

The Situation in Qatar: Undermining Peace and Security through Support for Terrorism and Extremism



The Situation

A number of states have taken diplomatic and economic measures in order to compel Qatar to change its activities and policies in support for extremism and terrorism. Qatar's support for extremism and terrorism comes in the form of direct government support through funding and provision of material, allowing known terrorist funders to freely operate in Qatar, providing a permissive jurisdiction for supporters and funders of designated terrorist organisations, and giving extremist views public voice through media and public events in Qatar. Research reports have concluded that is difficult, if not impossible, to identify action taken by Qatar to jail, charge, or put on trial any individuals designated as terrorists by the UN, and no instance of Qatar requesting mutual legal cooperation to deal with individuals designated as terrorists.

Given the threat from terrorism the world is experiencing, such behaviour can no longer be tolerated. The states of the Gulf Cooperation Council attempted to curtail Qatar's support for terrorism and extremism through a political agreement in 2014. If anything, Qatar has attempted to reinforce its position as a supporter of extremism claiming it alone will determine who is or is not a terrorist (statement by Emir in 2014 on CNN). In the current global situation, greater cooperation between and among states is necessary. Individual states cannot choose their own path in addressing this threat to international peace and security.

Summary of Qatar's Support for Extremism and Terrorism

2003 – *New York Times* reports CIA Director George Tenet was infuriated by Qatar's support and harbouring of Al Qaeda leadership (<http://nyti.ms/2sFWRN1>).

2011 – Qatar organises release of Abd al Hakim Belhaj, former head of Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, al Qaeda associated and designated terrorist group by the UN Sanctions Committee and allows Belhaj to move to Doha (<http://bit.ly/2uiJMXe>).

2014 – USA Treasury Department Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence states Qatar provides a “permissive jurisdiction” allowing terrorist financiers to operate freely (<http://bit.ly/2chMFIB>).

2014 – Investigative reporter, Elizabeth Dickinson, in *Foreign Policy*, documents Doha as “an extremist hub” and the existence of a “start up” industry of fund raising for extremists and terrorists (<http://atfp.co/1vprf4p>).

2015 - USA State Department Country Reports on Terrorism reports Qatar continues to serve as source of financial support for al Qaeda and associated groups (<http://bit.ly/2qoqWz7>).

2017 - Former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates says Qatar has a history of providing platforms to extremists and terrorists, and needs to changes it behaviour (<http://bit.ly/2sFTVLu>).

Evidence of the “Permissive Jurisdiction” Provided by Qatar

Qatar Ministry of Endowments - Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalid Al Thani, known for support to al Qaeda served as Minister 1992-1996. MAR al Humayqani, a US designated terrorist supporter of al Qaeda in Yemen served as Mufti and legal scholar for the Ministry. Ministry has invited the following designated UN/US terrorist individuals to speak in Doha – Hamid Abdullah al Ali, Hajjaj bin Fahd al Ajmi, Abd al Muhsin Zabin Mutib al Mutayri.

Al Jazeera (Arabic TV station) – funded by Qatari government, showed Osama bin Laden videos where he glorified terrorist attacks, provided a 2015 complimentary interview with head of Al-Qaeda in Syria, Abu Muhammad Al-Julani, showing support for the organisation; regular talk show for Yusuf Abdullah al Qaradawi who has called for the return of the Caliphate to Europe (al Qaradawi also heads the European Council for Fatwa and Research, based in Ireland), justified suicide bombings in Palestine, incited jihad in Syria, supports female genital mutilation and spouse abuse.

Doha Apple – IT company based in Doha, website links company’s activities with UN designated terrorist individuals such as al Kabi and al Kawari, company organised promotional campaigns directed at dissemination of al Qaeda and Nusrat front material.

Sheikh Eid Al Thani Charity – Qatari based organisation that has worked with AW al Humayqani, individual designated by USA Treasury for funding activities of al Qaeda in Yemen; one of the charity’s founders is ARU al Nuaimi, designated by UN and USA as an al Qaeda fundraiser.

Gamaa Islamiyya – Egyptian based group designated terrorist organisation by USA, leaders such as Tarek Abd al Mawgoud Ibrahim al Zomor are based in Qatar. Al Zomor regularly appears on Qatar media, including Al Jazeera speaking in favour of al Qaeda associated groups.

What Next?

Qatar has continued to protest that there is no evidence for support of terrorism and extremism. The facts should speak for themselves in that they show Qatar is actively supporting and permitting terrorism and extremism to flourish. All states have an interest in pressuring Qatar as its support for terrorism and extremism threatens security for Europe and the USA, as well as the Middle East. The UN has led in documenting designated terrorist individuals and all states have to act in support of this. Governments cannot be allowed to pursue direct and open action in support of extremist ideology and terrorism, and governments that do, must be pressured to change their behaviour.

About TRENDS

TRENDS Research & Advisory is an independent and progressive think tank, based in Abu Dhabi, UAE, building a global network of institutional partners and research associates. TRENDS works to improve policies and decision-making processes through rigorous research and analysis. TRENDS aims to serve as a leading institute for future studies in the region and to be regarded as an important contributor to the development of innovative solutions worldwide. Named as the 10th Best New Think Tank in the World in the *2016 Go To Think Tank Index Report*, University of Pennsylvania, <http://trendsinstitution.org>.

For further information, please contact Dr. Richard Burchill, Director of Research and Engagement, TRENDS Research & Advisory, Abu Dhabi, UAE, richard@trendsinstitution.org.