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Mapping Egyptian Islamism

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Introduction

This monograph is the first part of a two-year study of Egyptian Islamism funded by the Smith Richard Foundation. The study is divided into two parts. The second part examines the internal dynamics of Islamism in terms of the interrelationship among its various constituent currents and their disagreements on key theological and political questions.

This monograph maps the various currents, groups, and individuals that form the complex Egyptian Islamist scene. Before discussing those that are included in this report, it is necessary to first explain the methodology followed and why certain institutions and groups are not covered: Al Azhar, Shi'a, Sufis, Tabligh and Da'wah, and Hizb Al Tahrir.

This report and map is of Islamist actors and not Islamic ones. The interrelationship between the religion and the political ideology that claims to represent it is, of course, a complex one. By its very nature, Islamism claims to be not only a political ideology within the world of Islam, but rather *the* political manifestation of Islam. Such claims should not be accepted outright for several reasons: the modern nature of the ideology, the contribution of modern European ideologies to its foundation, and Islamism's transcendence of traditional Islamic political thought and schools of jurisprudence. However, these claims can't be dismissed offhand. Islamism has indeed shaped the way millions of Muslims around the world understand their religion. Acknowledging this interrelationship and mutual influence does not, however, mean treating Islamism as synonymous with Islam.

Various definitions have been suggested for Islamism or political Islam, as some prefer to call it. Nazih Ayubi defines it as "the doctrine or movement which contends that Islam possesses a theory of politics and the State,"¹ while Stephane Lacroix contends that an Islamist is "any formally or informally organized agent acting or wishing to act on his social and/or political environment with the purpose of bringing it into conformity with an ideal based on a particular interpretation of the dictates of Islam."² To define Islamism, however, we must go back in history to the crisis that gave it birth.

Islamism was born out of and as a response to the crisis of modernity in the world of Islam in its twin manifestations. First, this crisis was encountered, in the Egyptian case, with the discovery of Western technological, material, and military superiority as the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte crushed their Mamluk adversaries in the Battle of the Pyramids in 1798 and occupied Egypt. That discovery naturally led to Bernard Lewis's famous question "What Went Wrong?" and more important, how can we catch up? As time passed, the encounter with the West became not only intellectual, with the West held as a model for emulation, but also increasingly one with the West as an occupier. Second, the crisis of modernity challenged the very foundation of the political order in the Islamic world. Modernization efforts by rulers or foreign occupiers led to a growing gap between on the one hand, the Islamic worldview and concepts of politics, law, and

economics and on the other hand the reality in which Muslims lived. Born as a response to this discovery and gap, Islamism is preoccupied with finding a solution to this question and closing the gap.

The Muslim world was thus viewed by Islamists as subject to two forms of assault: one in the form of European colonialism and the direct occupation of Muslim land, and the other in the form of an invasion of Western practices, ideologies, and life styles that have replaced Islamic ones. The two assaults are linked. Islamists believe that the decline in the worldly fortunes of Islam and Muslims is directly tied to the decay of Islamic rituals, symbols, and practices in the daily lives of Muslims. The solution that Islamism champions is thus a simple one: A return to an earlier period of time when the Islamic world was not in decline but in ascendance by returning Islam to its all-encompassing meaning in the lives of Muslims.

Islamists of all stripes share a huge common ground. In his superb book, Ahmed Salem offers nine points on which all Islamists agree: rejection of secularism; belief that Islam offers an all encompassing answer to life on earth; attempt to establish one form or another of an Islamic state; the road to reform and righteousness is by returning to Islam; the Quran and the *Sunna** are references for all actions; *Shari'a* is the basis of legislation; all human action is to be judged by reference to revelation; *Shari'a* is compulsory for individuals, society and the state; and the material state of the Muslim world is the direct result of the state of religion.³ The distinguished scholar of Islamic philosophy and Islamism, Hillel Fradkin, concludes that all Islamists are joined together by at least three factors: “the desire to purify and thus revive Islamic life; the desire to restore the worldly fortunes of Islam; and the conviction that both can be achieved only by re-appropriating the model of Islam’s seventh-century founders, the Salaf or virtuous ancestors, who include Mohammed and his closest companions or followers.”⁴

Yet, despite this common ground among Islamists, a huge gulf has grown among Islamist currents and groups, which are often engaged in fierce rhetorical battles. The dividing lines stem from disagreements over theological-political questions. I discuss the various responses offered by the full spectrum of Egyptian Islamism to these key theological-political questions in part two of this study.

This report does not cover five institutions and groups: Al Azhar, Shi’a, Sufis, Tabligh and Da’wah, and Hizb Al Tahrir. An explanation of each exclusion is necessary.

As the historical center of Islamic learning, Al Azhar’s reputation transcends Egypt’s borders, with thousands of Muslims from all corners of the world traveling to study at its university. It oversees a school system parallel to the national one that has grown tremendously since 1952, with Al Azhar school students representing 7.6% of pre-primary students, 11.4% of primary students, 9.7% of middle school students, and 24.3% of non-technical high school students. With more than 300,000 students, Al Azhar University is the largest university in Egypt, representing 17% of all university students in the country. While Al Azhar serves as the official religious establishment in Egypt and

* Prophet’s way of life.

thus is an institution, its humongous size has in reality meant that all Islamic schools of thoughts and all Islamist currents have existed within its ranks. The careful reader of this study will note the extent to which various Salafi Sheikhs have received their education in Al Azhar, with some of them rising in its official ranks. Nonetheless, given the existence of all Islamic and Islamist currents within its walls, I have chosen to set Al Azhar as an institution aside. It warrants a separate study.

As Egypt does not officially recognize Shi'a as a separate community in Egypt, the size of that community is unknown. As a result of both state repression and Salafi intimidation and attacks, most Egyptian Shi'a choose to hide their faith. While an Egyptian Shi'a, Ahmed Rasem El Naffis, has attempted unsuccessfully to form a political party, Egyptian Shi'a have no political discourse in the public square and are thus outside the scope of this study.

Many myths have been propagated regarding Egyptian Sufism and its ability to counter Salafism. Much of this hype was the result of Sufi leaders' inflated sense of their relevance and power. And scholars not deeply immersed in the Egyptian scene assumed that Sufism can play a role in Egypt similar to the one it plays in other countries where it has political impact. In reality, and as electoral results repeatedly show, Egyptian Sufism, no matter the size of its followers, has no political ramifications.

Lastly the exclusion of Tabligh and Da'wah is natural given its own insistence on staying away from any political discussions. Its mention in the study is limited to its 1970s leader Ibrahim Ezzat's role in the lives of various Salafi Sheikhs and its current leader Hesham Ragheb's membership in the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. Similarly, while Hizb Al Tahrir is inherently political, its membership is extremely small in Egypt, making it irrelevant to the Islamist scene and intra-Islamist debates.

As readers of this study will note, the Egyptian Islamist scene is extremely complex. All Islamist currents across the Muslim world have a following, large or small, in Egypt and many groups found in Egypt cannot be found elsewhere. This richness and complexity is both the result of the country's centrality to the Muslim world and the long history it enjoyed there. Islamism is in fact the creation of three countries: Egypt, India, and Saudi Arabia. On the banks of the Nile, currents and thoughts from Ibn Taymiyyah, Wahabism, the Indian Ahl Al Hadith, and Al Albani were mixed with those of the native sons of the land: Mohamed Abduh, Hassan El Banna, and Sayed Qutb.

The report profiles 128 currents, groups, and individuals. In each case, the general current or group is profiled first followed by individual profiles of the most important Sheikhs. In the case of currents and groups, I provide the origin, historical development, and main features and ideas of each. In profiles of individual Sheikhs, I provide their backgrounds, education, and key positions. When relevant, I mention their connection to the United States in terms of preaching here or being associated with American based groups.

The report begins with a profile of Madkhali Salafism, followed by eight profiles of its Sheikhs. Next is Scholarly Salafism, followed by 29 individual profiles of groups and

Sheikhs. A profile of Activist Salafism and its most important theoretician is followed by profiles of its sub groups: The Salafi Call, its Nour Party, and the 16 most important Sheikhs, followed by the Sorouri current and six individual profiles, Cairo's Activist Salafism and six individual profiles. I conclude Activist Salafism with a profile of Revolutionary Salafism, followed by 11 individual profiles. Next comes a profile of Gama'a Islamiya and six of its leaders. The story of Egyptian Jihadis is recounted, followed by seven individual profiles of the most important leaders and the new groups that emerged on the Egyptian scene. Next is a short introduction to independent Islamist preachers, followed by 10 individual profiles. A profile of the phenomenon known as Televangelists is followed by four individual ones. The Muslim Brotherhood comes next, followed by four profiles of individuals and groups. A profile of Islamic Revival Thinkers is followed by five individual profiles. Last is a profile of Salafi TV Channels.

Madkhali Salafism

The Egyptian Madkhali Salafi current is an extension of Saudi Madkhalis. To understand the Egyptian version, it's imperative to understand the emergence of Madkhali Salafism in Saudi Arabia. Madkhalia, Jamiya, or Medina Salafism are the terms used to describe the newest current within Salafism. It was born in 1990 as a reaction to the scholarly debate over whether Saudi Arabia could seek help from Western unbeliever armies to protect its territory and oust Iraqi invaders from Kuwait. The decision to seek such assistance rattled the Saudi religious scene. While the official religious establishment declared the use of Western armies permissible,⁵ the decision was fiercely attacked by Sheikhs who would later be termed Al Sahwa. During the ensuing debate, the official religious establishment was put on the defensive as its Sheikhs failed to contain the younger generation and respond to their criticisms until Madkhalis joined the battle.⁶ Madkhalis went beyond the position taken by the official religious establishment. They not only defended the ruler's decision but also took the offensive and attacked those who criticized it as non-Salafis.⁷ The resulting debate within Saudi Islamist circles led to the emergence of Madkhalis as a distinct Salafi current.

Who were those Sheikhs? The current is named after two Sheikhs who became its spiritual leaders, Mohamed Aman Al Jami and Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali, both of whom were associated with the Islamic University of Medina. Madkhalis actually vehemently reject the term, preferring to be called Salafis or Ahl El Sunna.⁸ Al Jami, who was born in Ethiopia in 1930, traveled at the age of 20 to Saudi Arabia. He became a student of Sheikh Abdel Aziz Ibn Baz*, the future Mufti of Saudi Arabia, and Egyptian Salafis Abdel Razek Afifi and Mohamed Khalil Harras.⁹ He lived in Saudi Arabia for the rest of his life and taught at the Islamic University of Medina, but he received his M.A. in Pakistan and his PhD in Egypt.¹⁰ Al Madkhali, born in 1932 in Saudi Arabia, was a student of Al Jami, Ibn Baz, and later on of Mohamed Nasir Al Din Al Albani†.¹¹ He graduated in 1964 from the Islamic University of Medina, where his classmate was Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek. Other known Madkhali Sheikhs are Faleh Ibn Nafi' El Harbi, Falah Ibn Ismail Mendkar, Ahmed Ibn Yehia El Negmy, and Zayd Ibn Mohamed Al Madkhali.

Despite its recent emergence, Madkhali Salafism has achieved widespread appeal in Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen.¹² It was not just a response to Saudi actions in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In reality, Madkhali Salafism also was a reaction to a larger phenomenon in Saudi society: the growth of Sorouriya and the larger Sahwa phenomenon.¹³ Wahabism was born in Saudi Arabia completely isolated from the challenges of modernity because of the lack of intellectual or physical occupation or contact with the West. As a result, Wahabism was revolutionized by its encounter with Egyptian Salafism¹⁴ This happened first in the 1920s as several key Ansar El Sunna Sheikhs such as Abdel Razek Afifi, Abdel Zaher Aboul Sam'h, and Mohamed Khalil

* Leading Islamic scholar in Saudi Arabia (1910-99). Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, 1993-99.

† Arguably the most important Islamic scholar in the 20th century (1914-99). Born in Albania, he specialized in the study of Hadiths.

Harras immigrated to Saudi Arabia and played an instrumental role in its religious affairs. Contacts occurred again in the 1950s and 60s, when members of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its sister organizations were welcomed in Saudi Arabia after their ordeal in their native countries and were given control of Saudi education. While the Brotherhood's discourse found some support, its theological weakness and lack of attention to questions of creed created an open space for the emergence of a new current that would create an amalgam between Wahabi doctrines and Brotherhood activism, especially in its Qutbist form: Sorouriya.

The birth and dramatic growth of Sorouris in Saudi Arabia naturally created a counter discourse.¹⁵ In fact as an observer notes, "Sorouriya and Madkhalia are twins. They rise and fall together".¹⁶ The explosion in the number of religious students in Saudi Arabia created the perfect environment for the theological war to take place.¹⁷ After the initial break over the Gulf War, the separation between both currents gave way to increased differences.¹⁸ The birth of Madkhali Salafism was also assisted by the growing rift between Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood. The first cracks in the Saudi-Brotherhood relationship was over the Brotherhood's support for the Iranian Revolution. That was quickly healed as the Brotherhood changed course. The relationship was further cemented in the Afghan Jihad campaign. Then the relationship was permanently broken after the Brotherhood refused to support the American liberation of Kuwait. By 2002, Saudi Minister of Interior Prince Nayef Bin Abdel Aziz was publicly blaming the Brotherhood for the radicalization of Saudi society.¹⁹ This official antagonism toward the Brotherhood enabled Madkhalis to use the state's backing to settle old scores with their adversaries, accusing them of being secret Brotherhood members or having Brotherhood leanings.²⁰

Madkhalis believe that the ruler and the state are not only legitimate but are also **the** Islamic Gama'a.²¹ As such, any form of rebellion, whether peaceful or violent, is not permissible even if the rulers are unjust.²² Furthermore, Madkhalis reject even public advice to rulers to mend their ways or implement *Shari'a*, as they consider such public advice a form of rebellion.²³ The change methodology adopted by Madkhalis is Al Albani's purification and upbringing.²⁴

Obedience to the ruler is also extended to the official religious establishment.²⁵ The ruler is obeyed even if he rules by other than what God has revealed. Ruling by other than what God has revealed is not a nullifier of Islam.²⁶ For the ruler to be considered an unbeliever and his legitimacy questioned, he has to publicly declare his apostasy.²⁷ Because the state is the Islamic Gama'a, any form of collective action by forming Islamic groups or organizations is not permissible as it is a form of rebellion.²⁸ Those who engage in rebellion or incitement against rulers are following the methods of *Jahiliyyah*²⁹* and are viewed by Madkhalis as Kharijites†. As such, they are no longer considered Salafis.³⁰

* The state of ignorance. Historical term used to describe the Arabian Peninsula at the time of Mohamed's revelation. Term reinvented by Qutb to describe contemporary Muslim societies.

† Literary those who went out. Early Islamic sect which emerged during Islam's first civil war. Adopted extreme theological views on declaring unbelief. Largely disappeared from the main

The broad definition of rebellion that Madkhalis adopt perhaps made it inevitable that they would devote considerable energy and time to fighting other Islamists as innovators in religion, followers of heresies, and the source of all evil that befell the Muslim world. Madkhali Salafism is “a cleansing discourse that aims to purify Salafism from those who do not belong to it.”³¹ In fact, Madkhalis consider anyone who does not share their beliefs as not a Salafi.³² The worst offenders in the eyes of Madkhalis are the Muslim Brotherhood and especially its key ideologue Sayed Qutb.³³ Rabi’ Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali has described Qutb as “a supermarket of heresies”³⁴ and has written several books accusing Qutb of all sorts of heretical beliefs.³⁵

Madkhalis do not limit their criticism to those who adopt Qutb’s methodology. They also attack other Salafis who refuse to attack Qutb or who attempt to offer a more nuanced view of him. They thus turn one’s position on Qutb into a litmus test.³⁶ Refusal to attack heretics (Qutb) means that one is a heretic.³⁷ In their attacks on other Islamists, Madkhalis have adopted the *Hadith** criticism methodology known as *‘ilm al rijal* (Science of men or biographical criticism or evaluation) by which a *Hadith* narrator’s reliability is determined.³⁸ Avoiding no curse in attacking their adversaries, Madkhalis reject any balancing in judging them by admitting their good aspects and deeds.³⁹

Opponents often accuse Madkhalis of being state informers and lacking any change or reform methodology.⁴⁰ In the eyes of the Saudi religious establishment, Madkhalis overdo their biographical criticism, which results in religious students questioning all Sheikhs.⁴¹ For Activist Salafis, Madkhalis are Murji’ah†.⁴²

Madkhali Salafism’s lack of any organizational framework has led since its inception to internal fights as the biographical evaluation approach opened the door for anyone to challenge Sheikhs.⁴³ The first division was started by Egyptian Mahmoud Haddad, who took the Madkhali obsession with heresies to its natural conclusion, declaring numerous historical figures as heretics such as Al Hafez Ibn Hojr, Al Nawawy, Al Bihaqy, Al Zahabi, Ibn Hazm, and Al Shawqani. He publicly burned their books. Moreover, Haddad attacked Al Albani, which extremely troubled Rabi’ Ibn Hadi, who realized the danger of antagonizing such a towering figure in Salafism, especially one whose legacy he hoped to claim.⁴⁴ The Hadadia divide soon subsided as Haddad had few followers and after 2000 had little impact. The most important division, however, was at the hands of another Egyptian, Abu Hassan Al Ma’riby, whose religious knowledge enabled him to challenge Rabi’ Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali himself.⁴⁵

centers of the Islamic world during the Middle Ages. Remain today in small pockets in North Africa and most notably in Oman where the majority ofn the population belongs to the Ibadi sect which emerged from Kharijites.

* Prophet’s tradition including sayings and deeds. Compiled from oral tradition 200 years after the Prophet’s death.

† Literally those who postpone. A historical Islamic sect that is now extinct, which in its rejection of the Kharijite declaration of Muslims who commit a grave sin as unbelievers, took the issue to the other extreme by advocating that only God can judge whether a person is a true Muslim or not. They thuse created a separation, rejected by Salafis, between faith and acts that show that faith.

Madkhali Salafism was first introduced in Egypt by Osama El Qoussy, who studied with Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i* in Yemen.⁴⁶ For much of the 1990s and early 2000s, he led and represented Madkhalis in their fights with other Salafis in Egypt. Those fights were mainly with Cairo's Activist Salafis, though later on they included theological clashes with the Salafi Call in Alexandria. Debates centered on questions of declaring the unbelief of the ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed,⁴⁷ Jihad,⁴⁸ the position towards the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayed Qutb,⁴⁹ and in the case of the Salafi Call, over the permissibility of collective action.⁵⁰ By the mid-2000s, Osama El Qoussy began his transformation, which ultimately resulted in his abandonment of Salafism. Mohamed Sa'id Raslan then replaced him as the champion of Madkhali Salafism in Egypt. With the outbreak of demonstrations and strikes during President Mubarak's last years in office, Madkhalis devoted their energies to attacking demonstrations as an imitation of unbelievers and endorsed the prospect of Gamal Mubarak inheriting the presidency from his father.⁵¹ Madkhalis vehemently attacked the 2011 revolution as rebellion against the ruler and as part of a Western Zionist conspiracy to divide Egypt.⁵² Madkhalis were at the forefront of those who rejected political participation after the revolution, be it in elections, forming political parties, or supporting the constitution.⁵³ With the exception of Hesham El Beialy, they supported the military coup in July 2013.

Key Madkhali Sheikhs are: Mohamed Sa'id Raslan, Hassan Abdel Wahab El Banna, Talaat Zahran, Mahmoud Lutfi Amer, Hesham El Beialy, and Adel El Sayed. Lesser known Sheikhs are Ali Al Wasify, Khaled Abdel Rahman, Ali Abdel Aziz Moussa, Adel El Shorbagy, Taha Abdel Makdoud, Aboud Al Azeemy, 'Eid El Kayal, and Abu Abd El A'la Khaled Uthman.

Osama El Qoussy

Osama El Qoussy was born in Cairo and started his life as a *takfiri*† declaring his own parents unbelievers, and belonged to the El Samawy group endorsing Jihad during the 1970s. Believing Western education to be prohibited, he abandoned his university studies in medicine. His views, membership in Jihadi groups led to his imprisonment for a short period by the state security. He traveled to Saudi Arabia but was soon arrested in the aftermath of the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca at the hands of Juhayman Al Otaybi. Following his deportation, he immigrated to Yemen, where he hoped to live secluded from the world in a pre-modern lifestyle. In Yemen, he encountered Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i and for the following six years became his student.⁵⁴ In the mid-1980s, El Qoussy returned to Egypt, where he began preaching and worked in an Islamist publishing house. By the mid-1990s, he began to be influenced by the works of Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali, adopting his methodology and becoming the key representative of Madkhalis in Egypt.

* Yemeni Islamic Scholar (1933-2001).

† Someone who declares others unbelievers.

From the mid-1990s until the mid-2000s, he waged relentless war against Cairo's Activist Salafis over questions of the unbelief of rulers. He attacked the Muslim Brotherhood, accusing it of being the source of all evil and called for it to be banned.⁵⁵ He similarly attacked Hamas, though he declared Hamas to be legitimate rulers after their electoral victory. He changed course in his very next sermon and declared the Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas as the ruler who should be obeyed.⁵⁶ His clout began to diminish in Egyptian Madkhali circles after he sided with Abu Hassan Al Ma'riby in his dispute with Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali.⁵⁷ In the years preceding the revolution, he began to lose any Salafi aspect of his discourse. After the revolution, he completely broke with Salafism and Islamism as a whole.

Mohamed Sa'id Raslan

Mohamed Sa'id Raslan was born in 1955 in Monufia governorate. He received his B.A. in Medicine from Al Azhar University. During his study there, he became a Salafi. He received another B.A. in Literature and an M.A. and PhD in Hadith. Unlike other Salafis who travel all around the country giving sermons, with the exception of his years of study, Raslan has not departed his local village. That made him a local legend. Thousands flock every Friday to his small mosque in Monufia to attend his sermons.⁵⁸ Despite his disdain for Salafi TV channels, on which he has never appeared, and his isolation in his village devoting himself to scholarship, Raslan's fame is widespread with his sermons shared widely on social media. He maintains a website where his sermons and books are available <http://www.rslan.com/>. He is a prolific writer and has authored more than 49 books.⁵⁹

Raslan emerged on the Salafi scene in 2006 and became the best known Madkhali Sheikh in Egypt.⁶⁰ Before the revolution, he engaged in a theological fight with the Alexandrian Salafi Call over the question of collective action. His attacks were answered by Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, who treated him with the utmost respect.⁶¹ Raslan has engaged in theological disputes with Abu Ishaq El Howeiny,⁶² led the attack on Amr Khaled and other Televangelists, and accused Hamas of being Kharijites.⁶³ Raslan became the most outspoken critic of the 2011 revolution, which he viewed as a conspiracy by Jews and Freemasons, democracy, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Salafis who decided to form political parties. But he accepted Mohamed Morsi as the legitimate ruler after his election.⁶⁴ Raslan's attacks were answered angrily by Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, who said, "This is a man who was raised in a barn. This is a plant that was nurtured in the time of the state security and the NDP (Muabarak's ruling party). This plant, God will end it. This man should be ignored. He is a man who curses, no knowledge, has nothing."⁶⁵ Raslan supported the military coup and continues to attack the Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters.

Hassan Abdel Wahab El Banna

Hassan Abdel Wahab El Banna was born in Cairo in 1925. His father was an Ash'ari Sheikh who later became a Salafi. The family's transformation to Salafism was due to

Hassan's older brother, Mohamed, who born in 1916 and became an early disciple of Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi, the founder of Ansar El Sunna, which Mohamed joined in 1936. Through his brother, El Banna became a member of Ansar El Sunna and met and studied under early Egyptian Salafi Sheikhs such as Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi, Abdel Razeq Afifi, as well as Mohamed Taqi Al Din Al Hilali, Al Albani, Ibn Baz, Mohamed Al Amin Al Shanqiti*, Mohamed Aman Al Jami, Rabi's Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali, and Abu Bakr Al Jaza'iri†. His brother Mohamed was the Sheikh and teacher of Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali. Through his brother, Hassan El Banna secured a teaching position in the Islamic University of Medina. He returned permanently to Egypt in 1985, though he has traveled to preach in the United States and Sweden. Due to his age and learning, he is revered by Egyptian Madkhalis as a fatherly figure to whom they refer disputes and whom they call "The Father." He is not to be confused with the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan El Banna. Though they share the same name and have met twice, they are not related.

Talaat Zahran

Talaat Zahran was born in 1954 in Al Mahala El Kobra in the Gharbia governorate. He doesn't fit the widely held caricature among Egypt's non-Islamists of Salafis as 6th century traditionalists with little if any modern education. Zahran is not only well educated but an Associate Professor of Languages and Ancient European Civilizations in Alexandria University's Faculty of Arts. He received his B.A. in 1976, M.A. in 1982 and PhD in 1986 and taught as a professor in Yemen 1995-1997 and Saudi Arabia 1997-2003. He originally was a member of the Salafi Call and a student of Yasser Burhami.⁶⁶ He graduated at the top of his class from the Salafi Call's Al Furqan Institute in 1991 and taught there until 1995. He changed course after his return from Saudi Arabia, where although he a student of Ibn Baz and Mohamed Ibn Al Uthaymeen‡, he was greatly influenced by Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali. Upon his return from Saudi Arabia, he waged fierce attacks against his former comrades in the Salafi Call. He maintains an official website (<http://www.rahek.com/islamic/>) where his sermons and nine books are available. Beside his attacks on the Salafi Call, which intensified after the revolution and their decision to form the Nour Party,⁶⁷ he has attacked Abu Ishaq El Howeiny⁶⁸ and fellow Madkhali Salafi Adel El Sayed.

Mahmoud Lutfi Amer

Probably the most eccentric Madkhali figure, Mahmoud Lutfi Amer is known for creating controversies. He studied under Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali in the Islamic University of Medina. Returning to Egypt, he became the head of Ansar El Sunna's local branch in Damanhour in the Beheira governorate. He maintains an official website

* Mauritanian Islamic Scholar (1905-74). He became a member of the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia.

† Algerian Islamic Scholar. Born in 1921.

‡ Leading Islamic Scholar in Saudi Arabia (1925-2001).

<http://mahmodamer.wordpress.com/>. Like other Madkhalis, he is a fierce critic of the Muslim Brotherhood, which he accuses of being Kharijites and its founder of being a Sufi innovator. He has also attacked Mohamed Hassan, accusing him of being a Qutbist.⁶⁹ Amer had been vocal in his support for President Mubarak before the revolution, having supported him in the 2005 presidential elections, and backed the prospect of Gamal Mubarak inheriting the presidency from his father. In doing so, Amer cited the practice of Caliphs.⁷⁰

He issued a fatwa in 2010 permitting the killing of Mohamed El Baradei for challenging Mubarak and of any presidential candidate who runs against the ruler in elections.⁷¹ His fatwa led to a fight with Ansar El Sunna Sheikhs, who disavowed him. In response to criticism, he issued a proclamation to all Salafis listing a set of questions that he dared them to answer: on the permissibility of collective action; their position on the Muslim Brotherhood; their position on Hassan El Banna, Qutb, and Bin Laden; their position on Sufis and Shi'a; whether they acknowledge that there is a community of Muslims in Egypt with President Mubarak as its Imam; and on their position towards Gamal Mubarak becoming president.⁷² His unusual behavior and views were most evident in his fatwa rejecting calls for the boycott of American and Israeli products⁷³ and more remarkably in running for parliament in 2000 against the Muslim Brotherhood's Gamal Heshmat. That decision led to fierce criticism by other Madkhalis who reject political participation in elections. After the revolution, like other Madkhalis, he criticized it as a conspiracy proclaimed in the notorious fabrication, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Unlike other Madkhalis, he has criticized the official religious establishment, attacking Al Azhar for its 2011 document, which attempted to defend the civil nature of the state.

Hesham El Beialy

Hesham El Beialy was born in 1964 in Kafr El Sheikh governorate. He received his B.A. in Arabic from the University of Tanta in 1986 and has worked as a school teacher. He has studied in Saudi Arabia under Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, Abdel Razek Afifi, and Saleh Al Fawzan. Though residing in the village where he was born, Billa, he travels frequently across the Delta to give sermons. His official website is <http://www.elbeialy.com/>. Like other Madkhalis, El Beialy is a fierce critic of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayed Qutb, whom he views as innovators. He accuses anyone who refuses to criticize them of belonging to them. He has been a fierce critic of the revolution and Islamists' participation in electoral politics, insisting instead on following purification and upbringing as the sole methodology of change. Upon Bin Laden's death, he cursed him as "a man who is on a perverted methodology." Following Morsi's election as President, he acknowledged him as the legitimate ruler who had to be obeyed.⁷⁴ Contrary to other Madkhalis, he rejected the coup. He viewed it as a rebellion against a legitimate ruler and fiercely attacked Mohamed Sa'id Raslan for his support for the coup. These positions, supposed strong ties to followers of Haddad, and criticism of Al Albani led all major Madkhali Sheikhs to issue a statement renouncing him and calling upon their followers to shun him.⁷⁵

Adel El Sayed

Adel El Sayed is a Sheikh in Ansar El Sunna. He has authored six books and his official website is <http://www.adelelsayd.com/index.html>. Adel rose to fame after he authored a book *Hakimiyya and Shari'a Policy for Ansar El Sunna Sheikhs* in 2009. In his book, he argued that the founders and Sheikhs of Ansar El Sunna since its birth have given their oath of allegiance to Egypt's rulers, even if they ruled by other than what God has revealed. The book crated a firestorm, challenging all other Salafis who claimed the heritage of Ansar El Sunna and its early Sheikhs.⁷⁶ His most vocal critics, with whom he engaged in a theological fight, were the Salafi Call.⁷⁷ After the revolution, he attacked Hesham El Beialy, whom he accused of being a follower of Mohamed Haddad, and picked a lesser fight with Talaat Zahran.

Lesser Known Sheikhs

Ali Al Wasify is a Sheikh in Ansar El Sunna. He wrote a lengthy book in 2010 attacking the Muslim Brotherhood. He signed the statement by Madkhali Sheikhs renouncing Hesham El Beialy.

Khaled Abdel Rahman's official website is <http://khalied.com/index/>. He has attacked Hesham El Beialy.

Ali Abdel Aziz Moussa was born in 1963 and studied in Saudi Arabia for 11 years as a student of Ibn Baz and Saleh Al Fawzan. A prolific writer based in Beheira, he has written 24 books. His official website is <http://www.ibn-abdelaziz.com/>. He signed the statement by Madkhali Sheikhs renouncing Hesham El Beialy.

Adel El Shorbagy is the head of the Ansar El Sunna branch in Gharbia governorate. His official website is <http://alshorbagy.net/>. He was kidnapped in 2012 for a short period over financial disputes. He signed the statement by Madkhali Sheikhs renouncing Hesham El Beialy.

Other signatories of the Madkhali statement on Hesham El Beialy are Sheikhs Taha Abdel Maksoud, Aboud Al Azeemy, and 'Eid El Kayal.

Scholarly Salafism

Scholarly Salafism is the oldest Salafi current in Egypt. In fact it may be considered the continuation of Salafism as it existed for hundreds of years. This has led one observer to call it "new traditional Salafism," with a group of students and disciples gathering around a Sheikh, learning from and emulating him.⁷⁸ This loose framework and lack of organization is a key feature of Scholarly Salafism and distinguishes it from Activist Salafis. Both currents share a huge common ground,⁷⁹ however, leading many observers

to confuse Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs with Activist ones.* The confusion was further aided by the support many Scholarly Salafis gave to Salafi parties after the revolution. It is thus important to start by identifying the key differences that distinguish Scholarly Salafis from other Salafi currents that border it on the Islamist map.

Salafis of all stripes believe that following the methodology of the Salaf in their understanding of the Quran and the Prophet's *Sunna* is the only way for both personal salvation and national reform. It is thus no surprise that studying the Prophet's *Hadiths* and the works of the pious Salaf and those who followed them is at the center of any Salafi discourse and current. Scholarly Salafis devote themselves exclusively to religious scholarship and fighting heresies. While Madkhalis share the same passion and devotion, the two currents are distinguished on key theological questions. In addition, Scholarly Salafis' general demeanor in dealing with disagreements contrasts with Madkhalis' adoption of biographical evaluation in their attacks on their adversaries.

Despite the common ground that exists between Scholarly and Activist Salafis, the two currents are distinguished by a number of key theological questions. Scholarly Salafis reject collective action in general, though Ansar El Sunna and El Gam'eya El Shar'eya both endorse non-political collective action. Scholarly Salafis believe that changing the state of the Muslim world is possible only when each Muslim himself changes.⁸⁰ Change thus has to take place on the individual level.⁸¹ The changed individual would then change the surrounding environment.⁸² This has meant the adoption of Al Albani's methodology of change: purification and upbringing by Scholarly Salafis with individual Sheikhs emphasizing various aspects of that methodology. Unlike Activist Salafis, Scholarly Salafis lack a practical framework and procedural mechanisms to achieve that goal.⁸³

Key theological-political questions differentiate Scholarly Salafis from both Madkhalis and Activist Salafis. Unlike Madkhalis, they do not consider contemporary rulers who do not implement *shari'a* as legitimate and put some emphasis on the question of *hakimiyya*†. But they reject rebellion against those rulers. Scholarly Salafis are divided on the question of rulers who rule by other than what God has revealed. Some Scholarly Salafis such as Ansar El Sunna and Mustafa El 'Adawy do not declare unbelief except in the specific cases of the ruler who declares ruling by other than what God has revealed permissible, the ruler who prefers manmade law to God's *shari'a*, and the ruler who considers manmade law equal to *shari'a*. Others such as Ahmed El Naqeeb and Madeen Ibrahim declare the unbelief of the genus and not the particular.⁸⁴

Scholarly Salafis are critical of the Muslim Brotherhood, with historical figures such as Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi and Ahmed Shaker offering various criticisms of the Brotherhood's lack of attention to doctrinal questions and adoption of violence in the 1940s. Contemporary Scholarly Salafis echo those criticisms, accusing the Brotherhood of offering concessions in key doctrinal questions and being soft on Sufis and Shi'a.⁸⁵

* The Salafi Call for example was described by many observers as Scholarly Salafis.

† Sovereignty of God. The concept that God is the sole legislator for mankind.

Though rejecting collective political action in principle, many Scholarly Salafis supported Salafi parties and urged their followers to vote for them. None of the Scholarly Salafis personally joined a political party, and their endorsement of participation came with a number of conditions, the primary one being renouncing democracy as a principle.⁸⁶ Others such as Osama Abdel 'Azeem, Ahmed El Naqeeb, Mustafa El 'Adawy, and Madeen Ibrahim rejected political participation. They were similarly divided on voting for the Islamist drafted 2012 constitution, with most supporting it. The exceptions were Ahmed El Naqeeb and Mustafa El 'Adawy. While most Scholarly Salafis took an initial position against the coup, they gradually returned to their scholarship. Most of them regretted their political experience and viewed it as taking them away from their *da'wah*.^{87*}

Egyptian Scholarly Salafism has five roots and sources of influence: Ansar El Sunna, Al Azhar Sheikhs, Wahabism, Al Albani, and Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i. Of these, Al Albani continues to be the most important figure. He has a lasting influence on Egyptian Salafism in general and Scholarly Salafism in particular.⁸⁸

Besides the two organizations--Ansar El Sunna and El Gam'eya El Shar'eya--and the umbrella body, the Ulama Shura Council, the most prominent Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs are Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Mohamed Hassan, Ahmed El Naqeeb, Mustafa El 'Adawy, Osama Abdel 'Azeem, Mohamed El Debiessy, Madyan Ibrahim, Waheed Bali, and Mazen El Sirsawy. Other important Sheikhs include Mahmoud El Masry, Ali Al Salous, Mahmoud Al Ridwany, Tal'aat Afifi, Samy El 'Araby, Mos'ad Anwar, Hany Helmi, Omar Abdel Aziz El Qurashy, Khaled Saqr, Mohamed El Zoghby, Abdallah Shaker El Geniedy, Abdel 'Azeem Badawy, Gamal El Marakby, Gamal Abdel Rahman, Abu Bakr El Hanbali, and Hazem Shouman.

Ansar El Sunna Al Muhammadiyah

Ansar El Sunna Al Muhammadiyah was established in 1926 by Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi as a reaction to widespread Sufi practices considered heresies and idolatries and to increased Westernization. He was frustrated by the failure of Al Azhar to counter both problems and unhappy with the Ash'ari methodology of El Gam'eya El Shar'eya, with whom he disagreed on the theological question of God's names and attributes.⁸⁹ El Fiqi concluded that there was a need for a rigid Salafi organization.

Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi was born in Beheira governorate in 1892. His father had started studying at Al Azhar and was Mohamed Abduh's roommate, but he did not finish his studies. Fiqi himself graduated from Al Azhar and though not initially a Salafi, he quickly adopted their beliefs. He witnessed the revolutionary events of 1919, but unlike his contemporaries, he rejected the revolution because of the participation of women and Christians, which contradicted the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal. Fiqi was a close associate of Abduh's disciple, Rashid Reda, with whom he worked in Al Manar. A contemporary of Hassan El Banna, he was highly critical of the Muslim Brotherhood,

* Preaching and proselytizing of Islam.

which he attacked for its lack of concrete beliefs and scholarship. Though Ansar El Sunna was established to fill the vacuum created by the weakness of Al Azhar, under El Fiqi and his successors, it continued to have good relations with Al Azhar's leadership. He admired the works of Mohamed Abdel Wahab and developed extensive ties to Saudi Arabia and the Wahabi religious establishment.⁹⁰ During King Abdel Aziz Al Saud's visits to Egypt, he would pray in Ansar El Sunna's headquarters. The close connection resulted in the King inviting El Fiqi to live in Saudi Arabia, which he did from 1928 to 1931, establishing Al Islah Magazine in Mecca. El Fiqi wrote two books, one defending Wahabism against accusations and one a biography of King Abdel Aziz. Fiqi and his organization became the bridge between Egyptian Salafism and Wahabism. Returning from Saudi Arabia, he established Al Huda El Nabawy magazine in 1936 and continued to edit it until his death in 1959.

El Fiqi set the goals of Ansar El Sunna as follows: calling people to pure monotheism with its three branches (Monotheism of Lordship, monotheism of Divinity, and monotheism of the Names and Attributes)*, guiding people to taking their religion from the Quran and the *Sunna* and following them, loving the Prophet by taking him as a model, fighting superstitions and heresies, rejection of worshiping at graves, belief in all names and attributes of God and not interpreting them, ending the state of stagnation resulting from fanaticism to the schools of jurisprudence, ruling by other than what God revealed is demise on earth and torture in the afterlife, and rejection of inciting people against their rulers.⁹¹ Later on the organization adopted Al Albani's methodology of change through purification and upbringing.⁹²

Ansar El Sunna's original magazine, Al Huda Al Nabawy, was established as a continuation of Al Manar, which stopped publication two years earlier in 1934. During its 31-year run, its list of writers reads like a who's who of the world of Islamism at the time. Though supportive of Wahabism, its Sheikhs did not shy away from challenging Wahabism. One example: Sheikh Aboul Wafa Darwish's debate with Saudi Mufti Mohamed Ibn Ibrahim Al El Sheikh over the permissibility of personal photographs. In 1973 when Ansar El Sunna was reestablished, Al Tawhid magazine replaced it and for a while even included articles by Brotherhood-affiliated Sheikhs Mohamed El Ghazali and Sayed Sabek. It quickly returned to its purist Salafi discourse, publishing a wide range of Salafi authors, including Abu Ishaq El Howeiny and Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek.⁹³ Its recent book publications included attacks on both El Ghazali and his disciple Yusuf El Qaradawi as well as attacks describing Gamal El Din Al Afghani as a Shi'a.⁹⁴

In Egypt, Ansar El Sunna has more than 200 branches and controls 1,750 mosques.⁹⁵ Its magazine, Al Tawhid, sells more than 100,000 copies. Ansar El Sunna manages 32 institutes to train preachers, including one devoted to women, and an institute for

* The first concept of monotheism, that God is the only and perfect creator, unites all Muslims. The Salafi emphasis is on the other two. Monotheism of Divinity means that acts of worship are solely to God. Hence, according to the Salafi, understanding is infringed upon by Sufi practices of praying at graves and seeking miracles from Saints. Monotheism of the Names and Attributes means that no human can share an attribute of God. It forms the cornerstone of the Salafi Ash'ari historical feud, which continues until today.

African students. It runs an extensive social network that includes schools, hospitals, assistance to the poor, distributing goods and food, and orphanages that house 12,000 orphans. It is geographically strong in the Delta, with 39 branches in Sharkia governorate and 37 in Dakahlia. It is much weaker in the south, maintaining only two branches in Minya and just one in Beni Suef governorate. Its official website is <http://www.ansaralsonna.com/web/>.

Ansar El Sunna maintains a huge presence in Sudan and East Africa.⁹⁶ The Sudan branch was established in 1939 and has historically played a much more politically active role than the mother organization. In 1955, it demanded that Sudan be declared an Islamic Republic with Shari'a as the source of legislation, and in 1986 it openly endorsed candidates in the parliamentary elections. Recently the Sudan branch has increasingly fallen under the influence of Madkhali Sheikhs with its magazine publishing for Mohamed Aman Al Jami, Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali, and Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i.⁹⁷

In 1967, alarmed by the growing Salafi presence in Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser decided to dissolve Ansar El Sunna and incorporate it into El Gam'eya El Shar'eya. He hoped that the smaller Salafi organization would be absorbed by the much larger Ash'ari one. Contrary to government expectations, the exact reverse took place as the more ideologically disciplined Ansar El Sunna managed to Salafize El Gam'eya El Shar'eya. The union lasted until 1972, when Ansar El Sunna was reestablished.⁹⁸

Two smaller offshoots have come out of Ansar El Sunna due to minor theological disagreements: the Rightful Call Islamic Group (whose official website is at <http://www.dawatelhak.com/>) and the Islamic Center for the Preacher of Monotheism and the Sunna. The latter was established in 1968 by Mohamed Gamil Ghazi and controls Egypt's most famous Salafi Mosque: Zeitoun's Al Aziz Bellah (<http://azizbellah.com/>). Closer to Activist Salafis in its discourse, its preachers have included Mohamed Abdel Maksoud and Nashaat Ibrahim.⁹⁹

While generally staying away from specific political issues, the organization has taken a clear stand historically on various theological-political questions such as democracy. It allowed voting in elections but declared democracy unbelief for giving man the power to legislate.¹⁰⁰ Following the 2011 revolution, it established the Ulama Shura Council as an umbrella body for Scholarly Salafis.¹⁰¹ It has issued statements on political developments, such as calling on people to stop demonstrating in May 2011,¹⁰² calling on people to stop fighting following the coup,¹⁰³ and condemning terrorist attacks.¹⁰⁴ After the coup, it came under increased scrutiny by the Ministry of Religious Endowments, which removed Ansar El Sunna's name from its mosques and put them under its control.¹⁰⁵ Ansar El Sunna's loose theological framework has enabled various Salafi currents to operate within its ranks, with Madkhalis controlling many branches.¹⁰⁶

During its early history, Ansar El Sunna gave rise to a number of prominent Sheikhs who came to dominate Egyptian Salafism and who had a huge impact on Wahabism's development. Abdel Razek Afifi was born in Monufia governorate in 1905 and graduated

from Al Azhar. He taught Saudi Sheikhs Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, Abdallah Ibn Jibreel*, and Saleh Al Fawzan†. He became President of Ansar El Sunna following Fiqi's death and remained in his post for a year before permanently moving to Saudi Arabia, where he died in 1994. Abdel Rahman El Wakil was similarly born in Monufia governorate in 1913. An Azhar graduate, he became President of Ansar El Sunna following Afifi and until Nasser's decision in 1967 to dissolve the organization. He died in 1971. Mohamed Abdel Zaher Aboul Sam'h was born in Sharkia governorate in 1882. An Azhar graduate, he attended Mohamed Abduh's lectures as a young man. He later was influenced by Mohamed Al Amin Al Shanqiti and went on to found Ansar El Sunna's Alexandria branch. Invited by King Abdel Aziz to Saudi Arabia, he became the Imam of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and established there Dar Al Hadith. He died in 1951. Mohamed Khalil Harras was born in Gharbia governorate in 1916. An Azhar graduate, he received his PhD from Al Azhar with a thesis in monotheism and logic. Invited by Ibn Baz to teach in Saudi Arabia, he became the teacher of Mohamed Aman Al Jami. He was the Vice President of Ansar El Sunna and died in 1975. Ahmed Mohamed Shaker was born in Cairo in 1892 to a father who was the Deputy Head of Al Azhar and the Chief Justice of Sudan. A 1917 Azhar graduate, he studied under Mohamed Al Amin Al Shanqiti and Mohamed Rashid Reda. Upon graduation, he served as a Judge in the Shari'a Courts and stayed until his retirement in 1952. As a Judge, he refused to follow the rulings of the schools of jurisprudence and instead went back to the Quran and Sunna and came up with his own rulings. A prolific writer of more than 30 books, he died in 1958. Aboul Wafa Darwish was born in Sohag governorate in 1893. He initially worked as a teacher, and then he received his law degree from Cairo University in 1928. He died in 1963.

El Gam'eya El Shar'eya

El Gam'eya El Shar'eya was established in 1912 by Mahmoud Khattab El Sobki in response to the exclusion of religion from education and laws, widespread heresies and superstitions, and increasing Westernization.¹⁰⁷ Born in Monufia in 1856, he was a graduate of Al Azhar and a Sufi.¹⁰⁸ The organization was closed for three years during World War 1, with its founder jailed for three months on suspicion he was an agent for the Ottomans.¹⁰⁹ At its inception, the organization was closer to the Ash'ari school and not Salafism. Its founding principles were: spreading correct religious beliefs, fighting innovations and heresies, opening Quran memorization centers, establishing mosques, producing a religious magazine, publishing useful books, helping those in distress, building a hospital, paying for burial of poor Muslims, and stressing that the group will avoid political issues, the domain of the ruler.¹¹⁰ As its principles make clear, social work is a major emphasis of the organization. It maintains 400 branches and runs 6,000 mosques.¹¹¹ Its social network includes orphanages, helping with marriage costs, caring for the disabled, providing burial services, hospitals, literacy programs, and raising cattle. To manage such an extensive social support network, the group permits collective action. However that collective action is limited to the non-political sphere¹¹².

* Leading Islamic Scholar in Saudi Arabia (1933-2009).

† Leading Islamic Scholar in Saudi Arabia. Born in 1933.

El Gam'eya El Shar'eya limits its political discourse to specific issues, with no overall program for change or reform. The one exception is the organization's magazine, which has engaged in political questions since its establishment in the 1970s.¹¹³ This is likely due to the Brotherhood's infiltration of the organization, which today counts as a member Abdel Rahman Al Barr, the Brotherhood's eminent religious scholar, who sits on its Guidance Council.

El Gam'eya El Shar'eya has been largely Salafized after its short merger with Ansar El Sunna in 1967 and hence adopts the basic framework of the Salafi methodology.¹¹⁴ It was led for most of its history until 1976 by Sobki, his son, and grandson. Its current leader is Mohamed Al Mokhtar Al Mahdi, a Professor in Al Azhar University and a member of Al Azhar's High Board. Its official website is <http://alshareyah.com/>.

Ulama Shura Council

The Ulama Shura Council was established by Ansar El Sunna after the 2011 revolution as a deliberative body of the most important Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs.¹¹⁵ Its creation by Ansar El Sunna predictably led to a membership that included members from Ansar El Sunna: Abdallah Shaker, Gamal El Marakby, Gamal Abdel Rahman, and Abu Bakr El Hanbali. Five members of its 10 members were arguably the most important Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs in Egypt: Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Mohamed Hassan, Mustafa El 'Adawy, and Waheed Bali. The tenth member was the Salafi Call's Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem. Although he belonged to a Activist Salafi group, he focused nearly exclusively on scholarship.

The deliberative body was billed as the highest Salafi authority in Egypt. Its statements attempted to offer a consensus view on political developments. But its individual members often differed, most notably on the 2012 constitution.¹¹⁶ The Council's first statement was issued on March 10, 2011, and urged Salafis to vote yes in the upcoming constitutional referendum. It warned of attempts to tamper with Article Two of the Egyptian constitution, which declared *Shari'a* as the main source of legislation. The Council urged Sheikhs not to run for elections themselves but allowed political participation, urging voters to choose the candidate closest to *shari'a*.¹¹⁷ The Council argued that "political participation is one of the means of empowering *da'wah* and spreading it amongst segments of society."¹¹⁸ Consecutive statements urged Egyptians to support the military during the transitional period,¹¹⁹ prohibited civil disobedience, and¹²⁰ endorsed Hazem Salah Abu Ismail for Egypt's presidency.¹²¹ Other statements urged Egyptians to choose between Islamist candidates in the first round of the presidential elections,¹²² supported Mohamed Morsi in the second round,¹²³ supported the right of police officers to grow their beards,¹²⁴ and attacked Morsi for his soft position on the Shi'a threat.¹²⁵

On July 7, 2013, the Ulama Shura Council issued a statement demanding the return of Morsi and the release of arrested Islamists while refusing to condemn the military and urging a process of national reconciliation.¹²⁶ On July 24, 2013, it warned of the blood of

Egyptians being spilled. In its last statement on August 14, 2013, which is no longer available on its website, it called on the military to stop killing its own people.¹²⁷

The Council has not met since and is unlikely to continue in the future. Its official website is <http://www.shora-alolamaa.com/eg/>.

Abu Ishaq El Howeiny

Arguably the most important Salafi Sheikh in Egypt, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, was born Hegazi Mohamed Yusuf Sherif in 1956 in the village of Howeiny in the Kafr El Sheikh governorate. He chose Abu Ishaq as his alias. El Howeiny comes from a poor family that had worked in agriculture. Forced to support himself as a university student by working in a supermarket, he received his B.A. in Spanish from Ain Shams University, graduating as one of the top students in his class. Due to his academic performance, he received a scholarship to continue his studies in Spain. But he did not continue there for long due to his dislike for life in Spain and the vices he encountered. Though religious all his life, Howeiny's transformation into a Salafi and pursuit of a life of *Hadith* scholarship was due to a chance discovery of a book by Al Albani. Reading Al Albani's book on 100 famous fake *Hadiths*, he discovered that many of the *Hadiths* he knew were fake. Attending a sermon in the 1970s by one of Egypt's most famous preachers, Sheikh Abdel Hamid Keshk, he found the Sheikh citing a fake *Hadith*. He approached the Sheikh after his sermon and complained. Keshk replied that there was nothing wrong with the *Hadith* and told him "learn before you object".¹²⁸ Transformed by the experience, he dedicated his life since to the study of *Hadiths* and their authenticity.

He studied under Egyptian Sheikh Mohamed Naguib El Mote'i, but the man who had the greatest influence on him was Al Albani. El Howeiny met Al Albani in person only twice, in 1986 for a month in Jordan and during Haj in 1998. His encounter and study with Al Albani led many to describe him as Al Albani's successor in the science of *Hadith* because he follows Al Albani's methodology. Al Albani is said to have described him as his successor after reading one of El Howeiny's books and praised him in one of his own books.¹²⁹ El Howeiny is widely respected among Salafis for his scholarship,¹³⁰ though Madkhalis attack him.¹³¹ He was jailed briefly following Sadat's assassination in 1981 and clashed with takfiris in prison.¹³² He has written numerous books on *Hadith* and a book attacking El Ghazali for his Ash'ari views.¹³³ He has similarly criticized Yusuf El Qaradawi, whom he described as a non-scholar.¹³⁴ He attacked Sayed Qutb¹³⁵ and Amr Khaled, whom he accused of fabricating *Hadiths*.¹³⁶ After the 2011 revolution, he attacked Egypt's Mufti Ali Gom'a. When the Mufti took him to court, tens of thousands of Salafis descended on the court house in a show of support and intimidation that forced Gom'a to withdraw his complaint.¹³⁷ El Howeiny's health deteriorated in early 2012 due to life-threatening diabetes. On May 21, 2012, doctors amputated his leg to save his life.¹³⁸ His official website is <http://alheweny.org/>.

Though he is mostly preoccupied with *Hadith* scholarship, El Howeiny frequently comments on ongoing political developments. His fame and support base is widespread throughout Egypt as Salafi TV channels such as Al Nas and Al Rahma introduced him to

every household. El Howeiny does not endorse Jihad except when a Muslim country is attacked¹³⁹ and accepts bombings only if they hurt the enemy significantly and the attacker survives.¹⁴⁰ El Howeiny issued a fatwa in 2009 prohibiting peaceful demonstrations¹⁴¹ and was completely silent during the 2011 revolution. He has criticized forming political parties and partisanship,¹⁴² though he did not prohibit his followers from voting for the Nour Party. He indicated that he would not vote in the March 2011 referendum but declared that those voting yes were not sinning.¹⁴³ He endorsed Hazem Salah Abu Ismail for President. After his disqualification, El Howeiny supported Mohamed Morsi and urged his followers to vote yes on the 2012 constitution¹⁴⁴ as the least bad option available.¹⁴⁵ During Morsi's reign, El Howeiny demanded that Morsi fire the Interior Minister for refusing to allow officers to grow their beards.¹⁴⁶ Following the military coup, El Howeiny issued a fatwa allowing peaceful demonstrations in support of Morsi,¹⁴⁷ though he quickly backtracked for fear of civil strife.¹⁴⁸ He issued a fatwa urging Egyptians to boycott the 2014 constitution.¹⁴⁹ Lately, his appearances have been few due to his continuing health problems.

Mohamed Hussein Yacoub

Mohamed Hussein Yacoub was born in 1956 in a village in Giza governorate. His father was the founder of the local El Gam'eya El Shar'eya branch in their village. In 1977 he received a teaching diploma. Residing in Saudi Arabia from 1981 to 1985, he studied under Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, Ibn Jibreen, and Mohamed Mokhtar Al Shanqiti. He has traveled to Morocco, where he studied with the noted Zahiri* scholar and student of Taqi El Din Al Hilali†, Mohamed Abu Khuzba. Yacoub's connection to Saudi Arabia's religious establishment had been strengthened by his frequent and long visits to the country. However, the largest ideological influence on Yacoub came from his studies under Egyptian Sheikh Osama Abdel 'Azeem. Yacoub's discourse largely follows that of his mentor, though he is much more visible in the media due to his programs on Salafi TV channels.¹⁵⁰ He is on friendly terms with other Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs such as Abu Ishaq El Howeiny and Mohamed Hassan and with the Salafi Call.

Though he was interested in Hadith scholarship at an early age, his books and sermons mostly focus on social problems such as smoking, not praying, youth issues, and repenting. He adopts Al Albani's methodology of purification and upbringing. Known for his fiery sermons in which he screams, he has been able to use modern technology effectively. Before the emergence of Salafi TV channels, Yacoub was a favorite for Taxi and Microbus drivers who played his cassette tapes. His official website is <http://www.yaqob.com/web2/index.php>.

Even before the revolution, Yacoub ventured into political questions. He criticized Hamas in 2009 for its useless rocket attacks on Israel. During the revolution, he urged

* One of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence that has largely disappeared. Named after Daoud Al Zahiri, its most famous jurist is Ibn Hazm. The school is known for its commitment to the apparent meaning the Quran and Sunna rejecting esoteric interpretations.

† Moroccan Islamic Scholar (1893-1987).

protestors to leave Tahrir Square. On February 13, 2011, he warned anyone who dared touch Article Two of the Egyptian constitution that he would have to do so over his dead body.¹⁵¹ He helped mobilize Salafis for the March 2011 referendum and celebrated the victory with a sermon in which he described the victory as Ghazwat El Sanadeeq (The Invasion of the Boxes). The boxes, he declared, have said yes to religion, and he told those unhappy with the results that they could emigrate to Canada.¹⁵² The sermon became an instant hit among Islamists and was attacked by non-Islamists. That led Yacoub to minimize his public statements for a while. Upon Bin Laden's death, Yacoub praised him as the "greatest man in the world."¹⁵³

He supported Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's candidacy for presidency.¹⁵⁴ He criticized the Muslim Brotherhood for nominating Khairat Al Shater against him,¹⁵⁵ though he endorsed Morsi in the second round. During Morsi's rule, he attacked him for failing to implement *Shari'a*.¹⁵⁶ After the military coup, Yacoub visited the Rab'a sit-in to show his support for the protestors,¹⁵⁷ and as news of the August 14 massacre spread, he joined Islamist protestors in Mustafa Mahmoud Square.¹⁵⁸ In a recent sermon, he asked Islamists to return to God and abandon politics, citing the loss of the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal and the need to return to *da'wah*.¹⁵⁹ In April 2014, he clashed with the Ministry of Religious Endowments after he forcefully preached in a Minya mosque.¹⁶⁰

Mohamed Hassan

Mohamed Hassan was born in Dakahlia governorate in 1962. He received a B.A. in Mass Communications from Cairo University. He traveled to Saudi Arabi and studied there with Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, and Ibn Jibreen. In Jordan, he attended some lectures by Al Albani. He has taught Hadith in Saudi universities. During his military service, the Egyptian military chose him to give sermons to other conscripts. Hassan is arguably the most famous preacher in Egypt,¹⁶¹ with his cassette tapes popular among Taxi and Microbus drivers. He was able to use his communication skills, appearing on the Al Nas channel before he moved to Al Rahma TV, which he owns. His base of support is in Dakahlia and Suez governorates. He is a prolific writer and preacher on current events and social problems. In 2012 he received a PhD from the Sorouri American Open University, though he rented a room in Al Azhar to make it appear that Al Azhar granted him his PhD. That prompted a denial from Al Azhar.¹⁶²

Mohamed Hassan has in the past defended Sayed Qutb¹⁶³ and was attacked by Madkhalis who accused him of being a partisan and for making theological mistakes.¹⁶⁴ He initially rejected calls for the 2011 revolution in line with his view, held since 2003, that protests should not be a methodology for change for the nation.¹⁶⁵ During the revolution, Hassan initially asked protestors to leave the square.¹⁶⁶ By February 9, as it became apparent that Mubarak was about to fall, Hassan took his family and joined protestors in Tahrir Square.¹⁶⁷ On February 18, during a massive Salafi rally in Mansoura, Hassan encouraged Salafis to become politically active and¹⁶⁸ demanded that Sheikhs come out of their isolation and guide the youth.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, Hassan called on his fellow Salafi Sheikhs to review many of their previous positions on political participation¹⁷⁰ and running for office.¹⁷¹ He took an active role in supporting a yes vote

in the March referendum.¹⁷² Throughout the transition period, Hassan supported the military,¹⁷³ which used him in dealing with sectarian disputes. During such efforts, he claimed on Egyptian TV that during the attack on the Atfih Church, Muslims had found papers full of magic spells and sorcery in the burned church. He created an uproar, though the papers were simply prayers in Coptic. His support for the military was attacked by Tarek Abdel Halim¹⁷⁴ and Wagdi Ghonim. He led the campaign to collect donations by Egypt's citizens to help the country, which opened him for severe criticism from those who wondered where the money ended up. He was also attacked during this period by Mahmoud Al Ridwany, who accused Hassan of being a womanizer.

During Morsi's tenure, Hassan criticized Morsi for allowing Shi'a entry to Egypt.¹⁷⁵ Since the military coup, Hassan has been involved in mediation efforts between the military and Islamist supporters of deposed President Morsi,¹⁷⁶ though his recollection of the mediation and who was to be blamed for its failure has been criticized by Islamists.¹⁷⁷ Wagdi Ghonim has accused him of being a supporter of President Sisi.¹⁷⁸

Ahmed El Naqeeb

Ahmed El Naqeeb was born in Dakahlia governorate. He received his B.A., M.A., and PhD from the Faculty of Arts Cairo University. He is currently a Professor of Islamic Studies at Mansoura University's Department of Education. Based in Mansoura, Naqeeb is a prolific writer with more than 37 books. Unlike other Salafis, his Salafism is purely Egyptian. He credits Samy El 'Araby, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, and Ahmed Farid as Sheikhs that he has benefited from. He was arrested in 1981 and spent a year and a half in prison. Naqeeb was originally part of the Salafi Call, running its network in Mansoura before breaking with the Call. In Mansoura, El Naqeeb has developed a comprehensive reform program and produced a number of studies in various political, economic, strategic, and educational fields.¹⁷⁹ His official website is <http://albasira.net/cms/>.

Before the revolution, El Naqeeb attacked Madkhalis, though he showed respect to Mohamed Sa'id Raslan's scholarship.¹⁸⁰ In turn, he was attacked by Madkhalis for his defense of El Howeiny.¹⁸¹ Throughout the events that followed the revolution, El Naqeeb has opposed political participation¹⁸² and became one of the fiercest critics of his former comrades in the Salafi Call.¹⁸³ He has repeatedly attacked the Nour Party for its acceptance of democracy and concessions¹⁸⁴ and for partisanship.¹⁸⁵ El Naqeeb insists that Salafis should stick to *da'wah* and their methodology for change: purification and upbringing.¹⁸⁶ He argues that only through this methodology would they be able to achieve their goals.¹⁸⁷ He rejected voting in the presidential elections.¹⁸⁸ He even argued at one point that if forced to choose between Islamists and seculars, one should choose seculars because that would force Islamists fooled by democracy to abandon it and return to God.¹⁸⁹ El Naqeeb refused to meet Morsi during his tenure¹⁹⁰ and was a staunch critic of the 2012 constitution.¹⁹¹ He wrote a book detailing his arguments against it and against democracy and pluralism.¹⁹² Following the military coup, he condemned the Rab'a massacre¹⁹³ and attacked the Salafi Call and its Nour Party and for

their support for the coup.¹⁹⁴ He has urged Egyptians to boycott voting in the 2014 constitution.¹⁹⁵

Mustafa El ‘Adawy

Mustafa El ‘Adawy was born in 1954 in Dakahlia governorate. He received his B.A. in Mechanical Engineering from Cairo University. He traveled to Yemen, where he studied with Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i from 1979 to 1983. Influenced by Muqbil and Saudi sheikhs, he is the closest Egyptian Scholarly Salafi to Wahabism in his discourse.¹⁹⁶ He has been a critic of Al Albani, whom he criticized in several of his books for his leniency in accepting the validity of *Hadiths*. His attacks on Al Albani were answered by Al Albani himself as well as by Muqbil El Wadi'i and El Howeiny. He is a prolific author, with 57 books mostly devoted to *shari'a* rulings for social practices such as marriage, divorce, burial, and fasting and narrations of the Prophet's life. His official website is <http://mostafaaladwy.com/>.

Before the revolution, El ‘Adawy was known for his criticism of Sayed Qutb, whom he urged people not to read¹⁹⁷ and his similar prohibition on reading the 11th century Muslim theologian Abu Hamid El Ghazali.¹⁹⁸ El ‘Adawy was a strong critic of the Egyptian revolution, urging protestors to return to their homes. He has opposed joining Islamist political parties, though he has shied away from describing those who do as sinning.¹⁹⁹ He argued that joining groups divides the nation and that the basis of the system, democracy, was unbelief.²⁰⁰ El ‘Adawy was a fierce critic of Morsi during his rule, accusing him of being ignorant of Islam,²⁰¹ attacking him for his failure to implement *shari'a*, and warning him of God's punishment.²⁰² He rejected the Islamist-written 2012 constitution,²⁰³ arguing that it contained numerous articles that contradicted *shari'a*. He accused Islamist parties of betraying their voters' trust.²⁰⁴ He has similarly urged people to reject the 2014 constitution.²⁰⁵ Many Islamists were angered by his statements after the coup that no rapes were taking place in prisons and that Sisi should be obeyed, though he attempted to clarify them later.²⁰⁶

Osama Abdel ‘Azeem

Osama Abdel ‘Azeem obtained his B.A. in Engineering from Cairo University before studying *Shari'a* in Al Azhar University. His father was a member of El Gam'eya El Shar'eya. One of the earliest young men to become a Salafi in the 1960s, he became the leader of the umbrella youth organization, Gama'a Islamiya, in camps in the 1970s. His clout made him one of those invited to the secret meeting in 1980 called by Jihadi leader Abdel Salam Farag in an attempt to unite all Islamist groups and plan to overthrow Sadat. The meeting was attended by the full spectrum of Islamist movements at the time, but he refused to attend.

Despite his activist history, he completely abandoned activism after 1981 and adopted a quietest methodology. Based in a mosque in the Cairo neighborhood of Basateen, he devotes his energies to Quran memorization for his followers and reforming hearts and

purifying them.²⁰⁷ He argues that changing the miserable condition of the nation will take place only through individual change and that the reason for the nation's miserable state is corruption of hearts and the numerous sins Muslims commit.²⁰⁸ After receiving his B.A., M.A., and PhD from Al Azhar, he became a Professor in Al Azhar University and now heads the Shari'a Department in Al Azhar's School of Islamic Studies.²⁰⁹ He rejects modern technology and thus does not appear on Salafi TV channels.²¹⁰ With his rigid methodology, he insists that anyone who wants to be his student must memorize the Quran first. Yet his followers are estimated to number 150,000.²¹¹ Despite his isolation, Abdel 'Azeem is widely respected among Salafi Sheikhs for his deep piousness and humble persona, though some younger Salafis accuse him of being a follower of the Shafi'i* school of jurisprudence.

Despite the continued upheaval that Egypt witnessed in the past four years, Abdel 'Azeem has continued his commitment to his quietist approach. He rejected the Egyptian revolution and urged his followers not to participate. He contended that demonstrations are prohibited and un-Islamic,²¹² a position he continued to hold throughout the next four years.²¹³ He insisted that the methodology of change is still only through individual change.²¹⁴ Viewing demonstrations and the revolution as rebellion against the ruler, he argued that this was not permissible unless the ruler showed clear unbelief.²¹⁵

He rejected the idea of Salafis forming political parties and urged his followers neither to join them²¹⁶ nor to vote in any election.²¹⁷ He refused to endorse Morsi in the second round of the presidential elections because Morsi had a Christian assistant.²¹⁸ Only once did Abdel 'Azeem deviate from his chosen methodology, when in December 2012 he urged people to vote for the constitution. He justified his position by arguing that one should never side with secularists, that if not passed chaos would prevail, and that any human effort includes mistakes so perfection is unrealistic to expect.²¹⁹ Following the military coup, security forces raided his headquarters on July 9, 2013.²²⁰ Despite the raid, he issued a statement on July, 25, 2013, calling on all sides to stop the bloodshed²²¹ and another statement on August 2 calling on Islamists to leave Rab'a. He argued that the fight there was not for religion's sake.²²² Later on, Abdel 'Azeem argued that Islamists were drunk with power and that the coup should be a wakeup call for them as the job of Islamists was not to compete for political positions but instead bring people to God.²²³ Abdel 'Azeem has also been critical of Boko Haram.²²⁴

Mohamed El Debiessy

Mohamed El Debiessy was born in Cairo and received his B.A. in Electronics Engineering from Ain Shams University. He followed that by receiving another B.A. in Literature from Ain Shams University, a B.A. in Shari'a from Al Azhar University, an M.A. in Literature, and finally a PhD in Literature. During the 1970s, El Debiessy was one of the leaders of the umbrella organization Gama'a Islamiya in Ain Shams

* One of the four schools of jurisprudence. Founded by Al Shafi'i (767-820). Dominant school in Indonesia, Malaysia, Horn of Africa, and Kurdistan. In Egypt it is widespread in the south.

University. Due to his activism, he was arrested in 1981 and remained jailed for a number of years. He is often described as a student of Osama Abdel 'Azeem because he adopts the same approach, though they are actually contemporaries. He has written more than 30 books, including one on the infamous Danish cartoons in which he argued that the reason nonbelievers insult the Prophet is the lack of love Muslims have for him. His official website is <http://debiessy.com/Index.htm>.

Despite Mohamed El Debiessy's focus on scholarship and adoption of Osama Abdel 'Azeem's methodology, he has taken a more lenient attitude toward political participation following the Egyptian revolution. He participated in the grand Salafi rally organized by the Salafi Call in Alexandria on February 8, 2011, where he stressed Egypt's Islamic identity, with *Shari'a* as the source of legislation.²²⁵ Although he did not personally get involved in elections after the revolution, he allowed his right-hand man, Sherif Shaykhoun, to run in the 2011 parliamentary elections as a candidate for the Nour Party. He similarly allowed his followers to join the Islamist organized demonstrations in 2011-2012 that called for the implementation of *shari'a*.²²⁶ He endorsed the 2012 constitution, arguing that its benefits outweighed its negatives and that those against it were secularists and Christians.²²⁷ Following the coup, he blamed it on Muslims being away from God.

Madyan Ibrahim

Madyan Ibrahim was born in 1961 in Dakahlia governorate. He studied *Hadith* in the Islamic University of Medina, receiving his B.A. in 1984. There he studied under Mohamed Aman Al Jami and Ibn Al Uthaymeen.²²⁸ After finishing his studies he traveled to a number of countries including Jordan, Syria, Qatar and the U.A.E., working as an Imam before returning to Egypt. He was jailed twice, accused of being a *takfiri*, the last time in 2010 and lasting for 11 months. He has been a critic of Abu Ishaq El Howeiny.

Madeen Ibrahim has been a fierce critic of political participation since the revolution, arguing that one's first duty was monotheism and not the establishment of a state.²²⁹ His focus on monotheism led him to criticize those Jihadis whom he views as not sufficiently devoted to monotheism, such as Abu Mohamed Al Maqdisi and Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. He called them soft on Shi'a and interested only in power.²³⁰ He has also been a critic of the Salafi Call, accusing it of leading the people into idolatry and unbelief.²³¹ Ibrahim has forcefully attacked the state security apparatus, describing it as enemies of believers.²³² In 2013, rumors surfaced that he was leading a group of Egyptian fighters in Syria.²³³ In March 2014, he was accused by a former Jihadi leader of leading the group responsible for killing Egyptian policemen in Sharkia governorate.²³⁴ He is currently wanted in Egypt and his whereabouts are unknown. His general approach was summed up by Ahmed Salem as: "The Sheikh's method in my view is very close to some of Najd's Sheikhs, who occupy the integrated ground between Najdi Scholarly Salafism that is not institutionalized and Jihadi Salafism. They don't adopt the methodology of the latter, but they embrace many of the scholarly bases that

shape Jihadi Salafis' position towards Activist Salafism."²³⁵ His endorsement and active participation in Jihad in Syria is thus in line with his ideological disposition.*

Waheed Bali

Waheed Bali was born in 1963 in Kafr El Sheikh governorate. He received his B.A. in Arabic in 1985 and worked as a teacher for six years in Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, he attended lectures by Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, Abu Bakr Al Jaza'iri, and Ibn Jibreen. Bali is unique among not only Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs but also Salafis in general in his preoccupation with the question of sorcery, the devil, and magic. He has written 24 books mostly devoted to these subjects. He regularly advises his listeners on Salafi TV channels on ways to combat sorcery. While that preoccupation is usually associated with traditional folk religion and Sufis, Bali approaches it from a Salafi perspective founded on the Quran and *Sunna*. Nonetheless, this preoccupation of his has opened him to attacks by Madkhalis,²³⁶ with whom he exchanged curses.²³⁷ Despite being a member of the Ulama Shura Council after the revolution, Bali has been mostly absent from major political debates in the past four years as he traveled frequently to Sub-Saharan Africa to convert people to Islam. His official website is <http://www.waheedbaly.com/>.

Mazen El Sersawy

Mazen El Sersawy was born in a village in Sharkia governorate. He studied at Al Azhar elementary and high schools, graduating as one of the top 10 students nationwide. His academic excellence continued in university. He received a B.A. with Highest Honors from Al Azhar University and similarly his M.A. and PhD specializing in *Hadith*. He memorized the Quran at the age of 11 and was on his way to become a Quran reciter until he read one of Al Albani's books on *Hadiths*. That changed his course and led him to devote his life to the study of *Hadith*. He is currently a Professor of *Hadith* at Al Azhar University's Zagagig branch. He also teaches regularly at various Salafi-dominated mosques, including those of El Gam'eya El Shar'eya. El Sersawy is a student of Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, the now deceased Mohamed Amr Abdel Latif, who was one of Egypt's best Hadith scholars, and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub. El Sersawy was able to blend his rise within the official religious establishment with his Salafi discourse, creating a uniquely Egyptian blend of Salafism. He was the brains behind the Al Majd Salafi TV channel and was responsible for preparing all of its scholarly content.

Before the revolution, El Sersawy had been a critic of demonstrations,²³⁸ though he later changed his mind, leading Madkhalis to attack him.²³⁹ After the Egyptian revolution, he campaigned briefly for the Nour Party, though he was quick to distance himself from it afterward. He supported the presidential candidacy of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail,²⁴⁰ even joining him in his rally that surrounded the media city and threatened TV presenters.²⁴¹ He endorsed the 2012 constitution despite his strong objections to some of its articles.²⁴² El Sersawy has hundreds of videos in which he attacks Shi'a. He has

* I owe the insight to Ahmed Salem.

endorsed Jihad in Syria²⁴³ and approved of the killing of Hassan Shehata, the Egyptian Shi'a preacher killed in June 2013. He did object to the method of his killing since that was the responsibility of the state and not the mob.²⁴⁴ Following the military coup, he took part in the Nahda sit in.²⁴⁵

Mahmoud El Masry

Mahmoud El Masry was born in Cairo and received his B.A. in Social Service from Helwan University. He began his religious studies in Egypt before traveling to Saudi Arabia. In Egypt he counts as his Sheikhs Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Mohamed Hassan, and Mohamed Abdel Maksoud and has studied in El Gam'eya El Shar'eya's preachers' center. He is a prolific writer, with 86 books devoted to storytelling and social problems. He achieved fame as a regular face on several Salafi TV channels. El Masry was against the Egyptian revolution, urging protestors to leave Tahrir Square and return to their homes.

Ali El Salous

Ali El Salous was born in 1934 in Damietta governorate. He received his B.A. from Cairo University Dar Al 'Oloum in 1957, followed by an M.A. in 1969 and a PhD in 1975 on the subject of Shi'a. He worked as a teacher in Kuwait between 1957 and 1975. After receiving his PhD, he taught at universities in several Arab countries: Iraq 1975-1976 and Kuwait 1976-1981 before settling in Qatar, where he taught in its university since 1981. While in Kuwait, he began specializing in Islamic finance and is now one of the leading Islamist authorities on the subject. He has a program on Qatar TV on which he discusses economic questions, issuing fatwas on what is Islamically permissible. He has written 44 books, 20 of which are devoted to economic issues. Following the revolution, he became the President of the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. He is also the First Deputy President of the Assembly of Muslim Jurists in America. His official website is <http://www.alisalous.com/>.

Mahmoud Al Ridwany

Mahmoud Al Ridwany was born in 1964 in Dakahlia governorate. He received his B.A., M.A., and PhD from the Islamic University in Medina. After his studies in Saudi Arabia, he returned to Egypt in 1994. Initially close to Mohamed Hassan, he was responsible for preparing the material for his TV programs before breaking with him and publicly renouncing him. After the revolution, he accused both Mohamed Hassan and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub of being womanizers and accumulating huge fortunes, which made him the target of attacks by numerous Salafis. He is also close to breakaway Madkhalis such as Abu Hassan Al Ma'riby and Al Albani's student Ali Al Halabi. He has thus engaged in several fights with Madkhali Sheikhs. Al Ridwany was against the revolution as he views it as a rebellion against the ruler. His official website is <http://alridwany.com/>.

Tal'aat Afifi

Tal'aat Afifi was born in 1953 in Giza. He received his B.A. from Al Azhar University, followed by an M.A. and PhD in 1986. He taught in the Islamic University of Pakistan between 1991 and 1997. Besides this period, he has taught in Al Azhar University since 1979 and since 2001 has been the Head of Al Azhar University's Department of Theology. A member of El Gam'eya El Shar'eya, he has authored 19 books. In the aftermath of the revolution, he became the Deputy Head of the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. He was appointed as Minister of Religious Endowments in Morsi's first cabinet following the Brotherhood's failure to appoint Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim. Following the military, he joined the Rab'a protests, where he gave a speech. His official website is <http://www.talaatafifi.net/final/index.php>.

Samy El 'Araby

Samy El 'Araby was born in Dakahlia governorate. A graduate of Cairo University's Dar Al 'Oloum, he continued his studies at Al Azhar University but did not complete them because he moved to Yemen to work as a teacher. He studied with Ibn Baz, Ibn Jibreen, Saleh Al Fawzan, Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i, and in Egypt under Mohamed Naguib El Mote'i. The greatest influence on his development was El Wadi'i, and he adopted his mentor's approach in criticizing Activist Salafis. His views are thus close to Madkhalis, but he adopts a Scholarly Salafi approach.²⁴⁶ His students include Abu Hassan Al Ma'riby, Ahmed El Naqeeb, Waheed Bali, and Abu Bakr El Hanbali. He has written 12 books on theological issues, jurisprudence, and *Hadith*. He has been a preacher in Ansar El Sunna for more than 30 years.

El 'Araby has been a vocal critic of the decision by Activist Salafis to form political parties.²⁴⁷ A fierce critic of the Nour Party,²⁴⁸ he has described them as innovators and no longer Salafis for nominating women on their party lists.²⁴⁹ He argues that political participation in democracy is a form of apostasy.²⁵⁰ He also argues that demonstrations are not permissible.²⁵¹ Nonetheless he has criticized Madkhalis, most notably Hesham El Beialy.

Mos'ad Anwar

Mos'ad Anwar was born in Cairo in the early 1970's. He studied at a social service institute. Influenced by Mohamed Hassan and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub's cassette tapes, he became a Salafi. He studied at one of El Gam'eya El Shar'eya institutes. Anwar manages the website <http://www.shbabislamy.com/>. He joined the Rab'a protests.

Hany Helmi

Hany Helmy was born in 1974 in Cairo. A graduate of Cairo University's Dar Al 'Oloum, he is currently pursuing his PhD. He became a Salafi after attending Ansar El Sunna and

El Gam'eya El Shar'eya mosques. He has studied under a number of Egyptian Sheikhs such as Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Mohamed Hassan, Mohamed El Debiessy, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, and Osama Abdel 'Azeem. He follows the quietest approach of the latter with politics hardly appearing in his sermons. He is married to Mohamed Hussein Yacoub's daughter. Based in Cairo, Helmy's sermons focus on personal piety and social habits with a scholarly flavor. His official website is <http://hanyhilmy.com/main/index.php>. He also manages the Manhag portal <http://manhag.net/site/>. Helmy uses modern technology effectively and has been able to create an eclectic brand that is Salafi in doctrine yet adopts the Televangelist style of preachers such as Amr Khaled. Helmy's his website includes such recommended readings as *Men are from Mars Women are from Venus*, enabling him able to reach a wide audience. Manhag has more than 2.3 million followers on Facebook.

Omar Abdel Aziz El Qurashy

Omar Abdel Aziz El Qurashy was born in Cairo in 1961. He received his B.A., M.A., and PhD from Al Azhar University. He is a Professor at Al Azhar University and regularly gives sermons at El Gam'eya El Shar'eya mosques. His sermons often cover political issues such as describing Hurricane Sandy as a testament to God's anger. He claimed that Gamal Abdel Nasser was an atheist while Anwar El Sadat and Hosni Mubarak were Freemasons. El Qurashy has urged Morsi to implement *Shari'a* and has declared that the Quran is Egypt's constitution.²⁵² Recently he was part of a controversy in the Egyptian press after it was revealed that a PhD Thesis in Al Azhar University that he supervised described the removal of President Morsi as a coup.²⁵³

Khaled Saqr

Khaled Saqr was born in Helwan in 1960. He received a B.A. in Commerce from Helwan University in 1982 and a B.A. in *Shari'a* from Al Azhar University in 1997. He studied with Mohamed Amr Abdel Latif, Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Ahmed Hotaybah, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, and Mohamed Hussein Yacoub. He supported the formation of the Fadila Party but soon left it along with other Sheikhs and supported the Asala Party. He endorsed Morsi in the presidential elections. In December 2013 he was arrested in Cairo Airport while coming back from a trip to Turkey for having anti-regime pamphlets calling for the boycott of elections.

Mohamed El Zoghby

Mohamed El Zoghby was born in 1964 in Dakahlia governorate. He received his B.A. in Arabic from Al Azhar University in 1989 and has lived for a long period in Kuwait, working as a teacher and Imam. Both his father and grandfather were Quran teachers. El Zoghby is famous for stunts and engaging in caricature debates with supposed Shi'a, Ahmadis, Sufis, and Christians as well as fighting sorcerers. He widely lectures in Europe and the United States. In May 2014 he was banned from giving a sermon in a

Damietta mosque as part of government efforts to control mosques.²⁵⁴ His official website is <http://www.alzoghby.com/>.

Abdallah Shaker El Geniedy

Abdallah Shaker El Geniedy was born in Qalyubia governorate in 1955. After attending Al Azhar elementary and high schools, he received his B.A., M.A., and PhD from the Islamic University of Medina. In Saudi Arabia, he studied under Ibn Baz and Ibn Al Uthaymeen. He is the current President of Ansar El Sunna.

Abdel 'Azeem Badawy

Abdel 'Azeem Badawy was born in 1954 in Gharbia governorate. He received his B.A. from Al Azhar University in 1977, M.A., in 1994, and PhD in 1998. He worked as an Imam in Egypt before assuming a similar position in Jordan between 1980 and 1991. He then returned to Egypt. His work in Jordan enabled him to be in close contact with Al Albani. He is the author of 22 books. His official website is <http://www.ibnbadawy.net/>. Badawy is the Vice President of Ansar El Sunna.

Gamal El Marakby

Gamal El Marakby was born in Sharkia governorate in 1956. He received his B.A. in Law from Zagazig University in 1979, a Diploma in *Shari'a* in 1985, a Diploma in Law in 1986, and a PhD in Law in 1991. He joined Ansar El Sunna at a young age and served as its President from 2002 to 2009. He maintains an official website at <http://www.almarakby.com/web/>.

Gamal Abdel Rahman

Gamal Abdel Rahman was born in Sharkia governorate. He received a B.A. in Arabic from Zagazig University. He studied in Ansar El Sunna and worked as an Imam in Saudi Arabia from 1990 to 2000 before returning to Egypt. In Saudi Arabia, he studied under Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, and Mohamed Mokhtar Al Shanqiti. He heads Ansar El Sunna's Preachers Institute.

Abu Bakr El Hanbali

Abu Bakr El Hanabli was born in 1961 in Dakahlia governorate. His father was a Sheikh in Al Azhar. He studied under Sheikhs Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, Abdel 'Azeem Badawy, and Abu Bakr Al Jaza'iri. He worked in Jordan as an Imam for 10 years and then in the U.A.E for seven years as a Mufti for the Eastern province. The author of 11

books, he is a member of Ansar El Sunna. He maintains an official website at <http://www.elhanbly.com/>.

Hazem Shouman

Hazem Shouman is a Mansoura-based preacher. Before the revolution, he regularly appeared on Salafi TV channels such as Al Nas and Al Rahma. He rose to fame following the revolution with his inflammatory attacks on non-Islamists. In a sermon he declared that “a civil state means that your mother does not wear the headscarf.”²⁵⁵ His sermon gained him instant notoriety. Non-Islamists ridiculed him widely, and he became a source of embarrassment to Salafis. His inflammatory actions continued with his disruption of a musical party in Mansoura in November 2011, which he justified by arguing that singing was forbidden.²⁵⁶

Activist Salafism

Activist Salafism is perhaps the hardest Salafi current to define due to the common ground it shares with Scholarly and Jihadi Salafism and because as its name suggests, it is distinguishable from other Salafi currents by its adoption of action instead of a purely theological framework. This results in various groups and individuals being lumped together into an overall Activist Salafi current. In fact, as one knowledgeable observer of Egyptian Islamism, Amr Bargisi, has noted, the Muslim Brotherhood itself may be considered as a Activist Salafi organization.

Two other important differences distinguish Activist Salafism and Scholarly Salafism. First, while Scholarly Salafis often engage in commentary on current affairs and political matters, they lack an overall framework that puts these set of comments and opinions into an overarching political ideology. Second, Scholarly Salafis do not organize themselves in collective political action. These two features; politicization and collective political action--are the key features of Activist Salafism despite many of its Sheikhs devoting themselves to scholarly pursuits²⁵⁷

On the other hand, while Activist Salafis share some common ground with Jihadi Salafi such as focusing on the concept of *hakimiyya* and endorsement of Jihad in Afghanistan and other Muslim countries, and while there are also differences among Activist Salafi groups that make many of them closer to the Jihadi position, there are a number of disagreements between Activist and Jihadi Salafis. They involve such issues as declaring unbelief of rulers who rule by other than what God has revealed, Activist Salafis' preoccupation with the question of monotheism, and their failure to endorse many Jihadi practices and strategies.

Many scholars and observers often describe Activist Salafis as Sorouris, arguing that Activist Salafism is an amalgam of Salafi doctrines and the Muslim Brotherhood's activism. Such analysis is largely based on the Activist Salafis' occupations and their study in the Saudi Islamist environment where the Sorouri current was born. In the

Egyptian context, however, Sorouris are but one of the currents within Activist Salafism. Egyptian Activist Salafism was born before Sorouris emerged in Egypt and developed separately from the Sorouri development in Saudi Arabia. While they may indeed mix Salafi doctrines and Brotherhood activism, their adoption of this methodology was completely separate from Mohamed Sorour Zein Al Abidin's creation of Sorouriya in Saudi Arabia.

In most Arab countries, only one current or group represents Activist Salafism. That leads many to confuse the features of that particular group with Activist Salafism as a whole. This is not the case in Egypt, where before the revolution there were three different Activist Salafi currents: the Salafi Call, Sorouriya, and Cairo's Activist Salafis. A fourth, Revolutionary Salafism, emerged after the revolution. It may soon be described as no longer belonging to Activist Salafism and instead as a completely new current within Salafism.

Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek played a key role in giving Activist Salafism its theological basis, so I will begin by profiling him. Then I will describe the four subcurrents; the Salafi Call, Sorouriya, Cairo's Activist Salafis, and Revolutionary Salafis. In each case, I will give a general profile of the subcurrent followed by individual profiles of their leading Sheikhs.

Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek

Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek was born in 1939 in Monufia governorate to a Salafi father. He received his B.A. in *Shari'a* from the Islamic University of Medina in 1965. During his studies there, he was a classmate and close personal friend of Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali, with the two sharing the same desk.²⁵⁸ Both of them became students of Al Albani at the time. During this time, Abdel Khalek studied with Ibn Baz, Mohamed Al Amin Al Shanqiti, and Mohamed Abdel Wahab El Banna. Following his graduation, Abdel Khalek was deported for attacking a store.²⁵⁹ He immigrated to Kuwait, where he worked as a teacher from 1965 until 1990. In Kuwait, Abdel Khalek would shine as one of the most influential Salafi Sheikhs. The influence of his works spread across the Muslim world and played a foundational role in creating Activist Salafism as a current. His 1975 book *The Scientific Basis of the Salafi Da'wah* influenced Salafis worldwide, especially Salafis in Egyptian universities during the Islamist revival in the 1970s as it defined Salafism and its methodology in the clearest terms.

In Kuwait, Abdel Khalek revolutionized Salafism by pushing Salafis to run in the 1981 parliamentary elections and established the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society <http://www.altorath.org/> in 1982. Abdel Khalek "offered an alternative for those who felt the Saudi religious establishment was too isolated from contemporary events and were looking for action."²⁶⁰

The author of 56 books, Abdel Khalek has been at the center of intra-Islamist fights. His endorsement of political activism opened him to criticism by Al Albani, Ibn Baz, Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i, and Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali. Following the emergence of

Madkhali Salafism after the 1990 Gulf war, Abdel Khalek lost control of his organization to Madkhalis. In 1996, he created a rival group, the Salafi Scientific Movement.²⁶¹ Abdel Khalek, who was granted Kuwaiti nationality in October 2011, returned to Egypt in January 2012 for the first time in more than 30 years. When he landed at the airport for his short visit, he was welcomed by thousands of Salafis led by a host of key Salafi Sheikhs such as Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Mohamed Hassan, Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, and the founders of the Salafi Call: Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Yasser Burhami, Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem and Ahmed Farid.²⁶² His official website is <http://www.salafi.net/>.

Abdel Khalek holds that the ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed is an outright unbeliever,²⁶³ listing among the reasons for declaring rulers unbelievers their loyalty to the enemies of God.²⁶⁴ His position is adopted by all Activist Salafi subcurrents with the exception of the Salafi Call, which declares the genus but not the particular unbelievers. He rejects offering *shari'a* to people in a vote, arguing that this very act is an act of unbelief.²⁶⁵ He believes that the Salafi methodology is the only possible one as it achieves the main goal of Islam, monotheism.²⁶⁶ Abdel Khalek rejects the attempt by some Islamists, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood, to equate the Islamic concept of *shura** with democracy, arguing that *shura* is limited to the opinions of the experienced and to specific topics. He endorses collective political action, arguing that it is necessary as rulers have abandoned God's *shari'a*. He highlights the differences between general leadership of the Muslim community and leadership in those groups.²⁶⁷ Naturally this last position was forcefully attacked by Madkhalis. In response to attacks by his former friend Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali, Abdel Khalek wrote a book titled *The Short Response* in 1996. In the book, he defends his position toward Islamist groups, which he views as groups within Islam that have mistakes and not the heretics Al Madkhali sees. He accuses Al Madkhali of being obsessed with and preferring to fight those groups rather than to fight the enemies of Islam. Abdel Khalek also argues that Al Madkhali's attempt to unite Muslims has instead divided them. Furthermore he points out that Al Madkhali was himself a member of the Muslim Brotherhood for 13 years.²⁶⁸

Following the revolution, Abdel Khalek endorsed Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's presidential bid²⁶⁹ and criticized the Muslim Brotherhood's nomination of Khairat Al Shater.²⁷⁰ He has been a fierce critic of the Nour Party's support for the military coup²⁷¹ and entered into a spat with Yasser Burhami over the latter's positions.²⁷² This led to heated exchanges between the two. In January 2014, Abdel Khalek sent an open letter to Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem and Ahmed Farid asking them to break their silence and renounce Burhami.²⁷³

The Salafi Call

The Salafi Call was born in Alexandria as a result of the split within the ranks of the religious groups on university campuses, which had been created by an increasingly Islamized student body in the early 1970s. Differences among Islamist currents at the

* Consultation.

time were unclear to these young men. As a result, the religious groups adopted a general Salafi framework,²⁷⁴ with summer camps devoted to studying works by Ibn Taymiyyah and Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek's book, *The Scientific Basis of the Salafi Da'wah*.²⁷⁵ They began preaching on campus and enforcing their views on the student body by banning parties and plays and taking over the student union.²⁷⁶ Soon religious groups on various university campuses in Cairo, Alexandria, and Asyut were united under the name of Gama'a Islamiya. By the mid-1970s, members of the Muslim Brotherhood who were released from prison by President Sadat sought to rebuild their organization. They found an existing Islamist revival among Egypt's youth and began reaching out to those students. As a result, several key leaders in Gama'a Islamiya gave their oath of allegiance to the Brotherhood, reviving it from the dead. The decision by Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh and other Cairo-based members of Gama'a Islamiya to give their oath of allegiance created shock waves within the original Gama'a Islamiya. It eventually led to the group's breakup. One reason: those who took oaths of allegiance hid that fact for a while from the rest of their comrades. It was discovered by accident as Ibrahim El Zaafarany slipped while talking to Osama Abdel 'Azeem and let the secret out.²⁷⁷

The division was largely geographic with few exceptions. Most of the Delta- and Cairo-based members with the exception of Osama Abdel 'Azeem and Abdel Fattah El Zeiny joined the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood. The overwhelming majority of the members south of Cairo in Minya and Asyut, with the exception of Abu El'ela Mady, retained the name and became the modern Gama'a Islamiya. It eventually joined forces with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and assassinated Sadat. In Alexandria, some joined the Brotherhood, most notably Ibrahim El Zaafarany. But Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem refused to join and others began gathering around him.²⁷⁸ El Mokadem's role was instrumental. He refused to join the Brotherhood because he would not give his oath of allegiance to an undeclared Supreme Guide. The Brotherhood at the time had not announced who had replaced Hassan El Hodeiby as a Supreme Guide following his death.²⁷⁹

The internal rivalries sometimes seemed Kafkaesque. Salafi Call founders, for example, complained that the Brotherhood had criticized them for inviting Omar El Tilmisani to lecture on campus, claiming that he did not represent the Brotherhood. The Brotherhood then proceeded to declare him the Supreme Guide.²⁸⁰ By the end of 1979, the split within the original Gama'a Islamiya in Alexandria was complete between those who joined the Brotherhood and those who refused,²⁸¹ with Salafis withdrawing from the summer camp.²⁸²

El Mokadem had been one of the first young men to become an Islamist in the late 60s after frequenting Ansar El Sunna mosques.²⁸³ He also was ahead of his peers in his deep knowledge of religious texts.²⁸⁴ Because of his scholarship, El Mokadem enjoyed great respect among all young Islamists and soon the future founders of the Salafi Call followed his decisions. Some had met in Alexandria University but others knew each other before university. Yasser Burhami and Ahmed Hotaybah had been classmates in high school,²⁸⁵ and Adel Abdel Ghaffour and Sayed El Ghobashy were one year younger in the same school. Similarly El Mokadem and Abu Idris Mohamed Abdel Fattah knew

each other as high school students. Following El Mokadem's lead in not joining the Brotherhood, they soon found themselves in a predicament. As soon as they tried to continue their *da'wah* in Alexandria University as they always had, they found themselves attacked by their former colleagues, now members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Brotherhood attempted to silence them and ban their meetings.²⁸⁶ Clashes in university took a violent turn.²⁸⁷ Confronted with this challenge, the future founders of the Salafi Call met and decided they needed to organize and institutionalize their work.²⁸⁸ Ahmed Farid attributes the decision to El Mokadem.²⁸⁹ As Yasser Burhami would later recall, "They were organized and we were not. After that we met together and decided to organize work between us."²⁹⁰ The early clash with the Brotherhood would leave its mark on their attitudes toward it. Burhami does not tire from repeating, "If the Brotherhood is empowered, they will destroy the Salafi Call. The right way to have a good relationship with the Brotherhood is a strong presence."²⁹¹ The decision to form their own organization, as they later argued, was also driven by their inability to operate within Ansar El Sunna. The older members of Ansar El Sunna in control of its branches in Alexandria did not welcome them.²⁹² While this was true, the future founders of the Salafi Call were also uncomfortable operating under the constraints of Ansar El Sunna, an officially registered organization, as they sought more freedom of operation.²⁹³

Initially hesitant to create an organization like the Brotherhood, they called themselves the Salafi School and chose Abu Idris as their leader.²⁹⁴ The name was changed in 1984 to the Salafi Call.²⁹⁵ In 1985 they established the Al Furqan Institute to prepare preachers²⁹⁶ and created an extensive social services network.²⁹⁷ Between 1986 and 1994, the Salafi Call underwent a remarkable growth period.²⁹⁸ The Salafi growth in Alexandria, however, soon caught the eye of the state. Earlier in 1981 following the assassination of Sadat, both Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem and Ahmed Hotaybah were arrested,²⁹⁹ while Ahmed Farid was jailed in 1979 for refusing to shave his beard while serving in the military.³⁰⁰ In 1987, both Ahmed Farid and Yasser Burhami spent three months in prison following an assassination attempt on Minister of Interior Hassan Abu Basha at the hands of Jihadis.³⁰¹

It was not until 1994, however, that serious state repression began. Both Abu Idris and Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem were arrested,³⁰² the Al Furqan Institute was taken over by the state and eventually closed, the Salafi Call's magazine *The Voice of the Da'wah* closed, and their leadership council was disbanded.³⁰³ After 1994, the only remaining venue of operation was in universities, where the Salafi Call continued to preach and recruit. That avenue was closed in 2002 as another wave of state repression ended their ability to operate on campus and resulted in the imprisonment of Ahmed Farid and Yasser Burhami for nearly a year.³⁰⁴

The continued state repression took its toll on the Salafi Call, limiting the ability of its Sheikhs to operate outside of Alexandria. The repression also resulted in the emergence of one its Sheikhs as the undisputed strongman; Yasser Burhami. The rest of the Salafi Call's founders largely stuck to their scholarship, limiting their activities to teaching in

their local mosques. But Burhami continued to devote himself completely to *da'wah* and building cadres as he opened his doors to youth and slowly spread his network across the country. The true impact of the change that took place in 1994 was felt after the Egyptian revolution as Burhami emerged as the undisputed leader of the Salafi Call in reality though not in name. He viewed the growth of the Salafi Call as the product of his efforts with the role of the other founders only historical. Burhami's strong-arm control tactics would eventually result in a heated competition with the President of the Nour Party, Emad Abdel Ghaffour. Both had disliked each other since the 1970s.³⁰⁵ Ultimately it would result in Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem breaking with the organization as he took Abdel Ghaffour's side.

While I discuss the Salafi Call's positions on key theological-political questions in the second part of the study, a summary of those positions is necessary here. The Salafi Call adopts Al Albani's methodology for change through purification and upbringing.³⁰⁶ They divide their methodology into three steps: *da'wah* to monotheism and following the Salaf, establishing the believing community on the methodology of *Ahl El Sunna*, and the final stage of empowerment.³⁰⁷ How the last stage is achieved is left open, with Salafi Call leaders arguing that it is up to God.³⁰⁸

On the question of the unbelief of the ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed, the Salafi Call adopts the position of declaring the unbelief of the genus but not the particular, which means that they declare the abstract ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed an unbeliever, but do not similarly label the particular ruler an unbeliever (Hosni Mubarak for example) until certain conditions are met.³⁰⁹ They add that these rulers are not considered legitimate in the first place and limit obedience to them only in matters that are not contrary to *shari'a*.³¹⁰ Naturally this position has led the Salafi Call to engage in fierce debates and rebuttals with both other Activist Salafis who declare the unbelief of the particular and on the other hand with Madkhalis who reject both views. The Salafi Call stresses the need for clear unbelief to declare a Muslim an unbeliever and views ignorance as an excuse.³¹¹ The Salafi Call is unique among all Egyptian Salafis in following Al Albani's position of not declaring the unbelief of a man who does not pray out of laziness.³¹²

The Salafi Call does not endorse declaring Jihad or rebellion against rulers both for the above theological reason³¹³ and for a host of practical ones such as weakness,³¹⁴ balancing benefits and evils,³¹⁵ and the harm it would cause to *da'wah*.³¹⁶ This position was adopted early on by the founders of the Salafi Call, even before creating their organization. They had rejected the killing of former Minister of Religious Endowments Sheikh Mohamed El Dhahabi in July 1977 at the hands of the Society of Muslims. They spread out in the streets of Alexandria wearing T-shirts with the slogan, "The Gama'a Islamiya: We call to God and renounce *takfir*, and the killing of El Dhahabi."³¹⁷

Similarly, Yasser El Burhami was present in Mecca during the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque at the hands of Juhayman Al Otaybi. Burhami credits El Mokadem with warning Egyptian Salafis not to take part.³¹⁸ El Mokadem attended the all-Islamist meeting that Abdel Salam Farag called to discuss plans to overthrow Sadat but refused to endorse the idea unless a fatwa was obtained from Al Albani and Ibn Baz. El

Mokadem's views were probably shaped by his earlier experience as a member of the first Jihadi group in Egypt founded in 1964 together with Ayman El Zawahiri and Rifa'i Sorour.³¹⁹

As its official spokesperson, Abdel Monem El Shahat, describes it, the Salafi Call is “a *da'wah* reform group that adopts Salafism as a methodology and collective organized work as a technique.”³²⁰ Its adoption of collective action, while defended, later on, on theological grounds, was adopted as a result of their violent clashes with the Brotherhood in the late 1970s in Alexandria University. The adoption of collective action has been severely attacked by Madkhalis.³²¹ The Salafi Call is careful in noting that its endorsement of collective action is conditioned on it not being partisan.³²² The Salafi Call does not have an oath of allegiance.³²³ Furthermore the group defends collective action as necessary for certain tasks such as education and social services.³²⁴

The Salafi Call rejects democracy, viewing it as contrary to Islam.³²⁵ This rejection is based on a number of theological grounds: that the sovereignty of the people infringes on God's sovereignty;³²⁶ the unconstrained freedoms it allows;³²⁷ the concept of equality between believers and unbelievers;³²⁸ pluralism;³²⁹ and majoritarianism.³³⁰ Despite these theological arguments, the Salafi Call's position toward political participation was largely guided by practical considerations. These practical considerations were: being forced to offer theological concessions to participate, the lack of the possibility of enacting real change, fear of regime repression, and the international system being antagonistic to Islamist participation.³³¹ The changed circumstances after the revolution drove the Salafi Call to reverse its position, forming the Nour Party and competing in Egyptian elections.

Despite the rejection of political participation before the Egyptian revolution, the Salafi Call was heavily engaged in political questions, with its Sheikhs offering comments and *fatwas* on contemporary developments.³³² The Salafi Call's websites became a go-to place for Muslims seeking guidance in their daily lives. It contained daily fatwas issued on a wide range of subjects including the permissibility of working in a factory producing TV sets (No), the permissibility of driving a priest to church in a taxi (No), the permissibility of working in a factory producing shaving razors (No), the permissibility of working as an electrician in a five-star hotel (No), the permissibility of selling newspapers (Yes, except those solely covering actors), and permissibility of playing soccer in a European club (No).³³³ They also did not condemn those who voted for the Muslim Brotherhood in parliamentary elections³³⁴ and voted for Brotherhood candidates in university and professional syndicate elections. Despite being barred from leaving Alexandria and preaching elsewhere by state security,³³⁵ they managed to build an impressive grassroots network, especially in the governorates surrounding Alexandria such as Matruh, Gharbia, Kaft El Sheikh, Beheira, and Damietta.³³⁶ They also have maintained a presence in Giza since the late 1970s through Abdel Fattah El Zeiny, which resonated in Faiyem and Beni Suef.³³⁷

Since the founders of the Salafi Call were all self-taught, they were hugely dependent on Saudi Sheikhs for guidance.³³⁸ They also claimed the legacy of Ansar El Sunna's early Sheikhs such as Abdel Razek Afifi.³³⁹ Beside their fights with other currents within

Salafism, especially Madkhalis, Jihadis, and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafi Call had a number of differences with other Activist Salafi currents such as Cairo's Activist Salafis. The Salafi Call disagreed with Activist Salafis on the question of the unbelief of the ruler³⁴⁰ and the question of the unbelief of the person who does not pray. They clashed on the issue while imprisoned in the early 2000s. The Salafi Call disagreed with Sorouris over their attitudes toward disagreements within the Islamist ranks.³⁴¹ Throughout the years, some of the early members of the Salafi Call split from the group over theological or personal disagreements. The defectors include one of the original founders, Sayed El Ghobashy; Ahmed El Naqeeb, who was the Salafi Call representative in Mansoura; and Talaat Zahran, who was previously a student of Burhami and is now a Madkhali.³⁴²

However, the most important divisions within the Salafi Call would take place after the revolution, as Burhami's extensive control of the grassroots was translated into control of the Nour Party. That forced Emad Abdel Ghaffour and his followers to form a new party. Burhami's political choices, especially his support for the military coup, would result in a permanent split within the original six founders. Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem took the side of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem isolated himself, Ahmed Hotaybah focused on his preaching, while Abu Idris and, after some hesitation, Ahmed Farid sided with Burhami.

Following the revolution, the Salafi Call attempted to institutionalize its work. It registered an official organization, the Preachers Association. It held its first Shura Council, consisting of 203 members, which in turn elected an 18-member management board.³⁴³ They reestablished the Al Furqan Institute, which now has 25 branches and more than 6,000 students,³⁴⁴ and established a daily newspaper, Al Fath.

The following profile will cover the story of the Salafi Call's decision to create a political party: Nour. It will be followed by individual profiles of the Salafi Call's founders: Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Yasser Burhami, Abu Idris Mohamed Abdel Fattah, Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem, Ahmed Farid, and Ahmed Hotaybah, and the most important Sheikhs and Nour Party leaders: Abdel Monem El Shahat, Abdel Fattah El Zeiny, Sayed El 'Afany, Younes Makhyoun, Ashraf Thabet, Bassam El Zarqa, Nader Bakkar, Adel Abdel Ghaffour, Emad El Deen Abdel Ghaffour, and Ahmed El Sisi.

Nour Party

The Salafi Call's position on the Egyptian revolution evolved as the revolution progressed. It went from rejection³⁴⁵ to forming popular street committees to fill the security vacuum to supporting the idea of change while warning of chaos.³⁴⁶ However, even before the Egyptian revolution had succeeded in ousting Hosni Mubarak, the Salafi Call was using the changing political environment to its benefit. It realized that the future of the country was being decided and the restrictions on their political participation were eroding. On February 8, 2011, it held a massive rally attended by tens of thousands in which it warned of attempts to curb Egypt's Islamic identity.³⁴⁷ The fear that secularists and Christians would use the revolutionary moment to change Egypt's

identity guided Salafis throughout the early phase of their political participation. One week after Mubarak's resignation, Mohamed Hassan issued the first call for Salafis to actively take part in the political process.³⁴⁸ Framing the constitutional referendum of March 19 as a battle over identity, the Salafi Call mobilized its grassroots supporters and played a key role in achieving the 78% victory in the referendum.

Three days later, on March, 22, 2011, the Salafi Call declared that it had decided to participate in the political process, leaving the exact shape of that participation to be decided in the future.³⁴⁹ Extensive deliberations followed within the Salafi Call, with some preferring to create a political branch within the existing structure of the Salafi Call.³⁵⁰ In the end Emad Abdel Ghaffour, who had returned from Turkey, prevailed in convincing Salafi Call leaders to allow him to form a separate political party,³⁵¹ which was announced on June 3, 2011.³⁵² The decision was justified on the grounds of the need to protect Egypt's Islamic identity and not leave the political process in the hands of secularists. Explaining its new position, the Salafi Call stressed that it remained opposed to democracy as a philosophy and was merely accepting democratic means: elections. It thus continued its opposition to key democratic principles such as the sovereignty of the people, personal freedoms, and equality.³⁵³ Elections were only accepted as the lesser of two evils, the other being leaving the process to secularists.³⁵⁴ In response to critics who pointed out that by forming a political party, Salafis will have to accept Christian members, the Salafi Call stressed that they would be allowed to join only if they agreed on the party's principles regarding implementing *shari'a*. The Salafi Call also noted that allowing them as members would make them mix with Muslims and ultimately they would convert to Islam.³⁵⁵

Abdel Monem El Shahat stressed that the Nour Party was an ideological party and summed up its ideology as "the obligation of *shari'a* reference in all matters of life, working with what is possible from *shari'a* while working to remove the obstacles on what is not possible, explaining that working with what is possible does not mean being silent on the rest of what is demanded (the full *shari'a*) or changing it and stating it is not from religion contrary to those who make the possible and the demanded one thing and thus claim that what he could not achieve is not from religion, besides volunteering to do prohibited things to courtesy to some."³⁵⁶ The last point was stressed by the Nour Party as its distinguishable feature from the Muslim Brotherhood. Yousry Hammas summed up what they were seeking: "We want a state that connects earth with heaven."³⁵⁷

The most important question however was what the relationship of the Nour Party would be with the Salafi Call. Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem had described them as "The *Da'wah* is a river, the party is a branch of that river," and that "the Islamic civilizational reform project cannot be limited to a party."³⁵⁸ Tension, however, was inevitable. On the personal level, Burhami and Emad Abdel Ghaffour had disliked each other since the 1970s.³⁵⁹ With his near absolute control of the Salafi Call's grassroots, Burhami expected Abdel Ghaffour to come back to him for every major decision.³⁶⁰ He had endorsed the idea of forming a party and allowed Abdel Ghaffour to become its president to have him to blame in case the experiment failed. Abdel Ghaffour lacked his own base within the Salafi Call because he had spent the previous 30 years in Afghanistan and Turkey.

Burhami's camp would attempt to portray the struggle as one over ideological differences, painting Abdel Ghaffour as more lax on theological issues and an admirer of the Turkish model. In reality, the fight was over organizational control, with both sides sharing the same theological positions. Abdel Ghaffour would find backers in Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem and Ahmed Farid. Sa'id by this time had grown uncomfortable with Burhami's attempted takeover of the Salafi Call, while Farid's support for Abdel Ghaffour was driven more by his close friendship with Emad's brother, Adel Abdel Ghaffour, who was also one of the original founders of the Salafi Call. Burhami's network of students throughout the country was evident when he, not Abdel Ghaffour, won the allegiance of 114 out of the Nour Party's 150 parliament members in both chambers, 17 out of the 19 members of the Nour Party's high board, and 22 out of the 29 governorate heads. In December 2012, Abdel Ghaffour resigned from the Nour Party and established the El Watan Party. He was able to grab a huge part of the Salafi Call's network in Giza, where Burhami's control was weakest. Besides the Burhami-Abdel Ghaffour fight, other minor fights within the Nour Party included the departure of its first official spokesman, Mohamed Yousry Salama, who joined Mohamed El Baradei's Dostour Party; Sheikh Farahat Ramadan, who attacked Burhami's egomania; and Mohamed Abdu Imam.³⁶¹

The Nour Party refused to support Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's candidacy for president, given the strong disagreements they had with his revolutionary rhetoric and their doubts regarding his actual abilities.³⁶² In a decision that shocked many observers, the party endorsed Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh in the first round of voting. That decision, which put them in direct conflict with the Brotherhood, should have been expected, given the history between the two competing groups. The Nour Party faced an onslaught of attacks for that decision, especially from Cairo's Activist Salafis and Safwat Hegazi,³⁶³ which forced its leaders to defend their decision.³⁶⁴

In the second round of voting, the party endorsed Mohamed Morsi, though it secretly attempted to open a channel with his competitor, Ahmed Shafik. Throughout the transitional phase, the party backed the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, refusing to criticize its performance. The party also condemned the continued protests, which widened the gap between them and Revolutionary Salafis.³⁶⁵ The party successfully pressured the Muslim Brotherhood in the constitutional committee and managed to pass a constitution more to its liking.³⁶⁶ The party's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood continued to worsen under Morsi's rule, with Cairo's Activist Salafi Sheikh Fawzy El Sa'id cursing them for siding with the unbelievers (non-Islamists).³⁶⁷ Revolutionary Salafi Khaled Harbi called Burhami the Sahwa Sheikh*.³⁶⁸ The final straw was the Nour Party's support for the military coup and subsequent support for General Sisi's election as President. This created a permanent rift within Islamist ranks that is unlikely to be healed any time soon.

* Sahwa is the Arabic word for Awakening and while the term is used positively to describe the Saudi Islamist Awakening led by Sheikhs Safar El Hawali and Salman Al Ouda, in this case it is used in a derogatory manner referring to the Sunni Awakening in Iraq that accompanied the Surge.

Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem

Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem was born in Alexandria in 1952. As a high school student in 1965, he frequented Ansar El Sunna mosques and became a Salafi.³⁶⁹ He was one of the earliest and youngest members of the first Jihadi group in Egypt in the late 1960s.³⁷⁰ No information is available on when he left the group. During high school he befriended Abu Idris Mohamed Abdel Fattah. By the time he entered Medical School in Alexandria University, he was already preaching in Ansar El Sunna mosques. Completely self-taught, he started one of the first religious groups on campus. Due to his deep knowledge of religious texts, he became a magnet for younger Salafis, with his letters and sermons distributed as pamphlets among students. He graduated with a B.A. in Medicine, specializing in psychiatry. Later on he received a Diploma in mental health and a B.A. in Shari'a from Al Azhar University. El Mokadem led Alexandria Salafis in refusing to give their oath of allegiance to an undeclared Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s.

After violent clashes with Muslim Brotherhood students on university campus, he established with his friends the Salafi School, which later became the Salafi Call.³⁷¹ During the 1970s he frequently traveled to Saudi Arabia, attending sermons and lectures by Al Albani, Ibn Baz, Ibn Al Uthaymeen, Abdel Razek Afifi, Abu Bakr Al Jaza'iri, Ibn Jibreel, Muqbil Ibn Hadi El Wadi'i, and Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek. He was present in Mecca during the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque by Juhayman Al Otaybi and advised Egyptian Salafis not to take part.³⁷² El Mokadem's reputation among Islamists made him one of those invited by Abdel Salam Farag for the all-Islamist meeting held in Beni Suef to discuss plans to overthrow Sadat. But he refused to endorse the idea unless a fatwa was obtained from Al Albani and Ibn Baz.³⁷³ Nonetheless he was arrested with Ahmed Hotaybah following Sadat's assassination.³⁷⁴

From the late 1970s, El Mokadem devoted himself to scholarship and preaching. Among his students are Sheikhs Ahmed El Naqeeb, Mahmoud El Masry, Hani Helmy, and Khaled Saqr. Across the Islamist spectrum in Egypt, El Mokadem enjoys a positive reputation and is well liked due to his deep scholarship, piety, and decency toward others. He hardly ever engages in debates with other Salafis, and when he does, he always addresses them respectfully. He has been described by a non-Islamist in Alexandria as the Ibn Taymiyyah of our age. His sermons often cover contemporary issues. Following the military coup, El Mokadem chose to isolate himself with his books and scholarship. Reportedly unhappy with what the organization he started has become under Yasser Burhami's iron fist, he nonetheless promised his old colleagues that the organization will not be attacked from his side.

Yasser Burhami

Yasser Burhami was born in Beheira governorate in 1958. A few months after his birth, the family moved to Alexandria. Burhami's grandfather had been an Azhar graduate, and both his father and uncle belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1965, his father was imprisoned for a short period, and his uncle spent five years in jail. Later on,

Burhami would attempt to explain his family's ties to the Brotherhood by remarking that the Brotherhood at the time had a strong Salafi discourse due to the influence of Rashid Reda, Mohamed Hamed El Fiqi, and Moheb El Din El Khateeb. The influence of his deeply religious family was augmented by a high school teacher. In high school his classmate was Ahmed Hotayba, and the two would forge a lifelong friendship.³⁷⁵ Burhami joined Alexandria University's Medical School in 1976. By that time, Gama'a Islamiya dominated the campus with its general Salafi framework, and he naturally joined. Soon he met Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Ahmed Farid, and Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem, who preceded him in Medical School, and joined their efforts. Burhami spent four months in Saudi Arabia, where he attended the study groups of Ibn Baz and Ibn Al Uthaymeen and was present during Juhayman Al Otaybi's takeover of Mecca's Grand Mosque.³⁷⁶

Burhami was still a student in university when the Gama'a Islamiya broke apart and, with his fellow Salafis, refused to join the Muslim Brotherhood. The final split took place in the summer camps in 1979, with Salafis withdrawing due to the Brotherhood take over.³⁷⁷ In 1980 as he and Emad Abdel Ghaffour started Salafi work in Medical School, clashes began with the Brotherhood that soon turned violent as the Brotherhood attempted to silence them. As a result, Salafis in Alexandria met and decided to organize themselves. They formed the Salafi School and chose Abu Idris Mohamed Anel Fattah as administrative leader.³⁷⁸ Burhami was one of the Salafi Call leaders who engaged in the famous televised debate with Al Azhar Sheikhs in the 1980s together with Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem, Ahmed Hotaybah, and Sayed El Ghobashy.³⁷⁹ He was in Saudi Arabia during Sadat's assassination and thus escaped arrest. During this prolonged visit, he grew close to Abdel Razek Afifi, who shaped his views.³⁸⁰

Burhami graduated with a B.A. in Medicine in 1982 and still practices in his private clinic. He received an M.A. in child medicine from Alexandria University in 1992 and a B.A. in *Shari'a* from Al Azhar University in 1999. He was arrested twice. In 1987 following the assassination attempt against Minister of Interior Hassan Abu Basha, he spent three months in jail. In 2002, he spent nearly a year in prison.³⁸¹ In both instances, he was arrested with Ahmed Farid.³⁸²

While Abu Idris devoted himself completely to administrative responsibility, and the other founders of the Salafi Call devoted themselves to scholarship and teaching due to security pressures, Burhami devoted himself to preaching and building the organization and was thus able to create an extensive network of students across the country. Specializing in doctrine, he and Hotaybah were the only two from the founders who devoted their time to teaching at Al Furqan Institute. Following the security crackdown on the Salafi Call in 1994, Burhami was the only one of the Salafi Call's founders who opened his doors to young Salafis and focused on building cadres. As a result, his influence spread widely outside of Alexandria.³⁸³ Slowly, Burhami became in effect the strongest person in the Salafi Call. Among his students are Abdel Monem El Shahat, Talaat Zahran (who later became a Madkhali Sheikh), and Reda El Samady, the Thai founder of the Salafi Movement for Reform (HAFS).

Burhami naturally came to view the growth of the Salafi Call as the result of his efforts, while the contribution of the other founders was merely historical. His effective control of the Salafi Call's base was transferred after the revolution to the Nour Party, whose leaders are nearly unanimously his students. He clashed with the Nour Party President, Emad Abdel Ghaffour, and was able to force him out of the party.³⁸⁴ Before the revolution, he engaged in a battle with Mohamed Sa'id Raslan over the permissibility of collective action.³⁸⁵ In prison in 2002, he debated Cairo's Activist Salafis over the question of the unbelief of the person who does not pray. He answered Safar Al Hawali's book *The Deferral Phenomenon in Islamic Thought*, which created an uproar among Islamists for accusing Al Albani of being a Murji' for refusing to declare a man who does not perform the actions that prove faith an unbeliever.³⁸⁶ His defense of Al Albani was attacked by various Salafis as the Salafi Call was unique among all Egyptian Salafi currents in following Al Albani's position.³⁸⁷ He is against female education, advising the guardian of his future wife to take her out of school.³⁸⁸

Burhami is today one of the most hated people in anti-coup Islamist circles for his support of the military coup and General Sisi. He continues to be the real power behind the Nour Party.

Abu Idris Mohamed Abdel Fattah

Mohamed Abdel Fattah, known as Abu Idris, was born in Alexandria in 1954. He frequented Ansar El Sunna mosques as a high school student and during that time got to know Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem. Both of them were involved with the religious group on campus known as Gama'a Islamiya. Abu Idris led Gama'a Islamiya in Alexandria University's Faculty of Engineering, from which he obtained his B.A. Abu Idris is known as an effective administrator and has been chosen by his fellow Salafis to lead the Salafi Call since its creation. Abu Idris was arrested with Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem in 1994 during the security crackdown on the Salafi Call that resulted in terminating their preachers institute, magazine, and administrative body.³⁸⁹ Abu Idris is not known for deep scholarship but instead focuses solely on his task as the administrative leader of the Salafi Call. He has given few interviews and made fewer public appearances. One of his few appearances was joining the Islamist demonstration in July, 29, 2011, to proclaim Egypt's Islamic identity. He has supported Yasser Burhami's policies and voted for Sisi in the 2014 presidential elections.³⁹⁰

Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem

Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem was born in Alexandria in 1952. His grandfather was an Azhar Sheikh, and he inherited his extensive library of Islamic books. As a high school student, he gave sermons in Ansar El Sunna and El Gam'eya El Shar'eya mosques. He studied at Alexandria University's Medical School, where he was involved in the religious group on campus and became friends with the other future founders of the Salafi Call. He received his B.A. in 1978. Like other young Salafis, he frequently traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he met Ibn Baz, Al Albani, and Ibn Al Uthaymeen. He was one of the

Salafi Call leaders who engaged in the famous televised debate with Al Azhar Sheikhs in the 1980s. He joined Yasser Burhami, Ahmed Hotaybah, and Sayed El Ghobashy.³⁹¹ He was arrested in 1994 with Abu Idris during the security crackdown on the Salafi Call.³⁹²

Abdel 'Azeem has written more than 200 books, pamphlets, and letters. Two of his books, *The Collection of Provisions in Achieving Jihad* and *Democracy in the Balance*, were foundational works in the Salafi Call's discourse. Even after the Egyptian revolution, Abdel 'Azeem continued to be a fierce critic of democracy, which he described as an idol that people worshiped.³⁹³ Following the revolution, Abdel 'Azeem was appointed as the second vice president of the Salafi Call and became a member of the Ulama Shura Council and the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. He supported Emad Abdel Ghaffour in his struggle with Yasser Burhami over control of the Nour Party. He similarly endorsed Mohamed Morsi for President despite the Salafi Call's endorsement of Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh in the first round of voting. His relationship with Burhami and hence the Salafi Call continued to worsen during Morsi's one-year rule until it finally exploded in the open with his rejection of the coup and support for Morsi. He currently resides outside of Egypt, where he continues to attack the military regime.

Ahmed Farid

Ahmed Farid was born in 1952 in Sharkia governorate to a religious family. He spent his first university year in Mansoura University's Medical School before transferring to Alexandria University. He joined the religious group on campus, where he first met Ibrahim El Zaafarany and later Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem. Soon they were able to dominate campus, turning the acting room into a mosque and taking over the student union. In 1976 they met Gama'a Islamiya's Cairo University group represented by Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh and Essam El Erian in a camp held for all university student union members across the country. At the time, the Brotherhood had not yet infiltrated the student group. It appeared for the first time in a summer camp in Alexandria represented by future Brotherhood Deputy Supreme Guide Gom'a Amin and preacher Abbas El Sisi. It was during this period that Farid developed a close friendship with Adel Abdel Ghaffour. Farid followed El Mokadem's lead in refusing to give his oath of allegiance to the Brotherhood and then in founding the Salafi School. Farid spent most of 1979 in military prison for refusing to shave his beard as a conscript. His defiance became known across Salafi circles in Egypt, with his friends asking Ibn Baz for a fatwa on his behalf. By the time he was discharged from the military, Gama'a Islamiya had already split. Farid was jailed twice, in both instances with Yasser Burhami. The first episode was in 1987 for three months following the Jihadis' assassination attempt on Minister of Interior Hassan Abu Basha. The second was in 2002 for nearly a year.³⁹⁴

Farid initially took the middle ground in the struggle between Yasser Burhami and Emad Abdel Ghaffour over control of the Nour Party due to his lifelong friendship with Emad's brother, Adel. During Morsi's presidency, he publicly expressed his regret for voting for him. Farid initially criticized the military coup,³⁹⁵ but in the end followed Burhami's lead. He similarly expressed his rejection of the 2014 constitution,³⁹⁶ before

backtracking and endorsing it,³⁹⁷ and he supported General Sisi's election for the presidency.³⁹⁸

Ahmed Hotaybah

Ahmed Hotaybah was born in 1958 in Alexandria. In high school he was Yasser Burhami's classmate and the two have become friends since. He received his B.A. as a Dentist from Alexandria University, where he joined the religious group on campus and later was one of the founders of the Salafi Call. He was arrested for a short period with Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem following Sadat's assassination in 1981.³⁹⁹ Hotaybah continues to work as a dentist while maintaining his preaching activities and is known for focusing on jurisprudence. He was one of the Salafi Call leaders who engaged in the famous televised debate with Al Azhar Sheikhs in the 1980s, along with Yasser Burhami, Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem, and Sayed El Ghobashy.⁴⁰⁰ He supported Hazem Salah Abu Ismail for president.⁴⁰¹ Following the military coup, he has focused on his preaching and did not endorse the Nour Party's position on the military coup. His official website is <http://www.hotaybah.com/>.

Abdel Monem El Shahat

Abdel Monem El Shahat was born in 1970. He received his B.A. in Engineering from Alexandria University in 1993. While a university student, he studied at the Salafi Call's Al Furqan Institute before it closed in 1994. While attending lectures and sermons by all the founders of the Salafi Call, he became Yasser Burhami's personal student. He was arrested on several occasions before the revolution. El Shahat worked as a Computer Engineer while continuing his preaching activities. Following the Egyptian revolution, he became the official spokesperson for the Salafi Call, making him a frequent guest on Egyptian TV programs, where he frightened non-Islamists with his views such as suggesting that Pharaohic statues be covered in wax.⁴⁰² He was nominated by the Nour Party for an individual seat in El Manzala district in Alexandria in the parliamentary elections but lost after a fierce battle with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Abdel Fattah El Zeiny

Abdel Fattah El Zeiny was the only original founder of the Salafi Call not based in Alexandria. He began and led the Salafi Call's branch in Talibia Giza. During the struggles within the Nour Party, he was an acceptable figure to both camps. He sided with Yasser Burhami, unlike many of the leaders of the Salafi Call's Giza network. He similarly backed the Nour Party's position on the military coup and General Sisi's election.

Sayed El 'Afany

Sayed El 'Afany was born in Beni Suef governorate. He studied under Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem, and Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, whom he declares as his Sheikh. He was attacked by Madkhalis for praising Sayed Qutb and wrote a book about the life of Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin. El 'Afany backed the Nour Party's position on the military coup and General Sisi's election.⁴⁰³

Younes Makhyoun

Younes Makhyoun was born in 1955 in Beheira governorate. He received a B.A. as a dentist from Alexandria University in 1980 and a B.A. in *Shari'a* from Al Azhar University in 1999. An early member of the Salafi Call, he became its leader in Beheira governorate and was imprisoned for a year after Sadat's assassination in 1981 and three times afterward. Following the revolution, he was elected as a member of parliament and was selected twice in the constitution writing committee. He was elected as the president of the Nour Party in January 2013 after Emad Abdel Ghaffour's resignation.

Ashraf Thabet

Ashraf Thabet was born in 1964 in Alexandria. He received his B.A. in Agriculture from Alexandria University in 1989 and a B.A. in Law from Alexandria University in 1997. Following the Egyptian revolution, he was elected as a member of parliament and served as the parliament's Deputy Speaker.

Bassam El Zarqa

Bassem El Zarqa was born in 1960. He received his B.A. in Medicine from Alexandria University in 1986 and later a Diploma in Political Science. He was arrested in 2001. Following the revolution, El Zarqa became the Vice President of the Nour Party and was appointed by President Morsi as his advisor. He resigned from that post in February 2013 following Morsi's dismissal of another advisor, Khaled 'Alam El Deen, who also belonged to the Nour Party. His daughter is married to Nader Bakkar.

Nader Bakkar

Nader Bakkar was born in 1984 in Alexandria. He received his B.A. in Commerce from Alexandria University in 2005. As a university student, he became a student of Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem and began preaching. Following the revolution he became the official spokesperson of the Nour Party. As such he is a frequent guest on Egyptian TV programs, where he was able to present a modern image for the party. Bakkar's confusion with a Hadith by claiming that the Prophet was lenient with an adulterous woman and urged her husband to keep the matter a secret during one of his

interviews led Abdel Rahman Abdel Khalek to declare him an unbeliever for insulting the Prophet.⁴⁰⁴ Yasser Burhami rose to his defense.⁴⁰⁵

Adel Abdel Ghaffour

Adel Abdel Ghaffour was born in Alexandria. He went to the same high school as Yasser Burhami and Ahmed Hotaybah but was one year younger, and his classmate was Sayed El Ghobashy. One of the original members of the Salafi Call in the late 1970s, he used family ties to play an instrumental role in protecting young Salafis and allowed them to preach in a mosque through his family ties. His influence in Egypt, however, waned as he soon traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he received his B.A., M.A., and PhD from the Islamic University of Medina. His PhD thesis supervisor was Rabi' Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali. He is a Professor of Hadith in Saudi Arabia.

Emad El Deen Abdel Ghaffour

Emad El Deen Abdel Ghaffour was born in Alexandria in 1960. He joined the early founders of the Salafi Call through his older brother, Adel. He received his B.A. in Medicine from Alexandria University in 1983. He joined Gama'a Islamia as a high school student in 1975 and with Yasser Burhami played an instrumental role in initiating the Salafi School's work on campus after the breakup of the Gama'a Islamiya. It was during this period that both men grew to dislike each other. Abdel Ghaffour received an M.A. in Islamic Studies in 1986 and left Egypt in the 1980s for Afghanistan, where he conducted aid work during the war against the Soviet Union. Later on he left for Turkey, where he married his Turkish wife. Following the revolution, Abdel Ghaffour was the first to call for the Salafi Call to establish a political party and became the Nour Party's president.⁴⁰⁶ From the onset, he was in endless struggles with Yasser Burhami over control of decision making within the party and finally resigned in December 2012. He formed the El Watan Party in January 2013 and entered into a coalition with Hazem Salah Abu Ismail. Previously he had been chosen by Morsi as a presidential advisor and supported the Brotherhood during its rule. He opposed the military coup and was arrested two weeks afterward. His party became a member of the Brotherhood-created Anti-Coup Alliance until he left in September 2014.

Ahmed El Sisi

Ahmed El Sisi was born in the late 1960s. He received his B.A. in Arabic from Alexandria University and became a student of Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem and a member of the Salafi Call. He served as the Imam of the Tawhid Mosque in New Jersey from the late 1990s until after the September 11 attacks. He is known by his admirers as the "Pulpit Lion" for his powerful and fiery sermons. He left Egypt again in 2009 for the United States and returned after the revolution. At the time, it was claimed he had been forced to leave by state security due to his sermons attacking Christians. His recorded sermons from the U.S. became popular among Salafis. Following the revolution, he

began to criticize the Nour Party's positions in support of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces during the transitional period, its lack of support for Hazem Salah Abu Ismail (whom he endorsed), and its behavior during Morsi's rule. His criticism took a sharper tone as events unfolded, reaching an all-out attack on the Nour Party following the military coup. Salafi Call leaders and members have never responded to his attacks, most likely fearing his sharp tongue. Following Bin Laden's death, he praised him in one of his sermons. The Ministry of Religious Endowments took over his mosque in Alexandria in June 2014.

Sorouris

The Sorouri current was founded in Saudi Arabia by Mohamed Sorour Zein Al Abidin. A former member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, he came to Saudi Arabia in 1965 to work as a math teacher.⁴⁰⁷ Whether out of a brilliant reading of the Saudi religious landscape as his enemies accuse him, or out of his own convictions, Sorour attempted to bridge the gap between the Muslim Brotherhood discourse and outlook and Wahabism. While Wahabism at the time had been largely impacted by its encounter with Egyptian Salafism, it was the Saudi policy of welcoming thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members to Saudi Arabia that would lead to Wahabism's final transformation. As Stephane Lacroix argues: "Wahabism is not, as often portrayed, an unchangeable essence but rather a tradition in motion, subject to interpretation, and reinterpretation."⁴⁰⁸ The Saudi policy of welcoming Brotherhood members met several needs. It helped with the external struggle with Gamal Abdel Nasser. It met an internal need to counter the growth of leftist and Arab nationalist ideas in Saudi society during the 1950s and 1960s. The Saudis also used the well-educated Brotherhood members to fill government positions and modernize Saudi society.⁴⁰⁹ Saudi Arabia was thus not only an exporter of its Wahabi ideology but also an importer of Egyptian Islamism in both its Salafi and Brotherhood forms.⁴¹⁰ It was at this moment that Sorour managed to leave his mark on Islamism.

Sorour realized the deficiencies of the Wahabi and Brotherhood discourses. Wahabism was a pre-modern ideology that had no answers to the challenges of modernity. After the establishment of the third Saudi state under King Abdel Aziz Al Saud and the crushing of the Saudi Ikhwan, it had no action plan. But the Brotherhood's discourse was alien to Saudi Arabia, given the Brotherhood's lack of concern with doctrinal issues and lax views on Shi'a and Sufis. Sorour filled the gap by mixing Salafi tenets with Brotherhood activism. The Brotherhood's political focus needed a Salafi direction in belief, while the Salafi direction needed a dose of political organization.⁴¹¹ Lacroix frames the birth of the Saudi Islamist awakening this way: "The ideology of the Sahwa is located at the juncture of two distinct schools of thought with different views of the world: the Wahabi tradition and the tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood. Like the Muslim reformist tradition from which it derives, the tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood is primarily political and was constructed, in its Bannaist version, against the imperialist West, and in its Qutbist version, against the godless regimes of the Middle East. The Wahabi tradition, in contrast, is primarily religious and was constructed against heresy, that is, the impurities that were supposed to have grown up

around the original dogma of the pious ancestors. Historically, its primary enemy was not the West nor the political authorities but the non-Wahabi groups within Islam, beginning with the Shiites and the Sufis.”⁴¹²

It was not any Brotherhood discourse that was used, but specifically its Qutbist variant. As Ahmed Salem argues, Sorouriya is a mixture of Ibn Taymiyyah and the Qutb brothers.⁴¹³ The choice was natural for Sorour. During his days in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, he had belonged to the Damascus branch of the organization, which was much more Salafi and Qutbi in its tenets and discourse than the overall organization.⁴¹⁴ While he was technically merely a math teacher, Sorour used his time in Saudi Arabia to indoctrinate students and create an extensive network that rivaled that of the Brotherhood. Among his students are Saudi Sheikhs Safar Al Hawali and Salaman Al Ouda. He was aided not only by the Brotherhood’s alien discourse to Saudi society, but perhaps more important by the Brotherhood’s activism in Saudi Arabia. It was divided into four groups that often competed with each other.⁴¹⁵ Sorour’s relationship with his former colleagues was one of deep animosity.⁴¹⁶ Sorour had left Syria after disagreements with the Brotherhood, and the clash continued in Saudi Arabia.⁴¹⁷

Sorouris have not only been engaged in a fierce rivalry with the Muslim Brotherhood in Saudi Arabia, but with other Islamist currents as well. In Saudi Arabia they were engaged in a similarly fierce rivalry with Jihadis and naturally with Madkhalis.⁴¹⁸ Jihadis have in fact devoted hundreds of articles to attacking Sorouris,⁴¹⁹ and Rabi’ Ibn Hadi Al Madkhali has similarly devoted countless sermons and books to curse them. Their relationship with the official Saudi religious establishment has evolved over time. It started with support from the establishment, which aimed “to create the social infrastructure to mobilize people.” Then Sorouris attempted to absorb and infiltrate the religious establishment.⁴²⁰ Eventually, the relationship turned to animosity after Sorouris showed hostility to the Saudi state following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.⁴²¹ Sorouris consistently deny that they are a group, though there is enough evidence to suggest that they do have an organizational framework.⁴²²

The largest Sorouri base was in Saudi Arabia, though that subsided over time. But Sorour also had an impact on Islamists across the Arab world, especially in Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, U.A.E., and Yemen. In Egypt, Sorouriya was introduced by Salah El Sawy, who worked in the Sorouri-managed American Open University, and Gamal Sultan,⁴²³ before being propagated by others. In Egypt, the Sorour current is dissimilar to its Saudi origin in the lack of antagonism toward other Islamists in general and the Brotherhood in particular. Egyptian Sorouris attempt to bridge the gap between various Islamist currents and unify them. One reason for this difference is that Egyptian Sorouris do not carry the baggage of Sorour’s conflicts with the Brotherhood in Syria or the Brotherhood-Sorouri rivalry in Saudi Arabia. It is also important to note that unlike in Saudi Arabia, Sorouris are not a major force in Egypt that can antagonize other Islamists.

The key features of the Egyptian Sorouri discourse are: upholding Salafi doctrines while being occupied with contemporary challenges and not just historical heresies; a conciliatory attitude toward other Islamist groups and the areas of disagreements

between them; attempts at coordinating between Islamists serving as a go-between; endorsement of organized collective work;⁴²⁴ and declaring the ruler who rules by other than what God has revealed an unbeliever.⁴²⁵ Egyptian Sorouris reject the philosophical basis of democracy⁴²⁶ but endorsed political participation after the revolution if a number of conditions are met so that they can shape the outcome.⁴²⁷ They also emphasize the concept of Loyalty and Disavowal in dealing with unbelievers and the concept of *hakimiyya*.⁴²⁸

Following are the profiles of the most important Sorouri Sheikhs in Egypt: Salah El Sawy, Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim, 'Atiya 'Adlan, Hesham El Okda and Hesham Barghash and a profile of the Sorouri created Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform.

Salah El Sawy

Salah El Sawy was born in 1954 in Asyut governorate. At the age of seven he won first place in the Quran memorization competition in Egypt. He attended Al Azhar elementary, middle, and high schools. During his university studies, he was a member of Shukri Mustafa's Society of Muslims, which assassinated former Minister of Religious Endowments Mohamed El Dhahabi in July 1977. He received his B.A. from Al Azhar University's Faculty of Legislation and Law in 1976, his M.A. in 1980, and his PhD from Al Azhar University in 1985. He has served since 1977 as a Professor at Al Azhar University. From 1981 to 1986, he served as an Assistant Professor in Mecca University and from 1986 to 1992 worked in the Islamic World League. He traveled to the United States in 1992 and taught there until 1995. From 1995 to 2004 he worked in the Sorouri-created and managed American Open University in Alexandria, Virginia <http://aou.edu/>. The university also opened a branch in Egypt. In 2004, El Sawy established Mishkah University <http://www.mishkahuniversity.com/> in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, and serves as its president. El Sawy is also the Secretary General of the Assembly of Muslim Jurists in America. His daily *fatwas* are available in <http://el-wasat.com/assawy/>.

El Sawy has written 12 books that focus on Islamic politics and *Shari'a*. His most notable books are *The Theory of Supremacy and Its Impact on the Legitimacy of Regimes*, *Entry to the Rationalization of Islamic Activism*, and *Political Pluralism in the Islamic State*. In his books, El Sawy is a fierce critic of democracy, which he rejects as an idol and declares that those who rule by other than what God has revealed are unbelievers. He endorses Jihad as the only alternative to return the nation of Islam to its natural state.⁴²⁹ His discourse focuses on contemporary challenges, which he believes Salafism must confront. He is a strong proponent of cooperation and unity among Islamists and emphasizes the importance of organized collective work. El Sawy has argued that "the interest of the Islamist action may require that one group of its men would conduct some Jihadi operations, while another group shows its rejection of it."⁴³⁰ His attempts at unifying Islamists and building a common ground among them was evident in his refusal to condemn Osama Abdel 'Azeem and Mohamed Sa'id Raslan for their attacks on the revolution, which he supported.⁴³¹

Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim

Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim was born in Cairo in 1966. He received a B.A. in Engineering from Minya University in 1988, an M.A. in Chemical Engineering from Minya University in 1993, and a PhD in Chemical Engineering from Cairo University in 1998. He also received a B.A. in *Shari'a* in 1997, an M.A. in 2003, and a PhD in 2011, all from Al Azhar University. He also studied in Saudi Arabia, where he became a Sorouri.⁴³² A prolific writer, he has written 33 books. He serves as the Vice President of the Sorouri-managed American Open University's branch in Cairo.

Following the revolution, Ibrahim led the efforts to create the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform as an umbrella organization for Egyptian Islamists and became the organization's Secretary General. He was chosen by the Salafi Call to run its first Shura Council elections. He was a candidate for parliament, running for the individual seat in Cairo's Madinat Nasr. He had the backing of the Muslim Brotherhood but lost the elections. His extensive ties to the Muslim Brotherhood led them to nominate him twice as a member of the constitution-writing assembly. Ibrahim backed Morsi in the presidential elections and was nominated by him in his first cabinet as Minister of Religious Endowments. His Salafi ideology and frequent criticism of Al Azhar, which he accused of being part of the RAND Foundation's efforts to create a moderate Islam,* frightened Al Azhar's Grand Sheikh, who managed to get the military to pressure Morsi to change his decision.

Two of his books, *Contemporary Political Participation in the Light of Shari'a based Policy* and *The Jurisprudence of Priorities in the Contemporary Salafi Discourse after the Revolution*, were published by the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform and made the theological case for Salafis to engage in politics and deal with contemporary challenges.

'Atiya 'Adlan

'Atiya 'Adlan received his B.A., M.A. and PhD in *Shari'a*. He has written 9 books on the Islamic political system and *Shari'a*. Based in Monufia, he was arrested in 2007 by the state security, who accused him of leading a Salafi group to support the Muslim Brotherhood.⁴³³ Following the revolution, he founded the Islah (Reform) Party. The Islah Party's program had the heaviest Islamist language among Salafi parties, including advocating for *Hisba*†.

His party joined the Muslim Brotherhood's electoral coalition, with 'Adlan winning a seat in Monufia. He is a member of the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. In

* The Rand Corporation's Report *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*—available online at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG574.pdf—has been translated into Arabic and shared thousands of times in Islamist circles, which view it as part of a Western conspiracy against Islam.

† Islamic doctrine and government practice of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong.

March 2013 his party joined the electoral coalition created by Hazem Salah Abu Ismail.⁴³⁴ Opposed to the military coup, 'Adlan and his party are members of the Brotherhood-created Anti-Coup Alliance.

Hesham El 'Okda

Hesham El 'Okda was born in 1961 in Beheira governorate. He was raised in Saudi Arabia, where his father worked before returning to Egypt in 1979 for his university studies. In Saudi Arabia, he was a student of Sorouri Sheikhs Salman Al Ouda and Nasser Al Omar. He received his B.A. in Medicine from Alexandria University in 1985 and continues to practice medicine. He received a B.A. in *Shari'a* and an M.A. in *Shari'a* in 2007 from Al Azhar University. His preaching efforts in the city of Damanhour brought him into frequent clashes with the Salafi Call before the revolution.⁴³⁵ He is considered the leader of Damanhour Salafis, which is a Sorouri group. He was jailed twice, the first time for a year and the second time from 2005 to 2008. He is a member of the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform. His official website is <http://www.hoqda.net/>.

Hesham Barghash

Hesham Barghash received his B.A. in Engineering from Alexandria University. He also received a B.A., M.A., and PhD in *Shari'a* from Al Azhar University. He is a member of the Damanhour Salafi Group and following the revolution joined the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform.

Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform

The Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform was established during the Egyptian revolution as an umbrella organization to unite all Islamist currents. It issued its first statement on February 2, 2011.⁴³⁶ The driving force behind the initiative was Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim. Initially former Egyptian Mufti Nasr Farid Wasil was chosen as its president, but after a short period he resigned and was replaced by Ali Al Salous. The group gathered Islamists of all stripes with the exception of Jihadis and Madkhalis. Besides its president, its high board was composed of three vice presidents: Azharite and Scholarly Salafi Sheikh Tal'aat Afifi, Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, and Scholarly Salafi Sheikh Mohamed Hassan. Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim served as its Secretary General.

Its more than 100 members included: the Muslim Brotherhood's Khairat Al Shater, Gama'a Islamiya's Tarek El Zomor, Ansar El Sunna's Abdallah Shaker and Gamal El Marakby, Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Ahmed El Naqeeb, Wahid Bali, Mazen El Sersawy, Omar Abdel Aziz El Qurashy, and Khaled Saqr, Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikhs Fawzy El Sa'id, Sayed El 'Araby, Nashaat Ibrahim, and Hassan Aboul Ashbal, Damanhour Sorouri Salafi Sheikhs 'Atiya 'Adlan, Hesham El Okda and Hesham

Barghash, Sorouri Sheikh Salah El Sawy, the Salafi Call's Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Yasser Burhami, Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem, Ahmed Farid, Abdel Monem El Shahat, Sayed El 'Afany, Younes Makhyouun and Farahat Ramadan, Revolutionary Salafi Sheikhs Rifa'i Sorour, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, and Khaled Sa'id as well as Safwat Hegazi, Mamdouh Ismail, and Ragheb El Sirgany, and Tabligh and Da'wah's Mohamed Hesham Ragheb.⁴³⁷

The Shari'a Association issued numerous statements that dealt with contemporary developments in its attempt to unite Egypt's Islamists. Its efforts failed to close the rift created by the Brotherhood-Salafi Call struggle. Salafis viewed the Association as under the control of the Brotherhood, so Salafi Call members with the exception of Sa'id Abdel 'Azeem together with Mohamed Hassan resigned from its membership in February 2013.⁴³⁸ One of its members, Marwan Salam, was killed in Syria in July 2014 while fighting for Ahrar El Sham.⁴³⁹ His brother had also been killed there earlier. The Shari'a Association's efforts included supporting Sunnis in Bahrain against what they termed a Shi'a conspiracy⁴⁴⁰ and welcoming a delegation from Hizb Al Tahrir.⁴⁴¹ It issued statements blaming Christians for the Maspero massacre⁴⁴² and prohibiting Muslims from congratulating Christians on their religious celebrations.

The Shari'a Association published a number of books defending the revolution and endorsing political participation. The most important of these books are Mohamed Yousry Ibrahim's *Contemporary Political Participation in the Light of Shari'a based Policy* and *The Jurisprudence of Priorities in the Contemporary Salafi Discourse after the Revolution*, and Mohamed Abdel Wahed Kamel's *Balance between Benefits and Evils and Its Impact on the General Egyptian Issue after the Revolution*.⁴⁴³

Cairo Activist Salafis

As their name suggests, Cairo's Activist Salafis lack a collective organization that they belong to and are instead described by their geographical location and sphere of influence—Cairo—to distinguish them from their Alexandrian brethren who founded the Salafi Call. While they accept collective action in principle, they have shied away from forming their own organization out of fear of both dividing the nation further⁴⁴⁴ and security crackdowns. Instead they operate as individual Sheikhs who share a common outlook and discourse. However their lack of an organization has not protected them from state security, which arrested two of their Sheikhs, Fawzy El Sa'id and Nashaat Ibrahim in 2001 together with 94 of their followers in what became known as Al Waad (The Promise) Cell.⁴⁴⁵ They were accused of gathering donations and weapons for militants in Gaza.

Cairo's Activist Salafis are distinguished from the Salafi Call on a number of key theological-political questions. On the question of those who rule by other than what God has revealed, they publicly declare them outright unbelievers, both the genus and the particular.⁴⁴⁶ Naturally the concepts of *Jahiliyyah* and *Hakimiyya* frequently appear in their discourse.⁴⁴⁷ This has led their Madkhali adversaries to describe them as *takfiris*, and the two sides have exchanged attacks since the mid 1990s. Hence they view rebellion against those rulers as an obligation,⁴⁴⁸ take a favorable view towards Jihadis,

supported the 9/11 attacks, and praised Bin Laden.⁴⁴⁹ What distinguishes them from Jihadis, however, is that they stress ability as a condition to engage in Jihad, which they don't believe they have.⁴⁵⁰ They completely reject democracy, viewing it as a form of apostasy.⁴⁵¹

Another major disagreement between Cairo's Activist Salafis and the Salafi Call, which resulted in heated debates, is the question of the man who does not pray and more generally the man who does not perform the acts that prove faith or as it is termed in Islamic circles, the deserter of the genus of work.⁴⁵² The Salafi Call takes an anomalous position among all Egyptian Salafis, adopting Al Albani's view⁴⁵³ of not declaring him an unbeliever if he does so out of laziness.⁴⁵⁴ The battle was ignited by the publication of Safar Al Hawali's book, *The Deferral Phenomenon in Islamic Thought*, which accused Al Albani of being a Murji.⁴⁵⁵

These disagreements led to a huge debate between Cairo's Activist Salafis and the Salafi Call in the early 2000s while members of both currents were imprisoned. Despite this, the relationship between both groups remained cordial until the Egyptian revolution,⁴⁵⁶ with both groups praising the other.⁴⁵⁷ Though their views are much more radical than the Muslim Brotherhood, they take a much less critical approach toward it, given the Brotherhood's opposition to rulers.⁴⁵⁸ They do not adopt the Egyptian Sorouri attitude toward the Brotherhood, which attempts to ignore areas of disagreement and find a common ground among Islamists.⁴⁵⁹ Instead they highlight the Brotherhood's theological mistakes and accuse them of generally being too lenient on numerous theological issues and falling into heresies.⁴⁶⁰

Cairo's Activist Salafi Sheikhs and their followers were among the most enthusiastic supporters of the revolution, with both the Sheikhs and their followers participating in the Tahrir Square protests from their inception.⁴⁶¹ In response to attacks by Madkhalis, they defended their participation by arguing that the historical Salafi rejection of rebellion was limited to rebellion by the sword. They also argued that Mubarak was not a legitimate ruler so rebellion against him was not prohibited and that the negatives of injustice outweighed the negatives of rebellion. They cited historical examples in which many of the Salaf participated in rebellions.⁴⁶²

Following the revolution, they endorsed political participation to be able to shape Egypt's future and not leave it to non-Islamists. The Sheikhs, especially Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, endorsed the formation of the Fadila Party and later the Asala Party. Slowly they moved closer to the Brotherhood, often acting as go-between attempting to bridge the differences between the Brotherhood and the Salafi Call.⁴⁶³ Their relationship with the Salafi Call continued to worsen following the latter's decision to endorse Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh in the presidential elections. It deteriorated further during Morsi's rule. Cairo's Activist Salafi Sheikhs are opposed to the military coup.

Following are the profiles of the five most important Cairo Activist Salafi Sheikhs: Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, Fawzy El Sa'id, Nashaat Ibrahim, Sayed El 'Araby and Aboul Ashbal Hassan El Zoheiry and the Asala Party.

Mohamed Abdel Maksoud

Mohamed Abdel Maksoud was born in 1947 in Monufia governorate. He received a B.A., M.A., and PhD in Agriculture from Al Azhar University. He endorsed Jihad in Chechnya and has preached several times in the United States. Considered the most famous Activist Salafi Sheikh in Cairo, he played a key role in pre-revolution fights with Madkhalis and with the Salafi Call. While the disputes with the Salafi Call were always cordial, with both sides sharing a huge common ground, the fight with Madkhalis was an all-out warfare with Osama El Qoussy. The hatred between the two sides is seen in Abdel Maksoud's description of Mohamed Sa'id Raslan: "This is a man who was raised in a barn. This is a plant that was nurtured in the time of the state security and the NDP. This plant, God will end it. This man should be ignored. He is a man who curses, no knowledge, has nothing."⁴⁶⁴

Abdel Maksoud supported the revolution from its inception and personally joined protestors in Tahrir Square. Abdel Maksoud became the spiritual guide of the Fadila Party and then the Asala Party. He was against the presidential candidacy of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail.⁴⁶⁵ He criticized the Salafi Call's decision to back Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh, arguing that they were blinded by their hatred of the Brotherhood and that they would be sinning if they voted for him.⁴⁶⁶ His relationship with the Salafi Call continued to worsen as he grew closer to the Brotherhood. He supported Emad Abdel Ghaffour's efforts to create the Al Watan Party and attacked the Salafi Call during Morsi's rule for taking the side of non-Islamists. Abdel Maksoud opposes the military coup. Despite being wanted by authorities in Egypt and his health problems--he is unable to walk--he managed to escape the country. Appearing on TV programs from Qatar, he has endorsed using violence against the army and police though not killing them. He attacked Mohamed Hassan, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, and Mustafa El 'Adawy for their lack of condemnation of the coup and ongoing repression. After his escape, he received the death penalty from an Egyptian court.

Fawzy El Sa'id

Fawzy El Sa'id received his B.A. in Engineering from Ain Shams University in 1970 and continues to work as an engineer. He studied under El Gam'eya El Shar'eya Sheikhs. Preaching in the Tawhid Mosque in Ramsis Street in Cairo, he became one of Egypt's most famous Sheikhs, with tens of thousands flocking to his mosque every Friday to hear his fiery sermons. Mohamed Galal El Qassas, who later formed the Salafi Front, was his student for four years. El Sa'id was one of those who accused Al Albani of being a Murji' and engaged in heated fights with Madkhalis. He supported the 9/11 attacks. El Sa'id was arrested in 2001, joining Sheikh Nashaat Ibrahim and 94 of their followers in what became known as Al Waad (The Promise) Cell.⁴⁶⁷ Although El Sa'id was acquitted in September 2002, he continued to be illegally imprisoned by state security until his release in April 2005. He was prohibited from preaching thereafter until the revolution.

El Sa'id was an early supporter of the revolution and continued to participate in Islamist demonstrations throughout the transitional period, demanding the implementation of

Shari'a.⁴⁶⁸ El Sa'id became one of the fiercest critics of the Nour Party, attacking its lack of support for Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, its endorsement of Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh, and its middle position between non-Islamists and the Brotherhood during Morsi's rule. He accused the Nour Party of being loyal to the unbelievers.⁴⁶⁹ An opponent of the military coup, El Sa'id was arrested in July 2014 and remains in jail. His health has significantly deteriorated, and he was recently transferred to the prison hospital.

Nashaat Ibrahim

Nashaat Ibrahim was born in Asyut. He received a B.A. in Commerce from Ain Shams University, followed by a B.A. from Al Azhar University and an M.A. from the American Open University. He studied under Sheikhs Abdel Hamid Keshk, Mohamed Naguib El Mote'i, and Tabligh and Da'wah leader Ibrahim Ezzat. Ibrahim was imprisoned in 1981 following Sadat's assassination for a short period, after which he traveled to Saudi Arabia where he worked as an Imam in a mosque in Jeddah. Soon thereafter, Egypt asked for his extradition, and he was jailed again for a few weeks. Preaching from a mosque in Medinat Nasr, Ibrahim became an attraction to thousands of Salafis for his fiery sermons. Nashaat Ibrahim was arrested in May 2000, later joined by Sheikh Fawzy El Sa'id in Al Waad.⁴⁷⁰ Although he was acquitted in September 2002, he continued to be illegally imprisoned by state security until the end of 2006. Released from prison, he was banned from giving any public sermons and was arrested again in 2007 for giving a sermon inside a house upon the death of a relative. He remained in prison for a few months.⁴⁷¹ Ibrahim was a staunch supporter of the revolution, joining the protestors in Tahrir Square himself. He joined the Rab'a protests following the coup.

Sayed El 'Araby

Sayed El 'Araby works as a veterinarian in Egypt's Agricultural Research Center. Before the revolution, he was the first to raise the question of modern Murji'ah in Egypt. While he has been the least visible of Cairo's Activist Salafis since the revolution, he nonetheless supported Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's presidential bid, participated in the Syria rally in June 2013, and participated in the Nahda Square protests. He has also been critical of Amr Khaled.⁴⁷² His official website is <http://www.w-aqedah.com/>.

Aboul Ashbal Hassan El Zoheiry

Hassan El Zoheiry, known as Hassan Aboul Ashbal, was born in 1957 in Dakahlia governorate. In 1977 while a university student, he joined the religious group on campus and became a Salafi. He frequented Ansar El Sunna and El Gam'eya El Shar'eya mosques. He received a B.A. in Law from Mansoura University in 1980, a Diploma in *Shari'a* from Dar Al Oloum in 1994, and a B.A. in *Shari'a* from Al Azhar University in 2000. In Egypt he studied under Mohamed Naguib El Mote'i. From 1979 to 1985, Aboul Ashbal lived in Jordan, where he became a student of Al Albani. He is the author of 17

books, most of which are commentaries on Salafi texts. His official website is <http://www.tohadith.com/>.

Following President Obama's election in 2008, Aboul Ashbal called on him to convert to Islam.⁴⁷³ A critic of political participation before the revolution,⁴⁷⁴ Aboul Ashbal supported the Nour Party coalition in the parliamentary elections.⁴⁷⁵ He soon parted ways with the party and became a staunch critic of the ruling military council during the transitional period. His strong opposition to the military was highly praised by Tarek Abdel Halim.⁴⁷⁶ He heaped praise on Bin Laden following his death and commended Al Qaeda.⁴⁷⁷ He endorsed Hazem Salah Abu Ismail for president, publicly leading the masses in giving him an oath of allegiance during Rifa'i Sorour's funeral.⁴⁷⁸ He participated in the revolutionary Salafi sit-in in at the Ministry of Defense in May 2012. He was arrested afterward for calling on demonstrators to carry arms, calling for Jihad, and advocating a Libyan scenario.⁴⁷⁹ His radical positions made him a preferred target for Madkhalis for his views and for praising Mohamed Abdel Maksoud.⁴⁸⁰ In March 30, 2013, he announced the creation of the General Salafi Current.⁴⁸¹ He joined the Rab'a sit-in following the military coup⁴⁸² and from its stage was one of the most radical speakers. He incited demonstrators and engaged in *takfir* of anyone who did not join them.⁴⁸³ He has since completely disappeared from the scene.

Asala (Authenticity) Party

The Asala Party was formed in July 2011 after disagreements emerged between Cairo's Activist Sheikhs, especially Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, and the founders of the Fadila (Virtue) Party, who were pushing for a much more radical discourse and program. Upon its establishment, former police General Adel Abdel Maksoud Afifi, Mohamed Abdel Maksoud's brother, became the party's president. The party joined the Nour Party-led electoral alliance and won three seats in the 2011 parliamentary elections. In January 2013, the party held an election for president in which Ehab Shiha defeated Adel Afifi. The Asala Party is opposed to the military coup and has joined the Brotherhood-led Anti-Coup Alliance.

Revolutionary Salafism

Revolutionary Salafism is not only the newest current within Salafism and hence has not been extensively studied, but more important is a current still in formation. Outside of the works of Rifa'i Sorour, it has no theoretical formulations. But it has extensive experience in the revolutionary fervor that overtook Egypt since the revolution and solidified its discourse in the aftermath of the military coup.

Revolutionary Salafism is the outcome of a unique fusion between the theories of Sorour and political developments in Egypt. Before the revolution, Sorour's theories were limited to a small circle of committed followers. That is not to suggest that it was the revolution that created this emerging current from thin air. Even before the revolution, frustrations were mounting within younger generations of Salafis who grew weary of

what they viewed as their Sheikhs' quietist methodology for change and their lack of engagement with contemporary developments. These frustrations were evident among former students of Ahmed El Naqeeb such as Ashraf Abdel Monem, Khaled Sa'id, and Mohamed Galal El Qassas, in former Brotherhood members such as Mohamed Elhamy, and in Nedal Hammad, a former student of Osama Abdel 'Azeem. It was also evident in the creation of HAFS by a former student of Yasser Burhami, Reda Samady.⁴⁸⁴ More important, it was evident in young Salafis defying their Sheikhs and gathering under the banner of the defense of Christian women whom they claimed had converted to Islam and were illegally held by the Church.⁴⁸⁵

It was, however, the revolution and the chaos it created that turned these rumblings of discontent into a mass movement. The revolutionary spirit liberated those young Salafis from any constraints and helped shape them into a new current within Salafism. Many individuals and groups composed of young Salafis eager for action began appearing after the revolution. In the person of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail and his revolutionary discourse, they found a charismatic leader. He appealed to youth frustrated by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Call for their focus on gaining seats in parliament instead of transforming the country. The implementation of *Shari'a* became a rallying cry for young Salafis and even for apolitical Egyptians for whom the implementation of *Shari'a* came to symbolize a utopian society. Revolutionary Salafism's appeal grew as a Salafism released from the shackles of scholarship, a Salafism for the masses, a Salafism mixed with a heavy dose of social justice, populism, and anti-Americanism. The revolutionary moment had managed to revolutionize Sunni Islam in ways similar to what was done to Shi'a Islam under Ali Shariati and Ruhollah Khomeini.

Revolutionary Salafism has the potential to transform Islamism in ways that other Islamist currents have consistently failed to achieve. It remains, however, affected by the death of Rifa'i Sorour and Hazem Salah Abu Ismail's likely long term in jail. The gap left by the absence of the theoretician and the charismatic, if ineffective, leader is huge. Revolutionary Salafism is a transformative ideology waiting at the corner, awaiting its Lenin.

Rifa'i Sorour

Rifa'i Sorour was born in 1947 in Alexandria. As a young man, he frequented Ansar El Sunna mosques before breaking with them in 1966, accusing them of being apathetic toward the implementation of *Shari'a*. This was likely due to his discovery and fascination with the work of Sayed Qutb, which was left for him by a Brotherhood neighbor who was involved with Qutb in the 1965 cell after his arrest. Enchanted with Qutb, he wrote a book about him following Qutb's death while he was still only 18 years old. That book impressed Yehia Hesham, at the time one of the first members of a small Jihadi group founded in 1964.⁴⁸⁶ Hesham sought him out and recruited him for the Jihadi cell in 1966 that included among its members Ayman El Zawahriri and Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem.⁴⁸⁷ The group suffered from an early split as both Yehia Hesham and Rifa'i Sorour broke in 1967. They argued that working with the masses and conducting a popular revolution was the better methodology.⁴⁸⁸ They rejected the initial

methodology of change through infiltrating the military and conducting a coup and formed their separate group.⁴⁸⁹ Following Yehia Hesham's killing by security forces in 1975, Sorour managed to escape arrest and continued involvement in various Jihadi efforts. He was nominated as the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad but refused the post. Following Sadat's assassination, he devoted his life to creating a theoretical framework for the Jihadi movement.⁴⁹⁰ He was jailed in 1981 for three years and again in 2005.

His revolutionary theorization, successfully merging Salafi tenets, Jihadi discourse, and revolutionary methodology, would later become the foundation for the emergence of revolutionary Salafism after the Egyptian revolution. In an attempt to overcome the disagreements within the Jihadi discourse, Sorour attempted to formulate an overall theory best articulated in his major work *The Political Conception of the Islamist Movement*. He was critical of the current state of Egyptian Salafism and its adopted methodology of change, which he blamed on the Islamist revival being established under young men without deep knowledge or life experience.⁴⁹¹ His works led to him being described as "the thinker of Jihad."⁴⁹²

Sorour's ideas were adopted by a number of younger Salafis who became his students such as Khaled Harbi and Hossam Abu Al Bukhari. Both of them became the instigators and leaders of Salafi mobilization in support of Christian women whom they claimed had converted to Islam and were illegally held by the Church. Sorour himself devoted the last years of his life to fighting the Christian threat.⁴⁹³ The demonstrations they led gained support from young Salafis despite their Sheikhs' hesitation. The real transformation of Sorour into a Godfather of Revolutionary Salafism took place following the revolution as young Salafis were increasingly frustrated by the lack of action by their Sheikhs. They felt useless watching the world change around them with no Salafi response to the emerging challenges facing Muslims.⁴⁹⁴ Sorour was transformed overnight into one of the most important Islamist theoreticians, offering an alternative voice within Salafi ranks. It certainly helped that he had been the only Islamist who had consistently adopted a mass uprising as his methodology for change.

Sorour formed with his students the General Islamist Current, which aimed to gather all revolutionary Salafis into one bloc and declared as its objective: "it was necessary to determine the issue that everyone agreed on without any disagreements, which is the issue of *shari'a* as an original commitment that one has to adhere to and a launch to the necessary consciousness to achieve the conscious Islamic unity." They adopted a revolutionary discourse that aimed to overhaul the status quo, arguing that it was necessary to "maintain the revolutionary state of the people with all its social groups to utilize the available opportunity after the revolution and the collapse of the repression and terrorism organ." While attacking the military, they viewed it merely as a tool of the real enemy. "The main enemy of the revolution that controls all its adversaries is the American Embassy."⁴⁹⁵

Sorour died in February 2012. Testimony to his strong appeal was the attendance at his funeral of thousands of Islamists, including Sheikhs Abdel Meguid El Shazly, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, Hassan Aboul Ashbal and Hafez Salama and by Muslim Brotherhood

leader Mohamed El Beltagy. He is survived by his six children, Yehia, Omar, Yasser, Asmaa (Khaled Harbi's wife), Walaa and Roqaya. His children continue to carry the legacy of their father and are all leading voices among the emerging Revolutionary Salafi current.

Hazem Salah Abu Ismail

Hazem Salah Abu Ismail was born in 1961 in Giza governorate. His father was an Azhar Sheikh who joined the Muslim Brotherhood and became an influential preacher in the 1970s before becoming a member of parliament from 1976 to 1990. Abu Ismail received his B.A. in Law from Cairo University in 1983. He became involved in his father's political campaigns and the Islamist movement in general at a young age and joined the Muslim Brotherhood. He was nominated by the Muslim Brotherhood in 1995 and 2005 for the parliamentary elections and lost both times, though it is likely that his loss was due to extensive vote rigging by the regime. In 2005 he was elected as a member of the Lawyer's Syndicate Board. It is unknown when exactly he left the Brotherhood and became an independent Salafi preacher though this certainly took place before the revolution. Before the revolution, Abu Ismail was a regular face on Salafi TV channels, though it was evident that he lacked the scholarly knowledge of Salafi Sheikhs.

Abu Ismail was an early supporter of the revolution, joining the Tahrir Square protests from their inception. Following Mubarak's resignation, he took a strong anti-military position throughout the transitional period and led several protests. His activities, however, were marked from their beginning with a lack of plan and a preference for theatrics and fiery slogans. While not antagonistic to political participation, Abu Ismail advocated a revolutionary approach. He attacked the military and criticized the Brotherhood and Salafis for caving in.⁴⁹⁶ Abu Ismail became one of the most popular figures among Islamist youth, especially those with little actual knowledge of Salafi discourses and study yet with a passion for Islam. For tens of thousands of passionate Islamist youth, Abu Ismail was the charismatic leader they had always awaited.

In reality, Abu Ismail was more a symbol than an actual entity. His charisma allowed him to become a phenomenon that would take Egyptian politics by storm. He appealed to youth seeking action because of his adoption of extreme revolutionary positions that knew no middle ground. His appeal was enormous because of his indisputable endorsement of the revolution, his opposition to the military, and his support for street clashes with the military and police. Abu Ismail endorsed those clashes and used them to form his current and distinguish himself from other Islamists. He was thus able to form a discourse that mixed Salafism with revolutionary action under a strong anti-Americanism and anti-Israel umbrella.⁴⁹⁷

Abu Ismail announced his candidacy for the Egyptian presidency quite early, on May 24, 2011, enabling him to build a strong base of support. His candidacy became a phenomenon that took Egypt by storm, frightening not only non-Islamists but the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Call. His candidacy was one of the main reasons the Brotherhood backtracked on its promise not to nominate a presidential candidate and

instead offered first Khairat Al Shater and then Mohamed Morsi for the post. For the Salafi Call, the phenomenon of Abu Ismail threatened its control of the Salafi youth. He was intellectually independent from them, and they had fundamental disagreements with his methodology for change.⁴⁹⁸ Moreover, they had serious doubts regarding his ability to manage the state and, like the Brotherhood, understood that his victory would mean possible military intervention.⁴⁹⁹ The problem was amplified by the support Abu Ismail received. It came from revolutionary inclined Salafis such as Hassan Aboul Ashbal, who publicly gave his oath of allegiance to Abu Ismail during Rifa'i Sorour's funeral.⁵⁰⁰ More important, it also came from Scholarly Salafi Sheikhs. Abu Ismail received endorsements from Mohamed Hussein Yacoub,⁵⁰¹ Mazen El Sersawy,⁵⁰² and the Ulama Shura Council.⁵⁰³ Even Jihadis such as Ayman El Zawahiri,⁵⁰⁴ and his brother Mohamed⁵⁰⁵ had nothing but praise for Abu Ismail, though they obviously disagreed with the electoral process. The Salafi Call felt cornered. Abu Ismail had submitted his papers to the electoral commission supported by more than 152,000 signatures and the endorsement of 47 members of parliament who were elected on the Nour Party list for parliament. The Salafi Call's refusal to endorse him, a position shared by the Asala Party, opened them to attacks by Jihadis.⁵⁰⁶

The bullet was averted, to everyone's relief, after Abu Ismail was disqualified from the elections due to his mother holding dual nationality (American). He continued to deny the fact and his followers continued to believe him. Abu Ismail continued his populist discourse thereafter, leading his followers to march on the Ministry of Defense in May 2012 and during Morsi's rule in their siege of the media city. He attempted to form a political party to unite those who supported him, though his efforts were marred by the same haphazardness that was a distinct feature of the man and his followers.⁵⁰⁷ His quixotic campaigns did manage to create a rift between Salafi Sheikhs and their followers who were eager for action. He publicly warned the Brotherhood not to trust General Sisi and predicted a coup was in the making. Abu Ismail was arrested on July 5, 2013. In April 2014, he received a seven-year prison sentence for forging his presidential nomination papers, and in September 2014, he received another one-year sentence for insulting police officers. He is still being tried in other cases.

The Salafi Front

The Salafi Front was founded after the revolution by middle-aged Salafi Sheikhs frustrated with their elders' lack of engagement with contemporary challenges and political choices. Its founders are Ashraf Abdel Monem, Khaled Sa'id, Ahmed Mawlana, Mohamed Galal El Qassas, Saad Fayad, and Hesham Kamel. Many of them were former students of Ahmed El Naqeeb.⁵⁰⁸ They stressed that it was not their intention to form a new group, but instead attempt to gather and organize various existing initiatives. The goals of the Salafi Front are: increasing the presence of *shari'a* in Egypt; defending the legitimate rights of Muslims and especially Islamists; replacing the old Salafi discourse with an Islamist Salafi Renewal discourse that adheres to the constants while not separated from reality; and fighting media attacks on Islamists. To achieve those goals, the Salafi Front declared that it would adopt the following methods: demonstrations, preaching, backing Islamist parties, conferences, civil society, economic and media

involvement, and infiltration of non-Islamist currents to decrease tension against Islamists.⁵⁰⁹

On its website, the Salafi Front emphasized that its loyalty was to the Islamic nation, that secular regimes had no legitimacy.⁵¹⁰ They declared their admiration for Sheikhs Rifa'i Sorour, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, and Hesham El Okda. The Front unequivocally denied any connection to the Salafi Call and stressed its disagreement with the Call. The Front highlighted many areas of disagreement such as their respective positions on: the revolution, the military, the candidacy of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail and then Morsi, non-Islamist political parties under Morsi, and finally the military coup.⁵¹¹ The rhetoric toward other Salafi currents such as the Salafi Call is extremely aggressive, accusing the Call of being security agents.⁵¹² On the question of political participation, the Salafi Front takes no position, acknowledging that among its members are those who endorse it within theological limitations and those who prohibit it completely. They declare themselves "Qutbists in the general framework" and maintain a sharply anti-Saudi rhetoric. They also adopt a strong anti-Christian rhetoric, defending those responsible for burning the Imbaba church and defending Christian women who allegedly want to convert to Islam. They have participated in both the march and sit-in at the Ministry of Defense, where one of their members was killed, and the siege of the media city.⁵¹³ The Salafi Front is opposed to the coup, its members participated in the Rab'a and Nahda sit-ins, and they continue to take part in anti-coup demonstrations. The Salafi Call is the instigator of the November 28, 2014 Muslim Youth Uprising. Their official website is <http://gabhasalafia.com/>.

Fadila (Virtue) Party

The Fadila Party was the first Salafi political party that was announced following the revolution.⁵¹⁴ The party had the backing of Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Maksoud, who recommended his brother, Adel Afifi, to lead it. As discussions over the party program and orientation developed, it soon became apparent that there were two conflicting camps within the party. The first was led by Adel Afifi, backed by Cairo's Activist Salafi Sheikhs, while the other was the younger Salafis led by Mahmoud Fathy who were influenced by Rifa'i Sorour's ideas and attempted to create a radical revolutionary party. As a result, most of the founders left the party and formed the Asala Party, and the Sheikhs withdrew their endorsement of Fadila.⁵¹⁵ The party, which never managed to gather the necessary signatures to be officially declared, fell completely into the hands of Mahmoud Fathy and other revolutionary Salafis such as Hossam Abu Al Bukhari and Khaled Sa'id. The only significant Sheikh who continued to back it was Farahat Ramadan, who had by that time parted ways with the Salafi Call.⁵¹⁶ Fadila's party program has the heaviest emphasis on social justice among Salafi parties.⁵¹⁷ It continued throughout the transitional period and under Morsi as one of the fronts used by Revolutionary Salafis. Fadila is opposed to the military coup and Mahmoud Fathy, who has escaped outside of Egypt, continues to incite to violence and endorses the killing of the police and army.

Khaled Harbi

Khaled Harbi is married to Rifa'i Sorour's daughter. Before the revolution he led the Islamic Observatory for the Resistance of Christianization, which as its name suggests specializes in attacking Christian tenets. Harbi worked specifically on cases of Christian women, whom Islamists claim seek to convert to Islam, while Christians claim they are forcibly kidnapped. Harbi led an underground network to facilitate hiding them and assisting in their conversion. Christians accuse him of being responsible for the kidnapping of hundreds of underage Christian girls. His involvement in those cases led to several incarcerations for short periods before the revolution. Harbi led Salafi demonstrations in what became known as the Kamilia Shehata Affair.* He continued to incite against Christians after the revolution, threatening the use of violence if Christian women he believed were kidnapped were not handed to Islamists and allowed to convert to Islam.⁵¹⁸ Following the revolution, Harbi became one of the leaders of the emerging Revolutionary Salafi current. He harshly attacked Yasser Burhami in September 2012, accusing him of being a traitor to Islamists.⁵¹⁹ Due to his opposition to the coup, Harbi was arrested in November 2013 and remains in jail.

Hossam Abu Al Bukhari

Hossam Abu Al Bukhari is one of the rising stars among Egypt's Islamists. A student of Rifa'i Sorour, he focused before the revolution on leading anti-Christian activities and supporting new converts to Islam. He was one of the first Islamist activists to take part in the revolution, joining Tahrir Square demonstrations from their inception. Staunchly anti-military, he continued to lead revolutionary Islamists in various anti-military functions during the transitional period. He is one of the founders of the General Islamist Current, which aimed to unite all revolutionary Islamist groups and individuals.⁵²⁰ His debate skills made him a regular guest on Egyptian TV programs where he would debate non-Islamists. He joined the Rab'a protests after the military coup and was shot on August 14, 2013, as the military cleared the square. Arrested on that same day, he remains in jail.

Nedal Hammad

* Kamilia Shehata, a wife of a Coptic Priest in Minya governorate disappeared from her home in July 2010. Her disappearance sparked protests by Copts who accused Islamists of kidnapping her. She was found five days later and stated that she had not converted to Islam and had left her house after a family dispute. Despite this, Salafis continued to believe that she had converted to Islam and that she was now forcibly held by the Church. Becoming a cause célèbre for Islamists, her story was widely shared in Islamist circles worldwide. It led to the October 2012 Our Lady of Salvation Catholic Church attack in Baghdad by the Islamic State in Iraq, which left 58 people dead. Her alleged kidnapping by the Church also led to the Alexandria New Year Church bombing that left 23 people dead. For a detailed analysis of the story and how Islamists utilized it see The International Institute for Counter Terrorism, *Al Qaeda and its Role in Fomenting Religious Strife in the Arab World: The Kamilia Shehata Affair* (available online at <http://www.ict.org.il/Article.aspx?ID=185>).

Nedal Hammad is the president of the Egypt Building Party. He was born in Alexandria but lived most of his life in Cairo. He received a B.A. in Construction Engineering from Ain Shams University, a B.A. in Arabic from Ain Shams University, and a B.A. in *Shari'a* and Law from Al Azhar University. He is currently pursuing an M.A. at the American Open University. Hammad started off as a student of Osama Abdel 'Azeem and was later imprisoned from 2003 to 2008.⁵²¹ After the revolution, he attempted to form a political party. Impressed by his idea, Nour Party President Emad Abdel Ghaffour attempted to create a merger between both parties, which was announced on August 18, 2011, with Nedal Hammad becoming the Nour Party's Secretary General.⁵²² The merger was vetoed by Yasser Burhami, who was not eager to incorporate non-Salafi Call followers in the Nour Party's leadership.⁵²³ Despite this, Hammad continued as the Nour Party's candidate in Cairo's Ain Shams district in the parliamentary elections, losing to the Muslim Brotherhood candidate. Unable to obtain the necessary signatures to establish his party and seeking to unite similarly inclined parties, Hammad announced the merger of his party with the Islah (Reform) Party on January 16, 2013.⁵²⁴ Hammad is opposed to the military coup.

HAFS

In August 2005, the Salafi Movement for Reform (HAFS) was established by Reda Samady. A Thai national, Samady had been a student of Yasser Burhami before being deported from Egypt. HAFS declared its goal was to "offer a voice that represents the Salafi methodology in reform and change in Muslim society and the rationalization of political practice in all its forms and levels to conform to Islamic *shari'a*. To remind the nation of the constants that have to be invoked in every reform project and to compose a leadership reference to the Salafi current so it can invest its classes in favor of Islam and providing advice and guidance to Salafi cadres working in all levels." The movement issued hundreds of statements commenting on all contemporary issues facing the Muslim world and capitalized on the issue of Christian women whom Islamists claimed had converted to Islam and were illegally held by the Church.⁵²⁵ The movement, however, remained limited in its influence, with its founder thousands of miles away and lacking grassroots support. It was attacked by both Yasser Burhami⁵²⁶ and Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem⁵²⁷ in their sermons. HAFS issued a statement on of January 18, 2011, urging Salafis to join the planned demonstrations.⁵²⁸

Abu Islam Ahmed Abdallah

Ahmed Abdallah, known as Abu Islam, was born in 1952 in Damieeta governorate. He received a B.A. in Philosophy from Ain Shams University in 1981 followed by a Diploma in Journalism from Cairo University in 1985 and a Diploma in Education from Ain Shams University in 1993. From 1980 to 1985, he worked as a journalist for the Al Ahrar newspaper and from 1985 to 1990 as a journalist for the Al 'Amal Party's Al Sha'b newspaper. Though he lacks any theological study or knowledge, he has devoted his life since to fighting Christianity. He famously tore the Bible and asked people to urinate on it in front of the American Embassy in Cairo on September 11, 2012, in the

demonstration calling for the release of the Blind Sheikh and objecting to the infamous *Innocence of Muslims* movie. He received 11 years in prison for his actions. Known for his cartoonish acts and provocations, many Salafis distance themselves from him, with some accusing him of working for the state security.

Da'wah Ahl El Sunna wa Al Gama'a (Qutbists)

Da'wah Ahl Al Sunna wa Al Gama'a is a Qutbist organization that was established in 1975 following the release of Abdel Meguid El Shazly from prison. The organization and its founder are perhaps the truest continuation of Sayed Qutb's ideas and methodology. Their discourse is focused on the concepts of *Jahiliyyah*, *Hakimiyya*, rejecting political participation as a form of apostasy and endorsing Jihad.⁵²⁹ While they do not excuse ignorance and declare the whole society in the state of Jahiliyyah, they refuse to pass a judgment of unbelief on the whole society as Shukri Mustafa did.⁵³⁰ On their website, they devote significant energy to fighting Murji'ah, with 20 articles devoted to the matter. They completely work underground with no public *da'wah*, focusing on a long-term strategy of recruiting people to a secret vanguard and building a tightly knit group, which will ultimately achieve the desired goal; empowerment.⁵³¹ As a result, despite its long history, the Alexandria-based organization is estimated to have 20,000 members.⁵³² They claim both Qutb brothers, Sayed and Mohamed, as their ideologues and Tarek Abdel Halim as a member of their group, though he makes no such claim himself. Following the revolution, they emerged for the first time in the open. In October 2012, Qutbists abandoned their rejection of political participation and announced the formation of a coalition together with the Arab Tawhid Party, composed of former members of Al 'Amal Party and the Safety and Development Party founded by former Jihadis.⁵³³ They supported Morsi and are opposed to the military coup. Abdel Meguid El Shazly died on September 13, 2013, and it remains unclear who will replace him. The official website is <http://ahlusunnah.org/>.

Abdel Meguid El Shazly

Abdel Meguid El Shazly was born in 1938 in Gharbia governorate. His grandfather was an Azhar Sheikh. He received a B.A. in Chemistry from Alexandria University and worked as a chemist. El Shazly joined the Muslim Brotherhood as a school student in the 1950s through Mohamed Yusuf Hawash, who came from the same village. Hawash would later be Sayed Qutb's cellmate and would be hanged with him. El Shazly became an important figure in the attempt to reestablish the Brotherhood under Qutb, which became known as the 1965 Cell. He was accused No.8 in that trial and received a life sentence. It was during his jail time that he broke with the Muslim Brotherhood after heated debates regarding Qutb's ideas. He was released from prison in 1975 and established Da'wah Ahl El Sunna wa Al Gama'a to carry Qutb's ideas and legacy. After his release from prison, he traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he became a student of Ibn Baz, Abdel Razek Afifi, and Ibn Jibreem. This relationship would be a great asset to him in the future. Both Ibn Baz and Ibn Jibreem wrote forwards for his books, including the controversial *The Boundary of Islam and the Truth of Belief*, printed by Umm Al Qura

University. Their forwards gave this book the official stamp of approval. This book rejected considering ignorance as an excuse for not declaring someone an unbeliever. It was answered by the Salaf Call's Ahmed Farid⁵³⁴ and led to a heated exchange between both groups. Their relationship was always tense due to the huge gulf between their ideas and their geographical competition, both being based in Alexandria. El Shazly was arrested once again in 1981 and after his release was put under surveillance, limiting his work. He wrote seven books in total. Following the revolution, he endorsed Hazem Salah Abu Ismail for president. Abdel Meguid El Shazly died on September 13, 2013. Until the end of his life, he insisted that Qutb had not deviated from the Brotherhood's discourse as articulated by Hassan El Banna. He argued that El Banna, Qutb, and even Hassan El Hodeiby shared the same discourse and beliefs and blamed Umar Al Tilmisani for the Brotherhood's deviation from that path.⁵³⁵

Al Gama'a Al Islamiya

Al Gama'a Al Islamiya was born out of the Islamist revival on Egyptian university campuses during the 1970s. Initially, Islamist students at universities--Cairo, Ain Shams, Alexandria, and Asyut*--created Al Gama'a Al Diniya (the Religious group) on campus before its name was changed to Al Gama'a Al Islamiya (the Islamic Group). The extent to which the Sadat regime aided the formation of these religious groups on campus is a matter of scholarly debate. Egyptian Leftists and Nasserites who had dominated student politics until that time were a continuous headache for the regime, with student-led demonstrations gaining widespread support in 1968 and 1972. Sadat's opponents claimed that the regime aided the rise of these groups and may have created them. The role of Asyut governor, Mohamed Osman Ismail, who had historical ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, has especially come under scrutiny.⁵³⁶ Regardless of whether Sadat intentionally aided the rise of these groups, there is little doubt that the Islamist revival was born independent of any state role. Gama'a Islamiya was soon able to take over student unions throughout Egypt, which in turn helped link its members on the various university campuses. These links, however, did not cancel the individual characteristics of each group, which were largely shaped by their surrounding environment. It is thus no surprise that when the moment came in the late 1970s to choose whether to join the Muslim Brotherhood, each group chose a different path. Geographic divisions played a role in the outcome, as did the availability of student leaders who influenced their surrounding environment. Leaders such as Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh in Cairo and Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem in Alexandria promoted certain paths.

The members of the student umbrella group Gama'a Islamiya in Egypt's southern governorates retained the name as they rejected joining the Brotherhood. By that time,

* Until 1972 these four universities were the only ones in Egypt besides Al Azhar and the American University in Cairo. During the 1970's the Egyptian government created eight other universities: Mansoura 72, Tanta 72, Arab Academy 72, Zagazig 74, Helwan 75, Minya 76, Monufia 76, and Suez 76. The university expansion allowed Islamist students to easily rise to professorial positions as new universities were understaffed.

most of their leaders were graduating from university or had already graduated, and a clear decision was required as to what their future would be. In university, they had successfully purged Leftists and Nasserites from student unions. They soon managed to curb their ability to participate in any form in student politics by storming their meetings, tearing up their newsletters, and banning un-religious activities such as musical parties and plays. This was achieved through the use of intimidation, often accompanied by violence. Professors as well as students fell victim to their attacks, both verbal and physical. Naturally outside of their political opponents, the two groups to suffer the most in their attempt to enforce rigid conformity to their Islamist views were women and Christians. At the time, Egypt's southern governorates, especially Asyut, Minya and Sohag, retained the highest concentration of Christians in Egypt. Anti-Christian rhetoric gave way to attacks on Christians as Gama'a Islamiya began to spread beyond the university campus.⁵³⁷ Across Egypt's southern governorates, Gama'a Islamiya was implementing its view of Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong by attacking cinemas and theaters, banning alcohol drinking, attacking video rentals, and enforcing segregation of the sexes in the public sphere.⁵³⁸ In Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, Gama'a Islamiya found the necessary religious authority to legitimize their actions as none of them had acquired the religious scholarship necessary. His *fatwas* endorsed their attacks, giving them a theological foundation.⁵³⁹

As long as Gama'a Islamiya remained a student phenomenon, authorities were willing to tolerate its excesses. Gama'a Islamiya's expansion beyond universities also coincided with its increasingly critical rhetoric toward the regime, especially after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and the subsequent peace process. Tensions with the state soon gave way to open confrontation as the regime became increasingly worried about Islamist criticism, the rise of sectarian tensions, and increased indications that Islamists were all too willing to use violence.⁵⁴⁰ Developments in Iran as the revolution unfolded there emboldened Islamists further while frightening the regime more.⁵⁴¹

It was at this point in 1980 that the contact with Jihad began. After hearing that Karam Zohdi was hiding in Cairo University's student dormitory, Abdel Salam Farag initiated the contact. He attempted to convince Karam and the rest of Gama'a Islamiya's leadership to join ranks and endorse his methodology of overthrowing the regime through a military coup. Karam was enchanted by the idea and was soon able to convince other leaders of Gama'a Islamiya, leading to their merger with Egyptian Islamic Jihad.⁵⁴² Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman endorsed their actions.⁵⁴³ The merger would soon fall part, with the two groups retaining their individual structures while agreeing to cooperate. But the short union would continue to leave its mark with Abdel Salam Farag's *The Neglected Duty* continuing to shape future generations.⁵⁴⁴

Following the September 1981 crackdown on all political opposition, Gama'a Islamiya was feeling cornered. With its leaders on the run, it was pressuring Abdel Salam Farag for action. In truth, the man needed little convincing. When Khaled Al Islamboli approached him with his plan to assassinate Sadat, he endorsed the plan, overruling the objections of his military expert 'Abboud El Zomor. Gama'a Islamiya remained in the dark, however, as to the exact scope of the plan, which they assumed included much more beyond simply assassinating Sadat. With the communication breakdown between

the two partners, Gama'a Islamiya sat enthusiastically awaiting the news. As news spread of Sadat's assassination, the hawks in Gama'a Islamiya, at the time Karam Zohdi and Ali Al Sharif, pressed their colleagues for action. Their onslaught on police forces in Asyut was brutal and successful, but was soon crushed by army units. In a few days, the two groups were united once again, only this time in prison.⁵⁴⁵

In prison, unity was finally created between the two groups with a leadership council composed of 'Abboud El Zomor as president with Ayman El Zawahiri, Tarek El Zomor, Nageh Ibrahim, and Essam Derbala as members. The merger was again short lived as fights broke out over the question of whether a blind man (Omar Abdel Rahman) could be a leader or not. As a result three separate groups emerged from prison; Gama'a Islamiya with its symbolic leadership in Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman and historical Shura council composed of the former campus leaders, and two Jihadi groups, one led by 'Abboud El Zomor and one by Ayman El Zawahiri. After both Jihadi groups merged for a short period, Abboud and his cousin Tarek finally broke with Egyptian Islamic Jihad and permanently joined Gama'a Islamiya in 1991.⁵⁴⁶

In reality the differences between Gama'a Islamiya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad were irreconcilable. While Jihad was, even at the height of its membership a small, tightly-knit, secret organization divided into smaller cells, Gama'a Islamiya was always a mass organization that had deep roots in Egypt's southern governorates. The two groups also had different understandings of the necessary methodology for change, with Jihad focusing solely on military means, while Gama'a Islamiya focused on Commanding Good and Forbidding Wrong and *da'wah*. In practice, though, its methodology was no less violent than its Jihadi counterpart. More important, Gama'a Islamiya was much more Salafi in its conceptions.⁵⁴⁷

In the 1990s, Gama'a Islamiya engaged in a small scale insurgency in Egypt's southern governorates. While fights between security forces and Gama'a Islamiya had not subsided during the 1980s, the assassination by security forces of Gama'a Islamiya's official spokesman, 'Alaa Mohieddin, on August 2, 1990, unleashed a wave of violence unlike anything Egypt had seen before.⁵⁴⁸ While the Egyptian Islamic Jihad specialized in bombings, Gama'a Islamiya unleashed a wave of terror targeting tourists, security personnel, and Christians. Among its successful operations, it assassinated the Speaker of Egypt's Parliament and well known secular author Farag Fouda. It also conducted the failed assassination attempt of Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. The state responded with a severe security crackdown, with more than 20,000 Gama'a members jailed.

While Gama'a Islamiya's campaign of terror at its height nearly brought Egypt's tourism industry to a halt, below the surface the security crackdown increasingly decapitated the group. With thousands of its members jailed, in the case of its leadership council since 1981, the group was feeling exhausted. Its goals as far away as they had ever been, the group was demoralized and looking for an exit from its current predicament. Various mediation efforts had taken place throughout the years by Islamist preachers, and in the early 1990s, the Minister of Interior endorsed such efforts. Mubarak, who was determined to crush the insurgency, promptly sacked the Minister. Realizing it had no alternative, in 1997 Gama'a Islamiya finally announced a unilateral cessation of

violence. However, in November 1997, Gama'a Islamiya members still at large conducted one of the most horrific terrorist attacks in Egypt's history, butchering 62 people, including 58 tourists, in the Luxor Hatshepsut Temple. Horrified, the historical leadership still imprisoned denounced the attack and again announced its cessation of violence. By 2001, Gama'a Islamiya leadership began conducting a reexamination of their ideas, which finally resulted in what became known as the revisions.⁵⁴⁹

Many have speculated over the years why Gama'a Islamiya announced its revisions. Scholars argue whether these revisions were imposed by the state or whether it was an attempt by Gama'a Islamiya to camouflage its discourse. In reality, the revisions were mainly the result of the complete intellectual, political, and military defeat of the organization. The revisions acknowledged that the group could not simply overthrow the regime and that there were other means to achieve its goals, such as *da'wah*. The group admitted its mistakes in killing civilians.⁵⁵⁰ The revisions were not, however, unanimously endorsed. Gama'a Islamiya leaders outside of Egypt such as Rifa'i Taha renounced the revisions as a betrayal to the Islamist cause, especially since the regime did not offer any concessions.⁵⁵¹ Some of those leaders in exile allied themselves with Ayman El Zawahiri and his uncompromising position and later joined Al Qaeda.

More important, not everyone from the historical leadership still imprisoned was completely enthusiastic about the revisions. While Karam Zohdi, Nageh Ibrahim, Ali Al Sharif, Hamdy Abdel Rahman, and Fouad El Dawabili completely supported the revisions, Essam Derbala, Assem Abdel Maged, and Osama Hafez gave their approval while raising several reservations. On the other hand, 'Abboud and Tarek El Zomor rejected the revisions, arguing that the group was not mistaken in its approach and that only tactical errors were committed.⁵⁵² 'Abboud El Zomor insisted that the revisions did not mean retreating from the high goals of the Islamic revival. They were not a sign of weakness, nor did they mean supporting state secularism. They continued to support Jihad in countries under occupation. He expected the state to stop its persecution of Islamists, with all prisoners released. He defended Gama'a Islamiya's violence as merely a reaction to state repression.⁵⁵³ Even those who gave their reluctant support for the revisions such as Essam Derbala criticized Nageh Ibrahim for going beyond the four books which they all coauthored. Ibrahim had written a further 16 books in which he renounced all their previous positions, going so far as to argue that merely ruling by other than what God has revealed was not enough reason to declare the ruler an unbeliever and that the ruler had to announce he was doing so out of conviction for such a declaration of unbelief to be warranted.⁵⁵⁴

Those disagreements, however, remained concealed, and the regime began releasing Gama'a Islamiya members and leaders. Under Karam Zohdi's leadership and Nageh Ibrahim's guidance, the released Gama'a Islamiya undertook a complete makeover.⁵⁵⁵ For a while, it seemed like a chapter in Egypt's history had finally been closed. Besides the tensions, however, the revisions' greatest weakness was their failure to offer an alternative for Gama'a Islamiya besides its former methodology. Members were not reincorporated in the public square, and lacked experience to offer any meaningful political discourse.⁵⁵⁶

Nonetheless, following the revolution and the release of all Gama'a Islamiya leaders from prison, the tensions between them soon emerged in the open. The newly released leaders, both those who had endorsed the revisions with reservations and those who opposed them, were able to completely sideline Karam Zohdi and Nageh Ibrahim and take over the group's leadership.⁵⁵⁷ Gama'a Islamiya soon announced its intention to form a political party, which it called the Building and Development Party <http://www.benaaparty.com/>. The new leadership admitted that they had supported the revisions reluctantly⁵⁵⁸ and criticized Nageh Ibrahim for taking the revisions too far.⁵⁵⁹ The confrontation between the two camps led to the expulsion of Karam Zohdi, who together with Ali Al Sharif, Fouad El Dawabili, and Hamdy Abdel Rahman announced their intention to form a new political party called Al Diaa (Luminance). Nageh on the other hand argued that they should abandon politics and focus on *da'wah*.⁵⁶⁰

The Building and Development Party participated in the parliamentary elections as part of the Nour Party coalition, significantly helping the coalition's performance in its historical stronghold: Egypt's southern governorates. It won 13 seats in parliament. The party was closely allied to the Muslim Brotherhood during Morsi's rule. Its leaders, especially Assem Abdel Maged, increasingly resorted to both incitement against Morsi's opponents and threats of violence. On the Rab'a stage following the coup, Assem Abdel Maged distinguished himself with his unabashed calls for violence. Gama'a Islamiya continued to oppose the coup as part of the Anti-Coup Alliance, though it has recently shown signs that it is reexamining its position and heading towards de-escalation with the new regime.

Following are the short profiles of the six most important Gama'a Islamiya leaders: Nageh Ibrahim, Essam Derbala, Assem Abdel Maged, Karam Zohdi, 'Abboud El Zomor and Tarek El Zomor.

Nageh Ibrahim

Nageh Ibrahim was born in 1955 in Asyut governorate. He received his B.A. in Medicine from Asyut University. While in prison from 1981 to 2005, he received two other B.A.s, one from the Faculty of Arts in Minya University and the other in Law from Cairo University. He was the intellectual brain behind Gama'a Islamiya's revisions and authored most of its books. In total he has authored 25 books. After the revolution, he cut his ties with Gama'a Islamiya and now focuses on his writings while appearing regularly in Egyptian TV programs. He still runs Gama'a Islamiya's website <http://www.egyptianislamicgroup.com/index.php>.

Essam Derbala

Essam Derbala is the current leader of Gama'a Islamiya after the released leadership managed to oust Karam Zohdi. His reputation among his colleagues is largely due to his loss of his right arm during the attack on the Asyut Security Directorate in 1981.

Assem Abdel Maged

Assem Abdel Maged was born in 1958 in Minya. He received a B.A. in Engineering. During his imprisonment, he received a B.A. in Commerce from Asyut University and an M.A. in Business Administration. Following the revolution, Abdel Maged was one of the most vocal Islamists in inciting against Morsi's opponents and threatening Christians with spilling their blood. He escaped Egypt and fled to Qatar.

Karam Zohdi

Karam Zohdi was born in 1952. Long considered one of the hawks of Gama'a Islamiya, he went through an ideological change while in prison and led the revisions. He was released from prison in 2003 and continued as leader of Gama'a Islamiya until the revolution, when his newly released colleagues managed to kick him out of the group. Following his removal, he announced his intention together with Fouad El Dawabli, Ali Al Sharif, and Hamdy Abdel Rahman to form the Daa (Luminance) Party,⁵⁶¹ though that initiative never materialized. He has criticized the Brotherhood following the coup and called on it to conduct revisions.

'Abboud El Zomor

'Abboud El Zomor was born in 1947 in Giza. He graduated from the Military Academy in 1966 and fought in the 1967 and 1973 wars, reaching the rank of Colonel in Military Intelligence. He became an Islamist after hearing sermons by influential Islamist preachers in the 1970s such as Sheikh Abdel Hamid Keshk, and Tabligh and Da'wah's Ibrahim Ezzat. His conversion to the ideology slowly developed as he read books by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathir as well as books his cousin Tarek gave him by more contemporary Islamists such as Hassan El Banna, Sayed Qutb, Sa'id Hawy, Lebanese Brotherhood leader Fathy Yakan, and Saleh Sareya. During this period, he contemplated several methodologies of change before finally joining Egyptian Islamic Jihad.⁵⁶² He initially opposed the assassination attempt against Sadat as he calculated that the group would fail to take over power afterward and still needed a few years of preparation. But he ultimately endorsed the plan. Arrested in 1981, he first became the leader of the joint leadership council of Gama'a Islamiya and Islamic Jihad before the two groups split. In 1991, he left Islamic Jihad and permanently joined Gama'a Islamiya. Opposed to Gama'a Islamiya's revisions, he remained in prison until the revolution and was finally released by SCAF in March 2011. His appearance next to President Morsi during the 6th of October military celebrations, which coincide with Sadat's assassination, was heavily criticized by non-Islamists and was cited as one of the crimes that Morsi committed during his rule. After opposing the coup for the past year, he has recently distanced himself from the Muslim Brotherhood.

Tarek El Zomor

Tarek El Zomor was born in 1959 in Giza. As 'Abboud El Zomor's cousin and brother-in-law, he played an important role in recruiting his cousin to the Jihadi group led by Abdel Salam Farag. A graduate of Cairo University's Agriculture Department, he received a B.A. in Law, a Diploma in *Shari'a*, a Diploma in Law, a Diploma in International Relations, a Diploma in International Law, and finally a PhD in Law while in prison. He opposed Gama'a Islamiya's revisions. He was released from prison following the revolution by SCAF in March 2011. He was elected President of the Building and Development Party.

Jihadis

In 1964 the first Jihadi cell in Egypt was established by Elwy Mustafa, Ismail Tantawi, and Nabil El Bora'y. The date is important to note, as it was one year before the discovery of Sayed Qutb's attempt to revive the Brotherhood in 1965 and two years before his execution in 1966. While future Jihadis were influenced by Sayed Qutb's ideas and some of them had belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood before adopting the Jihadi methodology, this Jihadi cell did not seem to have any ties to either at its inception. Later on they included Sayed Qutb's books in their curriculum.⁵⁶³ Instead they were largely influenced by frequenting Ansar El Sunna and El Gam'eya El Shar'eya mosques and especially by the former's Sheikh Mohamed Khalil Harras.⁵⁶⁴ Ayman El Zawahiri would later claim that Sheikh Mohamed Khalil Harras gave them a fatwa in 1974 that the Egyptian regime was apostate and that it must be removed. He also claimed that another Ansar El Sunna Sheikh, Abdel Razek Afifi, not only declared that rebellion against the unbelieving Mubarak regime a must, but that anyone who did not rebel was sinning.⁵⁶⁵

At the time, military coups were the most successful methodology for taking over power in the Arab world, and Jihadis believed that the Free Officers* had originally been the military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thus Jihadis adopted a similar methodology for change: infiltration and a coup.⁵⁶⁶ The goal was to recruit high school students, who would later join the military academy to conduct a coup.⁵⁶⁷ Early members included Yehia Hesham, Rifa'i Sorour, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, and Ayman El Zawahiri.⁵⁶⁸ Egypt's two wars with Israel, 1967 and 1973, would prove detrimental to the Jihadi cell. Following the 1968 massive protests against lenient verdicts on air force officers accused of negligence during the 1967 war, Yehia Hesham and Rifa'i Sorour broke with the group. They disagreed with its methodology for change as they now saw an opportunity for working with the masses either through a popular uprising or through gang warfare. Their splinter group was crushed by security forces in 1975, though Rifa'i Sorour continued as a key Jihadi theoretician. The second split took place following the 1973 war as the group's members debated whether Egyptian soldiers killed in the war could be considered martyrs or not given that they were fighting under an un-Islamic banner. As a result, Elwy Mustafa, whose brother was one of those killed, split from the group.

* Group of Egyptian military officers led by Gamal Abdel Nasser who conducted the 1952 coup.

By this point, the core group that remained included Ismail Tantawi, Nabil El Bora'y, Essam Al Qamari, Ayman El Zawahiri and Sayed Imam Al Sharif.⁵⁶⁹

Separate from this group, another Jihadi group was being formed by Saleh Sareya, a Palestinian-born member of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood who at the time worked in the Arab League's headquarters in Cairo. Sareya established contact with Zainab El Ghazali, who acted as a link between the enthusiastic youth and the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁷⁰ After realizing that the Brotherhood did not endorse his methodology, he attempted to unite his group with the two existing Jihadi groups: those of Ismail Tantawi and Yehia Hashem. Both attempts failed. He clashed with Tantawi who insisted on a Salafi doctrine, while Hashem remained committed to his methodology of working with the masses. As a result, Sareya created his own group, which later led the failed attack on the Military Academy in 1974. The regime arrested the key figures in the group in 1974. The regime struck the group again in 1977 and 1979, leading to its dispersal when its leader at the time ordered members to dissolve the group. One mid-level leader in the group was Abdel Salam Farag.⁵⁷¹

It was left to Abdel Salam Farag to achieve what others had failed to do. A natural leader, he refused to inform the members of his cell that the overall group had been dissolved and instead attempted to unite all Jihadi groups in Egypt. He wrote *The Neglected Duty*, which became a foundational work for future generations of Jihadis.⁵⁷²

His success was enormous as he played an instrumental role in uniting all the various Jihadi cells.⁵⁷³ He was able to unite his group with those led by Kamal Habib, Nabil El Maghrabi, and the first Jihadi group now led by Ayman El Zawahiri. Zawahiri had taken over command after Ismail Tantawi had escaped to Holland to avoid arrest after the Military Academy attack in 1974. His two greatest successes were his recruitment of 'Abboud El Zomor, at the time a Colonel in Military Intelligence, and later Sadat's assassin, Khaled Al Islambouli. Another major achievement was uniting his group with Gama'a Islamiya.⁵⁷⁴ By this time, the members of the university-based umbrella group Gama'a Islamiya had refused to join the Muslim Brotherhood as their Cairo-based comrades had done. Instead they retained the same name, operating mainly in Minya and Asyut governorates. Their operations--trying to implement *hisba*, attacking parties and cinemas and clashing with Christians in universities⁵⁷⁵--had grabbed the authorities' attention, and the group leaders were on the run. At the time, one of the leaders of Gama'a Islamiya, Karam Zohdi, was hiding in Cairo University's dormitory. After meeting with Farag, he brought other Gama'a Islamiya leaders, and they all agreed on adopting the new methodology.

Farag was in a rush, which resulted in the supposedly secret Jihadi group operating in the open as it sought to prepare for the coup. He was not content with uniting Jihadis, but instead reached out to all Islamist groups in Egypt. A meeting was called in Beni Suif by Farag that included the Muslim Brotherhood, the Blind Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, and Mohamed El Debiessy. Osama Abdel 'Azeem was invited but did not attend. The Brotherhood rejected the idea of a military coup outright while Salafis asked for a *fatwa* from Al Albani and Ibn Baz before they could take part.⁵⁷⁶

The relationship between Jihadis and Gama'a Islamiya was tense, and problems soon emerged. They prompted Gama'a Islamiya to withdraw from the union though it still agreed to cooperate in the coup. Soon all Islamists were under pressure following the massive arrests conducted by Sadat in September 1981. The arrests reinforced the fear among Jihadis that they would repeat the mistake of the Brotherhood in its confrontation with Nasser. It hesitated to use force early on and thus wasted the opportunity and was easily crushed by Nasser. Gama'a Islamiya leaders were pressing for action. Farag was all too willing to listen and act himself.⁵⁷⁷

The story of Sadat's assassination is beyond the scope of this profile. It is enough to mention that communication between Jihadis and Gama'a Islamiya was broken during this period, leading Gama'a Islamiya leaders to assume the success of the plan when they heard the news of Sadat's assassination as they were unaware that this was all the Jihadis did. Assuming that the coup was underway, they launched an attack on the police headquarters in Asuyt in an attempt to take over the governorate. Their attack was successful and they managed to occupy the police headquarters, but they were soon crushed by army units.⁵⁷⁸

In prison, leaders of the two groups were finally together, and they attempted to unify their groups. They created a supreme council composed of 'Abboud El Zommor as president with Ayman El Zawahiri, Tarek El Zomor, Nageh Ibrahim, and Essam Derbala as members. Soon fights broke out between the groups, which remained distinct in their methodology. The fights centered on the question of whether a blind man (Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman) could be a leader, as Gama'a Islamiya insisted, or whether his disability barred him from that position, as Jihad argued. As a result, three separate groups emerged from prison: Gama'a Islamiya with its historical leadership jailed and its mass following in Egypt's southern governorate, a Jihadi group led by 'Abboud El Zomor, and a Jihadi group led by Ayman El Zawahiri. The latter two Jihadi groups were united in 1988 in Pakistan with Sayed Imam Al Sharif as their leader. In 1991, 'Abboud El Zomor and his cousin Tarek split from the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and joined Gama'a Islamiya.⁵⁷⁹ Both groups were engaged in a deadly struggle with the Egyptian regime. Gama'a Islamiya ended up renouncing violence in 1997 and issued its revisions in 2001. The Egyptian Islamic Jihad ability to operate was destroyed by the regime's successful crackdowns. The revisions of both Gama'a Islamiya and later of Sayed Imam Al Sharif in 2007 created a huge debate in Jihadi circles and led to numerous arguments and rebuttals.⁵⁸⁰

The Jihadi universe was not however exclusively dominated by Gama'a Islamiya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad. A number of other groups are important to mention briefly here.

Abdallah El Samawy was arrested in 1965 during the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood. He emerged from prison determined to reestablish the Caliphate by creating a group that would live isolated in the desert. His group, known by their Sheikh's name, was the largest Islamist group in the 1970s. Most future Jihadis passed through his group for a period of their lives, including Khaled Al Islambouli, making El

Samawy known as the Godfather of the Jihadi movement.⁵⁸¹ In 1986, his group was accused of burning video renting shops. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, El Samawy became involved in the 'Amal Party. He was arrested in 2007 for criticizing Sayed Imam Al Sharif's revisions. El Samawy died in 2009. His group no longer exists.⁵⁸²

Shukri Mustafa was similarly arrested in 1965. In jail he became influenced by Sayed Qutb's ideas and emerged from prison a pure *takfiri*. It was the ideas that he among others adopted in prison that led the Muslim Brotherhood's Supreme Guide to publish the book *Preachers Not Judges*. His group, which called itself the Society of Muslims but was known in the media as Excommunication and Emigration, adopted a lax interpretation of *takfir*. It viewed anyone who accepts man-made laws or resorts to courts as an unbeliever. As to Muslims who are not members of their group, they are not considered believers or unbelievers. Once they are offered an opportunity to join and refuse, they are declared unbelievers. Rejecting all Salafi scholarship, both historical and current, they chose to immigrate to the desert. His group was responsible for the kidnapping and subsequent killing of Sheikh Mohamed El Dhahabi, former Minister of Religious Endowments in July 1977. Mustafa was arrested and hanged. Following his death, his group adopted an approach similar to the Shi'a belief of awaiting the Mahdi. It focused on *da'wah* and creating their own educational bodies since they prohibited studying in Egyptian schools.⁵⁸³

Stopping and Determining as a concept preceded the establishment of the Saved From Fire in the mid-1980s under Magdi Al Safaty, a former member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. As its name indicates, it meant the need to stop and determine whether Muslims living in Egypt were indeed Muslims or unbelievers by checking their beliefs and offering them the chance to join the group and obey its leaders. With Al Safaty, however, the concept was given an operational framework as Al Safaty mixed Jihadi and *takfiri* ideas. Determined to prove that the group was one of action and not just words, as Jihadis claimed, the group conducted three unsuccessful assassination attempts in 1987 against two former Ministers of Interior and a well-known journalist. The group was crushed by the security crackdown that followed. The concept, however, continues and there are an estimated one or two thousand followers, but they do not conduct Jihadi attacks.⁵⁸⁴

The mixture of Jihadi and Stopping and Determining ideas continued under Shawki Al Sheikh. A member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad who was recruited by 'Abboud El Zomor, he was briefly jailed following Sadat's assassination. Imprisoned again in 1986, he met followers of Stopping and Determining and emerged from prison to create a new amalgam of both ideas. Only this time, there was no need for stopping. People were unbelievers until they joined his group, by which act they became Muslims once again.⁵⁸⁵ This mixture of ideas in prison was not unique in his case. In fact Jihadis moved frequently between groups as a result of their prison experience.⁵⁸⁶ Prisons enabled Jihadis to mix and ideas to float among them.⁵⁸⁷ Shawki Al Sheikh's group, known as the Shawkies, was based in Fayyoun governorate and began to arm itself. That soon brought clashes with the police in which Al Sheikh was killed in 1990. Following his death, the group went on a spree of violence. Egyptian Islamic Jihad was

all too happy to supply them with bombs to weaken the government. While it attacked the police, the group specialized in attacks on Christian jewelry shops. The violence continued in Fayyoun until 1994, when most of the leaders and members were arrested. They were released from prison in 2006.

Helmy Hesham was born in 1952 and joined the police academy in 1970. A police officer who secretly belonged to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, he was jailed in 1982 for a short period and remained a member of Jihad until his arrest in the late 1980s. During his later prison time, he began to be exposed to the ideas of Stopping and Determining. After his release from prison, he established a bookstore and wrote 10 pamphlets explaining his new beliefs under the pseudonym Shaker Ne'mat Allah. The books were hugely influential as they provided Shawkies with their first intellectual production and convinced hundreds of Jihadis to adopt the concept. Hashem was able to fool Egyptian security by convincing them that his group did not carry arms. He also argued that it was important to leave it as an alternative to people who believed in the concept of Stopping and Determining so that they wouldn't join the violent Shawkies. In 1998, Egyptian security discovered a huge arsenal of advanced weapons that Hashem's group was collecting, leading to his and their arrest. Hashem was released in 2008. He is today one of the leading theologians of ISIS.⁵⁸⁸

Hezbollah was established in 1980 under Ahmed Tarek, at the time a Lecturer at Al Azhar University's Faculty of Commerce. The group's area of operations was Alexandria, and some of its leaders were imprisoned for short periods following Sadat's assassination. Following Tarek's death, the group split into two, one of which joined the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, while the other only cooperated with Jihad from 1991 to 1993. The group had at the height of its growth a few hundred members and is inactive today.⁵⁸⁹

Hizb Al Tahrir was established in 1953 by Taqiuddin Al Nabhani, a Palestinian who had studied at Al Azhar. The group maintains a strong presence outside of Egypt, but it has few members in Egypt. The Egyptian regime arrested members of the group in 1984 and 2002. British citizen Maajid Nawaz, who later became an anti-Islamist activist, was among those arrested in 2002.⁵⁹⁰

While historical Jihadi groups ceased to play any significant role in terrorist operations within Egypt by the 2000s, newer Jihadi cells were emerging. These cells had no ties to the historical Jihadi leaders. They successfully conducted attacks in Taba in 2004, Sharm El Sheikh in 2005, and Dahab and Al Azhar in 2006.⁵⁹¹

Despite claims that the Arab Spring posed a challenge to Al Qaeda and proved the futility of its methodology for change, Jihadis had an unprecedented flourishing in the aftermath of the revolutions. This was the case not only in countries such as Syria and Libya where they used the collapse of the state in their favor, but also in Egypt. While some old guard Jihadis who had not been operational for decades floated the idea of political participation, with Kamal Habib attempting to establish the Safety and Development Party, Magdi Salem the Islamic Party,⁵⁹² and Osama Kassem mulling

participation in the political process,⁵⁹³ none of these initiatives went anywhere, and they were ridiculed almost unanimously by Jihadis.

Opportunities abounded for Jihadis with the collapse of the security forces, the availability of a nearly perfect safe haven in Sinai, the leadership available in Jihadi leaders released from prison, weapon flows from Libya, and their coalition with Gaza based *takfiri* groups*.⁵⁹⁴ Numerous Jihadi groups were established in this period. They include the Salah El Din Brigades established by Gamal Abu Sultan, the Army of Islam by Momtaz Daghmash, the Mujahedeen Shura Council, the Umma's Army founded by Abu El Nour Al Maqdisi, Allah's Soldiers by Abu Qaysar Al Maqdisi, Ansar Al Jihad, Nile Valley Jihadis by Abu Hatem Al Harzan, Ansar Al Shari'a by Ahmed Ashoush, and Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis (ABM).⁵⁹⁵ Jihadis were further able to use Morsi's year in power to rebuild their organizations and recruit new members.⁵⁹⁶ In its struggle with the Salafi Call, the Brotherhood allied itself with Gama'a Islamiya as it attempted to shore up its Islamist credentials. Following the coup, with the Brotherhood still in a state of confusion, it allowed the Rab'a stage to become a Jihadi platform with declarations of unbelief and threats of violence a regular feature of the speeches there.⁵⁹⁷ Thousands of Egyptians have also flocked to Syria to join Jihadi factions there, from ISIS to Al Nusra Front to Ahrar Al Sham. Most of these are young Islamists with no history in Jihadi operations and little religious scholarship who were moved by the scenes of brutality from Syria.⁵⁹⁸ One significant leader who has traveled to Syria, however, is Helmy Hashem, the former police officer turned takfiri who is now one of ISIS's most important theologians. Some of these young men have already returned to Egypt and are getting involved in local Jihadi operations in Ajnad Misr or with Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis, as was the case with Walid Badr, the suicide bomber who blew himself attempting to kill Egypt's Interior Minister.⁵⁹⁹

Following are the profiles of some of the historical Jihadi leaders who continue to play a role in the Egyptian Islamist scene, such as Ahmed Ashoush, Mohamed El Zawahiri, Sayed Imam Al Sharif, Hani El Siba'i, and Tarek Abdel Halim. I also provide two profiles of new Jihadi groups that have emerged as the most important players in the Egyptian Jihadi scene: Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis and Ajnad Misr.

Ahmed Ashoush

Ahmed Ashoush was born in 1960 in Beheira governorate. At the age of 12, he became influenced by his school teacher who belonged to Abdel Salam Farag's cell. He traveled to Afghanistan in 1989, where he became close to Ayman El Zawahiri. He was sent back to Egypt in 1991 to lead the Vanguard of the Conquest, which was El Zawahiri's attempt to reconstruct the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. He was arrested by Egyptian authorities in 1993. He remained imprisoned for 18 years until his release following the revolution. In prison, Ashoush was at the forefront of Jihadi leaders who rejected Sayed Imam Al

* For an account of the story of Gaza's Juhn Ansar Allah see Abdel Aal, Ali. "The Soldiers of Ansar Allah: The Road to the Islamic Emirate," *Arab Times*, available online at: http://www.arabtimes.com/portal/article_display.cfm?Action=&Preview=No&ArticleID=13129

Sharif's revisions.⁶⁰⁰ His staunch opposition to the revisions was praised by Ayman El Zawahiri. Following his release, Ashoush threatened to punish police officers who were responsible for torturing Jihadis in prison.⁶⁰¹ He took an uncompromising position toward democracy, which he vehemently rejected.⁶⁰² "Elections on principle are forbidden," he said, and it brings nothing but idolatry. He lamented that those who had chosen to participate in politics "had wasted the opportunity of implementing Islamic shari'a and bringing down the secular regime and establishing the state of Islam."⁶⁰³ Ashoush wrote a book summing up his criticism of the democratic process and those that have adopted it, articulating his arguments against voting for either Mohamed Morsi or Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh.⁶⁰⁴ Following Morsi's election, he declared him an illegitimate ruler.⁶⁰⁵ He renounced the Islamist-drafted Egyptian constitution of 2012, arguing that voting in the referendum was an act of unbelief.⁶⁰⁶

Ashoush, however, did not limit his activities to denouncing the democratic process. Like other Jihadis, he used Morsi's year in power to recruit and rebuild his organization.⁶⁰⁷ Realizing the golden opportunity at hand, he announced in April 2013 the establishment of the Vanguard of Salafi Jihadis: Ansar El Shari'a.⁶⁰⁸ In an attempt to solidify Salafi credentials, the goals of the new group included: monotheism, fighting heresies, calling people to Islamic practices and manners, and spreading religious knowledge. The focus on typically Salafi issues was a hallmark of Ashoush's approach. He had earlier claimed that he was the inventor of the term Jihadi Salafism.⁶⁰⁹ His efforts were mostly focused on Sinai, which he and other Jihadi leaders realized had the potential to become a base of operation. He was also involved in the protest and attack on the U.S. Embassy in Cairo on September 11, 2012, that resulted in replacing the American flag with that of Al Qaeda.⁶¹⁰ Ashoush was arrested in December 2013. His family claims that he is tortured in prison.

Mohamed El Zawahiri

Mohamed El Zawahiri was born in 1953 in Cairo. He is the younger brother of Al Qaeda leader Ayman El Zawahiri. He comes from a distinguished family from his father's side in both the medical and religious fields. From their mother's side, they belonged to a famous political family that included the founder of the Arab League.⁶¹¹ He received his B.A. in Engineering from Cairo University in 1974. By the time of his graduation, he was one of the members of what remained from the first Jihadi group in Egypt after splits by Yehia Hesham in 1967 and Elwy Mustafa in 1973.⁶¹² He traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he worked in construction and was active in recruiting members for Jihad. In Saudi Arabia, he studied under Sheikh Safar Al Hawali. He was indicted in absentia in Sadat's assassination but was later acquitted. In 1984, he started working for the World Islamic Relief Organization, building schools and hospitals across the Muslim world. His work took him to Indonesia, Bosnia, and Malawi. He later moved to Yemen in the early 1990s after his residency in Saudi Arabia became impossible and then joined his brother in Sudan. During this period, he was tasked by his brother to coordinate Jihadi operations in the Balkans.⁶¹³ Following Sudan's expulsion of Egyptian Islamists, he returned with his family to Yemen. In 1999 while on work travel to the U.A.E, he was arrested and extradited to Egypt, though his whereabouts were not publicly disclosed until 2004. He

had been indicted earlier in the 1993 case, Returnees from Albania. In prison, he rejected the revisions by Sayed Imam Al Sharif.⁶¹⁴

El Zawahiri was released from prison in March 2011 after the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces issued a general pardon, only to be rearrested shortly thereafter after the government discovered that he was still technically awaiting trial. His trial ended with his acquittal, and he was finally a free man in March 2012.⁶¹⁵ El Zawahiri declared his opposition to political participation, arguing that to do so was not permissible under *Shari'a*.⁶¹⁶ Despite this, he praised Hazem Salah Abu Ismail.⁶¹⁷ He claimed that the success of the Arab revolutions was due to the efforts of Jihadi Salafis.⁶¹⁸ El Zawahiri called for and led the protests at the American Embassy in Cairo on September 11, 2012, which resulted in the replacement of the American flag with that of Al Qaeda.⁶¹⁹ He issued a truce offer between Jihadis and the West if the West agreed to stop its interference in Muslim lands.⁶²⁰ He led a protest at the French Embassy in Cairo in January 2013 following France's military involvement in Mali.⁶²¹ El Zawahiri was arrested on August 17, 2013.⁶²² On April 7, 2014 he was referred to court and was charged with establishing a terrorist organization.

Sayed Imam Al Sharif

Sayed Imam Al Sharif was born in 1950 in Beni Suif governorate. He met Ayman El Zawahiri in Cairo University's Medical School and became one of the early members of the first Jihadi cell in Egypt following the breakups of Yehia Hesham and Rifa'i Sorour in 1967 and of Elwy Mustafa in 1973.⁶²³ He continued as a member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad throughout the 1970s. He escaped from Egypt to the U.A.E. in 1982 following Sadat's assassination. He later traveled to Pakistan, and then Saudi Arabia before returning to Pakistan to work on aiding Afghan Jihad. In 1988, the two Jihadi groups that emerged from the prison disagreements were united and chose Al Sharif as their leader.⁶²⁴ Throughout this period, Al Sharif did not have an operational role in Jihadi organizations but instead was considered their key theologian. His book *The Essentials for Preparing for Jihad* was considered essential reading for their members. He joined El Zawahiri in Sudan in the 1990s. There the two men disagreed over strategy as Al Sharif had come to the conclusion that current Jihadi attacks in Egypt were futile. He came to prefer a long-term strategy of infiltrating state institutions. Their disagreements took a turn for the worse and the two men had a major fight after Al Sharif discovered that El Zawahiri had edited the text of his book *The Compendium of the Pursuit of Divine Knowledge* behind his back. El Zawahiri had removed passages critical of Gama'a Islamiya. After their fight, Al Sharif left Sudan to Yemen where he worked as a medical doctor. He was arrested there in 2001 and extradited to Egypt in 2004.

In prison, Al Sharif wrote his book *Rationalizing Jihad in Egypt and the World*, which was published in December 2007. In his book, Al Sharif offered a revision of the Jihadi methodology, arguing that there was a difference between the theory of Jihad and adopting it in current circumstances as that was a methodology that should be judged by ability. He further argued that targeting tourists was not permissible as they were given

protection, nor was attacking Western states as this was a form of treachery since the attackers had been granted visas. While Al Sharif argued that rebellion against rulers was only permissible if they show clear unbelief, in practice that meant very little as he continued to adopt a loose definition of unbelief. His continued engagement in *takfir* was evident in his later declarations after the revolution in which he not only declared Morsi an unbeliever because he ruled by other than what God has revealed, but also anyone who voted for him was equally an unbeliever.⁶²⁵ Democracy was clear unbelief since decisions in parliament were made in the name of the people and not God even if people voted for the implementation of *shari'a* since the very act of offering *shari'a* up to a vote meant people had a free will to decide whether to implement it or not.⁶²⁶ Al Sharif argued that Muslims should rebel against Morsi if they had the ability, and in case they did not they should emigrate.⁶²⁷ He went so far as to declare Brotherhood supporters who died during the clashes in front of the presidential palace in December 2012 unbelievers because they were defending a palace of unbelief.⁶²⁸

Nonetheless his revisions created a firestorm in Jihadi circles given the clout he enjoyed. His revisions were rejected by a host of Jihadi leaders such as Mohamed El Zawahiri, Ahmed Ashoush, Ahmed Salama Mabrouk, and Hani El Seba'i.⁶²⁹ Ayman El Zawahiri certainly viewed them as a threat and wrote a detailed answer to Al Sharif's book. In an interesting twist, even the Brotherhood hosted a discussion in which the revisions were criticized for arguing that the basis of the Christian relationship with the state was citizenship and not Dhmittude.⁶³⁰

Hani El Siba'i

Hani El Siba'i was born in 1961 in the Qalyubia governorate. He first enrolled in Cairo University as an Archeology student before transferring to Law School to obtain his B.A. As a young man, he frequented El Gam'eya El Shar'eya mosque in his town and attended sermons by famous preachers in the 1970s such as Mohamed El Ghazali. According to his official bio, he holds a PhD in *Shari'a*, though no institution is identified. Immersing himself in the local El Gam'eya El Shar'eya branch in El Qanater El Khayreyya, he rose to become its president in the late 1980s, frequently traveling to preach in neighboring villages and towns. El Seba'i was active during this period as a lawyer defending Jihadis in court and publishing two Islamist journals.⁶³¹ The exact date of his membership in the Egyptian Islamic Jihad is unknown, though he was one of those involved in an escape attempt by Jihadi leaders in prison in 1982,⁶³² and he quickly rose in its ranks. Fearing arrest, he escaped to the United Kingdom in 1994 and has since been living in London as a political refugee. His name appeared on the list of accused in the "Returnees from Albania" case in 1999 and he was sentenced to 15 years in absentia.⁶³³ El Siba'i is opposed to the revisions by Sayed Imam Al Sharif.⁶³⁴ In London, he established Al Maqrizi Center for Historical Studies <http://www.almaqrize.net/>, which continues to promote Jihadi causes and activities. El Siba'i continues to be active in Jihadi circles and is a frequent guest in the media. He has attempted unsuccessfully to mediate between Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Tarek Abdel Halim

Tarek Abdel Halim was born in 1948 in Cairo. He came from a religious family, with his maternal great-grandfather the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar Abdel Meguid Selim El Bishry (Grand Sheikh 1950-51, 52). He received a B.A. in Engineering from Cairo University and worked in several Arab countries. He attributes his transformation into an Islamist to the trial of Sayed Qutb, which opened his eyes to the un-Islamic nature of Egypt's political system. This opened the door to the works of Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Al Qayyim, Mohamed Abdel Wahab, Ahmed Shaker, and Abul 'Ala Maududi. He left Egypt following Sadat's assassination, first going to Jordan and then to the U.K. before settling in Canada in 1989. Tarek Abdel Halim has written for a period in Sorouri publications, though he is currently quite critical of Mohamed Sorour. In Canada, in 1998, he established the Al Arqam Islamic Center, which maintains a public website at <http://www.alarqam.com/alarqam/ar/index.php>. He has written 12 books, some of which were translated into Urdu and are popular in Pakistani Islamist circles. Five of these books were written about the Egyptian revolution after 2011. Abdel Halim has been a staunch critic of the Muslim Brotherhood, which he has called "a cancer to Islam."⁶³⁵ He blames the Brotherhood for the failure of the revolution to establish an Islamic state and accused the group of being Washington's favored alternative to Jihadis.⁶³⁶ He has also attacked Salafis, accusing them of being Murji'ah and differentiating between them and Ahl El Sunna, which he belongs to. He makes Sayed Qutb the litmus test on which one's belonging to true Islam is to be judged.⁶³⁷ In October 2013, he called on Brotherhood members to form armed groups to fight the regime.⁶³⁸ Together with Hani El Siba'i, he has attempted to mediate between Al Qaeda and ISIS but has sided with the former in their ongoing struggle. Abdel Halim's son, Mohamed Sherif Abdel Halim, was arrested as part of the 2006 Ontario Terrorism Plot and on March 4, 2011, was found guilty and received a life sentence. His official website is <http://www.tariqabdelhaleem.net/new/index.html>.

Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis (ABM)

Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis (ABM) is the most important Jihadi organization operating in Egypt today. Despite its successful operations targeting the gas pipeline between Egypt and Israel and attacks on Egyptian security forces both in Sinai and in mainland Egypt, little is known about the group's origin and structure. Part of the confusion stems from the fact that more than 10 names have floated regarding Jihadi groups operating in Sinai, with little information about the links among them.⁶³⁹ Much of the confusion, however, is the result of Egyptian authorities' attempts to lump all terrorist activities together and attribute them to the Muslim Brotherhood. Egyptian authorities insist that ABM is merely the military arm of the Muslim Brotherhood or that the two groups are at least linked. But no independent authority has ever verified such claims, and analysts have constantly ridiculed them.⁶⁴⁰ The exact ties between Al Qaeda and ABM remain vague. Walid Badr, the suicide bomber who conducted the failed assassination attempt of the Minister of Interior, had previously fought in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, suggesting a link between old time Jihadis and the new group.⁶⁴¹ Additionally, both groups have exchanged praise.

While the organization has carried out a number of attacks on the gas pipeline and conducted terrorist operations against Israeli soldiers across the border, its emergence as the most important Jihadi organization in Egypt took place in the aftermath of the military coup. Among the most successful operations of ABM are the bombing of the Dakahlia Security Directorate on December 24, 2013, the bombing of Cairo's Security Directorate on January 24, 2014,⁶⁴² the bombing of a tourist bus in Sinai on February 17, 2014,⁶⁴³ and assassinating a senior state security officer on November 17, 2013.⁶⁴⁴ ABM generally does not target civilians except those it accuses of collaboration with Israel and tourists, though civilians have been killed in its bombings. Its most alarming operation has been the targeting of a military helicopter using a surface-to-air missile on January 25, 2014.⁶⁴⁵ The exact number of such missiles that the group has is unknown. The source is likely smuggled weapons from Libya.

ABM is likely the amalgam of two previous Jihadi groups in Sinai and Gaza. Following Hamas's crackdown on Gaza's Jund Ansar Allah,⁶⁴⁶ many of its members found refuge in Sinai and mixed⁶⁴⁷ with existing Jihadi cells such as Al Tawhid wa Al Jihad, which was founded by Khaled Mosa'id and had carried out attacks in Taba 2004, Sharm El Sheikh 2005, and Dahab and Al Azhar in 2006.⁶⁴⁸ Before becoming the leader of ABM, Tawfik Ziyada was a merchant in Al Arish city.⁶⁴⁹ He died on March 11, 2014. ABM claims his death was the result of a car accident,⁶⁵⁰ while the Egyptian military claimed that he was killed by them.⁶⁵¹ Ziyada was credited with the idea of targeting the gas pipeline supplying Israel with Egyptian gas.⁶⁵² Another key ABM leader is Shady El Mane'i, whom the Egyptian military claimed it killed on May 25, 2014. Their claim was ridiculed by ABM.⁶⁵³

On April 9, 2014, ABM was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department.⁶⁵⁴ Similarly the United Kingdom included ABM on its list of Proscribed Terrorist Organizations.⁶⁵⁵ In November 2014, ABM gave its oath of allegiance to the Islamic State, rebranding itself as the Province of Sinai. Its released video on the occasion, which showed its various operations, created an uproar in Egypt with the population frightened by the sophistication the terrorist group displayed.

Ajnad Misr

Ajnad Misr (Soldiers of Egypt) released its first statement on January 24, 2014, claiming responsibility for two attacks in Cairo that left two people dead.⁶⁵⁶ The attacks were earlier claimed by Ansar Bayt Al Maqdis (ABM) but the group quickly backtracked and acknowledged Ajnad Misr's responsibility. In its statement, Ajnad Misr also claimed responsibility for three earlier attacks. Between December 2013 and September 2014, Ajnad Misr carried out 16 attacks that left six police officers and one civilian dead. Its attacks are usually carried out through the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to target police.⁶⁵⁷

While some of its members appear to have traveled to Syria to fight with Jihadi groups and one member attempted to travel to Yemen to join Al Qaeda in 2012, the majority of

its members appear to be previously non-Jihadi Islamists who have been radicalized by the events following the military coup.⁶⁵⁸ Unlike ABM, which has its roots in Jihadi operations in Sinai since the early 2000s, Ajnad Misr represents a new phenomenon that was born out of the events surrounding Morsi's ouster and the army massacre of his supporters in the Rab'a and Al Nahda Squares.

Its statements are a mixture of revenge rhetoric infused with a Jihadi discourse, and it represents a worrying sign that previously non-Jihadi Islamists are beginning to adopt the Jihadi methodology. Its members are young Islamists, and the group's area of operation is in the Egyptian capital, where all of its attacks took place. In its statements, Ajnad Misr fuses slogans associated with supporters of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail (We will live dignified) with declarations of Jihad, rejecting man-made laws and swearing allegiance to Ayman Al Zawahiri. Yet it does not appear to adopt a *takfiri* discourse toward society at large. Its stated objective is: "retribution for those killed and assaulted by security forces." This includes both those killed during Morsi's ouster and revenge for alleged rapes that Islamist women are subjected to by security forces. According to confessions obtained by the Egyptian police, some of Ajnad Misr's members were themselves involved in the Nahda protests. Some of those targeted are police officers who were involved in dispersing the Nahda protests. It has so far shied away from targeting civilians, killing only one by accident.⁶⁵⁹ Ajnad Misr was designated a terrorist organization by Egyptian authorities on May 22, 2014.

Independent Islamists Preachers

The phenomena of independent Islamist preachers is hardly new to Egypt. In the 1970s, the stars of the Islamist universe were Sheikhs Abdel Hamid Keshk and Ahmed El Mahalawy. In the 1980s and 1990s, Sheikh Mohamed Metwally El Shaarawy was the most prominent Islamist preacher in the country.

Following are the profiles of the most famous independent Islamists and preachers: Ahmed El Mahalawy, Hafez Salama, Yusuf El Qaradawi, Omar Abdel Kafy, Wagdi Ghoneim, Safwat Hegazi, Ragheb El Sirgany, Zaghloul El Naggar, Fadel Soliman, and Nasr Farid Wasil.

Ahmed El Mahalawy

Ahmed El Mahalawy was born in 1925 in Kafr El Sheikh governorate. He graduated from Al Azhar in 1957 and worked as a preacher in the Ministry of Religious Endowments. By the 1970s, he had become a phenomenon as his fierce sermons from his Alexandria mosque captivated a generation of Egyptians. Among those who attended his sermons and consider themselves his pupils are Mohamed Ismail El Mokadem, Safwat Hegazi, and deceased Hamas leader Abdel Aziz El Rantisy. El Mahalawy ran unsuccessfully for parliament in 1979. His sermons, which often attacked Sadat, the Camp David Accords, and especially Sadat's wife, Jehan, outraged the president. In his September 1981 speech to parliament, Sadat mentioned El Mahalawy saying "now he is

thrown in jail like a dog.” Released from prison following Sadat’s assassination, he continued to have trouble with authorities until he was permanently banned from preaching in 1996. He returned to preaching during the revolution, leading demonstrators from his mosque, which is the largest in Alexandria. His sermons continued to focus on political affairs, naturally siding with Islamists, which angered non-Islamists. As a result, his mosque became a focal point for clashes. He was surrounded in his mosque with his supporters in December 2012 by anti-Brotherhood protestors after he gave a sermon cursing non-Islamists. He is opposed to the military coup and has called on people to boycott the 2014 constitutional referendum.

Hafez Salama

Hafez Salama was born in 1925 in Suez. He dropped out of school following primary education and is completely self-educated. He became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood breakaway group Shabab Mohamed (Youth of Mohamed), which rejected political participation and criticized Hassan El Banna for working under a regime that ruled by other than what God has revealed.⁶⁶⁰ Starting in 1944, he helped Palestinian fighters prepare bombs and was later involved in attacks on British occupation forces in Egypt and the burning of the Suez Coptic Church in 1951. Following Nasser’s decision to dismantle the Youth of Mohamed, of which he is the only known member still alive, he was jailed from 1954 to 1967. Following the 1967 military defeat, he was released from prison and used by the Egyptian military as a preacher to raise moral among soldiers by praising Jihad against Jews. He led the popular resistance against Israeli forces in Suez during the 1973 war, a role that has made him lionized by Islamists and the Egyptian public at large. A critic of the Peace Treaty with Israel, he was arrested by Sadat in 1981 and released following Sadat’s assassination. He endorsed the assassination of Sadat.⁶⁶¹

Under Mubarak, his legendary status was put to use in leading Islamist marches demanding the implementation of *Shari’a* during the 1980s. During this period he became the preacher of one of Cairo’s largest mosques, Al Nour in Abbassiya. He supported the 2011 revolution, joining the protestors calling for Mubarak’s ouster. After the revolution, he traveled briefly to both Libya and Syria to support Jihadis there. He also participated in Salafi marches demanding the release of Christian women whom they claimed had converted to Islam and were illegally held by the Church. He blamed Copts for the Maspero massacre.⁶⁶² In May 2012 he joined Hazem Salah Abu Ismail supporters in their march on the Ministry of Defense. Despite this, Salama has always been close to the Egyptian military, which used his stature as a legendary war hero for their own purposes. He supported the military coup and has since espoused a deep belief in conspiracy theories regarding Western plans against Egypt, accusing the Muslim Brotherhood of being American agents.⁶⁶³ He criticized the violence unleashed by Muslim Brotherhood supporters following the Rab’a massacre⁶⁶⁴ while continuing to support Jihad against Jews. He voted for Sisi in the 2014 presidential elections.⁶⁶⁵ Many Islamists attribute his recent positions to his old age, claiming he is now completely senile.

Yusuf El Qaradawi

Yusuf El Qaradawi was born in 1924 in Gharbia governorate. He attended Al Azhar schools, graduating in 2nd place nationwide. He attended Al Azhar University, receiving his B.A. in 1953 at the top of his class. He received his PhD from Al Azhar University in 1973. El Qaradawi joined the Muslim Brotherhood as a young man and was arrested several times for his Islamist activism in 1949 by the monarchy and in January and November 1954, spending 20 months in prison following his last arrest. In 1961, he left Egypt for Qatar to work as a preacher. In Qatar in 1977 he established the *Shari'a* Department in Qatar University, which he continued to head until 1990. El Qaradawi served as Chairman of the Scientific Council of the Islamic University in Algeria 1990-1991 before returning to Qatar. El Qaradawi often represented the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in international Brotherhood meetings and claims to have been offered the position of Supreme Guide in 1976 and 2004 (a claim that is highly unlikely in 1976 given that at the time he was hardly known and the Brotherhood still contained many heavyweights that had accompanied Hassan El Banna). El Qaradawi has stated that he has ceased his membership in the group, though it is unclear when that happened.

El Qaradawi's rise to fame across the Muslim world was a result of his regular appearances on Al Jazeera. He is the founder and President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars <http://iumsonline.org/ar/>. Among its Egyptian members are Salim El 'Awwa, Fahmy Howeidy, Salah Soltan, and Omar Abdel Kafy. The U.A.E. government designated the Union a terrorist organization in November 2014. He is also the President of the European Council for Fatwa and Research <http://e-cfr.org/new/>, which includes among its members Salah Soltan. He founded IslamOnline and is a shareholder in Bank Al Taqwa. A prolific writer, with 170 books and letters to his credit, El Qaradawi is one of the leading Islamist thinkers in non-Salafi circles. For Salafis, however, his *fatwas* and religious views have come under severe attack, with Salafis accusing him of being ignorant and devoid of religious knowledge.⁶⁶⁶ The animosity is mutual, with El Qaradawi often criticizing Salafis for their rigid approach, their focus on what he views as superficial issues such as religious garb and the beard, and their attacks on Sufis and Ash'aris.⁶⁶⁷

El Qaradawi is an anti-Semite. He has famously called for a new Holocaust against Jews saying: "Throughout history, Allah has imposed upon the Jews people who would punish them for their corruption ... The last punishment was carried out by Hitler. By means of all the things he did to them – even though they exaggerated this issue – he managed to put them in their place. This was divine punishment for them.... Allah willing, the next time will be at the hand of the believers."⁶⁶⁸ He has also endorsed the death penalty for apostasy and praised Palestinian suicide bombers. Though he was initially supportive of Hezbollah as a resistance movement against Israel, his views have changed recently as he grew more antagonistic to Shi'a and warned of the threat Shi'a posed. Following the Syrian civil war, he became an opponent of Hezbollah. El Qaradawi's controversial views led to him being banned from entering the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

El Qaradawi supported the revolution. Following Mubarak's fall he returned to Egypt and led prayers in Tahrir Square on February 18, 2011. He endorsed Abdel Monem About Fetouh in the presidential elections. He is an opponent of the military coup, which he regularly attacks. His official website is <http://www.qaradawi.net/new/>.

Omar Abdel Kafy

Omar Abdel Kafy was born in 1951 in Minya governorate. At the age of 10 he memorized the Quran. He received his B.A. in Agriculture in 1972 and went on to earn an M.A. and PhD in the same field. He later received a B.A. in Islamic Studies and an M.A. in Comparative Jurisprudence. He studied under Sheikhs Mohamed El Ghazali, Mohamed Metwally El Shaarawy, and Yusuf El Qaradawi. He is married to the granddaughter of Sheikh Moheb El Din El Khatib. Abdel Kafy was one of the first Islamists who discovered the power of TV and used it to become one of the preacher stars on Egyptian TV during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The mosque in which he gave his sermons became one of the most frequented in Egypt. In the early 1990s his fatwa prohibiting Muslims from congratulating Copts on their religious occasions created a firestorm. In 1998 he left Egypt and since has been living in the U.A.E., traveling frequently to Europe. He is a member of a host of Islamic organizations such as the Committee for the World Association of Muslim Scholars, Committee for the World Association of Muslim Scholars, and Islamic Fiqh Academy in India. In addition, he is also the director the Quranic Studies Center associated with the Dubai International Award for the Holy Quran.⁶⁶⁹ His official website is: <http://www.abdelkafy.com/>.

Wagdi Ghoneim

Wagdi Ghoneim was born in 1951 in Alexandria. He joined the Muslim Brotherhood at a young age. He received a B.A. in Business Administration from Alexandria University in 1973. He later received an M.A. in 2006 and a PhD in 2008 from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Indiana. Ghoneim quickly rose as one of the popular Islamist preachers in Alexandria in the 1980s and effectively used cassette tapes to become one of Egypt's most famous preachers. He ran unsuccessfully for parliament on the Brotherhood-Al 'Amal Party list in 1987. For his activities in Egypt he was arrested eight times. He left Egypt in the mid 1990s for the United States after being denied an entry visa to Canada. In the U.S. he worked as the Imam of the Islamic Institute of Orange County. During this period, he was again denied entry to Canada in 1998 for his support for terrorists. In November 2004, he was arrested in the United States and deported in January 2005. In September 2005, he was denied entry to Switzerland for his fundraising activities for Hamas. During this period, he resided in Bahrain before being kicked out of the country in 2007 after his attacks on Kuwait embarrassed the Bahraini government. His search for a new home took him to South Africa, Yemen, and Malaysia, all eventually deporting him. During this period he was denied entry to the United Kingdom in 2009 for his extremely anti-Christian and anti-Semitic discourse. He finally settled in Qatar.⁶⁷⁰ In 2010, Ghoneim received a five-year sentence for belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood's international organization. Following the revolution, Ghoneim

effectively used YouTube to become one of the most notorious Islamists in Egypt. In his nearly weekly videos, he distinguished himself with his severe anti-Christian incitement. He frequently uses curse words and obscene language to attack his opponents, including non-Islamists, the military, Christians, and the Nour Party. A supporter of Jihad, he has praised Osama Bin Laden as a hero and supported ISIS against its non-Muslim Western adversaries.⁶⁷¹ Due to Gulf pressure, he was forced to leave Qatar in September 2014 for Turkey, where he now resides. His official website is <http://www.wagdighoneim.net/>.

Safwat Hegazi

Safwat Hegazi was born in 1963 in Kafr El Sheikh governorate. His father was a Sheikh in Al Azhar. He received a B.A. from Alexandria University's Faculty of Arts in 1984. During his youth, he attended sermons and lectures by Sheikhs Ahmed El Mahalawy, Salah Abu Ismail, Mohamed El Ghazli, Tabligh and Da'wah's Ibrahim Ezzat, and Abdel Sabour Shahin. He worked in Saudi Arabia from 1990 to 1998. Returning to Egypt in 1998, he devoted his life to preaching. His rise to fame began on the Iqraa TV channel before moving to the Salafi Al Nas TV channel. In 2006 he issued a *fatwa* calling for the death of visiting Israeli officials and tourists, and in 2008 he called for genocide against Jews.⁶⁷² He claims to have received a PhD from the University of Dijon, though his claim cannot be verified. Hegazi was an early enthusiast for the revolution, attempting to position himself as its leader. He participated in Morsi's presidential campaign and was used by the Muslim Brotherhood as an attack dog against the Nour Party. During one of the campaign rallies, he famously declared that Morsi will restore the Caliphate with Jerusalem as its capital.⁶⁷³ During the anti-Brotherhood protests in December 2012, he threatened Christians with spilling blood if Morsi's legitimacy was touched.⁶⁷⁴ He was one of the worst inciters on the Rab'a stage, advocating violence against Christians and non-Islamists. Hegazi was arrested on August 21, 2013, while trying to escape to Libya and has been imprisoned since. On June 19, 2014, he received the death sentence in one of the cases in which he is a defendant.⁶⁷⁵ While there is ambiguity as to Hegazi's exact relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood, his official Facebook page identifies him as a member.⁶⁷⁶

Ragheb El Sirgany

Ragheb El Sirgany was born in 1964 in Gharbia governorate. He received a B.A. in Medicine in 1988, an M.A. in 1992, and a PhD in 1998, all from Cairo University, and is currently a Professor of Medicine at Cairo University. El Sirgany has specialized in Islamic history and thought and has written 56 books on the subject. His website <http://islamstory.com/> is a go-to place for Islamists of all stripes and regular Egyptians seeking to learn about Islamic history. His approach is historical revisionism. He tries to rewrite history to reflect a utopian view of Islamic history, often engaging in conspiracy theories and anti-Semitism. El Sirgany's revisionism is coupled with a wild imagination displayed in his claims that the Piri Reis map proved that Muslims had discovered the Americas before Christopher Columbus and that Ataturk was gay and chased his ministers wearing female cloths. El Sirgany was a supporter of Morsi during his

elections, often appearing with him in Muslim Brotherhood rallies. Following the coup, he has adopted a low profile. In September 2014, he created an uproar in Islamist circles after writing an article arguing that Muslims had to be obedient to rulers.

Zaghloul El Naggar

Zaghloul El Naggar was born in 1933 in Gharbia governorate. He was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood during his youth. He received a B.A. in Geology from Cairo University in 1955 and a PhD in Geology from Wales in 1963. He worked as a Geology Professor at Ain Shams, Wales, UCLA, Qatar, King Fahd, and King Saud universities. During this period he began to be involved in pseudo-scientific attempts to prove that the Quran preceded Western civilization in all scientific discoveries. While this approach has always existed on the margins of the Islamist movement, by the late 1990s, the discourse emerged as one of the most popular in the Muslim world and pushed El Naggar to stardom. In 2001 he was given a weekly page in Al Ahram to pursue his endeavor. He frequently used the space to attack Christianity. In 2004 he created a firestorm by claiming that NASA had confirmed that the moon had split.* The belief remains popular in the Muslim world despite NASA's continued denial.⁶⁷⁷ His official website is <http://www.elnaggarzr.com/>.

Fadel Soliman

Fadel Soliman was born in 1966. An electronics engineer by education and profession, he decided to devote his life to defending Islam and answering misconceptions about it after the 9/11 attacks.⁶⁷⁸ His involvement in Islamic preaching certainly precedes this and started in the United States following his immigration in 2000. Before that, he was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. He claims that what drove him to Islamist activism is the media bias against Muslims he saw in America. He describes Al Qaeda Sheikh Anwar Al Awlaki and Sheikh Yusuf El Qaradawi as his mentors.⁶⁷⁹ A member of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, he worked as an Imam and a Muslim Chaplain at American University in Washington, D.C., from 2001 to 2004. His book *Muslim Copts before Mohamed* claimed that Arians[†] were Muslims and that they are the ancestors of contemporary Egyptian Muslims.⁶⁸⁰ In 2008 he received an M.A. in *Shari'a* from the Sorouri Open American University. Soliman runs the Bridges Foundation <http://www.bridges-foundation.org/>, which includes on its board the notorious anti-Christian conspiracy theorist Zainab Abdel Aziz and Zaghloul El Naggar. As an Islamic preacher, he has been a regular presenter in universities around the world and worked with the Department of Defense. Following the revolution, he was hosted by Comedian Bassem Youssef in his popular TV show, where he was presented as an example of moderate Islam.⁶⁸¹ In January 2012, famous Egyptian secular thinker Sayed El Qemny accused him of hitting him during a TV debate in which Soliman acted as a moderator.⁶⁸² While he says he quit the Muslim Brotherhood in 2006,⁶⁸³ Soliman has

* Moon splitting is a miracle attributed to the Prophet.

† Followers of Arius (250-336), Egyptian Priest who started the Arian Heresy.

been a supporter of the Brotherhood. He participated in the Rab'a demonstrations. Soliman is opposed to the war on ISIS.⁶⁸⁴

Nasr Farid Wasil

Nasr Farid Wasil was born in 1937 in Gharbia governorate. He studied in Al Azhar University and received his PhD in comparative jurisprudence in 1972. He then served as a Professor in Al Azhar University and later in the Islamic University of Medina. He served as Egypt's Mufti 1996-2002. There was speculation that his lack of support for many government policies, refusing to justify them on religious terms, led to him losing his job. Following the revolution, he was chosen as President of the Shari'a Association for Rights and Reform, though he shortly resigned. He came from the official religious establishment, but he was viewed as pro-Islamist, leading to his appointment as a member of the Islamist constitutional assembly in 2012. He supported the military coup.

Televangelists

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, tens of thousands of upper and middle class Egyptians began showing signs of increased religiosity. Behind this development stood Amr Khaled. Though the effective use of television in preaching was not an entirely new phenomenon--this generation of preachers was preceded by people like Omar Abdel Kafy--Amr Khaled was different. He was not your average Islamist preacher. Instead of the traditional Islamic garb, he wore a suit and spoke in accessible terms and addressed youth and their problems. Soon, he was joined by others of a similar disposition. The phenomenon became termed Televangelists by Western observers, who did not fail to note the similarities with American Evangelical pastors and speakers. In Egypt, Khaled and his like were simply called the new preachers.

Unlike non-Salafi Islamists, the new preachers did not focus on state reform but instead on individual change. While they shared the Salafi appeal to the masses and focus on education and personal change, they had little else in common between them and Salafis. The new preachers' discourse was one of individual salvation, developing spiritual depth, and addressing how one can be a good Muslim in a changing world with a heavy focus on development issues. The new preachers present themselves as social reformers attempting to improve morals in society. The discourse has been described as Protestant Islam, Market Islam, American Islam, and Cool Religiosity because of its endorsement of material and worldly success. While the new preachers had their individual approaches and styles, some common features existed: attention to appearance and looks, focus on media, an upper- and middle-class constituency, personal charisma, topics focused on youth and women, attention to morals and ethics, a simple discourse, and avoidance of any religiously controversial topics.⁶⁸⁵

The phenomenon could hardly be ignored. The government had a mixed approach. The government tried to hinder the work of Amr Khaled, whose ties to the Muslim

Brotherhood worried officials, while they left others untouched. The Brotherhood used the new preachers and the increased general religiosity it helped foster to widen its base and recruit. Salafis fiercely attacked the new preachers as shallow and lacking any deep religious knowledge and cursed them for their theological errors.⁶⁸⁶

Following are the profiles of the four most important Televangelists: Amr Khaled, Khaled El Gendy, Moaz Masoud, and Mustafa Hosni.

Amr Khaled

Amr Khaled was born in 1967 in Alexandria. He received his B.A. in Accounting from Cairo University in 1988. He started his career as an accountant and belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, often giving small sermons at Muslim Brotherhood social events such as weddings. Aware of his natural skills and success, he decided by 1998 to devote his life to becoming a full-time preacher. Though others preceded him, Khaled is credited as the real founder of the phenomenon of new preachers. His preaching style used colloquial Arabic, focused on social problems, and employed Western business attire. Others attempted to copy him.⁶⁸⁷ His sermons were an instant hit with thousands of young upper- and middle-class girls deciding to wear the *hijab*. He attempted to use his clout to involve youth in developmental projects. The scope of his outreach and his fame and his ties to the Muslim Brotherhood alarmed the regime, prompting attempts to contain him. Realizing the limitations he was encountering, he left Egypt in October 2002 for Lebanon before moving to London.

The Televangelist phenomenon in general and Amr Khaled in particular were not only alarming to the regime but also to Salafis. Angered by his soft Islam and lack of rigidity, Salafis attacked his methodology, weak religious knowledge especially on *Hadiths*, and perceived theological mistakes. Khaled was further criticized by Islamists of all stripes for accepting a visit to Denmark after the Danish Cartoons and launching the Copenhagen Interfaith Conference.⁶⁸⁸ In London, Khaled continued his preaching work and programs, though he gradually lost his glamour. For one thing, other Televangelists emerged. More important, his lack of a comprehensive methodology soon led his followers to move on to more organized Islamist groups or return to their previous lifestyles. He received a PhD from the University of Wales in 2010.

Following the revolution, Khaled established the Egypt Future Party.⁶⁸⁹ He resigned from the party's presidency in July 2013, declaring his intention to focus on social reform and development.⁶⁹⁰ He supported the military coup. Khaled's official website is <http://amrkhaled.net/>.

Khaled El Gendy

Khaled El Gendy was born in 1961 in Cairo. He received his B.A. in religious studies from Al Azhar University and later earned an M.A. in *Hadith* from the same university. He has since worked as a preacher in the Ministry of Religious Endowments. El Gendy's

career as a Televangelist began with the Orbit TV channel as a launchpad for his *fatwas*. He later started the Islamic Phone, which people could call anonymously and ask for *fatwas*. It became an instant hit, specializing in *fatwas* for women and sexual problems. This opened him up for criticism both for the profit he accumulated and the nature of the project. In 2009, he established Azhari TV and currently has a TV program on Egyptian State TV, where he offers interpretations of the Quran. Throughout his career, El Gendy has sought to use his Azhar background to exclude competitors such as Amr Khaled by arguing that only Al Azhar graduates were qualified to preach. The author of 20 books, he has engaged in attacks on non-Islamists such as Sayed El Qemny, Nawal El Saadawi, Adel Imam, and Gamal El Banna for their perceived insults to religion. His official website is <http://khaledelgendy.zadsolutions.com/>.

Moaz Masoud

Moaz Masoud was born in 1978 in Kuwait. He received his B.A. in Economics from the American University in Cairo in 2000. He once was a non-religious person and member of a music band. He attributes his transformation to the deaths of several friends in car accidents and his own near-death experience in 1995. Though he lacks any religious study, from 2002 to 2006 he had a religious TV program dedicated to English speakers. His success enabled him to emerge as a leading Televangelist with his own Arabic TV program in 2007. He focuses in his program on social problems such as drugs, alcohol, and gender relations.⁶⁹¹ He is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Cambridge. Masoud supported the revolution and the coup.

Mustafa Hosni

Mustafa Hosni was born in 1978. He received his B.A. in Commerce from Ain Shams University in 2000. His programs appear regularly on Iqraa channel. His official website is <http://www.mustafahosny.com/>.

The Muslim Brotherhood

Attempting to write a complete profile of the history, ideology, structure, and political positions of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood would be an impossible task, as such a profile would likely run to book length. Moreover, excellent works have been written about the Brotherhood. Richard Mitchell's *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, though published in 1969, remains an essential read for anyone interested in the group's founding history. Recent articles and a forthcoming book by Eric Trager provide the reader with valuable information on the current state of the Brotherhood. It is thus not my intention to repeat the information in those and other works, but instead I will attempt here to answer one question: Where can we position the Muslim Brotherhood in the Islamist universe?

On the surface, the question not only appears simple, but uncalled for. Largely due to its strong organizational character and the force with which it strikes at any form of internal dissent, the Brotherhood is often thought of as occupying a specific point on the Islamist spectrum. The post-9/11 world's emphasis on the war on terror has often portrayed the Brotherhood in contrast to another form of Islamism, Jihadis. But while the Brotherhood as an organization and membership is indeed distinctive, the Brotherhood as an idea and where it fits in the Islamist world is harder to pinpoint. The nature of the Brotherhood's relationship to other Islamist currents is no less contentious. Due to the Brotherhood's longevity and its dominant position in the Islamist universe, numerous Islamists of all stripes have at one point in their history passed through the Brotherhood or were at least influenced by its discourse. Less clear is how the Brotherhood in turn has been influenced by other Islamist currents. Was the Brotherhood's founder, Hassan El Banna, a continuation of or a break with his intellectual predecessors such as Mohamed Abduh and Rashid Reda? And what is the Brotherhood's relationship ideologically to the larger pool of Salafism? The question of the Brotherhood's position in the Islamist universe is thus a question of the nature of the Brotherhood itself, not simply as an organization, but as an idea.

To begin understanding the nature of the Brotherhood and the position it occupies in the Islamist universe, we must begin by the vision its creator had in mind. By the time of El Banna, the crisis of modernity in its twin manifestations had acquired a more urgent form with the fall of the Caliphate and the challenge that foreign missionaries posed. El Banna found the previous efforts of various Salafi reformers before him lacking. He believed that some efforts had foundered because they had either been limited in their scope: Abduh's educational reform, Mohamed Abdel Wahab's fighting heresies, and the Libyan Senussi and Sudanese Mahdiyya movements' focus on fighting foreign occupation. Others failed because they had not involved the Muslim masses. El Banna sought to remedy these shortcomings by building a mass movement whose scope would be the entirety of the lives of Muslims. As Hillel Fradkin argues: "He wanted to create a movement that would have a concrete impact on the Muslim world, beginning with Egypt and then radiating out from it, and the provision of a utopian vision in an ideological form was arguably a necessary condition for such a movement. A mass movement required a vision that could be readily understood by and inspire large numbers of ordinary Muslims. El Banna's formulations supplied that and, at the same time, entailed a vast simplification of the approach and reflections of the founding fathers of Salafism like Abduh."⁶⁹²

In describing the group he created, we have two striking statements by El Banna. In his letter to the Fifth Conference of the Muslim Brotherhood, he described the Brotherhood as: "a Salafi *da'wah*, a Sunni order, a Sufi truth, a political body, a sports group, a scientific cultural association, an economic company and a social idea."⁶⁹³ The second statement proclaims: "We are not a political party although politics in accordance with Islam is deeply rooted in our ideas; and we are not a welfare organization nor a sports team, although welfare and sports are part of our method; we are not any of these because these are all forms, techniques, or means designed for specific objectives and for a limited period of time. We are, however, an idea and a creed, a system and a syllabus, which is why we are not bounded by a place or a group of people and can never

be until the Day of Judgment, because we are the system of Allah and the way of His Prophet. We are the followers of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, and the raisers of his flag as they raised it and like them, popularizers of his way and the memorizers of the Quran as they memorized it and the preachers of his *da'wah* as they preached it, which is why we are a mercy for mankind.”⁶⁹⁴

The description, which could mean everything and nothing, was to say the least ambiguous. The ambiguity of the description was not a reflection of the man's lack of intellectual sophistication, but rather intentional. Hassan El Banna's uniqueness and genius was precisely his ability to create an amalgam of all Islamist currents.⁶⁹⁵ El Banna's own background was a reflection of this diversity from Sufi orders,⁶⁹⁶ Al Azhar education, and Salafi ties with Rashid Reda and Moheb El Din El Khatib.

Attempting to gather all stream of Islamic thought in one group and attract the largest possible number of Muslims required setting aside all issues that could divide them. On this issue, El Banna was adamant: “Every issue that has no action ramifications, engaging in it is forbidden by *Shari'a* as excessive. Among these are side judgments about issues that never took place, delving into the meaning of Quranic science that science has not reached yet, and talk of who is better among the Companions of the Prophet and the disagreements that grew between them.”⁶⁹⁷ Setting aside theological disagreements was a key reason for the growth of the group's membership. As Israel Elad Altman argues: “What characterizes the MB is its adherence to a set of final objectives and a rigid commitment to a core of related principles, combined with pragmatism and flexibility as far as the strategy and tactics of achieving those objectives are concerned. There are no clear timetables to reach the goals, and gradual methodological progress takes priority.”⁶⁹⁸

Nonetheless the deficiencies of El Banna's approach are intrinsic. While Brotherhood leaders such as former Deputy Supreme Guide Mohamed Habib, claim that belonging to the Brotherhood means a clear commitment to a particular school of thought: “In the Muslim Brotherhood school, man learns how to devote himself to his noble idea, hence he does not add with it other ideas that may contradict it or not agree with it, even in minor issues, for his idea incorporates such totality and perfection that compensates him from looking at any other idea,”⁶⁹⁹ in reality, the loose ideological framework that El Banna insisted upon--setting aside theological differences and uniting people on an abstract goal--meant not only that the group was exposed to attacks from more rigid positions, but more important that it required a weak theological base. It thus opened the group to infiltration by more powerful ideas and individuals. Both phenomena would haunt the Brotherhood throughout its lifespan. While El Banna's charisma and prowess as a serious thinker contained the vulnerabilities during his life and maintained the Brotherhood's ideological cohesiveness, his successors were less adept at dealing with these deficiencies.

Sayed Qutb's success in infusing his ideas into first the Brotherhood ranks and later on generations of Islamists worldwide was the result of the absence of any strong ideological foundation within the Muslim Brotherhood. Hassan El Banna's works were not only few but more important rather general. The Brotherhood lacked at the time,

and still lacks any serious ideological discourse. A look through the Brotherhood's indoctrination literature exposed this weakness. New recruits are expected to study Hassan El Banna's works, Hassan El Hodeiby's *Preachers Not Judges*, Mustafa Mashhour's *Fiqh Al Da'wah*, and works by Gom'a Amin. To supplement these readings, Brotherhood members often read Sayed Sabek's *Fiqh Al Sunna* and a few pamphlets by Khaled Abu Shadi and Mohamed Abdullah Al Khatib.⁷⁰⁰ Besides these few works, a Brotherhood member is at a loss as to how to increase his religious knowledge. A comparison with the scope and number of works a Salafi student learns under his Sheikh exposes the intellectual and theological weakness of the Brotherhood. Moreover with the exception of contemporaries such as Gom'a Amin, who is rather old, none of the Brotherhood leaders or members is known to have produced any intellectual work of any value.

Some scholars have focused on one aspect of this phenomenon, namely the Salafization of the Brotherhood base. In his book *The Salafization of the Muslim Brothers*, Hossam Tammam traces the history of this slow process, starting with its development from El Banna's relationship with Moheb El Din El Khatib then to the encounter with Wahabism in the 1950s and 1960s, the Brotherhood's absorption of former members of the student umbrella group Gama'a Islamiya, and the influence the Salafi growth in Egypt in the 1990s and 2000s had in forcing the Brotherhood to toe the Salafi line.⁷⁰¹ Tammam concludes with a stark prediction: "Therefore, the group will lose most of its flexibility and ability to sustain internal variety, moving in the direction of more standardization and conservatism as supported by organizational, Qutbian and Salafi components." Others have focused on the ability of the Qutbist generation--Mahmoud Ezzat, Mahdi 'Akef, and Mohamed Badi'e--to control the Brotherhood.

But while both streams of thought; Salafi and Qutbist have indeed managed to advance within the Brotherhood's rank and file and leadership, they are merely symptoms of the larger diagnoses. El Banna's genius formulation of a strong organization with a weak theological basis was both the source of the Brotherhood's strength and its inherent weakness. A curse wrapped in a gift. The Brotherhood as an idea is not a point on the Islamist spectrum but rather a reflection of it. Just as traces of the Brotherhood's vision can be found in nearly all Islamist currents, traces of all Islamist currents exist within the Brotherhood. One of Egypt's most astute observers, Amr Bargisi, has argued that the Brotherhood has to be placed in the general Salafi framework and is best described as an Activist Salafi group. A distinguished scholar of Islamic philosophy and Islamism, Hillel Fradkin, concurs describing the Brotherhood as "the first organized form of Salafism."⁷⁰²

Salah Soltan

Salah Soltan was born in 1959 in Monufia governorate. He received his B.A. in Arabic from Cairo University in 1987, where he also received a B.A. in Law in 1994. He received an M.A. and a PhD in 1992 in *Shari'a*. After immigrating to the United States, he became a preacher in Boston, Michigan and Ohio. In 1999 he became a Professor in the Sorouri Open American University. He also has served as a Professor in Egypt, Saudi

Arabia, and Bahrain. A member of the Muslim Brotherhood, he considers Yusuf El Qaradawi as his intellectual mentor. He is a member of El Qaradawi's International Union for Muslim Scholars. Soltan is a committed conspiracy theorist and anti-Semite.⁷⁰³ He believes that 9/11 was an inside job,⁷⁰⁴ and he has propagated blood libel accusations against Jews.⁷⁰⁵ He was appointed by Morsi as Secretary General of Egypt's Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in a move interpreted as a Brotherhood attempt to control the official religious establishment. Following the military coup, he participated in the Rab'a sit-in, where he incited against the military and those opposed to the Brotherhood. He is currently jailed, though his official website (available at <http://www.salahsoltan.com/>) remains online.

Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh

Abdel Monem Aboul Fetouh was born in 1951 in Cairo. During the 1970s he became the leader of the student religious group on university campuses nationwide, Gama'a Islamiya. Aboul Fetouh led Gama'a Islamiya in its domination of university student unions and became the President of Cairo University's student union. As such, he had a famous confrontation with Sadat during his yearly meeting with university student union members after he objected to Sheikh Mohamed El Ghazli being banned from preaching.⁷⁰⁶ As the leader of Gama'a Islamiya, he was approached by Muslim Brotherhood leaders released from prison in their attempt to rebuild the organization. Convinced by the Brotherhood's methodology, he gave his oath of allegiance to the group and successfully brought with him thousands of Gama'a Islamiya members. That created a permanent rift within the group, leading to its division into three main blocks. He received his B.A. in Medicine from Cairo University and later received an M.A. in Hospital Management from Helwan University's Faculty of Commerce. He also received a B.A. in Law from Cairo University during one of his imprisonments.

Aboul Fetouh quickly rose within the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was especially close to the third Supreme Guide, Umar Al Tilmisani. He was one of the young Brotherhood members who pushed the group to participate in electoral competitions, whether in parliamentary elections through its alliance with the Wafd Party in 1984 and Al 'Amal in 1987 or in taking over professional syndicates. He was elected to the Doctors Syndicate and soon occupied the post of Secretary General of the Arab Doctors Union. He was elected to the Brotherhood's Guidance Council in 1987 and continued to serve in the body until his ouster in 2009. Through his position in the Doctors Syndicate, he played an important role in helping Afghan Jihadis during their war with the Soviet Union. His leadership role in the Brotherhood resulted in numerous jailings, first briefly in September 1981, then for five years 1996-2001, and last for several months in 2009.⁷⁰⁷ As a member of the Brotherhood's Guidance Council, he came to symbolize what was termed the middle generation, which analysts claimed championed internal reform. He argued that the Brotherhood should remain a *da'wah* organization and should not establish a single political party. Instead Brotherhood members should establish numerous political parties.⁷⁰⁸ His reform views, however, were limited compared with others who left the group and formed the Wasat Party. In the 2009 Guidance Council elections, he was ousted from the group's leadership.

Aboul Fetouh was a supporter of the revolution. After the fall of Mubarak, he announced his decision to run for the presidency. That led to clashes with his comrades. Finally in March 2011, Aboul Fetouh cut his ties to the Brotherhood. In November 2011, he formed the Strong Egypt Party, of which he remains President. In his presidential campaign and political party, Aboul Fetouh attempted to transcend the Islamist vs. non-Islamist divide in Egyptian politics by creating a catch-all populist discourse that had a heavy dose of socialism and anti-Americanism. He also adopted a revolutionary discourse critical of the military throughout the transitional period.⁷⁰⁹ Despite many observers believing that Aboul Fetouh was a serious competitor for the presidency and despite the endorsement he received from the Nour Party, Aboul Fetouh's attempt to satisfy everyone ended up satisfying no one. He ended up in 4th place in the 2012 presidential elections. He continued with the same discourse during Morsi's rule, neither fully supporting the Brotherhood nor joining the anti-Brotherhood National Salvation Front. While he condemns Brotherhood abuses in power, he is opposed to the military coup. His official website is <http://www.abolfotoh.net/>.

El Wasat (The Middle) Party

Perhaps encouraged by their success in entering parliament in 1984 through their alliance with the Wafd Party, the young university graduates who had belonged to Gama'a Islamiya and joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s began in 1986 to show signs of discontent with the Brotherhood. They criticized the group's structure and methodology. Unaware of the impossibility of change from within, they were initially content with submitting reform proposals. But the leadership shelved the proposals and ignored them.⁷¹⁰ The Wasat Party's founder and leader, Abu El'ela Mady, would later claim that the problem started in 1981, when the old guard who belonged to either the Brotherhood's dissolved secret apparatus or to the 1965 organization attempted to contain the younger members. Mady argued that while Umar Al Tilmisani was officially the Supreme Guide, he was in reality only a front man with no real powers. He was chosen only after the fiasco of the secret Supreme Guide whose identity remains unknown, though it is thought that the secret Supreme Guide controlled the group following Hassan El Hodeiby's death in 1973 up until 1977.⁷¹¹

In December 1995, the Wasat Party was first announced by members of this young generation, who had acquired political experience from their takeover of professional syndicates in the 1980s. The Brotherhood not only rejected the move, but also expelled those who continued and prohibited Brotherhood members from even greeting them. The social and financial isolation that was enforced created strong resentment on the other side and soon what started as a half-baked attempt by the leadership to test the regime's willingness to open the political space soon turned into a strong disagreement with some members of the middle generation, as they were termed.⁷¹² From that point onward, the Wasat Party began to acquire unique characteristics differentiating it from its parent organization.⁷¹³

The criticisms that the founders of the Wasat Party had for their former comrades were numerous and only grew over the years. The Brotherhood lacked any mechanism of self-criticism or a coherent methodology. It had no long-term strategy but instead dealt with circumstances as they emerged. The group made no differentiation between itself and Islam. Its worldview was deficient as it assumed that the world was devoid of ideas and living in emptiness that only Islam could fill. That resulted in a lack of openness to other political currents. The group refused to acknowledge that it was indeed a political party. Internally there was no institutionalization of leadership. The result was an ineffective mechanism for rising within its ranks and decision making.⁷¹⁴ Among their internal criticisms were their objections to the method of choosing the Supreme Guide, the lack of clarity regarding the Brotherhood's relationship to its international arm, the culture of secrecy prevailing among its ranks, its lack of internal democratic mechanisms, the control of special apparatus men, and the group's internal culture, which pushed intellectuals out. They called for an assessment of the group's record of failure and revising the group's stands on women and democracy and accepting others in general.⁷¹⁵

The Wasat Party attempted to correct these faults in its own discourse. Its founders described themselves as a civil party that seeks to establish an Islamic state based on a more liberal interpretation of Islam. This interpretation seeks to reconcile Islamic legal principles with the needs and values of modern liberal democracy.⁷¹⁶ They adopted a more inclusive discourse toward women and minorities and offered a more general interpretation of *Shari'a*, shying away from controversial issues.⁷¹⁷ They claimed to offer new intellectual solutions to political issues by offering economic solutions. They separated *da'wah* from politics by agreeing to work within the existing political system. They argued that their political program was a human experience with mistakes and not an infallible representation of Islam. Furthermore they attempted to adopt internal democratic mechanisms within the party and reach out to other political groups.⁷¹⁸

The Egyptian regime, however, remained antagonistic to the party, repeatedly denying it legal recognition.⁷¹⁹ Despite this, the Wasat Party actively attempted to build its base, succeeding in reaching out to independent Islamist thinkers such as Tarek El Bishry, Ahmed Kamal Abould Magd, Fahmy Howaidy, and Selim El 'Awwa, with the latter serving as the party's lawyer.⁷²⁰ Party members were active in both the Kifaya movement (2004) and the National Association for Change (2010).⁷²¹ The party's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood was one of hostility.⁷²²

The Wasat Party supported the revolution and received legal recognition one week after Mubarak's resignation.⁷²³ Initially the party attempted to offer itself as a middle ground in an increasingly polarized competition between Islamists and non-Islamists. In the parliamentary elections, the party received nearly one million votes and won 10 seats in parliament, though its founder, Abu El'ela Mady, failed to win a seat. Over time, however, the party grew closer to the Muslim Brotherhood. Its members served in the Islamist constitutional assembly, and one of its leaders became a minister in Morsi's government. By the time the military coup took place, the party had thrown its lot completely with the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷²⁴ The Party is opposed to the military coup and took part in the Brotherhood led Anti-Coup Alliance, though there are signs it is

attempting to separate itself from the lost cause. Party leader Abu El'ela Mady was jailed after the coup for more than a year, and his deputy, 'Essam Soltan, remains in prison.

Al 'Amal (Work) Party

Al 'Amal (Work) Party was established in 1978 by former members of Young Egypt. During the 1930s and 1940s, Young Egypt, founded by Ahmed Hussein, was a fascist movement that modeled itself on European Nazi and Fascist parties. Over the years it acquired a socialist and Islamist flavor. Its reestablishment in 1978 was welcomed by Sadat, who during his youth had sympathized with the movement and who sought to create a loyal opposition party. His hopes were dashed as the party increasingly attacked his policies, especially the Peace Treaty with Israel. The Party's initial ideology was socialist, but by 1987 the party made an ideological shift, turning slowly into an Islamist party. That year the party ran in the parliamentary elections in a joint list with the Muslim Brotherhood. It increasingly adopted fierce anti-regime rhetoric focused on the regime's relationship with the United States and Israel and the privatization of the economy. The party's newspaper, Al Sha'b (the People), crossed all red lines set by the regime in its opposition and led the incitement against publications by the Ministry of Culture that were perceived as insulting God. The resulting Al Azhar student demonstrations led to the closing of the newspaper. In 2000, the regime had had enough and used a legal loophole to close the party.

The Party cannot be separated from its president, Magdi Ahmed Hussein. Born in 1951 to Young Egypt's Ahmed Hussein, he received his B.A. from Cairo University's Faculty of Economics and Political Science in 1972. He served as a parliament member from 1987 to 1990. He was imprisoned several times by the Mubarak regime, in 1998, 1999, 2000, and in 2009-2011 for his visit to Gaza and relationship with Hamas. Following the revolution, he joined the Muslim Brotherhood electoral alliance in the 2011 parliamentary elections, winning one seat for the party's Secretary General Mohamed Magdi Qorqor. Facing legal hurdles in reestablishing his party under the same name, he sought to establish a new party, Estqlal (Independence) <http://www.estqlal.com/>. An opponent of the coup and a member of the Brotherhood led Anti-Coup Alliance, Hussein was arrested on July 2, 2014. The party still maintains its newspaper, Al Sha'b, online <http://alshaab.com/>, where it adopts an extreme anti-American and anti-Semitic discourse wrapped in elaborate conspiracy theorizing.

Islamic Revival Thinkers

Islamic Revival thinkers claim to be a continuation of the thoughts of early modern reformers such as Gamal Al Din El Afghani and Mohamed Abduh.* Arguing that there is

* The legacy of Abdu and other early reformers was the subject of a heated exchange recently in the Egyptian press between the current Minister of Culture, Gaber Asfour and the Deputy Head of Al Azhar, Sheikh Abbas Shouman. See Asfour, "The Conflict of Religious Discourses in Egypt,"

no inherent contradiction between Islam and modernity, their discourse attempts to offer an Islamist view with a modern interpretation and tries to find the common ground between them. The adherents to this discourse are fully committed to the Islamist understanding of Islam in its totality. “The complete commitment to the Book and the *Sunna* is an issue that cannot be debated,” “He who believes in the Quran and the Sunnah as a reference for all dealings is from the Islamist current. He who does not believe in the Islamic reference is outside of the Islamic political thought and outside of the Islamist current but he remains a Muslim”, and “As to the issue of separating religion from the state meaning sidelining religion from having a role in organizing the matters of society, this is the main component of secularism that no Muslim can accept.” They attempt, however, to differentiate between *Shari’a* and the schools of jurisprudence. They also distinguish between what they argue are two forms of *Sunna*: “Careful distinction in the Prophet’s actions between what is a general prescription that is applied in all times and between what served specific nature of one time or place.” They often object to numerous *Hadiths* and put emphasis on what they argue is the spirit of *Sunna*: “Adherence to the letter of the Sunna sometimes is not implementing the spirit of the Sunna and its goal, but can be the reverse of it even if it appears to be adherence to it.”⁷²⁵

Naturally these positions have put them in direct confrontation with Salafis, who criticized their views on women, Jihad, Dhimmitude, democracy, and nationalism. Salafis criticize their adherence to human reason, accusing them of putting it above revelation and for falling into theological deviations. They have in turn been critical of Salafis, accusing them of being Wahabis and thus alien to Egypt’s intellectual traditions and criticizing them for their obsession with Shi’a.⁷²⁶

Their discourse has influenced the Wasat and Strong Egypt parties. Following are the profiles of the most important of these independent thinkers: Mohamed Selim El ‘Awwa, Tarek El Bishry, Ahmed Kamal Aboul Magd, Mohamed ‘Emara, and Fahmy Howeidy.

Al Ahram, 24 June 2014 (<http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/299142.aspx>); Shouman, “Al Azhar’s Response to the Minister of Culture Gaber Asfour: Our Religious Discourse,” *Al Ahram*, 28 June 2014 (<http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/300661.aspx>); Asfour, “A Comment on the Response by Dr. Abbas Shouman the Deputy Head of Al Azhar,” *Al Ahram*, 30 June 2014 (<http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/301002.aspx>); and Shouman, “The Complete Response of the Deputy Head of Al Azhar to the Minister of Culture which Al Ahram banned,” *Islamion*, 8 July 2014, available at <http://islamion.com/news/15708/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B5-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%AF-%D9%88%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%87%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AB%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B0%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B9%D8%AA%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85>.

Mohamed Selim El 'Awwa

Mohamed Selim El 'Awwa was born in 1942 in Alexandria to a family of Syrian ancestry. He received his B.A. in Law from Alexandria University in 1963, followed by a Diploma in Shari'a in 1964 and a Diploma in General Law in 1965 from the same university. Due to his father's friendship with Hassan El Banna, El 'Awwa grew close to the Brotherhood, though he was never a member. Nonetheless he was briefly arrested in 1965.⁷²⁷ El 'Awwa left Egypt following his arrest for London, where he obtained his PhD in Law from the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1972. He worked as a legal advisor to various Arab countries during the 1970s and early 1980s.⁷²⁸ After returning to Egypt in 1985, he was chosen by the new Islamic government in Sudan as a member of the committee tasked with changing the country's laws to ensure their adherence to *Sharia*. During the 1990s, he unsuccessfully attempted to mediate between the Egyptian government and Jihadis. El 'Awwa became a legal advisor to the Wasat Party at its formation and unsuccessfully led their legal struggle to gain official recognition. He is the founder and president of a non-government organization called the Egyptian Association for Culture and Dialogue and is the author of 26 books. During this period, El 'Awwa positioned himself as an independent Islamist thinker who holds conciliatory views towards non-Muslims. As a result, he was a frequent participant in hundreds of interfaith initiatives and civilizational dialogues.

His conciliatory tone began to change dramatically following the Wafaa Constantine affair in December 2004. In a 2010 Al Jazeera interview, he famously accused Christians of storing weapons in monasteries and claimed the Church was acting as a state within the state.⁷²⁹ El 'Awwa is the former Secretary General of the International Union for Muslim Scholars, of which he remains a member. His conciliatory attitude toward Shi'a has infuriated Salafis, who criticized him for his position and his perceived theological mistakes. An early enthusiast of the revolution, El 'Awwa nominated himself for the Egyptian 2012 presidential elections and came in sixth, with 235,000 votes. He was a member of the Islamist constitutional assembly in 2012 and continued to support the Muslim Brotherhood throughout its rule. Following the military coup, he has unsuccessfully attempted to mediate between the new regime and the Muslim Brotherhood. He is Morsi's lawyer. El 'Awwa's second wife is the daughter of Hassan Ashmawi, famous Brotherhood leader in the 1950s. His official website is <http://el-awa.com/new2/index.php>.

Tarek El Bishry

Tarek El Bishry was born in 1933 in Cairo to a distinguished family. His grandfather served as the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar, and his father was the head of the Court of Appeals. He received his B.A. in Law from Cairo University in 1953.⁷³⁰ He worked in the Council of State, the Egyptian state's legal body, until his retirement in 1998. Once a committed leftist, he went through an intellectual transformation following the 1967 defeat and emerged as an Islamist thinker. He has also been a part-time historian of pre-1952 Egyptian politics, with his books hailed by scholars despite an obvious Islamist bias. El Bishry presented himself during this period as one of the leading voices on

Christian-Muslim relations and defended Egypt's national unity.⁷³¹ His attitude changed dramatically following the Wafaa Constantine affair in December 2004, when he became a critic of the Coptic Church. He accused it of becoming a state within the state. Following the revolution, the military in February 2011 appointed him head of the committee responsible for proposing changes to the constitution. His appointment was severely criticized by non-Islamists for his Islamist bias. He opposed the military coup. El Bishry's official website is <http://www.tark-bishry.com/>.

Ahmed Kamal Aboul Magd

Ahmed Kamal Aboul Magd was born in 1930 in Asyut. He received his B.A. in Law from Cairo University in 1950, where he also received a Diploma in Law in 1951, a Diploma in *Shari'a* in 1952, and a PhD in Law in 1958. He received an M.A. in Comparative Law from the University of Michigan in 1959. A Nasserite in his youth, he served as Egypt's Cultural Attache in Washington in 1966. As a member of Nasser's Vanguard Organization, he wrote reports on elements considered antagonistic to the regime. He was rewarded for his service with an appointment as Minister of Youth from 1971-1973 and then as Minister of Information from 1973-1975. After his government service, he moved closer to Islamism, positioning himself as an independent Islamist thinker. Following the military coup, he has offered to mediate between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood, though little came from his offer.

Mohamed 'Emara

Mohamed 'Emara was born in 1931 in Kafr El Sheikh governorate. As a young man, he wrote for Young Egypt's newspaper. He received his B.A. in Arabic from Cairo University in 1965, where he also received his M.A. in Philosophy in 1970 and PhD in Islamic Philosophy in 1975. During the 1970s, he underwent an ideological transformation from Marxism to Islamism. He has since been one of the champions of the Islamist revival, attempting to give it a scholarly foundation by linking it to early Muslim reformers. As such, he has focused on reclaiming the legacy of Gamal Al Din Al Afghani and Mohamed Abduh. The author of 70 books, his writings often antagonized Salafis, who view him as an Ash'ari.⁷³² In the last few years before the revolution, he was given a weekly page in the government newspaper, Al Akhbar. On its pages, he attempted to refute Orientalist scholarship on Islam, often engaging in attacks on Christianity. One of his books attacking Christianity and published by Al Azhar led to non-Islamist criticism of the institution. 'Emara is a firm believer in the inherent conflict between the West and Islam and interprets world events through the conspiracy theory. Following the revolution, he was appointed Editor in Chief of Al Azhar's official magazine. He is opposed to the coup, which he argues is another example of the West conspiring against Islamist rule,⁷³³ though he is careful to keep a low profile.

Fahmy Howeidy

Fahmy Howeidy was born in 1937 in Giza. He received his B.A. in Law from Cairo University in 1960. He was briefly jailed under Nasser but still admires the man greatly. He worked as a journalist for the Al Ahram newspaper from 1958 to 1976. From 1985 to 2008, he wrote a weekly half page in Al Ahram. Howeidy is an Islamist writer with an Arab Nationalist slant, all framed in a strong anti-Western and anti-Israeli discourse. In his writings, he defended Islamists, often resorting to conspiracy theories to blame regimes for Jihadi operations. His anti-Israeli views have made him a fierce defender of Iran, which he views as an ally against Israel. This has naturally led to Salafi unease since his writings call for closer relations with Shi'a. He continues to write a daily column for the Al Shorouk newspaper. Howeidy is opposed to the military coup.

Salafi TV Channels

During the second half of the 2000s, Egyptian TV viewers began noticing a new channel on their satellites, Al Nas (The People). When it started in January 2006, Al Nas was not that distinguishable from tens of other Arab satellite channels playing music and hosting dream interpreters. One year later, the channel's orientation abruptly shifted to an Islamic channel hosting Salafi Sheikhs. The owner, a Saudi businessman, had apparently realized that the Islamic orientation would become more profitable. He was not mistaken. Al Nas became an instant hit. Instead of attending sermons in mosques or buying cassette-tapes for Sheikhs, the stars of Egyptian Salafis were suddenly in your living room. With TV programs for Salafi stars such as Sheikhs Abu Ishaq El Howeiny, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Mohamed Hassan, Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, and Wagdi Ghoneim, Al Nas was soon one of the most watched TV channels in Egypt. The delighted businessman had to adhere to the Salafi Sheikhs' demands. Not only were female presenters fired, but they soon objected to non-Salafi presenters such as Amr Khaled. The dispute led many of the Salafi Sheikhs to leave the channel, though it continued with its new orientation. Despite the conflict, the lessons were not lost. Salafi Sheikhs have a huge audience, and Salafi TV channels could reap enormous profits. Almost overnight, numerous Salafi channels were launched.

The existence of an eager Salafi audience should have been no surprise. In the 1970s, cassette sermons had become immensely popular among lower-middle and middle-class Egyptians. Sold in Islamist bookstores and in front of mosques and metro stations, the cassette tapes by major Sheikhs could be heard everywhere, from taxis, minibuses, and even at barbershops.⁷³⁴ TV channels were just the latest technology to cater to an existing and growing audience. But Salafi channels revolutionized Egyptian Salafism. The audience reached was now in the tens of millions.⁷³⁵ Sheikhs were now able to access audiences beyond their mosques and occupied an undeniably prominent role in the public sphere.⁷³⁶ Not all Salafis were able to use the new phenomenon, as the regime made sure that those it worried about would not be given any airtime or exposure. With Activist Salafis of all stripes banned from TV channels, and Madkhalis averse to establishing them, the space was left solely to Scholarly Salafis. The Muslim Brotherhood, for its part, showed signs of concern about the Salafi boom. Abdel

Rahman El Bor attempted to play down the concerns by arguing that there was nothing to worry about since those channels added to Islamist activism. But Essam El Erian was more candid, voicing his fear that the growth of Salafi channels was an elaborate plan by the government to counter the Brotherhood.⁷³⁷ Of course, the government didn't always like what it saw. It eventually was sufficiently worried about the impact of those channels that it closed Al Hekma in 2009 and Al Rahma in October 2010.

The main Salafi TV channels are: Al Rahma (Mercy), which was founded by Mohamed Hassan and included among its program presenters Sheikhs Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, Mustafa El 'Adawy, Mus'ad Anwar, Talaat Afifi, and Hazem Shouman; Al Nas; Al Hekma (Wisdom) which hosted Mohamed Hassan, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, and Abu Ishaq El Howeiny; and Al Hafez (the Protector), which was started by 'Atef Abdel Rashid. Following the revolution, the Salafi channels adopted a much more political interest, airing numerous political shows and hosting Sheikhs that had been barred from appearing on air, such as Yasser Burhami and Mohamed Abdel Maksoud. New channels were established such as Amjad (Glories), which was launched in January 2013 and had among its presenters Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, Hossam Abu Al Bukhari, Mohamed Hussein Yacoub, and Hazem Shouman. The Muslim Brotherhood also used the open political environment and established the 25 January TV channel.

Immediately following the military coup, the military took all Islamist channels off the air and attacked their headquarters. With the exception of Al Rahma, all these channels remain off the air. To fill the vacuum, the Muslim Brotherhood has launched a number of TV channels that air from Turkey such as Rab'a, Al Sharq (the East), and Mekamelen (We continue). In October 2014, the Salafi Call launched its own online channel.⁷³⁸

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