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# THE ORGANIZATIONAL FRAGMENTATION OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND ITS POSITION ON THE -12DAY WAR

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## Abstract

This paper examines the internal divisions that have affected the Muslim Brotherhood since 2013 until 2025, focusing on the organizational fragility that emerged as a result. It explores the proliferation of competing centers of decision-making between the London and Istanbul factions, alongside the rise of a third bloc identified as the Current of Change. The paper also traces the development of relations between the Guidance Bureau in Egypt and the organization's branches across Arab countries since the 1970s. It highlights how the organization historically succeeded in maintaining unified political positions on major regional developments, including the Iranian revolution, the Gulf War, the 2006 Lebanon War and the 2011 Arab uprisings.

At the same time, the paper argues that the organization's current fragmentation has undermined its ability to coordinate unified positions, a reality reflected in the differing responses to the 12-Day War between Iran and Israel in June 2025. According to the paper, the London faction and Muslim Brotherhood branches in the Maghreb openly supported Iran, whereas the Syrian and Yemeni branches rejected that position, while the Istanbul faction remained silent. The paper concludes that these divisions reveal the effective breakdown of centralized decision-making within the organization, raising the possibility of the organization's gradual disintegration and the emergence of autonomous entities operating independently from the central leadership in Egypt.

**Keywords:** Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt, Arab uprising, 12-Day War, Islamist movements.

## Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is among the world's largest Islamist movements and is transnational in nature. Since its establishment in 1928, it has served as a model of a transnational movement grounded in political and missionary discourse centered on the concept of the Ummah. As the organization expanded beyond Egypt, its leadership moved to create an overarching institutional structure known as the International Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood. The body was designed to coordinate among national branches and unify their political and missionary positions under the supervision of the Guidance Bureau in Egypt, regarded as the movement's highest authority.

This organizational centralization played a major role in shaping the MB's image as a transnational entity advancing a unified discourse on regional and international affairs. The movement's coordinated political positions became particularly evident during major developments such as the 1979 Iranian revolution, the 1990 Second Gulf War and the 2011 Arab uprisings. Yet this central structure gradually began to erode amid mounting internal disputes following the overthrow of the MB's rule in Egypt in 2013. The crisis ultimately led to the emergence of rival factions contesting the movement's leadership, most notably the London front and the Istanbul front, alongside a third faction known as the Current of Change (al-Taghyeer).

This division was not merely organizational in nature; it was also clearly reflected in the coherence of the group's decision-making process and its political positions on regional issues. Divergences among the organization's branches became evident in their responses to the 2025 Iran–Israel war, marking an unprecedented development in the movement's modern history. The paper found that some branches expressed support for Iran, while others adopted opposing positions, whereas certain factions within the group chose to remain silent. The significance of this paper therefore lies in examining how the MB's internal fragmentation has affected its ability to formulate a unified political stance.

The movement is consequently experiencing an unprecedented phase of internal fragmentation and leadership rivalry, embodied in the emergence of two competing factions contesting control of the organization: the London front led by Salah Abdel-Haq and the Istanbul front headed by Mahmoud Hussein. Alongside these factions, a third trend known as the Current of Change has emerged, rejecting both camps. These divisions have affected the structure of the international organization and weakened its ability to preserve a unified political position on regional and international issues. The central question that arises, therefore, concerns the extent to which the MB's internal divisions have undermined its capacity to formulate a unified political stance toward the Iran-Israel war in 2025. From this main question emerge several subsidiary inquiries, most notably: What is the nature of the organizational divisions within the MB? How have these divisions affected the centralization of political decision-making within

the movement? And what differences characterize the positions adopted by the organization's branches in the context of the 2025 Iran-Israel war?

To address these questions, the paper adopts a descriptive-analytical approach supported by historical analysis, tracing the evolution of the relationship between the Guidance Bureau and the national branches while examining declared political positions in light of the movement's internal divisions. The paper also employs a comparative approach in analyzing the differences between the positions adopted by various branches, with the aim of demonstrating the extent to which centralized decision-making within the organization has declined.

### **Background and Articulation of Positions on Arab and Islamic Issues**

After the MB consolidated its foundations in Egypt, strengthened its presence during the early 1930s and gained broad popularity as a movement representing a significant segment of Egyptian society, it began expanding beyond the domestic sphere toward a wider framework of missionary and organizational activity. Hassan al-Banna established a special body known as the Section for Liaison with the Islamic World.

Among the department's principal tasks was establishing contact with religious figures and Islamic movements across the Muslim world to pave the way for the creation of branches affiliated with the group outside Egypt. The first external extension of the MB's call emerged in Djibouti in 1933.<sup>(1)</sup> However, this presence did not assume an official organizational form recognized by the movement's leadership. Rather, it remained limited to a number of individuals influenced by Banna's ideas during their studies in Egypt, who later transmitted those ideas to their local communities upon returning to their countries.

The first official branch of the MB established outside Egypt under the direct supervision of Banna was the Palestine branch, founded in 1935. Its establishment followed the dispatch of the movement's first delegation to several Islamic countries, which included Banna's brother, Abdulrahman al-Saati, alongside Muhammad Asad al-Hakim. During the visit, they met Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem and head of the Supreme Islamic Council, who had reportedly been influenced by Banna's message during his studies in Egypt at Dar al-Da'wa wal-Irshad (the School of Advocacy and Guidance). The delegation subsequently promoted the MB's call in Palestine before traveling to Damascus, where they delivered sermons at the Umayyad Mosque concerning the movement's message and met a number of prominent Islamic figures there.<sup>(2)</sup>

The organization continued establishing affiliated organizations across Arab countries while dispatching members from Egypt to train new recruits in its principles and methodology. In this context, Banna sent Muhammad al-Hadi Atiya, a Sharia lawyer based in Suez, to the branch in Beirut, while Salah Abdel Hafez and Jamal al-Din al-Sanhuri were assigned to the branch in Sudan.<sup>(3)</sup> By 1937, the number of MB branches had reportedly risen to 18 distributed across 11 countries.<sup>(4)</sup>

Following the political transformation in Egypt during the early 1950s, and the ensuing direct confrontation between the Egyptian state and the MB, a large number of the movement's leaders left Egypt and went on to establish numerous social and missionary organizations in their host countries. This development contributed to strengthening the relationship between the MB's branches across the Arab world and the movement's Guidance Bureau by the late 1970s. Under the leadership of the Supreme Guide Omar al-Tilmisani, the Guidance Bureau consolidated its authority over MB organizations abroad following the announcement of the movement's General Regulations in the early 1980s. These bylaws called for the imposition of unity over all branches of the organization. The Guidance Bureau in Egypt began exercising direct authority over other branches, no longer acting solely as a moral reference point but increasingly as a centralized leadership structure with the power to approve or reject local supervisors.

One example of this authority was the approval by the Guidance Bureau in Egypt of Adnan Saad al-Din as general supervisor of the movement's branch in Syria during the late 1970s, following internal divisions within the Syrian branch. Adnan Saad al-Din later stated that the Guidance Bureau in Egypt had elected him amid disputes within the Syrian MB and the emergence of several competing factions, including the Fighting Vanguard, the Issam Al-Attar group and the Palestinian MB organization in Syria. He also noted that he traveled to Cairo to pledge allegiance to the organization's supreme guide before returning to Syria.<sup>(5)</sup>

Similarly, the Guidance Bureau in Egypt intervened in the early 1990s in the appointment of a general supervisor for the MB's branch in Jordan following the conclusion of the term of Abdulrahman Khalifa. Internal deliberations emerged regarding the selection of his successor, and the names of the proposed candidates were submitted to the Guidance Bureau in Egypt. Ultimately, Abdulmajeed Dhunaibat was chosen as general supervisor of the MB in Jordan.<sup>(6)</sup>

Mustafa Mashhour (the MB's fifth supreme guide)<sup>(7)</sup> played a significant role in structuring the relationship between the Egyptian MB and its leadership bodies in other countries. He acted as a key intermediary linking the organization's internal leadership in Egypt with its counterparts abroad.<sup>(8)</sup> One of the most prominent organizational priorities during this period was the effort to centralize decision-making on regional and international issues among the MB's branches in the Arab world. This was done to capitalize on political developments in service of the movement's ideological objectives. This was intended to help build a broader popular base for the organization and strengthen its overall influence.<sup>(9)</sup>

On May 10, 1978, a provisional bylaw by the Guidance Bureau, approved by Tilmisani, marked a significant development in the organizational and coordinative relations among the MB's branches across the Arab world. Under this bylaw, relations were formally regulated between the movement's Guidance Bureau in Egypt and its affiliated organizations.

Subsequently, on July 29, 1982, amendments were introduced to the provisional bylaw and circulated to all branches of the organization across the Arab and Is-

lamic worlds. The bylaw outlined the movement's principles and objectives, the conditions of membership and the rights and duties of members. It also defined the organizational structure, including mechanisms for selecting leaders and members of the General Shura Council. In addition, it clarified the relationship between the Guidance Bureau, headed by the supreme guide in Egypt, and MB leadership branches in other countries.<sup>(10)</sup>

The regulations reflected the clear intention of the MB's Guidance Bureau to structure and standardize the positions of the organization's branches across different countries regarding emerging regional and international issues. Article 43 of Chapter Five, governing the relationship between the General Command and regional leaderships, stipulated that regional bodies must adhere to the decisions of the General Command, represented by the supreme guide, the Guidance Bureau and the organization's Shura Council. This included compliance with the group's general policies and official positions on public affairs as determined by the central leadership structures, as well as the requirement to obtain the Guidance Bureau's approval prior to taking any significant political decision. The regulations further emphasized the necessity of consultation and agreement with the supreme guide or the Guidance Bureau before making decisions on local matters that could have implications for the organization in other countries.<sup>(11)</sup>

After the adoption of the MB's General Regulations in 1982, some figures within the organization across the Arab world began to express reservations regarding the subordination of the organization's branches to the Guidance Bureau in Egypt in both internal and external decision-making. Among the most prominent of these figures was Hassan al-Turabi, who advanced the view that the relationship between the branches and the Guidance Bureau should be based on coordination rather than absolute subordination, pending the fulfillment of conditions related to political empowerment.

Turabi justified this position by referring to the political achievements of the MB's branch in Sudan, particularly following the fall of the regime of Jaafar Nimeiri in 1985. He argued that unconditional allegiance and waiting for directives from the supreme guide in every matter was no longer appropriate in light of the Sudanese branch's growing political effectiveness. However, this proposal was met with strong rejection by the organization's leadership, which viewed it as a deviation from the principles of the MB's methodology and organizational framework.

During this period, the National Islamic Front, led by Turabi, emerged as a political force that took into account the specific political and social conditions of Sudanese society. In 1989, following the military coup led by the National Islamic Front alongside Omar al-Bashir, it became increasingly evident that Turabi was pursuing an Islamic political project that operated with a degree of independence from the MB. Consequently, Turabi was later expelled from the MB's organizational structure in Sudan.<sup>(12)</sup>

This position was later echoed by Rached Ghannouchi in the early 1990s, who emphasized the distinctiveness of Tunisian society in comparison with Egyptian society. Accordingly, he argued that the relationship between the organization's branch in Tunisia — represented by the Ennahda Movement — and the Guidance Bureau should be based on commitment, cooperation and coordination, rather than hierarchical subordination.<sup>(13)</sup>

### **MB's Position on the 1979 Iranian Revolution**

The strengthening of relations between the MB's branches and the adoption of the General Regulations at the end of the 1970s coincided with a major regional development, namely the success of the Iranian revolution in 1979, which led to the overthrow of the monarchy under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and its replacement with a political system based on the theory of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist.

In this context, the MB's Guidance Bureau translated the provisions and regulations of its general system — particularly those relating to the management of positions on contemporary issues — into practical action. The International Organization of the MB formed a delegation comprising representatives from various branches in Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia.<sup>(14)</sup> The delegation traveled to Iran to congratulate the leadership of the revolution on its success and to explore avenues of cooperation between the movement and the newly established revolutionary leadership.<sup>(15)</sup>

This visit was followed by another delegation from the MB's branch in Sudan, led by Turabi, which traveled to Iran and met with Ruhollah Khomeini to congratulate him on the success of the revolution.<sup>(16)</sup> In addition, Khomeini's photograph appeared on the cover of *Al-Da'wa* magazine, the main publication of the MB in Egypt, in its March 1979 issue, which was issued in the month following his rise to power in Iran.<sup>(17)</sup>

While Ghannouchi stated that, with the success of the Iranian revolution, Islam had entered a new civilizational epoch,<sup>(18)</sup> Fathi Yakan — secretary-general of the Islamic Group, the MB branch in Lebanon — praised the Iranian revolution, arguing that the intellectual and doctrinal foundations of the Islamic awakening were derived from three main schools: the school of Banna, the school of Sayyid Qutb and the school of Khomeini.<sup>(19)</sup>

### **MB's Position on the 1990 Second Gulf War**

This consistency in the positions of the MB's branches regarding emerging regional and international developments extended even to major crises witnessed in the Arab and Islamic world in the contemporary period, including the Second Gulf War (the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq) and its subsequent developments and repercussions. During this period, the International Organization of the MB was able to coordinate and align the positions of the movement's various branches, producing a unified stance toward this major event, most notably the rejection of

seeking assistance from foreign forces for the liberation of Kuwait. This position was reportedly upheld even by branches located within the Gulf region. In Saudi Arabia, the local branch was described as taking a position that diverged from the official stance of the Saudi state and that of the Council of Senior Scholars. Likewise, the branch in Kuwait — despite the country being directly affected by the invasion — was characterized as adhering to the position of the International Organization of the MB, particularly its rejection of foreign military intervention to liberate Kuwait.<sup>(20)</sup>

### **MB's Position on the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War**

At that time, the Supreme Guide of the MB Muhammad Mahdi Akef, adopted a position that diverged from several Arab states' stances on the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war. While a number of Arab governments viewed the actions of Hezbollah as uncoordinated with the Lebanese state and undertaken without consultation with them, Akef instead called for support for Hezbollah and its Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah in their confrontation against Israel. He also announced the movement's readiness to dispatch approximately 10,000 fighters to participate alongside Hezbollah in the conflict.<sup>(21)</sup>

The position expressed by the supreme guide of the MB in support of Hezbollah was subsequently reinforced by a statement titled "A Statement and Call from the Scholars of the Ummah,"<sup>(22)</sup> which was signed by a large number of MB figures from various branches of the organization across Arab countries,<sup>(23)</sup> aligning with the view of the supreme guide regarding the necessity of supporting Hezbollah in its war. In the same context, the Algerian Movement of Society for Peace (MSP) called on the Algerian public to participate in a march under the slogan "Rejecting Silence and Humiliation" in support of Hezbollah.<sup>(24)</sup>

These positions, taken together, underscore the perceived strength of the Guidance Bureau in shaping and unifying the stances of the MB's branches across different countries on regional and international issues.

### **MB's Position on the 2011 Arab Uprisings**

Another example of coordination between the MB's branches and the Guidance Bureau on regional and international issues was their unified support for the uprisings that erupted across several Arab countries in 2011, alongside coordination among the movement's branches in pursuit of some of the organization's objectives. This pattern of alignment also continued following the fall of the MB's rule in Egypt in 2013. Branches of the organization across Arab countries issued statements expressing support for the group in Egypt and criticizing the developments that led to its removal from power.

The organization's branch in Jordan described the events in Egypt as a "heinous coup,"<sup>(25)</sup> while the General Supervisor of the MB in Syria Riad al-Shaqfa characterized the developments as dangerous and likely to generate significant instability, warning that a return to military rule would constitute a grave mis-

take.<sup>(26)</sup> The MB in Sudan described the events as a coup directed against Arab and Islamic political will and linked them to efforts aimed at preserving the Zionist regime in occupied Palestine through regional actors allied with Jews and Americans.<sup>(27)</sup>

Meanwhile, the Yemeni Islah Party organized a demonstration in the capital, Sana'a, condemning the developments in Egypt after the fall of the MB's rule.<sup>(28)</sup> The organization's branch in Iraq, represented by the Iraqi Islamic Party, issued a statement describing the events as a blatant coup against democracy, and an attempt to undermine what it called the blessed Egyptian revolution.<sup>(29)</sup> Likewise, the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia condemned the events, describing them as a clear coup against legitimacy.<sup>(30)</sup>

In a similar vein, Muhammad Reda Benkhaldoun, head of the international relations department of the Moroccan Justice and Development Party, stated that the events in Egypt constituted a military coup and an attack on legitimacy.<sup>(31)</sup> A number of individuals affiliated with the MB in Gulf countries also participated in statements condemning the events and describing them as a coup prohibited under Islamic law.<sup>(32)</sup>

### **The Fragmentation of the MB's Organizational Structure After the Coup in Egypt**

The MB is currently undergoing an unprecedented phase of fragmentation and organizational weakness as a result of political and security pressures imposed on it in numerous Arab and Islamic countries, particularly in Egypt, where the movement's Guidance Bureau is headquartered. These circumstances have contributed to restricting organizational coordination between the Guidance Bureau in Egypt and the movement's branches abroad. At the same time, internal disputes emerged among members of the Guidance Bureau who left Egypt after the organization was designated a terrorist group and many of its leaders faced prosecution in Egyptian courts. These developments fragmented the movement into rival entities that engaged in internal power struggles, ultimately resulting in an open split between the London and Istanbul fronts. Each faction has sought to assert organizational, financial and administrative control over the movement. The London front is led by Abdel-Haq and includes figures such as Osama Suleiman, Media Spokesman Suhaib Abdel-Maqsoud, Mohi el-Din el-Zayt and Helmy el-Gazzar. The Istanbul front, meanwhile, is headed by former Secretary-General Hussein, whose council includes Hammam Youssef, Medhat el-Haddad, Ragab el-Banna, Mamdouh Mabrouk and Media Spokesman Talaat Fahmy.

The internal conflict within the MB became increasingly public after Ibrahim Munir assumed responsibility following the arrest of Mahmoud Ezzat by Egyptian security forces. Ezzat had served as acting supreme guide since the imprisonment of the movement's eighth Supreme Guide Mohamed Badie along with other MB leaders in August 2013. He continued to manage the organization's affairs in strict secrecy until his arrest in August 2020.

After assuming leadership of the organization, Munir issued several decisions, including the abolition of the organization's General Secretariat, based on his interpretation of Article 39 of the group's internal regulations, which provides for the position of secretary-general of the Guidance Bureau to coordinate among bureau members under normal circumstances. As a result, Hussein was removed from his official post within the organization. A further decision established an auxiliary committee to assist the deputy supreme guide, widening the divide between the competing factions. This tension was compounded by the fact that the Istanbul faction, led by Hussein, controlled the movement's financial resources, while the London faction retained influence over important organizational files through its ties with the International Organization of the MB.

As a result of the deepening disagreements and the failure to reach a mutually acceptable settlement, the rival factions agreed to hold internal elections in Istanbul to select the movement's leadership abroad. The elections resulted in the defeat of Hussein and his associates, who subsequently submitted 53 appeals challenging the results on grounds of alleged electoral fraud. However, the election committee rejected all of the appeals. Consequently, the defeated faction refused to acknowledge the outcome and declined to hand over the administrative files under its control. In response, the London faction referred Hussein and several of his associates — including Medhat el-Haddad, Hammam Youssef, Ragab el-Banna, Mamdouh Mabrouk and Mohamed Abdel Wahab — for investigation, citing the movement's internal regulations. The move followed the submission of a memorandum accusing these members of violating the organization's by-laws. The Istanbul faction subsequently convened a meeting in which it decided to remove Munir from his position, relying on internal regulations that prohibit individuals holding a nationality other than Egyptian from assuming the role of supreme guide or acting supreme guide. Munir held both Egyptian and UK citizenship.<sup>(33)</sup>

In November 2022, Munir, the acting supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, died. Following his death, the London faction elected Abdel-Haq as the new acting supreme guide, succeeding Munir. This development reignited the struggle between the rival London and Istanbul factions competing for leadership of the organization.

Hussein and his associates refused to recognize Abdel-Haq's appointment, arguing that the MB possessed a General Shura Council composed of members from both inside and outside Egypt, and that this council had already selected Hussein as acting supreme guide while forming a new administrative body in December, 2022. They emphasized that the matter was an internal Egyptian organizational issue governed by the movement's own regulations and bylaws.<sup>(34)</sup>

The rivalry between the London and Istanbul factions also renewed attention toward a third trend within the MB known as the Current of Change. This current rejects the practices of both competing factions and is largely composed of younger members aligned with the late Mohamed Kamal, founder of the Sawa'ed

Misr Movement, also known as the Hasm Movement, who was killed during a confrontation with Egyptian security forces in 2016. Kamal had previously overseen the organization's specialized armed committees.

The Current of Change publicly announced its presence toward the end of 2022, expressing a desire to remove the older generation of leaders and replace them with new figures drawn from its own ranks. The current based its position on the claim that nearly 80% of the organization's administrative office members remained inside Egypt and were loyal to Kamal, giving the movement's younger generation the capacity to challenge and potentially bring down both the London and Istanbul factions. This current is led by Muhammad Montaser, alongside Yahya Moussa, Muhammad Elhami and Gamal Abdelsattar.

This current adopts violence as a means of change and has called for violent operations in Egypt aimed at overthrowing the regime and securing the release of its members from prison.<sup>(35)</sup> Meanwhile, the organizations affiliated with the International Organization of the MB have appeared unable to resolve the internal conflict affecting the parent organization in Egypt, particularly after the failure of four reconciliation initiatives between the two rival factions. These efforts collapsed amid each faction's insistence on demands that the opposing side viewed as attempts at marginalization and exclusion.<sup>(36)</sup>

### **Limits of Organizational Efficiency and Inconsistency Toward the Israel-Iran War**

The intra-conflict within the MB over leadership positions, influence and financial control has affected the structure of the organization's international network and weakened the Guidance Bureau's authority over the movement's branches in different countries. The acting supreme guide is no longer able to impose the authority and symbolic weight of his office upon the leaders of the organization's branches abroad, nor has the Guidance Bureau remained capable of defining the principal policy orientations of these branches or coordinating their positions on regional and international conflicts.

As a result, the movement has lost one of its most significant instruments for building popular influence and mobilizing Arab and Islamic societies toward its objectives, namely the unification of political positions as a means of exerting pressure on existing governments.

The centralized decision-making process among the MB's branches in different countries — something the Guidance Bureau had long sought to institutionalize through regulations and bylaws — has gradually weakened and become largely ineffective. As a result, the movement is now experiencing a state of confusion and divergence in positions on major regional and international issues between the parent organization in Egypt and its regional branches. This fragmentation became particularly visible in the differing responses of MB-affiliated organizations to the 12-Day War between Iran and Israel.

On June 18, 2025, the London faction, led by acting Supreme Guide Abdel-Haq, issued a statement titled “A Message to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” declaring its full support for Iran in its confrontation with Israel. The statement, issued in the name of the acting supreme guide, opened by affirming, “On behalf of myself and the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), I would like to emphasize our full support for the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of the brutal ‘Israeli’ aggression. I also would like to extend my sincere condolences for all the martyrs, including leaders, scholars, and innocent Iranian citizens.”<sup>(37)</sup>

The same position was adopted by several branches of the MB across the Maghreb region, including the Justice and Development Party in Morocco,<sup>(38)</sup> the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia<sup>(39)</sup> and the Movement of Society for Peace in Algeria,<sup>(40)</sup> in addition to the organization’s branches in Iraq, represented by the Iraqi Islamic Party, and in Lebanon, represented by the Islamic Group.<sup>(41)</sup> These groups publicly declared their support for Iran during the war, justifying their stance on the basis of the Palestinian cause, which they described as transcending all divisions and disagreements among Islamic peoples.

While the Syrian branch of the MB disavowed the statement issued by the London front which declared full support for Iran in its conflict with Israel, the Syrian MB issued its own statement on June 19, 2025.

In its statement, the Syrian branch declared that it disassociated itself from any statement issued in the name of the MB that supports “killers” or defends “criminals,” adding that both sides of the conflict share projects aimed at altering the religion of nations and humiliating peoples. It further stated that the group in Syria maintains an equal distance from all projects of hegemony and influence that have contributed to the destruction of Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon, and rejects alignment with any party perceived as seeking to distort Islam or exploit it for political purposes.<sup>(42)</sup>

The organization’s branch in Yemen, represented by the Yemeni Congregation for Reform Party, also reflected this position through articles and posts by its members published on the party’s official website and on their social media accounts, without issuing a formal statement under the party’s official name.<sup>(43)</sup>

While one faction in the leadership dispute within the MB — the Istanbul front led by former Secretary-General Hussein — remained silent regarding the Israel-Iran war, no clear or explicit position was issued by it or by its senior figures. The MB’s official website is *ikhwanonline.com* and its representatives include Hussein, acting as supreme guide, along with Media Spokesman Fahmy, Ali Hamad, Hassan Saleh, Ahmed Assem and Iman Mahmoud. None issued any statement.<sup>(44)</sup> However, a review of the aforementioned website, as well as the personal social media accounts of members of the Istanbul front, shows no clearly articulated position on the Israel-Iran war. This silence appears notable, given that the organization has historically often taken early and prominent stances on major regional and international developments.

The MB's divergent positions on the Israel-Iran war have also been reflected in the positions of MB-linked actors in the Gulf region. It is difficult to speak of a cohesive, hierarchical organizational structure for the MB in the Gulf; rather, its presence is often described as resembling fragmented media outlets that lack a unified institutional framework.

The Arabian Gulf remains a sensitive sphere of influence that MB-affiliated branches or remnants are generally unable to confront openly, particularly after the noticeable decline of the movement's presence in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and to some extent Bahrain. The situation in Kuwait appears more distinctive through the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM, known by its Arabic acronym *Hadas*), commonly regarded as the political arm of the Kuwaiti MB.

Accordingly, its position — expressed in a brief, cautious and somewhat ambiguous statement — can be interpreted less as an ideological alignment with Iran but more as a political stance broadly consistent with the position attributed to the movement's central leadership in Cairo (often associated with the London–Istanbul divide). It reflects a form of alignment with an axis perceived as opposing Israel, while simultaneously maintaining caution and ambiguity to avoid direct confrontation with Gulf security concerns.

In contrast, Al-Menbar Islamic Society in Bahrain adopted a more critical stance toward Iran, particularly regarding its targeting of Gulf states. Overall, the MB's positions vary according to leadership configurations, temporal and spatial contexts and actors' political interests.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examined the extent to which the Guidance Bureau in Egypt has, since the late 1970s, been able to impose a high degree of centralization over the MB's branches prior to the formulation of any political decision on regional or international issues. This centralization contributed to reinforcing the movement's image as a politically cohesive transnational organization. However, the fragmentation and internal disunity that later characterized the International Organization of the MB — particularly with the escalation of the leadership dispute between the London faction, led by Abdel-Haq, and the Istanbul faction, led by Hussein, as well as the emergence of the Current of Change, which advocates violence as a means of restoring the organization's prominence — has significantly weakened the ability of the parent leadership in Egypt to control the positions of affiliated branches on regional and international political issues. This weakening has, in turn, encouraged some branches to diverge from or openly challenge the political positions of the Guidance Bureau and the Shura Council. The result has been an unusual development within the structure of the International Organization of the MB, reflected in the emergence of clear contradictions in positions regarding the 12-Day War among MB-affiliated organizations. This situation may indicate a possible trajectory toward the disintegration of the international organizational framework and the emergence of more autonomous national structures that no longer recognize the centralized decision-making authority in Egypt.

## Endnotes

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- (6) Salim Yusuf al-Fallahat, *The Islamic Movement in Jordan – The Muslim Brotherhood* (Amman: Dar 'Ammar, 2017), 1/117. [Arabic].
- (7) Mustafa Mashhur was appointed General Guide after the death of the fourth Guide, Muhammad Hamid Abu al-Nasr, in 1996.
- (8) Ali Ashmawi, *The Secret History of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Cairo: Dar al-Zahra, 1st ed., 1989), 206-209.
- (9) Amer al-Shamikh, *The Brotherhood Facts* (Cairo: Islamic Distribution and Publishing House, 1st ed., 2012), 45. [Arabic].
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- (13) Rached Ghannouchi, *From the Experience of the Islamic Movement in Tunisia* (London: Maghreb Center for Research and Translation, 2001), 163-170. [Arabic].
- (14) The most prominent figures participating in this delegation included: Abd al-Rahman Khalifa from Jordan, Jaber Marzouq from Egypt, Said Hawwa and Ghalib Himmat from Syria, and Abdullah al-'Aqil from Saudi Arabia.
- (15) Nafisi, *The Islamic Movement*, 248-249.
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