

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism

Influence and Challenges for Swedish Society

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Executive summary

This is an Executive Summary of the Swedish Defence University report entitled *Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism – Influence and Challenges for Swedish Society*. This 265-page report was originally published in June 2018. This Executive Summary provides a short description of the framework of the assignment and then there is a selection of major passages of the report throughout the various chapters. For the full version please visit the Swedish report: <http://fhs.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1231645/FULLTEXT02.pdf>.

Preface

In June 2018, the Swedish Defence University received an assignment from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) to provide an analysis of propaganda messages and influence operations within Salafi-Jihadi milieus in Sweden. The focus of the assignment was to show if and how Salafi-Jihadi messages were actively promoted and spread in Sweden and which concrete methods were being used. Influence operations within the Salafi-Jihadi milieus in Europe is a relatively new research area. Today research studies and focus on this important issue is really missing within a Swedish context.

The aim of this MSB-assignment was to improve the ability of national and local government ability as well as other actors' awareness to identify and respond to Islamist actors and their different forms of information operations in order to craft and support operational and prevention measures. A principal aim was to improve knowledge about information operations pursued by Salafi-Jihadi inspired actors targeting secular and religious communities and individuals in Sweden. This involved focus on social media environments alongside physical spheres where Salafi-Jihadism manifests itself.

This comprehensive and analytically thorough report have broadened the perspective of the complex relationship between Salafist and Salafi-Jihadist environments. As such, it has opened up an entirely new research area which has hitherto not been done before in a Swedish context. It provides substantive, new knowledge about specific forms of Salafism and information operations within this ideological spectrum and milieus and specifically the interrelationship between different forms of Salafism within Sweden. The resultant conclusion provides important new avenues for further research.

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1. Introduction

The ideological interpretation within Salafism, that is labelled Salafi-Jihadism, has over the years attracted significant attention within academic circles and policymaking. Ever since the 11 September attacks in 2001 but especially since the establishment of the Islamic State (IS) and its subsequent collapse in Syria and Iraq in 2017, the focus on Salafism is steadily increasing. Both al-Qaida as a global jihadist ideological movement and its associated regional and localized manifestations and the Islamic State (IS) have their ideological origins within Salafism. This literalist Salafi interpretation within Sunni Islam is crucial to understand in order to confront the current jihadist challenge. All Salafist are not jihadists, but all jihadists are Salafists. Salafism within Europa is increasing and the Salafi-Jihadist milieus in Sweden have increased tenfold over the last seven years according to the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO).

The public debate about Salafism has elevated following the series of terrorist attacks occurring in Europe the last fifteen years from the Madrid attack in 2004, London-bombings in 2005 to IS-related terrorist attacks more recently with attacks against Charlie Hebdo and in Paris in 2015, Brussels, Nice and Berlin during 2016 and London, Manchester, Barcelona during 2017. Also, terror attacks occurred in the Nordic region, such as the terror attack in Copenhagen 2015 and Stockholm and Åbo during 2017. This litany of terror attacks does not reflect the multitude of terror plots thwarted by European security and intelligence services across Europe.

The attraction of Salafi-Jihadism became very evident when over 300 individuals from Sweden travelled to join primarily IS and to a lesser extent Jabhat al-Nusra. In June 2017 the Swedish Defence University published a study on these foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) based on aggregated data from the Swedish Security Service on 267 out of 300 Swedish FTFs. The report showed that 76% were men and 24% women while 34% were born in Sweden and 75% had Swedish citizenship. The report also revealed a geographic concentration of FTFs to segregated suburbs in four Swedish cities with 80% coming from Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmö and Örebro.

Research into Salafi-Jihadism underscores the importance of understanding the dynamic interaction between local and cultural context, and the interlocking interplay between ideology, the role of prominent hate preachers, charismatic leadership, entrepreneurs, organisations, networked structures, social media and group dynamics. The absence of research

on Salafi-Jihadism is largely due to the underground nature of this sub-culture. It is also complicated by the fact that the ideological core of the Salafism current stretches over a continuum from non-violent purist Salafists, political-activist Salafists and violent takfiri-jihadists. The majority of Salafists are purist, inwardly orientated in their religious practice and primarily focused on *da'wa* (proselytizing) in an effort to construct their Islamic State, while Salafi-Jihadists represent only a minority of the world's Salafist community.¹

Compared to Denmark and Norway, where there exist open violent extremist milieus and anti-democratic Salafi preachers and groups, the Swedish Salafi milieu operate differently. According to the Swedish investigative journalist Magnus Sandelin: "there are no organisations that openly promote a jihadist ideology. Instead there are certain non-profit organisations, mosques and events linked to the Salafi milieus which constitute an important infrastructure for the jihadist milieu in Sweden."² The absence of visible violence-promoting Salafi-Jihadi environment complicates the task of studying how these radical Salafi milieus are organised, which methods they use to spread their ideological message and how the Salafi-Jihadist orientation actually influence society and democracy within Sweden.

It is difficult to sharply differentiate between different Salafist orientations as the three main orientations according to Quintan Wiktorowicz's typology – purist Salafism, political Salafism and militant Salafism – are part and parcel of the same Salafist ideological foundation. This literalist interpretation that follows *al-salaf al-salih* (the Prophets companions) focuses on *tawheed* (monotheism and God's absolute authority), the principle of sanctity with a clear binary distinction between "us" and "them" that rejects non-Muslims (in many cases everyone and everything that is non-Salafi), rejects tyranny and secular democracy, applies a clear moral framework governing relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, embodies the ideal of creating a Salafi vanguard that propagates, protects and defends the straight path of the Prophet and where *da'wa* plays an important role in the conversion of non-Muslims into Muslims and as a defence against Western secular norms and values.

¹ Susanne Olsson & Simon Sorgenfrie. "Islamologer: Jihadisterna är i minoritet bland Salafisterna", Svenska Dagbladet, 8 September 2015. <https://www.svd.se/islamologer-jihadisterna-ar-i-minoritet-bland-Salafisterna>

² Magnus Sandelin. "Vad vet vi om islamistiska terrornätverk i Sverige?", Timbro, maj 2018. <https://timbro.se/app/uploads/2018/05/vadvet-vi-om-islamistiska-terrornatverk-i-sverige.pdf>

Beyond these factors, the distinction between different forms of Salafism becomes often a question about offensive versus defensive armed jihad and the emphasis on continuous, unending warfare between *dar-al-islam* (Abode of Islam) and *dar-al-harb* (Abode of War where Sharia laws are not yet applied). According to Islamologist Susanne Olsson, there exists “no research that can with a high degree of certainty explain why some are drawn to purist Salafism and others to jihadist groups. In all probability the difference between these forms are not that clear in reality.”³

Since Takfir-Salafism (or Salafi-Jihadism) exist in closed underground milieus as well as exist along a broad ideological spectrum within Salafism it becomes necessary to analyse the interplay between extremist milieus, Salafist preachers and associated networks, their messages and methods through which they distribute these moral frameworks and messages to their constituencies. Even though Salafism is not explicitly violence-promoting it can still constitute a serious problem for democratic norms and values as it fundamentally challenges respect for equality between individuals and for democratically enshrined freedoms and rights of every individual. For example, certain Salafi preachers have focused on limiting women’s freedoms and rights while they have expressed homophobic and/or anti-Semitic views, and some have sought to limit their follower’s active democratic participation and actively work to counter any contact with non-Muslims.

Some Swedish Salafi preachers appear more frequently around violent extremist milieus than others. It does not necessarily mean that these preachers openly convey violent extremist messages, but it is neither improbable that there could be causality as they may convey other messages in more private settings. In some cases, these Salafi preachers are surrounded by a social network that openly show, or have shown, sympathies with Salafi-Jihadi elements. Today there is an absence of academic evidence-based research on Takfir-Jihadism within the Swedish Salafist milieu.

It is crucial to underscore that most of the exercise and preaching of Salafi doctrine is permissible within the framework of constitutionally protected freedoms of expression and religion within Sweden. It is not, and should not be, forbidden to have radical religious views. But there are boundaries for that freedom of religion when expressions directly contravene the Swedish constitution.

³ Susanne Olsson, ”Slutdestination Paradiset”, i Jenny Björkman, Arne Jarrick (red.) *Religionen tur och retur* (Makadam Förlag, 2017): s. 109-124.

The range of possible problems when Salafism clashes with democratic society stretch from limiting individuals' democratic freedoms and rights, antidemocratic views to violence-promoting manifestations. In addition, Salafi-Jihadism occur in concealed environments where preachers are suspected of having restrained public positions while, at the same time, individuals appear close in their vicinity with sympathies and activities for different jihadist groups and violence-promoting expressions.

An extension to this argument is that studies of Salafi-Jihadism within a Swedish context cannot solely limit itself to violent expressions and activities. There is a significant grey area problem that captures the binary worldview of Salafism and its eschatology dimensions that can lead to anti-democratic views and in extreme cases violent expressions. In order to get close to the Salafi-Jihadism it is necessary to analyse extremist milieus in different local geographic environments, especially the most prominent Salafi preachers that have been active in these milieus over time.

Salafism is a tradition of interpretation within Sunni Islam that do not recognise the four main legal schools and, as such, represents a very small minority within Islam. Consequently, this study focuses on this minority within the Muslim minority and should not be interpreted as encompassing or representing the Muslim community as a whole. As Erik Helmersson, editorial writer at Sweden's largest daily *Dagens Nyheter*, pointed out "it is about time we examine the drawback of Islamism. But it should never swing over into hate of Muslims and intolerance. This balancing act must a modern, civilised society manage to handle."⁴

⁴ Erik Helmersson. "Den viktiga kritiken av islam får inte slå över i hat". *Dagens Nyheter*, 30 May 2018 <https://www.dn.se/ledare/signerat/erik-helmerson-den-viktiga-kritiken-av-islam-far-in-tesla-over-i-hat/?forceScript=1&variantType=large>

2. Theoretical Starting Points

Salafism is a minority interpretation within Sunni Islam which views itself as practising the true Islam as it was practiced by the first three generations after the Prophet Mohammed. These three generations encompassed *al-sahaba*, the Prophet Mohammed's companions, *al-tabi'un*, companions to *al-sahaba* and *al-tabi'i al-tabi'in*, companions of the companions. As such, Salafists are dogmatic in relation to the Koranic records, the sunnah, and the first three generations interpretations and reject any subsequent interpretation of the Koran (*bi'dah*) and modern Muslim views and practices.

Salafists have a strict view on an indivisible God (*tawheed*) and total submission to Gods rule and regulations through a return to a pure past. For Salafists *tawheed* means that God is the only legislator and that everyone is obliged to literally follow *Sharia* to the letter. All forms of change, deviation or renewal is deemed sinful and a denial of truth (*shirk*). For Salafists this means absolute authority and submission to God.

Salafists reject "parliamentary democracy as such as they mean such a system gives precedence for human, man-made laws before Gods rule. Democracy is often equated with *shirk*, "to set things aside from God".⁵

Salafists make a binary distinction between believers and unbelievers, between Salafisms rightly guided Muslims and all other interpretations. For example, the principle of sanctity is central to uphold as it categorizes all behaviour as *haram* (forbidden) or *halal* (allowed). To follow this moral framework to the letter shows loyalty as it regulates all behaviour and social relations and deviation requires correction measures. This practice is called *hisbah* (balance), i.e. to monitor that religious and moral rules are strictly followed.⁶

Salafism is not a homogenous tradition of interpretation but has several different orientations that have emerged historically. Quintan Wiktorowicz and other researchers usually speak about different categories of Salafism: purist Salafism, activist Salafism and militant Salafism.

The puritan Salafists (*al-Salafiyya al-'ilmiyya*) avoid "political activism and violence in the pursuit of building an Islamic State. Often their posi-

⁵ Leif Stenberg och Rickard Lagervall, "Muslimska församlingar och föreningar i Malmö och Lund – en ögonblicksbild (Lund: Centrum för Mellanösternstudier, 2016): sid.14.

⁶ Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2009): s.11.

tion is closely aligned with the Saudi religious elite and these emphasize that there is a duty to obey the political ruler of the state.”⁷ Instead the puritan focus on cleansing the religion from renewal or reinterpretation through education (*tarbiya*), cleansing (*tazkiyya*) and *da’wa* among other Muslims and promote segregation vis-à-vis non-Muslims.⁸ Here Salafists strive not only for separation between Muslims and non-Muslims but also strict separation of men and women in different spheres.

Activist Salafism (“politicos” is another term by Wiktorowicz) does not only distance themselves from democracy which they see as irreconcilable with Muslim faith and doctrine but also they actively seek out Muslims to divorce them from democratic processes such as voting in elections or participating in political parties. These activist Salafists participate actively on local societal issues, they point out un-Islamic behaviour and, at times, try to exercise social control in certain areas. Activist Salafists are often focused on global and local conditions and take a strong stance against democratically elected decisionmakers. They have a strong enemy picture and rhetoric focusing on Western regimes while Arab or godless nation-states represent the near enemy which hinders the establishment of an Islamic State. Certain political Salafists urge followers that if they have to vote in elections they should apply criteria that they should vote for parties that do the less damage to Islam and the Muslim community.

The militant Salafism (*al-Salafiyya al-jihadiyya*) views violence as a necessary instrument to change the present world order where Pax Americana with the USA and other allied states are seen as the spearhead in an all-out war against Islam and Muslims. There is also an individual duty on every Muslim to involve themselves in an armed struggle against their near enemies (Godless regimes). This for militant Salafism considers that armed jihad (*qital*) must be waged to defend Muslims and to expand *dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) and that there is an individual duty for every Muslim to fight unbeliever regimes.⁹ These Salafi-Jihadists considers Europe to be *dar al-harb* (Abode of War)¹⁰ For Salafist-Jihadists martyrdom is the ultimate struggle and sacrifice which promises special rewards in the Paradise (*Jannah*).

⁷ Leif Stenberg och Rickard Lagervall, ”Muslimska församlingar och föreningar i Malmö och Lund – en ögonblicksbild (Lund: Centrum för Mellanösternstudier, 2016).

⁸ Jihadister är i minoritet bland Salafisterna”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 8 september 2015

⁹ Eli Alshech, “The Doctrinal Crisis within the Salafi-Jihadi Ranks and the Emergence of Neo-Takfirism”, *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol.21 (2014): sid.419-452.

¹⁰ Leif Stenberg och Rickard Lagervall, ”Muslimska församlingar och föreningar i Malmö och Lund – en ögonblicksbild (Lund: Centrum för Mellanösternstudier, 2016): sid.15

As mentioned earlier the Salafist belief system (*aqidah*) remains the same across the three different orientations within Salafism. What differentiates these different schools within Salafism is *manhaj* – the action that legitimates whether one remains a purist, activist or Salafi-Jihadist. There is often a gliding scale between the different forms of Salafism as Susanne Olsson pointed out earlier.¹¹

Differences between these interpretations are not religiously grounded as they share the same original Islamic sources and ideologues. According to Wiktorowicz, the difference can be found in the strategies that are applied to new questions, situations and problems as it, by its very nature, necessitates human interpretation of given contexts.¹²

Despite the fact that the purist and political orientations of Salafism are not violence-promoting they nevertheless are problematic when considering a democratic perspective. This argument is promoted by the Dutch intelligence service AIVD in their report of Salafism within the Netherlands. AIVD make the point that citizens are free to express their religion even though it may be unorthodox or in some cases fundamentalist. At the same time, they point out the existence of a gliding scale when religion or ideology is used as baseline to turn against democracy and individual freedoms and rights. Its ultimate extension can lead to individuals seeking antidemocratic goals through violence, hatred and discrimination against other ways of thinking in order to systematically undermine democratic institutions and the rejection of the state in favour of parallel religious legal systems.

AIVD argues that there must be room within a democracy for political and religious groups, but the freedom is limited when the expressions of religious views undermine the democratic order. Even if there are no laws broken democracy itself can be threatened when individuals seek to reach antidemocratic goals through undemocratic means.¹³

Even if the non-jihadist currents within Salafism do not adopt violence they are nevertheless a forceful ideological current that can influence societal norms and can be viewed as threats against specific groups within Swedish society. Additionally, these Salafist groups risk producing parallel societies that feeds and nourishes violence-promoting groups and individuals. Researcher and police analyst Michael Fredholm capture this well:

¹¹ Susanne Olsson, "Slutdestination Paradiset", i Jenny Björkman, Arne Jarrick (red.) Religionen tur och retur (Makadam Förlag, 2017): s. 109-124

¹² Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi movement", Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Vol.29 (2006)

¹³ AIVD. "Salafism in the Netherlands: Diversity and dynamics file:///C:/Users/issl16012/Downloads/Salafism-in-the-netherlands%20(2).pdf

“when radical religious views transforms from a personal faith matter to religious doctrine that seeks to be superimposed unto others with threats of violence or violence, then it transforms from the religious sphere to the political and has to be judged according to prevailing legislation.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Personal communication with Michael Fredholm, June 2018. Fredholm refers to this discussion in his book Michael Fredholm, *Understanding Lone Actor Terrorism: Past Experience, Future Outlook, and Response Strategies* (London: Routledge, 2016), sid. 107- 108.”

3. Methodological Considerations

Since the ideological core within Salafism is the same for the three different orientations (purist, activist and jihadism) and these exist across a continuum it is necessary to not just focus on Salafi-Jihadism. In other words, the theological departure points within Salafism do not differ between orientations; rather what does differ is their application (*manhaj*). Although the starting point for this study is to focus on Salafi-Jihadi milieus, it is essential to understand Salafi milieus and how they have evolved and developed over time, especially how they interrelate to violent extremists and associated networks. Salafi-Jihadism does not appear in a vacuum. Instead it is closely influenced by prominent Salafi preachers and related networks both locally, nationally and transnationally. It is impossible to vacuum-pack the Salafi violent and non-violent milieus as they bleed into each other and interact across multiple levels.

Different European security and intelligence services point to the risk of Salafism being a stepping stone and a pre-cursor to Salafi-Jihadism. Both German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV)* and Dutch *AIVD* underscore that “the ideology being spread by Salafists is the cause for Islamist radicalisation towards Salafi-Jihadism and even to recruitment for jihad”,¹⁵ as well as that “this movement cannot be completely separated from violent jihad, especially on the individual level.”¹⁶

Furthermore, *AIVD* have argued that Salafism pose a serious risk and challenge for the democratic order on a number of different levels. For example, Salafism can lead to (1) polarisation due to their uncompromising hatred towards homosexuals, Jews, Shia Muslims, non-practising Muslims and other so-called “enemies of Islam”; (2) hindering non-Salafi Muslims, non-Muslims, women and homosexuals from freely exercising their democratic individual freedoms and rights; and (3) the establishment of a concealed parallel legal system based on sharia.¹⁷ This means in practice that the influence of Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism on the democratic order does not only encompass violent manifestations but also other threats against fundamental aspects to the democratic order. This study broadens the

¹⁵ Salafist efforts. Content and objectives of Salafist ideology”. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/islamism-and-islamistterrorism/what-is-islamism/Salafist-efforts> 192

¹⁶ The Radical Dawa in Transition”. General Intelligence and Security Service. Sid 67.

¹⁷ Ibid, sid 63-66

scope of the focus to analysing both Salafist and Salafi-Jihadist milieus, networks, messages, methods and influence within Sweden.

The starting point for this study has been to understand the local Salafi-Jihadist milieus, mapping out the most prominent individuals and how they interrelate, and how these extremist milieus have developed over time in 17 different Swedish cities. A number of terrorism-related cases provide important insights into how the violent extremist milieus have developed and changed. In the beginning of the 1990's some significant terrorists established themselves in Stockholm and Gothenburg where they build up recruitment activities for Salafi-Jihadism. A generational change occurred when these veterans left Sweden to join conflicts in Somalia and Iraq in the mid-2000 period. A number of new ethnic constellations developed around remaining veterans and prominent violent extremist leaders. These often acted as recruitment sergeants locally, acting in concert with more radical Salafist preachers who 'toured' around cities in lecture circuits which combined, connected and united the different Salafi milieus in Sweden. It is important to focus on the activities and relationships between these Salafist preachers in order to gauge their influence on followers and the local community.

Local milieus, both Salafist and Salafi-Jihadist actors, act in parallel and have different degrees of relations and connections with each other. This can be likened to a Salafist eco-system with prominent preachers and guest speakers, mosques, civil society organisations, companies, lecturing activities, da'wa activities both offline and online, social media, humanitarian charities and, in some cases, violent extremists. From these local milieus there are individual-based relationships between Salafi "organisations, events and travelling circuit preachers"¹⁸ that are active in large geographic areas.

The starting point for this investigation was media reporting about certain Salafist preachers and Salafi-Jihadism which were confirmed (or discounted) after interviews and fact checks with several law enforcement, intelligence and other government agencies. A multi-layered picture emerged of these Salafist ecosystems that existed across more than a dozen Swedish cities. Several individuals are key bridge-builders within the Salafist environments and the more Salafi-Jihadist elements. The unifying factor for why the study focused on certain Salafist preachers have been in different combinations: (1) preaching individually or collectively in

¹⁸ Magnus Sandelin. "Vad vet vi om islamistiska terrornätverk i Sverige?", Timbro, maj 2018. <https://timbro.se/app/uploads/2018/05/vadvet-vi-om-islamistiska-terrornatverk-i-sverige.pdf>

milieus that harbour Salafi-Jihadist elements; (2) appeared on open social media together with preachers who have expressed Salafi-Jihadist views or other antidemocratic views as well as; 3) spread messages that have not been violent in nature but antidemocratic as these messages seeks to limit fundamental individual human rights.

This study uncovered many identities within the Salafi-Jihadi milieu. It is important to underscore that the identities of individuals used in this study have appeared before in the public record in newspaper articles, literature, blogs by journalists, official documents and court records. Additionally, many of these individuals have publicly volunteered information through marketing activities on open social media sites. All the identified individuals in this study are not involved in Salafi-Jihadism but they have all to varying degrees participated in forums and circumstances in milieus with Salafi-Jihadist elements.

Salafism is often context-specific with local manifestations and actors while it is at the same time transnational in character. The starting point for this investigation has been on those actors and violent extremism milieus that have been verifiable both by research and law enforcement/intelligence communities, followed by the detection of relationships and behavioural patterns within prominent preachers and Salafist milieus. A limitation is that there are different hierarchies in social relations between preachers, different power relationships within Salafist milieus and gender roles that are difficult, if not possible, to scientifically measure. It is therefore impossible to prove through causation the effects of radicalisation of individual preachers except for their proximity, lecturing activities and contact with Salafi-Jihadist milieus.

When the presence of Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism is mentioned within cities it is important to stress that it does not include the entire city but rather sections of that city.

A difficult question is to discern differences between experienced manifestations of what is connected to Salafism and what is connected to honour-related issues within communities. However, as several experts, who have been personally affected by honour-related culture (and are activists against it), explain that honour-related culture is due to “different cultural patterns, where religion, customs and clan-based rule, are interwoven with each other and directly conflicts with everything that democracy and human rights are all about.”¹⁹

¹⁹ Maria Rashidi, Sara Mohammad, Meheret Dawit & Seyrand Duran. "Du måste våga koppla hedersväld till religion". Aftonbladet, 26 juni 2016 <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/article23054967.ab>

A similar perspective is offered by Omar Makram from GAPF, a civil society organisation that works actively against honour-related violence. Makram describe the relationship between Salafism and honour-related culture in the following way:

“Two of the most important aspects of honour-related culture is that girls and women are “sexually pure” and that the man should have complete control. These are also important constituent parts within Islam. There is consequently a linkage between faith and behaviour as well as faith and the religious scripture. There are different interpretations within Islam and those more conservative, such as Salafism, have a stronger connection to honour-related culture than more moderate interpretations.”²⁰

This study confirms that both aspects can be present and influential but that religious expressions often amplify honour-related culture and related limitations on individual human rights. Consequently, it becomes an impossible task to trace every interviewee’s experiences or recounting as definitive proof of causality to Salafism or Salafi-Jihadism.

The empirical material of this study is primarily based on a large number of interviews with government agencies and other relevant parties. It comprises around 70 interviews. Most of these were with representatives of different government agencies such as the Police, Tax Authority, Social Services and local coordinators responsible for coordinating prevention of violent extremism locally. Representatives from civil society have also been interviewed.

The other material has been collected from different sources. A majority of the material focused on Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism is academic. In a Swedish context, Salafism generally and Salafi-Jihadism specifically are largely unstudied phenomenon and, as a result, foreign scholarly material has been used. Similarly, government reports are primarily foreign-based in those EU-countries with a previous policy focus on Salafism.

Official documentation, such as investigative material, court records and decisions by the Tax Authority have also been valuable for this study. These public records have been invaluable to describe connections between, and modus operandi of, individuals in the Salafi and Salafi-Jihadist milieus. Social media footprints have proven extremely valuable for this study. Hundreds of videos by Swedish Salafi preachers have been analysed for their content.

²⁰ Interview with Omar Makram, June 2018

4. Swedish Salafi-Jihadi milieus and surrounding elements and connections

This chapter describes how the Salafi-Jihadi environments have developed in Sweden during the 1990's in 17 Swedish cities. The starting point has been to focus on violent extremists and their associated milieus. Simultaneously there is a small clique of Salafist preachers who move in and around these milieus. In many ways they act independently though they travel together at times and have been likened to be “a travelling circus.”

As journalist Magnus Sandelin expressed it: “it is about a handful of people resident in cities like Gothenburg, Malmö, Stockholm and Gävle who visit each other's theme days, courses, conventions and prayer days. The messages they convey are usually religiously orientated, very conservative but seldom openly violence-promoting.”²¹ This study does not draw a direct causation line between these preachers and violent Salafi-Jihadism. Instead it shows that these preachers are connected to and appear in these problematic milieus. This executive summary describes a number of Salafi-Jihadi and Salafi milieus in a number of Swedish cities as well as Salafi preachers who are present in these milieus. Please consult the Swedish version for a fuller and deeper presentation.

4.1 Stockholm

The Salafi-Jihadi environments in Sweden developed and grew initially in the 1990s, first and foremost in Stockholm and Gothenburg. Much of the Salafi-Jihadi activities in Stockholm centred around a now disused “mosque” in an apartment in Brandbergen in southern Stockholm. Two leading figures within the Brandbergen mosque were Mohammed Moumou and a man dubbed in media as “Abu Omar”, two veterans who were central to radicalisation, recruitment and coordination.

Mohammed Moumou was a high-ranking prominent jihadi leader not only around Brandbergen but also within the North African network as

²¹ C.S. van Nassau, “Salafistische moskeeorganisaties in Nederland: markt en competitieve voordelen nader onderzocht” (Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, October 2017).

he was a co-founder of the Moroccan jihadi movement *Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain* (GICM), as well as responsible for the GIAs newsletter *Nusraat Al-Ansar* and its move from its postal address in Great Britain to the Brandbergen mosque.

Mohammed Moumou's central leadership role can be traced to his veteran status within jihadi circles, specifically as he established close contact with al-Qaida's leadership in 1996 when he underwent significant training and indoctrination in the terrorist group's training camp in Khalden, Afghanistan. A martyr biography about Moumou claim he was trained by the al-Qaida-ledaren Abu Zubayda while Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi was emir over the Khalden training camp.²²

Moumou himself left for Iraq in May 2006 and joined al-Qaida in Iraq. After Zarqawi's death in June 2006 Moumou was appointed as the second highest leader in al-Qaida in Iraq under Abu Ayyub al-Masri. In that role Moumou was responsible for terror activity in northern Iraq and al-Qaida in Iraq's external operations such as trafficking of new terror recruits into northern Iraq.²³ Moumou was placed on the UN terror list in December 2006. On the UN-list he was listed as having the same address as his close friend "Abu Omar". Moumou never returned to Sweden and was prioritised as a target by the U.S. military who located and killed him in Mosul, Iraq, on 5 October 2008.

One of Muhammed Moumou's closest friends within Brandbergen mosque milieu was the Moroccan-Swede Abu Omar who was "mythical within extremist circles."²⁴ According to sources within intelligence service, Abu Omar is one of several key individuals who radicalises, recruits and finance extremist activities. As a "radicalisation broker" Abu Omar is well-known in international extremist circles as well as by Western intelligence services due to his longstanding engagement in violent extremism and his international contacts developed over the years.²⁵

Abu Omar have figured in at least three different terror investigations. Except for his close relationship with the Moumou family, Abu Omar appeared in connection with the terror planning by the Mumbai terrorist David Headley who were planning a terror attack against the Danish

²² Per Gudmundson. "Ny martyrbiografi över Mohamed Moumou" 12 December 2011 <http://gudmundson.blogspot.com/2011/12/ny-martyrbiografi-over-mohamedmoumou.html>

²³ Brian Fishman, "Al Qaeda in Iraq's Swedish Connections", *Foreign Policy*, 13 December 2010

²⁴ Bo-Göran Bodin, Axel Gordh Humlesjö och Ida Andersson. "Terroristen som radikaliserades i Sverige", *SVT*, 30 november 2016. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/terroristen-som-radikaliserades-i-sverige-1>

²⁵ Interview with former member of Swedish Military Intelligence (MUST), March 2018

newspaper *Jyllandsposten* in Copenhagen in 2009. Previously Headley had carried out the reconnaissance for terrorist targeting in Mumbai for the attack team on behalf of the Pakistani terror group *Lashkar-e-Taiba*.

The second time Abu Omar appeared in a terror investigation by the security services was in autumn/winter 2010 when Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) and the Danish Security and Intelligence Agency (PET) were conducting surveillance on four Swedes in an apartment in Järfälla, a suburb of Stockholm. These four Stockholm-based terrorists were planning to travel to Copenhagen with an automatic weapon, pistol and knife and 200 plastic cable ties and to storm the offices of the newspaper *Jyllandsposten* in order to kill as many as possible.²⁶ This terror attack was foiled at the end of December 2010.

During the trial with the four terrorists it emerged that one of the suspects had participated in an al-Qaeda training camp in Miran Shah in Pakistan and that they had contacted Abu Omar several times before departure from Stockholm to discuss financing for operation. According to wiretaps it emerged that Abu Omar had sponsored the terrorist cell with SEK190,000 kronor. When the terrorist cell was arrested in Copenhagen they had in their possession an equivalent amount in U.S. dollars.²⁷

The third time Abu Omar showed up in a terror investigation was when Swedish public television program *Uppdrag Granskning* revealed that Mohammed Belkaid from Märsta in Stockholm, one of the IS-terrorists who commanded the terrorist operations in Paris in November 2015 as well as in Brussels in March 2016, had worked as an intern in Abu Omar's leather and furniture store in Gamla Stan in Stockholm. Furthermore, there were several Swedish citizens who travelled to join terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq in 2013/14 who were registered on the same address as Abu Omar.

Finally, Abu Omar emerged in the terrorist investigation of Rahmat Akilov and the terrorist atrocity on Drottninggatan in April 2017. According to details Akilov was registered on the same address in central Stockholm which is central to another police investigation into suspected terror finance and economic crime. One of the companies scrutinised in this police investigation uses the same address as one used by Abu Omar.

A parallell network that emerged and developed since the mid-1990s is located in Rinkeby and is centred around the Somali diaspora. A strong reason why violent extremism grew strong in Rinkeby was the presence

²⁶ One of the authors was present at the terror trial in Copenhagen 2012.

²⁷ Finn Månsson, op.cit. (2017): p.35

of popular and influential imams such as Fuad Mohammed Qalaf (also known as Fouad Shangole) who arrived in Sweden in 1992 and later emerged as one of the top leaders within the Somali terror group *al-Shabaab*.²⁸

Recruitment to the Islamic Courts and later to *al-Shabaab* continued long after Shangole left Rinkeby.²⁹ During 2009 it was revealed that several young men had been recruited by a youth worker, Yassin Ismail Ahmed, to fight for *al-Shabaab*. The recruitment efforts targeting youths centred on the youth centre Kreativitetshuset, that had been founded by the mosque and it was one of its youth leaders who sparked a recruitment wave.³⁰

Other areas related to violent extremism in Stockholm is the southern suburbs of Skärholmen and specifically the *al-Taqwa* youth association that has been flagged. This *al-Taqwa* youth association have had lectures at the Skärholmens mosque³¹ and have shown on their official Facebook page that they hail jihad through violence and have included radical al-Qaida ideologues such as Nasir al-Fadh and Suleman al-Alwan.³² One of the persons who were engaged in the *al-Taqwa* youth association was 18-year old Bilal whose fate was reported on in a documentary.

After his death *al-Taqwa* youth association congratulated him on his martyrdom on their Facebook page.³³ One of the recruiters as well as the founder of the *al-Taqwa* youth association was Idris Cheway. He was the administrator behind the Facebook page “Ummah Nyheter” that involved many of the Swedish IS foreign terrorist fighters. In Syria he managed together with the known Swedish IS-terrorist Michael Skråmo a closed Telegram thread.³⁴ Cheway was also the focus of a police investigation that involved a considerable VAT-fraud conspiracy that involved a Swedish IS foreign terrorist fighter and Mohammed Moumou’s son.^{35, 36}

²⁸ Hanna Sistik, ”Så värvas svenskar till Al Shabaab”, Fokus, 8 October 2010.

²⁹ For example, Shangole emerged in terrorfinance in the prosecution in Norwegian court 2010 when a 41-year old collected over 200,000 Norwegian kronor to al-Shabaab. Ida Dahl Nilssen och Kristin Granbo, ”Verver skandinavere til hellig krig i Somalia”, NRK, 6 September 2010.

³⁰ Olle Lönnæus, Erik Magnusson och Thomas Löfqvist, ”Somalisk islamiströrelse rekryterar svenskar”, Sydsvenskan, 18 May 2011.

³¹ ”Moské med statsbidrag hyste jihadhyllande grupp”, SVT Nyheter, 20 May 2014. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/granskning/ug/moske-med-statsbidrag-hyser-jihadhyllandegrupp>

³² Magnus Sandelin. ”Svenska IS-krigare – från al-Qaida till jihadi cool”. Fri Tanke, 2015 p.246-47

³³ Bilal dog som en av de svenska jihadresenärerna”, SVT Nyheter, 20 May 2014. <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/granskning/ug/bilal-dog-som-en-av-de-svenskajihadresenarerna>

³⁴ Magnus Sandelin, ”Extremister rekryterar genom dawahrörelsen” <https://www.magnussandelin.se/extremister-rekryterargenom-dawahrörelsen>

³⁵ Lasse Wierup, ”Momsfusket ger nätverk miljoner”, Dagens Nyheter, 12 April 2016

³⁶ Magnus Sandelin, Akademikern från Alby blev rekryterare åt IS”, 21 November 2017. <https://www.magnussandelin.se/akademikern-fran-alby-blev-rekryterare-at-is>

Areas in Stockholm where extremists are most present and active are in Rinkeby, Tensta, Husby, Spånga, Hjulsta as well as Alby, Fisksätra, Vårberg and Märsta. The Salafi-Jihadi networks and milieus in Stockholm are often divided between smaller networks based on ethnicity, age and the kind of (illegal) activities they are involved in. For example, there is an older generation of so-called “Brandbergen” jihadi veterans around Rinkeby and Tensta where there also is a parallel Somali network active. There is also a small active but growing Caucasus network in Stockholm that stretch from their stronghold in Gävle to other cities such Sandviken, Avesta, Växjö etc. There is also an Uzbek network that is interlinked through Stockholm, Strömsund and Kalmar.³⁷ Around 67 foreign terrorist fighters travelled from the Stockholm area to join terrorist groups in conflicts in Syria and Iraq.³⁸

4.2 Gothenburg

A third of the 300 foreign terrorist fighters travelling from Sweden to join terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq come from the West coast region of Västra Götaland. Of these 90 foreign terrorist fighters an absolute majority come from Gothenburg’s northeast suburbs.³⁹ Additionally the police have stated that there are around 500 violent Islamist extremists in the Police District West.⁴⁰

The Salafi-Jihadi milieu in Gothenburg reveal almost every single aspect of the Salafi-jihadi ecosystem: from radical preachers, significant Salafi milieus and preachers, considerable *da’wa* (missionary) activity, a larger number of violent extremists, radical associations and mosques and considerable social media presence. Often Gothenburg have been pointed out as the Wahabi epicentre in Sweden even though every fourth mosque is financed by Saudi Arabia elsewhere in Sweden.⁴¹

³⁷ Interviews with several officials in crime fighting agencies and other government agencies, February-May 2018 during several occasions.

³⁸ Linus Gustafsson & Magnus Ranstorp. “Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: An Analysis of open-source intelligence and statistical data” Försvarshögskolan, juni 2017 <http://fhs.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1110355/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

³⁹ Gustafsson Linus, Ranstorp Magnus. Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq. Försvarshögskolan, 2017

⁴⁰ Per Sydвик. ”Säpos namnlistor var hemliga”. Göteborgs-Posten. 8 October 2017 <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/g%C3%B6teborg/s%C3%A4pos-namnlistor-var-hemliga1.4708136>

⁴¹ ”Saudiarabien finansierar var fjärde svensk moské”, ETC, 8 November 2017.

The Bellevue mosque is Sweden's largest mosque and it is also one of Europe's largest mosques. It is located in Gamlestaden in Gothenburg and is run by the Islamic Sunni Center (Islamiska Sunni Centret) which is financed by Saudi Arabia.⁴² The Bellevue mosque have long been associated with violent extremism. Already back in 2007 there were reports that the Islamic Courts in Somalia were collecting money and there have been several reports that there have been calls in the mosque to join *al-Shabaab*.⁴³ The mosque have been known for radical connections such as when in 2009 the Somali terror groups spiritual leader, Hassan Hussein was invited to preach in the mosque.⁴⁴ Also the well-known convert and recruiter for IS Michael Skråmo have been a preacher in the Bellevue mosque.⁴⁵

Connected to Bellevue mosque is also Sveriges Förenade Muslimer (SFM), a high-profile Salafi association which have drawn together the most well-known Salafi profiles, preachers and violent extremists.^{46, 47} For example, there was a meeting in 2014 where the aforementioned individuals from the Stockholm-based *al-Taqwa* youth association participated in a meeting together with a foreign terrorist fighter returnee from Eskilstuna. SFM have also invited several hate preachers who have expressed anti-democratic views as well as violence-promoting views based on Salafi ideology.^{48, 49}

4.3 Örebro, Gävle och Eskilstuna

The city district of Vivalla in Örebro is often mentioned as an epicentre for IS recruitment as well as radicalisation and violent extremism. Örebro is the city in Sweden where there are more individuals per capita than any other location who have become a foreign terrorist fighter travelling to Syria and Iraq to join terrorist organisations. In fact, the proportion in Örebro is 1 in 11 500 inhabitants compared to the national average of 1 in 37 000 inhabi-

⁴² Islamska sunnicentret <http://sunnicentret.se>

⁴³ Per Gudmundson. "Bellevues islamister". 1 January 2007 <http://gudmundson.blogspot.se/2007/01/bellevues-islamister.html>

⁴⁴ Cecilia Khavar. "Terrorstämplad ledare talar i Göteborg". SR, 2 July 2009 <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=2943317>

⁴⁵ Erik Magnusson, "Facebook viktig del i IS-kriget", *Sydsvenskan*, 6 March 2015.

⁴⁶ Magnus Sandelin. "Svenska IS-krigare : från Al-Qaida till Jihadi Cool". 2016, sid 234-235

⁴⁷ Interview with police, October 2017

⁴⁸ Magnus Sandelin. "Sveriges Förenade Muslimer ljuger om terrorföreläsare". 17 april 2017 <https://www.magnussandelin.se/sveriges-forenade-muslimer-ljuger-omterrorforelasare>.

⁴⁹ Magnus Sandelin. "Svenska IS-krigare : från Al-Qaida till Jihadi Cool". 2016, sid 238-239

tants.⁵⁰ Most of these are concentrated in the district of Vivalla where 25-30 individuals have travelled to become a foreign terrorist fighter in the conflict area in Syria and Iraq.

In 2015 a man was arrested for trying to recruit four young men to IS. The man had regularly preached in Örebro mosque as well as the al-Rahman mosque in Eskilstuna.⁵¹ In connection with the arrests the Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) issued a press release which said: “the Swedish Security Service have a clear picture that there is radicalisation and recruitment in Örebro. These arrests are part of an operation against local recruitment. The Security Service sees connections between the mosques in Örebro and Eskilstuna. The mosques are gathering places for individuals. Recruitment are principally occurring in an organised fashion in other places such as cafes and other gathering places. We would like to stress that it is not the religious communities that are singled out. It is individuals and their criminal behaviour that is behind the recruitment.”⁵²

There are many personal connections between violent extremists in Örebro, Gävle and Eskilstuna. A prominent example is Ali Abdallah al-Ganas. Al-Ganas was brought to public attention by Gefle Dagblad newspaper when he praised one of two “brothers” from Örebro who were killed in connection with fighting for IS in Syria. Al-Ganas claimed on Facebook that he had gotten to know both IS-recruiters during lectures in Örebro. To a relative of the brothers al-Ganas wrote: “We should not express sorrow or complain. We should say congratulations to the brother and his family. May Allah accept him. Martyrdom is what our beloved Prophet wished for three times. It is just indicative of the higher noble cause. May Allah let us conquer it.”⁵³

Al-Ganas is also a relative of Abu Raad, imam in Gävle mosque and have been pointed as the leader of militant Islamism in Sweden at this moment.⁵⁴ He received his religious education in Saudi Arabia, a country where Salafism or Wahhabism is state religion. He has also been part of

⁵⁰ Linus Gustafsson och Magnus Ranstorp, Swedish Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq (Försvarshögskolan, 2017): p.83.

⁵¹ Niklas Orrenius, „Skotten i Köpenhamn”. Bonnier 2016, sid 227

⁵² Säkerhetspolisen. ”Tillslag i Örebro – misstänkt terrorrekrytering” <http://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/ovrigt/pressrum/aktuellt/aktuellt/2015-06-01-tillslag-i-orebro---misstankt-terrorrekrytering.html>

⁵³ Anna Bagge & Johan Wikén, ”Gävlebo hyllar stupade IS-kigare”, Gävle Dagblad, 13 January 2015. <http://www.gd.se/gastrikland/gavle/gavlebo-hyllar-stupade-is-krigare>

⁵⁴ Johan Järvestad m.fl. ”Abo Raad pekats ut som militanta islamismens ledare i Sverige”. Gefle Dagblad, 10 September 2015 <http://www.gd.se/gastrikland/gavle/abo-raad-pekats-utsom-militanta-islamismens-ledare-i-sverige>

a closed Facebook group that has hailed IS foreign terrorist fighters⁵⁵ and praised IS success in relation to the conquering of Mosul in 2014.⁵⁶

The violent extremist milieus in Örebro and Gävle are bound together by the Qatari *Eid Charity*. This organisation invested eight million Swedish kronor in Örebro mosque and individuals from this foundation are also members of the board in Gävle mosque.⁵⁷ According to the Islamologist Mohammed Fazlhashemi, *Eid Charity* is Salafi and the investment risk becoming agenda-setting in the mosques they are investing in.⁵⁸ The foundation failed in taking over a mosque in Eskilstuna⁵⁹ but, as was mentioned earlier, the preacher that was arrested (and later released) by the Security Service had preached both in Örebro mosque and in Eskilstuna's second mosque, the *al-Rahman* mosque.

4.4 Malmö

The Salafi-Jihadi milieu in Malmö seems much smaller than their counterparts in Stockholm and Gothenburg. There is also few publications that describe the milieu in the city which can partly be explained by the fact that the extremist environment is smaller. The Security Service (SÄPO) mention Malmö as one of four cities in Sweden where violent Islamist extremism is present to a larger extent which indicate that the problem is relatively greater than is reported.⁶⁰

A central violent extremist actor in Malmö is Ahmad Qadan, who had an elevated position within the humanitarian NGO, Solidaritetscenter, which have collected money to Syria.⁶¹ In 2014 they received a so-called "90-account" (an account that assures that funds actually go to causes) from Swedish control body for charitable collection. Solidaritetscenter can be traced to the circles around Anas Khalifa as well as to members of

⁵⁵ Magnus Sandelin. "Gävleimamen i hemlig grupp för jihadsympatisörer". Gefle Dagblad, 11 May 2016 <https://www.magnussandelin.se/gavleimamen-i-hemlig-grupp-for-jihadsympatisorer>

⁵⁶ Johan Järvestad m.fl. "Abo Raad pekas ut som militanta islamismens ledare i Sverige". Gefle Dagblad, 10 September 2015 <http://www.gd.se/gastrikland/gavle/abo-raad-pekas-utsom-militanta-islamismens-ledare-i-sverige>

⁵⁷ Bokstavstrojna har köpt inflytande i moskéerna i Örebro och Gävle", Sveriges Radio P4 Örebro, 3 December 2015. <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=159&artikel=6317875>

⁵⁸ Bokstavstrojna har köpt inflytande i moskéerna i Örebro och Gävle", Sveriges Radio P4 Örebro, 3 December 2015. <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=159&artikel=6317875>

⁵⁹ Niklas Orrenius. "Sköten i Köpenhamn". Bonnier 2016, sid 223-230

⁶⁰ Säpo: Tusentals radikala islamister i Sverige", TT, 16 June 2017.

⁶¹ Torbjörn Jerlerup. "Hovrätten dömer Malmö-bon Ahmad Qadan för stöd till IS och Al Qaida". 28 November 2018 <https://ligator.wordpress.com/2017/11/28/hovratten-domer-mal-mobon-ahmad-qadan-forstod-till-is-och-al-qaida/>

Abu Raad's family. For example, in December 2012, the *al-Taqwa* youth association together with Solidaritetscenter organised a humanitarian collection for Syrian civilians in the Stockholm suburb of Vårby where they also used as attractions Salafi preachers like Anas Khalifa and Abu Raad.⁶² In February 2017, Ahmad Qadan was convicted to six months in prison for terror finance when he on Facebook urged others to donate money to an account used for IS and Jahbat al-Nusra in Syria.⁶³ The Higher Court upheld the conviction against Qadan in November 2017.⁶⁴

Another violent extremism from Malmö is Osama Krayem. Hailing from Rosengård district in Malmö he travelled to Syria and participated in the IS-coordinated terror attack in Brussels in March 2016, a crime he is charged with in Belgium.⁶⁵ According to Swedish police Krayem was involved in criminality in Malmö and according to one of his family members he was radicalised in an underground mosque in Rosengård.⁶⁶

4.5 Salafi Preachers

A commonality between the violent extremist milieus in these cities is that they are connected to prominent Salafi preachers, some of which have been already mentioned. Just to give an illustration of the overlapping contacts between Salafi-Jihadi individuals and milieus and prominent Salafi preachers that appear in the same mosques, associations and lecturing tours will be a presentation of the most prominent ones who happened to all gather in one event and in one picture.

⁶² Per Gudmundson, "Abu Raad samlar in till Syrien", 14 December 2012

⁶³ Gustafsson & Ranstorp, 2017

⁶⁴ 35-åring samlade pengar till IS – döms till fängelse", Kvällsposten, 27 November 2017. Lasse Wierup, "Biståndsarbetare åtalas för stöd till IS", Dagens Nyheter, 8 December 2016

⁶⁵ John Palm. "Terroranklagade Osama Krayem från Malmö lämnas ut till Frankrike". Sydsvenskan 8 June 2016 <https://www.sydsvenskan.se/2018-06-08/terroranklagade-osamakrayem-fran-malmo-lamnas-ut-till>

⁶⁶ "Terrormisstänkte svenskens anhöriga i chock", TV4, 9 April 2016.



Collection of the small clique of Salafi preachers who appear in an event organised by Sveriges Förenade Muslimer (SFM) in Gothenburg. Picture from the left: SMS-Bilal (Malmö), Kajs Atallah, foreign guest, Abu Muadh (Halmstad/Gothenburg), Abu Raad (Gävle), foreign guest, Fekri Hamad (Västerås), Abu Zamzam (Gothenburg), foreign guest and Abu Talal (Gothenburg).

An individual not pictured is the aforementioned Anas Khalifa. Khalifa is primarily active within SFM in Gothenburg and came to the attention for the first time in 2007 during a documentary where he glorified martyrdom by mujahidin during a lecture to children and youths in Gothenburg.⁶⁷ In 2013 Khalifa was convicted to three years imprisonment for tax fraud.⁶⁸ Khalifa can also be connected to the environment around the charitable organisation Solidaritetscenter, whose leader Ahmad Qadan was convicted in 2017 for terror financing.⁶⁹ For example, Khalifa have lectured together with Abu Raad in a lecture organised by *al-Taqwa* youth association in support of Solidaritetscenter.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ "Det svider i hjärtat." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeaDDtQysKo> ca 2:30 min in.

⁶⁸ Daniel Olsson, "Kommunpolitiker döms för ekobrottslighet", Göteborgsposten, 5 augusti 2013

⁶⁹ <https://www.expressen.se/kvallsposten/35-aring-samlade-pengar-till-is-doms-till-fangelse/>

⁷⁰ Per Gudmundson, "Abu Raad samlar in till Syrien", 14 December 2012.

At the same time, Ahmad Qadan is registered on the same address in Gothenburg as those persons convicted for tax fraud together with Anas Khalifa in 2013. Solidaritetscenter have earlier had their same registered address where Abu Raad's Gävle mosque is located.^{71, 72} Khalifa have been a guest before at the Gävle mosque.⁷³ Khalifa has also lectured at other conferences together with preachers within the Salafi milieus. In May 2012 Khalifa lectured together with Malmö-based preacher Bilal Borchali (SMS-Bilal) and Halmstad's mosque imam Abu Muadh at a conference organised by SFM.⁷⁴

As mentioned earlier, the Gävle-based preacher Abu Raad have been identified as the most prominent leader of militant Islamism in Sweden.⁷⁵ Raad was first noticed in 2005 in connection with two individuals convicted of terrorism financing in Iraq. In the court documents a witness tells the court that Abu Raad urged visitors to the mosque where he was preaching (in Gävle) to donate money: "The Imam asked them to blow themselves up as a form of an attack on U.S. armed forces. A prayer carpet was laid out for the mosque visitors to place money on the carpet which according to the imam would be delivered to those who blew themselves up and to the orphaned children".⁷⁶

Abu Raad was also behind the now disused homepage muslim.se which was part of a project to reduce islamophobia and racism within society. On this homepage it was stated that it was forbidden to become friends with a non-believer or to like them as persons or to become active member in a non-believer society.⁷⁷ Abu Raad has lectured in mosques at other conferences both alone and together with other Salafi preachers. As mentioned earlier he lectured together with Anas Khalifa to support Solidaritetscenter and in 2015 he lectured at a conference in Landskrona together with Abu Muadh. The conference was arranged by a man connected with the arson attack against the artist Lars Vilks in 2010.⁷⁸ Abu Raad has also lectured in

⁷¹ "Biståndsarbetare åtalad för IS-stöd", Dagens Nyheter, 7 December 2016.

⁷² Workshop 2018-01-30.

⁷³ Anas Khalifa <https://web.archive.org/web/20071019041916/http://anaskhalifa.com:80/>

⁷⁴ Ademsson. Sfm konferens 2012 "Anas Khalifa och Adnan Rashid DVD 2" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfi0y5NGFcI>

⁷⁵ Johan Järvestad m.fl. "Abo Raad pekas ut som militanta islamismens ledare i Sverige". Gefle Dagblad, 10 September 2015 <http://www.gd.se/gastrikland/gavle/abo-raad-pekas-utsom-militanta-islamismens-ledare-i-sverige>

⁷⁶ Dom Stockholms tingsrätt. B 2965-04, sid 47

⁷⁷ "Gävleimamen ansvarig för radikal hemsida". Gefle Dagblad. 1 July 2015 <http://www.gd.se/gastrikland/gavle/gavleimamen-ansvarig-for-radikal-hemsida>

⁷⁸ Niklas Orrenius. "Skotten i Köpenhamn". Bonnier 2016 ,sid 61.

Borås mosque, which have been brought to the attention for having invited other Salafi preachers such as Abu Muadh and SMS-Bilal.⁷⁹ Abo Raad has also via relatives' connections with other Salafi milieus in Sweden.^{80, 81, 82}

Abu Muadh is primarily based in the mosque in Halmstad which has hosted preachers such as Anas Khalifa and Abu Raad. Abu Muadh is also among the most prominent and charismatic Salafi preachers in Sweden and often appear together with SMS-Bilal, Abu Raad and other prominent preachers. Abu Muadh is raised in Bergsjön outside of Gothenburg. His father is, and has been, imam at Bellevue mosque in Gothenburg.⁸³ Abu Muadh has been accused of having supported jihad to receive forgiveness for sins⁸⁴, have equated homosexuality with a virus⁸⁵ as well as claimed that women who do not wear hijab have been fooled by the devil.⁸⁶

4.6 Summary

This chapter show how Swedish Salafi-Jihadi milieus have developed over time. It also provides a necessary analytical context to understand where, how and why so many individuals from Sweden decided to join terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq over the last 5-6 years. Focus in the debate have often been on individuals. As a result, it is easy to miss the overarching structures and milieus that shape their ideological worldview and, in some cases, are channelling the willingness to join radical and violent extremist groups. In many ways one can liken these social structures to a "Salafi ecosystem."

Furthermore, the chapter shows that there are multiple overlapping contacts between Salafi-Jihadist individuals and milieus as well as numerous prominent Salafi preachers that appear in the same mosques, associations and lecture circuits. It is surprisingly often the same Salafi preachers show up in and around Salafi-Jihadi environments. In some cases, the connections are stronger than in others, but it is clear that no external Swedish Salafi preachers within Sweden appear in these milieus.

⁷⁹ <https://web-retriever-info-com.proxy.annalindhbiblioteket.se/services/archive/displayPDF?documentId=0508132017063058ff4e0a7627d863dfbbb241f0312849&serviceId=2>

⁸⁰ Gadban 2015, sid 174-176

⁸¹ Ibid, sid 194

⁸² Berit Önell och Jonathan Önell, "Radikal islamism har fått fäste i Hässleholm", <http://www.frilagt.se/2017/05/16/radikal-islamism-har-fatt-faste-i-hassleholm/>

⁸³ Interview with salafists, June 2018.

⁸⁴ Sandelin mucf s 20

⁸⁵ Joel Snöbohm. Homosexualitet är ett virus – enligt imamen". Kvällsposten, 5 October 2015 <https://www.expressen.se/kvallsposten/homosexualitet-ar-ett-virus--enligt-imamen/>

⁸⁶ Jan Hägglund, op.cit.

Although the problem of Salafi-Jihadism is spread all over Sweden it is concentrated to a few prominent Salafi preachers, associations and organisations. Even though it centres on just a few individuals Salafism can be effectively spread through lectures in Swedish and the widespread use of social media to spread the message and influence of Salafism. As described in the theory chapter researchers in the Netherlands have shown that Salafi preachers appeal to specific target groups such as youths and women through charismatic and passionate lectures that focus on questions that particularly concerns and appeals to youths. Social media play a decisive role in the projection of Salafi messages, preachers and practical advice around the framework of how to be a “proper and good Salafist.”

5. Social media messages and preachers

This chapter concerns Anas Khalifa, Abu Muadh and Bilal Borchali, three of the most active and prominent Salafi preachers and their messages spread on social media. It also focuses on meta-sites on social media with Salafist messages that are connected to these preachers. This summary will not cover the specific content of these messages. Generally, the Salafi tradition about *tawheed* and the principle of sanctity are very obvious in the preaching and the material that these preachers are distributing via social media. Often the preachers are focused in their lectures on Koranic verses and the Prophet's Sunna with a clear binary division of what is forbidden (*haram*) and what is permissible (*halal*) in daily life and behaviour. Non-believers are consistently termed *kufir* and strict rules govern human interaction, specifically what is allowed in relation to physical contact between men and women.

Very little material exists that is explicitly violence-promoting. On the contrary, all the preachers reject explicitly terrorism, which became apparent after the terror attack on Drottningatan. Instead the material is mainly focused on literalist Salafi interpretation of the Koran, the Sunnah and hadiths focused on *tawhid*, *Iman* and *kufir*, *aqidah*, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *da'wa*, *fatwas*, *shirk* (sins) and other religious aspects.

It is very obvious that all these preachers are charismatic and have accumulated significant knowledge about the Koran and Hadiths as they cite the Koran and speak without notes. The three most prominent preachers Abu Muadh, Bilal Borchali and Anas Khalifa embody different personal presentation styles and focus on different messages. All these three preachers effectively convey their messages about *aqidah* and *manhaj* mixed with humour, entertainment and constant interaction with followers through questions and answers during the lectures or in the case of Anas Khalifa on different social media platforms. The absolute majority of the lectures are non-controversial and pertain to orthodox, literal Salafi-orientated religious messages. Some of these messages may be considered controversial and even antidemocratic when examined through a democratic perspective.

It is very interesting that these three preachers appear together with Salafi-Jihadists and their surrounding milieu. All three know each other very well and preach together on occasion. Some who were interviewed

pointed to the fact that the preachers were careful since they knew they were under close scrutiny and, consequently, were Janus-faced with one more polished and careful external side while they displayed a more radical orientation inwardly in non-public forums. This has been confirmed by a number of independent interviews.

This study also conducted a closer examination of the Salafi content that was preached by prominent Salafi preachers, lecturers and invited foreign imams invited to Sweden. The messages can be divided according to a number of themes that encompass more violence-promoting to themes that aim to polarise society or spread hate towards both minority groups and majority society. These antidemocratic expressions concerned separation of sexes, homophobic and anti-Semitic statements as well as rejection of participation in society and against non-believers (which includes non-Salafists). As was discussed in Chapter Two, both research and reports by foreign intelligence services show that these binary and enemy-creating Salafi messages can provide the mechanisms of entry into more radical views that can ultimately result in violent extremism and even terrorism.

It is therefore worrisome that Salafi preachers that promote such anti-democratic views convey these messages to Swedish youth on social media platforms and in the physical environment.

6. Methods of Influence

6.1 Dawah

Beyond the presence on social media and the spread of Salafi messages, the role of da'wa have played an important role for the spread of Salafism. Swedish Salafists have actively engaged in so-called “street-da'wa”. Close examination of the aforementioned Salafi preachers has shown that they are very active in da'wa activities, but they have used different affiliations in public in order to appear independent. In fact, it is possible to trace problematic foreign da'wa-organisations to Sweden, who have provided education and methods for establishing and effectively executing da'wa in Swedish cities. Such da'wa activity in Sweden with foreign connections have several times changed through disguised methods and the study focus on two such examples, *Die Wahre Religion* and *iERA*. In this summary only the first case will be mentioned.

Die Wahre Religion (DWR) which in English means “The True Religion” was founded in 2005 by a Palestinian-born German Salafist, Ibrahim Abou-Nagie, who comes from Cologne. As an organisation DWR have grown to around 500 active German members and activities have centered on the project “Lies!” (Läs!-projektet) which was a Koran-distributing campaign that seeks to distribute around 25 million Korans – one for every German household. According to Abou-Nagie, DWR have distributed 3,5 million Korans between October 2011 until 2016. These 500 members were divided between 60 local “Lies!”-initiative.⁸⁷ According to the German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (BfV), the Koran-distribution and missionary activity is a cover to spread Salafism and draw youths into more radical interpretations.⁸⁸

The founder of DWR, Ibrahim Abou-Nagie, have openly preached against democracy and Western values. According to sources, Abou-Nagie have said that “democracy is against Islam. And it is the opposite to Islam.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Jörg Dielhl och Roman Lehberger. “Innenminister verbietet Salafisten-Verein”, Spiegel, 15 November 2016 <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/Salafisten-bundesweiter-razzia-gegen-islamistischen-verein-a-1121208.html>

⁸⁸ Reiner Burger, “Franchise-System der Salafisten”, Frankfurter Allgemeine”, 18 August 2016 <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/lukratives-geschaeft-der-Salafisten-mit-koranverteilungen-14391377.html>

⁸⁹ “German police raid 200 sites across 10 states in hunt for banned Islamist group “The True Religion”, The Telegraph, 15 November 2016. <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/Salafisten-bundesweite-razzia-gegenislamistischen-verein-a-1121208.html>

In the same video Abou-Nagie expressed deep indignation against unbelievers or *kufir*: “They are trying to convert us to become kuffar, if we deny sharia then we are kuffar, if we accept democracy means we are kuffar also.”⁹⁰ He has also said that homosexuals must be executed to protect Muslims and individuals who are unfaithful should be stoned to death.⁹¹

DWR was outlawed by German authorities in November 2016. One reason for this decision was that 140 *Die Wahre Religion* members had travelled to Syria and Iraq to become foreign terrorist fighters and join IS. Prominent among these DWR members who joined IS was the famous ex-rapper Denis Cuspert (more known as “Deso Dogg”), a 26-year old suicidebomber from Solingen as well as the convert Christian Emde, who belonged to IS propaganda unit.⁹²

On December 26, 2014, the Al Quran foundation launched “LÄS!”-project in Malmö. According to registration papers from November 2017 from county government, Abu-Nagie is the foundation chairman.⁹³ Even IICSWEDEN who have their address on Amiralsgatan 30 in Malmö was involved in the development of the work around the “LÄS!”-project as they had previously worked with “*street da’wa*.”

The purpose of the “LÄS!”-project was to “distribute a free translation of the holy Koran to all our fellow human beings in Sweden. The Koran shall be distributed for free on the streets, in prisons, schools, hospitals and libraries with the help of Swedish Muslims that are financing the project with their donations.” According to Abou-Nagie, the goal of the project is to distribute a Koran to every single Swedish household.⁹⁴ “The LÄS!”-project collected donations to the Al-Quran foundation. According to German authorities, the Al-Quran foundation is one of the most important financial nodes for DWR activities which are forbidden in Germany.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/Salafisten-bundesweite-razzia-gegenislamistischen-verein-a-1121208.html>

⁹¹ Lizzie Dearden. “Germany launches almost 200 police raids as Islamist group linked to more than 140 Isis fighters banned”, 15 November 2016 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-bans-die-wahre-religiontrue-religion-lies-read-200-police-raids-isis-fighters-a7418701.html>

⁹² Jörg Dielhl och Roman Lehberger. “Innenminister verbietet Salafisten-Verein”, Spiegel, 15 November 2016 <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/Salafisten-bundesweiteraz-za-gegen-islamistischen-verein-a-1121208.html>

⁹³ Interview with police, June 2018

⁹⁴ “Der Start des Lies! Projekts in Schweden (Schwedisch-Arabisch-Deutsch)” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOX7qpNUdiQ>

⁹⁵ Interview with representatives from German Interior Ministry, Nürnberg March 2018.

Behind the launch of the “LÄS!”-project in Sweden was Ahmad Qadan (SolidaritetsCenter) and there are several videos on Youtube where “LÄS!”-project have put up stands on Stortorget in Malmö where those who man these stalls are dressed in white T-shirts and distribute roses and a free Quran. The DWR founder was present to support the activities.⁹⁶ The “LÄS!”-project was established first in Malmö,⁹⁷ Landskrona⁹⁸ and Helsingborg and then in Västerås and Borås.⁹⁹ Even Abu Raads daughter-in-law Omar El-Turk have been active in organising “LÄS!”-projects distribution. On his Facebook-page El-Turk is standing with a “LÄS!”-project T-shirt behind a da’wa-stall in the town of Fagersta.

It is important to underscore that *da’wa*-activity is fully legitimate and is protected by the Swedish constitution enshrined in freedom of religion and expression. What is focused on is the problematic connections to a German organisation that is outlawed or have a leadership which express anti-democratic views. It is important for politicians and local government to be aware of the abilities of Salafi *street-da’wa* organisers to change guise when they are connected to foreign or problematic organisations.



⁹⁶ “Lies! Infostand Schweden/Malmö am 24.10.2015” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oy4u4Hgp3o8>

⁹⁷ “Die Freundlichkeit und Toleranz der Schweden” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl7zZ1B8FcU>

⁹⁸ “LÄS Project in Landskrona (Schweden)” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXIHR8MyzhU>

⁹⁹ “Super freundliche Menschen in Schweden” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh6j_WNNZCQ&t=2s

6.2 School activities

Another observed Salafist arena for influence is within the school sector. The leadership of SFM is also behind Vetenskapsskolan in the district of Angered in Gothenburg. Vetenskapsskolan is officially not a religious private school but the role of religion is a significant part of the nature of this school. Earlier the school had been caught cheating on contributions and the School Inspection have delivered considerable criticism of the educational activities.¹⁰⁰ During one of the School Inspection visits to the school the pupils had to answer what they were taught during the religion classes and the answers were: “Islam, prayer and Arabic.”¹⁰¹ Vetenskapsskolan has a total of 200 pupils in grades 4-9 while grades 1-3 is operating in another location.¹⁰²

The connections between Sveriges Förenade Muslimer (SFM) and Vetenskapsskolan are very strong as a number of individuals are active in both organisations. The former principal and present owner is El Nadi Abdel Nasser who is also known as Abu Talal. As the company director and member of the board of Kunskapsljuset AB, Abu Talal is overall responsible for Vetenskapsskolan while, at the same time, he is very active within SFM as preacher, *da'wa* and involved in general lessons in the mosque as well as Islamic courses. It is very clear that there are strong ties between Abu Talal and the Gävle-based imam Abu Raad as they both are in a Sharia-committee within the framework of Islamiska Förbundet för Social Utveckling (IFFSU).¹⁰³ Abo Raad's daughter-in-law, who was also involved in the LÄS-project, Omar El-Turk have also worked in the school.¹⁰⁴

In interviews it was revealed that Koranic schools were present in socially exposed suburbs where it was possible to exercise influence over children at a young age. There is hard competition between different mosques to have their children placed in the mosque's Koranic schools.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ "Skola misstänks för bidragsbrott", Göteborgsposten, 29 May 2012

¹⁰¹ Sofie Löwenmark, "Vetenskapsskolan i Göteborg har nära kopplingar till SFM och extremister", 19 July 2017. <https://timbro.se/smedjan/reportage/sfm-spridervaldsbejakande-islamism-skattepengar/>

¹⁰² Skolinspektionen. "Beslut för grundskola efter tillsyn av Vetenskapsskolan belägen i Göteborgs kommun". 15 januari 2015 <https://siris.skolverket.se/siris/ris.openfile?docID=582774>

¹⁰³ Sofie Löwenmark. "Sveriges Förenade Muslimer bakom kritiserade Vetenskapsskolan". 3 July 2016 <https://archive.is/ihy2O>

¹⁰⁴ Sofie Löwenmark. "Sveriges Förenade Muslimer bakom kritiserade Vetenskapsskolan". 3 July 2016 <https://archive.is/ihy2O>

¹⁰⁵ Interview with police, October 2017

According to interviewees, it is a duty to send children to Koranic schools as it is considered obligatory for Muslim children and youths to attend. All Koranic schools are not necessarily negative influence, but several interviewees argue that Koranic schools can contribute to increased radicalisation. There are instances when youth disappear from the ordinary school education as they are participating in the education of Koranic schools instead.^{106, 107}

Koranic schools are necessarily closed-off environments that are difficult to reach for any outsider. This study managed to acquire textbooks used by several mosques in Gothenburg who operate Koranic schools. According to a sufi imam in northeast Gothenburg, this material was problematic as much of it was Wahabi-orientated.¹⁰⁸

The world's largest Muslim organisation *Nahdlatul Ulama* were invited to analyse the content in these textbooks. They concluded that the material presented a worldview where Islam was all-encompassing. The books instructed Muslims not to integrate into Swedish society or to respect its laws and rules. Sweden and Swedes were seen as non-believers with a social system in stark contrast to what God had mandated.

6.3 Forms of financing

Finally, the study examined different forms of financing of both Salafi-Jihadists and Salafi actors. There are several cases in Sweden where individuals associated with Salafi-Jihadist milieus have surfaced in police investigations concerning economic crime. These cases encompass among other, for example, welfare fraud, tax fraud and accountancy fraud which in some cases have yielded rather large amount of money. Even though some cases have resulted in convictions there is not a single case of financial crime in Sweden that can be tied to provide funding for terrorism or a terror group in the last decade. Instead certain individuals who have been involved in these crimes have spread jihadist propaganda over the internet and travelled down to the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq to join terror groups.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with police, October 2017

¹⁰⁷ Interview with police (2), October 2017

¹⁰⁸ Interview with imam, October 2017

In earlier studies of Swedish foreign terrorist fighters who travelled to Syria and Iraq we concluded that the majority of individuals had obtained social welfare benefits. In some cases, these social welfare benefits were systematically abused and constitute welfare fraud.

A number of different tax fraud cases have in the last eight years been investigated which have proven to involve individuals who are connected to the Salafi-Jihadi milieu in Sweden. Several cases of these crimes have involved VAT fraud involving sale of electronics and mobile phones. This type of goods is useful as they are small and easy to administer and have a relatively high value internationally with a large revenue turnover. It is therefore relatively easy to establish itself on the market and create a high turnover and where the VAT is withheld using different tax systems between countries. This can be abused together with false accounting. These extremist circles exchange modus operandi between themselves and criminal structures.

The fact that individuals with sympathies for violent Islamist extremist groups in these investigations have led intelligence and investigation to suspect that some foreign transactions are used to fund terrorist groups in conflict zones.^{109, 110, 111} However, none of these cases have led to the conviction of individuals for financing of terrorism.

A considerable challenge for Swedish authorities is the establishment of schools and educational establishments with connections to the Salafist environment. Several people that are examined in this study who are prominent within the Salafist milieu are or have been active in positions within Swedish educational establishments. This can constitute a considerable challenge when some of these have a clear antidemocratic agenda and as the educational sector in most cases are publicly funded. This phenomenon is mainly affecting Koranic schools and pre-schools for children who are very young to higher educational establishments and camp activities for older youths.

Another financial form for Swedish Salafists is charitable collection activities. Earlier in the study, Solidaritetscenter was mentioned whose leader was convicted of encouraging donations to terror organisations.

¹⁰⁹ Per Sydviik, Momsfiffel finansierade jihadister i Syrien, Göteborgsposten, 2014-11-28 <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/g%C3%B6teborg/momsfiffel-finansierade-jihadister-i-syrien1.263303>

¹¹⁰ Johanna Karlsson, Terrorsyskonen, Expressen, 2018-01-27 <https://www.expressen.se/gt/qs/terrorsyskonen/>

¹¹¹ Daniel Olsson, Kommunpolitiker döms för ekobrottslighet, Göteborgsposten, 2013-07-05 <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/g%C3%B6teborg/kommunpolitiker-d%C3%B6ms-f%C3%B6rekobrottslighet-1.570008>

Solidaritetscenter have been able to collect money with a “90-account” despite the fact that its representatives have expressed sympathies for Salafi-Jihadi terror groups and activities as well as invited hate preachers. A so-called “90-account” is meant to be a quality control measure for donations to humanitarian causes that is scrutinized by *Svensk insamlingskontroll* to ensure that it is conducted “through an ethical and responsible fashion and that the collected money is distributed to the stated causes without unjustified costs.”¹¹² The account of Solidaritetscenter ended on 5 February 2016 on their own account as activities were discontinued. It is likely due to the fact that the organisation’s activities were subject to an intrusive police investigation.¹¹³ There are no concrete or verifiable details that donations to Solidaritetscenter have directly gone to support terrorism or terrorist groups.

Sweden lack insight today how Muslim institutions finance their activities or if potential requirements are made by foreign donors on the ideological direction of board of directors of mosques. Few studies exist on these issues. However, there exist a public government agency who has a responsibility to distribute public money to faith organisations, activities and projects. This public provision amounts to around 90 million Swedish kronor per year.¹¹⁴ The possibility to access this public funding is regulated and requires decisions by the government. Today there exists 18 state-funded faith communities and three umbrella organisations that collectively gathers 40 faith communities.¹¹⁵

There are 18 registered foundations in Sweden who describe their goal as building and administration of mosques in the country. 11 of these foundations are not transparent regarding existing assets according to available information from county government register. The ability of county government to scrutinize foundations involved in humanitarian collection in Sweden or distribution of these donations to and in conflict zones connected to Salafi networks and activities are rather limited or even non-existent.

A review by the online newspaper *Dagens ETC* in November 2017 showed that 17 of the largest 25 mosques in Sweden receive funding from foreign states.¹¹⁶ Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait

¹¹² Svensk insamlingskontroll, <https://www.insamlingskontroll.se/home>

¹¹³ M. Sandelin, Sverige har exporterat terrorism till andra länder, *Expressen debatt*, 2017-03-12 <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/sverige-har-exporterat-terrorism-till-andra-lander/>

¹¹⁴ Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund, <http://www.myndighetenst.se/om-oss.html>

¹¹⁵ Myndigheten för stöd till trossamfund, <http://www.myndighetenst.se/om-oss.html>

¹¹⁶ Dag Ankensen, Saudiarabien finansierar var fjärde svensk moské, *ETC*, 2017-11-08 <https://www.etc.se/inrikes/saudiarabien-finansierar-var-fjarde-svensk-moske>

have contributed with money to 13 of the mosques reviewed and sometimes it accounted for the entire cost of building the mosque. It is unclear how these contributions have impacted these institutions ideological direction or activities as these financial contributions have not been transparent. There has been some financing that has been tied to conditionality on the board of directors, but it is clear that more focus and transparency is needed for the future.

7. Influence on Swedish society

Throughout this project extensive interviews of more than 70 individuals were conducted who are locally active in 17 different cities around Sweden. In principal, these interviewees are working professionally with violent extremism issues within the Police Agency, Social Services and in different roles within local municipalities. Additionally, a number of interviews were conducted with individuals including representatives from civil society as well as a couple of (purist) Salafists. Also, journalists, who have long investigated Salafist and Salafi-Jihadist milieus, have also been interviewed.

The number of interviewees in respective city varied according to size and the nature as well as scale of the problem. In larger cities more individuals were interviewed and vice versa. The selection of interviewees was dependent on who was judged by the relevant agencies and municipalities to possess the most relevant access to data and experience. It also depended on the Salafists and other experienced individuals within civil society that came into contact with different forms of Salafism.

This chapter shows that almost every interviewee in their experiences feel that Salafist and Salafi-jihadist have a considerable influence on local communities and create different challenges for residents locally. First and foremost, Salafist influence is directed against non-Salafi Muslims and minorities. Individual human rights with freedoms and rights as well as gender equality are circumscribed in certain cases taking the form of honour-related culture, gender segregation, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and pressures to not have contact with, or association with, non-Salafists. The strict moral and social framework espoused by Salafism argue for a separation from secular society and its values and norms.

Interviewees experience that the Salafi-Jihadi milieus have become more hidden at the same time its size and influence are increasing. How large these two Salafi milieus are is difficult to assess exactly. One reason for the difficulty to discern these two milieus from each other is that they share a common ideological foundation. At the same time, prominent Salafist preachers are often present in and around Salafi-Jihadi milieus. Another reason for this difficulty is related to the knowledge level about these religious distinction's by government officials and other respondents. Salafism is perceived as diffuse as it is less visible, it is less action-orientated and more difficult to grip than for example right-wing extremism.

Concerning the Salafi-Jihadist milieus that are acting more concealed it is important to recognise that activities have not stopped. Influence happens through concealed structures, concentrated through social networks and through social media. There are also overlapping structures between the Salafi-Jihadi and criminal structures.

Many interviewees within Social Services and local municipalities experience that they do not get access to high-resolution information showing the local situational pictures on local Salafi-Jihadi milieus. Therefore, it becomes very difficult for these actors to exactly know who to target within Salafi-Jihadist milieus and how to respond to Salafi-Jihadi influence activities. A complicating factor is how varied the knowledge base is among those that work with the problems and the varied experience how to handle the Salafi-Jihadi milieu. There is considerable knowledge among some police officers, who specifically work against these extremist milieus, while other police officers mention that they have difficulty in prioritising this problem as it seldom manifests itself as a concrete criminal activity.

When it comes to honour-related culture, many interviewees have pointed to the role of religious legitimation in the relationship with honour-related culture. There are, of course, embedded cultural reasons and causes but often cases involve religious legitimation according to religious texts. As previously shown, Salafism has built-in correctional mechanisms that is applied in varying degrees against those that deviate from the norms and rule-based framework of Salafism.

Honour-related culture with religious influences manifests itself as limitations on the freedom of movement for women and girls with regards to how they dress, who they meet, their activities and who they select as their life partner. Of course, there are those that have voluntarily adopted this religious lifestyle, but interviewees provide accounts of when women and girls are subjected to varying degrees of social pressure and limitations.

Salafism exists and reinforce isolationist tendencies. Interviewees express concern that these tendencies are mirrored in influence directed against youths. Such influences are exemplified by children being placed in confessional kindergartens, in afternoons and on weekends in Koranic schools and on school holidays in camps with religious activities. Furthermore, there is continued influence through the ages in religious private schools and after school activities. As one interviewee expressed it: “when they graduate they are already fully indoctrinated.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Interview with police in Gothenburg, Februari 2018

Conservative religious values have influenced youths and children in school according to interviewees. According to an interviewee from the police, it is great concern that pupils in some schools have referred to what is “haram” and “halal” in the classroom in order to undermine the power of teachers as they are often uncomfortable in tackling these complex social and religious issues. Other interviewees have witnessed that children role-play IS or that parents insist that young girls wear a hijab and does not participate in some forms of education. It is a serious challenge for school personnel to navigate in these religiously and culturally difficult issues. Many teachers are requesting increased knowledge and how to handle these challenges.

8. Conclusions

This study represents a first evidence-based platform to understand the relationship and complex interplay between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism in Sweden. Furthermore, this study seeks to map out and provide a holistic perspective over connections between the different actors and milieus. Additionally, this study investigates how local actors perceive and experience how Salafist and Salafi-Jihadi milieus influence local communities across Sweden.

Collectively the study of Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism show that it is present in all of the 17 cities that were studied across Sweden. It is also clear that local government representatives and actors experience that Salafism contributes to creating challenges for fundamental democratic human rights and values. On the one hand there is a lack of knowledge about different religious orientation. On the other hand, there is experienced difficulty handling the influence of Salafism across its different manifestations. On top of this it is clear that crime fighting agencies feel that Salafist influences fall outside their mandate as much does not cross the threshold of being a crime. For Social Services and schools, Salafism-related questions are very difficult to understand and not least to handle.

Within the framework of Salafism's ideological foundation, it is clear that there are different orientations across the spectrum from purist, political and Salafi-Jihadist forms of Salafism. Since all these forms of Salafism are part and parcel of the same ideological foundation it is not just possible to investigate and scrutinize Salafi-Jihadism alone. Rather it is essential to understand these different forms of Salafism and these connections to Salafi-Jihadism. A review of research into Salafism show that the ideological framework is the same for all these forms of Salafism but differ in relation to application (*manhaj*). Similar to all these forms is that there is an antidemocratic orientation since following God and God's laws are the only thing permissible.

Just as foreign government reports have underscored the ideology of Salafism that is spread by Salafists "is the cause for Islamist radicalisation in the direction of jihadi-Salafism and even to recruitment for jihad." It is not possible to separate this movement "completely from violent jihad and especially on the individual receiving level."

Even if Salafism is not explicitly violence-promoting, the ideology is still problematic from the perspective of democratic society and its values and

norms about the respect for equality and individual democratic freedoms and rights. For example, certain Salafist preachers have expressed views that seeks to restrict women's rights and freedoms, are Islamophobic or anti-Semitic, limit active democratic participation and limit contact with non-Muslim.

This study has analysed the interplay between extremists' environments, Salafi preachers and networks, messages and methods. There are strong social relations between different central Salafi actors that are connected in varying degrees to the Salafi-Jihadi milieus in Sweden. The same Salafi preachers appear alone or together with others in the same mosques, associations and, at times, together on the lecture circuit.

In parallel this study show that the Salafi-Jihadist milieus have developed and grown strong in several places in Swedish cities. This study provides a unique insight into how these Salafi milieus operate and have developed over time. From this emerges a complex and high-resolution picture how central leaders within Salafi milieus have shaped both the violence-promoting milieus and the surrounding Salafi actors. It is interesting to note that the "travelling circus" of Salafi preachers seem to be interested in collaboration rather than competition. Instead these Salafi preachers have divided up *da'wa* missions according to geographic areas. There is as the study show some rivalry between those in the Salafi milieus. For example, there is very little rivalry between "Järva-Salafists" (in Stockholm) and those studied here.

Another interesting area that the study highlights is how Salafi-Jihadi preachers are very active on social media than other Salafi orientations. It is clear that there is considerable *da'wa* through social media that focus on Friday prayers, lectures, question and answers and videos of foreign Salafi preachers. Almost nothing of their material is violence-promoting but rather is religiously grounded. As the study show some of the Salafi preachers have made statements that are problematic as they promote gender segregation and suppression of women, homophobia, anti-Semitism and promotion of segregation from secular society and non-believers (which also includes non-Salafists). Research and reports by foreign government agencies elevate the binary and enemy picture created by Salafi messages that act as a conveyer belt for more radical positions that can risk creating violent tendencies and even terrorism.

Even Koranic schools have been the focus of this study. Several interviewees expressed concerns about the role of Koranic schools and their potential influence on youths. A review of Salafi material connected to a number of mosques in Gothenburg show that some of the material was

takfiri (Salafi-Jihadi) in orientation and deeply problematic. This should be of great concern according to the sufi imam in Gothenburg that mean that the material that exists in mosques are establishing the values and norms for youths.

This study examined the financing of Salafi and Salafi-Jihadi activities. This review shows that the financial activities are considerable but that state and local control mechanisms are essentially lacking. It is clear that there is no absence of money within Salafist and Salafi-jiahdi milieus, especially when it comes to humanitarian collection.

Interviewees locally gave often a concurrent picture that Salafist and Salafi-Jihadi influence exists and create many challenges for local residents in certain geographical areas across the 17 cities examined. While these milieus have become more concealed it is clear that they have grown and become stronger during the last few years.

Salafi influence is primarily directed against other non-Salafist individuals and minorities. It affects individual human rights and equality as they are manifested through honour-related culture, gender segregation, anti-Semitism, homophobia and social pressure not to have contact with non-Salafists. The study has provided a further piece of the puzzle enhancing our understanding how information campaigns can be manifest in specific circumstances.

This study is the first serious effort to try to understand Salafism and Salafi-Jihadi presence in Sweden. It is important to underscore that both these ideological currents within Salafism are minorities within Sunni Islam. All Salafists are not Jihadists but all Jihadists are Salafists. As such, this study focuses on a minority within a minority and should not be taken as representation of Muslims as a group.

The study provides great food for thought for politicians and broader society as to the necessity to further understand how Salafism and Salafi-Jihadi milieus influences the development of Swedish society – not least on the local level. It is necessary to have more research and knowledge in a number of different areas. It is particularly important to investigate and understand the dynamic and interplay between different forms of Salafism.

It is obvious that foreign finance of mosques, schools and religious associations and foundations need to be scrutinized and studied further. Furthermore, the financing of the Salafist and Salafi-Jihadist milieus in Sweden require much greater attention as few studies exists. The study has also shown that the School Inspectorate play an important and decisive role in scrutinizing schools. Although Koranic schools are organised informally it is evident that researchers ought to focus on these and how

they influence the values and norms of youths within society. Furthermore, this study has reinforced the need to develop greater knowledge about the interface between honour-related culture and Salafism.

The study has shown the need for greater collaboration locally. One difficult aspect for government officials is that these issues often occur in a grey-zone between legal and illegal activity which makes interventions more difficult. This means there is a greater urgency for government to better shape the state and local government control mechanisms to review applications for funding of activities in order to safeguard that state funded activities conform to democratic principles and values. As such, it is clear that local municipalities could be much clearer about democratic values in dialogue with faith leaders.

Finally, this study underscores the importance and necessity for politicians and public debate to make greater differentiation or distinctions of Islam as: 1) practice of faith, 2) Islamism as a religio-political ideology and 3) Salafism/Salafi-Jihadism. Democracy becomes revitalised through a public debate with multiple perspectives, one that is facts-based and respectful as well as nuanced about Islam, Islamism and Salafism and ordinary practice of faith across a myriad of orientations.

Between Salafism and Salafi-Jihadism – Influence and Challenges for Swedish Society

June 2017 – June 2018.

Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies (CATS), at the Swedish Defence University.

Responsible researcher: Magnus Ranstorp, Research Director, CATS.

This study examines the influence from salafi and salafi-jihadist milieus in Sweden and the interactions between these different forms. This executive summary focuses on the evolution of salafi-jihadis milieus in Sweden and surrounding salafi elements; messages from these milieus; their methods for influence and the impact on local communities in Sweden.

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