

## Drivers And Barriers Impacting Propensity Toward Violent Extremism

### AMMAN: TARGET LOCATION ANALYSIS



*View of the Downtown area of central Amman, Amman governorate.*

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## List of Acronyms

AQ:	Al Qa'ida
DK:	'Don't Know' (Guided Questionnaire Answers)
EU:	European Union
FSA:	Free Syrian Army
GCC:	Gulf Cooperation Council
GID:	General Intelligence Directorate (Jordan)
GQ:	Guided Questionnaire
IAF:	Islamic Action Front
IDF:	Israel Defense Forces
ISIS:	Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham
JAF:	Jordanian Armed Forces
JD:	Jordanian Dinar
JN:	Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) <sup>1</sup>
MB:	Muslim Brotherhood
MP:	Member of Parliament
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
RF:	'Refuse to Answer' (Guided Questionnaire Answers)
UAE:	United Arab Emirates
UK:	United Kingdom
UN:	United Nations
USD:	US Dollar
VE:	Violent Extremism
VEO:	Violent Extremist Organization

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<sup>1</sup> In July 2016, Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra) rebranded as Jabhat Fatah Al Sham (Conquest of Syria Front). For the purposes of this report, the group is referred to as the former since primary research—including specific questions about Al Nusra—commenced prior to the group's rebranding.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Amman as a whole is not known as a center either of violent extremist organization (VEO) support or religious extremism, but socio-economic conditions can vary widely across the rapidly expanding city's many neighborhoods. Poor inner city areas like Wehdat and suburbs like Marka are regularly identified as focal points for Salafists in Amman, who locals often associate with violent extremist (VE) and VEO sympathy and support. Amman as a whole is socially less conservative than other governorates like Zarqa, but a minority of locals holds strong religious views and is in favor of both the practice of Takfir and the concept of an Islamic Caliphate. Almost half of respondents also believe that Sharia should be the only source of law in Jordan, indicating that VEOs may be able to widen their appeal to people in Amman using religious messages.



Despite receiving significant government investment in terms of civic infrastructure and basic service provision, especially in comparison to other governorates in Jordan like Ma'an and Zarqa, Amman still suffers from high rates of unemployment, especially among youths and university graduates. Bored youths unable to find work is a serious concern for many respondents and this is judged to be a major driver of social issues including drug use and petty crime, as well as radicalization and ultimately VEO membership. In fact, 76 percent of Amman Guided Questionnaire (GQ) respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that lots of bored youths is a problem in their community and many are concerned that this is exacerbated by a lack of social programs and activities. In the absence of state-sponsored youth or community centers, Muslim Brotherhood (MB)-provided social programs, Qur'an study centers, and sponsored clubs are widespread and popular, especially among poorer locals. However, many respondents are concerned that the MB is making youths more religiously observant and that this increases their vulnerability to VE messages, especially if they are unemployed, frustrated, and already blame the central government for their lack of opportunities. Religious extremism in general is a worry for a significant minority of locals and 40 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that religious extremism is a problem in their communities, and most blamed this on the spread of Salafism. Salafists, both Quietists and Jihadists, are thought to be increasing their membership in the city, although the majority of respondents expressed suspicion and/or opposition to Salafists in general, seeing them as a gateway to extreme religious views and potential VEO participation. Many are particularly concerned that Salafist preachers/religious leaders are targeting vulnerable and unemployed youths for recruitment, often by making contact with them through mosques in their neighborhoods. In several instances, youths that Salafist Jihadists have approached in this manner have gone on to fight for VEOs including Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) (JN) in Syria.

The central government attracts criticism for the way candidates for elections are chosen and respondents were suspicious that only those who are sympathetic to the state are elected to office, although it is largely believed to be working in the interests of the people. Support for the central government is also linked to the regional security situation and reflects popular concerns that Jordan might see the levels of violence and civil strife evident in both Syria and Iraq if there is not a strong policy

against VEO support and membership. This is apparent since most locals endorse enhanced anti-terrorism laws, even though they have been criticized as vague and wide-ranging. Respondents are also largely in favor of the imprisonment of returning VEO members, as most see them as a potential threat to national security. Over all, most are confident that the central government and security services will be able to protect them from VEO activity especially the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), which is often singled out for praise. However, many remain fearful of an Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS) attack in the city, which has not seen any terrorist acts since the 2005 hotel bombings. Were an attack to be successful, it would likely result in increased support for the central government and security services and further reduce backing for VEOs, as was the case following the death of Kasasbeh, which prompted mass rallies in Amman that expressed support for, rather than opposition to, the central government's involvement in the military coalition against ISIS in Syria. However, respondents also voiced grievances against the central government that are driving popular frustration and making some locals feel less invested in the system and thus more open to VE messages. These are mainly linked to perceptions of corruption and nepotism, which locals maintain are endemic problems in both the municipal and central governments. In particular, the use of personal or family influence to secure official positions is thought to be reducing both the quality and efficiency of government services in the city. For example, serious flooding in Downtown Amman in November 2015 is considered the result of poor management of municipal infrastructure, especially the sewage system.

The outlook toward the West in general and the US in particular is generally negative, despite its close economic, military and political ties with Jordan. Locals are critical of US foreign policy in the region, especially the 2003 invasion of Iraq, but one of their main complaints is that the West is humiliating Islam and degrading Muslims. Many gave the example of the Charlie Hebdo cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad, which prompted protest marches in Amman in 2015, and many stated they consider the murder of the staff at the satirical paper in early 2015 to be justified. This is a key contributing factor to the 44 percent of respondents who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable, which is even more than those who think jihad in Syria is justifiable. VEOs are taking advantage of this adverse perception of Jordan's Western allies through their output online in order to build support, which many think is being widely viewed in Amman, especially by youths. ISIS is seen as the most effective group at disseminating VE messages electronically and another major theme in their propaganda is a Shia expansion in the region, led by Iran, which appeals to many locals, as negative sectarian attitudes to Shias are widespread in the city.

## 2.0 ISLAMIST AND VEO SUPPORT

### 2.1 SUPPORT FOR VEOS

**VEOs are supported by a fraction of locals and most of the remainder are strongly opposed to them.**

None of the main VEOs active in Syria, including JN, ISIS, or Al Qa'ida (AQ), is endorsed by more than a fraction of locals and many think that the three are even confused by many locals, who see them as different facets of the same entity. However, informed respondents think that JN has the strongest support of any VEO in Amman and that it appeals to locals more than ISIS does, although its reputation has suffered by association from negative reactions to ISIS. ISIS is strongly opposed by the vast majority of locals in Amman and the immolation of Kasasbeh in early 2015 is widely seen as a turning point in the popular view of the VEO. Despite this, ISIS is believed to retain some supporters and sympathizers, in particular among members of the Salafist Jihadist community in Amman, in part because the VEO has been effective at using online propaganda, exploiting both sectarian feelings toward Shia Muslims and Iran, and frustrations with the central government. ISIS also continues to be one of the best-known VEOs and terrorist attacks in the capital remain a concern for the majority of locals, although ISIS is seen as less of a threat to security in Amman than in 2015 following Kasasbeh's death. Moreover, both Salafist Quietists and Jihadists are expanding their support base in relative terms, as both strains of Salafism are either negatively viewed or unknown to the vast majority of locals. Salafist Jihadists are concentrated in specific neighborhoods in Amman, where their disruptive and religiously extremist behavior can anger locals. Despite opposing violent jihad, Salafist Quietists are seen as a gateway to VE, as some members move on to Salafist Jihadism and/or VEO participation. In contrast, Hamas is positively viewed by the majority of locals and is widely seen as a legitimate, resistance organization. Locals do not consider it a VEO and is strongly differentiate Hamas from JN, ISIS and AQ. Overall, the MB is widely seen as the largest and most influential Islamist group, along with its political wing the Islamic Action Front (IAF), and its popularity is based on an extensive system of religious study centers and social programs. Notably, the MB is mainly seen as a barrier to VE, although some respondents are concerned that it is responsible for spreading VE narratives and/or it is unable to prevent its members from becoming radicalized.

*"Especially after the assassination of the pilot Moath Kasasbeh, declaring support for certain groups like JN and AQ in Syria has become less common and no one is being outspoken about them. Maybe some groups of people still believe in killing infidels or people from other sects but you don't hear people saying bluntly that he or she is associated with a certain extremist group."*

*(Male, 27, Student, Amman)*

**JN garners the strongest support of any VEO active in Syria and retains a stronger appeal among locals than ISIS.**

Many respondents reported that there is relatively significant support for JN in their communities and several were adamant that support for JN is greater than for any other VEO that is active in Syria.<sup>1</sup> While

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<sup>1</sup> "In Amman for example we do not have any presence of Daesh but JN? Maybe." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

68 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to JN in their community, as many as 22 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for JN (see Figure 2 below). More specifically, support for JN is often linked to the ability of the VEO to portray itself as a protector of the Syrian people,<sup>2</sup> and to its ideology, which is viewed as more moderate than that of ISIS, and interpreted as indicative of political rather than purely religious objectives.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to ISIS, which is seen as being primarily motivated by establishing a theocratic state in the form of a caliphate, many therefore expect JN to engage politically in a post-Assad Syria. JN supporters are also seen as more approachable than ISIS supporters, allowing them to promote JN to a wider audience,<sup>4</sup> and JN is regularly positively contrasted with ISIS, which has a worse reputation among locals from both a religious and a societal standpoint.<sup>5</sup> In particular, ISIS is increasingly viewed as un-Islamic, most notably since the immolation of Jordanian pilot Moath Kasasbeh in 2015, and abusive toward civilians, as a result of its engagement in public executions, kidnappings and beatings.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, several respondents reported that JN is viewed as a legitimate Islamic group in their community. Moreover, there is a common perception that the local media is particularly lenient in its coverage of JN and its activities, which some respondents believe also directly contributes to the greater appeal and acceptance of JN among locals.<sup>7</sup> Despite appealing to a minority, however significant, the average local is not supportive of JN, and the VEO is condemned not just for its perceived extremism and excesses toward some civilians in Syria, but also for attracting local youths to join its ranks, many of whom are then killed or injured, including the friends and relatives of some respondents.

*"I think JN is more influential in Jordan than Daesh. That's how I see it because firstly, when JN appeared, they were an armed group opposing the Assad Regime. Second, the time at which they appeared as an armed group, it was as a group that is fighting to defend the Syrian people at a time of aggression and inhumane practices by the Syrian Arab Army against the population of Syria and*

<sup>2</sup> "JN is the most active group here and they even have their own leading promoters in Jordan. I don't know their names, but I know there are a lot of promoters of JN here, and they were arrested by the Jordanian authorities." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>3</sup> "JN is a mix between moderates and Salafists and some are there because they oppose the political regime in Syria. Jordanian fighters go to ISIS because JN has a political dream while ISIS doesn't have one because they aspire to have an Islamic state. The difference is that they want an Islamic state while JN could have something like a Syrian state." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>4</sup> "Maybe there are more JN supporters because people have started to see them as moderate in comparison to Daesh, and so they spread more. People could talk to JN supporters more easily than talking to Daesh supporters, this is the reality, they are present and they have support." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>5</sup> "JN's reputation in Jordanian society, and in Islam is good, and Daesh, no, their reputation, from a religious perspective, and of course regarding their reputation in society, it is believed that something is off about them and some of their actions are considered illegitimate" (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>6</sup> "Severe human rights problems were widespread. Daesh committed the overwhelming number of serious human rights abuses, including attacks against civilians, especially Shias but also Sunnis who opposed Daesh; members of other religious and ethnic minorities; women; and children." US Secretary of State John Kerry. Wilson Center, 2016. 'Report: ISIS human rights abuses in 2016', Wilson Center, April 13, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> "I don't think the Jordanian media has a problem with JN, so I believe that JN are more accepted in Jordan." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

*so it appeared to be positive to the population who were opposing the government and its JAF."*

*(Female, 38, Lawyer, Amman)*

JN, AQ, and ISIS are frequently confused, as a result of which JN has suffered by association from negative reactions toward ISIS.

Many respondents failed to differentiate between AQ and JN and some conflated support for JN with an endorsement of AQ, identified JN members as followers of AQ leader Ayman Al Zawahiri,<sup>8</sup> and labeled JN the Syrian branch of AQ. As a consequence, some also had a strongly negative view of the VEO because they associated it with the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman that were attributed to AQ. Conversely, others maintained that the AQ association was helpful to JN because it ensured that it had support from AQ sympathizers in Jordan who predated the formation of JN.<sup>9</sup> Overall, support for AQ was limited. 71 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to AQ in their community, while only 13 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for AQ (see Figure 2 below). Furthermore, some also judged that AQ and JN have both come to be associated with, or are difficult to distinguish from, ISIS,<sup>10</sup> as a result of which support for AQ and JN has suffered from negative perceptions of ISIS, particularly those linked to its public killing of Kasasbeh.<sup>11</sup> In fact, most respondents reported that there has been a sharp reduction in open support in their communities for JN,<sup>12</sup> as well as other AQ-affiliated groups, since the murder of Kasasbeh.

*"Now, JN and AQ are the same, they have the same label and as AQ is in Afghanistan, so JN represents AQ in Syria. Here in Jordan as well, they are not the same as Daesh. People think they are the same because of the hotel bombings that happened in Amman."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

**Focus: Despite being married with a family, one young Amman local was drawn to fight with JN in Syria.**

<sup>8</sup> "As for ISIS and JN, even although they are not on good terms in Iraq and Syria, I believe it's not political but rather about whom they want to follow, one follows [Ayman Al] Zawahiri and one follows the Caliphate." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>9</sup> "Jordanians prefer JN because JN has roots in Jordan. It's basically AQ, it believes in AQ's ideology, and of course AQ always had a lot of loyalists even before ISIS was formed." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>10</sup> "Some youths here joined JN group, and I don't think JN and ISIS are different but I see that youths are joining JN more than joining ISIS since the biggest fight now is against ISIS, globally and politically." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>11</sup> "AQ had more of a following, however since the start of ISIS, people are moving away from supporting AQ, as ISIS is now considered part of it. People now do not trust AQ as an Islamic group, or that they are fighting in the name of Islam." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>12</sup> "Of course talking about these things [VEOs] is stupid, people might have a personal opinion but you do not say this in front of people." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)



*"A friend of mine joined a VEO and we used to study together, he is 27 years old, born in 1989, he's married and has two daughters. The latest news I heard about him was that he is in Idlib. He was one of those young men who had dreams, he had no religious thoughts when he was a student. He is a university graduate and he studied accounting. We used to have political discussions although his point of view was a bit different to mine as his political views were close to the Palestinian right wing, represented by Fatah Movement. He actually used to be a member of the Fatah youth bloc at university.*

*I personally don't know why he joined a VEO. One day, I received a message on Facebook from him asking me and another friend of ours to 'please take care of my daughters, I have joined the jihad for the sake of Allah, and I don't think I will come back. I am completely convinced in what I am doing, I'm sure you will criticize me, but you will never neglect my daughters.' He went to Syria in 2012 and he had joined JN.*

*I went to his house in Wehdat where his mom still lives. I went there and asked, and it was actually true. I don't see him online anymore, as he deactivated his Facebook account, but he does call his wife every now and then. He called me once last year, during the Eid holidays and he said he was mad at me because I never go and check on his daughters.*

*He said he was happy with JN. He said he was completely convinced and happy because he's there for the sake of Allah, and he told me you have no idea how beautiful life is there, but this is before JN took over Idlib. Before that, he was in rural Damascus. After that, his mother told me he is in rural Idlib, and since then I've had no contact with him.*

*His mother is still in shock; she only has two sons, him and another who is 17 years old so he is not able to contribute to the family yet, so this son of hers was the only source of income for the household. She says that some good people help her, but I don't know who exactly. His wife and two daughters are still living with his mother.*

*In my opinion my friend went to jihad because he lost hope in change. He was so full of hope when the Arab spring started. He is also an orphan who was raised in an orphanage run by the MB and he lived most of his life in poverty. I don't think it was being in the orphanage that influenced him because he grew up to be a Fatah member. He was raised in an orphanage for more than five years, then when he started university he joined Fatah's student bloc 'student unity'. He was not even religious, he only prayed normally like most people.*

*I think he was motivated to go on jihad because he lost hope that there would be any peaceful change in Jordan. Also the social conditions he lived in affected him, because he used to take care of his family, and he was so poor, and vulnerable. I want to add that he was one of the purest and most decent people in terms of politics, and social services. He organized several initiatives during the snowstorm, where he fixed people's houses and helped them without even being recorded or mentioned. On the personal and an ethical level, he is a very good person, I really feel sorry for him."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

## The vast majority of locals strongly oppose ISIS and hostility to the VEO has been on the rise.

The vast majority of respondents expressed opposition to ISIS and reported that the VEO does not have a significant support base in Amman, with 81 percent of Amman GQ respondents reporting that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to ISIS in their community, while 15 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for ISIS (see Figure 2 below). Opposition is mainly linked to the involvement of the VEO in violence toward civilians in the territory it governs, much of which is reported online and through local and international media outlets, and coverage of the brutal murder of Moath Kasasbeh. Despite these excesses, respondents confirmed that the VEO continues to enjoy financial and vocal support from a limited number of locals, and that it has also been successful in building an online support base by exploiting religious and sectarian sentiments. In this respect, ISIS has been successful in garnering support by presenting itself as defending Sunni Muslims and drawing on the Islamic principle of charitable giving (*zakat*) through online and printed material. One respondent stated that he is aware of at least one Amman local who is currently incarcerated after being convicted of financially supporting ISIS.<sup>13</sup> Locals arrested for similar offences interviewed for an article in late 2014 were unrepentant and called the central government hypocritical for prosecuting individuals for supporting ISIS, as the VEO protects Sunnis, while failing to prosecute individuals who express support for the Assad Regime.<sup>14</sup>

*"I want to give you an example, there is a guy who is imprisoned and he was tortured for a simple reason, he pays charity to Daesh in Syria. I don't know his name, I cannot give it to you, but I know him from the resistance cellblock in the prison, those that were released met him. So some people supported ISIS by giving donations/charity, they see it as a duty, especially if they are religious, they think it is a sin if they don't donate to JN or Daesh."*

*(Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)*

## The immolation of Kasasbeh was a major turning point in the popular view of ISIS.

ISIS propaganda has negatively impacted support for the VEO in Amman,<sup>15</sup> with the majority of respondents identifying the video of the immolation of Kasasbeh,<sup>16</sup> which was widely viewed in Jordan at the time of its release, although it has since been banned, as being a major turning point in support for

<sup>13</sup> "Since ISIS arrived things have been worse for the Muslim nation, for the Sunnis and for Islam itself. There has been havoc and there is no single benefit coming out of it so far." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>14</sup> Black, Ian 2014. 'Courts kept busy as Jordan works to crush support for terrorists', Guardian, November 27, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> "If ISIS only directed its attacks against the Syrian Regime, you would find greater support from the Jordanian people, and this is what it was like initially when they began committing crimes and hurting the Syrian people, their support dropped by a lot. After they killed Kasasbeh people saw them as extremists and criminals like Bashar Al Assad's regime and started to put Daesh and Bashar Al Assad in the same category." (Female, 38, Researcher, Amman)

<sup>16</sup> "After the Jordanian pilot, Moath Al Kasasbeh, was set on fire, there was a backlash, people became angry at those terrorist groups. Their presence was not reduced, but people don't get influenced by them as much as before. A lot of young men still join those groups, and are ready to leave for Syria, however, in general, there is a popular wave of anger toward ISIS due to the way they burnt the pilot." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

the VEO.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, some reported that if ISIS had limited itself to targeting the Assad Regime, it would likely have retained the support of many locals, but this video is seen as typifying the brutality that had turned both neutral locals and potential supporters against ISIS.<sup>18</sup> Although its content makes clear that it was intended to increase support in Jordan, this video outraged many locals and prompted protests against the group in Amman,<sup>19</sup> as well as accusations that ISIS had been co-opted by the West.<sup>20</sup> At one such protest in February 2015, held in support of the central government's continued military campaign against ISIS in Syria, thousands of protesters walked through the streets of the capital carrying banners and pictures of Kasasbeh.<sup>21</sup> Posters of Kasasbeh's silhouette transposed onto a Jordanian flag with the slogan 'we are all with you Moath' could still be found in places of business in Amman in March 2016, a year after the pilot's death, and the same slogan could be seen spray-painted onto walls in several neighborhoods of Amman, including Weibdeh, at that time. The negative experiences of locals from their communities who are former ISIS members that returned from Syria and Iraq or who interacted with ISIS members as members of other VEOs in Syria, including JN, have also reinforced negative views of ISIS. The VEO is also criticized, as locals believe it has failed to live up to initial expectations that it would have a positive effect in Syria.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the perceived opaque history and structure of the VEO has also eroded support, and has even caused some to believe it was founded by foreign intelligence agencies, including those of Turkey, the US, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>23</sup>

*"Daesh of course in Jordan is completely unacceptable, even the idea of the Caliphate, I mean perhaps in the beginning they had a following, but after what they have seen from Daesh, like the way they kill, and the brutal extremism, and the images of blood and executions, including that of the martyr Kasasbeh, all of this has contributed to the people having a negative view of Daesh."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

<sup>17</sup> "After what ISIS has done, all the criminal acts, people have started to say that this is not Islam and they will not support them." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>18</sup> "People support anyone who is against the Assad Regime, which they see as an authoritarian dictatorship killing his own people, there is also an historical perspective linked with the Hafez Al Assad Regime, which disappeared many people, including Jordanians. If ISIS were only fighting the Assad Regime not doing any other operations the people would support them." (Female, 38, Researcher, Amman)

<sup>19</sup> Fox News 2015. 'ISIS burns pilot alive', Fox News, February 03, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> "Before Moath there were many people who believed that going to fight with ISIS the right thing to do, but they always talked about it timidly. After Moath Al Kasasbeh died many things have changed, many people started to reject ISIS saying ISIS does not belong to Islam, and that they are part of the West's propaganda and funded by the West." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>21</sup> BBC News 2015. 'Islamic State Crisis: Thousands rally in Jordan', BBC News, February 06, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> "I don't think that the extremist groups have influence in this community. I believe that they lost influence. It's not evident but when people saw [what ISIS have done] I have a feeling that they lost influence. People do not want them anymore, as they built their hopes on them in the past and thought that they will do something good." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>23</sup> "ISIS was created by international intelligence agencies, and it split from AQ. These agencies were from Turkey the US and Saudi Arabia, and other countries that have an interest in the region." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

ISIS is believed to have strong support among members of the Salafist Jihadist community in Amman.

Many respondents, most notably one who described himself as a Salafist Jihadist, reported that ISIS is strongly backed by Salafist Jihadists,<sup>24</sup> a sentiment that was shared by local experts on Salafist groups.<sup>25</sup> Salafist Jihadists are viewed as holding a similar ideology to ISIS, with the main differences lying in their implementation of Sharia law, rather than in their fundamental standpoints. For instance, local Salafist Jihadists supported the murder of Kasasbeh in principle as an appropriate punishment for killing Muslim civilians, but agreed with the prominent Salafist Jihadist leader Abu Mohammad Al Maqdisi, who argued that the punishment had been carried out in the wrong way. Respondents generally agreed that the vast majority of Salafist Jihadists support ISIS over other VEOs active in Syria, including JN, because ISIS is dedicated to restoring the Caliphate, an idea that has strong resonance for them.<sup>26</sup> Some others also identify ISIS, along with other VEOs, as Salafist and do not distinguish at all between AQ, ISIS, and JN, as all three are viewed as similar Salafist-derived groups.<sup>27</sup> This conflation also demonstrates the limits of the appeal of ISIS beyond the Salafist Jihadist community, as the majority of respondents not only opposes ISIS but also VEOs in general and also expresses hostility to both Salafist Quietists and Salafist Jihadists.

*"The difference between Salafist Jihadists in Jordan and ISIS is based on the Sharia policies, in the example of Moath Al Kasasbeh, who bombed locations in Syria for example, he killed four women and seven children. They were fighting, in jihad. The problem is that they still didn't implement the Sharia punishment due, which is: (you have to understand this) an eye for an eye, regardless of their nationality. The punishment is: to burn him and kill him. However, as Abu Mohammad Al Maqdisi says: Is the implementation of this punishment and publishing it all over media the right thing to do? It was brutal and it wasn't supposed to be done this way, with this much media."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

<sup>24</sup> "My childhood friend Abdurrahman died in Syria fighting with ISIS as a Salafist" (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>25</sup> Alami, Mona 2015. 'Jordanian Salafists shift allegiance to IS', Al Monitor, April 20, 2015.

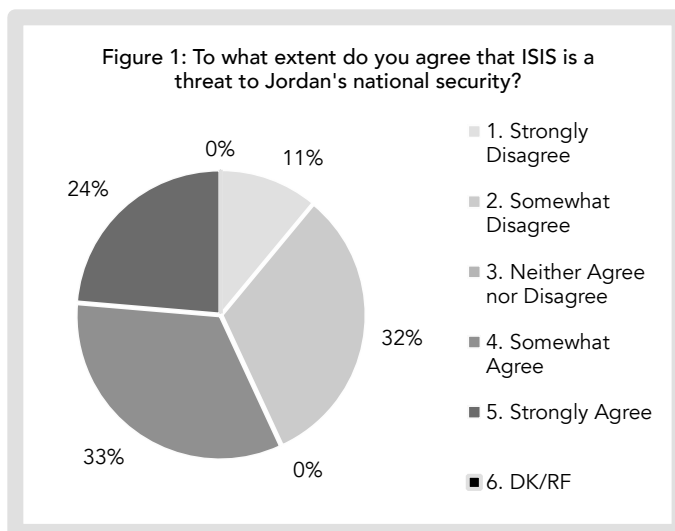
<sup>26</sup> "The Salafists in Jordan are against Abu Mohammad Al Maqdisi, because more than 90 percent of them are with ISIS, because ISIS is aiming to establish the Caliphate." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>27</sup> "JN, ISIS and AQ are all one (Salafi)." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

Terrorist attacks in the capital remain a concern for the majority of locals but ISIS is seen as less of a threat to security in Amman than in 2015.

Locals have been concerned about the danger of a terrorist attack in Amman by ISIS following the start of Jordanian participation in the military coalition against the VEO in Syria in September 2014.<sup>28</sup> These concerns were heightened following the murder of Kasasbeh, which was made public in February 2015. Several respondents felt that an attack might be imminent in the months after Kasasbeh's death, especially after the central government responded by executing two prominent Salafist Jihadist prisoners, including the female suicide bomber Sajida Al Rishawi,<sup>29</sup> and despite warnings from ISIS that such an action would result in attacks in Jordan.<sup>30</sup> Fears of an attack

like the 2005 Amman hotel bombings perpetrated by AQ have decreased considerably since but the majority of locals remain concerned about possible ISIS retaliation. Quantitative findings show that 57 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that ISIS is a threat to the national security of Jordan, while 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 1).



*"It seemed like ISIS was a threat when Jordan joined the war against ISIS in Syria and many people were afraid that ISIS would come to Amman but there was no evidence of this and there were no threats from ISIS. So people believe that the central government is doing a great job and is protecting Jordanians from ISIS and whatever they are doing is working and the government is stronger than ISIS. People were scared after Moath Al Kasasbeh died but now they are not afraid."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

<sup>28</sup> Drennan, Justine 2014. 'Who has contributed what in the coalition against the Islamic State?', Foreign Policy, 12 November 2014. Available at: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/12/who-has-contributed-what-in-the-coalition-against-the-islamic-state/>>

<sup>29</sup> Al Jazeera 2015. 'Jordan executes prisoners after ISIL murder of pilot', Al Jazeera, February 04, 2015.

<sup>30</sup> Abdelhak, Mamoun 2015. 'Urgent: ISIS threatens to take the fight to Amman, vows revenge against coalition pilots', Iraqi News, February 04, 2015.

Hamas is well regarded by most locals and widely viewed as a legitimate resistance organization.

The vast majority of respondents expressed support for Hamas,<sup>31</sup> and this was echoed in quantitative analysis that showed a strong majority of locals endorsed Hamas: 82 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hamas in their community, while only 10 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition (see Figure 2 below). Backing was particularly pronounced in districts with a high proportion of locals of West Bank origins, such as the Hay Nazzal and Wehdat areas of urban Amman, where it is possible to find pro-Palestine and anti-Israel slogans, consistent with the resistance slogans of Hamas, sprayed on walls such as: 'death to Israel' or 'celebrating resistance in Gaza'.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the local community is also split between supporters of Hamas and those of rival Palestinian party Fatah, which is active in Amman and has its own youth wing.<sup>33</sup> Locals of East Bank origins were also supportive of Hamas and respondents linked broad cross-community support with popular endorsement for the idea of continuing the fight against Israel,<sup>34</sup> with some seeing Hamas as revolutionaries,<sup>35</sup> and many others linking the legitimacy of military operations against Israel and the importance of resistance to a perceived occupation of Palestinian land.<sup>36</sup>

*"Hamas is the opposite to JN, AQ and ISIS, they have support and acceptance in the Jordanian streets so to speak, and the people's view of them is based on their approach and their ideology which aims to help Palestine. The people support Hamas in everything that they do, including resistance in Gaza. The Jordanian people accept Hamas; this is clear and tangible. With regard to them being a religious group, they do not have a problem as they represent a moderate faction."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

Hamas is not viewed as a VEO and is strongly differentiated from ISIS, JN, and AQ.

Most respondents emphatically distinguished Hamas from VEOs, such as ISIS, JN, and AQ,<sup>37</sup> and many stated that they view Hamas as primarily a political rather than a military entity,<sup>38</sup> with some highlighting

<sup>31</sup> "Hamas cannot be compared to ISIS and JN, because Hamas is a resistance movement, however, when Hamas interfered in politics, it was influenced by some agendas, like those of Qatar and Turkey, that had a negative effect on the region and the Arab renaissance project, and the Palestinian liberation project." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>32</sup> Al Shishani, Murad Batal 2014. 'Jihadist way of life in Jordan', BBC News, February 18, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> "I don't think it was being in the orphanage that influenced him because he grew up to be a Fatah member. He was raised in an orphanage for more than five years, then when he started university he joined Fatah's student bloc 'student unity'." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>34</sup> "Hamas is different. Hamas is here to fight Israel, they are very clear about their goals and enemy." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>35</sup> "I think that people relate to Hamas as revolutionaries against the Israeli occupation." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>36</sup> "Hamas is defending its rightful land that was stolen, its people and occupied Palestine. Hamas is fighting an occupation, they do not have any political ambitions, and they just aim to expel this occupier off their land." (Male, 56, MP, Amman)

<sup>37</sup> "Hamas for example runs in elections, there is democracy" (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

the participation of Hamas in the democratic process in the Palestinian territories as evidence of this.<sup>39</sup> Some respondents also differentiated between Hamas and VEOs,<sup>40</sup> by emphasizing its defensive duty to oppose Israel and contrasting this with the military behavior of VEOs like ISIS,<sup>41</sup> which was seen as lacking clear objectives and dividing the region.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, several respondents attributed the widespread popularity of Hamas to its long history as the principal resistance group against Israel.<sup>43</sup> This was shown at a rally that took place in Amman in October 2014, at which locals expressed support for Hamas while publicly criticizing the Israeli operation in Gaza at the time, and which was organized by the MB and over 15,000 people attended.<sup>44</sup>

*"Most people try to distinguish Hamas from other groups because they have a national religious cause. Hamas has always tried to look after the region, although we all know that there are many mutual points between all of them: Hamas, ISIS, JN and AQ. The only essential difference is that Hamas declares that their first enemy is Israel, whereas ISIS and JN's first enemy are the Shias, and they claim that Shias are more dangerous than Jews for us, and this is not my personal opinion. I often hear that from people around me including my friends and colleagues. However, there's still this collective preference for Hamas because it fights for Palestine."*

*(Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)*

<sup>38</sup> "There is a clear distinction [between JN/ISIS] and Hamas, which is a resistance movement whose objective is to get rid of the Zionist Entity (Israel) and settlerism (sic.). This is an issue that was imposed on them, Hamas is a resistance movement regardless of its ideology, Islamic or religious." (Male, 52, Academic, Amman)

<sup>39</sup> "I believe Hamas has an objective to be in power, they have political goals, more than a jihadi goal, in the end they are fighting against the Zionists, but they emphasize their political aims." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>40</sup> "There are many differences between Hamas and Daesh, in terms of the media of course. I told you I don't follow things closely but my background information about Hamas makes me believe they are political, that is firstly, they are not jihadists like JN or Daesh, and so I don't think they have anything in common, maybe only something small in that they all seek to govern under the Islamic Sharia. If they gain power, their policies would be different, but Islamic governance is found in all these groups, the way they implement it might be different, Hamas may be more diplomatic, they might make some sacrifices, but they will have the same goals and the mechanisms will differ." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>41</sup> "There is no comparison between Hamas and ISIS. It's impossible to look at Hamas in the same way as ISIS. You know, Hamas is a jihadist liberation movement, they are under occupation, but ISIS is not the same. It's Hamas's right [to fight], the UN and everyone says they have a right to defend their country. They are not like ISIS or any other organization." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>42</sup> "It cannot be compared to ISIS because Hamas represents a resistance against an occupation, it gave a lot of martyrs, there is no comparison, I can't compare the Hamas leaders that are arrested in the Zionist prisons who have clear goals and agendas with leaders who adopt agendas that seek to divide the region." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>43</sup> "In Jordan, since Palestine and Hamas has a long history in comparison with groups like ISIS and JN who are still new, there is great sympathy in Jordan for Hamas since they are the biggest resistance group in Palestine now." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>44</sup> Al Khalidid, Suleiman 2014. 'MB stages massive pro-Hamas rally in Jordan', Reuters, August 08, 2014.



### Hizb ut-Tahrir is considered to be an Islamist fringe group with limited influence or recognition.

While some respondents reported that Hizb ut-Tahrir attracts support in their neighborhoods because it is seen, along with the MB, to represent the Islamist political opposition, some others stated that its support base has been harmed by the fact that the party is officially banned in Jordan and so is unable to operate openly. Quantitative analysis revealed that 41 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hizb ut-Tahrir in their community, while 37 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Hizb ut-Tahrir (see Figure 2 below). However, 11 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that they had not heard of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and some questioned whether it still existed in any form in Amman or in Jordan as a whole, indicating that it has limited relevance or appeal among most locals.<sup>45</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir has attracted criticism from those familiar with it because its leadership is not believed to have changed for a long time and is also seen by some locals as having been co-opted by the establishment, mainly due to its failure to advocate or secure political reforms. Some respondents also questioned the extent to which Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters in Jordan can be considered moderate at all and suspected that the party is fundamentally extreme and/or contains extreme elements.<sup>46</sup>

*"If we want to talk about groups like the MB or the Tahrir party or Salafi groups, I'm sorry to say that they used to be strong as a [political] opposition and they had a big effect on the government and they used to impose the youth's demands on the government and demand change. But now we discovered that they are not so different from the government or from Arab governments or at least they are no different when seen from the outside. The same religious leaders in the past are still controlling the same religious groups, especially among Islamic groups"*

*(Male, 27, Student, Amman)*

### Salafist Jihadists are negatively viewed by most but are believed to be concentrated in specific neighborhoods, where they can anger locals and are believed to support recruitment into VEOs.

Most respondents were critical of Salafist Jihadists, although they acknowledged that there was some support for them in their communities. Specifically, 45 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Salafist Jihadists in their community, while 15 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Salafist Jihadists (see Figure 2 below). Interestingly, quantitative findings also showed that many locals were not aware of Salafist Jihadists as a distinct group, with 28 percent stating that they had never even heard of them. Many reported that Salafist Jihadists in their

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<sup>45</sup> "Specifically in Amman, there are Salafist groups and the MB party but I don't believe that the Tahrir party still exists in Jordan now. I believe Salafi groups and some streams in the MB in Jordan support extremist groups outside Jordan but not financially, maybe just intellectually. I don't think that jihadi or Salafist groups in Jordan have any link to those groups outside Jordan." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>46</sup> "There are other groups that some people call moderate like the MB and Hizb ut-Tahrir party in Jordan. I believe they contain some members that believe in extremism." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)



communities are supportive of jihad in Syria and of VEOs including ISIS and JN,<sup>47</sup> and some equated the presence of Salafist Jihadists in a given area with a likelihood of violent and religious extremism in that area.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in some instances respondents knew of Salafist Jihadists who were radicalizing male youths and recruiting them on behalf of VEOs including JN or encouraging them to fight in Syria and Iraq. They also thought that many locals who held Salafist Jihadist beliefs had become active participants in jihad in Syria and had both traveled there with the express intention of joining a specific VEO like JN or had become VEO members upon arrival.

Levels of support for Salafist Jihadists vary considerably by neighborhood in Amman,<sup>49</sup> so while there is believed to be little or no Salafist Jihadist presence in the suburb of Sahab,<sup>50</sup> locals in the Wehdat area of south-central Amman, a Palestinian refugee camp now integrated into the city, confirm that Salafist Jihadists are active there.<sup>51</sup> However, Wehdat locals are unhappy with the oppressive behavior of Salafist Jihadists there, who in the past have established their own council to rule on religious and social matters and have physically assaulted people they judged to have insulted religion. They also disrupted events that they believed were too secular and were critical of rival Islamist groups including the MB who they believed were not true Muslims. Some respondents maintain that the strong Salafist Jihadist presence in Wehdat is the result of the many locals who fought in Iraq following the 2003 Gulf War,<sup>52</sup> with one respondent saying he was personally aware of hundreds of locals who had left to fight in the past and others who were still with VEOs in Syria.<sup>53</sup>

*"There is a group of religious sheikhs in the camp, and they used to act as if they were the masters of the area. They used to solve problems between people, and whenever someone commits an offence against religion, they would beat him. As if they were a religious commission to judge what is good and forbidding what is wrong, just like the one in Saudi Arabia. The people of the camp stopped them more than once, until they learnt their lesson. This is even before the Syrian crisis*

<sup>47</sup> "The Salafist Jihadists have a big dream of an Islamic state, and the way to do that is through jihad." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>48</sup> "In my district, in case we're talking only about my district, because this issue is beyond my district of Marka, but in my district yes of course VE is a very serious problem. VE is always a problem, and it doesn't have to be linked to a particular district, because I see Marka as a part of Amman. In my district there are no signs of VE, I mean there is no extremism in the usual form. However, extremism is a serious issue. Salafist Jihadist groups exist where I live, you can tell from the way they dress, but not everyone who dresses as a Salafist is a terrorist." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>49</sup> "The Salafist jihadists have been in Jordan for a long time, and there are Salafist theorists and theologians here in Jordan. Like Abu Qatada, in Salt, and you also have Al Maqdisi." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>50</sup> "So there is support [in some areas], but in the area I live for example, honestly there is no presence of the [MB], or Salafists or any Islamic activities." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>51</sup> Achilli, Luigi 2015. 'Al-Wehdat Refugee Camp: Between exclusion and inclusion', Jadaliyya, February 12, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> "We know the areas where the jihadi Salafists are present, Al Salt, Ma'an, Zarqa, these areas are known, Al Baqa'a refugee camp, Wehdat refugee camp, these five places, if you don't know anything about Salafists Jihadists, you still know these places." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>53</sup> "He went to Syria in 2012 and he had joined JN. I went to his house in Wehdat where his mom still lives. I went there and asked, and it was actually true. I don't see him online anymore, as he deactivated his Facebook account, but he does call his wife every now and then." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

*started and they used to criticize other Islamic groups, such as the MB. They used to attack them and cause a lot of problems. I was a social and political activist at the time, so I used to organize some festivals, and they used to ruin most of my festivals and attack them, because they considered us secular, as for the MB, they used to consider them non true believers. They considered themselves to be the true believers."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

**Focus: A Salafist Jihadist has been recruiting for JN in the Wehdat neighborhood.**

*"My friend who joined JN had another close friend, who is very well known in Wehdat camp, and who was arrested once in the past by the security forces. I cannot tell you his name, definitely not. He was recently arrested again and has been in prison for four months, and they say that this person is responsible for the recruitment of more than 13 young men from Al Wehdat Camp to go to Syria. He is a shop owner in Wehdat and he is a member of the Salafist Jihadist movement. Even before the establishment of JN, this person had been a member in the Salafist Jihadist movement, and he is older than us, in his 40s I think. I always see him in the camp. Most likely he recruited my friend but when I spoke with my friend on Facebook when he was in Syria, he refused to give me any information.*

*The person who recruited my friend, I know at least four other people that were recruited by the same man, but I didn't have a close relationship with them or their families. I don't really know how he recruited them but he's very well known in Al Wehdat for being a recruiter. He was actually in Syria before and then he came back. He stayed there for less than a year, then came back here and recruited people. When he first came back, he was arrested for about two weeks. This person is actually a relative of a friend of mine, that's how I know so much about him. A while ago he used to meet with a group of religious sheikhs in the camp, and they used to act as if they were the masters of the area. They used to solve problems between people, and whenever someone commits an offence against religion, they would beat him. As if they were a religious commission to judge what is good and forbidding what is wrong, just like the one in Saudi Arabia. The people of the camp stopped them more than once, until they learnt their lesson. This is even before the Syrian crisis started and they used to criticize other Islamic groups, such as the MB. They used to attack them and cause a lot of problems.*

*I was a social and political activist at the time, so I used to organize some festivals, and they used to ruin most of my festivals and attack them, because they considered us secular, as for the MB, they used to consider them non true believers. They considered themselves to be the true believers. Then afterwards, the Syrian crisis started, and one of their leaders increased his activism. By the way, this person is also one of the people who got arrested in the Zarqa crisis, if you remember it, when they attacked the police with swords during a protest in Zarqa in 2011, at the start of the reform movement. It was a protest in which only religious people participated, Salafists, and they attacked the police, so he was one of them and he got arrested for that, and then he was released*

*after a while, then I heard he travelled to Syria and then after a while he came back and built a house."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

**Focus: Vulnerable locals can be drawn toward Salafism from an early age.**

*"I started to go to the mosque when I was 10 and I liked the idea that people there took care of me and gave me attention, any young guy at that age would like this. So I found people to talk to and be friends with and they were a bit older than me, maybe five years older. I liked the idea that there was a sheikh who was like a mentor, and was someone that you can go to, especially because my father was busy and absent, although he had time for us later when he retired. The point is that I didn't concern myself with details, I really liked the way they look, they wore dresses, and I looked strange wearing a t-shirt and pants. So the first day I told my brother I want to buy a dress, he told me why and I said I liked it, so that day I bought my first dress, it was grey, from Downtown. I memorized the whole of the Qur'an and I reached a level where the surrounding environment gave me a position, a place, and even although I was at a young age everyone asked me a lot of stuff. I didn't have enough with just reading Ibn Tammiyyah, I started memorizing Hadiths, around 5000, and I memorized the whole of the Qur'an, and I lead prayers at the mosque, Al-Abrar mosque in Marka, also in Abdullah Ibn Omar Mosque."*

*(Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)*

**Despite its involvement in Syria, Hezbollah retains significant support among locals, mainly due to its past military and political opposition to Israel.**

Many respondents reported that a significant proportion of locals in their communities support Hezbollah, despite the fact that they also express considerable dislike for Shias in general and for both Iran and the Assad Regime, with which Hezbollah is allied. Accordingly, 45 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hezbollah in their community. Respondents put significant levels of support for Hezbollah in Amman down to the positive way that locals, particularly those of West Bank origins, viewed Hezbollah's military resistance to Israeli forces, citing the repulsion of the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the 2000 withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from South Lebanon as significant achievements. In this respect, residual levels of support for Hezbollah among Amman locals can be considered to reflect the greater long-term importance ascribed to fighting Israel and aiding Palestinians than to the Syrian conflict. On the other hand, a sizeable minority of 41 percent of respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Hezbollah in their communities (see Figure 2 below). This can be ascribed not only to widespread sectarian sentiment against Shias in the region but also the military involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict on the side of the Assad Regime. The local and international media have widely covered the presence of Hezbollah

fighters in Syria and stated that they played a central role in a number of engagements with various rebel and VEOs including the retaking of the town of Qusayr in 2013,<sup>54</sup> and fighting in the Qalamoun mountains on the Syrian-Lebanese border.<sup>55</sup> Hezbollah is also a close ally of Iran and as a result its popularity has also suffered, as the vast majority of respondents hold negative views of Iran and some believe that there is a Shia conspiracy to expand across the region to the detriment of Sunni populations. Notably, several respondents also reported that VEOs are using the perceived links between Iran, the Assad Regime, and Shia VEOs, including Hezbollah, to reinforce this belief and to encourage recruitment.<sup>56</sup>

*"Most of the Jordanians who live in Amman are originally Palestinian and because of the role that Hezbollah played in the 2006 war and afterwards, and how it forced the Israelis to leave South Lebanon [in 2000] and destroyed the legend that the IDF was invincible, they support them. Although with Hezbollah's intervention in Syria and support for the Assad Regime the percentage of those supporting it has decreased, but doesn't mean that they won't be happy if Hezbollah does any operations attacking Israel."*

*(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)*

<sup>54</sup> ISW 2013. 'Syria update: the fall of Al Qusayr', Institute for the study of War, June 06, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Jordan Times 2015. 'Hezbollah leads fight in strategic Syrian mountain range', Jordan Times, May 10, 2015.

<sup>56</sup> "These radical groups use narratives about fighting Iran, the Assad Regime, and Shia groups to manipulate people's emotions." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

## 2.2 SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL AND NON-VIOLENT ISLAMIST GROUPS

**Despite opposing violent jihad, Salafist Quietists have limited support and are unknown to many locals.**

While Salafist Quietists are opposed to violent jihad and seek to differentiate themselves from the Salafist Jihadists, they have no unified platform to do so. As a result, many locals remain suspicious of them and 41 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Salafist Quietists in their community. Support is marginally higher than that expressed for Salafist Jihadists, with 24 percent of Amman GQ respondents reporting that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Salafist Quietists in their community. Notably, 26 percent of respondents reported that they had never heard of them, indicating that Salafist Quietists have limited influence outside their own communities, although several respondents stated that support is pronounced in certain neighborhoods where Salafists are prevalent, including Wehdat and Marka.<sup>57</sup> Despite limited public support, Salafist Quietists are believed to be officially tolerated because they have a good relationship with the central government, as they do not support violent jihad,<sup>58</sup> and have been critical of VEOs.<sup>59</sup> This is consistent with a broader policy by which the central government has been prepared to treat prominent Salafist leaders leniently, some of whom like Abu Qatada and Abu Sayyaf have expressed VE opinions in the past, provided that they are ready to publically criticize either jihad in general or a specific VEO like ISIS.<sup>60</sup> Some locals who are inclined to view Salafist Quietists positively also do so because they believe they act as a barrier to recruitment into VEOs and discredit arguments in favor of jihad.<sup>61</sup> For example, one respondent described how a Salafist Quietist imam in the neighborhood of Tla' Al Ali often used the platform of Friday prayers to openly speak out against VEOs like JN and ISIS.

*"Northern Marka is very close to Rusaifeh, where the first Jordanian center for Salafism was set up, and this center promoted the so-called [Salafist Quietists] and they usually gather in mosques, so we have lots of them in Marka, and Marka is considered a center for these people."*

*(Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)*

<sup>57</sup> "From the Salafist Quietists, there is a sheikh who is the imam mosque of a mosque close to me in Tla' Al Ali. This Sheikh spoke about what Daesh and JN do, even if it is different, and that one should not adopt their thinking or ideology." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>58</sup> "[Salafist Quietists] call for people to do good to improve society but they don't call for jihad or carrying arms, neither do the MB." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>59</sup> "The Salafist Quietists, they are very peaceful. The state even helps them to get visas to Israel." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>60</sup> Baumont, Peter 2014. 'Abu Qatada verdict illustrates Jordanian logic in fight against Islamic State', Guardian, 24 September 2014.

<sup>61</sup> "Peaceful Islamist groups are a barrier to extremism because these groups have their own ideas and they spread these ideas to their cadres, which are moderate ideas." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

Salafist Quietists are seen as a gateway to VE, as some members progress to Salafist Jihadism and/or VEO participation, and their numbers are increasing.

Some respondents reported that the numbers of Salafist Quietists in their communities has been increasing, notably as a result of their strategy of inviting locals to join their prayer sessions and the emphasis they place on improving people's religious observance in a positive manner.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Salafist Quietists have a visible presence in some neighborhoods, such as Marka, and Salafist Quietist imams and worshippers are the norm in some mosques in the city. Salafist Quietist clerics also play an active role in society by mediating disputes among some locals and ruling on religious matters.<sup>63</sup> However, this is also increasing the number of locals who may be vulnerable to VE narratives and some respondents view the Salafist Quietist community as a gateway to Salafist Jihadism and eventual VEO membership because they believe it lays the ideological groundwork for a desire to participate in jihad. In fact, several respondents stated that the Salafist Quietist community has been losing adherents over time because they come to embrace a Salafist Jihadist ideology and then join Salafist Jihadist groups.<sup>64</sup> One respondent, a Salafist Jihadist, was critical of the Salafist Quietists for their failure to endorse or to practice jihad abroad in Syria and Iraq, and believed that this was pushing members who wished to become active abroad toward more radical groups.<sup>65</sup> However, another former Salafist Quietist reported that many of those Quietists he had known well hold similar beliefs to Salafist Jihadists, to the point where they agree with everything short of engaging in jihad themselves.<sup>66</sup> This indicates that rank and file Salafist Quietists, in contrast to the imams who they listen to on a regular basis, are highly vulnerable to VEO messaging that plays on the duty of observant Muslims to perform jihad.

*"Now the regular Salafist dreams of living in an Islamic state but this depends on the conditions in each country and the condition in Jordan is different from the one in Syria, or in Algeria, or in Iraq. We can conclude that every Salafist Quietist is a candidate to be a Salafist Jihadist."*

*(Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)*

<sup>62</sup> "I'm not sure because it's been a while since I was in Marka, but definitely in the last couple of years there has been an increase in the number of Salafist collectives and groups." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>63</sup> "People in poor areas respect Salafists and always consult them on things, so Salafists have a good presence in such areas. They are treated as doctors, because they preform religious medicine and solve problems and give opinions on religious sins, so they form a social authority that is accepted to people." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>64</sup> "Salafist Quietists or Scientific Salafists, there are many of them and they have been here for a long time, it is [people] from these [groups] that crossed-over to the jihadi ideology." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>65</sup> "Jihad is a duty and it is one of the things that we have to do as Muslims, however the Salafist Quietists don't call people to join jihad. Many Sheikhs said that the conditions are now complete in Syria and Iraq for jihad, they say that. So in general, jihad is now a duty." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>66</sup> "Some of my old Salafist Quietist friends agree with ISIS in everything short of actually taking action." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

The MB is mainly seen a barrier to VE but some believe it is unable to prevent its members from becoming radicalized.

Many respondents reported that the MB is very influential in Amman and most, although not all, stated that it acts as a significant barrier to VEO narratives and recruitment. Quantitative findings also confirmed that the IAF, the political wing of the MB, is well regarded,<sup>67</sup> since 66 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for the IAF in their community, while only 25 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to the IAF. The high level of support for the MB largely stems from its long history in Jordan,<sup>68</sup> official recognition by the government,<sup>69</sup> and its network of social programs and Qur'anic study centers.<sup>70</sup> However, some made the assessment that the organization has been losing supporters, particularly youths, to the Salafist Jihadist community and VEOs,<sup>71</sup> although only one respondent was aware of an MB member from Amman who had actually fought in Syria with a VEO.<sup>72</sup> In particular, the MB is accused of not engaging with the concerns of members about the suffering of fellow Sunnis in Syria, being focused on Palestine rather than Syria,<sup>73</sup> and remaining neutral on VEO participation in Syria.<sup>74</sup> As a result, younger members have been driven to leave and join more extreme groups like Salafist Jihadists in Jordan or VEOs in Syria or Iraq. This drain of members has been exacerbated by unregulated elements within the MB, which have been indirectly, if not directly, encouraging male youths to fight for VEOs.<sup>75</sup> However, the MB has not adequately monitored the actions of the many volunteers in its social programs, study centers, and holiday camps, as a result of which some individuals have been able to promote VE, often to children and youths at an impressionable age, in spite of the official MB policy against such behavior.

*"Many people who were in the MB went to Syria, many, not a few, and those that went cannot say that they are the MB. If you want to do go you cannot go with the MB, at the same time these*

<sup>67</sup> "MB members are political. They use religion to give them social acceptance but their direction is purely political like the rest. I have a lot of MB friends and I like to discuss politics with them but not religion. They are flexible." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>68</sup> "I do know that the MB have clear stance, for 70 years they have been in Jordan and their numbers are up in the thousands, they do not have the idea of jihad, only Islam." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>69</sup> "The MB is widespread in Jordan. They are legal, according to the state. They work on Qur'an memorization, they are not involved in jihad, and they are only teaching Islam, only preaching." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>70</sup> "I see that the MB is mature, and they deserve [support]...they do lots of good things, for the benefit of society. And they do not have the fanaticism that could radicalize the youth." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>71</sup> "My opinion is that the MB is balanced and moderate" (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>72</sup> "I do know one person who was a member in the MB and went to fight in Syria, he was very rich, his father runs a lot of businesses in Jordan, he went along with his sister's husband." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>73</sup> "The MB in Jordan has always oriented itself toward Palestine, not Syria, generally speaking and, as per the political situation here in Jordan, the MB lean toward family education only, they don't incite violence and it is the party's aim to improve their members socially, morally, and religiously. They can make some of them more involved with politics but not so much as to direct them toward [fighting in] Syria." (Male, 49, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>74</sup> "The MB are with the revolution but they do not call for any of their cadres to go to Syria." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>75</sup> "I believed there are different opinions within these groups and some members are encouraging youths to go fight and some are against this." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

*people want to practice jihad”*  
(Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

**Focus: Some locals view the MB as a stepping-stone to recruitment into VEOs.**

*“MB members try to be moderate and they try as hard as they can to ensure their followers are moderates, but we don’t see any changes in this country, so what do we do? I mean I tried in university, I lived this experience to have individuals below me in the organization that I tried to calm, and after a point they can’t take it so they go the other way. Trying to make people moderates sometimes makes people want to go and practice jihad, people want to practice jihad, so after a while what did they do? They would say please mind your own business, and I will go alone to practice jihad. This happens as a reaction because they are jealous over their religious beliefs and honor and such, so they go to practice jihad, they will tell you I have a belief which I got from the MB, I have jihad, I have sacrifice, I may have got this ideology from the MB, but I will still leave the Brotherhood and apply it somewhere else.”*

(Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

The popularity of the MB is largely based on its extensive system of religious study centers and social programs, which some fear are spreading VE messages and enabling recruitment into VEOs.

The MB is the most successful religiously oriented group operating in Amman at developing and expanding its grassroots support base among youths, largely due to its outreach programs and initiatives for boys and girls based around its many Qur’an centers. These programs include free holiday camps and excursions that offer the only way that parents from financially deprived areas of the city like East Amman can send their children on holiday. Such holidays generally involve travel in groups within Jordan and activities interspersed with religious instruction by volunteers.<sup>76</sup> Some thought that these youth programs enhance levels of religiosity among participants, act as a gateway to VE, and increase vulnerability to VEO propaganda among youths, especially male youths,<sup>77</sup> although the general purpose of such social programs is to bolster the core membership of the MB. As a result, there are fears that the party leadership has either been turning a blind eye to, or is unable to effectively police, the promulgation of radical religious messages in such programs by volunteers and other actors.

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<sup>76</sup> “The MB are believed to take care of each other and same the for Hamas, Salafist groups (Quietist and Jihadist) even the communists and nationalists. This is how they attract many people. They have a support network.” (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>77</sup> “We hear on the news and the media about people that have died in Syria, and if you look at which governorates they were residing in, you will find that they are from Ma’an and Tafiela, Zarqa, and the East Amman neighborhoods. They are present in these areas, and also Irbid, the refugee camps, and the surrounding villages.” (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)



*"Most religious groups working in Amman that are having an impact are with the MB. They have hundreds of Qur'an centers, and each summer they have summer camps where boys and girls can go separately and do lots of activities. This is the only way for East Ammanis who are poor to send their sons and daughters somewhere in the summer break and this is how they recruit people, especially the boys, into a VE mentality, it is in these places. These camps involve memorizing the Qur'an, memorizing the Hadith, and discussions about the Qur'an; it is very dangerous. Also they go on trips, they go to the south, they go hiking, they go to the swimming pool, they learn to swim and it's all for free."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

The MB is criticized for failing to use its influence to counter VE rhetoric, both in communities in which it is influential and within its own ranks.

Some respondents were critical of the MB, arguing that it is failing to counter VE rhetoric in communities where it has a strong support base and accusing the organization of acting as gateway to radicalization and eventual VEO sympathy and/or participation. Several also stated that the MB ideology risks promoting VE because it is based on the writings of prominent Islamists like Sayyid Qutb,<sup>78</sup> and that there is a significant risk that the religious instruction it is giving to youths will put some of them on the path to VE,<sup>79</sup> also since some MB members share fundamental aspects of the belief-structures of VEO members including a rejection of non-Muslims.<sup>80</sup> The online statements of prominent members of the IAF also have the potential to fuel VE among the broad support base of MB members in Amman and Jordan as a whole. For example, one respondent familiar with the social media output of prominent figures from within the IAF identified sectarian themes and pro-jihad narratives within their online messages that may not have explicitly encouraged male youths to join VEOs, but condemned their failure to do so.<sup>81</sup> Such statements contradict the official positions of the MB and IAF against participation by their members in the Syrian conflict and can be seen as indicating tacit approval of involvement in the Syrian conflict, even on the side of a VEO.

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<sup>78</sup> "The MB was the first organized Islamic party, and the extremist group within the MB formed AQ, so they all go back to one origin, I don't want to criticize Hamas because it's a resistance movement, it has martyrs, it has its popular presence and popular support, so who am I to criticize Hamas, but ISIS, JN and other extremist movements are basically an extension of the MB movement." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>79</sup> "Moderate Islam is a path toward extremist Islam, in one way or another. Even moderate Islam, represented by Hassan Al Banna and Mohammad Abdulwahab, is all about hating others. Our region is full of minorities like Christians and Yazidis so the moderate Muslims also discriminate against those minorities, and so this discrimination promotes extremism, we've seen how MB led the way toward AQ, and AQ led the way toward ISIS." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>80</sup> "Until now the Hizb ut-Tahrir Party and the MB, and the Salafist Jihadists, each one of them depends on Sayyed Qutb's writing." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

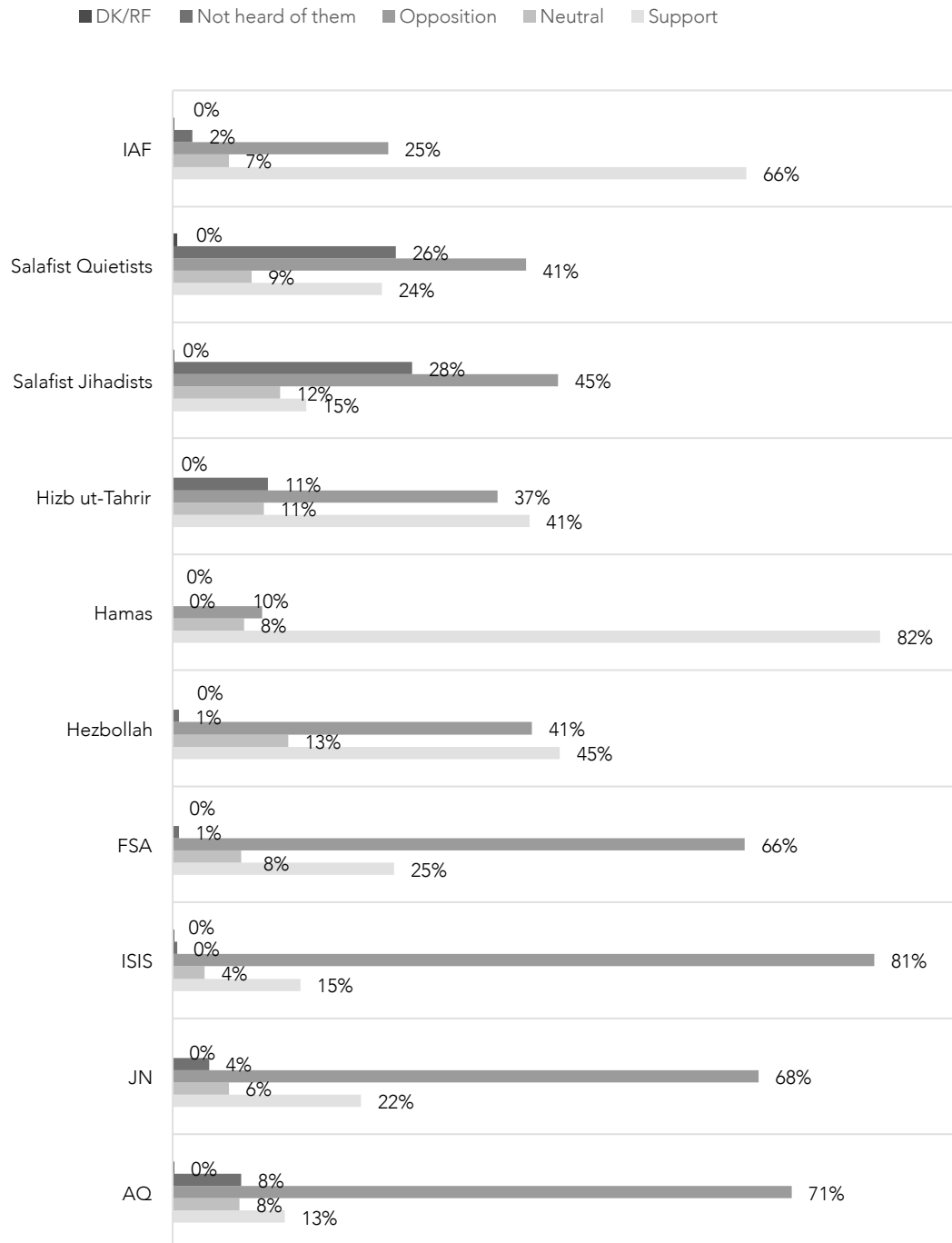
<sup>81</sup> "I regularly follow the news on social media and unfortunately when I look at the statements of some leaders from Hizb ut-Tahrir, the MB and others, I see there's a sectarian theme in what they are saying. Maybe they are not directly telling people to go fight in Syria with a certain group, but if you follow their social pages, you can see they are encouraging people to go on jihad, and blaming youths who don't do anything." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

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*"The MB is too busy with political issues and, as far as I am concerned, they never have any activities that prevent or limit extremism. I wish that the MB would hold a conference to fight ideological violence but this has never happened before."*

*(Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)*

Figure 2: To what extent do you think there is support or opposition for the following groups in your community?

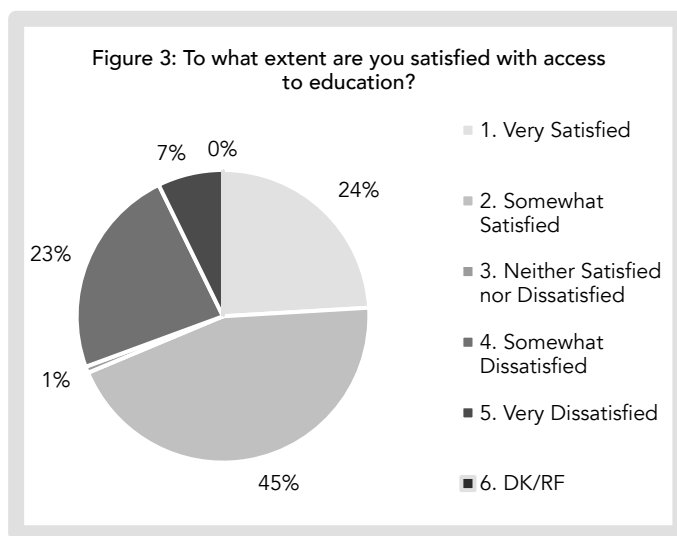


### 3.0 BASIC NEEDS DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

#### 3.1 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The public education system is overloaded and children are being poorly served, leaving them vulnerable to VE.

Most respondents reported that, although there is generally good access to education in Amman, the quality of public education in the capital and the wider governorate is poor and that this is adversely affecting the future prospects of pupils, as well as increasing vulnerability to Jihadist religious groups or VEOs among youths.<sup>82</sup> Although 69 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to education, 30 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied, and many also complain that children are leaving school poorly prepared for life in the employment market (see Figure 3). In particular, the curriculum is viewed as outdated and some respondents are also concerned that classes on religion actively encourage radical viewpoints.<sup>83</sup> They argued that the central government should be addressing this issue in order to prevent children being radicalized at school and/or being at risk of VEO recruitment, but complained there is no evidence that the government is taking action or plans to do so in the near future.<sup>84</sup> One respondent, a teacher at a school in the city, was particularly critical of the public education system, detailing how many children were effectively illiterate, as there are insufficient teaching resources to give them even a basic education. The low standard of the public education system has driven some parents to pull their children out of public schools and transfer them to private institutions, which is putting considerable strain on household finances, as a result of which some parents are pushing themselves into debt to finance their children's private schooling.<sup>85</sup>



<sup>82</sup> "Our educational system is very bad, I speak as a teacher." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>83</sup> "I once worked in a school and I attended an Arabic class, there was a radical dialogue there, so there's a big problem in our education system. I'm not saying there should be censorship but our education should be improved. But unfortunately also our education is marginalized and there is no real interest in educating our society and families are not educated so many people are learning bad habits from the streets." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>84</sup> "I gradually started to leave the Salafist way and religion in general when I started discovering that there was a huge mess in understanding religion. All our educational religious books in addition to all religious resources should be changed." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>85</sup> "The government educational system is very bad so if you have money you will put your children in private schools for example so the people find their own solutions." (Female, Activist, 33, Amman)

*"The problem is not with the society itself, it is with whoever caused this society to live in its current conditions, and caused its poverty and misery to increase. It's not the community's fault, they are poor and uneducated and illiterate. I am a teacher and in my school, there are more than 60 students who are completely illiterate, because the educational system is very bad, and the educational laws are unfair, so it's not their fault."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

**Focus: The curriculum in Jordanian schools and universities may be encouraging extremist thought and behavior.**

*"The curriculum needs to be changed, because we have a catastrophic problem in the curriculums. I once took a class about the Sharia. I wanted to learn more about laws in Islam, however the professor was a disaster... He has a criminal method. He made sure to implant in the heads of his students that punishment is the best way to take revenge. Another issue we discussed for instance is whipping the sick if he sins: do we wait for him to get better then punish him or do we punish him while he is sick? He insisted that the sick person should be punished during his illness to maximize the pain for him... Imagine how this person thinks! Anyway he's one case out of many, but we really need to reconsider our curriculum. Jordan University has similar cases as well, so I'm not only talking about this particular university. I don't believe that the Islamic Sciences and Education University is promoting extremism, but I think it is unable to cure extremism or limit its spread."*

*(Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)*

Limited job prospects are a key concern for locals and the failure of the Arab Spring to inspire noticeable improvement in their prospects made youths more vulnerable to recruitment into VEOs.

The majority of respondents reported that there are insufficient work opportunities in Amman,<sup>86</sup> with blaming the government for failing to help create jobs in the governorate.<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, 59 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied with access to employment opportunities, while 41 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied (see Figure 4). Many respondents expressed concern that if unemployment is not addressed, more locals are likely to find

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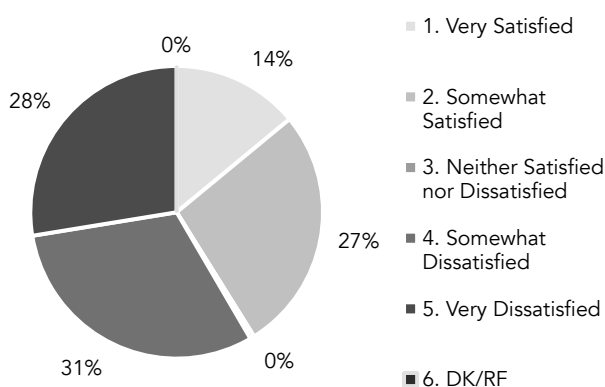
<sup>86</sup> "I'm sure that it can get worse here in Jordan and maybe nobody can stop it. Many youths write in certain blogs against those extremist organized groups but nobody listens to them. Look how in Syria all these intellectual groups left because they were targeted. So it's not easy to stop extremism in Jordan if it spreads. Maybe you won't be able in the future to stop radicalism especially among the youth now that they are under pressure and are angry because of the economic situation" (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>87</sup> "The Jordanian government didn't take any serious steps to provide job opportunities, and vocational education is still very weak in Jordan, and most of the time those who have vocational jobs learn by working in shops, although the Jordanian government has started to do a campaign encouraging youths to choose vocational education after finishing high school." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

themselves in poverty, which is also expected to make them more vulnerable to VE,<sup>88</sup> since unemployed youths are widely viewed as especially vulnerable to VEO messaging and recruitment.

Some respondents assessed the situation to be worse than in the past and accounted for this by observing that foreign job openings, particularly in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, which have played a significant role since the 1970's in making up for the shortfall in domestic employment openings, have declined. The consequent reduction in the number of locals able to find work abroad is, in turn, blamed on the economic downturn in these, resulting largely from the sharp fall in oil prices.<sup>89</sup> This is also having an effect on the quantity of remittances that are sent back by expatriate Jordanian workers, who are estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands in the GCC nations alone, which is considered to be the most important source of income for many locals.<sup>90</sup>

Figure 4: To what extent are you satisfied with access to employment opportunities in your community?



The unsatisfactory employment situation among youths in Amman took on greater significance following the Arab Spring, when the hopes of Jordanians that the government would address the severe opportunity deficiencies facing youths failed to materialize.<sup>91</sup> Despite widespread popular dissatisfaction among citizens, the absence of structural political reforms has led a significant number of youths to lose hope that there was a realistic chance of either political or economic change, and even made some more vulnerable to VEO recruitment.<sup>92</sup> The failure of the drive for political and economic reform sparked by the Arab Spring in Jordan left youths with limited outlets for their energies, driving some to turn to religion.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>88</sup> "In general, areas that have a high population, poverty and marginalization usually have extremist groups as well." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>89</sup> Bloomberg 2016. 'WTI Crude Oil (Nymex), 5yr view', Bloomberg, Accessed March 02, 16.

<sup>90</sup> "Since 2000 it has become harder to get jobs in the Gulf and not as many are working in Saudi due to the poor economy, so more are going to UAE and Qatar, Qatar is like a new country and many Jordanians go to work there. The Gulf is like a cure to unemployment in Jordan. I think hundreds of thousands of people from Amman are working in the Gulf and the money they send back is one of the main sources of money for many people here, these are the ones who can buy their own houses and land, cars, sending children to private schools, not people in Jordan." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>91</sup> "When the protests happen, they do so against unemployment, and in order to provide work opportunities, and to address the increase in the cost of living. So when you approach these guys, and they are in the frontlines fighting for their rights, you are in this stage, pulling them away from extremism, because they start airing these grievances, and demanding their constitutional rights." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>92</sup> "Youths' dreams are linked to having better jobs and better living situations in their communities." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>93</sup> "Economics is a part of VE participation but not the main thing, the main thing is ideological." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

VEOs such as ISIS are playing on this rising anti-establishment sentiment, by notably by highlighting the central government's failure to provide youths with much-needed socio-economic opportunities.<sup>94</sup>

*"Poverty and lack of responsibility, these are the first things that lead someone to go on jihad, secondly people might identify with the religious rhetoric, the rhetoric of heaven and hell, this rhetoric has an impact, as if they have nothing to lose in life they can go to heaven."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

**Syrian refugees are viewed as exacerbating the scarcity of employment for locals, leading to frustration among locals that VEOs can also exploit.**

Many locals identify the influx of Syrian refugees to Amman as having increased the strain on the domestic labor market, and some respondents complained that Syrians are sometimes working illegally and/or have lower wage expectations, pricing out domestic workers.<sup>95</sup> The perception that there is a significant number of Syrians in Amman is supported by an International Labor Organization study in 2015, which estimated that seven percent of the total population of Amman is Syrian refugees.<sup>96</sup> One respondent estimated that the average wage in Amman is between 300 and 500 Jordanian Dinars (JD) per month, which she believed was dangerously close to the poverty line of 280 JD per month to meet basic living expenses, meaning that many locals may struggle to get by if there is increased pressure on the job market due to an inflow of Syrian labor.<sup>97</sup> In such an environment, local youths are viewed as being at greater risk of VEO participation and/or radicalization, as the financial benefits of joining a VEO are seen as more attractive and inactivity drives frustration and a desire for escapism, particularly among youths.

*"When someone has nothing, they do not have ambition, they don't have anything, it is easy to influence them, and take them where you please if you provide them with money, and if you approach them with the rhetoric that there is a heaven and there is hell, there is jihad, and so on, they will follow."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

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<sup>94</sup> "Violence and radicalism increased as a result of the damage that was done to youths' dreams in Arab countries in the recent period. I noticed many youths faced a lot of problems and changed their views as a result of their governments breaking their promises to give them a better future." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>95</sup> "In Sharia Al Nadi, the main shopping street in Wehdat, most people there are Syrian now as they work for less." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>96</sup> Stave and Hillesund 2015. 'Impact of Syrian refugees on the Jordanian labor market', International Labor Organization, 2015.

<sup>97</sup> "Salaries are very bad in Amman compared to life expenses. 300-500 JD is the average salary and the poverty line is 280 JD." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

Poverty is a key factor driving recruitment into VEOs among local youths and many see violent jihad as offering a way to escape, with some youths drawn toward VEOs by the prospect of attractive salaries.

Many respondents maintained that there is an identifiable link between a weak personal financial situation and an increased risk of joining a VEO to escape from poverty.<sup>98</sup> In particular, respondents explained that economic deprivation might drive male youths to become more religiously observant and this,<sup>99</sup> coupled with a lower level of education, as they often cannot afford to enroll in higher education, makes them more vulnerable to religiously inspired VEO narratives. Others judged from the distribution of VEO recruits in Amman by neighborhood, with more coming from economically deprived East Amman rather than affluent West Amman,<sup>100</sup> that socio-economic circumstances have a bearing on vulnerability among locals to VEO recruitment.<sup>101</sup> One respondent described a friend whose poverty had made him vulnerable to VEO messaging, despite his not being especially religious.<sup>102</sup> This individual was from the Wehdat area, a former refugee camp, and some respondents explicitly associated current and former refugee camps with VE, on the basis that poverty is endemic in these areas and that it is driving locals there toward radicalization as a way to escape their economic circumstances.<sup>103</sup>

With many locals struggling with a shortage of employment and high levels of debt, locals often see VEO participation as a way to resolve their financial issues and to support their families. In fact, 55 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad is an easy way to make money, while 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 5). Some respondents believed that VEOs offer good salaries and one respondent stated that it was rumored in his community that ISIS members earn up to 1,000 US dollars (USD) per month.<sup>104</sup> Another respondent, whose brother joined JN

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<sup>98</sup> "Economic difficulties are a major reason [for VEO recruitment] because most youths are financially unstable so they have nothing to lose. They have nothing to look forward to except for Heaven. The state is not being asked to give them money, they should give them a project, job opportunities, like in Saudi Arabia." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>99</sup> "The youths, between 18 and 30 years of age, from the poorest class, are most vulnerable to radicalization." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>100</sup> "I think that religion in the eastern part [of Amman] is more apparent, not much in the western part. They are not fanatics, they are religious people who know their obligations and duties, but in the western part it's hard, you rarely see someone who does more than praying and fasting. Here it's a simple area, people are poor, when someone gets religious, he knows what the meaning of being religious is. He knows what his duty to Syria is and other Muslim countries. So that's why most of them are from the eastern part." (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>101</sup> "Some areas in east Amman [are more at risk of VE] since the economic situation is worse than other areas in west Amman." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>102</sup> "I think he was motivated to go on jihad because he lost hope that there would be any peaceful change in Jordan. Also the social conditions he lived in affected him, because he used to take care of his family, and he was so poor, and vulnerable." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>103</sup> "Areas near refugee camps usually have extremists. Not because they're bad areas, on the contrary I have really good friends from refugee camps, but because normally refugee camps have marginalized areas and poverty pockets that could trigger an extremist jihadist mentality." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

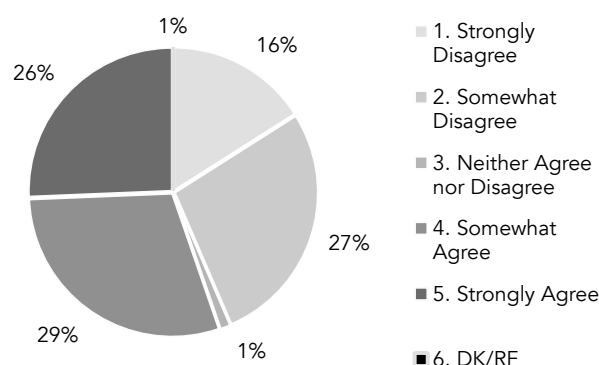
<sup>104</sup> "I don't think jihad is a good way to make money, maybe it is, but you have to pay to go to Syria so you need a sponsor, maybe on the ground yes I read that foreign fighters get 1000 USD per month with ISIS but don't know. One



before being killed fighting, stated that JN members receive 2,000 USD when they get married, although his brother still received money by international transfer from his parents in Amman until his wedding.<sup>105</sup>

Given the poor economic situation in some communities, which is judged to be making male youths increasingly desperate, VEOs do not need to offer large amounts of money to be able to tempt potential recruits, as they have few realistic prospects in Amman. However, several respondents with family members or friends who had traveled to Syria to join VEOs questioned such purely financial motivations, observing that the initial cost of traveling to Syria and reserving a place at a training camp could be as much as 1,500 USD.<sup>106</sup> They also argued that many VEO recruits needed financial assistance to be able to afford to travel to Syria in the first place.<sup>107</sup>

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad is an easy way to earn money?



*"Unfortunately there is a strange link between religious dialogues and having a poor economic situation, wherever you see a poor situation, you find religious dialogue spreading there. They see religion and belief as an antidote to their poor situation. Unfortunately you can see that. So you might see that a 15 minute religious dialogue in a Friday prayer can encourage many people go help his sect in Syria and Iraq since they see no hope for them here... Another point is the economic situation in Jordan. The youth might see that there are no hopes and dreams for them to achieve so they believe like they have nothing to lose. They might even have a better economic situation if they joined these groups because some get salaries from these groups or their families get salaries so this helps."*

story is that fighters in Raqqa always pay for their goods and don't steal, but I just read this somewhere." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>105</sup> "When he joined ISIS, he got married. At the beginning he asked us for money, telling us that everyone that gets married receives 2,000 USD, however he wouldn't have received the money for another month, so he asked for money to furnish his house and buy gold for his bride. We sent him the money and later he offered to repay it." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>106</sup> "[The recruiter] did not offer any financial aid to my brother in order to be able to travel. He kept on asking my brother if he knew the conditions of joining the [jihadist training] camp. The conditions were: 1. To pay USD 1,500 as a registration fee, which will include the tools and the training. 2. To arrive in Turkey. 3. Those who want to serve God, those that want to promote the word of God and come to Turkey. The subscription/registration fee is 1,500 USD. There will be training and accommodation and everything else is provided." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>107</sup> "There's an arrangement with some people inside Jordan or in Amman I believe to transfer other guys into Syria. They could also help them financially because I believe many guys can't afford to travel from Jordan to Egypt to turkey then to Syria. I believe there must be financial aid from people in Amman or from Jordan." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

(Male, 27, Student, Amman)

**Focus: The saturation of the graduate employment market in Amman further limits job opportunities for local youths.**

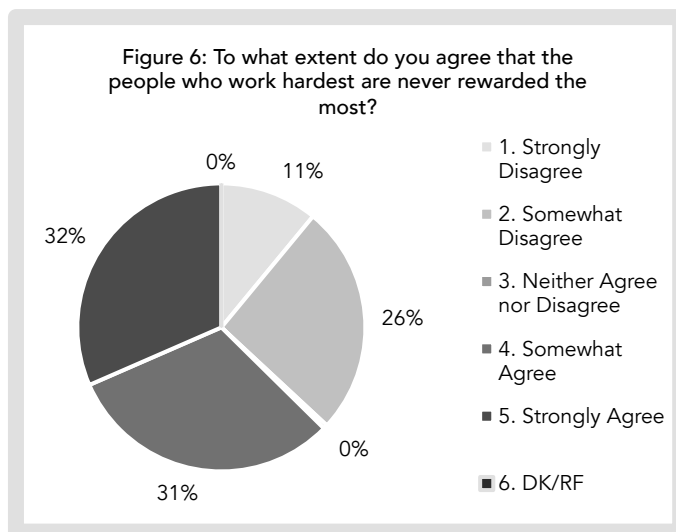
*"It is natural that people are not happy about real job opportunities in Amman as there is a lot of competition between new graduates and also it is hard to get jobs because some companies require at least three years of experience, and how can a recent graduate have this much experience? On the other hand, some companies get rid of experienced and qualified employees and hire freshly graduated ones because they will work for a lower salary. Most Jordanians now are educated and have degrees so it is hard for graduates to find a job within their degree field and a lot of them have to change their specialty to find work and others are doing jobs that do not even require a degree, that make them believe they are wasting their time and have spent money on their education for nothing. For example, the engineers' union announced in 2012 that the number of Jordanian engineers is greater than 100,000 but all Jordanian universities still offer an engineering course and the government didn't advise students about what they should study if they want work opportunities when they graduate. This is the same for the IT sector, and a study of the technology and IT sector said that this sector in Jordan only needs 1,700 people, but 6,000 students were studying this in 2014."*

(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

**Many locals are struggling to get by financially despite working long hours, making VEO membership more attractive.**

Many respondents expressed frustration that locals who work hard in their communities do not get a fair reward for their efforts, and as a result many are in financial difficulties and are obliged to borrow money to make ends meet. The resulting financial pressure contributes to a sense of resentment and hopelessness for locals in this position, and means that they are more likely to see VEO participation either as a way to earn money and pay off debts or as a way to escape from a life of hard work with limited return.

In fact, 63 percent of Amman GQ respondents, 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the people who work hardest are never rewarded the most, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 6). Respondents who agreed that some locals in their communities were struggling to support themselves and their families despite working long hours also conceded that others did not want to have to work hard to earn a living. They also said that a number of locals aspire to migrate to Europe, as there is a common perception that it is possible to live well there without needing to be employed since social security payments are high.



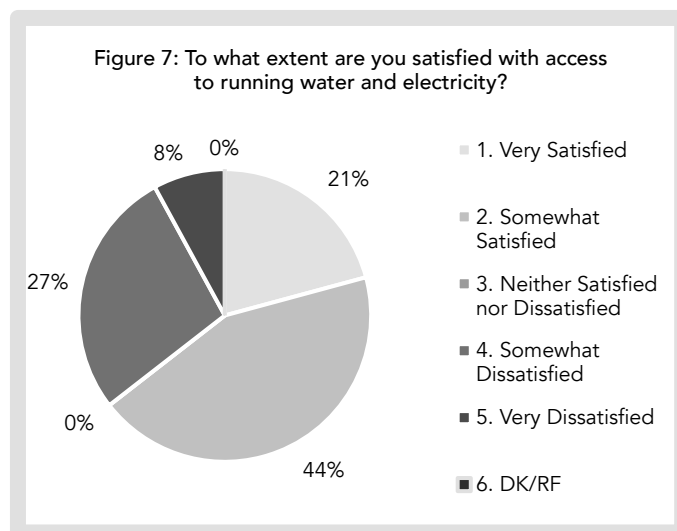
*"People in Amman believe hard work is not rewarded, but some people are looking for easy money. We found out a lot of Arabs want to go to Europe as they get money from the governments there for not working and people want this easy money but the excuse 'I have seven professional skills but I have no luck' is very common. Some people want easy money and others work hard but get nothing."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

### 3.2 UTILITIES AND SERVICES

The majority of locals are content with access to basic services in Amman.

Most respondents (65 percent) reported being satisfied with access to water and electricity in Amman (see Figure 7). Dissatisfaction with the access to water can be partly ascribed to consumption of bottled filtered water rather than piped water for drinking because, although 93 percent of locals in Greater Amman, in common with urban areas in the rest of the country, have access to government-supplied piped water,<sup>108</sup> there is a common perception that this water is not fit for human consumption.<sup>109</sup> As a result, almost all households across the socio-economic spectrum purchase bottled drinking water in 20-liter re-usable containers.<sup>110</sup> However, piped



water statistics can be misleading. Most households in Amman only receive water from the network once a week, almost all use their access to fill large containers on the roofs of their building, and the only option if this is used up before they can be refilled is to buy expensive water from private vendors.<sup>111</sup> Although satisfaction with access to electricity is on a par to, or better than, that regarding access to water, a significant minority of respondents (35 percent) reported being dissatisfied with access to these basic services, largely due to the rapid increase in the locals population as a result of natural growth, economic migration from neighboring countries like Egypt, and refugees from Iraq and Syria. This in turn has led to the city's rapid expansion and basic infrastructure has struggled to keep pace. It has also placed greater pressure on limited water resources, as Jordan has long struggled to meet its water needs, and provision can be sporadic, especially during the summer.

*"There is a difference between the government services in East and West Amman. The services in East Amman are worse than in West Amman, and this is because the upper classes and influential people live in West Amman while lower middle class and poor people live in East Amman. These services are only provided if you have money to pay for them, and if you don't pay your electricity or water bill then they will be cut off without any warning or anything. The roads in East Amman are also very bad, while in West Amman they have good roads in comparison to East Amman and also*

<sup>108</sup> WHO/UNICEF 2015. 'Jordan: estimates on the use of water sources and sanitation facilities (1980-2015)', WHO/UNICEF, 2015. This reported estimates that 93 percent of Jordanians living in urban areas have access to water 'piped onto premises' compared to 80 percent in rural areas, nation-wide.

<sup>109</sup> Namrouka, Hana 2012. 'Amman locals remain distrustful of tap water – study', Jordan Times, May 22, 2012.

<sup>110</sup> Wildman, Thomas 2013. 'Water systems in Balqa, Zarqa & informal settlements of Amman & the Jordan Valley', Oxfam/EU, August-October 2013.

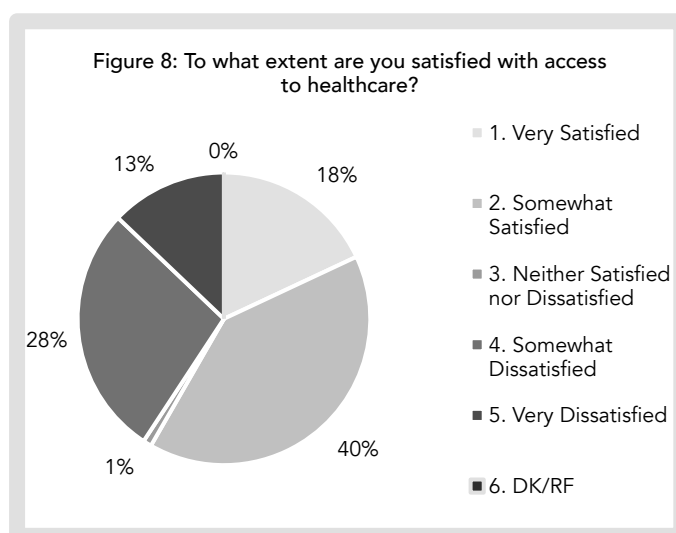
<sup>111</sup> Nahhan, Roufas 2015. 'Jordan scrambles to deal with water scarcity', the Arab Weekly, July 17, 2015.

*other governorates in Jordan. The infrastructure like the sewer system is bad and each winter we have floods, especially in the areas between mountains like Wadi Saqra street in Hay Nazzal."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Amman)*

While there is good access to healthcare in Amman through a network of clinics and government and privately run hospitals, treatment can be prohibitively expensive.

The majority of respondents reported being satisfied with access to affordable public healthcare, although they differentiate between the services provided by hospitals and those available at smaller local clinics. Specifically, 58 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to healthcare, although a significant minority of 41 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 8). Most hospitals in Amman were judged by many respondents to be too expensive for ordinary locals, with the exception of the Military Hospital (Medinat Al Tabiyeh), which is theoretically reserved for members of the JAF but which civilians can



attend for treatment if they apply to the Royal Court for special permission. This service is a useful source of patronage, while also giving poorer citizens and foreign nationals including Egyptians, Syrians and Palestinians in the capital access to specialist healthcare and cancer treatment at the King Hussein Cancer Center.<sup>112</sup> This is especially important in Amman, as a 2015 census found that it has the lowest rate of health insurance cover of any governorate in Jordan at 50.2 percent of locals.<sup>113</sup> There are a small number of government-run hospitals that provide services including accident and emergency treatment and, although the treatment at these hospitals is not assessed as expensive, they are judged to have poor hygiene standards and a common complaint is that waiting times can run to several hours. Some also think that very few locals have access to private healthcare and therefore see local, government-run clinics as the healthcare provider of choice for most locals, and many are complimentary about their quality and affordability.

*"Hospitals are mostly private and they are really expensive, although the government has a small number of hospitals and people believe that they are low quality. For example, at [Al Bashir Hospital] in Ashrafiyeh in East Amman, even if you have a serious injury, you may wait for up to two hours for a doctor to come and see you. They are not clean but the prices are good so anyone can*

<sup>112</sup> Information on the King Hussein Cancer Center, Amman Available from: <<http://www.khcf.jo/>>

<sup>113</sup> Ghazal, Mohammad 2016. 'Population stands at around 9.5 million, including 2.9 million guests', Jordan Times, January 30, 2016.

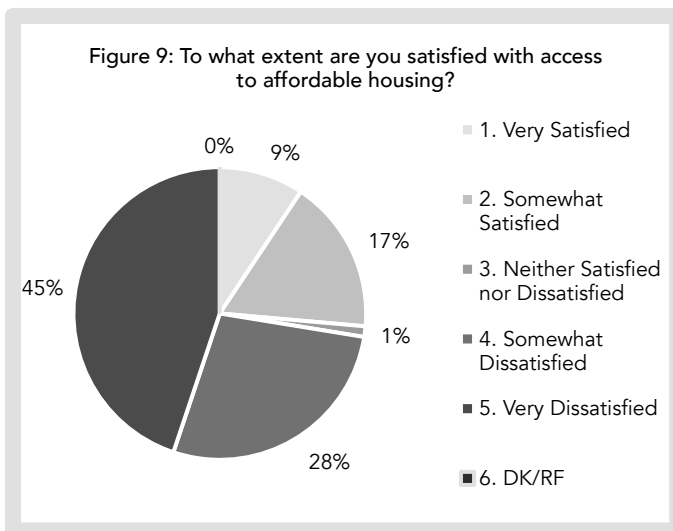
*afford them even if they are not working for the government, but the services are not the best. There is also Medinat Al Tabiyeh, which is an JAF hospital and is one of the best hospitals in Jordan with the best specialists and doctors. Those who are not in the JAF can get access to it by getting approval from the King for hospital treatment. The permission is issued by the Royal Court."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

### 3.3 ECONOMY, HOUSING AND DEBT

Affordable housing is a concern for most locals and prices are steadily rising, further increasing financial pressures that can make VEO membership more attractive for some.

The majority of respondents reported that there is a lack of affordable housing in Amman, and that this is impacting on the ability to find accommodation within their budgets. Accordingly, 73 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied with access to affordable housing, while 26 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied (see Figure 9). Some respondents reported that the price of residential properties in some areas of Amman is as high as 1,000 JD per square meter, which is supported by findings from a survey of property prices in Amman that discovered that by mid-2013 prices per square meter were close to or exceeded this figure in six areas of Amman.<sup>114</sup>



Some attributed the rise in house prices to the influx of wealthy Iraqi refugees, although this has mainly affected prices in more fashionable and expensive neighborhoods in West Amman. Many respondents also complained that the presence of Syrian refugees in the city has put a strain on the availability of housing for those with lower incomes.<sup>115</sup> This means that locals even in areas of the city where housing has historically been cheaper, like East Amman, now have to spend half of their monthly income on their rent, which has had a significant, negative impact on their finances and standard of living.<sup>116</sup> In addition, the large number of foreign nationals based in Amman for work purposes has driven up housing costs. These employees often have their accommodation subsidized or covered by their employers, pay above market rates, and often pay for a year's rent in advance, which locals are unable to afford to do.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Asteco Property Management 2013. 'Jordan Focus Q2 2013', Asteco Property Management, 2013.

<sup>115</sup> "[Syrian refugees] have a big impact, in terms of work and housing. Most of our neighbors are Syrians; in this building there are two Jordanian families and one Syrian. The buildings in front of us in it are all Syrians. It does have an impact on housing and on work, on everything, an economic and social impact." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>116</sup> "Prices in East Amman are also crazy so now many people are spending half of their monthly salary on rent and this has become normal." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>117</sup> "In Amman also in some other areas a lot of foreigners started to come because Jordan is one of the most stable countries in the MENA region so people can base themselves here for work in the other countries in the region. When they came to Jordan these people's companies would provide work expenses for them so when it comes to rent they don't care, if a house is normally 300 JD a month they will come and pay 700 JD and they will pay for the whole year in advance rather than on a monthly basis, which is a problem. We are really talking about areas in West Amman here so Abdoun, but also Jebel Amman and Weibdeh." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

*"Housing is a big problem in Amman and in other cities and areas in Jordan and prices are going up a lot, it is crazy. I am talking about housing and about land prices and it is getting very expensive. For example, in West Amman each square meter costs 1,000 JD and this happened firstly because a lot of Iraqis were coming in the 1990's and they had a lot of money so they started to build and bought a lot of real estate. Secondly after the US invasion of 2003 many more Iraqis came to Jordan and started to buy houses in a really crazy way and they would come to you and if your house was worth 30,000 JD they might buy it from you for 60,000 JD because of money laundering. Thirdly after the Syrian crisis, for the first two years Jordanians were very kind with the refugees and they did not increase their prices. This did not happen in Amman though, because most Syrians who came to Amman were rich and could afford housing so they pushed up the prices."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

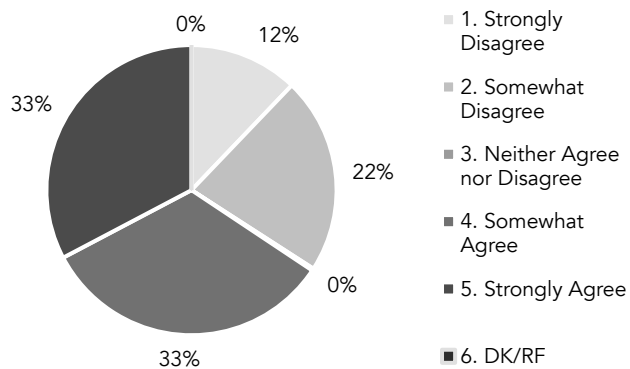
*"The cost of housing in East Amman is lower than in West Amman, but the cost of housing in general is very high in Jordan in comparison to people's monthly income. I live in the King Abdullah Gardens area and this area became very expensive after the fall of Baghdad in 2003 because many Iraqis came to Jordan so the rent and the building prices increased in a crazy way. Now after the Syrian crisis even in East Amman the prices have increased people and the government doesn't control the prices, but it should. I know a Syrian family who live in a small apartment and they pay 290 JD for small room, salon, kitchen, and bathroom. In a normal situation, this house should not be more than 100 JD per month."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Amman)*

**Borrowing is widespread in Amman and levels of personal debt are high, increasing financial worries.**

The majority of respondents considered debt to be a significant problem in Amman, with many identifying the price of living in the city as a leading driver of high levels of personal debt. Specifically, 66 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that debt is a problem in their community, while 34 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 10). Some respondents also stated that the ease of access to personal loans and mortgages in Amman, provided by any one of a number of competing Jordanian and international banks, is fueling a boom in consumer borrowing. Interest rates are assessed as very high, with one respondent judging them

Figure 10: To what extent do you agree that debt is a problem in your community?





to be often in excess of eight percent per annum.<sup>118</sup> An examination of mortgage loans offered by prominent banks including Housing Bank and Jordan Bank indicates that starting rates can be around six percent per annum, with some banks offering mortgages with no requirement for a deposit, and personal loans can start at around 10 percent per annum.<sup>119</sup> Some respondents linked high levels of personal debt to VEO recruitment, explaining that the chance to escape debts and poverty contributed to the decisions of some male youths to join VEOs abroad.<sup>120</sup>

*"Debt is a problem in Jordan. In Jordanian culture and in Amman specifically people do not have the old financial relationship with their families so in the past if someone needed money they could borrow it from their relatives like their mother, brothers or sisters but with this crazy expensive life we live in Amman almost nobody can afford to live given the high prices so if we can generalize, almost everyone in Jordan has a bank loan. In the beginning maybe it is for a car because we do not have good public transportation here in Jordan, also many parents borrow money for their children's' education, to send their sons and daughters to university because most education is not free in Jordan, higher education that is. Also if you want to build or to buy a house you need a bank loan. People never pay for houses up front, they always take a mortgage."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

<sup>118</sup> "There are a lot of banks in Amman, they are competing to provide loans because the percentage on loans is very high, around eight to ten percent which is crazy, like a credit card. The banks own your car; they own your house. At most banks the loan percentage is very high so it is a good investment for them. Housing Bank, Cairo Amman Bank, Jordan Bank, all of the banks are providing loans." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>119</sup> Housing Bank 2016. 'The lowest interest rate for housing loans in Jordan', Housing Bank, Offered until 31 March 2016. This loan was offered with a 25-year tenure at 5.99%APR, with no deposit or guarantor required; Jordan Bank 2016. 'Personal loans', Jordan Bank, Accessed 02 March 2016. Jordan Bank offers personal loans for up to 70,000 JD with 'competitive diminishing interest rates from 9.75%' available 'for Jordanians; private and public sector employees, retirees, military personnel, international entities' employees and self-employed'.

<sup>119</sup> "Debt is a problem everywhere in Amman, especially at certain times like when Eid fell in the middle of the month before payday and people needed to cover all the Eid expenses which can be 500 JD so they take a loan." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

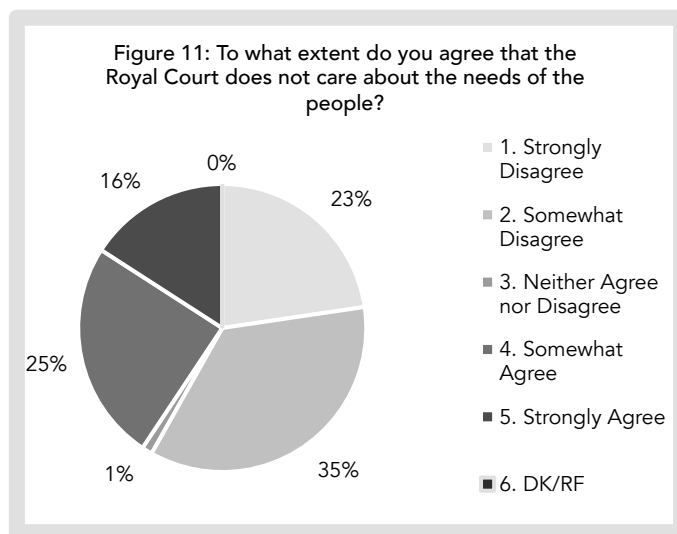
<sup>120</sup> "Financial reasons also exist [to join VEOs], because many youths are in debt or can't afford to support themselves, and they want to overcome this, and then the first reason is to flee." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

## 4.0 GOVERNANCE DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 4.1 CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

A significant minority of locals does not believe that the Royal Court is interested in their wellbeing, which drives resentment that VEOs are looking to exploit.

Although the majority of respondents were positive about the work of the Royal Court and reported that it has actively been working to benefit locals, a substantial minority disagreed. ISIS has tried to stir up anti-monarchy sentiment in Jordan through videos, including that showing the murder of Kasasbeh, and if left unaddressed, there is a serious risk that more locals might be inclined to either support or join VEOs. While 58 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Royal Court does not care about the needs of the people, as many as 41 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 11). Where dissatisfaction was expressed toward the Royal Court it does not necessarily reflect negative sentiment toward King Abdullah II personally and is more likely to be directed toward the Royal Court as an institution. For some respondents this dissatisfaction was characterized by a feeling that the Royal Court has deviated from its primary purpose, which is to operate as the private office of the King and to improve efficiency in the central government.<sup>121</sup> An important bulwark against negative sentiments toward the Royal Court remains its ability to issue permissions for locals and non-Jordanians with serious illnesses to access treatment in the military hospital in Amman and the King Hussein Cancer Care Center, which would otherwise have been outside their financial capabilities.<sup>122</sup>



*"In my opinion the Royal Court only covers the King's achievements and his travels, and they send cards during Eid to people in Jordan who are important, rich or supporters of the King. You never see them send cards saying congratulations during Eid to normal or poor people and they don't listen to them. People sometimes protest in front of the Royal Court but they never send someone to listen to them to find out what they want. In general, these people hope that the Royal court will*

<sup>121</sup> Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship, accessed March 02, 2016. Available from: <<http://www.qrce.org/>>

<sup>122</sup> "In reality people love the Royal Court because ultimately if one of your family is sick, for example your mum has cancer, then you can use the Royal Court to provide medical care and she could go to the Hussein Cancer Center for example. Many people, especially the poor and refugees and foreign workers use the Royal Court for free healthcare like Egyptians and Palestinians in Palestine, I think there is an agreement between the Military Hospital and the Royal Court that they will provide a certain amount of care per year for people sent by the Royal Court" (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

*listen to them and send their complaints and requests to the King."*

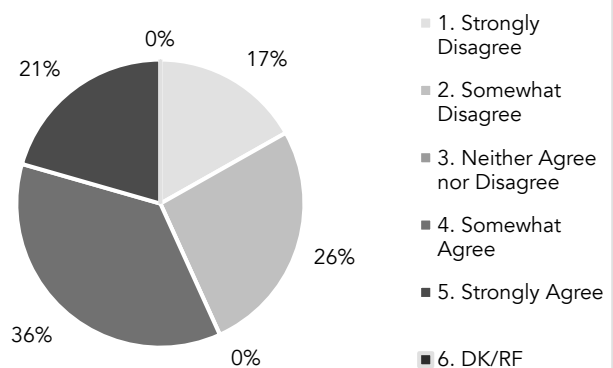
*(Female, 22, Journalist, Amman)*

The central government is mainly believed to be working in the interests of the people, although many complain that Jordanian system of government is not democratic.

The majority of respondents reported that the central government has their interests at heart and 57 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not care about the needs of the people, although a considerable minority of 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 12). Some questioned the manner in which candidates for general elections are chosen and it is widely assumed that candidates are pre-selected by the central government and the Royal Court. As a consequence, many believe that it would not be possible to ensure that a candidate who is not approved by the central government would

be able to be successfully elected, regardless of their level of popular support. By regulating the pool of potential Members of Parliament (MPs), the central government ensures that its own candidates are successful and the result is that many doubt that their local MPs are working in the interests of their constituents. Many are, therefore, frustrated by the lack of impact that they feel they can have on their own parliamentary representation and become less involved in politics. This can breed resentment among locals and shuts off an avenue of public expression, increasing the risk that they will be open to VEO messaging, particularly propaganda that offers them the opportunity to effect change in Syria and Iraq through military means.

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree that the central government does not care about the needs of the people?



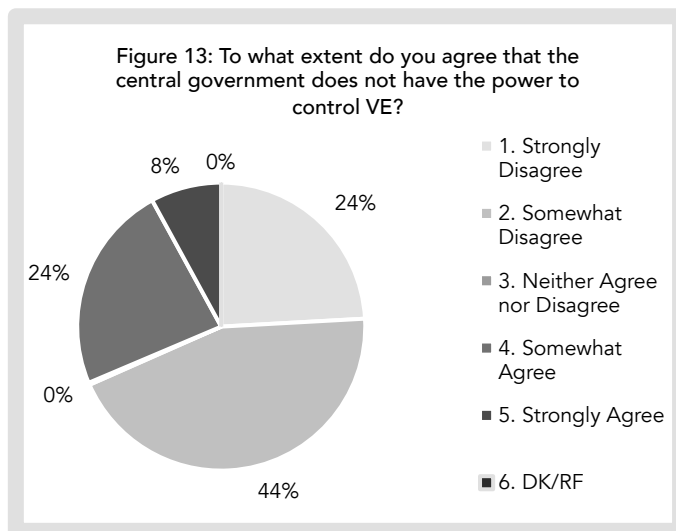
*"When it come to the MPs the people do not choose them, the government and the King choose them so they know that they will win from the beginning and there are shares of MPs for each governorate. Even if there is a good person and we believe he will make a great MP and we support him at the end we can't succeed [to get him elected]. The MPs don't work for the people as much as the government itself and the ministers are chosen directly by the King and the Prime Minister as well."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

Confidence in the ability of the central government to protect Jordan from VEO attacks is strong.

Respondents were generally confident that Jordanian borders were well monitored and secure,<sup>123</sup> and that the central government is active in countering VEOs and potential acts of terrorism.<sup>124</sup> Accordingly, 68 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not have the power to control VE, while 32 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 13). Many respondents expressed a general sense of physical security, although some conceded that they were afraid of an attack in the city by ISIS members in retaliation for the execution of two jailed Salafist Jihadists following the murder of Kasasbeh. However,

they believed that the lack of any such attack since is largely down to the effectiveness of the state security apparatus rather than a lack of desire on the part of ISIS to carry out such attacks. Some also highlighted that many aspiring VEO participants are obliged to travel to Turkey if they wish to access Syria, rather than crossing Jordanian northern border, to demonstrate that border security is tight and smuggling difficult.<sup>125</sup> One respondent, an MP from Amman, reported that there are 16 government bodies that are dedicated to countering the influence and spread of VEOs in Jordan and explained that communications are being monitored to identify those at risk of radicalization by VEOs, in addition to which the central government would enlist the help of families in preventing recruitment.



*"I believe that the government of Jordan has had a wakeup call and has started to take serious steps to fight the violent extremists. We now have over 16 or 17 bodies fighting terrorism as part of the Central government, in addition to departments in ministries working on social safety and security. The government is currently keeping an eye out on all communication with ISIS and when they encounter suspicious communication with violent extremists they inform the families of these youths to prevent recruitment."*

(Male, 56, MP, Amman)

<sup>123</sup> "I think that the security forces are monitoring everything in Jordan." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>124</sup> "Smuggling happens but the areas which the extremists target are in northern Syria, which is far from Jordan, and the border between us and Syria is controlled, most of the people go via Turkey and then head south." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>125</sup> "I do not have detailed information, but as I told you from the experiences of some of the youths, some people got tickets to fly to Turkey, and from Turkey they meet with those that take them to certain areas, and once they are there, that's it. So there are clusters and groups which are active in our country, whose job it is to get people to Syria" (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

The GID is widely seen as effective but excessive monitoring of suspected VEO members risks driving them abroad and into the hands of VEOs.

Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate (GID) is well regarded by many locals, who believe that the security services are diligent and well informed, and see this as evidence that the central government has been taking steps to prevent Jordanians from joining VEOs. Such steps include interviewing male youths traveling abroad without a return ticket and asking them to provide proof of employment or other evidence to support their reason for travel. The GID also communicates with the family and friends of known VEO members to explore their reasons for going to join VEOs in Syria and Iraq and to find out who their associates were who might also be at risk of recruitment or may have become radicalized but remain in Jordan.<sup>126</sup> One local whose brother successfully evaded government surveillance to go to fight in Syria 2014 stated that he was interviewed in detail by the GID when it was known that his brother had arrived in Syria to fight. The security services are also believed to monitor online activity for support for VEOs, particularly output on popular sites including Facebook.<sup>127</sup> However, constant scrutiny by the police and intelligence services can make it impossible for those jailed for supporting VEOs to re-integrate into society, leaving them angry and frustrated and ultimately less likely to abandon their VE beliefs than if they had been subject to less invasive methods. For instance, one respondent complained that the security forces are constantly monitoring him and that sometimes they interview him and attempt to trick him into incriminating himself, despite being extremely well informed about his movements and general behavior.<sup>128</sup> Some are therefore concerned that the GID might in some cases be contributing to the radicalization of the targets of their surveillance.

*"The central government also has its resources, its intelligence officers. They are definitely implementing a solid surveillance mechanism. The government communicated with us when my brother left. They interrogated me. They asked me how he left, who he spoke to, if he had any relations with anyone. They asked me and I told them the story as I told you. They were very insistent on knowing who his friends are, places he would usually go to." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)*

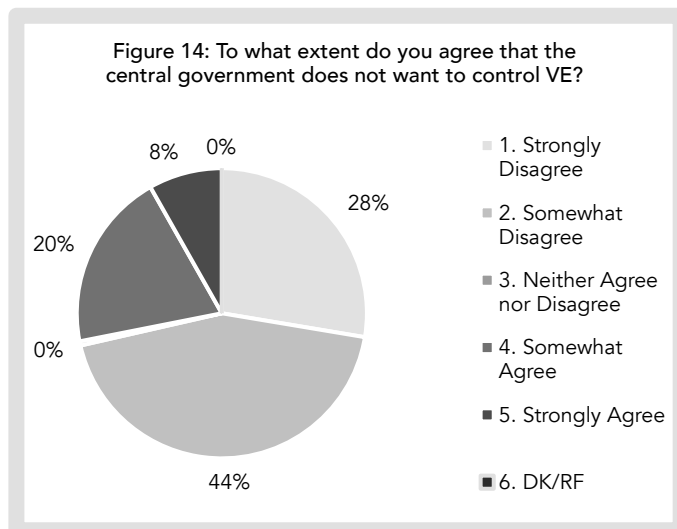
<sup>126</sup> "The central government is monitoring people that are traveling in general, especially those that travel with one way tickets. They are interrogated, and requested to provide supporting documents for their stories; if for example they say they are going for work, border security will request to see the work contract and supporting documents." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>127</sup> "The government does conduct [online surveillance] activities, I am not denying that; there are clear penalties for those who are promoting such [VE] ideology even for writing something on Facebook, this has a penalty, which is good... [People] understand that there needs to be freedom of speech, so there needs to be a clear line and a way to deal with these stances or with peoples perspectives [if they are not appropriate], but there is [government] control, and this is good." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>128</sup> "It is not ok that they keep monitoring us all the time. I managed finally to go for the Umrah this year. I came back a month ago, I haven't been since 1995, and they still gave me a very hard time to be able to go. All our papers are right, our phone numbers, our lives, we are doing everything right, and they shouldn't give us a hard time or pressure us anymore. They asked me what work I do, I said that I am a restaurant supplier, he asked me about my shop, which wasn't yet open at the time, trying to trick me, I am being honest and straight with them. They have all information on me. I was still preparing my shop; it wasn't ready. They have all my information, all pictures, videos, everything." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

The government is seen as willing and capable of countering VEOs and confidence in the JAF is strong.

Most respondents were confident that the central government has the desire to control VE, which forms a positive counterpoint to issues like corruption and nepotism that make locals less likely to be happy with the performance of the central government and hence more inclined to sympathize with VEO narratives criticizing it. Specifically, 72 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not want to control VE, while 28 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 14).<sup>129</sup> This indicates that locals believe that their government is prioritizing their security, giving them confidence in the government as a whole and reassuring them that Jordan is not likely to suffer from the conflict and destabilization present in neighboring Iraq and Syria.



In particular, the JAF are seen as playing an important role in keeping the borders secure and in physically fighting VEO members inside the country if necessary, as happened in the city of Irbid in March 2016,<sup>130</sup> and the vast majority of respondents expressed positive views about their abilities and behavior, further reinforcing the impression that locals are supportive of central government efforts to oppose VEOs and those tasked with physically doing so, along with the police and intelligence services. 77 and 80 percent of Amman GQ respondents respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the JAF don't have the ability to keep them safe and that the JAF do not behave in a respectful way, while 23 and 20 percent respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figures 15 and 16). One respondent stated that, although *wasta* (nepotistic connections) is frequently used to secure appointments, the JAF are not seen as corrupt and are widely respected by locals.

*"The head of the JAF is the King himself and most of the time people in the JAF get high appointments using wasta, but it is not a corrupt sector and people respect the JAF, they believe that they are doing a great job and that members of the JAF do not cause trouble in the country and that the JAF is controlled by the King."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

<sup>129</sup> "I believe that the government has the main responsibility for fighting radicalism in Jordan." (Male, 27 Student, Amman)

<sup>130</sup> Al Khalidi, Suleiman 2016. 'Jordan says foils Islamic State plot to attack civilian, military targets', Reuters, March 02, 2016.

Figure 15: To what extent do you agree that the JAF don't have the ability to keep Jordan safe?

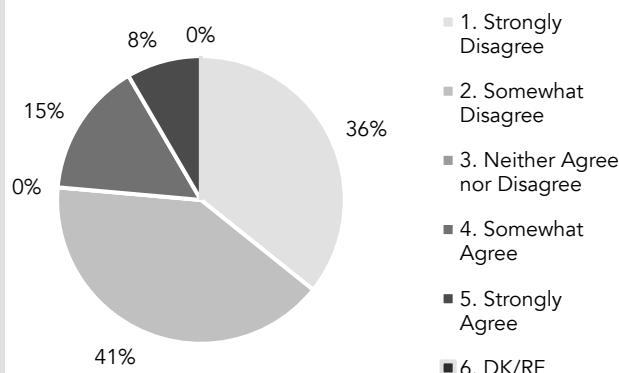
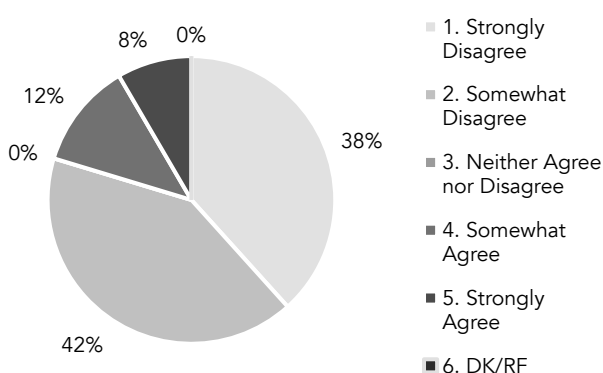


Figure 16: To what extent do you agree that the JAF do not behave in a respectful way?



Locals believe that the central government was initially slow to respond to recruitment into VEOs and that this has exacerbated the current problem.

Some respondents, particularly those with friends or relatives who have successfully evaded security measures and joined VEOs in Syria, said that the government could do more to make VEO participation more difficult and to counter VE narratives. Some reported that the government made no effort to prevent locals joining VEOs in Syria in earlier years of the conflict and implied that it facilitated some of their journeys,<sup>131</sup> which several interpreted as evidence of an active policy of exporting radicalized locals to Syria to remove them from the country,<sup>132</sup> although it was known that they were joining VEOs, particularly JN.<sup>133</sup> Some even alleged that the government had a policy of releasing known VEO-sympathizers from prison, on condition that they traveled to Syria rather than remaining in the country.<sup>134</sup> While this is no longer the case, and the security services are now keen to stop further VEO participation, many locals remain concerned that active members of VEOs might drive recruitment among locals directly, but also indirectly by setting an example to local youths, and that returned fighters pose a threat to the country in the event that they manage to return.

<sup>131</sup> "I asked many people how they enter Syria. They want the Salafist Jihadists to leave Jordan; they want to get rid of them. They would facilitate their entrance, through bribes. Usually in Jordan, we do not take bribes, however they opened channels of entry to Syria, with security officers that accept bribes and would facilitate the passing." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>132</sup> "It is as if what they are saying (the government) is that we do not want you here. Sometimes the state doesn't have a problem with these movements, they have a problem however with them being in Jordan, the issue is the presence of these movements on its territories, but it doesn't mind that its own (Jordanians) will join these groups outside its territories." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>133</sup> "[The government] was tough and whenever someone wants to travel, they investigated and questioned them on why they are traveling and they didn't let them go easily." (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>134</sup> "That the government wants to get rid of these people [is obvious], for example they are willing to release you from prison, in exchange for you going to Syria. You want to practice jihad? Go ahead. What I am telling you is what I heard from those that have been imprisoned." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

*"Jordanian authorities used to know that there were a lot of young men who were leaving for Syria, they've known all along, but they never did anything except recently. It used to happen in front of them, even though they have a strong security department, supposedly."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

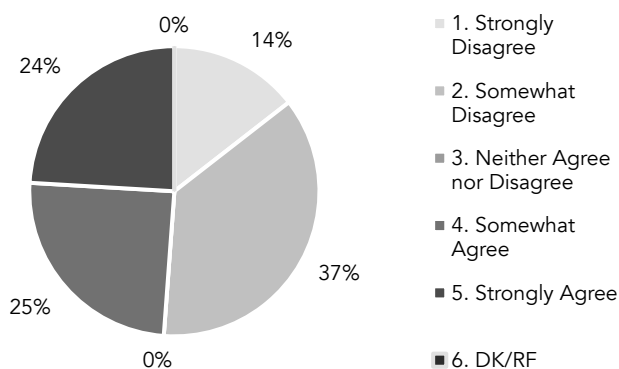
The central government is seen as heavily influenced by Western powers and by the King, and locals doubt its ability to function independently.

A significant minority of respondents reported that the central government is largely beholden to the demands or wishes of its Western allies, with some feeling that this influence is often exercised through the King and the Royal Court, who they think the central government ultimately answers to. In particular, the power that the King retains to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister and other ministers is believed to ensure that the actions of the central government are dependent on the King's approval, and he can be pressured by Western allies on whom his kingdom depends for financial assistance to shore up its budget.<sup>135</sup>

This situation is even more pronounced given the many Syrian refugees resident in Jordan and dependent on aid, many of which reside in Amman. In fact, 51 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government just does what the West says, while 49 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 17).

One respondent illustrated the weakness of the position of the Prime Minister by giving the example of Awn Shawkat Al Khasawneh, who was Prime Minister from October 2011 until May 2012, and whom the respondent believed was removed from office by the King after he attempted to increase the authority of the Prime Minister's office. Although the local media stated that Khasawneh had resigned, it also reported that he did so following several disputes with the King over a new electoral law that the King did not support and due to frustration with what he referred to as shadow governments that limited his ability to act.<sup>136</sup> Such a statement from a leading politician serves to confirm the perception of almost half of respondents that their government is not independent and that it is heavily influenced both by the King and Jordanian Western allies. This perception both undermines popular faith in democracy and the relationship between the individual and the state and can generate resentment that both VEOs and Salafist groups can use to generate support and drive recruitment. Salafist groups, particularly Salafist

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree that the central government just does what the West says?



<sup>135</sup> Sowell, Kirk 2016. 'Jordan is sliding toward insolvency', Carnegie Center for International Peace, March 17, 2016.

<sup>136</sup> Al Samadi, Tamer 2013. 'Jordanian PM's abrupt resignation reveals deep political crisis', Al Hayat / Al Monitor (English translation), September 12, 2013.



Jihadists, can exploit such sentiment because they explicitly reject the concept of any state that is not fundamentally Islamic.

*"The central government is not independent at all. The Prime Minister is between the King and the Royal Court; so whatever they say, he will do that. Once a Prime Minister asked for general jurisdiction to get more authority and the King ended his period in office immediately. He tried to reduce the Royal Court's influence but he was fired. If you are the Prime Minister, you should realize that you are not the decision maker and you should just execute the orders of the King."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

**Corruption and nepotism are believed to be widespread and this is driving popular frustration with both the municipal and central governments.**

The majority of respondents expressed frustration at what they see as widespread corruption and nepotism in both the central and municipal governments, which is believed to account for inefficiency at the municipal level. Corruption is seen to take a variety of forms, including the use of personal influence to ensure that the family or tribal members of government officials can find government employment. As a result, locals perceive corruption to be widespread and 62 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that government officials are corrupt, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 18). The failure of the local and central administrations to inspire confidence is causing locals to feel estranged from the governing classes. It also increases the danger that they will be open to anti-government narratives, such as those used by ISIS in its propaganda videos, and will consider VEO participation as an alternative to living in a corrupt system.

Many respondents were especially dissatisfied with the performance of municipal authorities in the city, with several expressing anger at the poor response of officials to flash floods that inundated Downtown Amman in November 2015, destroying property and flooding businesses.<sup>137</sup> They believed that the sewage system had not been properly maintained, leading to higher water levels, and that neither the municipal nor central government had properly compensated business owners or admitted fault. Accordingly, 61 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the local government does not care about the needs of the people, while 38 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 19). Complaints were not limited to the issue of flooding and some were also frustrated with the uneven distribution of basic services in the city's neighborhoods, including garbage collection and water.<sup>138</sup> Locals complain that affluent neighborhoods in West Amman benefit from better municipal services than poorer parts of the city.<sup>139</sup> The poor quality of basic services and lack of equity

<sup>137</sup> See YouTube, 2015. 'Cars washed away after heavy rain floods', YouTube, November 05, 2015. Available at: <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sxq25215\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sxq25215_c)>

<sup>138</sup> "Garbage collection differs different from area to area in the city so in East Amman they usually collect the garbage once per day every two or three days, while in other areas in West Amman they collect the garbage at least two times per day." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>139</sup> "Some basic services the municipality is responsible for are not good like with water, which is sometimes only available in homes one day per week, while in other areas like in West Amman the water comes on a daily basis or at least three times per week." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

between different neighborhoods in Amman is widely blamed on the municipal government, with the central government seen as ultimately responsible, as it should be exercising oversight to ensure excesses do not occur. Combined with anger at corruption, dissatisfaction at basic service provision makes locals more likely to reject official structures entirely, if left unaddressed, making them vulnerable to anti-government narratives, such as those espoused by Salafist Jihadist groups and VEOs.

*"In 2015 parts of Amman flooded during the winter, which lead to the deaths of some people and worst flooding accident was in November where most of the wadis/valleys flooded and this was because the Greater Amman Municipality didn't do the appropriate maintenance of the sewerage system which lead to many houses being flooded and four people being killed. Also, many of the streets were ruined and walls collapsed and most of shops in Downtown and Wadi Saqra street were flooded. However, the government and the head of the Greater Amman Municipality didn't apologize or say they would compensate those who were affected."*

(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

Figure 18: To what extent do you agree that government officials are corrupt?

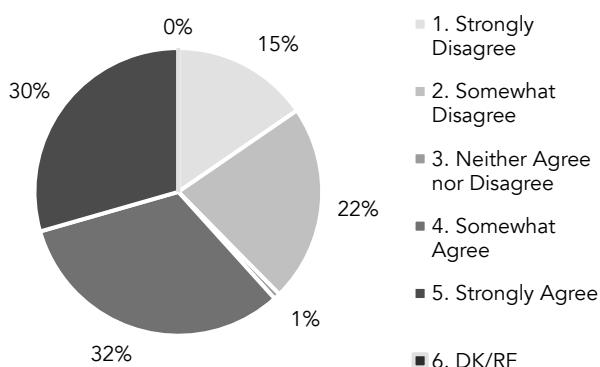
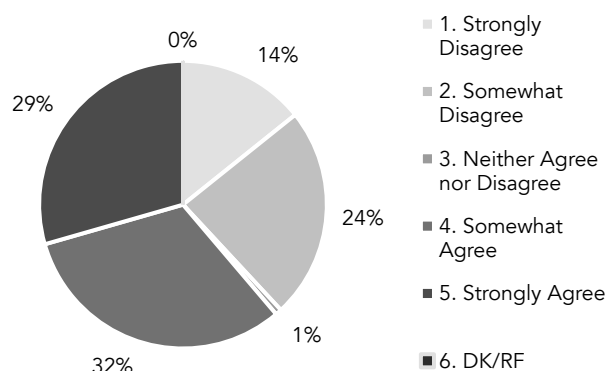


Figure 19: To what extent do you agree that the local government does not care about the needs of the people?

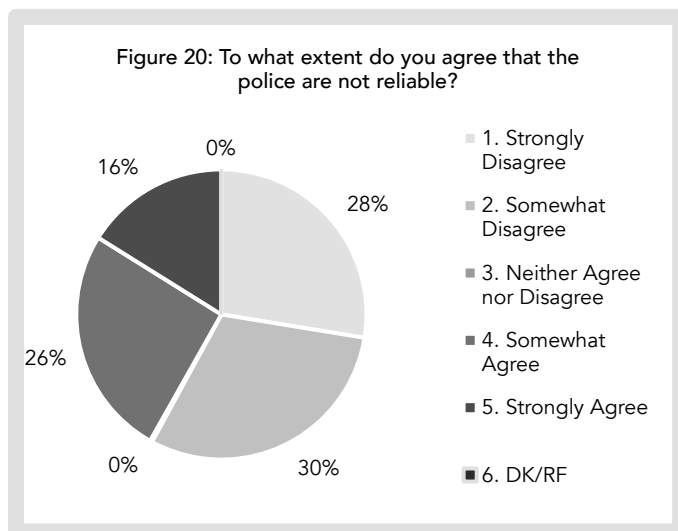


## 4.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT

The police are generally well regarded but sometimes engage in repressive behavior that risks driving resentment toward the government among locals.

The majority of respondents reported that the police in Amman are generally effective and can be relied upon. 58 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the police are not reliable, although a substantial minority of 42 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 20). The police are considered be effective when responding to crimes but some respondents were critical of the efficiency and attitude of police officers working in police stations, stating that many behaved in an insulting manner toward locals in response to factors such as their clothing or perceived sexual orientation.<sup>140</sup>

Police behavior can also be oppressive and thereby risks driving radicalization and support for VEOs among locals. More specifically, some respondents identified both intrusive surveillance techniques and behavior toward prisoners within the penal system as areas where police are seen as behaving in an oppressive manner. In fact, many linked incarceration and increased propensity toward violent and religious extremism and believed it is fundamentally the result of active recruitment by both Salafist Quietists and Jihadists in prison, but that those who have experienced oppressive police behavior are much more likely to become Salafists. Recruiters also take advantage of a sense of guilt among prisoners and a desire to atone for their crimes through greater religious observance that makes them vulnerable to approaches by religious groups.<sup>141</sup> Police harassment also frustrates and angers some locals, which drives resentment toward the government and therefore makes them more vulnerable to VEO messages that draw on anti-establishment themes. One respondent, a Salafist Jihadist, reported that police harassment risks pushing individuals toward VEOs rather than away from them and stated that he had once been stopped and questioned in his home neighborhood of Sweileh on the grounds that he had been looking around



<sup>140</sup> "If you go to any of the police stations you will hate them, they are not efficient and they treat people badly, as although you have committed a murder or something. You believe they are exercising authority rather than practicing the law. This is worse for men than women as the stereotype here is that women do not get in trouble but if you are a man who looks different with ripped clothes or a piercing then they will treat you badly." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

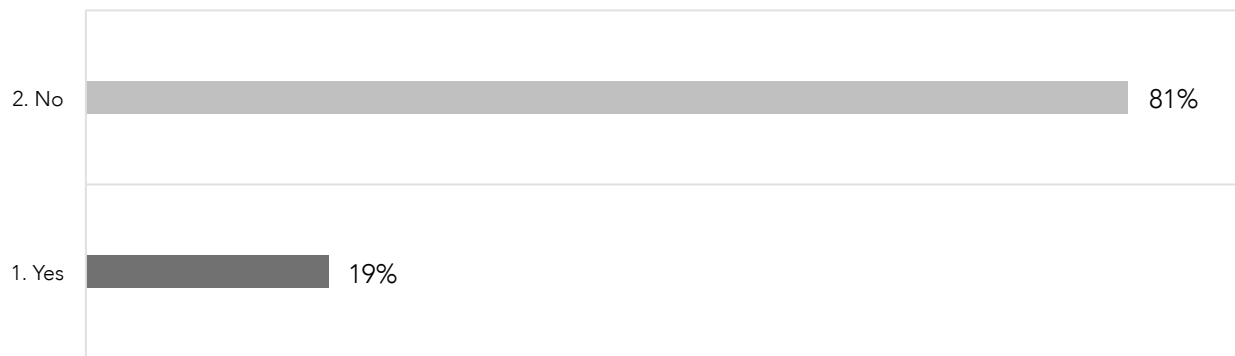
<sup>141</sup> "When oppression persists, the reaction is stronger, so any person who endured oppression, you will find that the jihadi Salafists becomes their first choice. The indication of this is that most of those in prison that are subjected to oppression, leave jail as Salafist Jihadists, they do not come out as moderates; this ideology really spreads inside prison. The prisons have huge groups of Salafist jihadist and they only recently started to separate prisoners in order to counter this spread." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

himself more than was supposedly normal.<sup>142</sup> While the vast majority of respondents have not personally experienced such behavior; 81 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that they or their family members had not suffered directly from excessive police authority, as many as 19 percent reported that they had (see Figure 21). This indicates that a large number of locals may be harboring resentment toward the police and by extension the central government, which VEOs can appeal to in order to secure their support and/or physical participation in fighting abroad or in attacks within Jordan.

*"He asked me, why are you looking around you while walking in your area? I told him I was looking for someone, their agent reported that I looked around while walking and this is not a crime, and yet I got stopped over it. There are intelligence agents in our area, in Sweileh they are everywhere."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

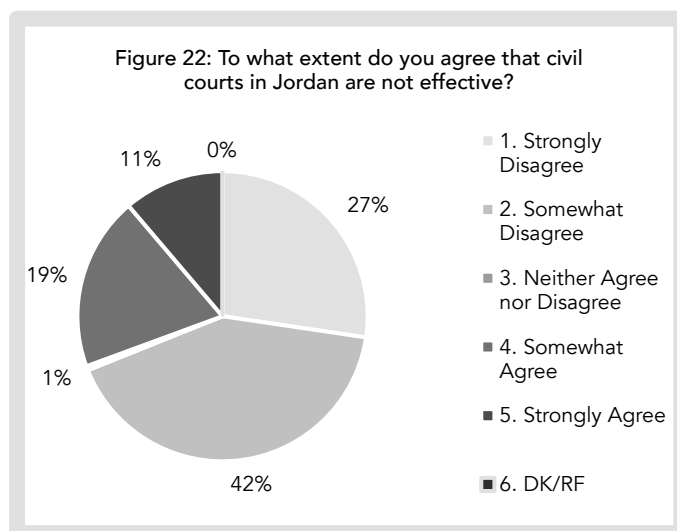
Figure 21: Have you or your family directly suffered from excessive police authority?



<sup>142</sup> "The security services do not leave any person it suspects to be with any organized groups alone." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

## The civil court system in Amman is largely seen as impartial and effective.

Most respondents in Amman had a positive view of the civil courts and reported that judges were impartial in applying the law and not beholden to the central government or the Royal Court. Accordingly, 69 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that civil courts in Jordan are not effective, while 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 22). The civil courts deal with a variety of offences, including minor felonies, and also try individuals, often journalists, for articles or statements adjudged to have broken the law for offences including the violation of gag orders on information. The civil courts also regularly acquit journalists or writers even if they have criticized the authorities, as a result of which journalists in Amman have campaigned to have their peers tried in civil courts rather than the state security court.<sup>143</sup> One respondent gave the example of a case in which a journalist on trial in the civil court system was acquitted of writing pieces that were seen to be critical of the central government when he could potentially have been either jailed or heavily fined. Respondents frequently positively contrast the activities of the civil court system with the state security courts, whose verdicts they believe are directly controlled by the central government and are believed to regularly sentence people to time in jail regardless of the evidence against them. Given the respect locals have for the even-handedness of the civil courts, if more cases can be tried there, rather than in the state security courts, then there would likely be greater respect for the verdicts and sentences handed down and less grounds for resentment against the justice system that VEOs can also exploit as evidence that the government in Jordan is oppressive.



*"The civil courts are seen as fair and transparent and you believe the judges are separate from the government and do not follow them, for example one journalist was convicted of writing pieces against the government and he was sent to court but the judge released him without any fine or jail time."*

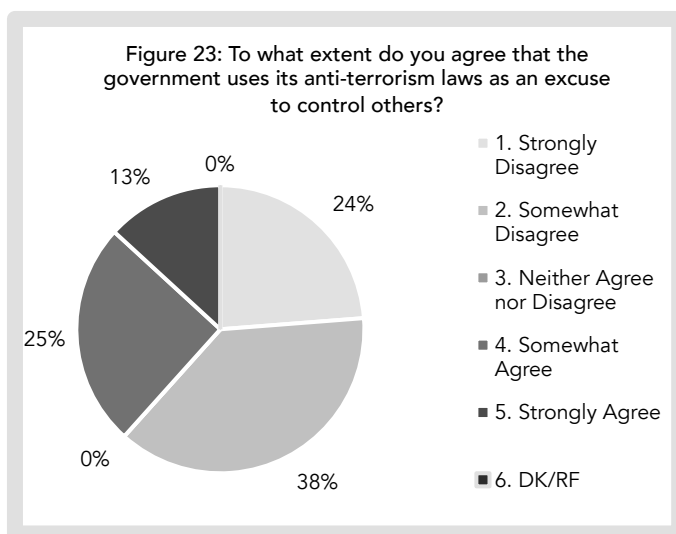
*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

<sup>143</sup> Ghazal, Mohammad 2015. 'Syndicate wants detained journalist freed', Jordan Times, July 10, 2015.

### 4.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

While most locals trust the application of anti-terror laws, some fear that they are counter-productive and risk driving sympathy for VEOs.

Enhanced anti-terror laws were introduced in 2014, ostensibly to combat the spread of terrorism in Jordan, and they have drawn criticism from activists for being too broad and lacking specificity but are broadly endorsed by locals more afraid of terror attacks than authoritarian behavior by the central government.<sup>144</sup> As a result, 62 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government uses its anti-terrorism laws as an excuse to control others, while 38 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 23). Many respondents made the assessment that the anti-terrorism laws have been effective and prioritize



the jailing of potential VEO participants and members,<sup>145</sup> with some supporting sentences of up to 10 years for locals who had tried to travel to Syria to participate in the conflict there.<sup>146</sup> Many also agreed with enabling the security courts in Amman to crack down on expressions of online support for VEOs, including JN and ISIS.<sup>147</sup> However, several respondents expressed concern that these laws are harming freedom of expression and giving locals fewer outlets for energies that may instead be turned toward VE.<sup>148</sup> Some gave examples of friends or acquaintances that they believed had been unfairly detained under this legislation, some of whom were students, and expressed frustration that people they knew

<sup>144</sup> "There is a big difference between the security and civil courts as only police and JAF members should be tried in the security court, not civilians except now they can be tried under the terrorist law. We have a problem with the new terrorist law, as it is very broad and not specific. The new law says if you are 'undermining the regime' you can be tried there but maybe you are only taking part in a protest for example. At the same time you believe as although they could be taking their orders from the Prime Minister or the King himself or the Royal Court or the GID as they are not transparent." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>145</sup> "I have a friend and this guy's friend is a Salafist Jihadist who tried to go to Syria, but he was arrested at the border, and he's now accused of going to Syria for jihad and will be imprisoned for 10 years." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>146</sup> "I have a friend and this guy's friend is a Salafist Jihadist who tried to go to Syria, but he was arrested at the border, and he's now accused of going to Syria for jihad and will be imprisoned for 10 years." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>147</sup> "I heard a lot of people were sent to the security courts for supporting VEOs like JN/ISIS and most of the time it was about Facebook because the government watches Facebook closely." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>148</sup> "The police have started to end protests in an aggressive manner. If you want to have a protest, even one showing solidarity with Palestine the police will not allow it." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

were not terrorists should be jailed for that reason.<sup>149</sup> Since many in Amman believe that these laws are arbitrarily applied, not just to jail potential terrorists but also to suppress journalists and limit free speech, there is a risk that their application will only succeed in making locals hostile to the central government and to the justice system. This risks driving resentment toward the government but also the incarceration of those without links to VE and their being exposed to recruitment by radical religious groups in the penal system, which could ultimately lead to VEO sympathy and/or recruitment.

*"A friend of mine was imprisoned under terrorism charges, without there being any evidence. He is a student at the Arts College in our university, and he will come out soon, but let me tell you, if this guy is a terrorist, I'm going to be a terrorist, because he is not, you know what I mean?"*

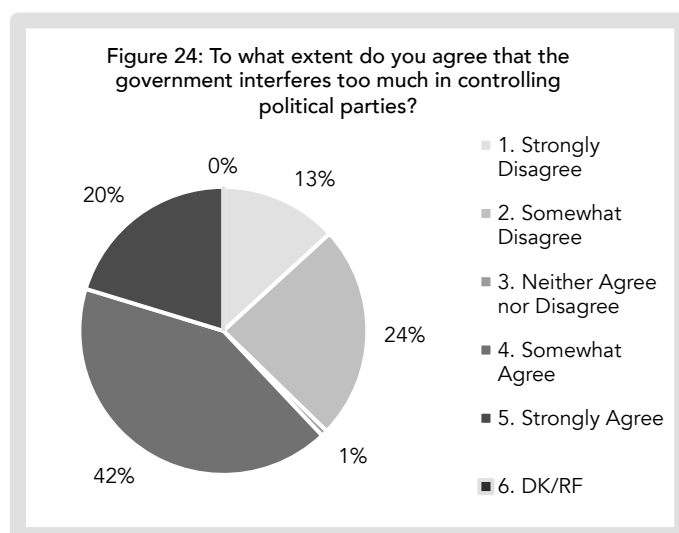
*(Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)*

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<sup>149</sup> "Sometimes you find that the judges believe what you are telling them but they have no power. Many of my friends were sent to the security court for taking part in protests and had a good relationship with the judge and members of the court, but all of the charges will only be dismissed if the King orders them to be dismissed and that is what and he did for all of them. A lot of human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were asking and arguing with the King to release those guys." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

Dissatisfaction with limited political freedoms is making some locals feel less invested in the political system and risks increasing vulnerability to VEO messages and recruitment.

Many respondents expressed concern about the lack of political freedom,<sup>150</sup> and identified a dearth of political reforms as a key grievance among locals, some of whom participated in Arab Spring protests inspired by the Arab Spring in 2011.<sup>151</sup> Political parties are heavily regulated and have limited freedom of action and locals doubt their ability to effect change, which was most evident in the wake of the Arab Spring when the central government ignored calls for greater political freedom through reforms, such as a new election system and more representative government. Accordingly, 62 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the government interferes too much in controlling political parties, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 24).<sup>152</sup>



Disillusionment with the political process is especially pronounced among youths. Youth movements were prominent in the 2011 protests and many were inspired by the success of a similar demographic in ousting the heads of authoritarian states in Egypt and Tunisia.<sup>153</sup> However, as promised reforms never materialized and the political system in Jordan essentially remained the same, respondents observed that many youths were overcome with a sense of frustration and disappointment that they had been unable to effect change.<sup>154</sup> Since 2011, the central government has focused on closing off avenues to change by

<sup>150</sup> "The state thinks we are dumb and that we don't listen except to the official radio stations. So the state is the one who creates such environments supportive of extremism. Even although the state knows about all those young men who went to join terrorist groups it still suppressed the progressive democratic activists and continues to hold some political prisoners until this day. Of course the state plays a role in extremism, along with other things." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>151</sup> "Something the government should be doing is removing the restraints on the average Jordanian man. I don't want to delve too far into political issues in Jordan, but this is related to the absence of freedoms and this can make people turn to extremism. Both Salafists and other people." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>152</sup> "I have an activist friend who was very active and extremely positive, then the Arab Spring began in 2011, and we formed a political association, and we started demanding to reclaim our constitutional rights and so on with the intention of reforming the country. My friend started drifting away from our project which is related to the medical association, and he started to be more active on Facebook... Later on I started to believe that he's becoming too extreme in his opinions, and he started cursing the government and the King... until the day he decided to put an ISIS flag on Facebook." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>153</sup> "The governments didn't want real change while religious parties and the youth wanted change." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>154</sup> "In my opinion my friend went to jihad because he lost hope in change. He was so full of hope when the Arab spring started." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)



democratic means, such as by banning or severely limiting protests. More specifically, some reported that the level of political freedoms was tolerable until 2014, when the unstable situation in Syria moved the government to curtail avenues of political expression in order to promote stability.<sup>155</sup> Although this is not considered a positive thing and greater political freedom is seen as ideal, many stated that the current lack of such freedoms is both understandable and tolerable because they prioritize internal security.<sup>156</sup>

However, the result has been that locals, especially idealistic youths, feel they have no way to make a political impact in their home country, as a result of which some have become more open to VEO propaganda that advocates changing the Syrian political system through armed struggle.<sup>157</sup> A political system that locals see as rigid, unrepresentative, and unlikely to change also plays into VEO messages that attack the Jordanian government as authoritarian and makes it more likely that some will sympathize with such messages, increasing the risk that they may become further involved with VE and/or join VEOs. For instance, one respondent confirmed that the lack of legal forms of popular expression was impacting on youths in his community and was making it more likely that they would look to express themselves by traveling to Syria or Iraq to join VEOs.<sup>158</sup> In particular, universities have been focal point for youth political engagement and activism in Amman that have recently been suppressed. However, more needs to be done to politically engage the student population, as this offers a way to build trust in the government and its institutions, which in turn can also serve as a barrier to VEO messages attacking the state.<sup>159</sup>

*"Extremism will vanish as soon as the Arab states stop using oppressive means against the people. The Arab authorities are actually using terrorism as an excuse to pressure us so that we would postpone real change and democracy, which we called for during the Arab spring. It's not about leaders, it's about agendas. The only way to fight extremism is through a democratic agenda, a civil democratic agenda, meaning the legal relationship between the citizen and the state."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

<sup>155</sup> "Political freedom from 2011 until the start of 2014 was very, very good. We had the freedom to express ourselves, to talk about anything, to do demonstrations and protests, to send petitions, to argue with MPs, to argue with the ministers and Prime Minister, but within a year due to what is happening in Syria everything has changed. So now we are not allowed to do any protests or demonstrations at all. Freedom of expression, talking about journalism, everything is controlled by the government." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>156</sup> "Instability is never positive, and security is more important than food and drink. As long as we are living safely, regardless of the political pressures that we are subjected to, we are much better than others in the area, like those in Syria." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>157</sup> "The main blame for people going to jihad must fall on the state, because these young men tried to make a change here, they tried the democratic approach, they tried to express their opinions, but they didn't find anything that would enhance their ambition for a democratic Jordan. So they left to take part in jihad in Syria in an attempt to make a change somewhere else." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>158</sup> "The state should allow space for people to express themselves. Many youths get enthusiastic and they want to fight for Islam and defend the women and children; these youths don't have any direction, they have to be directed in the right way, they would get excited to do something, and are arrested directly. Now they leave to join jihad to Syria and Iraq." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>159</sup> "In some cases, youths may not trust their government since they stopped them from participating in politics especially in universities." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

*"If we have extremist thoughts among the youth and if the situation deteriorated then the youth would explode as we saw in other countries. I am more concerned about having a stable and strong youth. I'm not saying that the security situation is not important, but I am concerned that the government should engage youths more in society and give them real roles in the political life of the country. I remember in the beginning of the Arab revolution there were promises from the government to engage the youth more and there were conferences held that focused on youths and their dreams but they all failed and we don't hear about this now. So unfortunately if the situation gets worse in Jordan, a strong security environment will not be enough."*

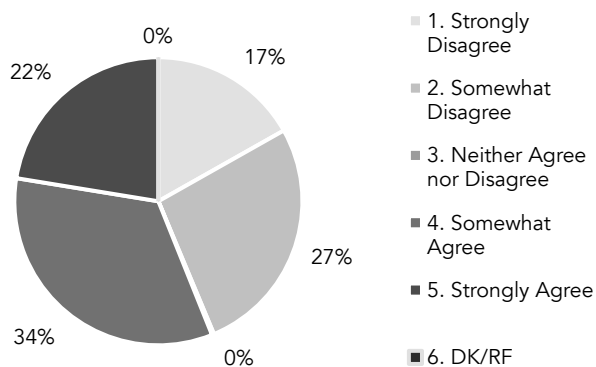
*(Male, 27 Student, Amman)*

**Most locals believe human rights are not observed, which has reduced confidence in the government.**

Many respondents maintained that civil rights are broadly respected in Amman and some believe that this is because the law itself is not subject to control by the central government and the judges who interpret it are thought to do so in an independent manner.<sup>160</sup> However, some believe that popular freedom of expression has suffered from recent government legislation, including the anti-terrorism laws of 2014, and that locals in their communities feel less able to influence government policy through protests or demonstrations than was the case prior to 2014. Some respondents also maintained that the central government frequently fails to respect

the human rights of citizens in their communities and cited examples of the arrest and incarceration of friends and family members. As a result, 56 percent of GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms, while a significant minority of 44 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 25). One respondent, a Salafist Jihadist whose brother was arrested and jailed for three years after being convicted of acting as a VEO recruiter, despite what he believed was a total lack of evidence, claimed that Salafist Jihadists are being unfairly and illegally targeted and that this is building up strong resentment against the central government. Failure to properly observe the civil rights of locals, especially Salafist Jihadists who already hold religious views with

Figure 25: To what extent do you agree that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms?



<sup>160</sup> "For civil rights the law is guaranteed, it is not the government that guarantees this, it is the law." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

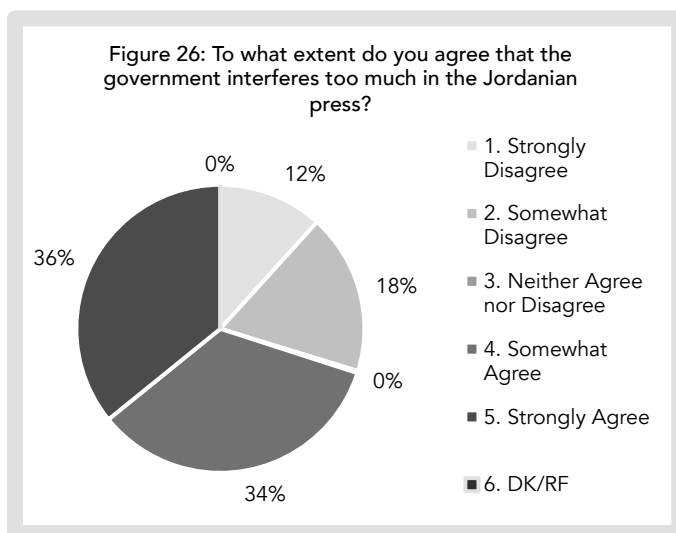
strong ideological similarities to VEOs, is creating frustration and anger that could push them toward VEO participation.<sup>161</sup>

*"There were many legal cases and 70 people were sentenced following [the murder of] Moath Al Kasasbeh. My brother, who sells honey and cheese, was arrested because of claims that he recruited young people for jihad. They couldn't find any evidence against him but they arrested him, telling him that many people call him to ask him about fatwas and Sharia laws. He told people he is not a Sharia expert and people still call him but he didn't do anything himself. By law, they shouldn't arrest him. He has done nothing but was sentenced for three years. Two people were arrested with him and one was sentenced to five years in jail and one for seven years."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

Concerns that press freedom is heavily constrained by central government legislation are widespread.

Most respondents reported that the central government constrains press freedom in Amman and that it is a source of frustration for locals. Several respondents identified the amendments made to the Press and Publications Law in 2012 as an example of central government interference in the free operation of the press, and stated that attempts by activists at the time to derail the amendments, including an Internet blackout, were unsuccessful. As a result, websites of Jordanian media outlets are now responsible for comments posted on their sites by third parties and their staff can face arrest if comments are posted that are critical of the monarchy or central government, causing all domestic news sites to disable comments on their pages.<sup>162</sup> This amendment, made in late 2012, was also strongly criticized by Freedom House, which argued that it went against a previous commitment to maintaining freedom of expression on the Internet in the country.<sup>163</sup> Accordingly, 70 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press, while 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 26).



<sup>161</sup> "There is injustice toward the Salafist Jihadists, they aren't doing anything in Jordan, they aren't active and the state is provoking them and pressuring them, which could only lead to an explosion." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>162</sup> Kuttub, Daoud 2016. 'Some Arab spring gains rolled back in Jordan', Huffington Post, March 14, 2016.

<sup>163</sup> Freedom House 2012. 'Amendments to law in Jordan restrict press, Internet freedom', Freedom House, August 27, 2012.

*"We don't have any freedom of expression. Jordanian media outlets usually have a website and the printed media is just four newspapers and the rest are online and this law says that if anyone comments on your website article in a way that is against the government or expresses anti-government sentiment, then your chief editor will be held accountable. So in 2012 we had an Internet blackout day to protest against this law but in the end the law was passed and all of the online outlets have no comment sections. This only applies to Jordanian media outlets."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

## 5.0 PSYCHOSOCIAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 5.1 LOCUS OF CONTROL

Most locals do not believe that the central government is responsive when they express their concerns and faith in the democratic process is low, which risks driving locals toward radicalization and VE.

The majority of respondents expressed concern that the central government does not listen to grievances voiced through demonstrations and protests, as a result of which 59 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to them, while 40 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 27). Some respondents referenced protests in the wake of the Arab Spring that called for political reforms but made the assessment that locals are more likely to take to the streets to oppose government actions that are expected to affect their standard of living. For instance, many respondents saw popular protests against an increase in fuel prices as the best example of such public expressions of anger and observed that public concerns were ignored as the price increase was implemented despite widespread dissatisfaction. In fact, protests against the reduction of government subsidies on fuel products posed a greater threat to the system than those held during the Arab Spring, reflecting the fact that many locals prioritize the cost of living over political reform. Nevertheless, the perceived deafness of the government to the views of locals is driving anger toward the political system and reinforces the perception that locals can no longer drive change in Jordan via traditional means such as protests.

Further, most locals lack faith in the democratic process and do not believe that participating in local or national elections will result in any desired changes being effected. Political parties are also felt to have limited influence over the actions of the central government and some respondents think that the influence of political parties has declined in recent years. Accordingly, 63 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that there is no point in voting, as it does not change anything, while 36 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 28). Several respondents also suspected that elections in Jordan are rigged in favor of pro-government candidates, which has been a

Figure 27: To what extent do you agree that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to you?

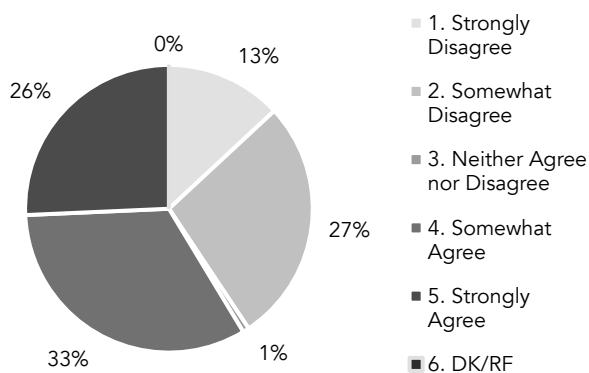
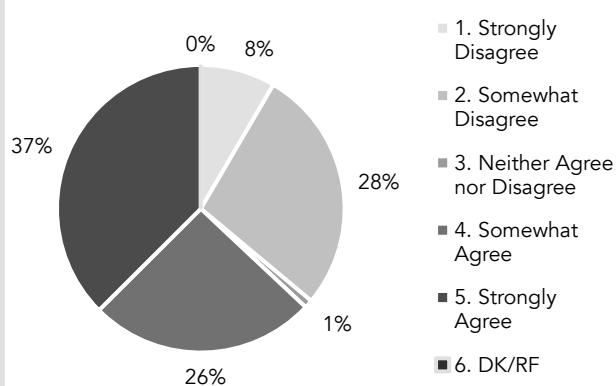


Figure 28: To what extent do you agree that you do not feel that there is a point in voting as it doesn't change anything?



refrain of prominent groups including the MB in past elections. Overall, there is a widespread belief among locals that genuine political freedom and open democracy is lacking in Jordan, which drives feelings of frustration and powerlessness. It may also be making segments of the population, particularly youths, more receptive to VE narratives that promise to empower the people at the expense of the state.

*"People in Amman think the government doesn't listen to them. At the start of the Arab spring there were a lot of demonstrations looking for reform and improving the economy for example fuel prices are very high so are electricity prices. Most of the time people demonstrate for basic things, which is reasonable, because even when oil prices in the market are decreasing fuel prices here are increasing."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

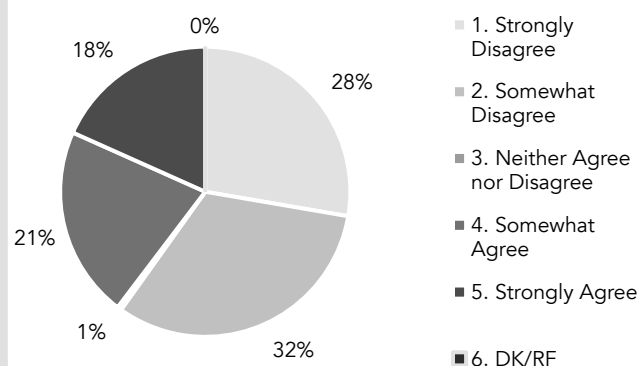
*"[VE] is spreading to the extent that people are not calling it extremism, especially when they see that there is no real freedom or democracy, that's when they shift to extremism. This extreme dialogue exists in my neighborhood."*

*(Male, 27, Student, Amman)*

A significant minority of locals feels estranged from their local communities, making some of them vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment into VEOs.

A considerable minority of respondents reported that they or many people in their communities do not feel socially engaged, and most see youths as the group most likely to feel distanced from their community. More specifically, youths can find traditional family housing arrangements to be constrictive and isolating, especially if they have not yet settled into employment or started a family. One respondent judged that this phase often ends around the age of 25 for young men in Jordanian society, when they can be seen to re-engage with their communities.<sup>164</sup> Accordingly, 60 percent of Amman GQ

Figure 29: To what extent do you agree that you do not feel part of your community?



<sup>164</sup> "I have seen that teenagers and those in their early 20's don't believe like they belong to their communities but something magical happens when they turn 25 and then they become much more involved and they start to practice things they were against when they were younger; it is just teenage rebellion. You find that most teenagers don't like their parents. People here, you can see that they are always looking to see how they can build their own communities like in Weibdeh, many people living here chose not to be with their families and wanted to be free to do what they want and not be restrained or stigmatized. So there is always a way to find your comfort zone within your community." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that they do not feel part of their community, 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 29). However, this feeling of estrangement increases the risk that locals, particularly male youths, will be drawn toward religiously radical groups like Salafist Jihadists or even to be attracted to VEOs in search of a sense of identity lacking in their day to day lives. For instance, respondents who have young male family members who joined VEOs in Syria identified the fact that they were shy or reclusive and short of friends in their neighborhoods as a key driver of their recruitment. They stressed that, in the absence of friends, these male youths spent most of their time with their families but that they would never discuss VEOs or plans to travel abroad to join these groups with family members, as they would most likely oppose such behavior, which highlights that youths in the process of radicalization often give no indication that they are considering VEO participation.

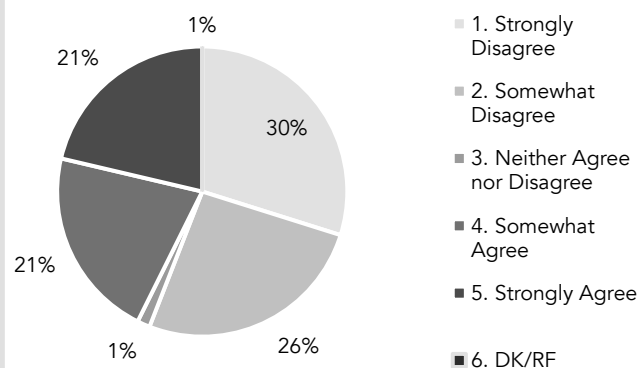
*"My brother is the eldest. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting in 2009. He was like any other guy his age. He wasn't very religious; he sometimes went to the mosque to pray but at times he would miss prayer as well. He was more of an introvert. He would sit at home, with his earphones on. He did not have any friends; he only had me and my uncle as his friends. There were no signs before he left."*

*(Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)*

### Traditional concepts of personal and family honor continue to have relevance for some locals.

Some respondents reported that traditional attitudes toward the honor of the individual and of the family persist in Jordanian society and can contribute to radical views on what is justifiable behavior. For instance, some believe that murder is an acceptable response if a family's honor has been compromised. In fact, 56 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that it is better to die in revenge than to live on in shame, while 42 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 30). In particular, the concept of dying in revenge rather than enduring shame is commonly associated with the importance of upholding traditional family or tribal honor and is often related to female relatives. One respondent explained that some locals continue to think that women that bring shame on their families, generally through pre-marital sexual relations, deserve to be killed. This is supported by the findings of a University of Cambridge study in 2013 which found that one third of teenagers in Amman, 44 percent of the boys and 22 percent of the girls surveyed, believed honor killings to be acceptable in some circumstances.<sup>165</sup> These

Figure 30: To what extent do you agree that it is better to die in revenge than to live on in shame?



<sup>165</sup> Smith-Spark, Laura 2013. 'Third of teens in Amman, Jordan, condone honor killings, study says', CNN, 10 June 2013.

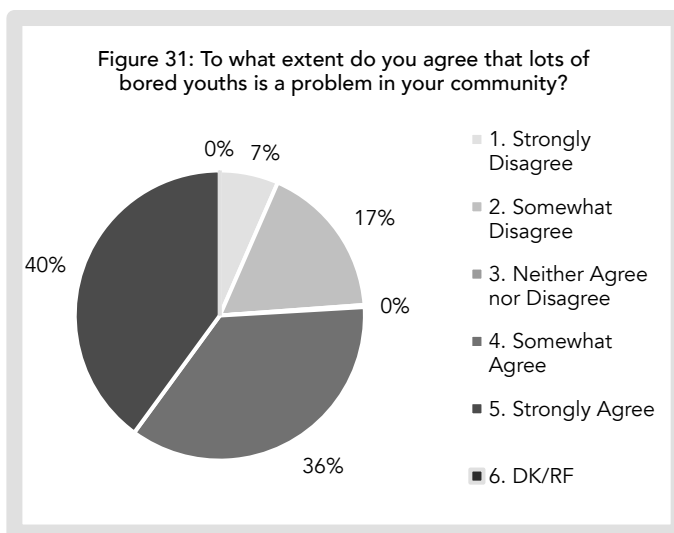
findings indicate that there is a tolerance in Amman for violent behavior including murder provided that it is considered socially justified. Crucially, this sentiment can be exploited by VEOs that play heavily thorough their videos on the idea that extreme violence can be religiously justified.

*"The idea of death rather than shame makes sense to me but it is mainly related to honor crimes rather than VE so if a woman has exposed the family to dishonor then she must die. It is about the culture and how people see things. A lot of people would agree with it but it doesn't mean anything beyond its traditional cultural significance."*

*(Female, 33, Researcher, Amman)*

**The many idle, male youths in Amman are viewed as more vulnerable to VEO recruitment than any other segment of society.**

Youth unemployment is a serious problem in many neighborhoods in Amman, which is pushing youths, particularly male youths,<sup>166</sup> toward socially deviant behavior including drug use and crime, and potentially increasing their susceptibility to VE narratives.<sup>167</sup> Unemployment was seen as the main reason for the high number of idle youths and 76 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that lots of bored youths is a problem in their community, while 24 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 31). Some respondents saw those between the ages of 18 and 25 as most at risk,<sup>168</sup> and generally believed that those male youths who have no outlet for their energies and no domestic responsibilities because they still live at home are most vulnerable to VEO recruitment.<sup>169</sup> In contrast, men with wives and children are seen as less likely to go abroad to fight,<sup>170</sup> although one respondent could name a personal friend who had joined JN despite



<sup>166</sup> "The group that is most at risk of extremism is the youth, that is 17-25 and of course male, I don't think we have many cases of females, or none actually." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>167</sup> "Drugs are a problem because youths are using them when they are bored or have nothing to do and no aims so it calms them down and makes them believe fine and happy or just sleep and do nothing, it is a form of escapism for them." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>168</sup> "The age range that is most at risk of radicalization is from 18 until 25 years old, and less than 30. The 20's is the most dangerous age group." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>169</sup> "Firstly, I think it's easier to influence someone when they are young, they do not have responsibilities to worry about, so they are willing to go if they are convinced by the idea." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>170</sup> "The lack of responsibility leads to VE, so someone that has children and a family they will not go to practice jihad." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)



being married and having young children.<sup>171</sup> Some reported that VEOs have been capitalizing on a desire among youths for respect and recognition by offering them the chance to be part of a structured organization.<sup>172</sup> Others pointed to VEOs playing on this desire for status by promoting the idea that recruits would be given positions of authority and responsibility for particular areas once they joined them in Syria,<sup>173</sup> all of which has allowed high youth unemployment in Jordan to work to the benefit of VEOs active in Syria.

Many respondents are therefore critical of the lack of clubs and activities available to unemployed youths, which could provide them with a greater sense of belonging to their communities and curb frustration at the difficulty in finding employment that might otherwise be harnessed by VEOs or those with radical religious views like Salafist Jihadists. For instance, one respondent acknowledged that civil society groups are doing a good job in trying to provide forums for debate so youths could become more socially and politically engaged, but complained that political parties are not proactive and should be doing more to engage youths and help them to constructively occupy their time.<sup>174</sup> The most active group in Amman is currently the MB, whose study centers and social activities do include sports, but their focus is also on religious development and there are concerns that these activities increase religiosity that makes youths more vulnerable to VEO messages, especially those focusing on the religious duty of jihad and of protecting other Muslims. A program of secular/non-religious youth activities would, therefore, likely provide a much-needed alternative.

*"That is common sense, the government should see what is missing and to provide that, so first employment opportunities and also social activities like athletic clubs, or open clubs for discussion and debate. I am not the one that should suggest a solution, the solution comes from specialized people, experts, but as I told you, providing job opportunities is first and foremost and then providing ways for people to live a dignified life, and enjoy freedoms, and participate in clubs, this is all positive and pulls people away from extremism."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

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<sup>171</sup> "One day, I received a message on Facebook from him asking me and another friend of ours to "please take care of my daughters, I have joined the jihad for the sake of Allah, and I don't think I will come back. I am completely convinced in what I am doing, I'm sure you will criticize me, but you will never neglect my daughters." He joined JN." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>172</sup> "When they go there (Syria) they will believe that they are an active part of this system which they have joined, so that's how they see themselves, that they take the chance or opportunity that they never had before, when they were poor, and in Syria they can become known and they can practice jihad, and people will respect them." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>173</sup> "Power- they promise youth power. You will have control over this area or that." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

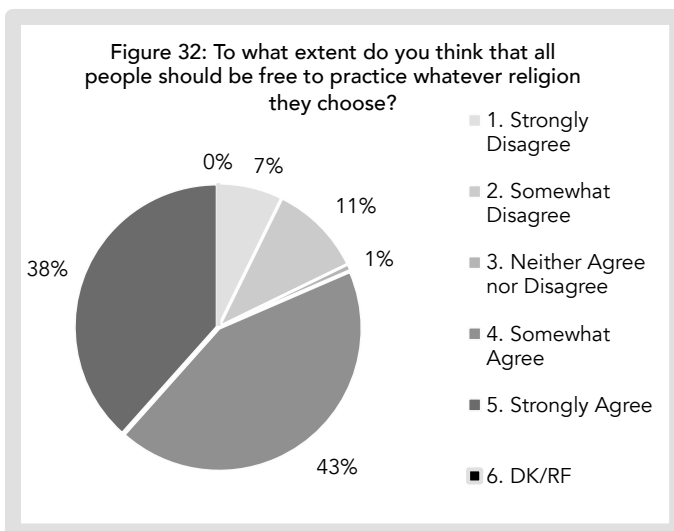
<sup>174</sup> "There are volunteering workshops being conducted by civil institutions, sometimes youths themselves organize volunteering groups in universities, some local organizations, some radio channels are doing initiatives for the youth. This gives space for youth to voice their opinions, which affects positively on the youth. The problem with political parties is that they don't have an open space for dialogue, which affects negatively on the youth." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

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## 5.2 RELIGIOUS VALUES, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

Some locals hold strongly conservative religious views that could be exploited by VEOs who use religion as their main route to appeal to locals.

The vast majority of respondents (81 percent) indicated that religious freedom in Jordan is important and that citizens should enjoy full freedom to practice their religion, while a minority (18 percent) disagreed (see Figure 32).<sup>175</sup> Many respondents further stated that they considered religion to be a personal choice rather than a societal issue.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, some opposed a society in which Muslims and Christians are integrated and mingle freely together, since a sizeable minority of respondents (32 percent) agreed that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims, while the majority (68 percent) disagreed (see Figure 33). Some respondents were fairly explicit that they viewed non-Muslims in their community, specifically Christians, as infidels. For instance, one respondent, who self-identified as a Salafist Jihadist, said that it is the duty of Muslims to convert unbelievers. Further, a significant minority of respondents (24 percent) disagreed that Islam does not allow the killing of other people, while the majority (67 percent) agreed (see Figure 34). This level of religious conservatism among segments of the population in Amman indicates that radical religious messaging can be particularly effective in building sympathy toward VEOs and potentially driving VEO recruitment in Amman.



*"Christians are infidels, it is our duty to call them to join Islam. They call us Salafist Jihadists, but we aren't calling people to join our group, we want people to join Islam in general."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

<sup>175</sup> "For me I want to live in a civilized country where everyone have the right to practice whatever religion they want to practice and be protected by the law." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>176</sup> "From a religious perspective we say "to each his own religion". (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

Figure 33: To what extent do you think that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims?

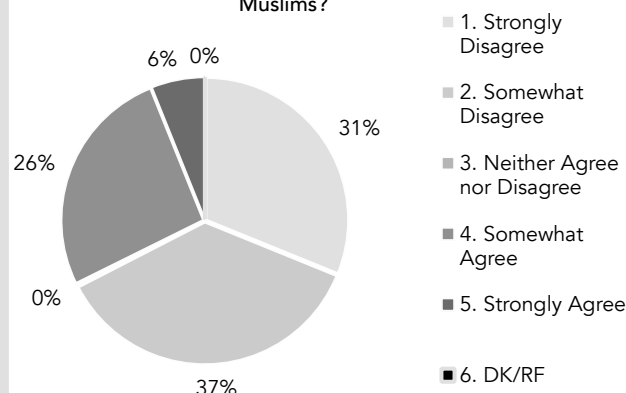
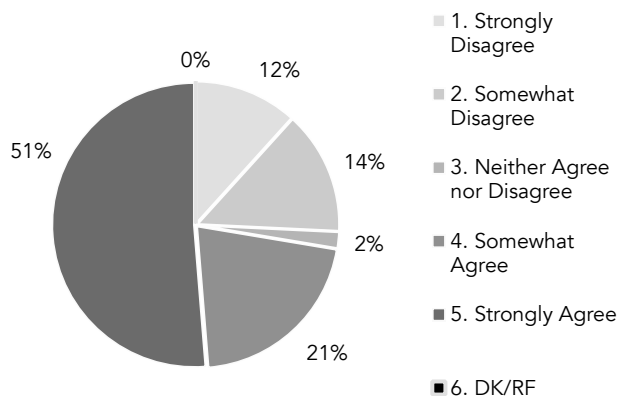


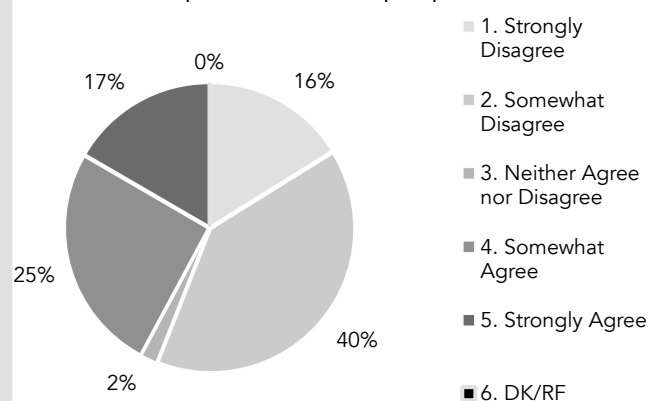
Figure 34: To what extent do you think that Islam does not allow the killing of other people?



### Most locals call for a greater role of Islam in the political system of Jordan.

The majority of respondents were in favor of religion playing a role in the way the country is governed and 56 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that religion and politics should be kept separate, while 42 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 35). The vast majority of Jordanians are Muslim and most are religious to some degree as can be seen from a 2012 Pew Research Center poll that found that 85 percent of Jordanians believe their religion is 'very important to them.'<sup>177</sup> As such, it is natural that the majority of locals would want religion to have a role in politics and there is evidence that King Abdullah is careful to be sensitive to this sentiment. The King is a Muslim and it is possible to see large posters depicting him praying in hoardings in Amman including one in the Downtown neighborhood, which serve to underline the link between the head of state and the religion of most locals. However, some respondents questioned whether popular desire to ensure religion plays a role in politics is solely indicative of a religiously conservative mindset among many locals. They observe that attitudes to the role of religion in government and the legal system could also reflect self-interest because significant elements of the Jordanian legal system are

Figure 35: To what extent do you think that religion and politics should be kept separate?



<sup>177</sup> Pew Research Center 2012. 'The world's Muslims: unity and diversity', Pew Research Center, August 09, 2012.

derived from the Qur'an and Islamic Sharia law including the laws governing inheritance.<sup>178</sup> Inheritance laws are prescribed under Islamic law and apportion the amount of the deceased's estate according to a formal structure whereby sons inherit twice the amount of daughters and children cannot be disinherited, as is possible under non-Islamic legal systems.<sup>179</sup> Although there are practicalities to the relationship between the system of government, the law, and religion, it is clear that religion is important to many locals and some respondents even believed that many naturally agree with certain concepts such as that of a state governed according to Islamic principles. Many locals can thus be receptive of certain principles professed by VEOs, particularly ISIS, even if they do not agree with them or their actions, and as such VEOs and radical religious groups might have success building a support base that will yield recruits in time if they focus their messages on religious topics that appeal to locals.

*"Ask any Muslim in the street do you wish that there is an Islamic state, and he doesn't have to be a Salafist, he will answer yes, because this exists in the subconscious mind, ask any Muslim, are you against the Islamic state, he will say he is with it."*

*(Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)*

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<sup>178</sup> "I think this is to do with those laws that are related to personal affairs, marriage, divorce and inheritance because those laws are still based on the Islamic Sharia not international law." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>179</sup> "I also want better inheritance laws that don't follow the Islamic Sharia as when it comes to inheritance in Islam men inherit twice as much as women." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

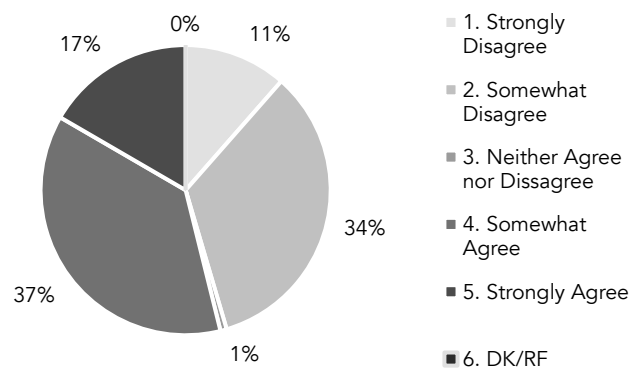
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### 5.3 EXPOSURE TO CRIME AND CONFLICT

Crime is a concern for many locals, with burglary identified as a leading problem in Amman.

Many respondents reported that serious crime is not a problem in their communities, however many also believe that Amman has the highest crime rate in the country and specific crimes including burglary from residential buildings are commonplace. Accordingly, 54 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that crime is a problem in their community, while 45 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 36). Nevertheless, violent crime and street crime like robbery and assault are thought to be rare and some respondents stressed that they feel safe walking in the streets in any neighborhood. So while a majority of respondents see crime as a problem, the vast majority of locals have not actually been affected by it and their views of crime reflect a general feeling as to how frequently crimes are committed in the city. In fact, 84 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that they or their family members have not suffered directly from crime, while 16 percent reported that they had (see Figure 37).

Figure 36: To what extent do you agree that crime is a problem in your community?



*"Amman has the highest level of crime in Jordan but it happens at night mainly and is burglary of houses not robbery in streets or violent crime so people believe safe on streets. Burglary is higher here than elsewhere in Jordan. The reason for the burglary problem is that there is no tribal system here and people don't know each other, people don't know their neighbors. It's a big city."*

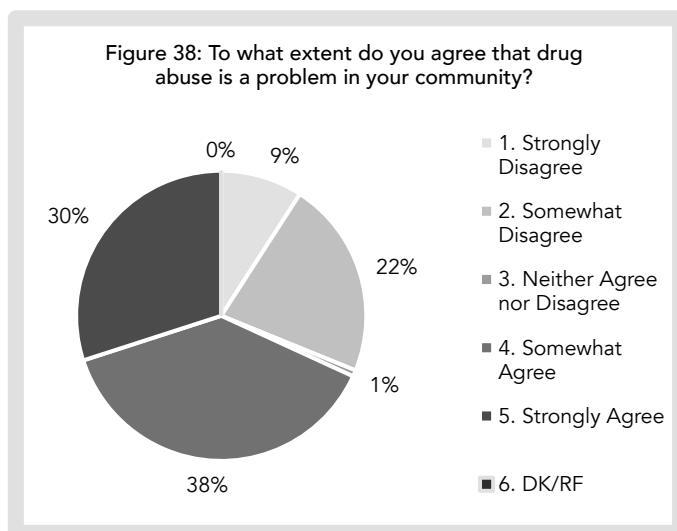
*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

Figure 37: Have you or your family directly suffered from crime?



Drug abuse is widespread in Amman and considered a major problem, particularly among youths.

The majority of respondents reported that drug abuse is a serious issue in Amman and is not limited to any specific location, although the type of narcotics consumed can vary depending on the user's age and socio-economic circumstances. As a result, 68 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that drug abuse is a problem in their community, while 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 38). Several respondents stated that illegal drugs that can be obtained in Amman include hashish, cocaine, heroin, the amphetamine Captagon, and joker. Many Amman locals are particularly concerned about the effects on



users of joker, a highly addictive synthetic cannabis that is locally manufactured in Amman,<sup>180</sup> and is currently the target of a central government campaign to make users aware of the health risks related to smoking it.<sup>181</sup> One respondent described how children in Amman, some as young as nine years old, are also taking cough medicine and abusing solvents recreationally, before moving on to harder drugs as they get older, with universities a focal point of drug use. The presence of drug dealers and the availability of large amounts of illegal substances has also been confirmed by the considerable quantities of drugs confiscated in raids in various locations in Amman by the Jordanian Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) in the last two years. Drugs seized included 3,000 bags of joker in East Amman in February 2014,<sup>182</sup> 130 bags of hashish in South Amman in April 2015, and a haul of kilograms of joker and hashish as well as 11,000 pills confiscated in a series of raids in East Amman in December 2015.<sup>183</sup> Drug abuse is not only damaging to the health of users but can also lead them toward involvement in petty crime, especially burglary, and increases the chance that users will be arrested and incarcerated, where they may be radicalized by fellow inmates who hold radical religious viewpoints like Salafist Jihadists, which can potentially lead to VEO sympathies and/or membership.

*"Drugs are a problem here especially among youth from East Amman where it is a major problem because they don't use safe drugs. When they are nine to twelve years old they sniff glue or take cough medicine because it is cheap. When they are at university they have more money and they*

<sup>180</sup> Hussein, Rana 2014, 'Five suspects detained for 'involvement in drug making' ', Jordan Times, February 22, 2014.

<sup>181</sup> "Joker is a big problem, it is made from plants sprayed with insecticide then dried and smoked, it is now highlighted as a dangerous drug in Jordan and people get addicted from the first cigarette. The government is campaigning against it." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>182</sup> Petra News 2015. '130 Hashish Bags seized, 4 Apprehended: PSD', Petra News, April 08, 2015.

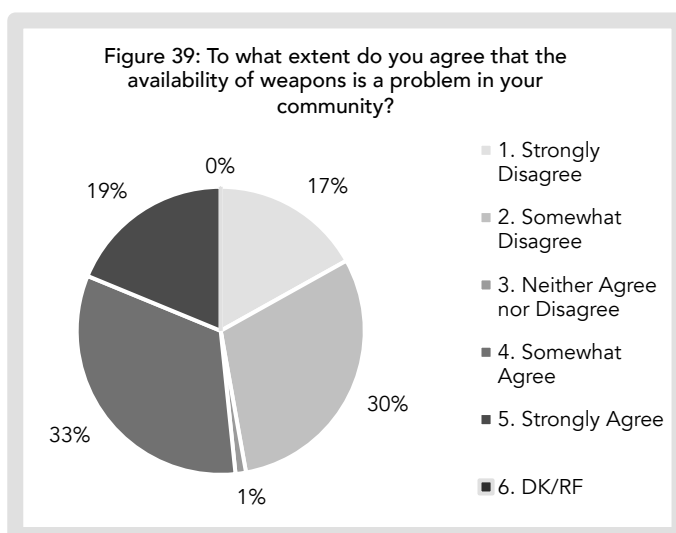
<sup>183</sup> Jordan Times 2015. '16 arrested in East Amman raids', Jordan Times, December 27, 2015.

*have more access to drugs so you have Captagon and Joker and it is cheap as well so you don't need too much money to buy it. If you go to West Amman you find more expensive drugs like heroin and cocaine."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

Weapon ownership is commonplace in Amman, although it is regulated by the central government.

Most respondents (52 percent) reported that the availability of weapons is a problem in their communities (see Figure 39), including ownership of legal and some illegal firearms,<sup>184</sup> highlighting that several weapons dealers have been arrested in Amman between early 2014 and early 2016.<sup>185</sup> However, many respondents (47 percent) disagreed, explaining that the central government regulates sales and demands licenses (see Figure 39).<sup>186</sup> Weapons are more common in areas with a high proportion of locals from East Bank tribal groups, who historically have higher levels of firearm ownership than non-tribal Jordanians. Weapons are most visible at weddings, where they are fired into the air in celebration, but the central government has clamped down on this practice since 2010, when it was made illegal, as accidental injuries were frequent.<sup>187</sup> Fines and jail time for the wedding organizer enforce the ban,<sup>188</sup> and now locals use fireworks to celebrate rather than gunfire.<sup>189</sup>



<sup>184</sup> Hussein, Rana 2014. 'Drug, weapons dealer apprehended in Amman', Jordan Times, August 07, 2014.

<sup>185</sup> Jordan Times 2015. 'Three suspects arrested in Amman in alleged weapons dealing case', Jordan Times, May 06, 2015.

<sup>186</sup> "Weapons are not a problem in Amman because there are no tribes and the tribes are closely linked to weapons, plus many in Amman are West Bank Jordanians and they can't get a license. To get a gun license you need a specific reasons, so, for example, a shop owners could get a gun but there are guidelines so they are only supposed to shoot at the legs of robbers not to try and kill them." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>187</sup> "Many accidents happened in Jordan not only in Amman because of people using weapons during weddings and stray bullets cause death or serious injury among the wedding guests or people in the neighborhood, and now people become more sensitive about this and as soon as they go to wedding and start to hear the noise of bullets they start to complain and asked them to stop it. Now the police forces started a campaign telling people not to shoot during weddings and it look like it works, people are now using fireworks instead." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>188</sup> Ma'ayeh, Suha 2010. 'Jordan to enforce 'happy shooting' ban', National, August 19, 2010.

<sup>189</sup> "The wedding tradition of shooting in the air was normal but is now forbidden in Amman and only fireworks can be used. There are fines for using weapons like this and the wedding organizer can go to jail, according to new

However, some alleged that locals of West Bank origins, who make up a large proportion of locals, are rarely issued licenses, although one respondent refuted this, and reported that licenses were not too hard to obtain for all citizens, regardless of their family background. Concern about the availability of weapons is mainly related to fears about crime, lawlessness, and the danger of injuries to bystanders, rather than concerns that firearms might be used in acts of terrorism.

*"It is easy to get a weapon here in Jordan but you need to have a legal permit. It is not hard to get a permit for your weapon anywhere in Jordan not just Amman, and the police always encourage people to have legal permits for weapons. In Amman most of those who live in the center are originally Palestinian and they must get a permit if they don't want to be in trouble, for examples most of the shops that open during the night their owners have a legal weapon since they can use it if there is a robbery. There are those who might use a weapon for illegal purposes such as gangsters who would definitely not have a permit. In the far west of Amman we know that a lot of Jordanian tribe members particularly in the Lubban area don't have permits for their weapons especially as some of them are drug dealers. So basically there are a lot of people who have weapons but they only appear at certain times like fights or weddings."*

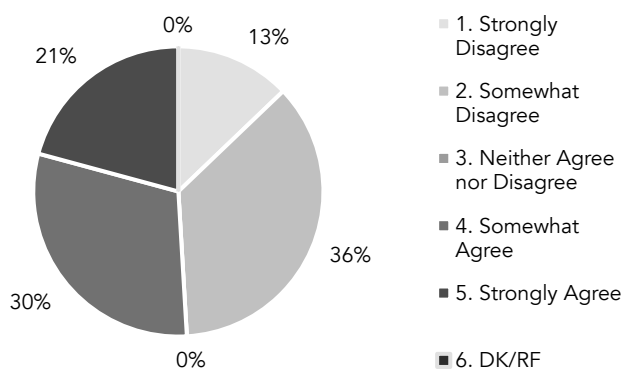
*(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)*

Tribal inequality is a source of concern and resentment, mainly because the central government is accused of favoring East Bank over West Bank Jordanian tribes.

The majority of respondents (51 percent) disagreed that inter-tribal conflict is an issue in Amman, although many (49 percent) do believe that some tribes are favored over others and that this can cause resentment and even lead to sporadic violence (see Figure 40). These findings can be partially explained by the fact that tribal membership is limited to the East Bank Jordanian community and that a majority of respondents are of West Bank origins so would not necessarily have personal experience of or knowledge about tribal disagreements and inequality in Amman. However, some respondents acknowledged that there have been a number of incidents of violence

between tribes on university campuses in the city, which mostly resulted from disagreements between individual youths that escalated as family members became involved and which were sometimes exaggerated by the media. In general, such incidents were dismissed as isolated, also because there are fewer concentrations of individuals from East Bank tribes in the central districts of the city or the suburbs.

Figure 40: To what extent do you agree that inequality between tribes is a problem in Jordan?



regulations. Other areas in Jordan especially the tribal ones are also cutting down on this."(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)



One respondent identified Wadi Essier and Sahab, which is home to members of the Abu Zeid tribe, as residential areas with large tribal populations but did not believe that there had been any specific instance of inter-tribal conflict or resentment in these locations in the recent past.<sup>190</sup>

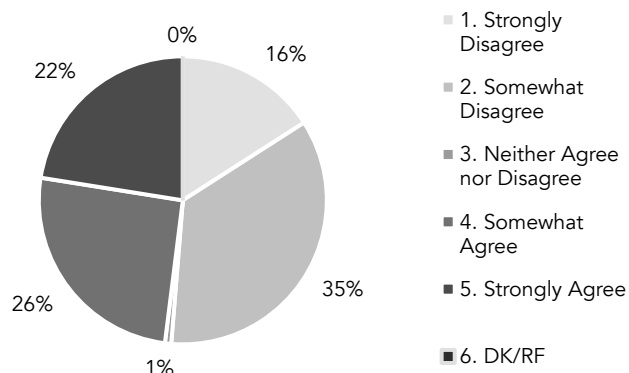
*"Honestly I don't believe that there are tribal conflicts, yes we have tribal fights in universities, but those are between normal students and later on they start to call their relatives and friends to support them in the fight and this leads people to call it a tribal fight when actually it is just a normal fight. For example a lot of news outlets started to report on tribal fights in universities during the university elections because tribal and political parties were fighting and the fights started as soon as they showed the results of the elections."*

*(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)*

**East and West Bank communities coexist without any reports of friction but many believe that the political system favors of East Bank Jordanians.**

Most respondents (51 percent) rejected that there is significant inequality or friction between East and West Bank Jordanians in Amman, or that West bank Jordanians are discriminated against in their neighborhoods, although many respondents (48 percent) disagreed (see Figure 41). Many reported that Jordanian citizens of East and West Bank origins are well integrated in Amman and that, although West Bank Jordanians are the overwhelming majority in certain areas like Wehdat, and East Bank Jordanians in parts of South Amman and suburbs like Marka,<sup>191</sup> most parts of the city are a mixture of East and West Bank locals. Some respondents observed that both groups mix with one another and frequently intermarry and that, although locals are aware of whether individuals are of East or West Bank heritage, this did not affect their behavior toward one another.<sup>192</sup> Locals who have joined VEOs have been from both the East and West Bank communities, this sense of inequality can

Figure 41: To what extent do you agree that inequality between East and West Bank Jordanians is a problem in Jordan?



<sup>190</sup> "There are some tribal areas e.g. Wadi As Seer, which was a pure East Bank area but now it is a more mixed area in West Amman and land prices are high so they have been selling it for development. Also the Sahab area has many people from the Abu Zeid tribe and a few Palestinians." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>191</sup> "Those talking about tribes are mostly from areas in South Amman where most of the people are Trans-Jordanian like Naour, Sahab, Rujm Alshami, Aljeezah and Hussban. There are also some similar neighborhoods in areas in Wadi Al Sier and in the Jama'ah area of Sweileh." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>192</sup> "No there is no conflict, the groups mix together and marry into the other group and there are no hard feelings, we help each other and we are all Jordanian at the end. People do distinguish between Jordanian and Palestinian but they don't treat people differently." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

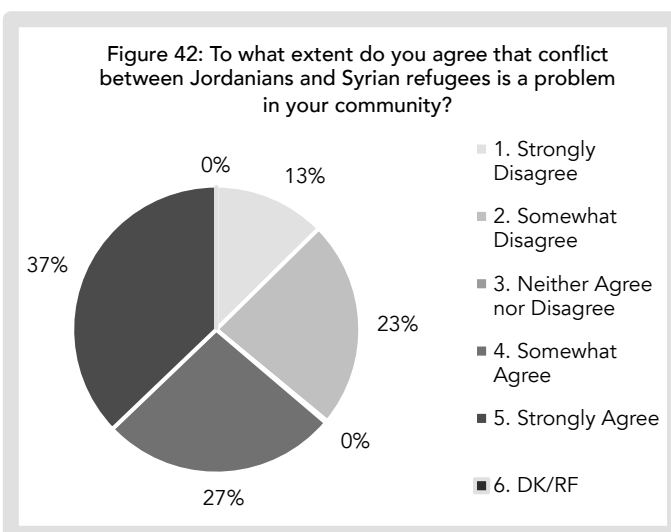
breed resentment among potential recruits from both backgrounds that VEOs can exploit, although by appealing to one group at the expense of the other they risk alienating the other half of Jordanian society.

*"There is equality in the civil service and the JAF and West Bank Jordanians hold some high ranks in the JAF. The Palestinians still prefer to be dominant in the private sector than to be working in the government sector and some East Bankers believe that the West Bank Jordanians do too well from the private sector but there are benefits to working in the public sector, not a high salary but you can guarantee that you will have health security and a pension."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

There is little open conflict between Jordanians and Syrian refugees but there is a growing perception that refugees are not welcome and being blamed for putting pressure on local services.

Locals increasingly view Syrian refugees in a negative light as sympathy for their difficult situation and for the Syrians affected by the conflict in general has given way to the feeling that they have overstayed their welcome after five years. Accordingly, 64 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that conflict between Jordanians and Syrian refugees is a problem in their community, while 36 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 42). In particular, tensions are increasing between refugees and host communities because of the strain that they are thought to be putting on the local infrastructure and services, although refugees are seen as less of an issue in Amman than in other areas of the country, given the city's size. Some respondents maintained that Syrian refugees are benefiting unduly both from the hospitality and sympathy of Jordanian host communities as well as enjoying a lifestyle and economic situation that is better than that of locals, since they are seen to be receiving both money and other benefits from international donors, which locals do not have access to.<sup>193</sup> Anger toward Syrian refugees can also manifest as anger toward the Assad Regime, which is seen to be responsible for their presence in Jordan, and which VEOs have used to reinforce propaganda portraying themselves as opponents of this regime, also to attract recruits in Amman.



*"It is not such an issue in Amman but in other places you can find conflict between locals and refugees as people think Syrians are taking their money and jobs and that money is coming to*

<sup>193</sup> "The refugee situation has had a definite economic impact. Jordan is a country with limited resources, when large numbers enter the country, this will have an impact." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

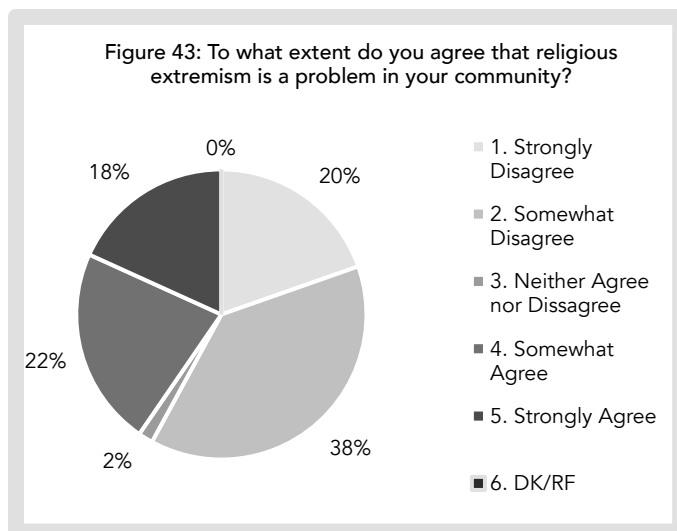
*refugees not to Jordanians. Many Syrian refugees and camps are in poverty pockets in Jordan but no money is going to poor host communities. Despite these problems ultimately I believe Jordanians are sympathetic toward Syrians."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

## 5.1 EXPOSURE TO VE AND PERCEPTIONS OF VEO THREAT

A sizeable minority believes that religious extremism is an issue in Amman and sees the spread of Salafism as evidence that it is increasing.

Although the majority of respondents (58 percent) do not consider religious extremism to be a problem in their communities,<sup>194</sup> a sizeable minority (40 percent) expressed disquiet that it is widespread in certain neighborhoods in the city, including the Wehdat area (see Figure 43). Many referred to a perceived increase in the number of Salafists in their neighborhoods as evidence of a worrying growth in radical religious beliefs among locals. Many locals view Salafist Jihadists with suspicion.<sup>195</sup> They are blamed for targeting youths, accused of radicalizing observant and moderate adult Muslims using religious arguments, and are seen as a stepping-stone to VEO participation,<sup>196</sup> as a result of which many locals are deeply concerned.<sup>197</sup> Areas where religious extremism is most visible are usually also economically deprived,<sup>198</sup> and signs of such extremism include increased religiosity and belief in Salafist Jihadist concepts, including martyrdom.<sup>199</sup> However, most observant locals remain religiously moderate,<sup>200</sup> and some contrast the perceived absence of religious extremism and VEO



<sup>194</sup> "No, VE is not a real problem, it's not widespread, and you can't believe that it is a problem. I mean that this problem is not present here in Jordan and we do not have clear cases of extremism." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>195</sup> "Extremist groups are not present in my area, but as far as I know, generally speaking that is, Salafist Jihadists are the ones that are most accepting toward extremism." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>196</sup> "Now for instance you can ask any stranger in the street about his opinion on apostasy and he'll reply without hesitancy that it is a religious duty, that means killing whoever converts to another religion! Or ask a complete stranger about his opinion in Ibn Taymiyyah, he'll directly says of course he's the Sheikh of Islam." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>197</sup> "Part of this is that this age group (10 to 18 years old) doesn't receive much attention from their families. Maybe some of the older members fought in Iraq or Syria, but in the end the link is a religious one, not an economic or sexual or racial or linguistic one, it's about ideas, and these are easy to spread. They pick it up at a young age and grow with it." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>198</sup> "What happens is that a regular Muslim meets a Salafist Jihadist and thinks he has found someone who speaks about true Islam, which is what he is looking for. If you sit with someone he will tell you I only pray, but when he sits with a Salafist Jihadist he will persuade and convince him of many things and he can explain that killing someone is religiously acceptable and they may be convinced. So if someone asks why did you kill a civilian, he says this civilian cooperated with the regime and so on." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>199</sup> "In the afterlife they think they will have all the virgins." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>200</sup> "If a mosque Imam suggests something that is moderate, this mosque will become a place against extremism, and people that go to this mosque, especially youth, will also be against extremism because this is the mosque leader, it

support in Amman with other parts of the country that are perceived to have a problem with religious and violent extremism, such as Zarqa,<sup>201</sup> and Salt.<sup>202</sup>

*"VE is a very serious problem in my community. I'm not sure about ISIS, but when you look at the supporters of Salafist Jihadists, you'll find most of them are from refugee camps and the poorest areas, like Zarqa and other governorates, why is that? It's because this ideology would never grow except in an environment that is in need, as long as there is poverty and vulnerability, and as long as there is an educational program that is weak, as long as the state keeps implementing an approach of making people more poor and uneducated, those poor societies will become more supportive of such extremist thoughts."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

The loss of a friend or family member to VE has a profound impact on the emotional and financial situation of family members.

Several respondents had been personally affected by VE in their communities through having a family member or a friend leave to join a VEO in Syria or Iraq. All of the VEO participants of whom respondents were personally aware were male youths, with the exception of one respondent's father who is believed to be over 50 years old. In every instance the departure of the VEO member had caused deep concern and disquiet within their families, and none was comfortable with the participation of a relative in a VEO.<sup>203</sup> The departure of a male relative is not only a shocking event but can also leave relatives without a breadwinner and unable to provide for themselves and other dependents.<sup>204</sup> However, these respondents were in the minority, as 86 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that they or their family members had not suffered directly from VE, while 14 percent reported that they had (see Figure 44). All respondents who had experience of a male relative leaving to fight for a VEO stated that they and their families had suffered from emotional trauma, including one respondent who was the mother of a young man from the Hay Nazzal area who was killed fighting for JN in Syria.

*"He asked him to tell us that he was going to be a martyr and to join jihad, and he hung up. My father then came and told us, and everyone at the house knew. It became very chaotic, I don't even*

*makes people more aware, and people are comfortable with moderate religious speeches."* (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>201</sup> "In East Amman Nazzal village has this kind of issue [VE] and also in [refugee] camps you can find this [VE] dialogue. It is not well publicized but you can find it around you if you put yourself among people who are more radical." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>202</sup> "We do not have much VE here in Amman, more in other areas like Zarqa and Salt." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>203</sup> "He surprised us, we didn't see that in him, he looked normal just like you, this happened to him in a night, and after that in our messages he surprised me by saying that he has a duty to go out there, to take a stand, to help, we told him to come back he said he won't." (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>204</sup> "His mother is still in shock, she only has two sons, him and another 17 years old so he is not able to contribute to the family yet, so this son of hers was the only source of income to the house. She says that some good people help her, but I don't know whom exactly. His wife and two daughters are still living with his mother." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

*remember what I did at that point. I yelled, I went down to the street to look for his car to see if he had come home. My mother had a breakdown. Me and my father were lost, we did not know what had happened, or what to do."*

*(Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)*

Figure 44: Have you or your family directly suffered from VE?



While martyrdom celebrations do take place in Amman, they do not reflect an endorsement of the deceased's VEO participation.

Respondents acknowledged that martyrdom celebrations are often well attended but most maintained that this is because the vast majority of attendees go solely to express their condolences toward the family of the deceased VEO members, much as they would had they not been killed fighting in Syria or Iraq, and that their presence should not be considered an endorsement of VEO participation.<sup>205</sup> Most locals are opposed to male youths from their communities going to fight abroad,<sup>206</sup> and some expressed skepticism about the impact that untrained youths could make on the battlefield, explaining that it was no surprise they were killed.<sup>207</sup> Some locals have tried to persuade VEO members from their communities to return before they were killed or injured and others expressed hopes for the safety of VEO participants.<sup>208</sup> Some even went as far as to state that they would never attend the funeral of someone

<sup>205</sup> "The people embrace those who die fighting and we've seen a lot of funerals for those who were killed in Syria, they call them martyrs." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>206</sup> "From what I sensed, more than 90 percent of the people say that the ones who go are mentally disturbed or wrong, they don't say it is right, either that each one has a problem or an economic burden that he wants to escape from." (Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)

<sup>207</sup> "It is clear that The people in Hashmi are satisfied with what has happened to people who went to fight abroad because when the news comes that one of them is dead, they say well you allowed people to go and fight, and they don't have any military experience, and have no idea what it's like really on the ground, so it is no surprise that they get killed. They are easily killed." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>208</sup> "One guy, a normal guy, went to fight from Hashmi. He was 22 and he had no job, he had graduated from university then he went to Turkey and we were surprised to find out that he was with the armed groups in Syria, and

who was killed fighting for a VEO because they disagreed so strongly with their actions, even those of close friends in some instances.<sup>209</sup> Those who genuinely celebrate the deaths of VEO participants are usually religious extremists or family members wishing to give their relatives' deaths meaning.<sup>210</sup> Salafist Jihadists also often attend funerals of young locals who died in Syria and take the view that they are martyrs for a religious cause.<sup>211</sup>

*"The people just say that they ruined their life and destroyed their future, and may they rest in peace, and they join the funeral. Some people call them martyrs, and some people say that this person went to be involved in the killing of Muslims by one another, and those that kill receive their punishment in hell, this is of course also a view that is held by some."*

*(Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)*

**The families of potential VEO members are generally a barrier to recruitment and participation but in most cases cannot ultimately prevent it.**

Respondents generally see the family unit as a barrier rather than a gateway to VEO participation and reported that in most cases individuals who leave to fight abroad did not inform their family members until they were already either inside Syria or close to the border. Respondents were doubtful that youths would even be able to tell their families that they were leaving without them trying to prevent it, possibly by informing the security forces that would then detain them, largely because VEO participation is strongly associated with the likely death of a family member.<sup>212</sup> However, some reported isolated incidents where family members had actively encouraged relatives to travel abroad to fight or stated that they did not know of any occasions when family members had successfully prevented an individual joining

he joined JN. He used to upload pictures onto his Facebook account before battles and other people would share it. He would be dressed in a military outfit, with his weapon. Some people would say, "may God make you succeed" but most would say, "may God protect you", because they knew the end result, that they would lose this person, and some people would tell him to return." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>209</sup> "I really loved jihad, but unfortunately I couldn't go to his funeral, because that's against my beliefs to go and show sympathy for someone who is participating in destroying an Arab state, although he doesn't know it, he was tricked." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>210</sup> "I didn't see any declaration in our society encouraging people to go but in some cases when a certain person goes and dies there, their family believe proud and happy that he was a martyr. There's a sectarian and ideological view. This thinking exists. I saw that with a certain family when their son died inside Syria, they were happy about it. Most of them would support [family members] if they went there to fight and especially after they died they would be happy about it." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>211</sup> "Abdurrahman's mother was saddened by his death fighting for ISIS but he is a hero for her. As for the surrounding people, those who understood politics hated him and he think he died for nothing. As for the religious ones he is a hero. For Salafists he is a hero." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>212</sup> "Maybe his parents knew at that time that he was leaving, but they said they found out afterwards. Such people do not make public that they are going because of course no one will go to their own family and say "I'm going to Syria" and expect them to respond "may God be with you" I think that is nearly impossible to find. It is also possible that the family themselves would notify the authorities or try and forbid them from leaving as usually the parents forbid their children from leaving to do something like this. He was not a Salafist but he was religiously conservative." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

a VEO.<sup>213</sup> In a notable example, one respondent knew a young man from the city who went to fight in Syria said that his family had encouraged him to go there because they believed that he did not have anything to do at home and lacked a sense of purpose.<sup>214</sup> In addition to close family, the friends of potential VEO members also represent a possible barrier to recruitment, which suggests that any campaigns against VEO participation that seek to influence those closest to potential recruits to prevent them joining a VEO abroad should focus not just on the families of vulnerable people but also their friends.<sup>215</sup> However, the broad consensus was that ultimately no amount of effort by friends or family would be able to dissuade someone from joining a VEO if they were determined to do so,<sup>216</sup> and that only the central government's security apparatus could physically prevent VEO participation.<sup>217</sup>

*"If they knew that he was going to Syria, then the father is the one responsible, and the mother, but if they didn't know how can they be considered responsible? I was surprised that my son went to Syria. I didn't know anything and found out the news like everyone else. We lost contact with him for two to three days and then three to four days later we knew he was in Turkey, he told us that he arrived in Egypt but later we knew that he was in Turkey. After a week he was in Syria. He didn't call me, I don't know where he went, how could I take responsibility? He is responsible for himself. I knew he participated in protests but didn't know that he would go to Syria although we were like friends."*

*(Male, 52, Carpenter, Amman)*

**VEO participants are not well regarded and the majority of locals support the central government in incarcerating them on their return to Jordan.**

In the past, former VEO members are often celebrated by their communities on their return and one respondent recalled that he had seen fighters returning from Iraq as heroes when he was younger and that they were still being idolized by the younger generation, increasing the chance that they will see VEO

<sup>213</sup> "I have never heard of families forbidding their children from going to Syria." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>214</sup> "I knew a person who wanted to go fight since the beginning of the Arab Spring, and unfortunately his family and friends encouraged him to go fight because they believed it was better for him to go, since he had no real sense of purpose here." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>215</sup> "I knew a friend who was planning on joining a certain group their but his family stopped him at the last moment, but still I don't think that this is the only issue here. I believe that friends of the same age group have more impact on having a healthy dialogue and for really stopping their friend from doing such a thing in a longer run, not only logistically. Since family members are of a different age group, friends of the same age group may trust each other more and confide in them and encourage them to change their radical thoughts." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

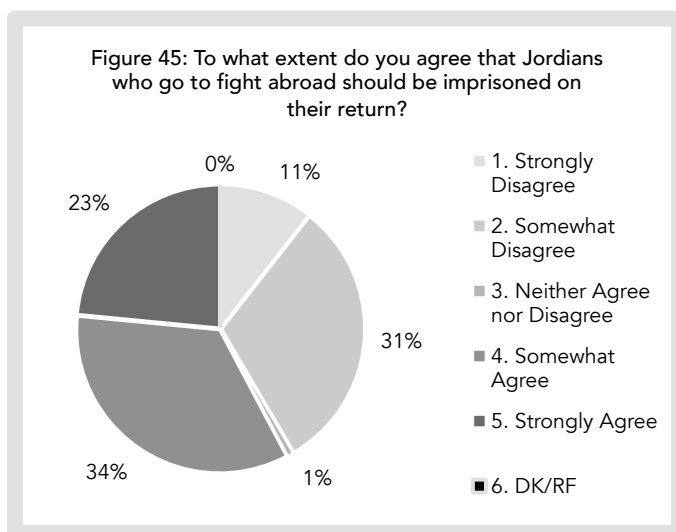
<sup>216</sup> "I believe that families have a role, but I think that in the end it's completely a personal choice. My father made a personal choice, which he made as a result of his readings and understanding and he was not influenced by friends or family." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>217</sup> "Nothing can stop him, unless they were hesitant to begin with, but I don't think that someone wanted to leave and then came back with a different goal, I don't think so, unless they changed their conviction or something particular made them hesitant, otherwise what can prevent him? Only the security apparatus, but for him to change from the inside? No, this doesn't work." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)



participation as glamorous and look to travel abroad to fight when they are older.<sup>218</sup> In contrast, many reported that those who went abroad to fight more recently were not well regarded in their communities of origin and one respondent stated that many locals that he had spoken with had assumed that VEO participants must have mental illnesses or else be trying to escape poverty to take such a course of action. Several respondents confirmed that few believed that it was the right thing to do.<sup>219</sup>

However, for many respondents, incarceration is not believed to be the answer to VEO participation, as a result of which views were mixed. While most respondents (57 percent) supported the government program of incarcerating returning VEO members, arguing that they constitute a clear threat to Jordanian national security, many (42 percent) disagreed (see Figure 45).<sup>220</sup> Some were emphatic that Jordanians who fight abroad should not be imprisoned or stigmatized on their return, with several pointing to the example of those who fought in Afghanistan in the 1980's and 1990s and in Iraq after 2003, but who were subsequently able to re-integrate into society.<sup>221</sup> The central government is feared to be causing resentment and failing to respect the human rights of its citizens who fought abroad, and who ultimately maintained ties to their communities even if few endorsed their behavior.<sup>222</sup> In the absence of rehabilitation programs, there is a risk that former VEO members will retain their extreme views once they leave prison, ensuring that the problem of VEO ideology will outlive the groups themselves if their bases in Syria and Iraq are overrun.



*"Terrorism is becoming a threat, every time the Syrian JAF advances toward the southern borders, toward Jordan, the state here panics. Those terrorists who went to Syria from all over the world*

<sup>218</sup> I had friends whose names I can't mention, that went to Iraq and came back and they were celebrated. I used to be happy when I sat with them, that I'm sitting with heroes, they have history as heroes, they have fatwas to kill and mutilate, like the incident of martyr Moath Kasasbeh, in the video, there was a fatwa about Ibn Tammiyah in the video." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

<sup>219</sup> "This issue differs among people, some people see the mujahideen as fighting for the good of the Islamic people, and on the other hand some...might think that this person is wrong and there is no use their being in these groups, so it differs in Jordanian society." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>220</sup> "We have the Security Directorate, the prisons for these people [returning fighters], many people have been put away and if they (the security services) think that you have been with JN, you will get sentenced to three years [in jail]...for affiliation with Daesh you will get a nine year sentence." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>221</sup> "[Some people believed the situation should be similar to] what happened in Iraq, when many people left to fight yet they returned back once everything was made clear." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>222</sup> "Many people came back from Syria and were imprisoned, and some returned and were interrogated and let go. They should respect the people here, and their human rights." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

*constitute a threat against Jordan. Those terrorists who were originally normal people, such as my friend, if they came back to Jordan, they would be a real threat toward this country, not to mention the problems that already exist in Jordan like poverty, corruption and the negative aspects of tribalism. Also, when someone is prevented from giving their opinion or doing anything that allows them to achieve their dreams, then they would definitely resort to terrorism, or set themselves on fire. This is a logical result. We all know what happens to those young men when they come back from Syria. They call them in every now and then for investigation at the intelligence department, but why did the state allow them to leave in the first place? They are a real and direct threat against Jordan."*

*(Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)*

## 6.0 EXTERNAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 6.1 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

**US foreign policy in the region is driving negative perceptions about its effect on Jordan and recruitment into VEOs.**

The influence of the US on Jordan is largely seen as negative, with many respondents citing US interference in the region as the reason for the widespread instability and the rise of VEOs. Respondents identified Iraq, Syria, and Libya as Arab or Muslim nations that the US has negatively impacted through its foreign policy, which is widely seen as intrusive and interventionist. In particular, many single out the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq as the leading cause of anti-US sentiment in Jordan and cited the perceived sufferings of Muslims generated by the Iraq conflict as a significant motivator for locals joining VEOs in Syria, as the Syrian conflict provided an opportunity for locals to defend Muslims. Accordingly, 65 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that the US has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan; while 31 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 51 below). Some respondents also stated that the US is a viable target for jihad, often also linking this sentiment with a condemnation of US support for Israel.<sup>223</sup>

The US is also believed to be specifically targeting Sunni Muslims,<sup>224</sup> a perception that is leading some youths to sympathize or emotionally associate themselves with explicitly Sunni VEOs in the region.<sup>225</sup> The negative perception of US foreign policy in the region even extends to the activities of USAID, which is reportedly seen by locals as an organization that pursues US political objectives. Many thus consider it shameful to openly accept money from USAID for development projects,<sup>226</sup> despite the close diplomatic, economic, and military ties of the US with Jordan. The US embassy is the largest in the country and US trainers are closely involved in developing the capabilities of the JAF. The US is also a key economic partner for Jordan and is the main destination for Jordanian exports, which is closely linked to the free trade agreement between the two nations, which was fully implemented at the start of 2010.<sup>227</sup> US-manufactured products are also conspicuous on the shelves of supermarkets in the capital, and US-made cars are a regular sight on the streets. While many Jordanians take issue with US foreign policy in the region, in practical terms they have no issues with using US products or benefitting from the economic ties between the two nations.

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<sup>223</sup> "Jihad is more justifiable in the US than in Europe since it is a big supporter of Israel, and is responsible for all the destruction in the region. They are related to the destruction everywhere in some way, in Iraq and now in Syria, and Yemen and Libya." (Female, 37, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>224</sup> "It was George Bush Senior who came up with the anti-terrorism concept in the US, then this was followed by policies by George W Bush, then the rest of the world followed, blindly. America is throwing thousands of bombs at people killing many civilians, and they claim that one man with a belt bomb is the terrorist." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>225</sup> "Many youths unfortunately believe in conspiracies theories and that the US and other countries are aligned against them, so they believe they have to support VEOs because they are fighting the US and they want to associate themselves with Sunni extremist groups." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>226</sup> "Taking money from USAID is considered shameful because it is believed that the US is using USAID to make up for its crimes in the region." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>227</sup> Office of the US Trade Representative 2014. 'Jordan', OUSTR, April 29, 2014.

*"When the US invaded Iraq, that's when he started to view things as the US targeting Muslims. Of course the US did not invade Iraq for the Iraqi people, and we know the media is highly politicized. We know the issue was not saving the Iraqi people, it was an issue of interests, and those that are dying are the Muslims, so he had a desire to go to Iraq, but this didn't work out for him. So when things happened in Syria, he tried and in the end he joined the organized groups in Syria."*

*(Male, 25, Imam, Amman)*

**While some locals view the EU favorably, largely due to its development funding, most assess its impact on Jordan as either negative or limited.**

Many respondents judged that the European Union (EU) has little direct impact on Jordan in terms of foreign policy, although some expressed negative perceptions of the EU, including the United Kingdom (UK), for being part of a broader coalition with the US, which is having a negative impact on the region, in large part due to its involvement in the Syrian conflict. Consequently, 52 percent of Amman GQ respondents judged that the EU has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while 34 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 51 below). However, several acknowledged that the EU has impacted Jordan in a number of positive ways, including its empowerment of human rights organizations in Amman, and the example that it has set as a functioning body made up of many culturally diverse member states, as a result of which is also provides an attractive model for locals who would like to see Arab states behaving in a similar fashion.<sup>228</sup> However, the EU's principal impact on Jordan has been through its financing of development projects. In this respect, the EU is seen to be providing funding without taking a leading role in the projects itself or pursuing political objectives in the same manner as USAID.<sup>229</sup> This is supported to an extent by the EU itself, whose stated aim in Jordan is to invest in civil society projects and it has funded a number of projects and campaigns in Amman, including one announced in January 2016, whereby the EU was funding a local company to deliver a project aimed at improving the employability of Jordanian and Syrian youths in Amman.<sup>230</sup>

*"The EU is having a positive impact because it has been empowering human rights organizations. It is seen in a positive way and people like the idea of the EU it is made up of lots of countries with no shared language or heritage or history and they fought in the past and now they are able to be in this strong entity and they are supporting each other. People like the idea of the EU and wish Arab countries could do the same thing."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

<sup>228</sup> "The EU is seen as part of a coalition with the UK and US and they could use Jordan as a base for a way in the Middle East if they wanted to attack Iraq or anywhere." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

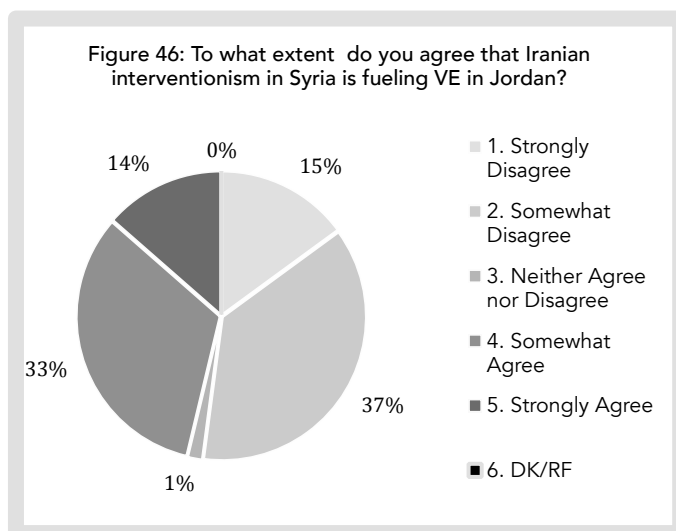
<sup>229</sup> "The EU is providing funding for civil society organizations but is not working directly in Jordan and it is supporting projects with finance, they don't do as much as USAID. People see the effect of the EU as being very positive but the US impact is generally bad so I would rather work on projects funded by the EU than USAID as they are political and the EU is not." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>230</sup> Jordan Times 2016. 'EU funded project to enhance job prospects for young Jordanians, Syrians', Jordan Times, 30 January 2016.

Locals are hostile toward Iran and many believe that its support for the Assad Regime is making sectarian VEO narratives more plausible in Jordan.

While few locals believe that Iran has had a direct impact on Jordan, many respondents believe that it has nonetheless played a significant role in enhancing negative attitudes among Sunni Muslim Jordanians toward Shia Muslims in the region, mainly through its support for both the Assad Regime and Hezbollah.<sup>231</sup> Accordingly, 60 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that Iran has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while 12 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 51 below). Notably, a significant minority of 21 percent of respondents did not believe that Iran had any impact at all on

Jordan, despite its involvement in neighboring Syria and Iraq. Iranian financial and military assistance to the Assad Regime in particular has angered many locals and some even identified this as a driver of VE thought and behavior in Jordan. Thus while 52 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Iranian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, 47 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 46). Iran's involvement with the Assad Regime and its perceived targeting of Sunnis in Syria and the wider region is seen as playing into sectarian VEO narratives that could be used to appeal to local youths.<sup>232</sup> However, some respondents observed that, despite tensions over Syria, Iran maintained diplomatic relations with Jordan, and pointed out that the media has been fueling anti-Iranian and anti-Shia sentiment, which endorse ISIS propaganda that portrays the VEO as the defender of Sunni Arabs against Shia expansionism.<sup>233</sup> Some respondents also reported that ISIS has benefitted greatly from perceptions of the oppression of Sunnis in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria,<sup>234</sup> and that it also continues to use sectarian narratives to drive sympathy and recruitment in Jordan.



*"I think [popular dislike for Iran] is related to Iran being the head of the Shias and how they support the Assad Regime. People call this the Alawite, rafidi [opposition] regime. People are scared of Shia*

<sup>231</sup> "I met some people who think Iran has a negative effect in Jordan while in reality Jordan has nothing to do with Iran." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>232</sup> Al Khalidi 2015. 'Lebanon's Hezbollah says Iran will not abandon support after nuclear deal', Reuters, 25 July 2015.

<sup>233</sup> "The Iranian intervention in Syria as the main Shia nation in the world causes Jordanians to be scared of a Shia expansion, but I don't see this conflict between Shia and Sunni, I think the media made out that the Syrian conflict is between Shias and Sunnis while in reality it is a cold war now between powerful countries on Syrian territory. At the beginning people were just hoping for better policies and politics in Syria." (Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)

<sup>234</sup> "As for the Iraqi crisis, it's well known: sectarianism found welcoming communities in Iraq, where they enhanced it, and the marginalization of this large group of people, who are Sunnis, led to the emergence of ISIS." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

*expansionism especially in Syria but also in the region in general but Iran doesn't have any direct involvement in Jordan and we still have diplomatic relations with them."*

*(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)*

**Focus: Sectarianism and anti-Iranian sentiment are closely linked.**

*"As for Iran, a good percentage of respondents support jihad against Iran because they are Sunnis and they believe that Iran is against the Sunnis. They see that the Sunnis have not started any war against Shias, but Iran started the war against Sunnis a year after the start of the [2003] war on Iraq, by supporting Shias who want to control the country and who started to do jihadi operations against Sunnis and issue fatwas to kill Sunnis and shed their blood. So people believe that the Shias consider killing Sunnis to be permitted and so it is right to kill Shias. There may not be any Shias in Jordan, but they're still in favor of this idea because of the media agenda on the news that shows the targeting of Sunnis by Shias and which sanctions the killing of Shias."*

*(Female, 38, Researcher, Amman)*

**Locals mainly see Saudi Arabia's relationship with Jordan as beneficial, although some believe Saudi Arabia has been fueling religious extremism in Amman.**

The majority of respondents (66 percent) reported that the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Jordan is a good thing for their country, with many emphasizing the economic benefits in particular, while the minority (24 percent) disagreed (see Figure 51 below). Despite this positive picture, some locals view Saudi Arabia as a driver of both religious extremism and radicalization in Jordan, as well as one of the main Sunni countries fueling sectarianism in the country.<sup>235</sup> Saudi Arabia was also believed to be directly funding both Salafist Jihadists,<sup>236</sup> and VEOs in Syria, including ISIS, which was in turn believed to be strengthening their power and ability to attract recruits from Jordan.<sup>237</sup> Salafist Jihadists in Jordan are seen as heavily influenced by Saudi Arabia,<sup>238</sup> and some identified Saudi Arabia's promotion of Wahhabist

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<sup>235</sup> "We can blame certain countries for radicalization because I believe that they are primarily responsible for extremism in the region. For example, Saudi Arabia and Iran, extremism nowadays is sectarian, more than it is political, the extremism which is happening in Syria is between the Shias and Sunnis, this is the primary driver, and Saudi Arabia and Iran are the supporters for this." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>236</sup> "There are two Salafist blocs, there is the moderate group, led by Saudi Arabia, and the extremist Salafist Jihadist group, like AQ and ISIS, which carried arms. The moderate Salafists want to promote a weak Islam because it's linked to the benefits of the US. As for the extremist one, it aims to divide the region, their leaders used to call on people to participate in jihad during their speeches and their other meetings." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>237</sup> "I do not think Jordan is supporting ISIS, but there is information indicating that Jordan supported certain other extremist groups backed by Saudi Arabia." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>238</sup> "I attended around 30 sessions with Halabi, but they were only Salafists, dressed like each other and smell like each other. Salafists wear the Saudi dress. They cover their head with a Saudi head cover, white or red, because they consider Saudi a source of Salafism." (Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)

ideology as its main impact on Jordan, as it had ideologically underpinned the rise of VEOs,<sup>239</sup> and principally ISIS,<sup>240</sup> as well as JN.<sup>241</sup> Some respondents also expressed frustration about the influence that Saudi Arabia had over Jordan, feeling that its economic links to the country made the central government beholden to Saudi influence and obliged it to do what the Saudi government wanted.<sup>242</sup> One respondent gave the example of Khaled Al Natour,<sup>243</sup> a Jordanian activist and member of the Hirak movement who was detained in Saudi Arabia for three months without charge in 2013 on a business trip, to demonstrate this.<sup>244</sup> The positive attitude to Saudi Arabia among locals must also be seen in the context of sectarian attitudes to Shias and fears of Iranian expansionism in the region, which many respondents expressed. Saudi Arabia is seen as a leading Sunni nation and has long been a vocal opponent of Iran, which is condemned by locals for its backing for both the Assad Regime in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Shia VEOs and political parties in Syria and Iraq, including the Dawa party of former PM Nouri Al Maliki, which is accused of oppressing Sunnis in Iraq.<sup>245</sup>

*"The main hub for radicalization is Saudi Arabia, because they have Salafist preachers, like Abdul Wahhab, Ibn Baz, and Ibn Uthaymeen, who has a fatwa that the anyone who doesn't pray doesn't have the right to be buried in the Muslims cemeteries. It affects Jordan because we have good communications with Saudi Arabia, the sheikhs from Saudi communicate with sheikhs here, Salafists here receive scholarships to study in Saudi Arabia, I received one to study in Medina."*

*(Male, 27, NGO Employee, Amman)*

**Focus: The spread of Saudi-inspired Wahhabist religious messages has been feeding extremism in Amman.**

*"In Jordan, in Amman and even in my university, the Jordan University, the Wahhabi mentality has spread enormously. Since the early 1990's, every now and then there were Wahhabi campaigns from Saudi Arabia in Jordan. I have witnessed some of these campaigns for instance when I used to*

<sup>239</sup> "However, we have started to witness signs of extremism since the early 90's when the Wahhabi Hanbali Salafi streams started to enter our region" (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>240</sup> "ISIS's educational system is based on the Saudi Arabia's, and based on the Hanbali teachings. ISIS's books for teaching use resources from the Saudi Arabia." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>241</sup> "Saudi Arabia and the spread of Wahhabi ideology is a reason behind the spread of these groups [JN/ISIS]." (Male, 43, Journalist, Amman)

<sup>242</sup> "Jordan is linked to Saudi Arabia economically, meaning Saudi provides lots of assistance and economic and political support to Jordan, and Saudi Arabia is also linked to the US. Jordan will do whatever Saudi says." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>243</sup> Whitson, Sarah Leigh 2013. 'Letter to the Saudi Interior Minister regarding Khaled Natour', Human Rights Watch, March 08, 2013.

<sup>244</sup> "Saudi Arabia is responsible for radicalization because political decisions in Jordan are linked to Saudi Arabia like Khaled Al Natour's arrest. The Jordanian authorities ignored Al Natour and his other friend when they were arrested by the Saudi authorities." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>245</sup> "During the Maliki regime [in Iraq], the Shias were the reason for the wrongdoings against the Sunni people, so I think it is a reason for enhancing the presence of VE." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

*go to mosques, there were plenty of tapes and CDs in huge amounts inside the mosques available for free for people to borrow. There were tapes by Al Uraifi and Al Qarni and many other Saudi Salafi Sheikhs in particular. So we used to take tapes, listen to them and then take them back and take other tapes. So the mosques here were spreading the Wahhabi mentality, especially in the 1990's. We used to walk in the streets and find those publications almost everywhere. I personally find that Saudi Arabia is the main driver of radicalization, and is the reason behind the most dangerous extremism issues in the world. The Wahhabi mentality was created along with the creation of Saudi Arabia, which brought back Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Hanbal's extremist and intolerant mentality.*

*(Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)*

**Turkey is not judged to have a significant impact on Jordan, although some locals believe that it is facilitating VEO participation in Syria.**

The majority of respondents were of the impression that Turkey does not have a major impact on Jordan, although some argue that Turkey has been exacerbating the problem of VE in Jordan by permitting individuals to transit its territory to join up with VEOs in Syria.<sup>246</sup> Specifically, 36 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that Turkey has 'no impact' on Jordan, 34 percent reported that Turkey has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact, and 22 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact (see Figure 51 below). Several respondents who had friends or relatives who had arrived in Syria through Turkish territory without being detained condemned the Turkish authorities for ignoring or failing to crack down on the transfer of Jordanians into Syria.<sup>247</sup> For instance, one respondent said that Turkey has played a role in covertly supporting the growth of VEOs in Syria, particularly JN, which has helped it to develop and increase its appeal to locals.<sup>248</sup>

*"I do not have detailed information but, as I told you from the experiences of some of the youths, some people got tickets to fly to Turkey and from Turkey they met with middle-men that took them to certain areas and once they were there, that was it. So there are clusters and groups that are active in our country, whose job it is to get people to Syria."*

*(Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)*

<sup>246</sup> "He went to Egypt and from Egypt he went to Turkey and then to Syria" [Respondent on his father's journey to join a VEO in Syria] (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>247</sup> "We can also blame the countries that are facilitating the entrance into Syria, like Turkey, people from all nationalities are entering Syria through Turkey, and this shows that this country if they aren't facilitating the smuggling, they are turning a blind eye to this." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>248</sup> "Ahrar Al Sham, which is a part of JN, is funded and supported by Turkey and Qatar, as a front to support JN which cannot be done publically." (Male, 43, Journalist, Amman)



The Syrian conflict has taken some of the focus off Israel but the country continues to be a focus of local anger and Salafist Jihadist sentiment.

Almost all respondents (97 percent) expressed strong hostility toward Israel and reported that there has been any recent shift in how Israel is perceived in most neighborhoods in Amman (see Figure 51 below). Hostility is particularly strong among those of West Bank origins in areas like Wehdat and Hay Nazzal. Despite the overwhelming dislike that respondents expressed toward Israel for both its historical displacement and more recent treatment of Palestinians, this is generally only shown in public in response to Israeli actions perceived to be detrimental to Palestinians. The most recent manifestation of anti-Israeli sentiment in Amman was a protest in response to Israeli operations against Gaza and took place in July 2014 in front of the Israeli Embassy in Amman. Protesters called for the closure of the embassy and the cancellation of the peace treaty and attempted to assault the building, although they were beaten back by the security forces and some were arrested and later released.<sup>249</sup> Regular protests do take place near the Israeli Embassy in Amman, as do yearly commemorations of the Nakba, the defeat of the Arab and Palestinian forces by Israel in 1948. In general, it seems that, despite almost universally negative sentiment toward Israel, there has been no increase in recent years and, if anything, the Syrian conflict has caused those few individuals who might have considered actively attacking Israeli territory to focus on Syria instead, most probably as members of VEOs.

*"Israel has no impact on Jordan at the moment as there has been no change; the peace treaty is still there, the US is protecting the King and protecting Israel, there are no exchanges of fire on the borders or anything. There is only an impact when they are attacking the Palestinians like the Gaza war, which makes people in angry."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

The Syrian conflict is viewed as having an extremely negative impact on Jordan and driving recruitment into VEOs among some locals.

The ongoing Syrian conflict has remained a significant concern for the majority of respondents, who believed that Syrian refugees that fled the violence in their homeland are a growing burden on Jordan and that the conflict has been driving recruitment into VEOs among youths in their communities. As a result of these concerns, 89 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that Syria has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while merely seven percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 51 below). The conflict has inspired both anger toward the Assad Regime and sympathy for the suffering of Syrians, which has been a leading motivation for locals who have travelled to Syria to fight with VEOs including JN and ISIS.<sup>250</sup> Most respondents referenced the role that the media has played in bringing images of, and stories from, the Syrian conflict to people in their neighborhoods and emphasized the strong feelings that these images of widespread physical destruction and the human cost of the conflict inspired in locals. Nevertheless, some do not

<sup>249</sup> Freij, Moath 2014. 'Protesters attempt to storm Israeli Embassy in Amman', Jordan Times, July 09, 2014.

<sup>250</sup> "The killing we see in Syria pushes the youth to go...I am not following what's happening, however I hear about many sites that show what is happening on the ground in Syria." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

believe that locals are well informed about the Syrian conflict and the parties involved and observed that many were not even aware of the role played by Russia in supporting the Assad Regime. As a result, and despite popular dislike of Assad, only 34 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that Russia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while 12 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan, mainly through its involvement in the Syrian conflict; notably, the majority of GQ respondents, 47 percent, reported that Russia had no discernible impact on Jordan (see Figure 51 below).

*"I believe that people are more affected by Syria rather than Iraq. Sympathy I mean. They follow Syria more than Iraq. Maybe they've lost hope in Iraq. Maybe what's happening in Syria is much bigger than what's happening in Iraq. I believed that people are discussing the situation in Syria more, at restaurants, at barbershops. You see that people are sympathetic. People are praying for the Syrian people and not the extremist groups."*

*(Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)*

**The popularity of the FSA has waned as the Syrian conflict has continued and support is limited.**

Most respondents reported that the Free Syrian Army (FSA) is poorly regarded in Amman, mainly because its local support base has been eroded as the group has struggled to make a military impact in Syria since the start of the conflict in 2011, and is increasingly viewed as being part of the problem rather than the solution in Syria. Accordingly, 66 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to the FSA in their community, while 25 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for the FSA (see Figure 2). Many respondents identified the rise of other armed groups, which have been more successful on the ground in Syria, particularly JN, as playing a significant role in reducing support for the FSA.<sup>251</sup> Consequently, most Amman locals no longer regard the FSA as the main group protecting the Syrian people from the Assad Regime. In addition, some also reported that the FSA's popularity among locals has declined due to concerns over the support that the group gets from foreign powers, particularly the US, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. This has given locals the impression that the FSA is beholden to its foreign, financial backers and that it is promoting the interests and foreign policy of these countries, while failing to make a positive impact in Syria. The lack of popular appeal of the FSA and suspicions over who is bankrolling it have increased the chance that locals who wish to make an impact in Syria and to physically oppose the Assad Regime are more likely to join a VEO than look to become a member of the moderate, Western-backed armed group in the Syrian conflict.

*"When I asked people why they don't support the FSA they said we were supporting them at the beginning of the Syrian conflict, but now with all this killing and destruction in Syria we don't support any side that is destroying Syria. All the armed factions have committed crimes that have led to all this destruction in Syria, and I totally agree with them. Nothing specific happened to change their opinions but over time people began to believe that they don't understand what is going on in*

<sup>251</sup> "[The establishment of JN as an influential group in Jordan] occurred after the FSA had shown that it was not able to effectively oppose the Assad Regime." (Female, 38, Lawyer, Amman)

*Syria, and then they started to question which countries were supporting and funding the FSA and these countries are the US, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. They started to believe like the FSA is a part of the conspiracy against Syria."*

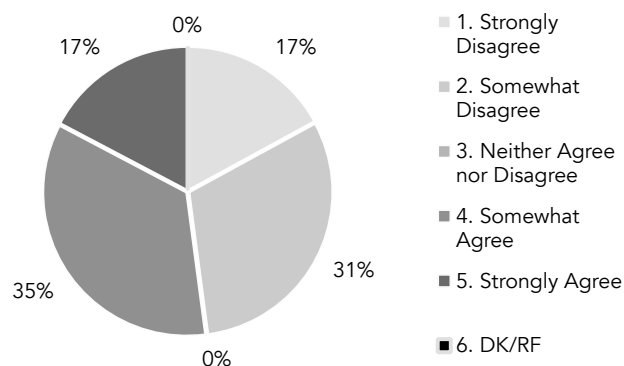
*(Female, 38, Archivist, Amman)*

## 6.2 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INTERVENTIONISM

Western involvement in Syria is believed to be fueling the conflict and strengthening VEO narratives.

Many respondents agreed that Western interventionism in Syria is fueling resentment in their neighborhoods and was worsening the already negative views of the US, Russia, and other countries and actors involved in the conflict. As a consequence, 52 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Western intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, while 48 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 47). Some reported that resentment against the West for its part in the Syrian conflict was driven by a natural sympathy among Jordanians for the plight of Syrians and a belief among some locals that Western powers were prolonging the Syrian conflict for their own ends. These sentiments have been harnessed by VEOs, for instance in ISIS videos using the coalition's presence in Syria.

Figure 47: To what extent do you agree that Western intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?



*"For me it is a cold war, everyone wants to show how powerful they are and they chose Syria to show this so Saudi Arabia and Qatar at the start were playing a role and later on the US and Russia and it is having a bad effect. There are many militias and many foreign fighters who are going there. This makes Jordanians angry, as we are naturally sympathetic to other Arab countries."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

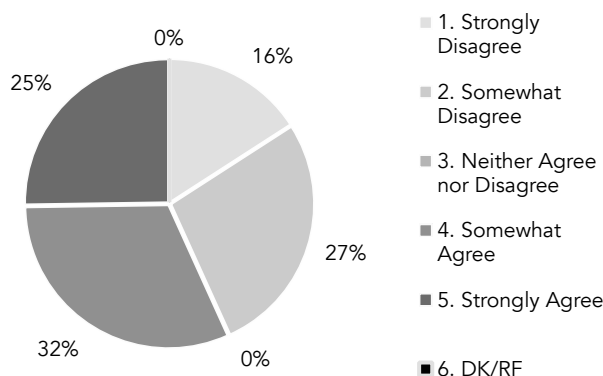
The West is believed to have considerable influence on Jordan, which is driving VE among some locals.

Most respondents observed that there is a negative perception in their communities that the West has considerable influence in Jordan, particularly over the King, which is leading to resentment and increased vulnerability to VE narratives.<sup>252</sup> In fact, 57 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan, while 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 48). Many also identified the US as the leading source of Western interference in Jordan and its influence as a negative factor that is causing frustration in their communities that could radicalize locals. One respondent, a Salafist Jihadist, accused the US of leading an anti-jihad campaign in Jordan designed to target Salafists and ordering the central government to implement this program in exchange for financial incentives.

<sup>252</sup> "It's not wrong to join [jihad]. All Arab states are following the US; it made them and taught them. It tells them what to do, so all of them are to blame." (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

In contrast, another respondent from Amman argued that Western influence can sometimes be constructive, as the West can put pressure on the King or the central government to ensure that human rights or the right to free speech are respected.<sup>253</sup> However, over all the West is not well regarded and the perception that the King and central government are heavily influenced by their Western allies is exploited by VEOs seeking to undermine them, which is especially clear in the ISIS video showing the murder of Kasasbeh in February 2015.

Figure 48: To what extent do you agree that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan?



*"There is a grant from the American government to the Jordanian government, the condition of this grant is sentencing people like us, Salafists, to life in prison or execution. This is the price the Jordanian government pays for this grant. This is part of Jordanian way to fight terrorism as they say internationally, but we call it the anti-jihad campaign. Jihad is our duty as Muslims."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

Jordanian involvement in Syria is largely endorsed by locals but is also believed to be contributing to VE.

Views among respondents were mixed as to whether Jordan should be involved in the Syrian conflict and 48 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Jordanian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, while 51 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 49). Some respondents reported that it is inevitable that Jordan would become involved in the Syrian conflict due to the geographical proximity of the two countries and they drew parallels between the ways in which Jordan is involved in Palestinian issues with its involvement in Syria. In particular, the murder of Kasasbeh in February 2015 is seen by many as a turning point in popular attitudes to Jordanian involvement in the bombing campaign against VEOs in Syria and some thought that, although locals were largely against becoming involved in Syria initially, they got behind the government's bombing policy as attitudes to ISIS hardened after his death. Accordingly, 65 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Jordanian intervention against ISIS in Syria is justifiable, while 34 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 50). However, some respondents maintained that the Syrian conflict

<sup>253</sup> "There is the feeling that the West is deciding everything, the King is seen as a toy in the West's hands, everyone is saying this. But we believe we can use the West's influence in a good way, for example in the Hirak movement many people were arrested and we used the West to put pressure on king to get the charges dismissed and it worked. The West can do this but we are not happy, we want the King to be with us and to listen to us not listen to the West." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

does not have anything to do with Jordan,<sup>254</sup> and argued that it is more important to focus on recovering Palestine than fighting VEOs or even the Assad Regime in Syria,<sup>255</sup> in addition to which some also raised concerns that involvement in Syria might increase the risk of destabilizing Jordan.

*"We are integrated in the war, whether we want to or not, it is inevitable that we are part of this war, particularly in Syria, of course. Just like we cannot ignore the Palestinian issue, we cannot be taken out of our skin, that's how the war in Syria is, it is only a percentage of how important the Palestinian issue has been [in Jordan], but it is significant."*

(Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

Figure 49: To what extent do you agree that Jordan's intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?

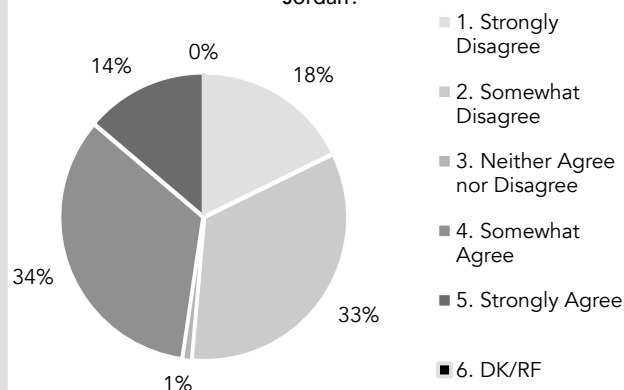
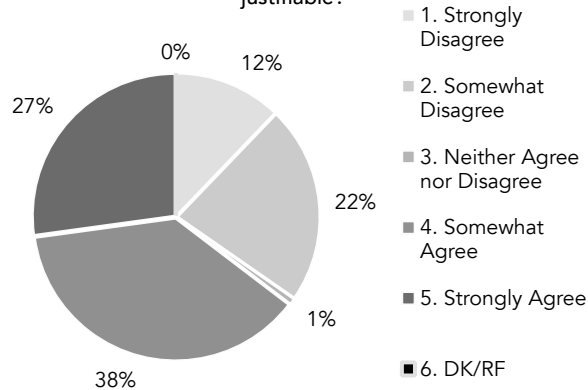


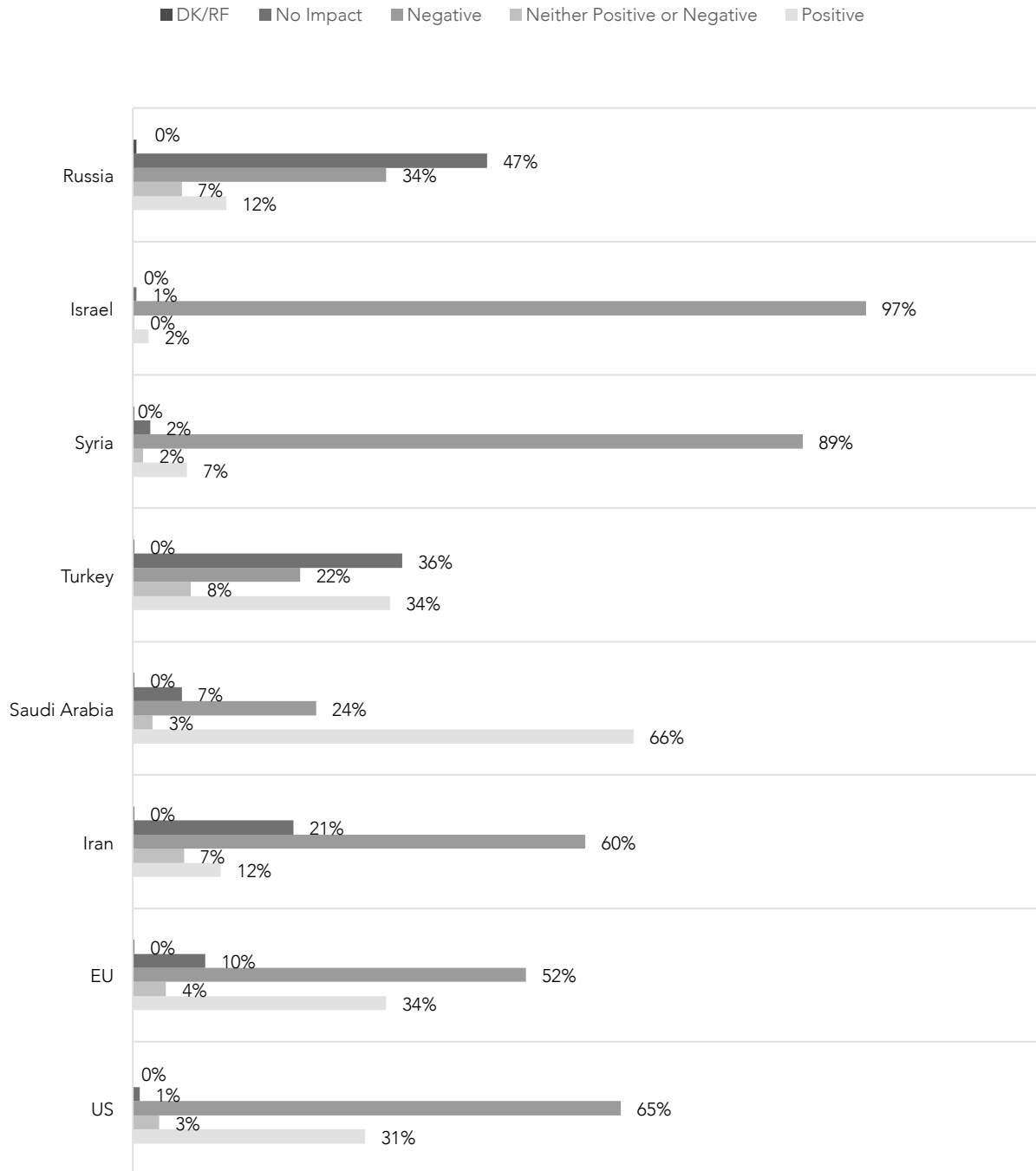
Figure 50: To what extent do you agree that Jordan's intervention against ISIS in Syria is justifiable?



<sup>254</sup> "At the start of the Syrian revolution, we were all against Assad Regime, and now, I admit, we all wish that the regime would take control over everything and bring back the Syria that we knew before." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>255</sup> "The majority of Ammanis consider that this is a crisis which we have nothing to do with." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

Figure 51: To what extent do you think that the following countries have a positive or negative impact on Jordan?

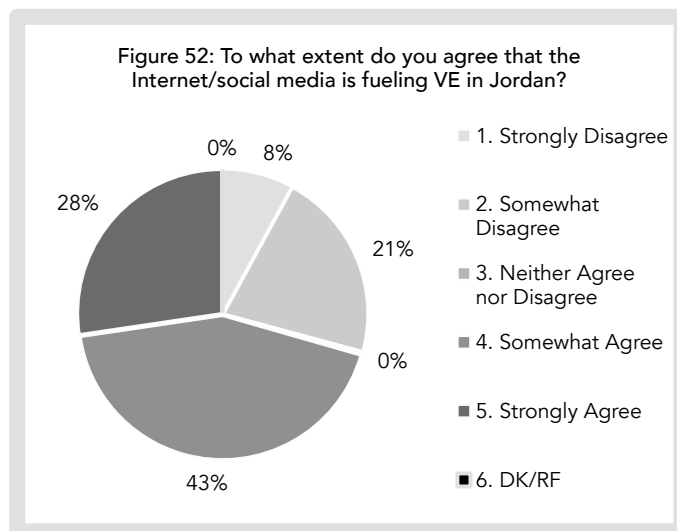


## 7.0 COMMUNICATION DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 7.1 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM PROPAGANDA

The Internet and social media are playing an important role in driving recruitment into VEOs, which are making extensive use of these platforms, although the role of the Internet can also be exaggerated.

The Internet and social media are considered a leading driver of VEO recruitment and the dissemination of VE narratives in Amman. As a result, 71 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the Internet/social media is fueling VE in Jordan, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 52). Respondents held the view that by using electronic means VEOs have been able to greatly expand their reach and some described how friends or relatives were able to join VEOs through contacts they met via social media that act as facilitators, organizing travel and linking recruits with VEOs once they arrive in Syria or Turkey.<sup>256</sup>



In particular, respondents identified ISIS as the VEO most active in targeting potential recruits in their communities online. ISIS are considered to have a technologically advanced and professional propaganda apparatus that uses the Internet and social media as a delivery system and which has been successful at attracting new recruits in Jordan and abroad.<sup>257</sup> Respondents reported ISIS is able to make full use of social media,<sup>258</sup> including Facebook and Twitter, to maintain an impressive virtual presence, and to reach out to those who might be vulnerable to their VE messaging,<sup>259</sup> and making it possible for them to contact the VEO.<sup>260</sup> Several respondents reported that ISIS's use of videos in particular was

<sup>256</sup> "The Internet is now a big resource for meeting with radical groups. Many people meet over the Internet." (Male, 27 Student, Amman)

<sup>257</sup> "ISIS has a huge media corporation and we've seen the impressive quality of their videos, I'm sure this attracts a lot of young men, and unfortunately, no powerful state is confronting ISIS on social media, when I look for ISIS videos, I find them easily, by using any hashtag." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>258</sup> "Daesh fighters have twitter accounts, because most of these guys are youths, and most of the youth have accounts on social media." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>259</sup> "I always saw him as a human rights activist and nothing more, and his religious orientations were very basic and usual like many others, but I can understand that if there is someone who has a religious seed and ISIS comes to give him the opportunity to apply what he believes in, he won't refuse." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>260</sup> "I mean contact with Daesh is available, through their page on Twitter for example. They also have their international Internet pages at Dabiq and Aymaq. I don't know the exact name or site but the page is there with a series of videos that they release so they have a presence. Daesh are also trending on Twitter, they are one of the most powerful groups that use Twitter." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)



having an appreciable impact and was fueling VE in their neighborhoods. One respondent highlighted the way in which the group presented itself on YouTube, explaining that the channel uses a debate format in some of its videos to make the viewer believe that they are well informed about the issues under discussion, while absorbing VE narratives even if they would seem strange to them if explained in another context.<sup>261</sup> Another respondent confirmed that he had looked for ISIS material online and had been able to easily access the VEO's magazine, Dabeq, as well as a number of videos.<sup>262</sup>

Sites like Twitter and Facebook are widely used by locals to discuss VE themes, including participation in jihad abroad, and allow VE sympathizers to spread and receive VEO propaganda.<sup>263</sup> These sites are therefore key to fueling VE, as they give male youths with an interest in engaging in jihad the medium through which to contact recruiters and gain exposure to VEO propaganda that could further radicalize them. They are easily accessed using smartphones or personal computers, which are commonplace in Amman, and these applications are easy to use even for those with little experience using them. A local from the suburb of Marka described how his brother, despite not being technologically adept, had been able to connect with a recruiter via Twitter, who subsequently facilitated his entry into Syria via Turkey and enrolment at a jihadi training camp there. Facebook and Twitter are also used to pass on news about VEO members from Amman and one respondent, the mother of a VEO member who died fighting in Syria, stated that it was only through Facebook that she discovered that some of her son's friends from the same neighborhood in Amman had been killed there.<sup>264</sup> Some also reported that VEO recruiters use Facebook, and largely fake accounts, to communicate and attract new members.<sup>265</sup>

However, some respondents cautioned that the role of social media should not be exaggerated and that the support expressed for VEOs online might be misleading, as it does not reflect the actual levels of support in their communities. For instance, celebrations of the deaths of Jordanian VEO members online is often different to how these deaths are received on the ground.<sup>266</sup> Whereas such individuals are celebrated as martyrs in posts online, in reality the celebrations of their deaths are often better understood as expressions of sympathy for their grieving families rather than an endorsement of their

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<sup>261</sup> "They [VEOs] try and broadcast themselves as being open to discussing issues and they have their own channels on YouTube. I don't remember the exact name of the channel. I think that Al Furqaan is the channel for Daesh and they show you videos for example, that make you believe that you are well informed by listening to their debates... the actions and the words are illogical, and strange, so we cannot understand them, but they show you a very good image of themselves... the last video they released was in Raqqa, and it was great." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

<sup>262</sup> "If you check the sites of ISIS, you can see many videos. I tried, I saw Dabeq Magazine but there were only videos of operations." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>263</sup> "Extremists are everywhere, especially on Facebook." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

<sup>264</sup> "We didn't know them; we knew them after they died, when people posted about them on Facebook. That's how we knew, and we don't even know how any of jihad's friends [went to fight], but when they died and news spread around Facebook that someone from that place died that's how we came to know." (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>265</sup> "You can find many youths who have fake accounts on Facebook, where they express their radical thoughts through social media and it would be hard to find them." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>266</sup> "Most people believe sad for them, because most of the time, someone has convinced this individual to go, they consider that this person is "lost" you will not here, people say "oh he is so lucky" no we do not have this view, at least not the majority, maybe the Facebook society is the one that supports this the most, and this is apparent." (Male, 25, Teacher, Amman)

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membership of a VEO in Syria. Facebook is also widely seen as being closely monitored by the GID, which also limits its effectiveness as a tool for spreading propaganda aimed at increasing support for VEOs. For instance, one respondent reported that his brother was arrested for using his Facebook account to like some posts deemed to be in favor of or promoting ISIS.<sup>267</sup> As a result, views as to whether ISIS and JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan were relatively mixed and 51 and 48 percent of Amman GQ respondents respectively agreed that ISIS and JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan, while 49 and 51 percent respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 53 and 54).

*"In general you can see some youths changing their views as a result of the dialogue [about VE] being seen on social media, which is very open and there's more freedom of expression there, so it affected the youth more than anything else. Unfortunately, many governments don't have open discussions to fight these [extremist] views. Sometimes as a result of open dialogue you see many youth changing their opinion."*

(Male, 27, Student, Amman)

Figure 53: To what extent do you agree that ISIS propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan?

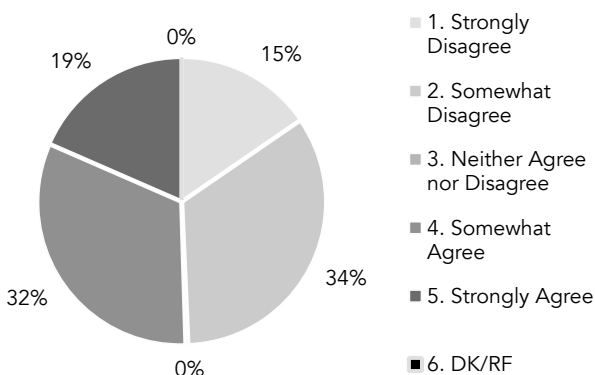
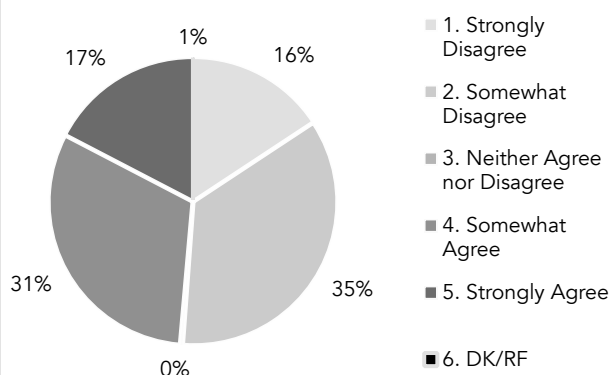


Figure 54: To what extent do you agree that JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan?



<sup>267</sup> "Any like or post on Facebook could get you arrested. The state claims that they don't arrest anyone who isn't involved in terrorism and extremism acts, however they arrested my brother, and they had no evidence about him recruiting anyone. Only over Facebook posts and 'likes' of ISIS related topics, or things that the state frowns upon." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

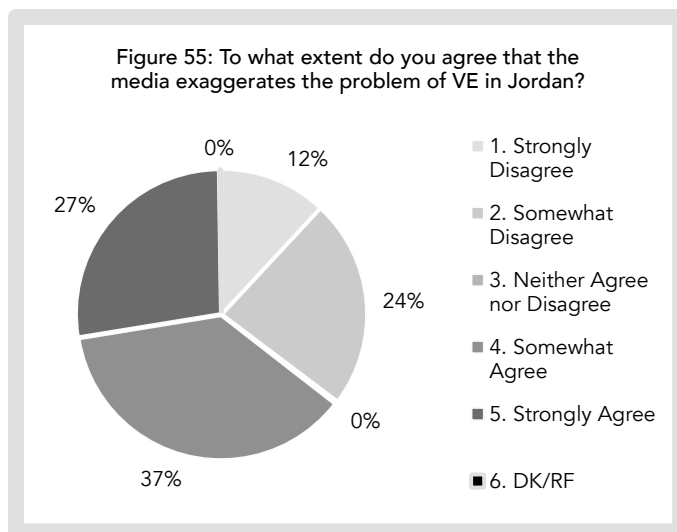
## 7.2 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Locals believe that the media is exaggerating the issue of VE in Jordan and look to the central government to monitor media content to prevent this.

Most respondents maintained that the media has been exaggerating the issue of VE in their communities and the country in general and that this had caused locals to believe that VE was a greater problem than it is in reality.<sup>268</sup>

Accordingly, 64 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the media exaggerates the problem of VE in Jordan, while 36 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 55).<sup>269</sup> Some blamed the central government for not exercising more control over the media and some even argued that the central government is deliberately failing to rein in the media as part of a campaign to scare locals about the danger

of religious extremism, which some see as tantamount to insulting Islam. In addition, some claimed that the media has been focusing on Sunni VEOs to the point where it is ignoring the actions of both the Assad Regime and Shia militias, which has led some local youths to identify more strongly with the VEOs being described as terrorist, with their Sunni sectarian identity a central factor in this process.<sup>270</sup> In fact, some even concluded that the lack of censorship of the media in the country was making it more likely that male youths would gravitate toward VEOs, which also suggests that limitations on press freedom are accepted when they are perceived as associated with personal and national security concerns.<sup>271</sup>



<sup>268</sup> "I mean people believe VE exists more now but that is a result of the media. The image that the media portrays in the areas where there are crises, they present them as the result of extremism. No, the media does not reflect the reality in Jordan." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>269</sup> "At the beginning of the Syrian situation, violent extremist groups weren't exposed for what they are and they were therefore more open about promoting themselves. We didn't have enough information, and there weren't any serious interventions internationally. It was easier to be brainwashed by extremist groups then. However, recently with the media acting the way it is, whether it was to highlight or defame them, I believe these groups have become weaker. This showed people that they do not know what they are doing." (Male, 26, Pharmacist, Amman)

<sup>270</sup> "The Sunnis in Jordan have faced a big problem after the recent events in Iraq and Syria, and with respect to sectarianism between Sunni and Shia groups, the global and Arabic media only focuses on extremism caused by Sunni groups. This caused a big problem among the youth. When I noticed the dialogue between youths and what they talk about, I noticed that they often say that when ISIS in the news it is associated with terrorism, but the media doesn't call the Syrian JAF or any of the militias fighting with them terrorists, that's one of the reasons why the youth develop extremist beliefs. They see that extremism is from both sides but when the media only limit extremism to Sunni groups they might want to associate themselves with them, which is natural." (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>271</sup> "The media plays a role in making people become more supportive of extremism." (Male, 29, Teacher, Amman)

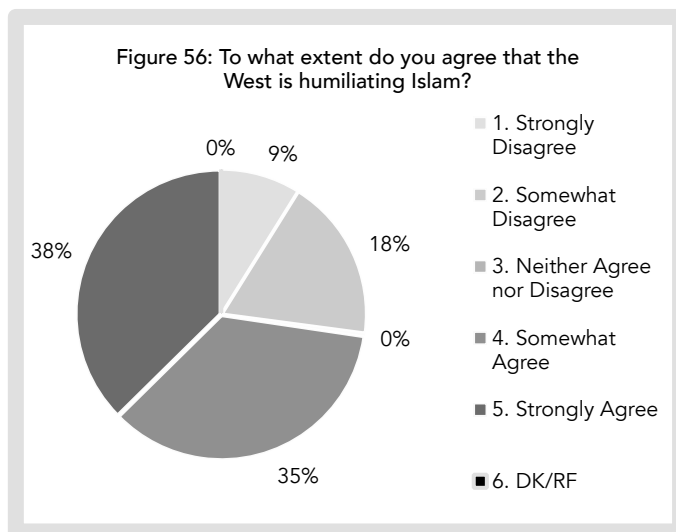
*"The media is defaming the image of Islam and Muslims. You can see the media exaggerating. If the government were reasonable, they wouldn't let the media do this. They would have stricter measures for the media. The State is using fear mongering, trying to scare the common people."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

### 7.3 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

There is a belief that the West has a negative attitude toward Islam, which is a narrative that VEOs have been able to exploit.

There is considerable disquiet among locals with the way that the West engages with Islam and many respondents expressed anger at the treatment of Muslims in Europe and the US, although notably this widespread anti-Western sentiment is mostly independent of VEO narratives on the same theme. However, VEOs have been harnessing hostility toward to West to build support in Amman and recruit. In fact, 73 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the West is humiliating Islam, while 27 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, indicating the strength of anti-West and pro-Islam sentiments (see Figure 56). In particular, respondents judged that Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad first published in 2005 and reproduced elsewhere in 2006,<sup>272</sup> and the similar Charlie Hebdo drawings, caused widespread anger among locals and are largely viewed in the context of an attack on Islam originating in the West. France's banning of the hijab is also widely seen as an attack on Muslims and Islam rather than a social issue and some respondents argued that, given the depth of the insults to their religion, terrorist attacks against some European countries can therefore be justified.<sup>273</sup>



*"I can understand why people see the West as humiliating Islam, mostly because of the Charlie Hebdo cartoons, which had an impact. There was a campaign against Denmark and their products and it made people angry and they haven't forgotten it."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

Most locals are in favor of Islam playing a prominent role in both the legal and justice systems but oppose the establishment of the Caliphate and practice of Takfir, which are strongly linked to VEOs.

Many respondents observed that society in Amman continues to be religiously practicing and that most locals, even if they are not observant Muslims, have a positive view of Islam and believe that the country should be governed in accordance with Islamic law. In fact, 65 percent of Amman GQ respondents

<sup>272</sup> Telegraph 2015. 'Prophet Mohammad cartoons controversy: Timeline', Telegraph, May 04, 2015.

<sup>273</sup> "France is a very racist country and they don't want Muslim women to wear the hijab, and they are even racist toward Arabs who were born and lived all their lives in France." (Female, 37, Housewife, Amman)

'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that only Islam can guarantee justice, while 24 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 57). However, there were limits to the extent to which locals believed Islam should influence the laws in Jordan and only a slim majority of 53 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Sharia should be the only source of law, while 45 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 58). The majority of respondents also disagreed with the concept of an Islamic Caliphate and that the establishment of such a theocratic state would have a good effect on Islam. Quantitative findings showed that 70 and 80 percent of Amman GQ respondents respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Caliphate will help restore Islam and that the practice of Takfir is justifiable, while 28 and 19 percent respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figures 59 and 60). Both the concepts of the Caliphate and Takfir have become strongly associated with VEOs and largely viewed as key ideological pillars for ISIS.

*"The danger is not coming from Bashar Al Assad, or from the Iraqi government, it is coming from these extreme groups, who say that the Shias are the real threat, but this is not true, the danger we are facing is a Takfiri danger."*

*(Male, 62, University Professor, Amman)*

Figure 57: To what extent do you agree that only Islam can guarantee justice?

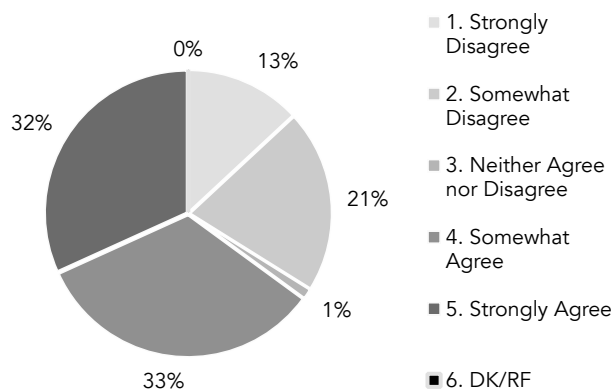
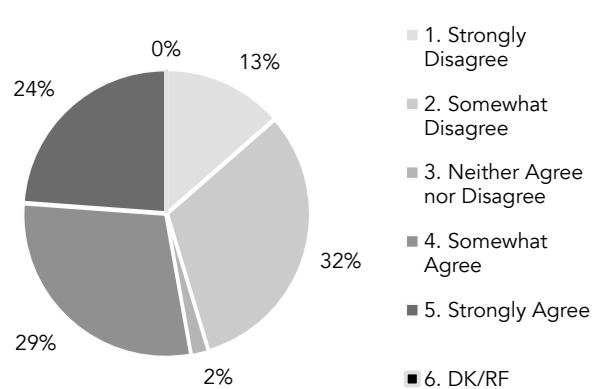
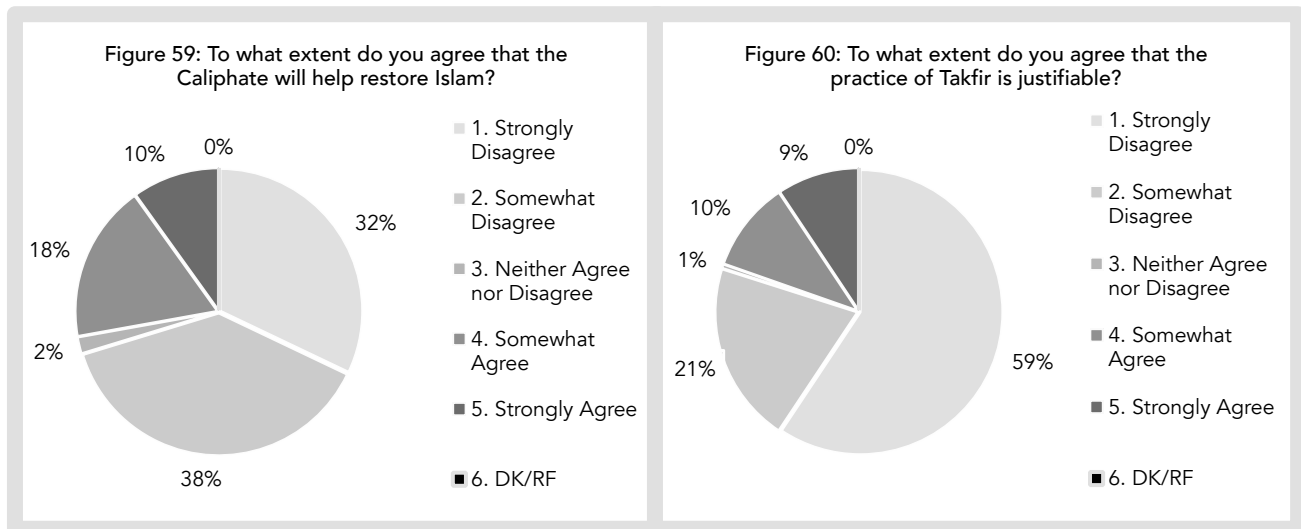


Figure 58: To what extent do you agree that Sharia should be the only source of law?





**Violent jihad in Israel is widely believed to be justifiable but practical limitations mean aspiring VEO members travel to Syria and often join VEOs instead.**

The vast majority of respondents reported that they view acts of violence against Israel as justifiable,<sup>274</sup> although many do not see this in the context of a religious obligation to perform jihad and rather class it as resistance against Israel, which is seen as the occupier of land belonging to Palestinians. In fact, 80 and 65 percent of Amman GQ respondents respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad in Israel is justifiable and that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is an act of betrayal for Islam and Arabs (see Figures 61 and 62). One respondent, Salafist Jihadist who was himself jailed and sentenced to death for planning an attack from Jordanian territory against Israeli forces, argued that jihad, including against Israel, is incumbent on all Muslims.<sup>275</sup> Anti-Israel sentiment was running high in early 2016 in Amman as a host of MPs spoke out against a proposed deal to use gas from Israel's offshore Leviathan field, with one MP stating he would rather locals went back to using oil lamps than buy Israeli gas. Anti-Israeli protests also continue to be organized on a weekly basis in Amman.<sup>276</sup> Despite strong support for the idea of jihad in Israel, some acknowledged that many aspiring VEO members are more likely to be drawn to fight in Syria, as it is easier to access, because the security forces closely monitor the border with Israel.<sup>277</sup>

<sup>274</sup> "For me if people perform jihad against only the US I will be more than happy, but for me I think jihad should be first in Israel and then the US." (Female, 42, Schoolteacher, Amman)

<sup>275</sup> "This person [going on jihad] is implementing true, real Islam. Jihad is a duty, this person goes to sacrifice even himself, the greatest sacrifice, to join jihad, which is a duty that should be performed by every Muslim and they will reach heaven." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

<sup>276</sup> Kuttub, Daoud 2016. 'Gas and the people of Jordan', Jordan times, February 17, 2016.

<sup>277</sup> "In our case, we had arms and we were heading to Palestine, the West Bank, for an attack. They caught us and arrested us for having arms with us although we were in the desert. They sentenced us without evidence, it is called, by court order, so the court was convinced and they sentenced us to execution I have been sentenced to death twice and to life imprisonment twice. The charges against me were: possession of weapons, development of bombs, and involvement in terrorism." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

*"I think 90 percent of respondents believe that the operations against Israel are justified considering that Israel has usurped and occupied land that is not theirs. Everyone supports any operations against Israel including jihad, martyrdom, suicide, and self-defense."*

*(Female, 38, Researcher, Amman)*

Figure 61: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Israel is justifiable?

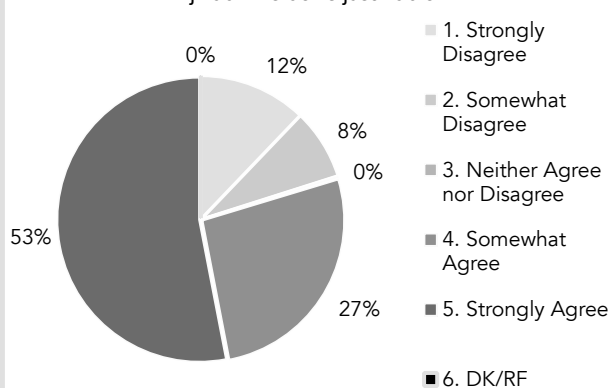
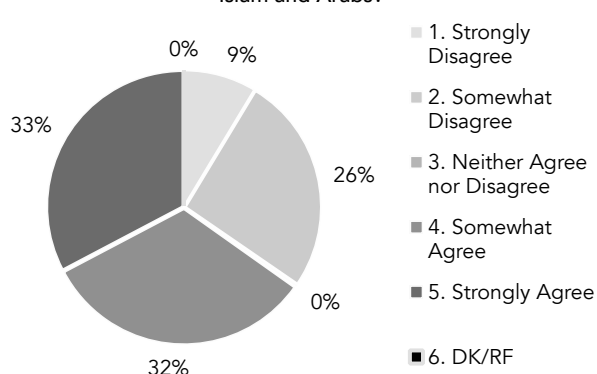


Figure 62: To what extent do you agree that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is an act of betrayal for Islam and Arabs?



### Most locals do not see violent jihad in Syria as justifiable or endorse Jordanians who join VEOs.

Although some respondents viewed violent jihad in Syria as justifiable,<sup>278</sup> a position that is often linked to sectarian narratives about Shias oppressing Sunnis, most reported that locals should not go to Syria to fight. In particular, some expressed strong concerns about the idea of Muslims fighting against other Muslims. Accordingly, 69 percent of respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable, while 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 63). Some respondents reported that all of the main religious and political groupings in their neighborhoods, including the MB, Hizb ut-Tahrir and Salafist Jihadists and Quietists, were supportive of the revolution in Syria, and that this support could be taken by their members as endorsement of participating in jihad there.<sup>279</sup>

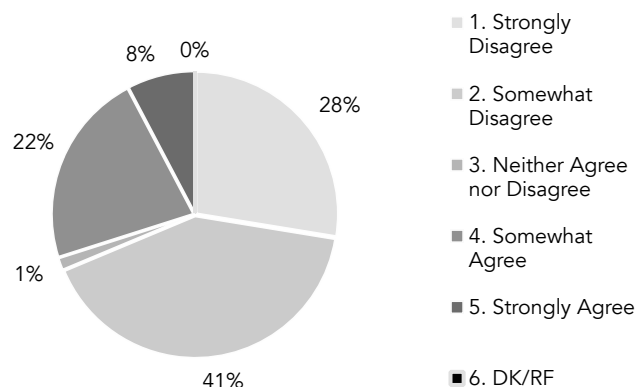
<sup>278</sup> "From another side, it's not wrong, if a young man believed that he should be committed to an Islamic State where Muslims are in need of them, and then it's not wrong." (Female, 42, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>279</sup> "The MB is against the regime and with the revolution, and the Tahrir Party. They have more than once protested in front of the Syrian embassy demanding the fall of the Syrian regime, and supporting the revolution, even the Salafists, whether jihadist or the Quietists, they are all with the revolution in Syria, they are clear, they do not hide their perspective." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)



One respondent, a Salafist Jihadist, maintained that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable and should be encouraged, describing it as a religiously inspired act of self-defense, the aim of which is ultimately to protect Muslim women and children. Others were not so explicit, although some think that jihad is certainly justified in some cases and that people are likely to engage in it if they believed it to be right or just, and that there is little that the central government can do to stop them, beyond incarceration once they reached this conclusion.<sup>280</sup>

Figure 63: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable?



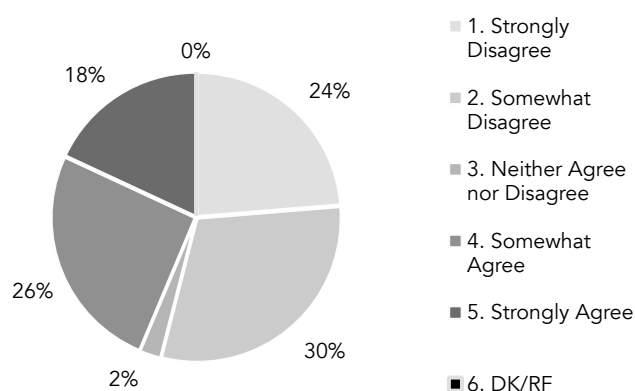
*"If anything, a danger, comes into your house, like a bull, if you kill him you are not punished, because this is considered self-defense. In Syria, they the Muslims, women and children are in danger, and it is our duty to defend them."*

*(Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)*

Although not in the majority, a significant segment of locals support the view that terrorist attacks in Europe can be justifiable.

Many locals expressed criticism of European governments, highlighting what was seen as a lack of respect for Muslims and Islam, and although 54 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable,<sup>281</sup> a sizeable minority of 44 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 64). This was despite recent attacks in Paris in November and an attack in Brussels in March

Figure 64: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable?



<sup>280</sup> "As much as I am concerned with Jordanian security, in the end there is something that is legitimate, when there is something you are certain of and is legitimate, you will do it even if the regime opposes it, unless you find the regime more holy than religion. So I pray that God shows us the way." (Male, 25, Imam, Amman)

<sup>281</sup> "I am against the Charlie Hebdo attacks, they see us in this way and they have the freedom to express and criticize any religion even they do the same with the Christ." (Male, 25, Engineer, Amman)

2016. Respondents identified a number of instances where Muslims and their religion had been insulted, including the cartoons published in both the Charlie Hebdo magazine and in Danish newspapers in previous years.<sup>282</sup> Several said that there was widespread anger about the Charlie Hebdo cartoons in particular,<sup>283</sup> and this was also clear in Amman at the time,<sup>284</sup> when large protests were organized that attempted to march to the French embassy.<sup>285</sup> Some respondents also identified the banning of the hijab in France as a significant source of anti-Europe sentiment and interpreted this as evidence of deliberately anti-Islamic policies of the French government. Many stated that they are not in favor of attacks specifically targeting civilians,<sup>286</sup> although a minority maintained that civilian casualties are justifiable provided that the attacks have legitimate targets such as government buildings or members of the JAF or police.<sup>287</sup>

Of those who were in favor of jihad in Europe, most also differentiated between the various countries in Europe, and although some, like Norway, Germany, and Sweden are positively viewed for their readiness to accept refugees, the UK and France are negatively singled out for their involvement in the Iraq war and/or Syrian conflict and for their colonial pasts in the region.<sup>288</sup> Denmark is also blamed for the cartoons published by the Danish media depicting the prophet Mohammad, and Russia for its allegiance with the Assad Regime and for perceived crimes against Muslims in Chechnya and the Caucasus. Some respondents linked this sentiment to broader dislike for prominent Western powers, and recalled that there had been people celebrating in the streets in Amman in 2001 after the attacks on the World Trade

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<sup>282</sup> "People had mixed opinions about jihad in Europe, some of them said they [the European governments] don't respect Islam and Muslims and this was very obvious from the drawings about the Prophet Mohammad in the Charlie Hebdo magazine and before this in the beginning of 2000 in Denmark they did some offensive drawings about Muslims and Islam." (Female, 38, researcher, Amman)

<sup>283</sup> "There were three protests in Amman after the cartoons were published, people were very angry and they still think about it." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>284</sup> "Those drawings hurt and insulted me a lot, I don't know how they dare to talk about prophet Mohammad in such a way, they described him as womanizer and surrounded him with naked women, this was very insulting and they deserve such a response." (Female, 37, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>285</sup> BBC News, 2015. "Protests in Jordan against Charlie Hebdo's cartoon", BBC News, January 16, 2015.

<sup>286</sup> "I think jihad in Europe is justified in certain cases, such as if we want to put pressure on a certain government because of their intervention in X or Y country, I think it is justified, and only if they are targeting military positions or bases." (Female, 42, Schoolteacher, Amman)

<sup>287</sup> "I don't know the 2005 bombing in London were justifiable or not, but I didn't believe sorry for them, I somehow believed it is revenge for what they did in Iraq and their support for the US with the war against Iraq. I know they are innocent people but the people who are killed from the Arab and Muslim countries are always innocent, so let this countries live the life we live, most of the victims of wars are innocent people, women and children, let them live and face what we live and face." (Female, 37, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>288</sup> "People were saying the that European countries are all different, but if we going to talk about the most dominant and strong two countries in Europe then it is Britain and France. They are the root of colonisation and they destroyed many countries. Also in the last 10 years they were involved in the Iraq invasion and now they are involved in the war in Syria. Even after the Paris attacks happened President Holland still started air strikes in Syria. On the other hand they respect other countries who were good with Syrian refugees such as Germany, Sweden and Norway. So most people who responded that jihad in Europe is justifiable were referring to Britain and France because of their foreign policies."

(Female, 38, Researcher, Amman)

Center in New York, although this occurred years before the invasion of Iraq.<sup>289</sup> While several some believe attacks in France and the UK can be justified, many did not support the bombings in Belgium,<sup>290</sup> as Belgium has no negative past in the region,<sup>291</sup> which indicates that advocates and supporters of jihad in Europe are only focused on countries they have specific grievances against.<sup>292</sup> One respondent judged that there are many reasons for pro-jihad responses including interventionism in the region but many are also angry at what they see as the perceived double standards with which the West and the United Nations (UN) approach the value of human life in Europe and in the Middle East. They believed that there is little recognition of, or interest in, the hundreds of Arabs, most of whom are Muslim, dying in Iraq and Syria and elsewhere in the region, while attacks like those in Paris or Belgium are disproportionately covered in the media.<sup>293</sup> These opinions, while ostensibly indicative of a depth of extreme sentiment among many locals, do not necessarily indicate any desire to participate in, or openly support, attacks in Europe or against European targets in Jordan.

*"As they [European countries] think it is justifiable that to kill Arabs and Muslims we should believe the same. They see it is justifiable to intervene in Arab countries and start to do air strikes and send troops like in Iraq and Syria and we don't have such [military] resources but we can reply by doing some jihad operations. They don't like us and they don't want to see our countries improve, look at Iraq it was considered one of the most progressive and developed and educated country in the MENA region and how it has been destroyed put back a hundred years. Yes the US did this but the UK as well as they supported the US in the war against Iraq."*

*(Female, 37, Housewife, Amman)*

<sup>289</sup> "After 9/11 people were celebrating in the streets, they were very happy." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

<sup>290</sup> "In this case, I do not think it's justified, I do not know why they did attacks in Belgium, I do not understand the motives behind these operations I think it's related to personal reasons of those who did this operation, I'm just agreeing with the operations that target colonial countries, those who had a military intervention in the Arab and Muslim countries and those who offend Muslims and Prophet Mohammad and the Islamic religion." (Male, 23, Student, Amman)

<sup>291</sup> "US, France, Russia and the UK are the countries where jihad is most justifiable, but within some countries like Belgium it is not and I prefer such jihad operation be in countries like the US to pay back this snake since it is responsible of all the ruins in the region and they are big supporters of Israel." (Female, 37, Housewife, Amman)

<sup>292</sup> "Of course, jihad is more justifiable against the three countries in Europe who are the most dominant: France, Britain and Russia. The rest of the European countries do not interfere with the region." (Female, 42, Schoolteacher, Amman)

<sup>293</sup> "I believed that a good number of respondents found jihad in Europe justifiable and this might not only be for religiously extremist reasons, but also political reasons such as the Iraq occupation, intervention in some countries like Syria, Libya, Yemen and even in Egypt. They support such operations maybe because they believe the West has double standards for example innocent Arabs and Muslims are killed in their hundreds per day and you never hear anything from General Council or from the United Nations, but when it comes to only one person from the West who is even just injured, not killed, you will find the world is shaking and you will see the General Council and United Nations conduct private sessions to discuss the incident." (Female, 38, Researcher, Amman)

**Focus: Anger and hatred are often expressed toward France in Amman.**

*"Jihad is justified against Denmark and France because the Prophet was insulted in their cartoons, and also France because of its intervention in Libya, and being a part in the coalition that is targeting ISIS and JN in Syria. Jihad against Britain is justified because of its policies and as one of the dominant force in the region that supports America and Israel in their decisions, in addition to the role played by Britain in creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine, those Jihad operations are always justified. Also, the role Britain played in supporting the US during the war on Iraq and fighting AQ in Iraq, and since Britain is a part of the coalition that is targeting ISIS and JN in Syria.*

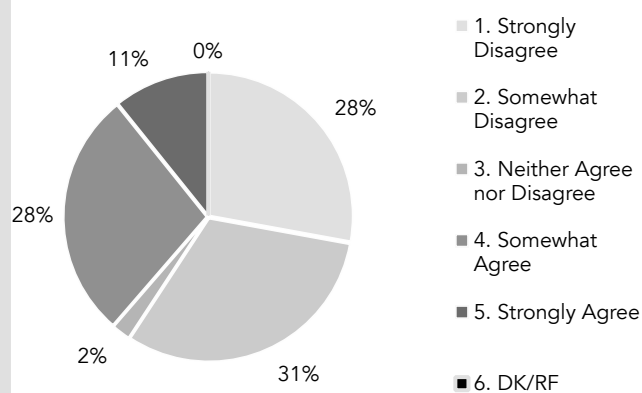
*Violent jihad in Europe is justifiable because the drawings that Denmark and France did about the Prophet Mohammad crossed a red line, and this not only because they are Kuffar, even if this drawing was done by an Arab or a Muslim country then jihad would be justifiable. Jihad is about bringing back our dignity when you hit those countries on their own lands. We must continue to respond to the abuse carried out by the French of the Prophet, they did not apologize for this abuse as a state and did not remove the images from the Internet. I believe that these actions [including the November 2015 attacks] are the defense of our honor as Arabs and Muslims."*

*(Male, 23, Student, Amman)*

**Anti-Shia sentiment is widespread in Amman and is an important driver of VE that VEOs are exploiting.**

Many respondents reported that perceived injustices perpetrated by Shia-led governments in the region against Sunni citizens in those countries, which generally include the Alawite-dominated Syrian government and the Iraqi government, has fueled resentment and made people in their communities more vulnerable to sectarian VE narratives. They judge that many Sunni locals are hostile toward Shias because they see them as a threat and believe that Shias are expanding their influence and/or direct control across the Middle East. They see this process as led by Iran, making it more of a danger even than Israel, the traditional target of local hatred.<sup>294</sup> Many locals also interpret the

Figure 65: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable?



<sup>294</sup> "It has no impact, but in the Shia-Sunni conflict since 2005 most Jordanians see the Shia as a stronger enemy than Israel, there is a hostility issue between Sunnis and Shias. There have been campaigns in Jordan against anti-Shia hate speech, which seem to be having an impact." (Female, 33, Activist, Amman)

Syrian conflict as one where Sunnis are suffering at the hands of Shias,<sup>295</sup> which causes people in their communities to feel a sense of duty to protect Sunni Syrians.<sup>296</sup> VEOs including ISIS are playing on this existing groundswell of sectarian feeling to appeal to locals, particularly youths, and to drive recruitment.<sup>297</sup> However, sectarian sentiment was not shared by the majority of locals, as 59 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable, although a sizeable minority of 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed with that statement (see Figure 65).

*"Unfortunately there is sectarian dialogue among us. Maybe not in our practical lives but if you read the social media outlets here, you can find that it's there. For example, you can find someone posting a video that speaks out against Shias or other sects very easily, because unfortunately there is a sectarian war in Syria and Iraq. So it's normal that most youths have this reaction and because there's no solution for the war that's why the youths follow this kind of sectarian dialogue. I think many youths believe in that, which is shown by the number of Jordanians going there to fight and I'm sure even more believe it's acceptable to go there to fight but maybe they did not get the chance to leave."*

*(Male, 27, Student, Amman)*

**The majority of locals see VEO members as able fighters with a strong sense of mutual solidarity, boosting their appeal to youths.**

Many respondents stated that people in their communities believe VEO members are able fighters, and several used the tactical success of ISIS, which is believed at one point to have almost reached the Syrian capital Damascus, as evidence of its perceived military prowess. As a result, 53 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that members of VEOs are skilled fighters, while 46 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 66). Members of groups like ISIS and JN are also widely assumed to take care of one another and to have a strong sense of group solidarity. 55 percent of Amman GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that members of VEOs always look after each other, while 44 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 67). As long as these generally positive assumptions persist about the qualities of the average VEO member, many of whom are male youths, VEOs will continue to

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<sup>295</sup> "I think the biggest reason why they go [to Syria] is their ideology or religious belief. If the youth have strong feelings toward a certain sect and they see that their people are being victimized and tortured in a certain place they believe that if they go there they can help them" (Male, 27, Student, Amman)

<sup>296</sup> "I believe that the main reason for people going to Syria is to save their Sunni brothers and sisters." (Male, 29, Businessman, Amman)

<sup>297</sup> "Sectarianism is the main issue ISIS works with now, that the real danger is the Shias, and this is what they focus on. This Sunni vs. Shia narrative is very common now and widely spread, although in Jordan we barely have Shias, however there is a lot of hatred toward them, which is very strange. People know that ISIS is fighting a jihad against Iran and its extension in the region, and they're convinced that ISIS is protecting us from Iran's extension toward us. I formed this opinion from my all the things I have read including articles, books and on Facebook, and I've heard it from people as well, even my colleagues at work they believe that ISIS are the ones who are preventing Iran from spreading" (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

appeal to this demographic through the offer of adventure, comradeship and 'glamour' of war in what they stress is a socially and religiously just cause.

*"Yes, they are seen as strong fighters and they are seen as a gang and nobody can get rid of them so despite this huge coalition including the US, Jordan and the Gulf Countries being against them, it hasn't been able to stop them expanding; they have almost reached Damascus."*

*(Female, 33, Activist, Amman)*

Figure 66: To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs are skilled fighters?

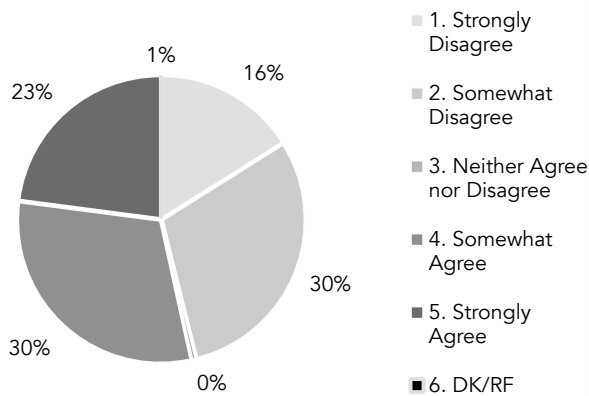


Figure 67: To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs always look after each other?

