Radical Islamism in Libya. The case of the Libyan Islamic Fighters Group.

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The background of the jihadist in Libya and what subsequently happened to become Libyan Islamic Fighters Group (LIFG), date back to the beginning of the 1980s, in conjunction with the first group of Libyans who declared their "jihad" against the regime of Qadhafi. The period of its first years of existence was marked by disagreements and rivalries. The few actions that could be done finished in less than encouraging results. In 1986, after the assassination of a key official at the Libyan Government, Qadhafi security forces quickly identified and tracked down nine members of the Islamist cell responsible for the plot and condemned them to death.

After that incident, the radical Islamists began to come together under the leadership of Commander Awatha Al-Zuwawi, a student of Islamic law in Tripoli which formed an underground jihadist organization in Libya in 1982. According to Noman Benotman, a former member of the Advisory Committee (shura) of the (LIFG), most of the leaders of the Foundation and the tables of the fighter group were members of the clandestine organization of Zuwawi. Between 1985 and 1986 Zuwawi had many students and the educated people around him, in particular Abu Munther Al-Saadi, who served as the spiritual leader of the LIFG, 1.

In 1986 Zuwawi traveled to Afghanistan to join the fight against the Soviet invasion back in Libya. Three years later, in 1989, Zuwawi was arrested in Benghazi by Libyan security forces and his group was disjointed. After the arrest of Zuwawi and the repression of Islamist demonstrations in Benghazi, the Libyans who sympathized with the Jihad emigrated to Afghanistan where they "joined their fellow Arabs under the wings of Afghan groups Mujahideen in battles against the Communist central Government in Kabul." 2

In Afghanistan the main base of the Libyan Mujahideen was the Salman Al-Farisi field in the area of Ghindaw, located in the area along the border with Afghanistan and Pakistani Tribal.

In 1993 Pakistan ordered the ramp down of all the Mujahideen camps threatening owith the deportation of those with no legal papers within the territory. The Libyans headed mainly to three destinations, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria to join the G.I.A and following Sudan following Osama Bin Laden. Only a few returned underground to Libya.

In Sudan Bin Laden established an "Islamic army of Shura," which should serve as the coordinating force for international militant alliances that he sought to form. The Islamic army of the Shura was composed the Group and trust of Osama Bin Laden and leaders or representatives of terrorist organizations that were still independent, including almost twenty members of the LIFG. These were also in charge of protecting 'Abd Allah the Turabi and Bin Laden, in a complex of villas in Khartoum, where instructors LIFG taught conferences on military theory, intelligence and tactical guerrilla, and security issues.
The members of the Libyan Mujahideen in Sudan still had regular contact with members LIFG in Libya. According to Noman Benotman, who was at that time in Sudan with the LIFG, "we were all part of the same group, but people in Libya had their own military and organization structure. iii"

In exile in Sudan, the incipient LIFG, deepened a network of contacts with Al Gama At A Egypt Islamiyya and the "Algerian Afghans" members of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)." It should be recalled that on 6 June for the 1996 and October 1, 1997 the LIFG issued two press releases harshly criticizing the leadership of the GIA by "indiscriminate killing civilians and moving away from the principles of Jihad." A criticism that we will hear again in 12 years.

In Libya the LIFG staged mediocre actions, almost amateur. For example, in May 1995 they proceeded to rescue a wounded member in a hospital. The operation and its immediate sequel gave to the security service important clues. Qadhafi personally ordered security services to pursue the perpetrators. Security forces surrounded the authors in a farm near Benghazi. This farm was a training location. This gave the regime information and motivation to deepen the investigations.

Al Gamaat Al - Islamiya Al - Libya to Al - Muqatila, also called Libyan fighters Islamic Group, came to public light on 18 October 1995, after a summer of unprecedented attacks to weaken the Qadhafi regime. The LIFG issued its first formal declaration that recognizes the existence of the Group:

"The time has come for the combatant Libyan Islamic Group to become a public movement, rather than a secret one, in the lig projects in Libya. Moreover, Islamic combatant Libyan hereby group claims blessed jihadists actions that have been happening everywhere in Libya since June. Dealing with bad dictators of the era, as Qadhafi, has become one of the most important duties for Muslims behind the belief in the blessed Alá. We sent a fraternal, friendly, and the word of love of peace to all the jihad movements that have stood up in defense of Islam and the Muslims oppressed throughout the Islamic world" iv.

The Group aims to establish an Islamic State in Libya based on Islamic law and proclaims Jihad against Tripoli and its allies.

At the top of the structure is the Consultative Committee, composed of 15 members, according to its statutes for a decision to be valid the agreement of 7 members is required.

The Advisor Committee depends on the Judicial Committee which is responsible for all legal matters, as well as for the education of the militants, propagandist training and scholars of religion v. The Committee is also responsible for the expedition of legal writings. In addition,
the Committee is interested in the correct functioning of Libyan society, thus all messages, matters and articles critiquing the tendencies should be considered negative from an Islamic point of view. This Committee is divided in three branches: research and study, propaganda and judicial affairs orientation.

The information Office is the third force. This one publishes open letters to the Libyan calling them to focus on the Islamic faith. They have been detected in Western countries like United Kingdom (which would be its fund-raising and propaganda base)\textsuperscript{vi}, Denmark and Germany.

The LIFG networks spread. The group is mentioned several times in the summary of the 11-m. A report by the Central Unit of External Information of the General Police Station of information in Spain, reveals the connections of Serhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhet, "the Tunisian", spiritual leader of the cell of the terrorist attacks of 2004 in Madrid, with two members of LIFG settled in China. A branch quite unknown until now. The thread that led to the Asian country was claimed by Jordanian Abdallah Mohd Othman, with whom "the Tunisian" intended to set up a furniture business.

It was detected that Serhane called to London and Hong Kong from a registered phone on behalf of Othman, where the furniture company was and that intended to contact. The investigators got hold of the Chinese phones which were used by the instigator of the 11-m. The person in Hong Kong was Abu Abdullah Sadiq\textsuperscript{vii}, known as "Mohamed Ali", head of the furniture company who speaks with a United Arab Emirates accent. The suspect turned out to be a leader of the Libyan Islamic combatant group. And in April 2004 he was arrested in Libya after his extradition from China\textsuperscript{viii}.

The Police of the case highlights that the 'Tunisian' calls to London occurred just when Ziyad to Hashim, alias 'Imad to the Libi'', Member of the Committee of the LIFG media, resided in a London suburb. In addition, in January 2004, Ziyad traveled by plane from China to United Kingdom, where he settled down. The Spanish justice established that when "the Tunisian" and partner Othman telephoned China «Mohamed Ali» (leader of LIFG) was with Ziyad Al Hashim\textsuperscript{ix}.

Younes Chakouri as the Coordinator of Islamic Group of Moroccan fighters (GICM) and the LIFG get quoted in the same summary. Also noted in the summary that members of LIFG gave training to militants of the GICM in two respects in which Moroccans were better prepared than the Libyans, organization and leadership of small groups and military-technicians\textsuperscript{x}. 
The LIFG best-known action was the attempt to assassinate Qadhafi in an attack bomb. The frustrated attack was planned for months and was executed on February 22, 1996, but failed because the bomb exploded in a car away from the convoy for where it happened Qadhafi. The attack later authors who managed the vehicle that would put the passage of the convoy, there was another attempt with equal luck in 1997 and 1998. The man who would have directed the attack of 1996 was Anas Al libi, the same who procured a House of security in Benghazi to Bin laden.

Anas Al Libby was considered the key man in the North and the Horn of Africa operations. Egyptian diplomats tell that he participated in an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in June 1995 and he also took part in the bomb attacks perpetrated in August 1998 against the embassies of the United States, UU Kenya and Tanzania. Its mission would have been taking the photographs that were used to mark the places where the explosives should be placed.

Since the invasion of Iraq, Libya coexists with two nearby threats: one is the existence of training camps of Al Qaeda in the southern border of his territory - remote and Mountain-, mainly in the boundary of Chad, Mali and Senegal. The second is the emergence of new Libyans among the Iraqi resistance. A score of combatants "Iraqi Libyans" have acted as suicide bombers against troops in Basra and Falluja, a fact which had not seen before among Libyan terrorists.

Nearly 90 Algerians in actions were detected in Iraq in the 2005 suicide, while the Libyans were 20. This phenomenon represents a long-term problem for Tripoli, due to which elements "Iraqi Libyans" will want in the future to return to their homeland and join the repressed opposition. In this it should be noted that after Saudis Libyans represent second present nationality as jihadists in Iraq.

These estimates were confirmed by the discovery in Sinjar areas, a city in the North of Iraq of the 606 militants catalogued since 2006 in the registers of Sinjar areas, nearly 19 per cent had come to Iraq from Libya. Previous intelligence estimates had always maintained that most of the foreign fighters of Iraq come from Saudi Arabia. In fact, the largest number of militants in the registers of Sinjar areas-244 of them were Saudi citizens. However, in percentage terms, the Libyans represent a much higher percentage.

On the domestic front the Libyan army 2004 discovered, having followed three of LIFG members close to the border with Chad, a large training camp of the GSPC (current Al - Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb). The military found hidden near Tibesti an arsenal with machine guns, explosives of high sophistication and some anti-armor shells, which were not described in
detail, plus a field and indoctrination shooting. The GSPC used it to train specialized military which had managed to recruit. In France the press linked it with the planning of attacks on European and American embassies in Africa.

On November 3, 2007 in a press release Ayman al-Zawahiri declares the LIFG joined Al-Qaeda to fight the Government in that country: "Today, with the grace of God, the Muslim nation is witnessing a blessed step. The Honorable Members of the Islamic combatant in Libya Group announced to join al-Qaeda to continue the progress of his brothers". In this sense, the leading Islamic fundamentalist called on his followers to overthrow" Wicked regimes of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

Since 2006 the LIFG held talks with the Government of Libya, in spite of this the Government reported that in May 2007, the Government arrested several militants with the accusation that were planning a car bombing similar to an attack of April bomb in Algeria. And in July 2007, a group who calls himself Al Qaeda in the East of Libya in Darnah.

The result of talks with the Gaddafi Foundation, interlocutor between the LIFG and the Libyan Government announced a suicide attack, was the release of 88 militants of LIFG, one-third of those is imprisoned. This release was the first step in the attempt by the Libyan Government to stop the LIFG armed struggle. xii

Fruit of this negotiation, was a release in July 2009 expounding a harsh criticism to Al-Qaeda for its policy of "indiscriminate bombing" and "attack against civilians " and stating that violence does not reach the goals of the Group on the Elimination of oppression.

This is the first time that a group to join al-Qaeda refuses her, this raises the idea that Al-Qaeda no longer function; as agglutinating group as centripetal force, ideological umbrella, or as a "brand"xiii. As wrote a member of the shura of Al-Qaeda, Mustafa Setmarian, known as Abu Mus'ab al - Suri: "Al Qaeda not intended to be an organization but a call"xiv.

Paradoxically Abdel Hakim Belhadj emir of the LIFG was appointed as military adviser of Tripoli by the National Council of transition, the same as one of the leaders of the attacks of the 11-M call and that no means place him together with other Libyan fighters, in early December this year on the border of Turca-siriato support the revolt against the President of Syria xv.

According to the exposed data perhaps the future of the jihadis movements consists in adopting democratic speeches to enter the domes of the State?, which would happen if for the deny of Al Qaeda in the face of public opinion.


iv “Communiqué #1: The Declaration of the Establishment of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.”


vi The LIFG was appointed under the Executive Order 13224 of September 23, 2001. On 6 October 2001, the United Nations Security Council was added to its consolidated list of entities associated with Al Qaeda. This list includes the following members of the economic fabric of the GICL: individuals ’Abd Al - Rahman Al - Faqih, Ghuma Abd'rabbah, Abdulbaqi Mohammed Khaled, Tahir Nasuf, Mohammed Benhammedi, and Sara homes Limited, Ozlam enterprises Limited, Sanabel properties limited relief agency.

vii It is one of the aliases of Abdel Hakim Belhadj military leader of Tripoli in the war against Gaddafi

viii Police stressed that othe Tunisian”, «Mohamed Ali» Ziyad to the Hashim are members of the family of Mustafa Mainouni, arrested in Morocco by the 2003 Casablanca bombings. Serhane and Ziyad were married to sisters of Mainouni, while a premium was wife of 'Muhammad Ali', reflecting the intermagrebí interaction of the groups.

ix Sumario del 11-M, Tomo 174 pag. 67153.

x “Al Qa’ida’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records.”

xi “The police reveals connections of the Tunisian Libyan terrorists planted in china” ABC, 2005-08-01

xii De la Corte, Luís: La yihad terrorista. ed.sintesis, Madrid. Pag195

xiii Al Markazia” الضرورية تنظف أن يتوقعون المراقين أن إلى إقامة السيطرة، للأراضي خارجي عسكري غزنو ندر الألق في منازل بلحاج الحكم عبد هؤلاء، وينفرد الصف، ساحة بالتضاي بتركية السورية، التركية المستمرتين في، المقاتلين من كتيبة الأولى العلوى سليم باسم تركيًا في حالياً يتواجد الذي” consultado 1 de diciembre 2011.