



ICT
International Institute
for Counter-Terrorism
With the Support of Keren Daniel

ICT Situation Room

SPECIAL REPORT

The Rising Threat in Ma'an, Jordan

June 2014

Recent activity in Jordan's southern governance capitol, Ma'an, raises concern as to the emergence of radical Islam and its implication in-light of recent gains by the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS). Recent months have seen an increase in Jihadi rhetoric over the internet as well as on the ground.

- In April, Al-Hashd jihdist outlet published a recorded message from a new organization under the name Ma'an Martyrs' Brigade to Abu-Bacher al-Baghdadi, leader of the ISIS. In the video, an unidentified speaker pledges allegiance to the ISIS in hopes of raising the banner of Jihad in Jordan.¹ The declaration comes in the background of anti-government protests in the city of Ma'an following the death of young individual by security services.²
- Following the anti-government protests at the end of April, al-Itisam jihadist outlet, which is affiliated with ISIS, published a new video titled "A message to our brothers in Ma'an".³ In the video, one of the ISIS activists, a Jordanian fighting in Syria under the nom de-guerre of Al-Gharib al Urdunni, addresses the people of Jordan and specifically Ma'an in a call to arms against the "criminal and infidel" royal regime. Al-Urdunni promises the residents of Ma'an that ISIS will provide them with all the necessary means while imploring them to continue to fuel the protests in hope that Ma'an will be the gate-way for change in all of Jordan. Furthermore, al-Urdunni urges the Jordanian military to convert as they are protecting the borders of the Jews and preventing activists from performing Jihad. The transcript of the video was done by Fursan al-Balagh Jihadist outlet.⁴
- On June 20th, Ma'an experienced a procession in support of ISIS. During the procession, black ISIS flags were carried by activists while chanting praises for Islam and jihad, as-well-as addressing the city of Ma'an as Jordan's Fallujah. Although estimates place the number of participants anywhere between several dozen to a few hundred, government officials reported that the procession was under tight security supervision and that any future attempts to hold similar demonstration will prevented.⁵

¹ <http://www.hanein.info/vb/showthread.php?t=363535>

² <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=692546>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_59ORUTqSRE

⁴ www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/jordan-reels-from-week-violence-maan-20144281256437277.html

⁵ <http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2014/06/22/jordan-rally-pro-isis>

Since foreign fighters have joined the call for arms in the Syrian civil war, Ma'an has sent several volunteers to fight alongside jihadist groups, specifically Jabhat al-Nusra (a number of whom were killed in Syria). A prominent local Salafi leader, Mohammad al-Shalabi aka Abu Sayyaf, has voiced his and his followers support for the organization.⁶ It should be noted that this is not the first time Ma'an has seen clashes with Jordanian security forces. 2002 saw bloody protests take place when security forces searched Ma'an for suspects after an attack on a US diplomat in Aman.⁷ Ma'an has been known to have supported Iraq against the US invasion in 2003 as well as hold a strong affiliation to radical Islamists groups dating back to the 1970's, such as al-Takfir wa al-Hijra.⁸⁹

These and recent events add to known information of the Salafist movement rising in Jordan, contributed in part by the influx of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees as well as refugees from the previous Iraqi conflict, who threaten the stability of the country. The more jihadist in Syria and Iraq demonstrate achievements and success, the more probable it is to encourage Salafists in Jordan to expand their activities. It would seem that recent events in Ma'an are an indication and precursor of future developments.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEoTDtzAnAw>

⁶ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/04/18/death_funeral_jordan_syria_abu_sayyaf

⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/25/world/2-die-in-clashes-in-islamist-stronghold-in-jordan.html>

⁸ http://www.merip.org/mero/mero120302?ip_login_no_cache=eccc26aa8e7bc9fa6f121273129bde96

⁹ Al-Takfir W'al Hijra was originally established as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1970's. The group has operated in several countries since its inception and has been responsible for lethal terrorist activity in places where they have a presence.

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