



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## Lebanon

Lebanon – LBN36736 – Fatah – Fatah al-Islam – Nahr el-Bared – Internal relocation – State protection  
16 June 2010

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### 1. Please provide brief information about Fatah.

Fatah is a Palestinian nationalist political and military group founded in the late 1950s or early 1960s by Palestinian refugees residing in the Persian Gulf.<sup>1</sup> The group was formed to promote the armed struggle to liberate all Palestine from Israeli control.<sup>2</sup> Fatah means “conquest” in Arabic<sup>3</sup> and is a reverse acronym of *harakat al-tahrir al-watani al-filastini* (Palestine Liberation Movement).<sup>4</sup> The group was initially conceived as a nationalist but ideologically neutral entity. Violent disputes later occurred between traditional (rightist) and leftist factions; however, with centrist and leftist factions prevailing and rightist groups splintering off into new groups.<sup>5</sup> Middle East commentator David McDowall states that Fatah was the most important of several groups that emerged at the time from a growing consensus among exiled Palestinians “that only Palestinians would put Palestine first, and thereby recover it”.<sup>6</sup> Fatah, led by Yasir Arafat, initially focused on a:

...basic idea of subordinating political disagreement to the issue of ‘return’ [which] had immense appeal to the refugees, and made Fatah a broad church able to withstand considerable internal disagreements. Fatah took care neither to oppose the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organisation]...nor to allow itself to become identified with it.<sup>7</sup>

Fatah launched its first attack on Israel in 1965<sup>8</sup> and attained a mass following in 1968 after the Battle of Karameh, when it joined with the Jordanian army to (unsuccessfully) oppose an Israeli incursion into the East Bank.<sup>9</sup> Fatah’s exponential growth in popularity

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<sup>1</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 1, 12 November – Attachment 1; ‘Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization’ 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>2</sup> ‘Palestinian rivals: Fatah & Hamas’ 2007, *BBC News* website, 17 June  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/5016012.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5016012.stm) – Accessed 16 June 2010 – Attachment 44

<sup>3</sup> ‘Palestinian rivals: Fatah & Hamas’ 2007, *BBC News* website, 17 June  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/5016012.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5016012.stm) – Accessed 16 June 2010 – Attachment 44

<sup>4</sup> ‘Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization’ 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>5</sup> ‘Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization’ 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2; <sup>5</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 1, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>6</sup> McDowall, D. 1995, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood*, Minority Rights Publications, London, p. 69 – Attachment 3

<sup>7</sup> McDowall, D. 1995, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood*, Minority Rights Publications, London, p. 69-70 – Attachment 3

<sup>8</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 1, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>9</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 1, 12 November – Attachment 1

in the late 1960s helped it assume control of the PLO Executive Committee in 1969; Arafat was elected PLO Chairman and Fatah became the dominant faction of the PLO.<sup>10</sup>

The 1970s and 1980s saw a number of new Palestinian nationalist groups form and others defect from Fatah as a result of ideological differences,<sup>11</sup> with some receiving support from other Arab countries such as Syria and Iraq. The PLO became an umbrella organisation containing many of the disparate groups.<sup>12</sup>

Fatah's leadership was first based in Kuwait, then Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Since the 1990s the organisation has been based in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>13</sup>

In September 1993 the Oslo Accords, signed by Arafat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, established the Palestinian Authority (PA) and granted it the authority to assume partial governmental responsibility in Gaza and portions of the West Bank.<sup>14</sup> The International Crisis Group (ICG) notes that subsequent to the PA's establishment, Fatah made an "uneasy and incomplete transition from national liberation to state-building", with its administrative bodies weakening as the PA's strengthened.<sup>15</sup> Fatah largely became absorbed into the PA rather than existing as a distinct body, as the focus moved from organising and recruitment to institution-building.<sup>16</sup> By the late 1990s only Fatah's senior leadership levels remained intact.<sup>17</sup>

Online military database *Global Security* states that Fatah's primary political body is the Central Committee, paralleled by the Revolutionary Council (the organisation's decision-making body).<sup>18</sup> *Global Security* states that three militia-type organisations have emerged from Fatah:

the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, a designated foreign terrorist organization that emerged during the intifada that began in September 2000, and takes a violent approach to force Israel to end its occupation; Force 17, a personal security force for PLO leaders that was involved in attacks on Israeli targets in the early 1980s; and the Tanzim (or organization) militia, which is considered to be an armed offshoot of Fatah.<sup>19</sup>

In the early 2000s the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade claimed responsibility for a number of attacks against targets within Israel. At the same time, Fatah members joined with reformists to pressure Arafat to combat perceptions of corruption and mismanagement within the PA and to appoint a prime minister to share executive authority. Fatah thus

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<sup>10</sup> McDowall, D. 1995, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood*, Minority Rights Publications, London, p. 70 – Attachment 3; 'Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization' 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>11</sup> 'Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization' 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>12</sup> McDowall, D. 1995, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood*, Minority Rights Publications, London, p. 70-71 – Attachment 3

<sup>13</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 1, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>14</sup> 'Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization' 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>15</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 2, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>16</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 2, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>17</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 2, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>18</sup> 'Al-Fatah' 2010, *GlobalSecurity* website <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/al-fatah.htm> – Accessed 16 June 2010 – Attachment 43

<sup>19</sup> 'Al-Fatah' 2010, *GlobalSecurity* website <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/al-fatah.htm> – Accessed 16 June 2010 – Attachment 43

came to represent a contradictory combination of elements conducting guerrilla attacks, and other members pushing for political reform and security.<sup>20</sup>

Fatah, PLO and PA leader Yaser Arafat died in 2004, effectively exposing “the degree to which [Fatah] had lost its purpose and any semblance of institutional coherence, as well as the extent to which it had come to depend on one man”.<sup>21</sup> Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas replaced Arafat as Fatah Chair and in 2005 was democratically elected to the position of Chairman of the PLO.<sup>22</sup>

In 2006 Hamas’ (the Islamic Resistance Movement, a fundamentalist group that had benefited from mainstream PLO defections in the West Bank and Gaza in the 1990s), Reform and Change lists won 74 of 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections.<sup>23</sup> Hamas formed a national unity government (NUG) with Fatah in March 2007, but in June staged a violent takeover of PA government installations in Gaza, killing hundreds of Fatah supporters and PA security personnel.<sup>24</sup> President Abbas dismissed the NUG and appointed a cabinet of independents. The cabinet governs the West Bank, while elements of the former Hamas government have formed a ruling authority in Gaza.<sup>25</sup>

Presently, President Abbas and his cabinet control PA security forces in the West Bank, while Hamas controls security forces in Gaza. Other armed factions and terrorist organisations are also active in Gaza.<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch reports that Hamas security forces target Fatah-affiliated officials in Gaza and Fatah security forces target Hamas members and supporters in the West Bank.<sup>27</sup>

In May 2010, a Fatah official warned that the group does not rule out the possibility of resuming an armed struggle against Israel.<sup>28</sup>

### **Fatah in Lebanon**

Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon date from the 1948 Palestine War which displaced 300-350 000 Palestinians. The Palestinian liberation movement enjoyed early support in Lebanon in poor Shia-Muslim villages in the south, and in both Sunni and Shia populations in Beirut and neighbouring towns, particularly low-income areas.<sup>29</sup>

In 1969 the PLO was expelled from Jordan (where it had been based) and relocated its headquarters to Lebanon. Consequently large tracts of the south of the country came under the PLO’s informal control. By November the Lebanese government and the PLO reached a formal agreement that granted the PLO autonomous control of the refugee camps and

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<sup>20</sup> ‘Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization’ 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>21</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 3, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>22</sup> International Crisis Group 2009, *Palestine: Salvaging Fatah: Middle East Report No. 91*, p. 3, 12 November – Attachment 1

<sup>23</sup> ‘Palestinian Authority/Palestine Liberation Organization’ 2010, CQ Press Electronic Library, Political Handbook of the World Online Edition. – Attachment 2

<sup>24</sup> US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Israel and the Occupied Territories*, 11 March – Attachment 4

<sup>25</sup> US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Israel and the Occupied Territories*, 11 March – Attachment 4

<sup>26</sup> US Department of State 2010, *2009 Human Rights Report: Israel and the Occupied Territories*, 11 March – Attachment 4

<sup>27</sup> Stork, J. 2008, *Occupied Palestinian Territories: New Arrests Highlight Abuses by Hamas, Fatah*, Human Rights Watch website, 29 July <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/07/29/occupied-palestinian-territories-new-arrests-highlight-abuses-hamas-fatah> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 5

<sup>28</sup> Abu Toameh, K. and Keinon, H. 2010, ‘Fatah may resume ‘armed struggle’’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 23 May – Attachment 10

<sup>29</sup> McDowall, D. 1995, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood*, Minority Rights Publications, London, p. 72 – Attachment 3

allowed it to continue to pursue liberation from Israel in Lebanon.<sup>30</sup> The PLO presence in Lebanon came to be known as 'Fatahland' – a Palestinian 'state within a state'.<sup>31</sup>

As Fatah has weakened as a political force and Islamist groups have grown in popularity, the refugee camps have come to be governed by a number of Palestinian groups and armed factions, including the coalition of Fatah (comprising Fatah, Palestine Liberation Front, Palestinian Popular Struggle Front); the groups comprising the PLO; and Islamic forces including Ansar, Islamic Philanthropic Association, Al Jamaa al-Islamiyya, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP/DFLP), Palestinian National Alliance, Arab Liberation Front, Saaqa, Fatah Revolutionary Council, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah Intifada (an Islamist splinter group of mainstream Fatah).<sup>32</sup> Fatah al-Islam seized three Fatah al Intifada compounds in Nahr El Bared camp when it entered Lebanon in 2006.<sup>33</sup>

An article published in *Time Magazine* in February 2009 reports that Fatah's popularity in Lebanon has steadily declined among Palestinians since Israel's incursion into Gaza in early 2009.<sup>34</sup> The article notes that "the failure of Abbas' negotiation strategy to deliver any meaningful change for the prospects of Lebanon's Palestinian refugees has led many – like their kin in the West Bank and Gaza – to transfer their support to Hamas and other radical Islamist groups".

Sources indicate that Fatah is now clashing with Islamist forces within Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.<sup>35</sup>

## **2. Please provide updated information about the activities of Fatah-al-Islam in the Nahr El Bared area and over Lebanon in general.**

Sources are inconsistent as to whether FAI maintains an active presence in Nahr el-Bared and as to what other areas the group is currently active in. Some sources indicate that FAI was effectively debilitated by the events of 2007 in Nahr El Bared; however, recent sources describe attacks and activities by the group since the conflict, in areas adjacent to Nahr el-Bared as well as other areas throughout Lebanon. Sources were also located that posit links between FAI and other militant Islamist groups operating in Lebanon, potentially broadening the geographical spread of the group's influence and/or activities.

As noted above, Research Response LBN34442 of February 2009 provides a thorough overview of FAI's origins and activities in Nahr el-Bared up to the conflict of 2007.<sup>36</sup>

The response to this question will be divided into two sections, firstly examining Fatah-al-Islam's (FAIs) presence and activities in Nahr El Bared since the 2007 confrontation and secondly the group's presence in Lebanon more broadly.

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<sup>30</sup> McDowall, D. 1995, *The Palestinians: The Road to Nationhood*, Minority Rights Publications, London, p. 72 – Attachment 3

<sup>31</sup> Shafie, S. 2007, *FMO Research Guide: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, July <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo018/> – Accessed 18 March 2010 – Attachment 6

<sup>32</sup> Shafie, S. 2007, *FMO Research Guide: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*, July <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo018/> – Accessed 18 March 2010 – Attachment 6

<sup>33</sup> Haddad, S. 2010, 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>34</sup> Aysha, R. 2009, 'Fatah and Hamas: heading for a showdown in Lebanon', *Time Magazine* – Attachment 11

<sup>35</sup> 'Clashes Kill 2 At Lebanon Refugee Camp' 2010, *Arabia 2000*, 15 February, via EBSCO (Newspaper Source Plus) – Accessed 8 June 2010 – Attachment 8; Lyons, J. 2009, 'Bomb kills senior Fatah official', *The Australian*, 25 March, via EBSCO (Newspaper Source Plus) – Accessed 8 June 2010 – Attachment 9; 'Fatah member killed in Lebanon refugee camp' 2009, *Agence France Presse*, 18 June – Attachment 14; Daragahi, B. and Rafei, R. 2009, 'Palestinian leader killed in Lebanon bombing', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 March – Attachment 12; 'Factbox – Risks to stability in Lebanon' 2009, *Reuters*, 21 May – Attachment 13

<sup>36</sup> RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response LBN34442*, 23 February – Attachment 39

## **Fatah al-Islam in Nahr El Bared**

A number of sources indicate that the Lebanese security forces were successful in flushing out FAI militants from Nahr el-Bared and the surrounding area during the 2007 conflict. Some reports were located, however, that indicate the group may have maintained or be re-establishing a presence in the area.

In his 2010 journal article 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', Simon Haddad states that the battle at Nahr el-Bared resulted in the eradication of most FAI cells by police forces and led to the division of FAI into 13 small groups who fled the area, although Haddad does not specify where the small groups fled to.<sup>37</sup>

Sources are inconsistent regarding the continued presence of FAI in Nahr el-Bared. An article published in *Now Lebanon* in October 2009 reports that the fighting at Nahr al-Bared "resulted in a rare victory for the Lebanese army". The army assumed full control of the refugee camp and has maintained it since, guarding the camp entry and conducting ongoing raids and searches.<sup>38</sup> The article goes on to report, however, that the army and government fear that FAI has maintained sleeper cells in the area; however, residents contend that there is no FAI presence at all in the camp anymore.<sup>39</sup>

In March 2009 online publication *Electronic Lebanon* reported that the Lebanese army had erected a barrier around the Baddawi refugee camp, which is located near Nahr al-Bared, in order to prevent smuggling and the infiltration of Islamic extremists into the camp. Many of the 33,000 Palestinian refugees displaced by the fighting at Nahr al-Bared fled to the nearby Baddawi camp, resulting in its population nearly doubling from 16,000 to 30,000.<sup>40</sup> The article states that FAI is reported to have retained a presence in Baddawi since the 2007 conflict in Nahr al-Bared; Palestinian leaders in the camp, however, deny this charge.<sup>41</sup> *UPI* has also reported that FAI have been regrouping in North Lebanon since the Nahr al-Bared conflict.<sup>42</sup>

## **Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon**

Reports were located indicating that FAI maintains a presence in Lebanon, and has continued to launch attacks since its claimed defeat in Nahr al Bared in 2007. The group is reported to be active in other Palestinian refugee camps, particularly Badawi and Ain al-Hilweh, and may have sleeper cells in a number of other parts of the country.

The extent of FAI's presence in a variety of regions in Lebanon prior to the Nahr al-Bared conflicts illustrated in a *Jane's Intelligence Review* report from 2007. The report states that FAI:

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<sup>37</sup> Haddad, S. 2010, 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, p. 558, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>38</sup> Elali, N. 2009, 'Nahr al-Bared: Security vs. standard of living', *Now Lebanon*, 2 October <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=117435> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 16

<sup>39</sup> Elali, N. 2009, 'Nahr al-Bared: Security vs. standard of living', *Now Lebanon*, 2 October <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=117435> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 16

<sup>40</sup> Moor, A. and Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 34

<sup>41</sup> Moor, A. and Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 34

<sup>42</sup> Ismael, M. 2009, 'Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza', *UPI* website, 2 November [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 20

... is headquartered in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp but is thought to have a small presence in other camps, such as Badawi in Tripoli, Bourj al-Barajneh and Shatila in Beirut and Ain al-Hilweh in Sidon. Cells of sympathisers are believed to exist in Sunni areas of Lebanon such as Tripoli and the province of Akkar in the north and in the Sunni towns and villages of the Bekaa Valley.

... An unknown number of Lebanese Sunnis living in north Lebanon are thought to have been recruited by Fatah al-Islam and operate in small cells. Some Jihadist militants were recruited from groups similar to Fatah al-Islam, such as Jund al-Shaam and Asbat al-Ansar, found in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.<sup>43</sup>

Further, in his 2010 article on FAI, Haddad states the following of FAI's geographical organisation prior to the confrontation at Nahr El Bared:

The FI network consisted of an independent dormant cell structure in several northern regions that could be activated to support outside operatives logistically and militarily as needed to carry out attacks. The firm observance of a cell configuration had enabled FI to retain a remarkably high level of confidentiality and safety. The FI structure has seven distinct but interconnected cells scattered in several Northern Lebanese regions: Dedeh, Kalamoun, Akkar, Tripoli and Nahr El Bared.<sup>44</sup>

No information was located to confirm any current presence of FAI in the above regions, aside from the reports located below on FAI activities in Tripoli and Ain al-Hilweh.

In his 2010 article on FAI in Lebanon, Simon Haddad states that of the 229 individuals arrested by Lebanese security forces in the aftermath of the Nahr al-Bared conflict, all lived in Lebanon; almost half lived in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp. Over a quarter lived in Tripoli, around 15 percent in other northern areas, and another 15 percent in "other parts of the country".<sup>45</sup>

A number of sources identify the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp in the south of Lebanon as an area where FAI continues to operate. *UPI* reported in November 2009 that FAI have been regrouping in North Lebanon since the Nahr al-Bared conflict, as well as establishing roots in the Ein al-Hilweh camp in Sidon in the south.<sup>46</sup> In the same month *Xinhua* reported the arrest of FAI member Fadi Ghassan Ibrahim (known as Sikamo) outside Ein el-Hilweh. He was arrested for involvement in bomb attacks and the formation of terrorist cells.<sup>47</sup> Ahmed Moor and Deen Sharp report in *Electronic Lebanon* in 2010 that a recent spate of inter-factional violence between Palestinians in Ein al-Hilweh led Hamas representative Ali Barakeh to warn that, "[w]e won't allow Ein el-Hilweh to become another Nahr al-Bared".<sup>48</sup>

Two other sources identify Palestinian refugee camps generally as locations of FAI activity. The Jamestown Foundations' *Terrorism Monitor* reported in October 2009 that members of FAI had infiltrated several Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon with the intent of carrying out attacks on peacekeepers working for the United Nations Interim

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<sup>43</sup> Jane's Information Group 2007, 'Fatah al-Islam', *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* website, 26 June – Attachment 37

<sup>44</sup> Haddad, S. 2010, 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, p. 557, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>45</sup> Haddad, S. 2010, 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, p. 562, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>46</sup> Ismael, M. 2009, 'Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza', *UPI* website, 2 November

[http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 20

<sup>47</sup> 'Lebanon issues arrest warrant against Fatah al-Islam member' 2009, *Xinhua*, 19 November – Attachment 28

<sup>48</sup> Moor, A. and Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 34

Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), Palestinian and Lebanese officials.<sup>49</sup> An article published in *Ya Libnan* in July 2009 attributes the increased popularity of Islamist ideology in refugee camps to the lack of resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the slow decline of the PLO's hegemony in Palestinian refugee camps, the Fatah-Hamas conflict and rising poverty and unemployment.<sup>50</sup>

Other reports indicate that FAI is carrying out operations in Tripoli, with bombings in the city in August and September 2009 attributed to the group.<sup>51</sup> The *Christian Science Monitor* reported in May 2007 that Tripoli, traditionally a conservative Sunni Muslim city, had experienced a recent arrival of hundreds of foreign militants, including many veterans of the current war in Iraq. The article states that some have joined FAI.<sup>52</sup> A February 2009 article from the Lebanon *Daily Star* reports that "some analysts believed that the group had been crippled by the losses it suffered during and after the battle" at Nahr el-Bared, but then attributes the August and September 2008 Tripoli bus bombings to Fatah al-Islam, stating that "the militants burst back onto the radar of counter-terrorism officials in August, when they bombed a bus full of Lebanese soldiers in Tripoli".<sup>53</sup>

Further articles were located that describe the continued operation of FAI in Lebanon, but do not identify particular areas of operation. An article published in January 2010 in *NOW Lebanon*, for example, states that al-Qaeda militants have been plotting terrorist attacks against state institutions and foreign missions in coordination with FAI<sup>54</sup>, but does not indicate where such attacks are being planned. *Reuters* reported in August 2009 that while FAI was defeated in the battle at Nahr al-Bared in 2007, Muslim militants linked to or inspired by al Qaeda have become more active in Lebanon, with several bomb attacks on army targets since the Nahr al-Bared conflict blamed on FAI remnants.<sup>55</sup>

Three sources were located that posit links between FAI and other militant Islamist groups operating in Lebanon, potentially broadening the geographical spread of the group's influence and/or activities. Articles published in *Reuters* and the United Nations *Integrated Regional Information Network* (IRIN) in June and August 2007, respectively, note that FAI is partly comprised of foreign Arabs (in addition to some Lebanese and Palestinians), including veteran 'jihadis' from Iraq and fighters from Saudi Arabia who follow the Wahhabi ideology of 'takfiri', which condemns to death anyone who does not follow their strict interpretation of Islam. Consequently the groups' ideas have resonated with other Sunni militant groups, such as Jund al-Sham (Soldiers of Greater Syria) which

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<sup>49</sup> al-Shishani, M. B. 2009, 'Attempt on the Life of Lebanon's Grand Mufti Marks the Return of Salafi-Jihadi Operations to Lebanon', *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 7, Issue 30, Jamestown Foundation website, 1 October [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=35562](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35562) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 19

<sup>50</sup> Aizenstat, J. 2009, 'The other force in Lebanon', *Ya Libnan*, 26 July [http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2009/07/the\\_other\\_force.php](http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2009/07/the_other_force.php) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 24

<sup>51</sup> Ismael, M. 2009, 'Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza', *UPI* website, 2 November [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 20

<sup>52</sup> Blanford, N. 2007, 'In Lebanon's camps, rising sympathy for Islamists', *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 May – Attachment 29. See also Haddad, S. 2010, 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7, which notes the pre-Nahr el-Bared existence of FAI cells in Tripoli (p. 557), as well as the arrest of FAI members in Tripoli since the 2007 conflict (p.562).

<sup>53</sup> Wander, A. 2009, 'Trial of 29 terror suspects kicks off in Beirut', *The Daily Star*, 18 February [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=1&article\\_id=99436#](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=1&article_id=99436#) – Accessed 18 February 2009 – Attachment 41

<sup>54</sup> <sup>55</sup> 'Lebanon arrests al Qaeda militant near refugee camp' 2009, *Reuters*, 19 August – Attachment 30

has a presence in the south of Lebanon.<sup>56</sup> The *Reuters* article comments that while FAI does not have a big Lebanese membership, it may have some “emotional reach”, especially in the north which “is the heart of conservative Sunni Islam” in Lebanon.<sup>57</sup> The *Terrorism Monitor* article posits a potential link between FAI and other “al-Qaeda affiliated groups” and speculates that “Fatah al-Islam continues to operate in Lebanon two years after their defeat”.<sup>58</sup>

Nicholas Blanford reported in the *Christian Science Monitor* in 2007 that while the bulk of FAI was based in Nahr al-Bared camp, the group has an “unknown number of militants and sympathisers operating elsewhere in Lebanon”.<sup>59</sup> In the weeks preceding the Lebanese army’s attack in Nahr al-Bared, FAI senior commander Abu Hurreira declared that the group was prepared to “blow up Beirut and every other place in Lebanon” if the army carried out its threat to storm the camp and defeat the militants. Hurreira also stated that FAI “has bases and sleeper cells in all the Palestinian refugee camps in the various regions of Lebanon”.

### 3. Is there any area in Lebanon where Fatah-al-Islam does not operate?

It is not possible to provide a definitive answer as to where FAI do and do not operate in Lebanon. The information provided in question two indicates that FAI has been or may currently be active in the following areas: Nahr el-Bared<sup>60</sup>, the Baddawi refugee camp (near Nahr el-Bared)<sup>61</sup>; Tripoli<sup>62</sup>; the northern province of Akkar<sup>63</sup>; the Ein al-Hilweh refugee camp (in Sidon in the south)<sup>64</sup>; the Bourj al-Baranjneh and Shatila refugee camps

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<sup>56</sup> Perry, T. 2007, ‘North Lebanon fertile ground for Sunni militants’, *Reuters*, 13 June <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL13858058> – Accessed 10 March 2010 – Attachment 26; ‘Tense times as rival Islamist groups vie for control of refugee camp’ 2007, *Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) - United Nations*, 5 August – Attachment 27

<sup>57</sup> Perry, T. 2007, ‘North Lebanon fertile ground for Sunni militants’, *Reuters*, 13 June <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL13858058> – Accessed 10 March 2010 – Attachment 26

<sup>58</sup> al-Shishani, M. B. 2009, ‘Attempt on the Life of Lebanon’s Grand Mufti Marks the Return of Salafi-Jihadi Operations to Lebanon’, *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 7, Issue 30, Jamestown Foundation website, 1 October [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=35562](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35562) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 19

<sup>59</sup> Blanford, N. 2007, ‘In Lebanon’s camps, rising sympathy for Islamists’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 May – Attachment 29

<sup>60</sup> Elali, N. 2009, ‘Nahr al-Bared: Security vs. standard of living’, *Now Lebanon*, 2 October <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=117435> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 16;

Moor, A. and Sharp, D. 2010, ‘Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp’, *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 34; Ismael, M.

2009, ‘Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza’, *UPI* website, 2 November [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 20; Haddad, S. 2010, ‘Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, p. 557, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>61</sup> Jane’s Information Group 2007, ‘Fatah al-Islam’, *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism* website, 26 June – Attachment 37; Moor, A. and Sharp, D. 2010, ‘Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp’, *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 34

<sup>62</sup> Ismael, M. 2009, ‘Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza’, *UPI* website, 2 November [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 20; Jane’s Information Group 2007, ‘Fatah al-Islam’, *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism* website, 26 June – Attachment 37; Blanford, N. 2007, ‘In Lebanon’s camps, rising sympathy for Islamists’, *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 May – Attachment 29

<sup>63</sup> Haddad, S. 2010, ‘Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, p. 557, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7; Jane’s Information Group 2007, ‘Fatah al-Islam’, *Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism* website, 26 June – Attachment 37

<sup>64</sup> Ismael, M. 2009, ‘Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza’, *UPI* website, 2 November [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/11/02/Jihadist-groups-infiltrate-Lebanon-Gaza/UPI-33581257200980/)

in Beirut<sup>65</sup>; Sunni towns and villages in the Bekaa Valley<sup>66</sup>, and in an unknown number of sleeper cells in unknown locations elsewhere in the country.<sup>67</sup> One source also indicates that FAI may be linking up operationally with and/or inspiring other militant Islamist groups, potentially further expanding its reach in Lebanon.<sup>68</sup>

Thus if FAI cells do exist in Lebanon, and are linking up with other emerging Islamist groups in the country, it is not possible to identify any particular part of Lebanon in which FAI, or groups linked to/inspired by it, do not have a presence.

#### 4. How effective are the authorities in dealing with Fatah-al-Islam?

Sources indicate that the Lebanese authorities have had some success in locating and prosecuting FAI members suspected of involvement in the Nahr el-Bared conflict in 2007. The information included above in questions two and three, however, indicates that FAI has maintained a presence in Lebanon in spite of being defeated at Nahr el-Bared, raising questions as to the security forces' continued effectiveness in eradicating the group.

While FAI forces were defeated at Nahr al-Bared, the battle demonstrated the group's strength as a guerrilla force, with 300 militants holding their own against over 11 000 Lebanese army troops for four months.<sup>69</sup> An article published in *Now Lebanon* in October 2009 calls the success of the Lebanese army at Nahr al-Bared in 2007 "a rare victory."<sup>70</sup> A July 2007 *Asia Times* article states that, "[t]he spectacular failure of the Lebanese security forces to crush a small group of militants at the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp in a short space of time is an obvious reflection of the weakness and fragility of the Lebanese state".<sup>71</sup>

A number of sources were located that report on FAI-targeted law enforcement efforts subsequent to Nahr al-Bared. A 2008 *Carnegie Endowment* report on FAI states that Lebanese security authorities arrested 227 people accused of belonging to the group in the aftermath of the Nahr al-bared conflict.<sup>72</sup>

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[33581257200980/](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/33581257200980/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 20; 'Lebanon issues arrest warrant against Fatah al-Islam member' 2009, *Xinhua*, 19 November – Attachment 28

<sup>65</sup> Jane's Information Group 2007, 'Fatah al-Islam', *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* website, 26 June – Attachment 37

<sup>66</sup> Jane's Information Group 2007, 'Fatah al-Islam', *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* website, 26 June – Attachment 37

<sup>67</sup> 'Lebanon arrests al Qaeda militant near refugee camp' 2009, *Reuters*, 19 August – Attachment 30; Blanford, N. 2007, 'In Lebanon's camps, rising sympathy for Islamists', *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 May – Attachment 29; Elali, N. 2009, 'Nahr al-Bared: Security vs. standard of living', *Now Lebanon*, 2 October

<http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=117435> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 16;

<sup>67</sup> Moor, A. and Sharp, D. 2010, 'Lebanese army encircling Baddawi refugee camp', *Electronic Lebanon*, 26 March <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article11166.shtml> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 34

<sup>68</sup> al-Shishani, M. B. 2009, 'Attempt on the Life of Lebanon's Grand Mufti Marks the Return of Salafi-Jihadi Operations to Lebanon', *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 7, Issue 30, Jamestown Foundation website, 1 October

[http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=35562](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=35562) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 19; Perry, T. 2007, 'North Lebanon fertile ground for Sunni militants', *Reuters*, 13 June

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<sup>69</sup> Butters, A. L. 2009, 'Palestinians in Lebanon: a forgotten people', *Time Magazine*, 28 February – Attachment 32

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<sup>71</sup> Abedin, M. 2007, 'Lebanon bending under extremist challenge', *AsiaTimes* Online website, 4 July [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle\\_East/IG04Ak01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/IG04Ak01.html) Accessed 16 June 2010 – Attachment 42

<sup>72</sup> Abdel-Latif, O. 2008, 'Lebanon's Sunni Islamists – A Growing Force', *Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Endowment website, No. 6, January

Lebanese publication *Ya Libnan* reported in July 2009 that the Lebanese Army had arrested 10 suspects accused of plotting attacks against the United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL), all reportedly members of FAI.<sup>73</sup> In the same month the Lebanon *Daily Star* reported that 12 FAI members were sentenced to life in prison for terrorism after being found guilty of several criminal acts.<sup>74</sup>

In August 2009 a member of FAI arrested during the Nahr al-Bared conflict in 2007 escaped from Roumieh high security prison<sup>75</sup>; however, security officials re-captured the man the following day.<sup>76</sup>

Lebanese authorities arrested 21 suspected members of FAI in October 2009 for bombings in Tripoli in August and September that killed 25 people.<sup>77</sup>

A number of sources were located describing the continued efforts of Lebanese authorities to hunt down FAI members in 2010:

- In January, the *Sina* news website published an article describing the arrest of a suspected FAI member in Beirut accused of plotting terrorist operations.<sup>78</sup>
- *Lebanon Now* reported in January that another suspected FAI member, accused of being responsible for providing weapons and funding to fighters in Nahr al-Bared in 2007, was arrested by Lebanese authorities.<sup>79</sup>
- In March 2010 Lebanese newspaper *The Daily Star* reported that security forces in Zahrani had arrested a Palestinian for working with a terrorist unit operating with FAI.<sup>80</sup>
- In May 2010 the *News24* website published an *AFP* report stating that a Lebanese military court had sentenced 31 alleged- FAI members to prison terms of up to 15 years for terrorism. 19 of the 31 were in custody; the remaining 12 were sentenced in absentia.<sup>81</sup>

One source indicated, however, that FAI members may on occasion encounter a more liberal attitude from Lebanese security personnel. Web-based news publication *Middle East Online* reported in April 2010 that Roumieh prison has experienced rioting instigated

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[http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/CMCEC6\\_abdellatif\\_lebanon\\_final.pdf](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/CMCEC6_abdellatif_lebanon_final.pdf) – Accessed 15 June 2010 – Attachment 36. Simon Haddad states that 229 individuals were arrested – Haddad, S. 2010, 'Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Anatomy of a Terrorist Organisation', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 13 May, accessed via Informaworld 8 June 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>73</sup> Aizenstat, J. 2009, 'The other force in Lebanon', *Ya Libnan*, 26 July

[http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2009/07/the\\_other\\_force.php](http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2009/07/the_other_force.php) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 24

<sup>74</sup> '12 Fatah al-Islam members sentenced to life in prison', *The Daily Star*, 10 July – Attachment 31

<sup>75</sup> 'Inmate flees in Lebanon jail break' 2009, *Al Jazeera* website, 19 August

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/08/2009818183730156563.html> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 18

<sup>76</sup> 'Fatah al Islam fugitive captured' 2010, *UPI Emerging Threats*, 19 August – Accessed 8 June 2010 via EBSCO (Newspaper Source Plus) – Attachment 25

<sup>77</sup> Ismael, M. 2009, 'Jihadist groups infiltrate Lebanon, Gaza', *UPI* website, 2 November

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<sup>78</sup> 'Suspected Fatah al-Islam terrorist arrested in Lebanon: report' 2010, *Sina* website, 8 January

<http://english.sina.com/world/2010/0108/298441.html> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 22

<sup>79</sup> ; 'Lebanon detains wanted Islamist' 2010, *The Age* website, 8 January <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-world/lebanon-detains-wanted-islamist-20100108-lyv6.html> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 16

<sup>80</sup> Zaatari, M., 'Palestinian with Fatah al-Islam links apprehended in Zahrani', *The Daily Star*, Zawya website, 16 March [http://www.zawya.com/Story.cfm/sidDS160310\\_dsart12\(3\)/Palestinian%20with%20Fatah%20al-Islam%20links%20apprehended%20in%20Zahrani%20/](http://www.zawya.com/Story.cfm/sidDS160310_dsart12(3)/Palestinian%20with%20Fatah%20al-Islam%20links%20apprehended%20in%20Zahrani%20/) – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 23

<sup>81</sup> 'Lebanon jails 31 for terrorism' 2010, *AFP*, News 24 website, 12 May,

<http://www.news24.com/World/News/Lebanon-jails-31-for-terrorism-20100512> – Accessed 10 June 2010 – Attachment 21

by the growing number of FAI inmates since the second half of 2009. The article claims that FAI inmates are treated more leniently, including being given their own water pump which they use to sell water to other inmates; more relaxed visiting hours, and are permitted visits from religious figures believed to be smuggling in phones and electronic equipment.<sup>82</sup> The claims are corroborated by a journalist who visited the prison herself in an article published on the *International Media Support* website in February 2010.<sup>83</sup>

Simon Haddad's 2010 article on FAI notes that the group initially "took advantage of the permissive political and security conditions in Lebanon to provide training for the members who allegedly were to be dispatched to Iraq and Palestine".<sup>84</sup> The article also notes that there have been political allegations within Lebanon that FAI was backed by the Lebanese authorities as part of an effort to support Lebanese Sunnis and counterweight the power of Shia Hezbollah. The Internal Security Forces (ISF) has been accused of being a Sunni militia itself.<sup>85</sup> A July 2007 *Asia Times* article also notes that divisions in Lebanese politics have led supporters of the government to tie FAI to al-Qaeda (and inevitably to Syria), while the Hezbollah-led opposition accuse the ruling March 14 Alliance of supporting Fatah al-Islam and other extremist Sunni groups.<sup>86</sup>

Question four of Research Response *LBN32112* of August 2007 provides information on the protection available to Palestinians in Lebanon by the Lebanese authorities, and notes that in cases of disputes outside camps, Palestinians ostensibly have access to legal protection equivalent to Lebanese nationals, though their access is restricted in practice because of discrimination and lack of financial resources.<sup>87</sup>

Question four of Research Response *LBN36172* of March 2010 provides an overview of the capacity of the Lebanese security forces generally, and notes that the security apparatus is not immune to the sectarian divisions within Lebanese society, which can affect the impartiality with which it provides protection, further increasing the likelihood that Lebanese citizens will seek protection proffered by sectarian communities rather than from state bodies.<sup>88</sup>

## Attachments

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