as normal and a video of the episode and Ebada's statements were published on YouTube.
6. Likelihood of imminent consequences from the speech	Clarity of the invitation to use violence	The term 'kill' was explicitly used by the speaker.
	Ability of the speaker to persuade the public to act	There is a substantial possibility of influencing large segments of the public with speech by an Azhari sheikh and official with the Endowments Ministry presented officially and in media as a representative of acceptable and moderate religious discourse sanctioned by the state.
	Ability of public to carry out the acts incited to	In various incidents, citizens have been able to attack some Shias while meeting and attempting to worship, by surrounding their homes and assaulting them, at time to death, as was the case with Sheikh Hassan Shehata and his disciples.
	Was the group targeted for incitement a recent target of discrimination or other incitement?	A general climate of incitement to discrimination and hate speech against Shia prevails and has spiked after certain incidents, including the Egyptian family's declaration of their Shia faith, as a result of which they were threatened and the father was detained and charged. Inciting against the Shia threat and Shia practices had previously led to the murder of Sheikh Hassan Shehata and his followers.