

## Forsane Alizza: Background Brief

In March 11, 2012, three French soldiers, a professor and three students of a Jewish school in Toulouse (South of France) were shot and killed. The suspect of these shootings, Mohammed Merah, is a 24 years old French citizen from Algerian background. He was under the French intelligence radar since traveling twice in Pakistan and Afghanistan for operational training in 2010 and 2011. In 2011, Merah was arrested in Kandahar (Afghanistan) and deported to France. Prior to his trips to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Merah was arrested in France for petty crimes (some relatively violent). Mohammed Merah claims to be a Mujahideen, who belongs to al-Qaeda and wanted to "avenge Palestinian children" as well as "strike against the French military due to their foreign military operations"<sup>1</sup>.

According to various French sources, Merah is linked to Forsane Alizza, a radical Salafist group that operates in France and that was disassembled in January 2012<sup>2</sup>. The group was already mentioned by ICT's Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group when a member of the jihadist Web forum Al-Fida published a video clip created by a group of Salafists in France calling themselves Forsane Alizza [The Brave Horseman]. The video clip, which was filmed in Paris and is in French, decries French Islamophobia and what Forsane Alizza calls "the campaign of incitement and persecution" being waged by French public figures, led by President Sarkozy, against France's Muslim population and against the group. In the clip, Forsane Alizza declares that it does not recognize France's secular democratic regime, and is working to see shari'a [Islamic religious law] implemented in France. The forum member who posted the clip praised the efforts of Forsane Alizza to protect the downtrodden Muslims in infidel lands; he

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<sup>1</sup> Leclerc, Jean-Marc, *Toulouse: Le suspect est un Djihadiste français de 24 ans*, Le Figaro, March 21, 2012 – Available at : <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2012/03/21/01016-20120321ARTFIG00355-toulouse-le-suspect-est-un-djihadiste-francais-de-24-ans.php>

<sup>2</sup> Belingard, Christian, *Toulouse: La Piste Forsane Alizza évoquée*, France 3, France Televisions, March 21, 2012 – Available at : <http://limousin.france3.fr/info/toulouse-la-piste-forsane-alizza-evoquee-73042967.html>

noted that the group was composed of young people raised in France, Belgium, and other countries<sup>3</sup>.



### Terrorism in France

France has witnessed practically all types of modern manifestations of terrorism:

- 1950s: anti-colonialist terrorism
- 1960s: right-wing terrorism
- 1970s-1980s: left-wing terrorism
- 1970s-1980s: Separatist terrorism
- 1980s - 1990s: international & homegrown Islamic terrorism

Nowadays, the threat comes primarily from the al-Qaeda network. This includes the Afghan-Pakistani group as well as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) and homegrown cells. In addition, France faces threats from the Salafist Preaching and Combat Group (SPCG), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC) and the Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA). Homegrown cells are perhaps better equipped to target France. As stated by the

<sup>3</sup> For more information, please see: <http://www.ict.org.il/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=dDe-YcDZdA0%3d&tabid=344>

Director of the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST) in May 2005: "the French jihadi has rougher edges, is younger, but also is more radicalized and engaged than in previous years"<sup>4</sup>.

### FORSANE ALIZZA<sup>5</sup>



### Ideology & Goals

The following are essential points about the radical Islamic group, Forsane Alizza:

- Known as "Les Cavaliers de la Fierté" in French, and "The Camel Jockeys" in English.
- An Islamic group, established in France in 2010 by Mohammed Achamlane, a French Muslim living in the Loire-Atlantique.
- The group's stated purpose: "to trumpet the words of Allah" and "bring Muslims back to the *kitab* [the Qur'an] and the Sunnah".
  - According to the group's official source, its main objective is to support the Mujahideen throughout the world. To this end, the group clearly states its rejection of every "democratic" system, and its absolute refusal to ever consider supporting anyone during any kind of election.
- Main priorities:
  - To punish the blameworthy and promote the deserving.
  - To emphasize the centrality of this priority by posting verses of the Qur'an on the group's Web site, which will convince all Muslims in France, and especially members of the group, to pursue this priority.

<sup>4</sup> Kauffmann, Sylvie and Smolar, Piotr, *Le Djihadiste français est plus fruste, plus jeune, plus radicalisé*, Le Monde, May 25, 2005

<sup>5</sup> Information for this document was retrieved from Forsane Alizza's official website: [www.forsane-alizza.com/](http://www.forsane-alizza.com/)

- To use religion to justify aggression against those who do not accept or respect the group's interpretation of Islamic religious law.

*"For the one who holds my soul in His hands! If you stop commanding those whose conduct is suitable to thwart the blameworthy, I fear that Allah will visit a calamity (punishment) upon you, [and] when you implore Him, He will not hear you."*

*"Will even the pious among us be destroyed? The Prophet (saaw) said, 'Yes, if [your] bad habits increase'."*

The group's ideology relies on what it calls the five mandatory laws for the protection and security of the Muslims, according to shari'a [Islamic religious law]:

- Religious protection [*hifd al dine*]
  - Moral protection [*hifd al 3aql*]
  - Protection of the family [*hifd al nasl*]
  - Protection of the Muslims' physical integrity [*hifdou nafs*]
  - Protections of the Muslims' goods [*hifdoul mal*].
- The group tends to target the Muslim community in France. However, it also openly rejects and criticizes Muslims who have lost an understanding of the "true Islam", as defined by Forsane Alizza's – that is, one strongly based on respect of the Sunnah and of *tawhid* [the principle of the Oneness of God]. The group blames those "unfaithful" or traitorous Muslims, whom it claims have changed the religion, for what it perceives as the current weakness of Islam.
  - According to the group's website, it is unacceptable for a Muslim to innovate within the religion, for example by saying that Muslims should obey the laws of the country they live in. The group denounces most Muslims and accuses them of doing just this – that is, of obeying the laws of the countries they live in – and claims that no sacred text has ever sanctioned this "lie".
  - Furthermore, according to the group's ideology, Islam was enlightened during the period of the Caliphate, when Islam had a harmonious society

with its own administration, currency and army. But for the past 80 years, the Islamic world has been undergoing what the group calls a process of colonization; this has led Muslim countries to have a very poor way of life, and has forced Muslims living in the West to live as inferior member of society: in ghettos, discriminated against, subject to public aggression.

- According to Forsane Alizza, the return of the Caliph is the only way for the Muslim community to regain a safe living environment. The group wishes to create a fortress for Islam – and this can only be achieved through battle: “The establishment of *tawhid* throughout the world is done with the sword.” The group strongly emphasizes that the only way to establish a good society for the Muslims is, and should only be, through combat and physical struggle, and not through books and learning.
- This ideology clearly encourages violence in societies that have Muslim communities, whose members are vulnerable to the propaganda of Forsane Alizza and other fundamentalist Islamic groups.



*"O you men, the battle is engaged, calls for jihad have been launched, the gates of Paradise are opened. If you are not warriors on horseback, stand aside and make room for the women to lead the fray. Go and replace them, take their utensils, for you are then women, even though you have a beard and wear a turban."*

### What is Forsane Alizza's "Security Pact"?

- According to the group's "security pact", the Muslims are in a constant state of danger in France and elsewhere. The pact dictates that the French Army must leave all territories with a Muslim majority, unconditionally and without delay. The general demand is then made that the Muslims (re)gain *"the right to practice our authentic religion. We also demand the withdrawal of these despicable laws against the hijab [headscarf] and niqab [face veil] in public and in private"*.
- The pact goes even further, and makes threats if the French government and French society do not meet its conditions: *"If by chance our demands are met, then we will consider that the [French] government has declared war on Muslims and has voluntarily let hatred against us proliferate."*
- The pact appeals to the Muslim community to unite around Tawhid, as their security is being threatened every day. The pact then issues a warning to Muslims who do not respect Islam, as Forsane Alizza interprets it: *"Do not listen to or follow the cowards who have infiltrated our community; they are followers of tijara [trade] and hijra [emigration] tourism. The same people who for years have invited you to go on hijra have accumulated thousands of dollars in their cozy taghout's bank account. These same people neutralize the spirit of honor, courage and justice by encouraging laziness and the comfort of air-conditioned libraries."*
- Finally, in addition to expressing this ideology and these aims openly, it also lists the following distinct projects and goals for the future:
  - To spread Da'wa [proselytizing, missionary work] as far as possible, through alternative media and continuous counter-propaganda.
  - To develop an intra-Muslim economy, particularly through the market for halal [Islamically permitted food and goods] products.
  - To build Muslim schools rather than mosques – a task that has so far been neglected.
  - To fight unbelievers hostile to Islam with every means available.
  - To reunite and fortify the Mujahideen, and to be patient.

## Structure

The group Forsane Alizza and its very active Islamic Web site were established in 2010 by a French Muslim in his 30s named Mohammed Achamlane. The Web site, which is constantly uploading anti-democratic, anti-republican and pro-Islamist articles and videos, is known by the police to have only a handful of members. However, according to the founder, a few hundred people follow the activity of the group through the Internet.

Followers and group members are recruited through the Web site with messages similar to this one: "Our organization is growing and we need manpower 'fissabilillah' ('for the path of Allah'). We are looking for all kinds of skills, but especially for soldiers! So if you enjoy martial arts and are quick to respond when we contact you, then your profile interests us, *inshallah*".

The group's founder and leader, who is also known as Abu Hamza, declared, with a reference to the Prophet's paternal uncle, that the group would take distinct action, and not just talk. Abu Hamza clearly told the press that if people did not understand that his group was going to take real action – then they were all fools.

Forsane Alizza is composed of fundamentalist Muslims who are more than willing to take action against French society, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. A chief target of the group from among the non-Muslims – and by whose actions the group feels embattled – is the Jewish community, and everything that the group interprets as "Zionism."



Mohammed Achamlane

## Cooperation

Forsane Alizza is known to cooperate with and support other Muslim groups and associations. Its Web site even has a link to some of these partners' Web sites.

The first such partner is called "Force de Défense Musulmane sur Internet" (FDMI). Its motto is "*We do not retreat! We do not weaken! One fears only Allah!*" The purpose of this group's Web site is to denounce every purportedly anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim Internet link or group. FDMI works to combat and shut down such Internet "infractions". For instance, FDMI agitates against various Facebook groups that it accuses of Islamophobia.

Their second of Forsane Alizza's partners is the group "Collectif Tawhid". This group aims to help the Muslim community by intervening in its favor when economic, administrative or cultural problems arise. Collectif Tawhid lists the following three main objectives for the Muslim community:

- To fight any kind of discrimination against Muslim worship.
- To help the community foster its various Islamic approaches.
- To help finance the basic needs of the community, in times of difficulty.

To this end, Collectif Tawhid aims to do the following:

- Reorganize the economy of the Muslim community, according to the principles of divine law.
- Make good use of all of the resources that Allah has provided for humanity.
- End capitalist society, which operates unfairly and mis-distributes wealth.
- Ensure the exercise of public Islamic worship.
- Teach the message and practice of Sunni Islam.
- Build mosques.
- Build Muslim Qur'anic schools.

Forsane Alizza also works in partnership with various Muslim social networks. However, attention should mainly be paid to those of its partner groups that show similar fundamentalist tendencies, particularly Collectif Tawhid, whose agenda is clearly against the democratic, capitalist model of Western society.

### **Action Strategy & Tactics**

Forsane Alizza is very active on the Internet through its Web site, where it continuously posts articles and videos that denounce what it perceives as injustices against Muslims in French society. The group divides the articles and videos it posts into the following categories: Actions; Statements; and Islamophobia. Each article begins with a shocking, attention-grabbing title, and aims to incite hateful thoughts, as a sort of retribution.

The online content of Forsane Alizza's Web site is only one aspect of the group. Indeed, action has been taken by Forsane Alizza on more than one occasion.

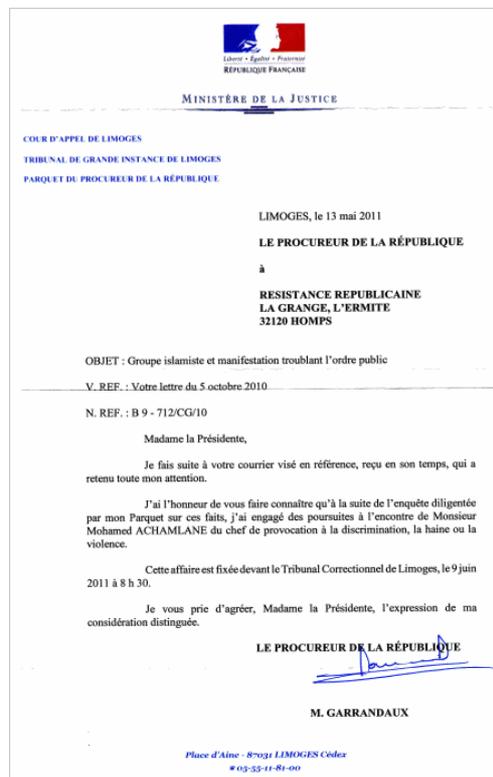
Usually, this action takes the form of street "demonstrations" that devolve into violence. For example, in July 2010, members of the group, their faces hidden, urged passers-by to stop going into McDonald's, because the fast food brand (also) serves Israel. Subsequently, Mohammad Achamlane was convicted of having filmed the scene and posted the video online to attract attention – and more members.

This was not the first time Achamlane had been accused and condemned. For example, he had called for the burning of the penal code, saying that not one single line in it defended the Muslim community. In fact, he claimed that he himself had burned a copy of the penal code in Aulnay-sous-Bois (in the French suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis), as a sign of protest against the ban on wearing the veil.

Other actions of the group have been less "physical". According to Forsane Alizza's official Web site: "We will soon issue a call for a boycott of French interests abroad by organizing 'business' trips to meet people who have the relevant influence inshallah. The information transmitted to Arab countries about

what is happening in France is biased and unfortunately does not reflect reality. This is actually one of the factors that has led immigrants to continue drowning in the Mediterranean Sea in their efforts to come live in this former 'eldorado'. We call on Muslims to prepare themselves financially and physically inshallah. Those who can make *hijra* to the *ribat* should not delay indefinitely. And those who decide to stay and fight – do not be surprised."

In January 2012, French Minister of the Interior Claude Gueant announced that the government had published and disseminated an official document dissolving Forsane Alizza, and bringing its leader, Abu Hamza, to trial.



Letter from the French Magistrate

According to Gueant's official statement, the group must be dissolved for breaking the 10th of January 1936 Law, Article 1, which states that "...any association or group that by its form or military organization appears distinctly to be a fighting group or militia, aims to attempt to wield force against the republican form of government, or provokes discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons on account of their origin or their belonging, or not belonging, to an ethnic group, nation, race or religion, or that propagates

ideas or theories that attempt to justify or encourage such discrimination, hatred or violence, will be dissolved by a decree, to be issued by the President of the Republic in the Council of Ministers.”

Specifically, Forsane Alizza is accused of “propagating a theory of using armed struggle for religious reasons, and advocating the establishment of a Caliphate in France and of imposing shari’a [Islamic religious law], thereby jeopardizing the democratic regime and the fundamental principles of the French Republic – particularly secularism and the exercise of individual freedoms.”

In addition, Forsane Alizza, and particularly Abu Hamza, have been accused of doing the following, during demonstrations:

- Publicly rejecting the French penal code (by burning it) and secularism (e.g., as reflected in banners reading “secularism, go to hell”).
- Fomenting Jihad (via videos uploaded onto the Internet), and denigrating Muslims who do not engage in jihad.
- Appealing to Muslims to fight “all infidels and unbelievers”, especially Zionist movements, gay and lesbian groups, secular bodies, and the representatives of the Muslim faith in France.
- Lastly, the group may be described as private militia because it offers its most active members actual training, including in hand-to-hand combat, shooting paintballs, simulated hostage-taking, and religious indoctrination.

For all of these reasons, Forsane Alizza is carefully watched (and was recently disassembled) by the French government, which sees it as a serious threat to French society because it promotes and initiates actions against secularism and democratic values, which are the foundation of French society, and Western society, in general.