

The Muslim Brotherhood's social outreach after the Egyptian coup

WORKING PAPER

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SUMMARY: Since July 3, 2013, Egypt's government has embarked on an extensive campaign to dismember the Muslim Brotherhood's formidable network of social services. With electoral participation, civic activism, and social service provision now foreclosed, street activism has become the lone vehicle for Brotherhood mobilization. This paper uses the lens of the Brotherhood's schools and medical facilities to show how regime repression and the rise of alternative models of social service provision are incentivizing the Brotherhood to adopt more confrontational methods of opposition.

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The July 3rd 2013 deposition of elected president Mohammed Morsi set off a high profile political battle between the Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt's new military regime. As part of this broader conflict, the regime has also been engaged in a lower-profile effort to disrupt and ultimately uproot the Brotherhood's vaunted network of nationwide social services. This chapter chronicles the regime's campaign against the Brotherhood's network of social services, in particular schools and medical facilities.¹ By coupling a comprehensive review of articles in Egypt's Arabic-language press with extensive fieldwork among the Brotherhood's social service network, an important contribution of this chapter is to add valuable specifics to a subject that has long been the preserve of speculation.

Beyond the empirical investigation, the fate of the Brotherhood's social service network raises a number of important implications for the study of Islamist activism. For instance, one likely effect of the regime's campaign to foreclose such a vigorous area of Islamist activity will be an increased potential for violence. In Egypt, Islamists (as well as many others) have already been excluded from electoral politics, media outreach, and religious activism. Now that the regime has ruled civic and social activity out-of-bounds, only street activism remains as an avenue in which to organize. Not only is street protest increasingly dangerous in contemporary Egypt, it is precisely the space where the line between peaceful protest and violence blur.

Over the longer term, the regime's crackdown on the Brotherhood's social service network potentially casts doubt on the wisdom of that organization's accomodationist, legalist approach to existing states. Specifically, the Brotherhood has historically situated their social service provision as complementary to the state's provision and, ultimately, subservient to it. Yet the recent legal campaign against these institutions may ultimately drive the Brotherhood's social service provision underground, shifting it in a more decentralized and potentially revolutionary direction. At the same time, Salafi jihadist groups throughout the region confidently display models where social service provision has become a mechanism to contest existing states' legitimacy. These internal and external pressures combine to produce a powerful counterpoint to the Brotherhood's longstanding legalist approach.

Regime Strategy

A September 2013 court case established the legal basis for regime to move against the Muslim Brotherhood's social service network. In that ruling (judgment 2315 of 2013) the Cairo Court for Urgent Matters ruled that the Muslim Brotherhood was a terrorist organization. The court simultaneously established a committee to investigate and assess the possibilities for seizure of the Brotherhood's physical and financial assets.² At the end of December 2013 the committee completed its preliminary investigation of the Brotherhood's assets, and the lists of the group's affiliated social service organizations soon leaked in the Egyptian press. The initial listing

¹ While the Brotherhood-regime conflict is particularly prominent, it is important to contextualize it by within other episodes of regime violence: targeting liberal activists with a draconian protest law, delegating control of restive universities to the security services, and stirring up moral panics in an attempt to co-opt religious discourse for itself. Josh Stacher, "Fragmenting States, New Regimes: Militarized State Violence in the Middle East," *Democratization*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (2015).

² David D. Kirkpatrick, "Egyptian Court Bans the Muslim Brotherhood," *The New York Times*, September 23, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/24/world/middleeast/egyptian-court-bans-muslim-brotherhood.html?_r=0

included 1142 individual entities spread across each of Egypt's 27 governorates.³ Among the institutions on the list were both organizations clearly linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as ostensibly independent organizations in which the committee judged the Brotherhood had extensive influence in or control over. Particularly notable were certain local branches of the sprawling Islamic organizations, *al-Gam'iyya al-Shar'iyya* and *Ansar al-Sunna*.⁴ At approximately the same time as the list of community associations appeared, Egyptian newspapers published a list of 87 schools affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵ Both the community associations and schools were subject to an immediate asset freeze, further investigation, and potential confiscation of assets.

The regime's entire campaign against the Brotherhood is nested within a larger effort to re-corporatize civil society and prevent the emergence of potentially independent centers of activism. For instance, in July of 2014 the regime floated plans to force all NGOs operating in Egypt to dissolve and re-register with the Ministry of Social Solidarity within 45 days, although the deadline was later extended, and the enforcement remains unclear.⁶ As one NGO employee put it, "You register and you survive, but under very difficult conditions of work."⁷ For the regime, the goal is to maintain a baseline level of social provisioning, yet forestall the possibility that potential opponents of the regime- Islamist or not- can leverage their activity their into a political challenge.

The specific case of the Brotherhood's social service network presents a particularly acute version of this dilemma. Anwar El-Sadat's embrace of free market reforms in the 1970s, coupled with the onset of Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Policies (ERSAP) in the 1990s have steadily shrunk Egypt's social safety. And for decades it has been non-state providers, including Islamist groups, which have filled the gap for millions of Egyptians. For instance, in the years before the 2013 military coup the Brotherhood's Islamic Medical Association (IMA) was serving approximately two million Egyptians annually.⁸ One patient's complaint following the seizure of IMA facilities captured the frustration: "the government neither provides us with hospitals suitable for human beings, nor do they allow the hospitals that treat us well to continue

³ As discussed below, the campaign encompassed two types of institutions: educational facilities and community associations. Mohammed Sa'adni, "al-Masry al-Youm Tanshir Qa'ima bi-Isma' Jama'iyat 'al-Ikhwan' al-Mujammida (1) (al-Masry al-Youm Publishes the List with Names of the Brotherhood Community Associations Whose Funds are Frozen)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, December 24, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/363611>.

⁴ *Al-Gam'iyya al-Shar'iyya* has apparently been able to sufficiently distance their branches from the Brotherhood, and thus they have been allowed to resume operations. Aaron T. Rose, "Administrative Court Lifts al-Gameya al-Shareya," *Daily News Egypt*, June 25, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegyp.com/2014/06/25/administrative-court-lifts-al-gameya-al-shareya/>.

⁵ Sarah Jamil, "al-Masry al-Youm Tanshir Qa'imat Wazirat al-'Adl bi-Isma 87 Madrassa Taba'a lil-'Ikhwan' (al-Masry al-Youm Publishes the Ministry of Justice's List of Names of 87 Schools Affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, December 30, 2013, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/369022>.

⁶ Todd Ruffner, "Under Threat: Egypt's Systematic Campaign Against NGOs," *Project on Middle East Democracy*, March 2015,

<http://pomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Under-Threat-Egypt's-Systematic-Campaign-against-NGOs.pdf>.

⁷ *Ibid*, 5.

⁸ Mohammed Taha, "Dirasa: al-Jama'iyya al-Tibiyya" Tu'alij Nahu 7 Milyon Marid Khilal 4 Sanawat (Study: '(Islamic) Medical Association' Treats Approximately Seven Million Sick over Four Years)," *al-Jam'iyya al-Tibiyya al-Islamiyya*, January 2, 2015, <http://www.ima-egy.net/2013-09-24-14-31-06/607-7-4>.

operating!⁹ Suddenly shuttering this sprawling network would risk provoking the very unrest that the regime intends to prevent.

On the other hand, allowing this network to continue in its current form poses apparently unacceptable risks to the regime. For decades, the Brotherhood's network of social services have deeply embedded themselves in Egypt's cities and villages and earned the movement a reservoir of gratitude, if not outright support. So long as this network continues to exist it will serve as a potential site of opposition against Egypt's new rulers, a place where activists from the Brotherhood can build support by leveraging their resources to help Egyptians cope with their everyday problems.

To balance their desire to repress the Brotherhood with the necessity of maintaining social stability, Egypt's new rulers are appointing new management teams- composed of government bureaucrats and security service figures- to oversee these facilities. In effect, they are gambling that forcing out those individuals most likely to be a bridge between the Muslim Brotherhood's organizational infrastructure and these facilities will reduce the risk the Brotherhood leverages their network to contest the regime while producing only minimal social disruption. Indeed, as security services forced out the management teams of hospital after hospital, regime officials continually stressed that the facilities would not close, and that the quality of the facilities would not suffer.¹⁰

Of course, this may simply be exchanging a short-term problem for a longer term one. One immediate practical effect of the regime's efforts is to dramatically narrow the available spheres of Islamist activism, potentially making violent activism more likely. Beyond civil society, the group's economic enterprises have been targeted, political participation foreclosed, and even fields of religious education and study are being strictly policed to remove alleged Brotherhood influences. All this is occurring against a rhetorical campaign to exclude the Brotherhood from Egyptian body politic, to tar it as a foreign body to be excised.¹¹

Indeed, as of now the only arena in which the Brotherhood has room at all to operate is in the field of public protest- demonstrations, sit-ins, and human chains. While this strategy plays to the Brotherhood's strength in numbers and mobilization capacity, it also increases the possibility of a violent confrontation. First, the protest-centric strategy is essentially interminable- the Brotherhood has taken as key demands the reinstatement of Mohammed Morsi and punishment of military leaders- clear non-starters for the current regime. The longer this strategy drags on

⁹ "Mudeer Mistashfa al-Rahma 'Aqab al-Istila' 'Aleyha: al-Inqilab Faqid 'Aqilu (The Director of the Rahma (Mercy) Hospital Following its Seizure: The Coup Regime has Lost its' Mind)," *al-Rasad*, January 14, 2015, <http://rassd.com/15-128042.htm>.

¹⁰ Baheyya Mekki, "bil-Sawr..Amin al-Qaloubiyya Yatahafiz 'ala Mishtashfiyyat al-Ikhwan bil-Khanka (In Pictures...Security Forces in Qaloubiyya Seize the Brotherhood's Hospitals in Khanka)," *Bawabat al-Qahira*, January 14, 2015, <http://goo.gl/V3a0YQ>; Islam Abu Wafaa, "Tafasil al-Tahafuz 'ala Mistashfa Dar al-Salam al-Taba'a lil-Ikhwan bil-Beheira (Details of the Seizure of the Brotherhood's Dar al-Salam Hospital in Beheira)," *Roz al-Yusuf*, January 14, 2015, <http://goo.gl/nG2WZQ>; Karim al-Bakri, "al-Saha: La Niya Lidayna li-Ighlaq Mistashfiyyat al-Ikhwan (Ministry of Health: We Have No Intention to Close the Brotherhood's Hospitals)," *al-Shorouk*, January 14, 2015, <http://www.shorouknews.com/mobile/news/view.aspx?cdate=14012015&id=3f8b4507-8ef4-40ba-8ac1-bc6674e59c3d>.

¹¹ Ibrahim Hodaiby, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Transition," trans. Amira Elmasry, *Mada Masr*, n.d., <http://www.madamasr.com/opinion/politics/muslim-brotherhood-transition>.

without bearing fruit, the more likely it becomes that disaffected and frustrated activists drift into violence.¹² Second, and particularly for those on the front lines of the protests bearing the brunt of police crackdowns and confrontations with security forces, the leap between passive protest and active violence becomes shorter and shorter. It is likely that a number have already taken that step, but as alternative avenues for popular activism are crimped off, more may follow them.

The following sections detail how the regime is waging its campaign against the Brotherhood's social service network through an examination of the fates of two clusters of Brotherhood-affiliated institutions in particular. The first examines one of the largest community organizations that appeared on the list of community associations, the Muslim Brotherhood's Islamic Medical Association (IMA). The following section examines the regime's efforts to control the Brotherhood's schools. Together, these two case studies not only demonstrate the regime's attempt to uproot the Brotherhood's vaunted network of social services, they set the stage for the chapter's concluding discussion of the lessons a new generation of Islamist activists will potentially take from the episode.

Brotherhood Medical Networks

Prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader Ahmed al-Malt founded the Islamic Medical Association (IMA) in 1977 to provide low cost and high quality medical care. The organization grew steadily and, on the eve of the military coup, the association operated 22 hospitals and seven specialized medical centers (four dialysis centers, an ophthalmology center, a fertility center, and a center for those with special needs). In addition, the organization was also active in the provision of mobile "medical caravans" that sent groups of doctors across the country. The IMA is the largest and oldest of the Brotherhood's organized social service initiatives.

Soon after July 3rd, members of the security services visited each of the IMA's facilities to ensure that they were registered and that their paperwork was up-to-date. Additionally, the IMA was also forced to cut ties with prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood on its board, including Freedom and Justice Party parliamentarians Helmi al-Gazar and Gamal Heshmat. Other politically active Brotherhood personalities involved with the organization, such as Mohi al-Zeit, the director of the flagship Central Charity Hospital in Nasr City, fled the country. Others, such as Wael Talib, a key figure in the establishment of the IMA's facilities in Helwan, were arrested.¹³

In December 2013 the IMA appeared on the list of Brotherhood-linked community associations targeted for an asset freeze. Shortly thereafter, IMA responded with a front page ad in the state daily *al-Ahram* pleading with the regime to allow them to continue operations, "on behalf of 2 million sick and tens of thousands of those who receive kidney dialysis on a continuing basis, and premature infants, and those unable to pay for their treatment, as well as those who visit the hospitals."¹⁴ Outside of the dialysis centers, it is not clear how much the freeze actually

¹² Steven Brooke, "Brotherhood Activism and Regime Consolidation in Egypt," *Islamism in the IS Age*, ed. Marc Lynch, (Washington, DC: Project on Middle East Political Science, 2015).

¹⁴ *al-Ahram*, December 28, 2013, pg. 1.

affected the IMA's ability to function. In an interview conducted a in the immediate aftermath of the decision, one IMA manager remained optimistic that the asset freeze would be lifted within days.¹⁵ Further, in an interview a few months later the IMA's Director of Hospital Management even claimed that three new hospitals were close to entering service.¹⁶

However, the regime clamped down suddenly in early 2015, formally assuming control of the IMA and seizing its assets. These included properties worth approximately 300 million Egyptian pounds (approximately 39 million dollars).¹⁷ The management teams of the individual hospitals were dissolved and reconstituted with pro-regime figures. Financial managers came under extra scrutiny because, according to the regime, some of the IMA's money was being used to "fund terrorism."¹⁸

Notably, the committee in charge of overseeing the Brotherhood's assets dissolved the IMA's board of directors and replaced it with pro-regime figures from the Ministry of Health. Putting a point on the change in orientation, the IMA's new chairman is the staunchly pro-regime religious figure Ali Goma'a, the former Grand Mufti of Egypt.¹⁹ Goma'a is also notorious for his anti-Brotherhood attitudes, including a post-coup sermon where, speaking about pro-Morsi protests, he urged members of the military and police to "shoot them in the heart... We must cleanse our Egypt from these riffraff."²⁰ In the aftermath of the decision to nominate Goma'a, one patient at an IMA facility lamented that "the wolf now guards the sheep."²¹

¹⁵ IMA Manager in discussion with the author, January 2014; Saeed Abdel Rahim, "Misr 'Tatahafuz' 'Ala al-Mistashfiyyat al-Islamiyya (Egypt 'Seizes' Islamic Hospitals)," *al-Arabi al-Jadid*, January 19, 2015, <http://goo.gl/2odzY8>.

¹⁶ Mohammed Taha, "Dr. Ali Abu Saif: Basoos and al-Khalil and Beni Suef Mistashfiyyat Jadida Tadakhil al-Khidmat Qariban (Dr. Ali Abu Saif: New Hospitals in Basoos, al-Khalil, and Beni Suef are Entering Service Soon)," *al-Jam'iyya al-Tibiyya al-Islamiyya*, August 15, 2014, <http://www.ima-egy.net/2013-09-24-14-31-06/497-2014-08-15-00-57-03>.

¹⁷ "Hasr Amwal al-Ikhwan: Mistashfiyyat al-Jama'iyya al-Islamiyya Mustamirra fi 'Amalha (Seizure of the Brotherhood's Funds: The Islamic Association's Hospitals Continue their Work)," *Ru'yah*, January 15, 2015, <http://goo.gl/Lu25uB>; "State Confiscates Medical Charity Associations for Brotherhood Affiliation," *Aswat Masriyya*, January 14, 2015, <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/view.aspx?id=2951c14e-b994-4101-ac16-e28f29532889>.

¹⁸ Baheyya Mekki, "bil-Sawr..Amin al-Qaloubiyya Yatahafiz 'ala Mishtashfiyyat al-Ikhwan bil-Khanka (In Pictures... Security Forces in Qaloubiyya Seize the Brotherhood's Hospitals in Khanka)," *Bawabat al-Qahira*, January 14, 2015, <http://goo.gl/V3a0YQ>; Islam Abu Wafaa, "Tafasil al-Tahafuz 'ala Mistashfa Dar al-Salam al-Taba'a li-Ikhwan bil-Beheira (Details of the Seizure of the Brotherhood's Dar al-Salam Hospital in Beheira)," *Roz al-Yusuf*, January 14, 2015, <http://goo.gl/nG2WZQ>; Karim al-Bakri, "al-Saha: La Niya Lidayna li-Ighlaq Mistashfiyyat al-Ikhwan (Ministry of Health: We Have No Intention to Close the Brotherhood's Hospitals)," *al-Shorouk*, January 14, 2015, <http://www.shorouknews.com/mobile/news/view.aspx?cdate=14012015&id=3f8b4507-8ef4-40ba-8ac1-bc6674e59c3d>.

¹⁹ "al-Tahafuz 'ala Amwal al-Jama'iyya al-Tibiyya al-Islamiyya (Seizure of the Islamic Medical Association's Funds)," *Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-Adala*, January 14, 2015, http://www.fj-p.com/Our_news_Details.aspx?News_ID=61304; A. Sh. A., "Lajnat Idarat Amwal al-Ikhwan' Tatahafiz 'Ala al-Jama'iyya al-Tibiyya al-Islamiyya (Committee Managing the Brotherhood's Funds Seizes the Islamic Medical Association)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 14, 2015 <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/629557>; and Ali Ghanem, "al-Inqilab Yasriq al-Jama'iyya al-Tibiyya al-Islamiyya... al-Harb 'ala Milayeen al-Marda (The Coup Regime Steals the Islamic Medical Association... War on Millions of Patients)," *Ikhwanonline*, January 14, 2015 <http://ikhwanonline.com/Article.aspx?ArtID=218310&SecID=230>.

²⁰ Amr Osman, "Religion and Politics in Post-Coup Egypt," *Open Democracy*, November 28, 2013 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/arab-awakening/amr-osman/religion-and-politics-in-post-coup-egypt>; David D. Kirkpatrick and Mayy El-Sheikh, "Military Enlists Religion to Quell Ranks," *The New York Times*, August 25, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/26/world/middleeast/egypt.html?_r=0.

²¹ "Mudeer Mistashfa al-Rahma 'Aqab al-Istila' 'Aleyha: al-Inqilab Faqid 'Aqilu (The Director of the Rahma (Mercy) Hospital Following its Seizure: The Coup Regime has Lost its' Mind)," *al-Rasad*, January 14, 2015, <http://rassd.com/15-128042.htm>.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Schools

The Brotherhood's network of private schools serves as the second pillar of the group's broader social service network. As with the IMA (and community associations in general), the legal basis for state control over the Brotherhood's schools stems from the September 2013 court decision designating the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization. Like the community associations (including the IMA), these schools were initially assigned to a type of receivership but allowed to continue operating under the control of a Ministry of Education committee. And, in a further insult to the Brotherhood, the schools have been placed under the authority of the "June 30th schools committee".

The regime's key complaint was that the Brotherhood had used their schools to incite violence against the military and police.²² For example, one parent of a student described Arabic lessons where students were told the army and police were killing protestors. She elaborated:

If the teachers were speaking about a historical episode of conflict between good guys and bad guys, the teachers would editorialize that the bad guys in the story were analogous to today's army and police. The teachers would also inject politics into every discussion, and they would insist on describing the events of June 30th as a coup, rather than a revolution.²³

In some cases the security services even directly intervened in the schools to arrest individuals they charged with recruiting for and organizing attacks on the regime.²⁴ For their part, those affiliated to the schools not only reject the charges, they point out the absurdity of the investigations. For instance, according to the director of the Hira' school network in Asyuit, the regime introduced as evidence of the school's radical orientation a classroom cartoon of the Smurfs where one was apparently flashing the "Rabaa' (four fingers)" sign.²⁵

In contrast to the relatively smooth takeover of the IMA, the regime's efforts to bring the Brotherhood's schools to heel have proceeded much more haltingly.²⁶ One key bureaucratic hurdle is that all regime interaction with these facilities must run through the aforementioned June 30th committee. The June 30th committee guards their prerogatives fiercely- the courts have even indicted members of the Ministry of Education for dealing with the schools directly.²⁷

²² The 'Vetogate' website reported on a number of violations, based on a series of reports obtained from the Egyptian Ministry of Education. These reports are compiled at: <http://www.vetogate.com/list/783>

²³ Rishwa al-Tahtawi, "Madaris `30 Yunio': Amwal Taht al-Tahafuz...wa Mudarisoona Fawq al-Riqaba (June 30th Schools: The Money is Seized, but the Instructors are Above the Monitoring)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 10, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/626211>.

²⁴ Mahmoud Taha Hussein, "al-Ta'leem: Lajnat al-Bahath Wadia' Madrasat al-Medina al-Menawara al-Ikhwaniyya bil-Iskandariyya (Ministry of Education: Two Committees to Investigate the Situation of the Brotherhood's Menawara ("Enlightening") Schools in Alexandria)," *al-Youm al-Sabea'*, October 18, 2014, <http://goo.gl/4VidZL>.

²⁵ "Ba'd al-Tahafuz 'ala Madaris al-Ikhwana...Khibraa': 'al-Qarar Siyasi wa Laysa Ta'leemi' (After Seizure of the Brotherhood's Schools...Experts: This is a Political Decision, not an Educational One)," *al-Rasad*, April 21, 2014, <http://goo.gl/g2wHL1>.

²⁶ "Revolution of all the Brotherhood Schools," *Facebook*, <http://goo.gl/MSzbPm>.

²⁷ Ibrahim Qasim and Mohammed al-'Alim, "'Hasr Amwal al-Ikhwana' Tahel Mudeer Mudiriyya al-Ta'leem bil-Giza lil-Niyaba Idariyya (Seizure of the Brotherhood's Funds...The Referral of the Director of the Giza Directorate of the Education Ministry to the Administrative Prosecutor)," *al-Youm al-Sabea'*, September 24, 2014, <http://goo.gl/3uJC9n>; "al-Niyaba al-Idariyya Tua'qib Maso'uli al-Ta'leem bil-Giza Bisabab Madaris al-Ikhwana (The Administrative Prosecutor

In other cases, the Ministry of Education's lack of an enforcement capacity has meant that the original boards of directors were able to essentially brush off the demands to dissolve and continue to operate as if nothing had changed.²⁸

Another problematic issue (from the regime's point of view) is that the legal basis for seizing the Brotherhood's property- the September 2013 court decision- applies to corporately owned assets only (for instance the IMA). Yet many of those who own the schools are *individuals*, including prominent members of the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Wafa' Mashour (daughter of former General Guide Mohammed Mashour (d. 2002) and a Brotherhood candidate in the 2010 parliamentary elections), longtime parliamentarian Mohsen Radi, and Khadija al-Shater (daughter of prominent Brotherhood leader Khairat al-Shater).

Despite their affiliations with the Muslim Brotherhood, a number of the schools' owners have challenged the regime's claim that it can seize their private property based on the September 2013 decision.²⁹ There have even been some successes- a number of schools immediately challenged the December 2013 finding that they were affiliated the Muslim Brotherhood, and three were released to their owners.³⁰ In late 2014 the owners of nine schools received a sympathetic hearing from lower court judges, who ruled that proceedings to seize their schools were not valid. In support of their opinion, the judges cited the Egyptian constitution's protection of private property from seizure except in extreme circumstances.³¹

This has led the Ministry of Justice and the security services to conclude that the Ministry of Education is fundamentally incapable of bringing the schools to heel. For their part, the Ministry of Education claims that they lack the enforcement capacity to fully implement the decision.³² Summarizing the spat, *al-Masry al-Youm* (which has closely followed the case) pointed out:

The Ministry of Education has failed to tighten control over the schools and implement the primary objective of the ruling on the seizure of the institutions: to 'protect students minds from

Punishes the Responsible Officials in the Giza Ministry of Education Because of the Brotherhood's Schools)," *al-Mogaz*, March 3, 2015, <http://almogaz.com/news/crime/2015/03/03/1895331>.

²⁸ Risha al-Tahtawi, "Madaris al-Ikhwan' Kharij Saytirat al-Ta'leem (The Brotherhood's Schools are Outside the Control of the Ministry of Education)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 4, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/620528>.

²⁹ Hazem 'Adel, "20 Yanayir...al-Hukm fi Da'wa bi-Talaan Qararat Lajnat al-Tahafuz 'ala Amwal al-Ikhwan (Translation)," *al-Youm al-Sabea* January 6, 2015, <http://goo.gl/J8Vt5b>. Hazem 'Adel, "25 November...al-Hukm fi 9 Da'awi li-Waqf al-Tahafuz 'ala Amwal Madaris al-Ikhwan (November 25...Judgement in 9 Cases to Stop the Seizure of the Funds of the Brotherhood's Schools)," *al-Youm al-Sabea*, October 21, 2014, <http://goo.gl/bzWXKw>; and Hazem 'Adel, "Ta'jeel Da'awi bi-Talaan Qarar al-Tahafuz 'ala 9 Madaris Taba'a lil-Ikhwan li-21 Uktubir (Translation)," *al-Youm al-Sabea*, September 2, 2014, <http://goo.gl/dQMj4s>.

³⁰ Risha al-Tahtawi, "Ba'd Riqabat 'al-Ta'leem: Madaris al-Ikhwan... 'Aam min 'al-Ishraf 'ala al-Waraq' (Tahqiq) (After Ministry of Education Monitoring...A Year of 'Supervision on Paper' (Report), *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 10, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/626218>.

³¹ Shaima al-Qarnashawi, "al-Masry al-Youm Tanshir Haythiyat Waqaf al-Tahafuz 'ala Amwal 9 Madaris Ikhwaniyya (al-Masry al-Youm Publishes the Rationale (behind) Halting the Sequestration of the Money of 9 Brotherhood Schools)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, November 25, 2014, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/584773>; Wissam Abdel 'Alim, "Nunshir Hukm Waqf Tanfiz Qarar al-Tahafuz 'ala Amwal Madaris al-Ikhwan (We Publish the Details of the Judgement Halting the Implementation of the Decision to Seize the Funds of the Brotherhood's Schools)," *Bawabat al-Ahram*, January 25, 2014, <http://goo.gl/BulmFl>.

³² Rishwa al-Tahtawi, "al-Ta'leem: 'al-Khorouj 'an al-Nas Mahdoud... wa Ijra'at Jadida lil-Saytara (Ministry of Education: Departure from the Text is limited, and there are New Procedures for Control)," *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 10, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/626212>.

extremism.’ Instead, the Ministry of Education handled this as a mere formality, preferring instead to focus solely on managing the financial aspect of the schools’ operation without paying attention to what is actually happening behind the scenes (literally “in closed sections”).³³

In January 2015 the regime essentially re-booted their efforts to control the Brotherhood’s schools. As a first step, they began to inject “new blood” into the process, appointing new boards of directors for all the schools.³⁴ Notably, the Ministry also emphasized that these new managers would all be pre-cleared by the security services before assuming their duties, suggesting that earlier managers possessed sympathies with the Brotherhood (or at least antipathy towards the current regime).³⁵ Regime officials also propagated new guidelines for the schools that included a ban on female students and teachers wearing the *niqab* (the full face veil), as well as a prohibition on requirements that students wear the *hijab* (the headscarf).³⁶ According to Ministry of Education officials the campaign is proceeding apace: in February 2015 the Minister of Education claimed that the Brotherhood’s network of schools was “85% under control.”³⁷

The regime’s attempts to trim the branches of the Brotherhood’s education network will likely receive a boost from new anti-terror legislation. In late February, the Egyptian president signed into law a series of measures giving Egypt’s authorities wide powers to designate, detain, and confiscate the assets of groups deemed a threat to public order (not coincidentally, the September 2013 case dubbed the Brotherhood a threat to public order).³⁸ In effect, this establishes a firmer legal basis for seizing the Brotherhood’s properties by closing the loophole many of the schools’ owners used to challenge the designation: that there was no legal basis to seize their private property. The regime wasted little time in applying the law, designating 18 high-profile Muslim Brotherhood members and seizing their assets in March.³⁹

³³ *Egypt Independent*, January 10th, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/626218>; Risha al-Tahtawi, “Madaris al-Ikhwan’ Kharij Saytirat al-Ta’leem (The Brotherhood’s Schools are Outside the Control of the Ministry of Education),” *al-Masry al-Youm*, January 4, 2015, <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/620528>.

³⁴ Mahmoud Taha Hussein, “Musdar bi-‘Ta’leem:’ al-Wazir Yajtama’ Ghadan bi-Ra’is Majmua’at 30 Yunio li-Wadaa’ Ijra’at lil-Saytara ‘ala Madaris al-Ikhwan...wa Qariban Tughayyir Ba’d Mudeeri al-Madaris...wa ‘Ard al-Qararat ‘ala Lajnat Idarat al-Amwal bi-Wazirat al-‘Adl (Ministry of Education Source: The Minister will Tomorrow Meet with the Head of the June 30th Schools to Clarify the Procedures for Control over the Brotherhood’s Schools...And Soon will Change Some of their Directors...And Publicize the Decisions of the Committee Managing the Funds at the Ministry of Justice),” *al-Youm al-Sabea’* October 26, 2014, <http://goo.gl/qWkxMb>.

³⁵ Mahmoud Taha Hussein, “al-Ta’leem’ Tentahi min Majalis Madaris al-Ikhwan...wa Irsal al-Isma’ lil-Lajnat al-Aminiyya (The Ministry of Education is Ending the Boards of the Brotherhood Schools...and Sending the Names to the Security Committees),” *al-Youm al-Sabea’*, January 10, 2015, <http://goo.gl/ZDFzHa>.

³⁶ Alaa Hassanein, “Nunshir Shurut al-Tarbiyya wa al-Ta’leem lil-Musalaha ma’a Mudaris al-Ikhwan (We Publish the Ministry of Education’s Terms for Reconciliation with the Brotherhood’s Schools),” *al-Wady*, January 1, 2015, <http://elwadynews.com/news/2015/01/01/62708>.

³⁷ “al-Hayah al-Youm Liqa’ Wazir al-Tarbiyya wa al-Ta’leem Doctor Mahmoud Abu al-Nasir wa Istarad al-Tabilat al-Ta’leemi al-Jadid (*Al-Hayah al-Youm* Speaks with the Minister of Education Doctor Mahmoud Abu al-Nasr and Reviews the New Educational Tablet),” *al-Hayah al-Youm* (T.V. Program), February 17, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvT-ORfAgrk>.

³⁸ “President Approves New Anti-Terrorism Law,” *Daily News Egypt*, February 24, 2015, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/02/24/president-approves-terrorist-entities-law/>.

³⁹ “Egypt Prosecutor Names Brotherhood Leaders as Terrorists,” *Associated Press*, March 29, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egyptian-militant-group-claims-cairo-university-bombing-29985042>; “State Confiscates Assets of Sentenced Defendants, Charity Organization for Brotherhood Affiliation,” *Aswat Masriyya*, March 26, 2015, <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/view.aspx?id=0517282d-bfbe-4247-8d43-4dce184bd6db>.

The above sections traced how the Egyptian regime is steadily uprooting the Brotherhood's nationwide network of social services and posited some immediate effects of this effort on the Brotherhood's strategies of mobilization. The below sections examine how these developments will potentially reverberate for how Islamist groups understand the place of social service provision in their broader strategies of activism. Two particular ramifications stand out. The first is based on the seeming failure of the Brotherhood's legalist, accommodationist approach to social service provision, while the second considers how the rise of Salafi jihadist social service provision elsewhere in the Middle East may pose an alternative model for the practice.

Following the Law Will Not Save You

A defining characteristic of Islamist groups has been their fundamental accommodation to the existence of current states. Islamist groups participated in political systems, adopted national discourses, and largely subjugated their activism to regime laws. The Muslim Brotherhood's historical conception of social service provision as something to be pursued openly and subjugated to the state- rather than subversive activity in competition to it- is a prime example of this accommodation.

From the organization's outset the Brotherhood registered their social service organizations with the relevant government authorities (including the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of *Awqaf* (for mosque-based charities), and the Ministry of Health). At the organization's outset in 1928 Hasan al-Banna registered the Muslim Brotherhood with the British-controlled government.⁴⁰ When the Ministry of Social Solidarity was established in 1939 all NGOs operating in Egypt were required to dissolve and re-constitute themselves by following the new guidelines- which the Muslim Brotherhood did.⁴¹ In the post-Nasser period the organization likewise registered its social and civic activities with the government. The Brotherhood abided by these guidelines despite the fact that they gave the government tremendous power over the formation, operation, and even existence of these societies.⁴² In essence, for the Brotherhood the benefits of a free and legal operation outweighed the costs that submitting to government regulation entailed.

Indeed, the crackdown on the Brotherhood's social service institutions took the group by surprise- they were betting on their history of cooperation with the government to protect them. In an interview in January of 2014, shortly after the IMA appeared on the list of Brotherhood-affiliated community associations, an IMA manager emphasized the organization's cooperation with the Ministry of Social Solidarity and expressed optimism that the IMA would soon sort things out with the government. As he claimed, "we aren't the enemy of the state, we're part of it, despite the fact that we disagree with its policies."⁴³ Even after the regime takeover one year later, the IMA protested by pointing to their history of good relations with the Ministry. "Not only has the Ministry of Social Solidarity not recorded a violation over the past year," the IMA's

⁴⁰ Hussam Tamam, *The Salafism of the Muslim Brothers*, Marased Paper No. 1, (Alexandria, Egypt: Biblioteca Alexandria, 2011), pg. 9.

⁴¹ Ishaq Musa al-Husaini, *The Muslim Brethren*, (Beirut: Khayat, 1956), pg. 52.

⁴² Maha M. Abdelrahman, *Civil Society Exposed: The Politics of NGOs in Egypt*, (London: IB Tauris, 2004).

⁴³ IMA Manager in discussion with author, January 2014.

director of public relations argued, “but it has praised the IMA!”⁴⁴ Similarly, the Brotherhood argued that their network of schools adhered strictly to the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines and that they operated in compliance with the law.

Unfortunately for the Brotherhood, not only did the legalist approach fail to protect their network of social services from the regime, it actually facilitated efforts to dismember them. As Wiktorowicz argues, authoritarian regimes proliferate laws and guidelines in civil society in order to render activism in these realms visible, and thus controllable.⁴⁵ When the regime decided to crack down upon- or simply expropriate- the Brotherhood’s social service network, the group’s legalist approach furnished the regime a ready-made “hit list” of properties, enterprises, and activists. For instance, all of the Brotherhood community associations- including the Islamic Medical Association- were registered with the Ministry of Social Solidarity- none operated underground.

Furthermore, the specific character of Egypt’s civil society laws prevented the Brotherhood from using the court system to contest the regime’s decision. Specifically, Egypt’s Law of Associations (Law 84/2002) includes a provision that gives the Ministry of Social Solidarity- and not an outside body such as Egypt’s courts- extraordinary power to adjudicate any disputes that occur between an association and the ministry.⁴⁶ Specifically, the Ministry of Social Solidarity can dissolve an association, and that that association can only appeal the dissolution order *back to the Ministry*. In effect, this means that third parties (such as Egypt’s court system) have no jurisdiction over dissolution cases unless the Ministry of Social Solidarity allows it. This is why the regime’s campaign against the Brotherhood’s community associations has proceeded so quickly: in late February the Ministry dissolved 169 institutions from the list, and on March 1st they dissolved 112 more.⁴⁷ A further 99 were dissolved in mid-March.⁴⁸ Had the Brotherhood registered these social initiatives as businesses (for instance as many of the schools were) they would have at least been able to contest the dissolution orders through the court system.

One potential reverberation of the crackdown will be to highlight the tensions between conceptualizations of social service provision as a mechanism to attract potential political supporters or as a way to ensure a tight and cohesive activist movement. For the Brotherhood, social service provision has historically functioned as the former, as a way to win mass support as the organization strove to gain political power. The group’s social service provision was largely provided without discrimination: there is no ideological litmus test nor allegiance

⁴⁴ Saeed Abdel Rahim, “Misr ‘Tatahafuz’ ‘Ala al-Mistashfiyyat al-Islamiyya (Egypt ‘Seizes’ Islamic Hospitals),” *al-Arabi al-Jadid*, January 19, 2015, <http://goo.gl/2odzY8>.

⁴⁵ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Civil Society as Social Control: State Power in Jordan,” *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 1 (October 2000).

⁴⁶ Specifically, before proceeding outside the Ministry of Social Solidarity any dispute must first go before a three-person board, consisting of two Ministry of Social Solidarity representatives and a representative of the concerned organization. A majority vote by that body determines whether or not the claim advances to the courts (article 7). See also Kristina Kausch, *Defenders in Retreat: Freedom of Association and Civil Society in Egypt*, (Madrid: FRIDE, April 2009), pg. 7, http://fride.org/download/WP82_Egypt_Defenders_Retreat_ENG_may09.pdf.

⁴⁷ Marina Makary, “More Muslim Brotherhood-Affiliated NGOs Dissolved in Egypt,” *Daily News Egypt*, March 1, 2015, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/03/01/more-muslim-brotherhood-affiliated-ngos-dissolved-in-egypt/>; Nourhan Fahmy, “Egypt Dissolves 169 Muslim Brotherhood-Affiliated NGOs,” *Daily News Egypt*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2015/02/23/egypt-dissolves-169-muslim-brotherhood-affiliated-ngos/>.

⁴⁸ “Ministry Dissolves 99 NGOs for Brotherhood Ties,” *Aswat Masriyya*, March 18, 2015, <http://en.aswatmasriya.com/news/view.aspx?id=d6d9c3ea-127d-40ff-8724-5d1fe36389ca>.

necessary to access the group's services- in fact the Brotherhood goes to great effort to emphasize their social services are open to all. In other words, the Brotherhood overwhelmingly viewed social services as would a *political party*, in the sense that they were a way to reach out to and mobilize voters. A prime example is the Muslim Brotherhood/ Freedom and Justice Party's massive program of social service outreach, "Together we Build Egypt," during the run-up to parliamentary elections in the summer of 2013 (the coup ended preparations for these elections).

Yet the new regime's unwillingness to tolerate a regulated and above-ground Islamist social service network potentially tips the scales in favor of social service provision as a strategy to recruit and enhance the cohesion of an activist movement. The effect would be more than just driving the Brotherhood's mode of activism underground. A number of authors have approached the study of social service provision through the lens of organizational economics, to help understand how movements encourage members to participate in risky activities, such as demonstrations and violence.⁴⁹ Making access to social services contingent on participation in these activities or membership in the organization is a crucial step to prevent free-riders.⁵⁰ Indeed, so long as the Brotherhood continues to emphasize risky activism such as street protest, and especially if the organization takes a different approach to the utility of violence against the regime, the exclusive, movement-based conceptualization of social services will likely become more attractive.

Alternative Models of Social Service Provision

Any potential reconceptualization of the role of social service provision inside Islamist groups will also draw lessons beyond the Egyptian experience. As the above section argued, one key characteristic of the Brotherhood's approach to social service provision was an accommodation with the existing state. Yet as the weaknesses of this approach have been exposed, the alternative approach of Salafi jihadist groups, in which social service provision becomes a means to contest and compete against existing states, has risen in prominence.

Salafi-jihadism arose, at least partially, from a conviction that non-violent engagement (politics or preaching, for instance) was insufficient to achieve sociopolitical change. However, Salafi jihadis have recently devoted increasing attention to the ability of social service provision to buttress their violent activism. For instance, among a trove of documents recovered from an al-Qaida safe house in Mali was a letter from Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the leader of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), to his counterpart in Mali. In it, al-Wuhayshi advised his comrade about the importance of social-service provision:

Try to win them [the population] over through the conveniences of life and by taking care of their daily needs like food, electricity and water. Providing these necessities will have a great effect on people, and will make them sympathize with us and feel that their fate

⁴⁹ Eli Berman and David D. Laitin, "Religion, Terrorism and Public Goods: Testing the Club Model," *Journal of Public Economics* 92, no. 10 (2008); Melani Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

⁵⁰ The Brotherhood runs a parallel internal system of goods provision whereby the organization furnishes aid (mostly in cash) to the families of detained members. The above-described shift would essentially convert the entire enterprise to this system, in which members and sympathizers are privileged over outsiders.

is tied to. This is what we've observed during our short experience [in Yemen].⁵¹

Of course, the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq has gone the furthest in implementing a mixture of social service provision- or governing more broadly- and violence. In the areas it controls the Islamic State has set up sophisticated bureaucracies providing an array of services. Not only are these explicitly designed to replace the state, in some cases they are former public works bureaucracies that the Islamic State has simply repopulated with their own activists.⁵²

There is a key distinction between this approach and the historic strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood. Salafi jihadist groups either use their social service provision to elbow out the national state (AQAP's venture in Yemen, for instance) or set up where the state had collapsed (for instance parts of Syria and Iraq today). Put differently, for Islamist groups, social service provision serves as a tool to succeed within the current system. Salafi jihadist groups, in contrast, use social service provision as a mechanism to contest the state's core legitimacy, encourage dissent against it and, ultimately, overthrow it.

The Salafi jihadist approach of social service provision is not without precedent in Egypt. In the early 1990s al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya established an "Islamic Emirate" in the Giza neighborhood of Imbaba, a short distance across the Nile from Cairo.⁵³ As part of that effort, the group extended a network of social services to residents of the area.⁵⁴ Although the Egyptian state successfully beat back that challenge to its legitimacy, the country's current insurgency has opened up the space for a revival of Salafi jihadist service provision. Not only have militants established an Islamic State franchise in the Sinai, there is evidence that they are engaged in rudimentary social provisioning, including providing handouts to Egyptians whose houses were destroyed in the Egyptian military's counterterrorism campaign there.⁵⁵ A recent release also highlighted the group's ambulance service.⁵⁶ The confluence of socioeconomic crisis, the expulsion of alternative providers, the presence of historical referents, and the industriousness of new jihadist groups all seem to suggest that this phenomena will remain relevant in the future.

Conclusion

Since the July 3, 2013 military coup, but with increasing vigor this year, Egypt's new regime has begun dismembering the Muslim Brotherhood's nationwide network of social services. Just as this threatens the livelihoods of millions of Egyptians who rely on these services to meet their daily needs, the campaign is also a tremendous blow to the Brotherhood, who has for decades

⁵¹ "The al-Qaida Papers," *Associated Press*, www.longwarjournal.org/images/al-qaida-papers-how-to-run-a-state.pdf.

⁵² Aaron Zelin, "The Islamic State has a Consumer Protection Bureau," *The Atlantic*, June 13, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/the-isis-guide-to-building-an-islamic-state/372769/>.

⁵³ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2002), 291-292; Geneive Abdo, "Chapter 2" in *No God But God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Mary Anne Weaver, *A Portrait of Egypt*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000), 144-148.

⁵⁴ Salwa Ismail, "The Popular Movement Dimensions of Contemporary Militant Islamism: Socio-Spatial Determinants in the Cairo Urban Setting," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (April 2002): 381-382.

⁵⁵ "Taghtiya Musawwara li-Tawzi' al-Amwal 'ala al-Muslimeen al-Mutadarirreen Jira' Hadm wa-Ihraq Jaish al-Ridda li-Manazilihim [Photographic Coverage of Distributing Money to the Afflicted Muslims whose Homes were Destroyed and Burnt by the Apostate (Egyptian) Military]," *Al-Maktab al-'Alani li-Wilayat Sinai*, January 8 2013, <http://justpaste.it/isxw>.

⁵⁶ The official *Wilayat Sinai* release is titled "Sawlat al-Ansar #2 (Charge of the Supporters #2)."

emphasized the importance of social service provision to their overall mission. As the above sections noted, the events of the past two years have essentially closed off the legal avenues for the Brotherhood to engage in social service provision. One practical result of this campaign may be to increase the draw of violence as a tool of activism.

At the same time, the apparent failure of the Brotherhood's legalist approach to social service provision- and relations with existing states in general- increases the attraction of alternative models that emphasize violence. Among these, the Salafi jihadist conceptualization of social service provision as a tool to contest the legitimacy of existing regimes is particularly prominent. While this is due to the ongoing successes of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and the growth of similar movements throughout the region, there are antecedents in Egypt's recent past. Whether these groups infiltrate from outside or arise domestically, Egypt's persistent socioeconomic difficulties ensure that an opportunity for these movements to accumulate social and political capital will exist.

In the end, the regime's penchant for targeting social services providers without addressing the underlying citizen demand for a decent and affordable safety net may, in the end, render discussions about the future of Islamist social service activism academic. In other words, if Egypt's current trajectory continues, it seems unlikely that it will be a small, highly radicalized band of Muslim Brotherhood members or a dramatic jihadist offensive that ultimately topples the country's authoritarian regime. Instead, it will be a broad uprising composed of Egyptian citizens who have for decades watched their leaders advocate policies requiring them to give more and more while settling for less and less.