

Drivers And Barriers Impacting Propensity Toward Violent Extremism

MAFRAQ: TARGET LOCATION ANALYSIS



Alathaar area, Mafraq governorate.

November 2016

This report provides Target Location-specific findings as part of a larger study entitled, "Factors Influencing Propensity Toward Violent Extremism and Influence Pathways Toward Extremism in Jordan."

Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION	4
2.0 ISLAMIST AND VEO SUPPORT	7
2.1 Support for VEOs	7
2.2 Support for Political and Non-Violent Islamist Groups.....	15
3.0 BASIC NEEDS DRIVERS AND BARRIERS.....	20
3.1 Education and Employment.....	20
3.2 Utilities and Services	31
3.3 Economy, Housing and Debt.....	35
4.0 GOVERNANCE DRIVERS AND BARRIERS.....	38
4.1 Central and Local Governance	38
4.2 Law Enforcement	48
4.3 Human Rights and Civil Liberties.....	51
5.0 PSYCHOSOCIAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS.....	53
5.1 Locus of Control.....	53
5.2 Religious Values, Attitudes and Beliefs.....	56
5.3 Exposure to Crime and Conflict	59
5.4 Exposure to VE and Perceptions of VEO Threat	65
6.0 EXTERNAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS.....	71
6.1 Perceived Impact of Foreign Relations	71
6.2 Perceived Impact Of Foreign And Domestic Interventionism	72
7.0 COMMUNICATION DRIVERS AND BARRIERS.....	82
7.1 The Role of Violent Extremism Propaganda.....	82
7.2 The Role of the Media	88
7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives	91

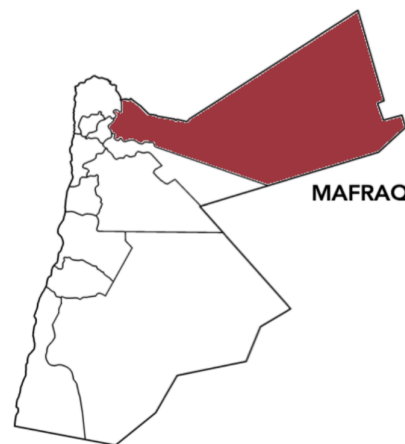
List of Acronyms

AQ:	Al Qa'ida
CVE:	Counter Violent Extremism
DI:	Depth Interview
DK:	'Don't Know' (GQ Answers)
FSA:	Free Syrian Army
GID:	General Intelligence Directorate (Jordan)
GQ:	Guided Questionnaire
IAF:	Islamic Action Front
ILO:	International Labor Organization
ISIS:	Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham
JAF:	Jordanian Armed Forces
JD:	Jordanian Dinar
JN:	Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) ¹
MB:	Muslim Brotherhood
MP:	Member of Parliament
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
PMF:	Popular Mobilization Forces
RF:	'Refuse to Answer' (GQ Answers)
USD:	US Dollar
VE:	Violent Extremism
VEO:	Violent Extremist Organization

¹ 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.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Despite its geographical proximity to the turbulence in neighboring Iraq and Syria, Mafrq is not one of Jordan's violent extremism (VE) hubs. Likewise, compared with neighboring Irbid, its accommodation of violent extremist organization (VEO) influences appears to be minimal. Indeed, a significant explanation for Mafrq's relatively lower levels of VE is the strong tribal influences that prevail in the governorate. To an extent, local tribes serve to insulate youth from foreign manipulative forces as represented by VEO recruiters. Furthermore, Mafrq's tribes are loyal to the regime – that is, the king more than the government – and correspondingly hostile to oppositional political Islamists. The latter include the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) as well as regional VEOs, and tribes have demonstrated their objection to these groups through physical confrontation. In addition to the obstacles the tribes pose to VE, Mafrq's topographic and demographic particularities render it ill-suited to the ambitions of VEO operatives. For instance, the governorate consists predominantly of desert settlements, where sparsely populated and socially cohesive communities are highly attuned to local activities and the presence of strangers. Nonetheless, although not having encountered VE first-hand, the majority of respondents expressed concerns about a discernible increase in VE. Most locals associate this growing threat with the substantial influx of Syrian refugees into Mafrq following the intensification of the Syrian conflict. For example, in attempting to identify VE threats inside Mafrq, most respondents singled out local refugee camps, where there are suspicions that VEO sleeper cells are operating. A less proximate link between Syrian refugees and VEOs is related to the pressures they have introduced into the job market and the housing market, as well as the strains on local resources and inflation of local prices. This has affected some of Mafrq's poorest areas, including Rwaished district, Bal'ama district, Badiyah Gharbiyah district, Khaldiyyah town (Khaldiyyah district), Za'atari village and Irbah district. In these locations, youth unemployment rates are exceptionally high and services are exceptionally poor. Consequently, there are large numbers of frustrated and idle youth seeking alternative livelihood options. Compounding these problems is Mafrq's distinct lack of leisure facilities for young people, including sports centers, parks and restaurants, which are especially scarce in Badia regions.



One consequence of endemic youth idleness is high rates of drug abuse and drug trade across the governorate, which many respondents associated with VE. This is especially apparent in areas such as Salhiya district, Sabha City (Sabha district), Dafyaneh (Sabha district), Khaldiyyah district, Irbah district, Za'atari village and Mafrq City. Furthermore, deterioration in livelihoods following the influx of refugees is generating grievances and creating additional physical needs that VEOs have been attempting to exploit, with some success. They have achieved this largely through material provision, but also through the promotion of effective narratives that resonate with disaffected youth. For example, while Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS) has gained a reputation among locals for providing generous financial rewards to its recruits, it has also been adept at inculcating in young men a sense of obligation to contribute to the "resistance" against the Syrian regime. Alongside this narrative, ISIS and other VEOs are

competing to present themselves as effective 'liberation' movements in a bid to attract duty-bound recruits. Another of the main ideas advanced by VEOs is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. This has proven particularly appealing to locals, many of whom wish to see an end to US global hegemony and a return to the Islamic empires of the past. A necessary resistance against a regional Shia expansion is an additional VEO narrative with particular resonance in Mafrq, where Sunni-Shia sectarianism is widely accepted. Meanwhile, Salafist Jihadists and VEOs are capitalizing on opportunities to undermine the Jordanian regime in order to present themselves and their ideological principles as a legitimate alternative. High levels of support for Sharia supremacy, opposition to the West and Israel, and deteriorating living standards all provide potential avenues of affinity between Mafrq's residents and VEOs, as well as points of division between residents and the Jordanian regime.

Instrumental to the promotion of these various messages has been VEO's social media messaging - especially via Facebook and Twitter. Disconcertingly, many of the narratives promoted via these platforms have been complemented by popular media material, thus potentially strengthening the appeal of these groups. VEOs have also used the Internet for more active interaction with prospective recruits in Mafrq. Indeed, findings suggested that VEOs typically initiate communication via social media - usually Facebook - in order to establish a basic relationship before arranging physical meetings. Even then, as a precautionary measure they tend to limit their encounters to small closed groups - including in mosques.

Among all of the VEOs in question, Hamas is the only organization that receives substantial levels of support due to the perceived legitimacy of its primary agenda, i.e., resistance to Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. On the other hand, VEOs active in Syria have a negative reputation among locals. More so than any other VEO, respondents objected to ISIS on the grounds that it is excessively violent and un-Islamic. This perception is influenced by the organization's brutality toward Muslim civilians - especially its cruelty toward women. ISIS' immolation of Moath Al Kasasbeh served to amplify local hostility toward the group. Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) (JN) enjoys relatively higher levels of support than ISIS due to its supposed greater clarity of objective in combating the Syrian regime, and a comparative dearth of media attention exposing the group's atrocities. However, it is nonetheless widely unpopular due to its violent methodologies, which seem to be well known. Meanwhile, Al Qa'ida (AQ) is more popular than both JN and ISIS, despite recognition among many respondents that it is responsible for the inception of the latter two organizations. Salafist Jihadists more generally are unpopular in Mafrq. Indeed, they receive lower levels of support than JN or AQ, suggesting that the latter two are disassociated from Salafist Jihadism. But in their favor, Salafist Jihadists have been relatively successful at presenting themselves as a socially supportive movement, which has potential appeal in Mafrq where there is an increasing sense of socio-economic and political neglect.

Many respondents were positive about the role of the MB in Mafrq, praising it for its socio-cultural contributions that constitute a potential barrier to VEOs. However, quantitative findings revealed high levels of opposition to the group - notably its political wing, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) - which is consistent with tribal aversion to political Islam in Mafrq. Salafist Quietists on the other hand, represent a non-political Islamist movement for the majority of locals. For this reason, as well as their representation of 'moderate Islam' and active community engagement, they are very popular in Mafrq. However, perhaps because they restrict their discourse to 'soft' topics, such as observance of the five pillars of Islam, Salafist Quietists are thought to have very little influence, certainly in terms of countering violent extremism. Similarly, many locals lack confidence in the government's ability and desire to mount an

ideological and structural challenge to the influence of violent extremists. The challenge of effectively countering violent extremism is compounded by an absence of influential moderate religious leaders in Mafraq, many of whom are considered to be lacking adequate religious education.

2.0 ISLAMIST AND VEO SUPPORT

2.1 SUPPORT FOR VEOs

Apart from Hamas, regional VEOs are unpopular, although some more than others due to the extent of their atrocities and violence toward women.

Proud of their dedication to “true Islam,” Mafraq’s public rejected the legitimacy of most regional VEOs on the grounds that their violence violates Islamic principles. This is particularly true of ISIS, whose brutality toward women is well documented. For one respondent, such brutality contravenes the dictates of the Prophet Mohammad who is understood to have forbidden the slaughter of women and the elderly,¹ along with children. But although ISIS apparently sets the benchmark for brutality, locals regard other VEOs such as AQ and JN as similarly extreme and illegitimate. This is largely based on their self-serving motives, their violence against civilians and their general criminality. What little support there has been for VEOs in Mafraq has contracted following attacks on Jordanian soil or against Jordanian nationals, such as ISIS’ immolation of Moath Al Kasasbeh in January 2015, the Irbid raid on an alleged ISIS cell in March 2016, and the attacks on both Baqa’a Camp in June 2016 and Ruqban Camp in June 2016.

“Hamas is fighting one enemy, which is Israel, and is not trying to control the lands of others. Hamas seeks freedom for its land. However, ISIS and Nusra [JN] are trying to control the lands of others and do not have a clear enemy. We feel that ISIS’ enemy is the people who are not involved; it [ISIS] controls and murders them. Al Qa’ida does not have a specific objective other than bombing targets. ISIS, Al Nusra and Al Qa’ida have a resemblance in that their criminal tactics and murder lack purpose, and that most of their victims are civilians.”

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

ISIS is the most pervasive VEO in Mafraq, but the majority objects to the group and considers its brutality un-Islamic.

Among regional VEOs, ISIS receives the most public attention. This has mixed consequences for ISIS’ levels of support. Many respondents were appalled by the ISIS atrocities they were aware of, which ultimately have the potential to serve as deterrents against the organization.² Most significantly, ISIS’ immolation of Moath Al Kasasbeh has reinforced local revulsion against the organization,³ with one respondent asserting that the act was a breach of Sharia law. In a certain respect, the immolation of Al Kasasbeh has backfired on ISIS, as many residents now regard the pilot a martyr – a symbol of legitimate

¹ “This is not Islam. The Prophet Mohammad in his wars asked people not to kill women or the elderly.” (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

² “I was with a group called Al Ansari [Jaysh Al Islam]. Our mission was to support and emphasize the areas after ISIS enters the area. I was doing inspection for everything and I ran away from them because of their horrible ways in killing people in addition to the many ways they used to torture, rape, displace, and execute people.” (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

³ “ISIS is known for its terrible killings that are ugly - like what they did to Moath [Al Kasasbeh]: we hate them for that.” (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

resistance against a malevolent force. The unlawfulness of ISIS is a widespread source of local contempt, as is its seizure of Islamic land. More generally, several respondents argued that there was no religious or logical reasoning behind ISIS' atrocities, notably those committed against fellow Muslims, women, children and the elderly.⁴ The organization's violence toward women is a particular source of loathing for locals, as articulated by one individual who observed such transgression first hand.⁵ The extent of these atrocities and the organization's extreme ideological interpretations has led some locals to compare ISIS with the ancient violent extremist group, the *Khawarij*.⁶ Far from supporting the takfirist policies of ISIS and the *Khawarij*, most locals advocate religious tolerance and freedom (see 5.2 Religious Values, Attitudes and Beliefs and section 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). Accordingly, ISIS' forceful imposition of its religious ideologies on others is a source of local contempt and a breach of Islamic principles.⁷ This was reflected in quantitative findings, with an overwhelming 98 percent of Mafraq Guided Questionnaire (GQ) respondents reporting that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while only one percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for ISIS in their community (see Figure 2).

Aside from generating public outrage toward the group, coverage and circulation of ISIS' activities may be inspiring some youths to support it. For example, the knowledge that there are Jordanian nationals occupying high positions within ISIS' ranks – such as Omar Mahdi Al Zaydan and Saad Al Hunayti - has the potential to serve as a pull factor for young, ambitious individuals seeking social status.⁸ That said, public exposure to Shia and US activities in the region may also be inspiring support for ISIS. One respondent specifically alluded to events in June 2016 following the 'liberation' of Fallujah by the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), after which Sunni civilians are reported to have suffered abuse at the hands of divisions within the PMF – namely Hezbollah.⁹ Yet hard evidence of local support for ISIS in Mafraq is scant. One example is the March 2015 security raid on six alleged ISIS operatives, all of whom were reportedly Syrian.¹⁰ Aside from this, there are persistent rumors in the governorate about locals who

⁴ "With respect to ISIS, it is not abiding by the religion of Islam. Islam prohibits the killing of a soul - children, elderly, youngsters and women - and ISIS kills for absurd reasons - reasons that are far from the principles of religion. They also occupy Islamic land and kill Muslims. For example, they kill a female doctor for curing a male, or a person who does not know the exact prayer time by heart. There are mosques and mobile applications; there is no need to memorize prayer times. Islam does not prohibit this; they implement the Islamic Sharia in an irrational manner." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁵ "They would enter the houses and do whatever they wanted to do. They raped women and if they tried to refuse they would kill them or they would rape them and then kill them. They were even raping married women." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

⁶ "I see them [ISIS] as the *Khawarij* of this age." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

⁷ "They want to force their ideology on everyone - they want a state of khalifa, and this is far away from Islam." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁸ "Youth of ages 16-20: they are excited youth and there are people who like the ideas of the Islamic caliphate, and the idea to go and become an emir, as well as other ideas of Daesh. They also hear that there are Jordanian emirs in Daesh." (Female, 50 Retiree, Mafraq)

⁹ Dearden, Lizzie 2016. "Up to 900 refugees from Fallujah feared dead after being kidnapped by anti-ISIS militia in Iraq", *The Independent*, July 05 2016.

¹⁰ Albawaba News 2015. 'Daesh cell discovered in Jordan', *Albawaba News*, March 17, 2015.

secretly sympathize with ISIS, and speculation about frequent unannounced security raids on the group's affiliates – notably in Mafraq City and Za'atari Camp.¹¹

"Daesh: we hear about their extremism that doesn't belong to Islam at all. For example, a woman who doesn't cover her face - they kill her. The biggest example is what they did with [the] martyr Moath Al Kasasbeh. Why did they burn him? A fighter pilot who fights extremism and the things that are outlawed from our religion and customs - he should be treated like a war prisoner according to Islamic Sharia and not get burned."

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

There is recognition that AQ is the genesis of ISIS and JN, and while most object to the group's terrorist activities, some regard it as less extreme than ISIS.

Many residents in Mafraq trace the origins of ISIS to the central AQ organization as currently led by Ayman Al Zawahiri. As far as some locals are concerned, the two organizations are ideologically identical. Similarly, both groups are condemned for their brutality against civilians - including non-Muslims - such as AQ's 2005 Amman bombings. Yet while several respondents appeared unable to clearly distinguish between AQ and ISIS,¹² others regarded the former as less heinous than ISIS as it is not seen to have targeted women or committed atrocities with the same degree of savagery.¹³ Another explanation for why locals view AQ as less brutal than ISIS may be that the organization and its activities have not received so much media attention as the latter.¹⁴ Consequently, some respondents described a distinct lack of awareness of the group within Mafraq, especially since around 2011.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the vast majority across Mafraq view AQ negatively. For example, 87 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while 11 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for AQ in their community (see Figure 2). In addition to its links with ISIS, one respondent also recognized AQ as the genesis of JN, and claimed that AQ roots could account for the organizational and marketing capacity of ISIS and JN – supposedly inherited from AQ.¹⁶

"The ideology of Al Qa'ida and ISIS is identical; all we hear about them is murder, terrorism, captivity and things against the religion." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹¹ "Some people in Mafraq say that there are Jordanians from Mafraq who secretly sympathize with ISIS, and that there are daily raids on Jordanians and Syrians that are not announced - especially in the city of Mafraq and Za'atari area." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

¹² "I know that Al Qa'ida and ISIS are the same. What happened in the hotel explosions - they said it was Al Qa'ida and then [they] said [it was] ISIS, so it's basically the same thing." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

¹³ "They [AQ] wanted to blow up the hotels in Amman but not like ISIS - they burn people and take the women." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁴ "We heard little about Bin Laden - not like ISIS or Nusra [JN]." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁵ "Since the events in Iraq, we heard nothing of them [AQ]." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

¹⁶ "They [ISIS and JN] organized themselves. They also had previous experience from Al Qa'ida. They knew how to attract people. Al Qa'ida was the mother that gave birth to ISIS and Jabhat Al Nusra." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

Locals equate JN violence with that of ISIS, but know little of the group's activities.

Although it receives more media attention than AQ, JN enjoys relatively little public exposure in Mafrag compared with ISIS. Consequently, several respondents were unable to provide an informed assessment of the group other than claiming that it has religious motives.¹⁷ However, those with more awareness of JN were generally very critical of what they considered its unreligious barbarity toward civilians, and they compared them to the atrocities committed by ISIS. These individuals viewed the organization's actions as unprincipled and unjust.¹⁸ Based on quantitative findings, this perception accords with the majority in Mafrag: 89 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while nine percent reported that there is strong or some support for JN in their community (see Figure 2). Aside from JN's methodology, one respondent commented on its structure. He suggested that, though it is organized, the group does not enjoy the same level of resources and support as ISIS, and that this – rather than ideology – could explain why its activities are confined to Syria.¹⁹ Another distinction between ISIS and JN is in their media strategies. While ISIS frequently publishes video recordings of gory executions, JN appears to avoid publicizing material that might shock its audience and attract accusations of brutality. Instead, much of its propaganda is focused on religious messaging, although it occasionally releases video footage of successful attacks.²⁰ This more subtle approach may explain why respondents were less aware of JN's activities, including its local recruitment drives.²¹ The group's peculiar media strategies might also account for a more nuanced opinion of JN among certain locals in Mafrag. For example, one respondent maintained that, unlike ISIS, JN is not a terrorist group but a jihadist organization. It is apparently JN's eschewal of violent media propaganda that partly determines this distinction.²² This is in addition to the group's supposed clarity of objective – to defend Syrian communities from violent forces.²³ Accordingly, the group's highest levels of support within Mafrag have reportedly come from the Syrian elements of the population. Consistent with JN's own activity being less flamboyant than that of ISIS, these supporters appear to be less vocal. For example, despite quantitative

¹⁷ "I don't know anything about Al Nusra Front. I know that it is an organization that works in the name of religion, but I don't know to what degree it applies religion." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrag)

¹⁸ "Executions are simple for them [JN]. They kill people for reasons not mentioned in religion and none of these groups are controlled by religious people. Each group works according to what suits it: they are chaotic and work against the people." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrag)

¹⁹ "I've never heard that Jabhat Al Nusra did any work outside Syria. If they had tools like ISIS, then they would do like them. I don't know their intentions, but I know that they have fewer supporters and less money [...] I see them as the same as ISIS but with fewer capabilities. ISIS has a big budget." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrag)

²⁰ Benotman, Noman & Roisin Blake 2013. 'Jabhat al-Nusra: a strategic briefing', Quillam Foundation, January 8, 2013.

²¹ "[I joined] because ISIS was already one the largest organizations, and inspired its people to recruit young people. And what I heard about their victories [made me join]. I never heard that Nusra recruited people." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

²² "In my opinion, ISIS is a terrorist group. Nusra is a jihadist group since it doesn't hurt humanity by video recording a person being killed by a sword." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafrag)

²³ "ISIS objectives are not known [...] The clear image of Nusra Front is that it is a jihadist group [...] a jihadist group since it is defending Muslims and their land. It doesn't do what ISIS does - terrorize and kill." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafrag)

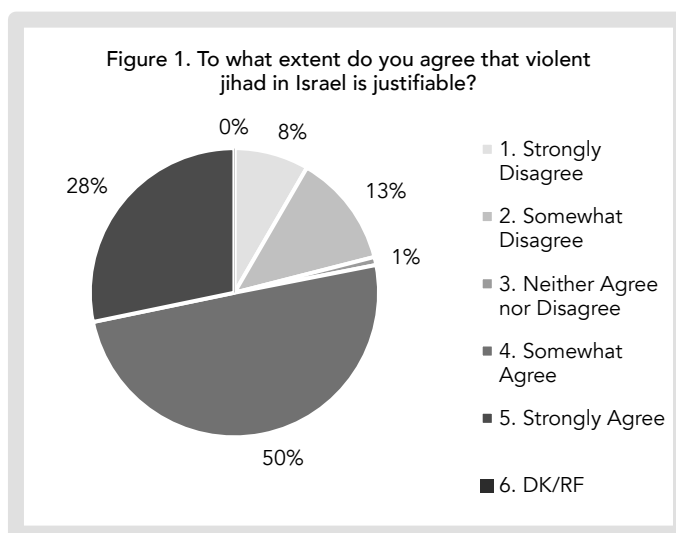
results showing that the organization receives greater levels of support than ISIS, several respondents were of the impression that ISIS is more popular than JN.²⁴

"Even Nusra is like them [ISIS]. They don't differ from each other; they all want to steal, plunder and rape women. And then they tell you that they are the Islamic religion and that the 'Heaven is ours'."

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

Locals view Hamas as a genuine resistance organization defending Islam from a 'Jewish oppressor'.

According to local residents, Hamas' principle objectives are to defend Palestine from an Israeli oppressor and fight Jews.²⁵ With the majority of citizens identifying Jews as the enemies of Islam and the occupiers of Islamic land, these objectives receive high commendation. Several respondents also praised the organization's methodology, namely its "martyrdom operations" on behalf of Palestinians.²⁶ Furthermore, there is a widespread view in Mafraq that Hamas is an Islamic movement representative of all Muslims, not only Palestinians.²⁷ Indeed, one respondent articulated an Islamic duty to commit jihad in Palestine,²⁸ and quantitative



findings suggested widespread sympathy with this viewpoint across the governorate. For example, 78 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 21 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad in Israel is justifiable (see Figure 1). Hamas' "legitimate" motives render it distinct from VEOs as far as the public is concerned,²⁹ as does its perceived eschewal of brutality. A number of additional apparent distinctions that set Hamas apart from other VEOs are its focus on a single enemy as opposed to several, its avoidance of criminal behavior such as theft, and its mercy

²⁴ "There are people who support ISIS. However, I have never heard of people who support Al Nusra." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

²⁵ "I don't think they [Hamas] are the same as Daesh. It is an organization that fights and resists the Israeli occupation; they are a resistance. If it had any other activities that are similar to Daesh or Al Qa'ida then I've never heard about that." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

²⁶ "[Hamas] is defending the Palestinians and their right of return. Hamas played a major obvious role in Palestine through martyrdom operations." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

²⁷ "In the current situation, the only group that is facing Israel is Hamas; Hamas is trying to return the Al Aqsa mosque to all Muslims not to Palestinians only." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

²⁸ "The Islamic nation's duty is to go for jihad in Palestine." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

²⁹ "In the case of Hamas, it is defending Gaza and its county. It works on eliminating the Jews - the enemies of Islam...they are different because they are resisting an occupying enemy." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

toward civilians.³⁰ One respondent also bestowed upon Hamas a credible socio-political status, citing the group's civil and military employment structure as reflective of this, along with its widespread support.³¹ Despite these unanimous expressions of approval, 59 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while 40 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hamas in their community (see Figure 2).

"We can't say that a movement such as Hamas is similar to ISIS or Nusra. On the contrary, Hamas is a moderate Islamic movement; we have never seen it killing its own public nor people, nor even trying to control anything in its way. Nor does it slaughter. Hamas is an Islamic movement that seeks to free its land and people from the Jews, who originally came and stole the Palestinian's land, slaughtered Palestinians and took Al Aqsa [Mosque]."

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

Salafist Jihadists currently have low levels of support, but have a reputation for internal socio-economic support and group solidarity, potentially strengthening their appeal.

The ideological clashes between the 'Zarqawists' and the 'Maqdisi wing' of the Jordanian Salafist Jihadist movement have been well documented.³² This division has attracted particular attention, since several prominent members of the 'Zarqawist' faction – including Abu Mohammad Al Tahawi, Omar Mahdi Al Zaydan, and Saad Al Hunayti – pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2014. Yet for some locals, the movement has maintained a reputation as a socially supportive network with strong internal unity. One respondent articulated this perception, emphasizing the spiritual, logistical and economic support that Salafist Jihadists cultivate. If this outlook was intended to refer exclusively to the cohesion within each wing of the movement, rather than to the movement as a whole, the respondent did not indicate such a distinction. Nevertheless, if this perception is widespread – as quantitative findings appear to suggest (see 3.1 Education and Employment) - it is likely that the Salafist Jihadist current is appealing to socio-culturally marginalized individuals seeking a sense of belonging. The same respondent also claimed that Salafist Jihadists are the most active VE movement in Jordan, yet questioned whether they are successfully resonating with the public.³³ However, quantitative findings about the group's popularity indicated that they are not doing so on a large scale. For example, 91 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while only 7 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Salafist Jihadists in their community (see Figure 2).

"[Salafist Jihadists] are united in many ways; they always support each other economically and

³⁰ "Hamas is fighting against one enemy. Hamas doesn't kill civilians, and it doesn't kill to steal as well." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

³¹ "Hamas has supporters and a governmental system. It has civilian employees and military employees." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

³² Sowell, Kirk H. 2015. 'Jordanian Salafism and the Jihad in Syria', Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, May 18, 2015.

³³ "In terms of active extremism groups, I believe that the most active group is the Salafist [Jihadist] group; we always see their leaders such as Abu Sayyaf establishing meetings with the affiliate. In terms of their voice, I can't say that it's heard, but they have a voice." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

spiritually. For example, when one of them was imprisoned, the group took care of the imprisoned person's family. If any of them has an occasion - whether a happy or a sad one - they provide him with whatever he needs such as tables and chairs. I witnessed that last year in Zarqa: one of them [Salafist Jihadists] had a condolences house and the group took care of everything for him."

(Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrq)

Hizb ut-Tahrir is largely unpopular, despite its public campaigning and attempts to display solidarity with local tribes and refugees.

Ideologically, Hizb ut-Tahrir is well aligned with Mafrq's majority on major regional issues. For example, the organization positions itself strongly as anti-US movement (see 6.2 Perceived Impact of Foreign and Domestic Interventionism) and champions the non-violent establishment of an Islamic caliphate as well as the supremacy of Sharia law (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). It is also a strong advocate for jihad in Israel and is outspoken in its objection to the Syrian regime and ISIS. Meanwhile, the organization has been reasonably active in Mafrq despite its outlaw status. For example, in 2014, Hizb ut-Tahrir member Usama Al Mashabqeh was arrested in Mafrq for distributing flyers containing criticism of the US invasion of Iraq. The organization has also attempted to win support among Syrian refugees in Mafrq. For instance, during Ramadan 2012, the group's Jordanian spokesperson, Mamdouh Qtishat, organized an *iftar* (the meal breaking the daily fast) event for Syrian refugees. The organization used this opportunity as a platform to promote the idea of an Islamic caliphate and call for absolute Sharia law in Jordan. Members of the organization have also made attempts to show solidarity with tribal members in Mafrq. For example, in February 2016, a delegation of Hizb ut-Tahrir members attended a gathering of Bani Hassan affiliates in order to congratulate a local family on the release of their son from prison.³⁴ However, despite these efforts and the organization's ideological symmetry with locals, quantitative findings suggest that Hizb ut-Tahrir is overwhelming unpopular in Mafrq: 74 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while only 17 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hizb ut-Tahrir in their community (see Figure 2). This strong opposition is likely to be partly driven by the group's outlawing by the Jordanian regime, to which there is strong loyalty in Mafrq (see 4.1 Central and Local Governance). Indeed, Badia-based tribal representatives in Mafrq have explicitly demonstrated their intolerance to anti-state activism (see 4.1 Central and Local Governance). Thus, the June 2014 arrest of a Hizb ut-Tahrir activist after his public criticism of Jordan's key international allies - notably the US - outside a mosque in Mafrq City,³⁵ will be welcomed, rather than opposed by local regime-committed tribes. Similarly, the organization's social attempts to win over tribes are unlikely to be very effective.

³⁴ Hizb ut-Tahrir Central Media Office 2016. 'Wilayah Jordan: Congratulations to the Almashaqaba family on the release of their family member Osama Almashaqaba from the prisons of darkness', Hizb ut-Tahrir Central Media Office, February 6, 2016.

³⁵ Editorial 2014. 'Arresting Shabab of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Jordan will not deter them from exposing the conspiracies of the kuffar', The Khilafah, June 26, 2014.

Hezbollah receives support from a significant minority.

Because Hezbollah has very few, if any activities inside Mafrq, locals have little empirical experience upon which to base their opinions of the organization. Thus, relative support or opposition to the group is based predominantly on its regional activities, geopolitical and religious representation, as well as its ideological doctrine. Although Hezbollah has clearly established its anti-US and anti-Israeli position, which strongly correlates with the majority viewpoint in Mafrq, it is also a known ally of the locally unpopular Assad regime and Iran, and is representative of militant Shia Islam in the region, which many identify as a considerable threat and a major enemy (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). There are also indications that Hezbollah poses a potential threat closer to home. For example, in August 2015, Jordanian authorities convicted eight individuals on charges of plotting terrorist attacks within the country on behalf of Hezbollah, as well as pursuing recruitment drives for the organization.³⁶ Furthermore, the huge numbers of displaced Syrians now living in Mafrq are contributing to the negative reputation of Hezbollah by recounting atrocities committed by the organization in their Syrian hometowns. This includes the group's destruction of homes and raping of women.³⁷ However, quantitative findings indicated that relative to other VEOs – bar Hamas – Hezbollah enjoys relatively high levels of support in Mafrq. That said, in absolute terms, the negative factors associated with Hezbollah overwhelmingly trump any ideological affinity it has with locals: 72 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while 24 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hezbollah in their community (see Figure 2).

³⁶ Halaby, Jamal J. 2015. 'Jordan convicts 8 Hezbollah suspects on terror charges', The Arab Weekly. August 7, 2015.

³⁷ Greenwood, Phoebe 2013. 'Rape and domestic violence follow Syrian women into refugee camps', The Guardian, July 25, 2013.

2.2 SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL AND NON-VIOLENT ISLAMIST GROUPS

Especially among urban residents, the MB enjoys support and represents a barrier to VEOs.

Although respondents were critical of the Egyptian-based MB, they praised the Jordanian MB. With that in mind, respondents did not distinguish between the traditional Jordanian MB and the more recent divisions that have emerged within the organization, such as the Zamzam initiative and the MB Society.³⁸ Yet for most local residents, the MB in Jordan is certainly distinct from the Egyptian MB, and in terms of extremism constitutes little more than a peaceful political movement.³⁹ In fact, some respondents drew distinctions between the Jordanian MB objectives and those of Salafists. One respondent, for instance, depicted the former as a non-violent political organization in contrast with the supposed aggressive ideological agendas of the latter.⁴⁰ The MB's formal rejection of terrorism and takfirist ideology, as expressed in the organization's endorsement of the Amman Message, is one way in which it has promoted this moderate image and distinguished itself from extremist movements. Although the majority disassociated the Jordanian MB from its parent movement, the Jordanian chapter nonetheless appears to have gained a degree of acceptability over time based on events within the structure of the wider MB movement. For instance, one respondent associated the organization's perceived transition from extremism to moderation with the dissolution of the mother-organization's military wing after the Arab-Israeli War.⁴¹ Some locals admire the active social contributions of the organization. For example, based on its religious and diplomatic engagement, as well as its Islamic principles, several respondents suggested that the organization nurtures awareness and integrity in its members, including youth. This is supposedly manifest in statements released by the organization – occasionally broadcast on TV – that condemn VE.⁴² One example may be the statement made by the MB political wing – the IAF – in February 2015 denouncing ISIS' murder of Moath Al Kasasbeh.⁴³ Also exemplary of the MB's youth engagement is the "Political Memoirs" project. The project entailed events whereby MB elders shared their wisdom and experience with younger members in an effort to bridge the generational gap and strengthen intra-organizational respect.⁴⁴ The MB has also sought to expand youth opportunities within the organization itself and enhance its reflection of youth values. This was inherent in its September 2014 Student and

³⁸ Omari, Raed 2016. 'Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood has become one big mess', Al Arabiya, January 4, 2016.

³⁹ "They do not have a bloody history and they are a peaceful opposition. It is true that they look to take over the rule, but they do not kill or practice terrorism. They oppose with a peaceful method. For example, what happened in Egypt during the eighties with the Muslim Brotherhood - they committed murders, slaughters and explosions against the state institutions. This did not happen in Jordan" (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁴⁰ "The Muslim Brotherhood group is peaceful; we never heard of them calling for jihad or protesting that consisted of destroying stores or attacking people. The Muslim Brotherhood is a political group while Salafists want to create change by their hands and impose their opinion on the people." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

⁴¹ "The Muslim Brotherhood group had a military wing before. There was religious extremism but now it is a peaceful group." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

⁴² "[The MB] released many statements against extremism. Many of these statements we see on TV. After every incident they go out and say that they are against terrorism. For example, if they don't release statements people will doubt their loyalty." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁴³ Middle East Monitor 2015. 'Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood condemns pilot execution', Middle East Monitor, February 4, 2015.

⁴⁴ Bondokji, Neven 2015. 'The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan: time to reform', Brookings Institution, April 2015.

Youth Congress. In addition to these specific examples, the MB conducts regular events within its Mafraq Qur'anic Centers.

Initiatives like those highlighted here, respondents claimed, are inimical to VE and serve to curb the expansion of local VEOs – a belief that is shared by many others across the country.⁴⁵ Moreover, the MB is known for its recreational youth programs. These initiatives, crucially in a governorate such as Mafraq where leisure facilities are notoriously scarce (see 3.2 Utilities and Services), serve to assuage the idleness and boredom of local youth – tendencies that are linked to drug abuse and susceptibility to VE (see 5.3 Exposure to Crime and Conflict).⁴⁶ Thus, the closure of the MB Mafraq headquarters in April 2016 is likely to be celebrated by Salafist Jihadists and VEOs seeking to gain a stronger foothold in the governorate. One respondent, for example, observed a significant collapse in the MB's youth engagement since its fragmentation,⁴⁷ and specialists have already identified signs of Salafist Jihadists capitalizing on the consequent void in neighboring Irbid.⁴⁸ Indeed, it is a concern that has been voiced by the Jordanian MB former deputy leader, Nimer Assaf, who warned that the weakening of the MB is likely to drive people to extremism.⁴⁹

"The Muslim Brotherhood has its own societies and organizations, and it is not radical. It is maybe even more peaceful than Salafists because Salafists are extreme. They [the MB] can't be considered terrorists because they do not kill like ISIS. The Muslim Brotherhood in my opinion has no effect on the people here because they have been here for years and nothing bad happened. The Muslim Brotherhood has its own people and demands, but I don't know what they are. Yet the Salafists were violent against the security here. As for the Muslim Brotherhood, I never hear anything bad about them."

(Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

The MB faces strong opposition from Badia tribes, who regard the organization as a destabilizing force.

Despite the overarching sentiments discussed above, sympathy toward the MB is not universal across the governorate. In rural Badia areas, there have emerged signs of strong opposition toward the organization, particularly from tribal communities (see 5.1 Locus of Control). For example, commenting on the June 2016 arson attack against the MB headquarters in Mafraq City,⁵⁰ several respondents claimed

⁴⁵ "You have the Muslim Brotherhood, which I truly believe that their role is essential in countering extremism and presenting a moderate picture compared to the extremist insanity." (Male, 48, Journalist, Amman - on Mafraq governorate)

⁴⁶ "I believe it [the MB] plays the role of a barrier against losing youth to ISIS or any other extremist groups. I heard that the Muslim Brotherhood group has programs to fill youth's empty time." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

⁴⁷ "They [Islamist groups] don't help youth, especially after the disintegration of the Muslim Brotherhood group." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

⁴⁸ Schwedler Jillian 2015. 'Jordan: the quiescent opposition', Wilson Center, August 27, 2015.

⁴⁹ Sweis, Rana F. 2016. 'Jordan shuts down Muslim Brotherhood headquarters', The New York Times, April 13, 2016.

⁵⁰ Albawaba News 2016. Muslim Brotherhood office in al-Mafraq set on fire', Albawaba News, June 27, 2016.

that the local Bani Hassan tribe was responsible for the incident.⁵¹ The Bani Hassan is also known to have obstructed MB attempts to stage public protests in Mafrq.⁵² One example is the December 2011 incident, which resulted in physical conflict between the Bani Hassan and MB activists.⁵³ The Badia communities' supposed rejection of political Islam might largely explain their opposition to Islamist groups such as the MB, and particularly its official political wing, the IAF. The fact that clashes between rural tribes and the MB intensified after the latter began participating in political demonstrations from 2011 onwards lends credence to this. Although there are voices of objection to this level of retaliation,⁵⁴ quantitative findings suggest that the IAF is overwhelmingly unpopular across the governorate: 64 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition, while 34 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for the IAF in their community (see Figure 2). Meanwhile, the historical loyalty of Mafrq's tribes and their communities to the monarchy is also likely to explain their rejection of alternative political movements such as the MB the IAF. A related explanation for tribal resistance to the MB may be that the MB typically garners support through family and kinship ties,⁵⁵ which in rural communities tend to be thoroughly embedded in tribal networks and thus difficult to dislodge. Contributing to, or deriving from this reputation, was the belief that the MB constitutes a potential gateway to VEOs. This belief derives the group's religious orientation and its political opposition to the government, which it is perceived to be attempting to channel through local youth. These perceptions may have been generated by the MB's engagement with youth protest movements. For example, the MB lent strong support to the Hiraq movement – initiated by East Banker tribal-affiliated youth – that was active in Mafrq in 2011-2012 demonstrating against state corruption, calling for political reform and denouncing the monarchy. Some objection toward the MB – including in urban areas – is also based on the organization's theological foundations. For example, one respondent highlighted one of the group's early theorists, Sayyed Qutb, as evidence of its VE ideologies.⁵⁶ Finally, the more recent fragmentation of the Jordanian MB (as mentioned above) is reducing public confidence in the organization, potentially damaging its reputation within Mafrq.⁵⁷

"They are not radical but they are a start. The Muslim Brotherhood uses the religion card and can manipulate kids. I don't have any examples to give. They are against our government [...] they can't

⁵¹ "In Mafrq they [the tribes] burned the Muslim Brotherhood gathering place." (Male, 45, Consultant, Ajloun)

⁵² "I heard about what people from Bani Hassan did to their [the MB] center when they burned it and stopped them from doing a protest." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

⁵³ Middle East Online 2011. 'Jordan's largest tribe clashes with Islamist demonstrators', Middle East Online, December 24, 2011.

⁵⁴ "What happened in Mafrq lately, when the clans of Bani Hassan stopped people from the Muslim Brotherhood from demonstrating, is wrong. They should allow anyone to demonstrate, as long as they do it peacefully." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrq)

⁵⁵ Schwedler Jillian 2015. 'Jordan: the quiescent opposition', Wilson Center, August 27, 2015.

⁵⁶ "I have a big question mark on Muslim Brotherhood group. One of the founders of the jihadist ideology is Sayyed Qutb, who is one of the theorists of the Muslim Brotherhood group. The Muslim Brotherhood group is closer to the jihadist's ideology." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

⁵⁷ "The Muslim Brotherhood group has a problem: [it is] internally disintegrated." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

reach the government so they go to people."

(Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

Although they appear to receive little attention, there are high levels of support for Salafist Quietists, who many consider a barrier to VEOs.

The majority of Depth Interview (DI) respondents were unable to give strong opinions about Salafist Quietists. However, quantitative findings showed that the majority of Mafraq's population is supportive of the group. Indeed, 76 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support, while 22 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Salafist Quietists in their community (see Figure 2). One respondent provided an explanation for the group's popularity, claiming that it represents moderate Islam, is entirely distinct from Salafist Jihadists and constitutes a barrier to VEOs. A Salafist Quietist public spokesperson, Sheikh Ibrahim Al Btoush, is contributing to this image of the organization through publications on social media. Also reinforcing the group's reputation as a moderate movement are groups of 'touring' Jordanian Salafist Quietists, who typically visit a mosque, staying there for three days before moving on to another. During their stay, they deliver post-prayer lessons for men, which are reportedly very popular in the Salhiya district at least. It is the content of these lessons that lends itself to the Salafist Quietists moderate appeal: according to locals, they limit the discourse to soft topics, such as discussing the five pillars of Islam and reminding their listeners that Islam is a path away from, rather than toward, VE. Perhaps due to the modesty of their style, however, respondents claimed that Salafist Quietists have very little, if any, influence over local communities. This comes despite the fact that there are number of mosques associated with the group, including Al Kabir Mosque in Sabha district and Usama Bin Zaid Mosque in Mafraq City (Al Jaish street).

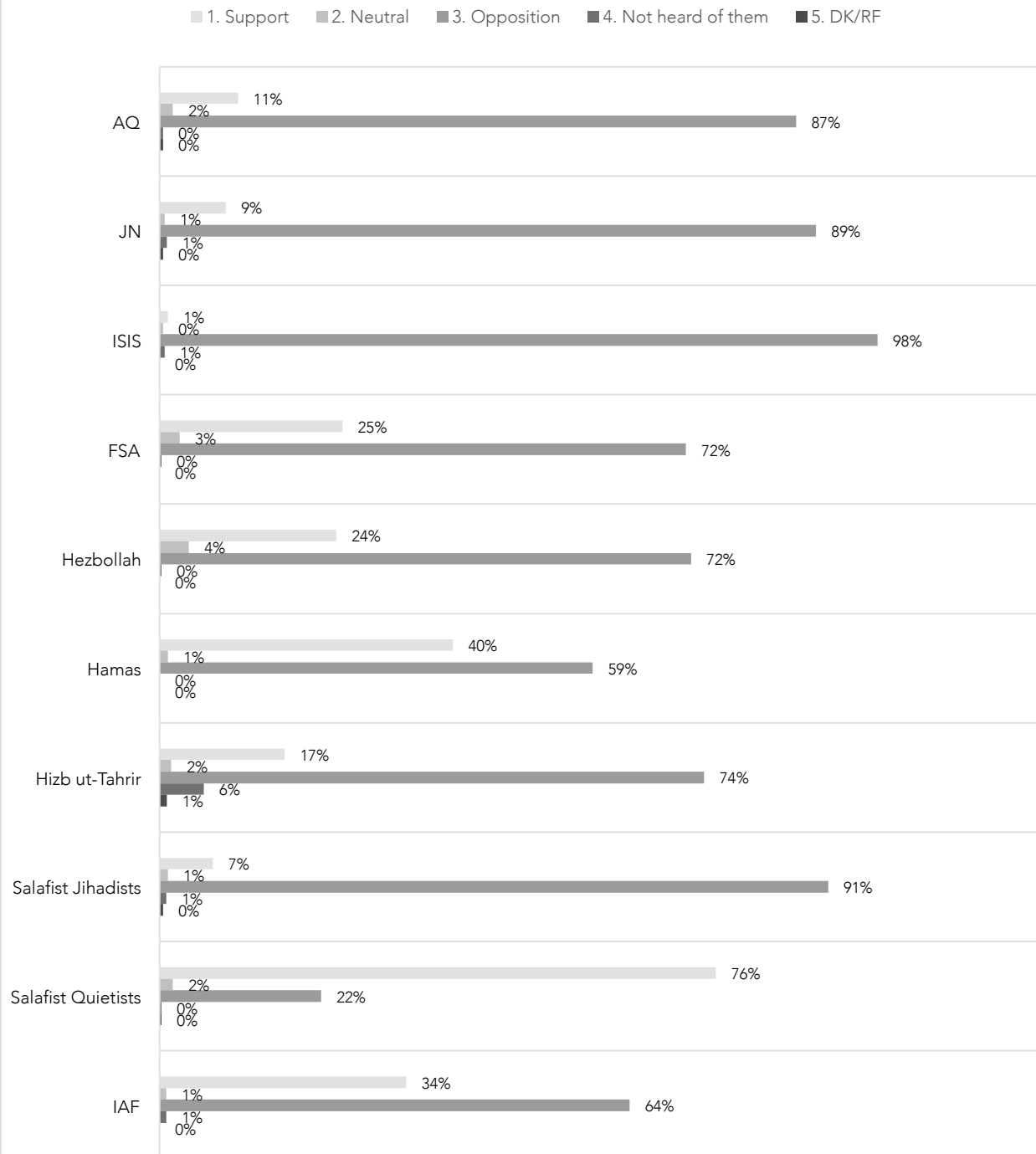
Meanwhile, some of the opposition toward Salafist Quietists in Mafraq appears to derive from the group's relative anonymity. Some respondents identified a shared demonization of the state among Salafist Jihadists and Salafist Quietists, and others were not able to distinguish between the two organizations at all. Regardless of whether they were supportive of Salafist Quietists or not, respondents bemoaned the absence of public Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives by the group in Mafraq. To that end, one respondent suggested that Salafist Quietists lack the resources to lead awareness campaigns and should receive government support for such purposes.⁵⁸

"Moderate Salafist groups are a barrier [to VEOs]. For example, Sheikh Ibrahim Al Btoush has many articles on his Facebook page. Moderate Salafist groups are the ones that follow the moderate Islam. I don't use the word Salafist next to extremist groups; these groups are not Salafist groups"

(Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

⁵⁸ "Unfortunately, [Salafist Quietists] don't have any programs. The government should get closer to the moderate Salafist groups and give them more tools to enable them to establish youth awareness programs in mosques and cultural centers. This would make youth stay away from terrorism." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

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

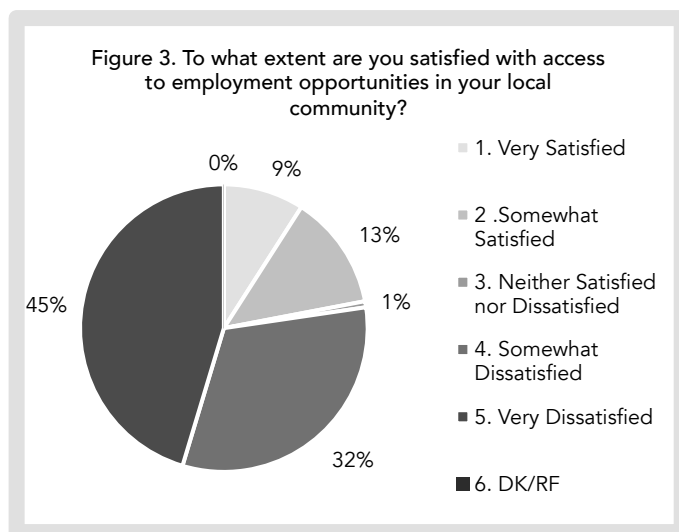


3.0 BASIC NEEDS DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

3.1 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Low-skilled workers are susceptible to VEO recruitment as Syrian refugees compete for jobs and drive down wages.

Industries such as tailoring and farming are absorbing large numbers of Syrian refugees, who often work 10-15 hours per day for low wages. This is generating frustration among locals, who are experiencing diminishing earnings or being squeezed out of employment altogether.⁵⁹ Indeed, 77 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied, while only 22 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with their access to employment opportunities in their local community (see Figure 3). Testament to the lack of job opportunities – especially among young people – is the fact that some of the most popular Facebook pages among youth are those that advertise local job opportunities, such as the Kulluna Al Ordon Youth Committee page and the Al Badia Jobs page.



Farm hands, who would normally establish seasonal contracts with local farmers, are especially vulnerable to job displacement for several reasons. For example, the local agricultural sector in general, central to Mafraq's economy, has been negatively impacted by the Syrian conflict. Crucially, escalating violence has led to the closure of major roads through Syria and eventually the entire Jordan-Syria border that was a vital route for local exporters to access markets in Turkey. As a consequence, trading routes have had to be diverted and extended at a greater cost of transportation via the Aqaba and Haifa ports. Among those affected are tomato farmers and wool harvesters,⁶⁰ which has been reflected in the plummeting prices of their export-produce. In addition to the detrimental impacts of shock events like the Syrian conflict, some of these producers contend with seasonal fluctuations in the cost of production and sale prices. In Sabha district, for instance, these fluctuations occasionally render tomato farming unprofitable, thereby forcing a halt in production. The subsequent diminishing profits for farmers may partly explain their overwhelming preference for cheap Syrian employees over more expensive and inflexible local Jordanian workers. Respondents affirmed this dynamic,⁶¹ complaining that many Syrian refugees are able to work for lower

⁵⁹ International Labour Organization 2016. 'Local economic development strategy for Mafraq Governorate: 2016-2018', Beirut: ILO, 2016.

⁶⁰ Defterios, John 2014. 'Seeds of conflict: Syrian civil-war stifles Jordanian farmers', CNN, July 4, 2014.

⁶¹ "Refugees get out of the camp and take our jobs in Jordan. For example, if you want to work with a farmer they would say no and they would take Syrians to work with them because they pay them less." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

wages than Jordanian locals because of their peculiar living circumstances. For example, those working on farms typically live on the site itself in tented accommodation, thereby incurring no transport or rental fees.⁶² Additionally, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are disproportionately providing Syrians with basic necessities (see below), reducing their expenses and enabling them to survive on lower incomes than Jordanian locals.⁶³ Respondents expressed this with particular emphasis on Badia areas.⁶⁴ For the Jordanians who lose out, several respondents claimed that they are more likely to be seduced by VEOs offering them material/financial benefits – widely understood to be a principal recruitment incentive deployed by VEOs including ISIS (see below). That said, there are signs of initiatives attempting counter these negative developments in the agricultural employment sector. One example is the project coordinated by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO). The project is aimed at maximizing agricultural production, creating additional jobs and improving infrastructure for vulnerable farmers. Among other means, this is being attempted through the installation of rain-harvesting systems, the encouragement of greenhouse-use and technical training programs for local farmers.⁶⁵ Another example is the July 2016 royal initiative being implemented by the Social Development Center Society, aimed at creating income-generating enterprises for underprivileged families.⁶⁶

"They [Syrians] affected the wages of the youth in our areas, who went to find work in farms to find out that they have enough Syrian workers already. Also the Syrians are satisfied with low wages; they live in tents and they don't have electricity or water. But the Jordanian - how would he be OK with a small wage? If he received five Jordanian Dinar (JD) a day, how will it be enough? It's barely enough for a pack of cigarettes, how will he spend on his family?"

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

The influx of refugees has driven up prices, exacerbating economic hardship and increasing vulnerability to VEO exploitation.

Since 2011, an influx of Syrian refugees has doubled the population in central Mafraq.⁶⁷ In areas such as this, the price of basic necessities has significantly increased. This is primarily due to greater demand and

⁶² "Young men and women from the Badia work on farms. They make a deal with every farm to work there on seasons. Now this is not happening because our Syrian brothers came and put tents next to these farms, and they can do the Jordanian's job but with a lower salary." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁶³ "There is huge competition in the job market. The Jordanian worker won't accept less than 10 or 20 JD as a daily payment, while the Syrian would accept 5 JD since he gets his food and place from the relief organizations." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

⁶⁴ "Employers avoid recruiting Jordanians because Syrians request lower wages. This is a disturbing phenomenon, especially in our desert areas." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁶⁵ Reliefweb 2016. 'Irrigation projects aim to ease strain of Syria refugee crisis in Jordan', Reliefweb, March 31, 2016.

⁶⁶ The Jordan Times 2016. 'Royal initiative brings jobs to Zarqa, Mafraq', The Jordan Times, July 18, 2016.

⁶⁷ Malkawi, Khetam 2015. 'Mafraq, Ramtha population doubled since start of Syrian crisis', The Jordan Times, November 27, 2015.

opportunistic retailing.⁶⁸ At the same time, with wages being depressed in response to a greater supply of labor, locals are finding it increasingly difficult to earn a living. Some respondents suggested that this could explain why certain locals are turning toward VEOs, which are known to provide reasonable if not handsome salaries alongside basic necessities.⁶⁹ For example, one former ISIS recruit from Mafraq City revealed that the organization paid him a salary of 600 US Dollars (USD), which later more than doubled to 1500 USD. Indeed, consistent with its supposed promises of economic benefits, ISIS in particular has gained a reputation for its generous pay packages,⁷⁰ which findings suggested have constituted a decisive incentive for some of the organization's local recruits.⁷¹ In fact, quantitative findings indicated that VEOs – notably Salafist Jihadists (see 2.1 Support for VEOs) - have generally been reasonably successfully in presenting themselves as alternative guarantors of socio-economic necessities in Mafraq. For example, a significant 27 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 69 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad is an easy way to earn money (see Figure 4). Likewise, a considerable 30 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 69 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that members of VEOs always look after each other (see Figure 5). Such observations are consistent with assertions that it is the most deprived areas of Mafraq that are most at risk of VE and VEO targeting.⁷² These poverty hotspots include Al Rwaished district, Bal'ama district, Badiyah Gharbiyah district, Khaldiyyah town (Khaldiyyah district), Irbab district and Za'atari village. Meanwhile, the increase in local prices is fueling criticism against the government on issues such as its failure to implement a local market regulator. It is such anti-government grievances that Salafist Jihadists (including VEO operatives) are exploiting to win support. As one respondent confirmed, those who feel abandoned by the state are more likely to side with anti-government extremist organizations.⁷³

"The salary of the employee or retired employee used to cover his basic needs, but after the arrival of Syrians, the government did not increase salaries and prices increased."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁶⁸ "Since the refugees came here in huge numbers, the owners took advantage of the situation and raised the prices." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

⁶⁹ "These groups take advantage of individuals financially. I heard that the recruited get high salaries and are provided with everything they need." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁷⁰ "ISIS pays high salaries - twice what you make in your country." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

⁷¹ "The first motive [for joining ISIS] was the money. ISIS was paying us about 800 USD per month and ISIS was providing us with whatever we needed." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

⁷² "The poor areas that suffer from marginalization, poverty, ignorance and the lack of development projects [...] all have been used by radical groups because of neglect and poverty." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

⁷³ "Maybe a person would see his situation and then change his mind from opposing these groups [VEOs] to supporting them. Maybe a person would come and convince him to rebel. If they see that their government is not helping them, they will change." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

Figure 4. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad is an easy way to earn money?

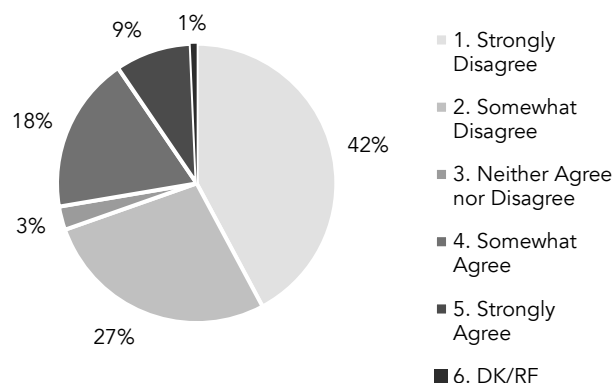
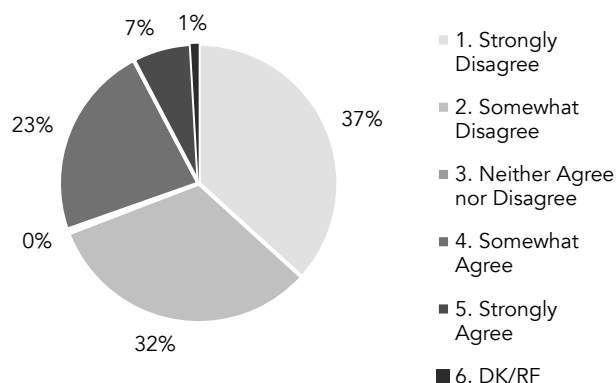


Figure 5. To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs always look after each other?



There is a sense of ethnic inequalities in Mafraq, reinforcing the anti-government attitudes that VEOs promote.

External analysis concludes that Mafraq has relatively low levels of economic inequality, especially in Badia areas where low economic status is deep but consistent.⁷⁴ One respondent was forthright in his recognition of Mafraq's relative economic equality.⁷⁵ However, as the government has made efforts to create employment opportunities for Syrian refugees entering the governorate, many locals believe that it has overlooked the needs of Jordanian residents. Accordingly, respondents articulated a perception that the state is prioritizing the requirements of refugees over and above that of the host population, including local tribes. This even relates to charitable food distribution.⁷⁶ Likewise, NGOs working with refugees in Mafraq are a source of indignation, as residents feel that these organizations are doing nothing for needy Jordanian locals as would be fair. These views were echoed in quantitative findings, which revealed that 77 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 22 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that inequality between Jordanians and Syrian refugees is a problem in their community (see Figure 6). Disproportionate benefits afforded Syrian refugees are generating animosity from the host population toward refugees, and there are concerns that, if this issue is not addressed, conflicts may arise. There are also fears that, as Syrian refugees gain increasing economic influence within Mafraq, extremist elements among them may be strengthened.⁷⁷ But the main

⁷⁴ United Nations Development Programme 2015. 'Socio-economic inequality in Jordan', UNDP, September 16, 2015.

⁷⁵ "Mafraq is ruled by traditions and customs and the economic status between people is similar; they all live in the same environment." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁷⁶ "I am a member of a charitable society and we used to give everything to Jordanians but now it's split between Syrians and Jordanians. I saw houses for Syrian people who don't need anything and they had plenty of food, but still I have to deliver assistance. Many Jordanian families here don't even have food to eat." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

⁷⁷ "If the economic situation continues to get worse, and if the situation of refugees continues to get better then conflicts will occur. Syrians are now controlling workshops, farms, and businesses. Some of them have so much money. Where did they get it from? Is it from their work here? Or is someone funding them from the outside? This

target of local hostility deriving from these matters is the state itself,⁷⁸ which respondents consider to be fostering these unbalanced economic dynamics. This is concerning in such a context where the Salafist Jihadist current is actively presenting itself as a channel for anti-state grievances (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). Likewise, but to a lesser extent, a majority of locals identify tensions between West Bank residents and East Bank residents within Mafraq. For instance, 55 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed, while 39 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that inequality between East Bank and West Bank Jordanians is a problem in their community (see Figure 7). Although respondents did not discuss this in detail, economic factors may have been significant and multi-directional. For example, especially since the implementation of the 1970s “Jordanization” policy,⁷⁹ the government has overwhelmingly reserved public sector jobs – probably the most privileged employment sector in Jordan – for East Bank residents, leaving West Bank residents largely dependent on the private sector. However, precisely for this reason, national economic strains and rising unemployment over recent years are likely to have disproportionately disadvantaged East Bank residents as they began to lose their employment guarantees.⁸⁰ The fact that West Bankers for the most part abstained from participation in the pro-reform demonstrations that started in 2010, in which protesters were heavily active in Mafraq,⁸¹ may be reflective of this.⁸²

“The unemployment issue has also become a problem to the Jordanian citizen. The Jordanian citizen is less likely to be employed in comparison to other nationalities. The state is providing our Syrian brothers with working permits and providing them with jobs, all while ignoring the Jordanians. Moreover, the international organizations meet to discuss how to employ the refugees. Can’t they discuss how to create employment for Jordanians? The state has to impose obligations on business owners to employ Jordanians. For example, a farm owner hires foreign workers without any monitoring.”

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

[has] led Jordanians to work for refugees, and this might change the people’s loyalty. These refugees, some of whom might be [VEO] sleeper cells, can control the economics of the area.” (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

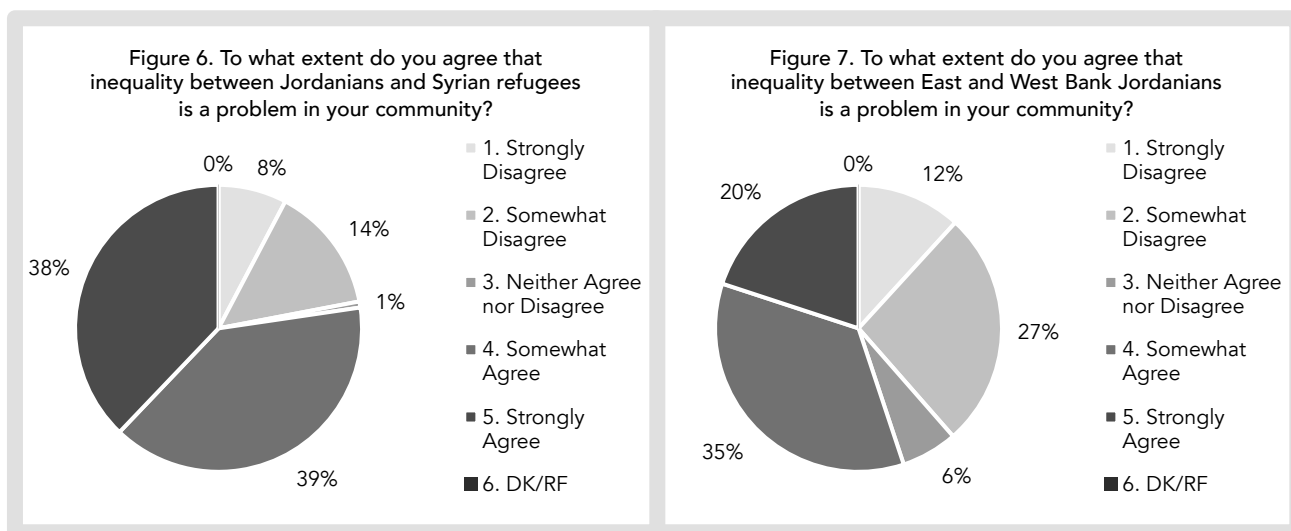
⁷⁸ “They [tribes] were affected a lot by the Syrian refugees, leading to an increase in the level of poverty. The state focused on finding jobs for the Syrians and left the Jordanians without jobs. They took the Jordanian’s share.” (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

⁷⁹ El Muhtaseb, Lamis 2013. ‘Jordan’s East Banker-Palestinian schism’, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center April 2013.

⁸⁰ Tell, Tariq 2015. ‘Early Spring in Jordan: the revolt of the military veterans’, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 4, 2015.

⁸¹ Schenker, David & David Makovsky 2012. ‘A full agenda for King Abdullah of Jordan’s White House visit’, The Washington Institute, January 13, 2012.

⁸² El Muhtaseb, Lamis 2013. ‘Jordan’s East Banker-Palestinian schism’, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center April 2013.



Unemployed university graduates are particularly at risk of VEO recruitment.

Financial incentives are employed as a major part of VEO recruitment tactics.⁸³ It is therefore those lacking employment who have a particularly heightened receptivity to these groups.⁸⁴ This is especially true of young males aged up to around 35 years old, a striking proportion of whom are unemployed and financially deprived.⁸⁵ Indicative of this is a youth unemployment rate of approximately 40 percent in mid-2016,⁸⁶ which is most acute in areas including Khaldiyyah district and Irhab district. Meanwhile, at younger ages, males typically have a less developed and/or rigid ideological grounding and are thereby more malleable to extremist ideas.⁸⁷ Respondents who supported this notion also noted that those without employment are more likely to engage in drug abuse, which can similarly increase their receptivity to VEO incentives. (see 5.3 Exposure to Crime and Conflict.) Similarly, without employment or other sources of socio-economic participation, youth are likely to be more receptive to alternative opportunities of social belonging. One respondent recognized this dynamic in the local context, and linked it to VE.⁸⁸ Another

⁸³ "The guy who went as I know went to make money: he used to get 300 JD and they told him he will get 3000. So that's why he went" (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafrag)

⁸⁴ "The main reason why young people are joining these groups is the financial status – young people aren't able to find jobs so they can't get married or buy a car. They will seek any way in order to live a good life." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrag)

⁸⁵ "Most youth here do not have money and are unemployed, and they cannot build a decent life. They take money from ISIS, which gives good money. I don't know how they pay them. But because those people are poor they join. Maybe they hear about it from some people so they become convinced." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafrag)

⁸⁶ Luck, Taylor 2016. 'Syrian refugees: can Europe help Jordan turn a burden into a boon', The Christian Science Monitor, May 19, 2016.

⁸⁷ "They target children or young people because it's easy to control them and convince them. They don't have a good background about true religion, so it's easy to brainwash them and feed them with radical ideas, and to tempt them financially." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrag)

⁸⁸ "The youngsters, they always need to belong to a group. It can lead to extremism, especially if you are looking for protection – just like a gang. This is how people start on the path of extremism." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafrag)

respondent, speaking from personal experience, confirmed the amplified appeal of VEO membership for the socially marginalized, recalling how he was attracted to ISIS because it promised a system of support in an environment of socio-economic neglect.⁸⁹ A wide recognition that VEOs constitute alternative support systems was evident in quantitative findings (see above). High levels of perceived social alienation were also discernible in quantitative results. Indeed, a significant 40 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 58 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that they do not feel part of their community (see Figure 8).

With all this in mind, particular caution should be paid to university graduates, who are likely to have the highest employment expectations and thus be more prone to disappointment and/or frustration. Quantitative findings suggested that this sense of discord between achievement and opportunity is widespread in Mafraq: 66 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the people who work the hardest are never rewarded the most (see Figure 9). The increasing inaccessibility of public sector jobs is most likely compounding this perception, as it is in this sector that many graduates wish to work.⁹⁰ Although some from this educated class accept less prestigious and lucrative jobs for a lack of alternatives,⁹¹ others are known to remain idle, typically spending their time in local coffee shops.⁹² It is the latter who are thought to be especially vulnerable to VEOs. Furthermore, VEOs engaging in local recruitment efforts typically favor educated youth with tangible skill sets over uneducated locals.⁹³

"When a person is educated and tired and they have their family still paying them money, and when they can't find a job and have no income, this affects them and they become convinced to join these groups."

(Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

⁸⁹ "[ISIS members] were the only ones who stood with me, supported me and provided everything I needed." Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

⁹⁰ "It has become harder to get a job in governmental positions because of the lack of vacancies and the increase [in standards]. Many people would prefer to work in the public sector because the working day ends at 3 pm, which allows them to get another job to secure extra income. [This is in addition to] the health insurance, social, security and retirement salary provided." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

⁹¹ "We have many youth who are smart and clever but have no chance. For example, we have a driver in our area who studied in university but works as a driver because he cannot find a job." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

⁹² "A person who just graduated from university would spend his time in coffee shops because he couldn't find a job." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

⁹³ "Radicals look for educated people; they don't want someone who doesn't know how to use weapons or how to make bombs or else they would never benefit from them. They also have to know their language. Radical people can come from all over the world but they have to be educated so they can converse with each other." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

Figure 8. To what extent do you agree that you do not feel part of your community?

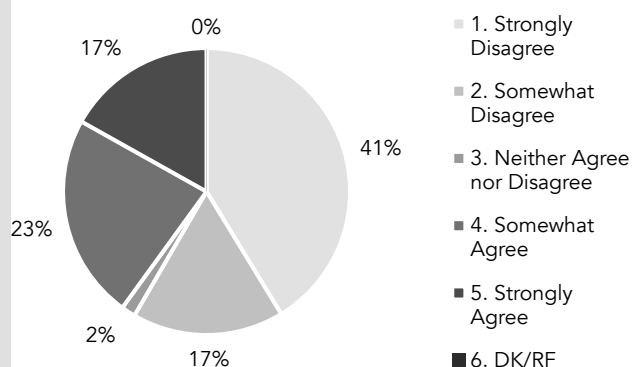
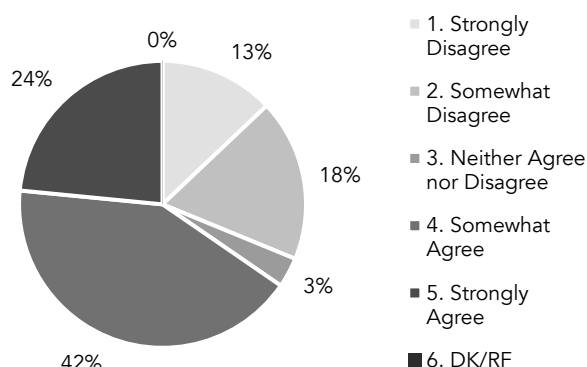


Figure 9. To what extent do you agree that the people who work the hardest are never rewarded the most?



Discharged military personnel have demonstrated a proclivity for drug abuse and a heightened susceptibility to VE.

Former military youth – mostly under 30 years of age – are another exceptionally vulnerable group in Mafrq, who are targeted for their particular skill-set. For instance, they have developed martial skills that VEOs value in order to strengthen their foreign fighter force. One respondent confirmed this demand for physical capabilities with reference to ISIS, whose recruiters reportedly make enquiries into the health of prospective recruits before hiring them.⁹⁴ Yet there are several other reasons why this group is especially vulnerable. Along with unemployed university graduates, respondents singled out discharged military personnel as being prone to drug abuse and thus – as noted above – more exposed to exploitation by VEOs.⁹⁵ This is particularly applicable to those from the Badia region of Mafrq,⁹⁶ which is notorious for its drugs culture and where many have been dismissed from the army for substance abuse in the first instance. One typical example is that of a young off-duty army officer who in March 2015 was caught by the police whilst driving in Zamleh (Sabha district) in possession of cannabis and discharged from his post. Most expelled military personnel remain unemployed for an extended period of time. This leaves them potentially receptive to the financial incentives offered by VEOs. Finally, those discharged from the army may be more likely to develop grudges against the state, which may equally apply to other dismissed public sector workers. For example, one individual from Mafrq was arrested just months after

⁹⁴ "I got a [Facebook] friend request and I accepted, and he [an ISIS recruiter] started to send messages on chat and asking about my health." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

⁹⁵ "There are people who were fired from the army in our areas, for reasons such as drugs. They are now unemployed and there is a fear that they get taken advantage of through radicalization and drugs, as most of them are under 30 years old." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrq)

⁹⁶ "Most people in the desert are lost, jobless and use drugs. If a soldier had a job he wouldn't drift like them." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

being discharged from the general security services on charges of VEO affiliation.⁹⁷ For the reasons highlighted here, several respondents were critical of decisions to discharge youth from the military for minor offenses.⁹⁸

"Youngsters who join the army should be preserved and not kicked out for simple reasons such as the use of drugs or alcohol. When they find themselves on the streets, they might fall into these extremist groups. Especially because the military has prepared them, which is a good opportunity for the extremist groups to take advantage of."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

Due to a lack of jobs and insufficient salaries, some locals are resorting to illegitimate income opportunities.

Aside from those remaining idle or actively joining VEOs as a means to overcoming their economic woes, others are resorting to alternative illegal income opportunities. For example, one respondent recalled an encounter with a local man who had been engaged in smuggling Syrians from Za'atari Camp to Irbid in exchange for payment.⁹⁹ This is of particular concern for locals, many of whom suspect that there are extremist elements among the refugees arriving from Syria (see 5.4 Exposure to VE and Perceptions of VEO Threat). Another example concerns employed military personnel who perceived their salaries to be insufficient and resorted to a fraudulent business scheme in order to supplement their income. Having bought supplies – such as cellphones – from a local electronics shop (named Qazan) with check payment, these young men then sold them on at higher prices. However, when the checks bounced, the electronics shopkeeper reported the individuals to the military, which duly discharged them. Those areas already prone to underemployment and external influences face a high risk of VEO influence, most evidently border areas, impoverished areas and those that have absorbed high numbers of refugees. This includes Rwaished district to the far east of Mafraq,¹⁰⁰ Khaldiya town in Khaldiya district, Za'atari village and Irbid district. Several respondents put much of the blame for the conditions in these areas on central government negligence.¹⁰¹ In order to reduce these risks, respondents proposed that the government

⁹⁷ "I have a friend who used to work in general security but he was discharged after six months of getting the job for some reason. He became a sheikh. Six months later, he was arrested and prosecuted for being an affiliate of extremist groups. He was freed after spending two years in prison." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

⁹⁸ "The military should adopt them and punish them if they did something wrong, but not expel them." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

⁹⁹ "I also want to talk about smuggling Syrians from the camp by Jordanians in exchange for money. How can they do this when they don't know them. I once met a guy who transfers people by a bus from one place to another. He told me once that he took two guys and a woman who were Syrian from Za'atari to Irbid and they paid him 200 JDs. He wanted to tell the police but they left fast. This happened a year ago." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁰⁰ "Border areas such as, Rwaished [...] have high levels of unemployment and their lives have depended on smuggling sheep, drugs and weapons. These areas are near the Syrian, Iraqi and Saudi borders." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁰¹ "The government's policies are extreme, the government should be able to incubate youth and create job opportunities for them in order to make them stay away from extremism." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

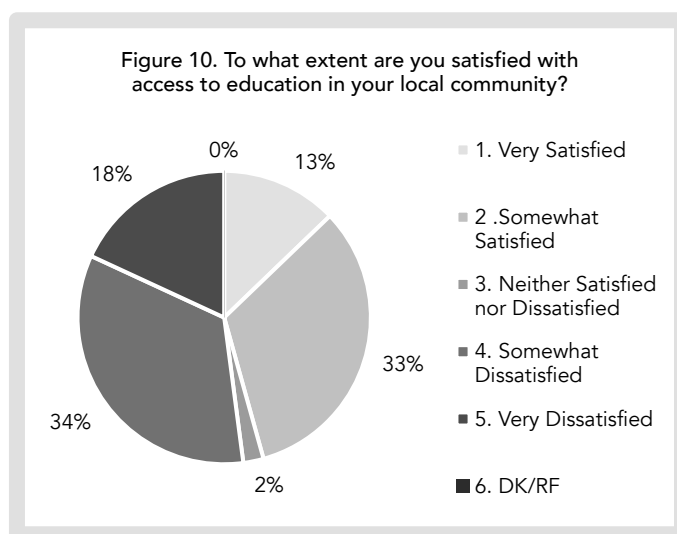
should focus on expanding youth employment and implementing awareness campaigns, which could improve community youth engagement.¹⁰²

"The youth require awareness and have to be protected - especially the unemployed and those with no income. They might fall into radicalism through financial methods because they do not have any income...Youngsters after secondary school require special care and assistance...So the reasons might be ignorance or financial, or lack of a job and sufficient income, and they might be attracted to the groups [VEOs]."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

Aspects of the school curricula appear to be complementing VE ideologies, and several areas are burdened with substandard education facilities.

As revealed by quantitative findings, views on the local education system are divided, but a large proportion of Mafraq's population believes that the education system requires improvement. 52 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied, while 46 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with their access to education in their local community (see Figure 10). The areas exhibiting some of the worst levels of education in Mafraq include Khaldiyyah district, Sabha district and Irhab district. Some explanations for high levels of dissatisfaction with local education were revealed in qualitative reports, which included complaints that the school curricula are incommensurate with contemporary society.¹⁰³ Indeed, these complaints come even as the government is taking measures to reform the teaching materials in schools across the country,¹⁰⁴ suggesting that these measures are inadequate. This includes replacing images of women wearing a hijab with more secular depictions, replacing Qur'anic verses with secular poetry and relaxing the focus on Qur'anic memorization. One respondent's objections centered on the failure of school



¹⁰² "The government has to think of matters to employ the youth and help them have a better future; they should not stay on the streets without a goal. It is easy to attract the youth because they want to build a future, so when their financial status improves we can deter them from falling into radical groups." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁰³ "The government should insert new ideas in the curriculum such as the tolerant teachings of Islam and moderate Islam, and explain them simply and smoothly for youth. Many of the religious issues need to be restructured, not because the religion has changed but because we have changed. Therefore, the tools should be changed." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹⁰⁴ Al Sharif, Osama 2016. 'Row erupts in Jordan over school curricula changes', Al Monitor, September 21, 2016.

curricula to address the role of women and Christians in society, and to raise awareness of basic human values.¹⁰⁵ He also criticized the religious curricula for encouraging VE. The challenges involved in thoroughly reforming the local education system are exacerbated by the pressures accumulating from the presence of huge numbers of refugee children. For example, class-sizes have swelled despite the introduction of double shifts, age groups have become disturbed, attendance is inconsistent and funds are lacking.¹⁰⁶ These dynamics have led to complaints by locals of over-populated schools in Mafraq. At the same time, because the school curricula modifications have been so controversial in Jordan, it is possible that much of the dissatisfaction with local education as revealed in quantitative findings derives from the direction of these alterations. For example, there has been much public outcry since the implementation of the curricula amendments, even culminating in several public demonstrations and social media campaigns.¹⁰⁷ Aside from the school curricula, substandard school facilities in certain locations may also account for high levels of dissatisfaction with the local education system. Some areas in particular suffer from poor education services, such as Irbab district. Here, Um Humasah Mixed Primary School reportedly has a lack of water and electricity access, while Daqmasah Primary School has a lack of classrooms, requiring many teachers to share classrooms. In some areas of Irbab, there is even inadequate access to secondary schools. Accordingly, Irbab is renowned for its high illiteracy rates. Sabha district, in turn, is also notorious for its poor education facilities and high illiteracy rates.

"Dr. Nofan Obeidat and many other doctors talked about Jordanian curriculums; there was no mention for women and their role in the society, she is just the mom and nanny. Curricula don't talk about the working woman. There is a huge exclusion of the women's role in addition to the exclusion of the Christians' role. Our religious curricula are all based on the Shafi'i's doctrine, adding to the problem of presenting stories such as the [Prophet's] companions' stories - such as this companion killed or cut...etc. The culture of killing is strong in our curricula."

(Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹⁰⁵ "We have to learn more about human values such as honesty, forgiveness and feeling [for] others. We were never taught these values because of the weakness in our education system." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹⁰⁶ Freij, Muath 2016. 'Mafraq educators pin hopes on donors to ease pressure off refugee-burdened school system', The Jordan Times, March 30, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Azzeh, Laila 2016. 'Curricula changes trigger heated debate between conservatives and anti-extremism activists', The Jordan Times, September 24, 2016.

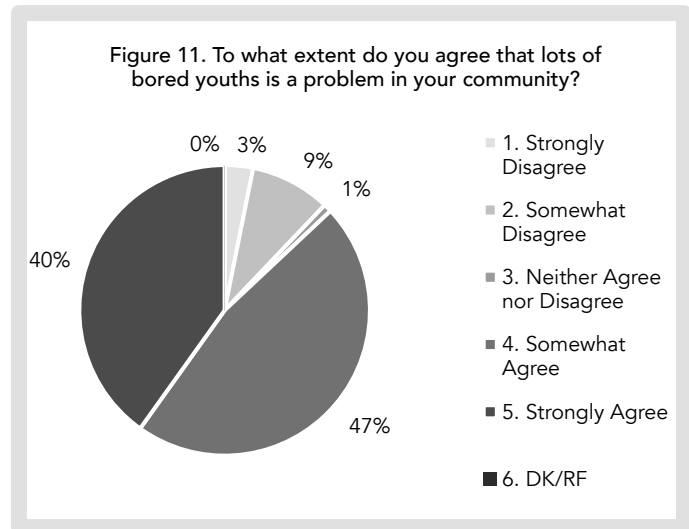
3.2 UTILITIES AND SERVICES

A lack of leisure facilities and a history of government neglect risks driving youth into VEOs.

Mafraq is notable for an absence of recreational facilities, leaving young people with few options in the way of formal leisure.¹⁰⁸

This is particularly – but not exclusively – true of rural Badia areas,¹⁰⁹ where many respondents complained that youth have no sports or playground facilities whatsoever, which is disabling talented individuals from pursuing their hobbies. Aside from the Badia in general, respondents singled out Irhab district and Khaldiyah district as being especially disadvantaged in terms of youth facilities. Accordingly, there is a lack of sports clubs in these areas, including soccer, which is especially popular with young people. There is also an acute shortage of parks in Mafraq,¹¹⁰

with Al Mabrameh Park being the only example in the entire governorate. Faced with limited opportunities, many young men – especially if unemployed – spend the day sleeping before gathering in houses or street corners – typically under street lamps if available – in the evenings, where they tend to chat and smoke. Some also play football in the streets. Nonetheless, there is a distinct lack of energy outlets for youth, which was a notable concern for some respondents. One respondent, for instance, complained that sports classes are often cancelled and that students are being encouraged to play computer games instead of pursuing physical activities.¹¹¹ Similarly, there were complaints that the Internet is the only source of recreation for students.¹¹² As a consequence, young people – and even adults – are experiencing high levels of inactivity and boredom.¹¹³ As revealed in quantitative findings, an overwhelming 87 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed, while 12 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that lots of bored youths is a problem in their community (see Figure



¹⁰⁸ Nasser, Amjad 2014. ‘Syrian refugees in Mafraq blamed for town’s woes’, The New Arab, November 18, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ “We have to fix the desert before anything. I wish we could have a park. Because we live in the desert, if I want to take my kids to Amman I will have to pay 100 JDs and this is a lot. If we had a park nearby that would’ve helped. As for the youth I suggest clubs [...] the desert is forgotten in this respect, too.” (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹¹⁰ “The Badia is very large. It needs like four or five parks – each municipality should have a park. This is essential for building a sound psyche.” (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

¹¹¹ “It sounds like sport classes are cancelled actually. There is no football nowadays, and some schools gave their students PlayStations to play.” (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

¹¹² “The student spends his three-month break on the Internet because of the lack of activities that would increase his abilities and develop his personality.” (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹¹³ “We are now raising our sons between four walls in homes. We adults get bored, what about children?” (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

11). A high level of inactivity typically maximizes the appeal of drugs among youth, thus potentially increasing their vulnerability to VE exploitation (see 5.3 Exposure to Crime and Conflict). One former ISIS recruit even suggested that VEOs might appeal to youth as a direct means of overcoming boredom when there is a distinct lack of alternatives.¹¹⁴ Younger youth have also exhibited the negative consequence of boredom. For example, on one occasion in 2015, a group of children aged 8-14 attempted to break into the Zamleh Al Amir Ghazi Society building in Sabha district. Several respondents accordingly proposed a number of developments to ameliorate the recreational deficit in Mafraq. Football fields and parks are particularly in demand. In the meantime, to access decent recreation and education facilities, some residents bemoan the fact that they must travel long distances and pay large sums of money – factors that may be reflected in the low levels of university attendance among the Badia population.¹¹⁵

"We need to have playgrounds for our kids so they can do sports and pursue their passions and play outside. Many kids have hidden talents but they have no outlet for them. They feel they are a burden to society. We can build a center in Zamleh and the Salhiya area where youth gather because it's a main street. We do not have any clubs here. We need football clubs. My daughter was accepted into Mutah University [Karak] but I don't have money for her transportation. So I transferred her to Al Bayt University because it's nearer to us. But she doesn't like what she is studying there. If we want to go to an area where there are clubs, we have to pay 100 JD for the bus, and it's 100 Km away from Mafraq. This is a big sum of money for us."

(Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

Increasing water scarcity is aggravating social tensions, and many blame Syrian refugees for inadequate water and electricity services.

Although Mafraq has long been subject to water scarcity, the issue has intensified since the Syrian conflict drove large numbers of refugees into the governorate.¹¹⁶ At the time of writing, water is delivered to Mafraq on a weekly basis, yet some areas – such as Khaldiyyah district – are far better serviced than others. Apart from Za'atari Camp, where, in May 2015, around 45 percent of the population was reportedly disconnected from the public water network,¹¹⁷ other areas within the governorate prone to serious water shortages include the districts of Serhan, Hosha, and Sabha, as well as Za'atari village and Irbab district. These areas suffer mainly due to being disconnected from the public water network, but some places, such as Ein Bani Hassan village and Ein Al Nabi village, are also inhibited by poor pumping systems. Consequently, they struggle to transport their water supply into storage tanks and are compelled to purchase their supplies elsewhere.¹¹⁸ As a result of these circumstances, Mafraq is witnessing social discontent. Several respondents, for instance, were explicit in blaming the diminishing water supplies on

¹¹⁴ "If there were job opportunities or any other activity offered by the government that would fill a youth's empty time, I wouldn't have joined ISIS." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

¹¹⁵ "In the Badia, the percentage of university students is only 10 percent or 30 percent." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

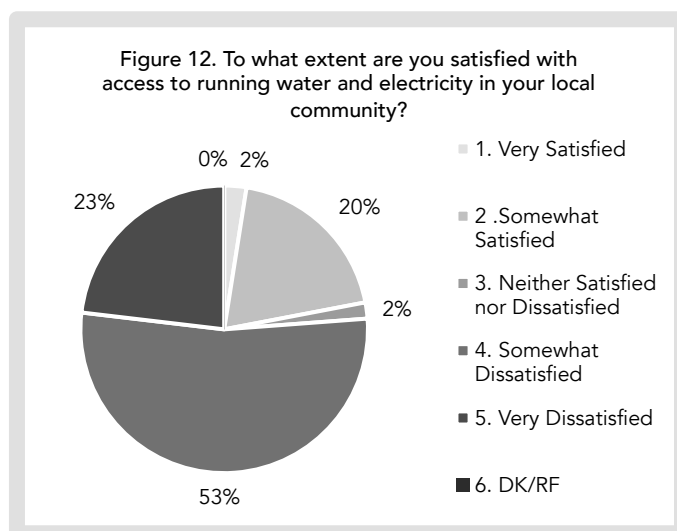
¹¹⁶ "Before the Syrian crisis, access to water was a million times better." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

¹¹⁷ REACH 2015. 'Social Cohesion in Host Communities in Northern Jordan: Assessment Report', May 2015.

¹¹⁸ "The water comes once per week, but since the pressure is very weak they can't fill the water tanks and they have to buy water." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

Syrian refugees, with one individual singling out the increasing demand from Za'atari Camp as a source of the problem for her community.¹¹⁹ Another location that is experiencing severe water shortages are Ruqban camp (Dair Al Khaf district). Here, there is also a lack of sanitation services, which is contributing to escalating pest problems and the spread of diseases.¹²⁰ Respondents from surrounding districts complained that these diseases have penetrated their own communities, and trace the disease origins to the arrival of Syrian refugees into the governorate.¹²¹ Another area afflicted by a poor sewage system is Dhal (Irbab district).

Although Mafraq governorate is generally well serviced by electricity, some areas have better access than others. For example, certain rural areas – notably in Irbab district – are reportedly devoid of street lighting in residential areas and on roads. There are concerns among locals that Syrian refugees are putting increasing pressures on electricity services in their community, which have already reached an unacceptable standard for a large number of the governorate's residents. Along with frustrations over water services, this was reflected in quantitative findings: 76 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied, while 22 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with running water and electricity in their community (see Figure 12).



"Essentially, we have a water problem, and these refugees, how much are they going to consume from [our] water and electricity? The United Nations could pay but how will they get us water? Create a river or a sea or how exactly? This is how we get affected – we are a country of limited resources."

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

¹¹⁹ "When these services were made to serve one million people, how will it serve three million? The Za'atari camp affected the water body that we drink from." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

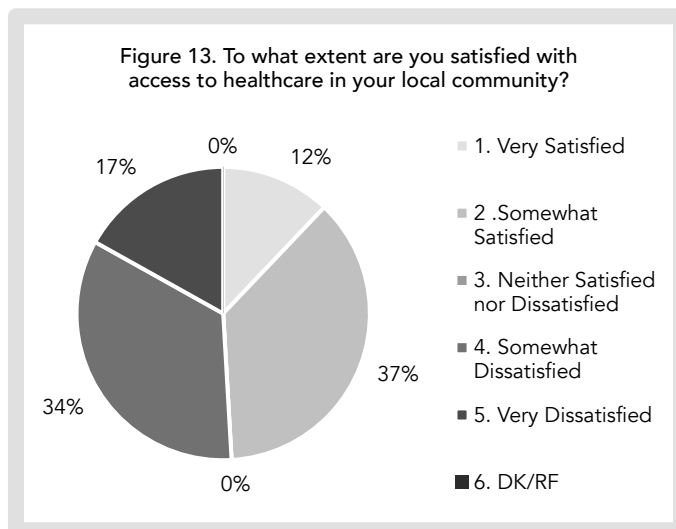
¹²⁰ Magid, Aaron 2016. '27,000 Syrian refugees stranded near Jordanian border', Al Monitor, February 19, 2016.

¹²¹ "We have diseases we don't know about but I don't know what are they exactly. But we didn't have them before the Syrians came." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

Health services have been overburdened following the influx of refugees, but there are efforts to counter the problem.

Due to the disproportionate numbers of Syrian refugees it has absorbed, Mafraq, along with neighboring Irbid, is exceptional in the degree of pressure brought upon its healthcare facilities.¹²² This has impacted a large proportion of Mafraq's Jordanian population, many of whom are discontent with the current level of healthcare services available to them. For example, quantitative findings revealed that 51 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied, while 49 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with healthcare in their community (see Figure 13). The near-even split in opinions suggests that there is a

degree of inequality in the provision of healthcare services across the governorate. Indeed, some specific areas are renowned for their poor healthcare services, such as Za'atari village, where high numbers of refugees have evidently strained resources. Another example is Irbid district, which suffers a shortage of medical supplies in its pharmacies. A final example is Sabha district, where there are just two healthcare centers – one in Sabha town and another in Dafyaneh town – operating just six hours per day. Considering these points, state development initiatives inside the governorate, such as the opening in August 2016 of King Talal Military Hospital,¹²³ will be well received by locals and potentially help to assuage feelings of socio-economic neglect.



¹²² Al Wazani, Khalid W. 2014. 'The socio-economic implications of Syrian refugees on Jordan', Amman: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, May 22, 2014.

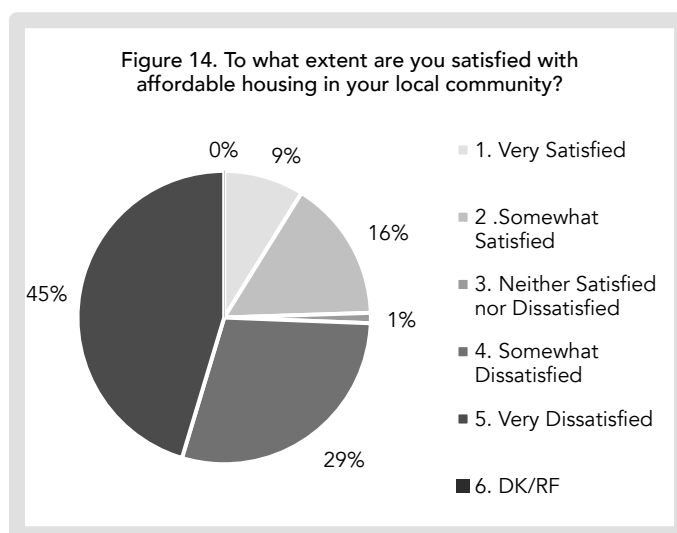
¹²³ The Jordan Times 2016. 'King inaugurates army-run hospital in Mafraq', The Jordan Times, August 1, 2016.

3.3 ECONOMY, HOUSING AND DEBT

House prices are soaring, leading to dangerous coping mechanisms and increasing economic insecurity, which VEOs are capable of exploiting.

With the majority of Syrian refugees residing in host communities rather than camps, their requirements are putting significant pressure on housing affordability. This is occurring in two directions. First, the higher demand is understandably driving up house and rental prices,¹²⁴ with some urban rents apparently doubling in price since the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis.¹²⁵ Meanwhile, vulnerable Jordanians and refugees are competing for low-skilled jobs and resorting to the informal employment sector, where wages are being compressed. In some sectors, Syrian refugees are working for less than the national minimum wage, which at the time of writing stands at 190 JD per month. (see 3.1 Education and Employment.)

Taken together, these two factors are diminishing the capacity for locals to afford accommodation, especially in the rental sector, which is more susceptible to price hikes.¹²⁶ Consequently, there have been cases of local Jordanians being evicted by their landlords.¹²⁷ There are also indications of increasing homelessness among Jordanian locals. This was inherent in events in 2013, when around 20 local families were put up in tented accommodation in Mafraq City.¹²⁸ The circumstances discussed here were reflected in quantitative findings. Indeed, 74 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied, while only 25 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with affordable housing in their community (see Figure 14). Data from May 2015 revealed that urban areas are most affected by housing crises, as this is where rented accommodation is most common.¹²⁹ The same data identified the following areas as especially affected: Irbab district, Za'atari village and Serhan district.



¹²⁴ "The owners are taking advantage of the situation by increasing the rents." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹²⁵ "Since the time they [Syrian refugees] came here, rents increased a lot: houses that were rented for 100 JD per month now increased to 200 JD per month." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

¹²⁶ Malkawi, Khetam 2015. 'Mafraq, Ramtha population doubled since start of Syrian crisis', The Jordan Times, 27, November 2015.

¹²⁷ Trend News Agency 2013. 'Jordanian-Syrian tensions mount as refugee crisis deepens', Trend News Agency, April 14, 2013.

¹²⁸ Onishi, Norimitsu 2013. 'As Syrian refugees develop roots, Jordan grows wary', The New York Times, October 5, 2013.

¹²⁹ REACH 2015. 'Social Cohesion in Host Communities in Northern Jordan: Assessment Report', REACH, May 2015.

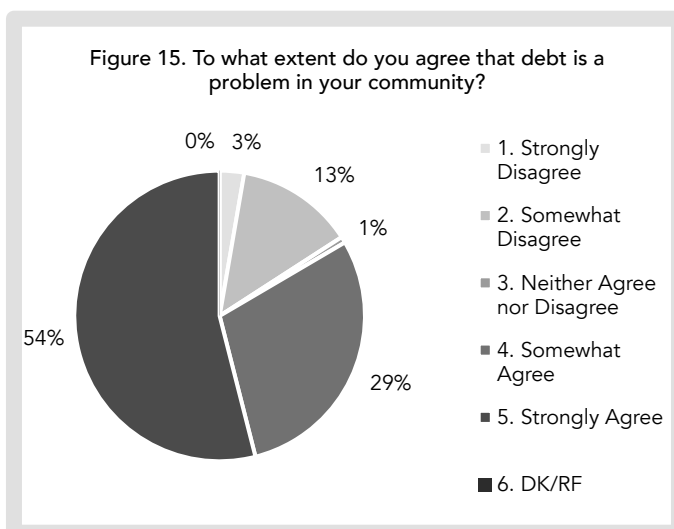
With that in mind, one respondent's complaints suggested that those residing in rural areas feel they are bearing the burden of these strains, and that cities are not receiving their fair share of refugees.

"The desert is neglected in all ways and we are under pressure because refugees came here and now everything is expensive and the rent is high. Cities should take some of that pressure from us. We used to rent houses for 30 JDs and now it's 150 JDs: that's why guys can't get married and start a family like they normally would."

(Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

Rising prices are taking their toll on citizens, with many taking out loans to maintain their standard of living.

Residents are adopting a number of coping mechanisms in response to accommodation challenges. First, the situation has prompted the expansion of informal settlements.¹³⁰ Second, residents are selling food vouchers and non-food items to supplement their incomes.¹³¹ Third, many young men and women are postponing marriage as the former are unable to afford the required dowry.¹³² Alternatively, some men are opting to marry Syrian girls instead, as the requested dowry tends to be cheaper in their case.¹³³ Finally, and perhaps even more concerning, residents are resorting to borrowing money or taking out private loans, resulting in growing debt. As



quantitative findings revealed, this is a widely recognized problem across the governorate: 83 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 16 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that debt is a problem in their community (see Figure 15). With that in mind, this growing economic instability is rendering increasing numbers of disadvantaged citizens vulnerable to VEO recruitment. While this is often conducted through financial and/or material incentives (see 3.1 Education and Employment), some VEOs – namely ISIS – are notorious for offering women/girls and even wives to

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ "The conflict in Syria and Iraq affected us because the rent went up and girls are not getting married in the desert. People get married to Syrian girls because they don't request money a lot. If a Syrian father goes to the mosque and declares his daughters for marriage people would marry them." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

their prospective recruits, reportedly luring them with photographs through social media.¹³⁴ For one respondent, this is a worrying phenomenon when increasing numbers are unable to afford a local marriage.

"Some people join these radical groups because they want to meet women, and as I heard there are women there with ISIS, and they use them for sex or marriage. They give them wives, money, a house."

(Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrag)

¹³⁴ "A young person who wants to get married reaches 30 while he is not married and not working. ISIS offers them marriage and uses the technique of sending pictures of a girl to a person promising him that she is going to be his wife." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafrag)

4.0 GOVERNANCE DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

4.1 CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Despite a wide recognition and appreciation of past and current government CVE campaigns, many residents lack faith in the government's desire and capacity to combat VE.

The government is running a number of anti-extremism initiatives through media, mosques and civil organizations. For example, its program of state-appointed clerics, who are employed, guided and monitored by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs,¹³⁵ is acknowledged and relatively well-received in Mafraq, as are state-sponsored counter-extremism media campaigns, most notably TV advertisements shown on official state channels. These advertisements seek to challenge and condemn extreme Islamic principles such as the practice of *Takfir*.¹³⁶ Similarly, the state-sponsored All Jordan Youth Commission delivered a seminar entitled "Moderate Islam and Extremist Thinking" during Ramadan 2016. The event, which was held in Mafraq City, was well attended by young people from across the governorate who came to listen to the main speaker, Dr. Ahmed Harasheh, the director of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. Harasheh addressed the causes of VE and denounced terrorism as un-Islamic and inhumane. At the same time, he celebrated the role of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in tackling VE. Another example is the February 2015 one-day CVE workshop administered by the Mafraq Youth Directorate of the Khaldiya Youth Center. The event's organizer, Qasim Mouhaidat (the governor of Mafraq) addressed around 100 attendants, encouraging responsible parenting and promoting nationalism, which he did with reference to Moath Al Kasasbeh. The Dean of Mafraq Private College, Dr. Abdullah Al Athamnah, also spoke at the event, stressing the importance of security and the maintenance of moderate Islam. Several respondents claimed that these various campaigns have been successful. Apparently, the state has used these platforms, along with radio, to encourage people to participate with the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) by reporting suspicious behavior anonymously.¹³⁷ Al Wakeel is one specific radio station that is known for addressing issues of VE. The government is also delivering awareness campaigns in collaboration with local organizations, such as the Cooperative Badia Development Association. The latter, located in the Sabha triangle area of the Salhiya district, has conducted counter-terrorism workshops and anti-drugs workshops targeted at young males and females in 2014. The events featured appearances by security officers providing expert knowledge.

While respondents spoke positively about these efforts, quantitative findings suggested that many deem them insufficient, which is raising questions about the government's commitment to CVE. For example, a considerable 48 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 51 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not want to control VE (see Figure 16). Similarly, those respondents who discussed local Members of Parliament (MPs) were of the opinion

¹³⁵ Booth, William & Taylor Luck 2014. 'To counter rise of Islamic State, Jordan imposes rules on Muslim clerics, The Washington Post, November 9, 2014.

¹³⁶ "I don't know whether the government followed a certain program, but we see on TV and the media calls to reject terrorism and Takfir because it leads to extremism. And [we see messages claiming that] the one who accuses people of blasphemy is an extremist." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

¹³⁷ "The government is working hard. For example, the radio station told people to report anything that is unusual without even saying your name or number." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

that there is little contribution to CVE efforts in their community.¹³⁸ In addition to questioning the state's will to control VE, a majority doubted the its capacity to do so. Indeed, 51 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 47 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not have the power to control VE (see Figure 17). A major point of criticism for several respondents was the government's failure to adequately train moderate imams, who are thought by some to be poorly educated and lacking in socio-cultural awareness.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, there were complaints that the government has failed to support moderate Salafists who possess the capacity to influence public opinion and de-radicalize local youth.¹⁴⁰

"[The] Jordanian government, intelligence agencies, and specialized ministries such as the Ministry of Awqaf [and Islamic Affairs] are not doing a good job of facing or combating the extremist ideology in Jordan."

(Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

Figure 16. To what extent do you agree that the central government does not want to control VE?

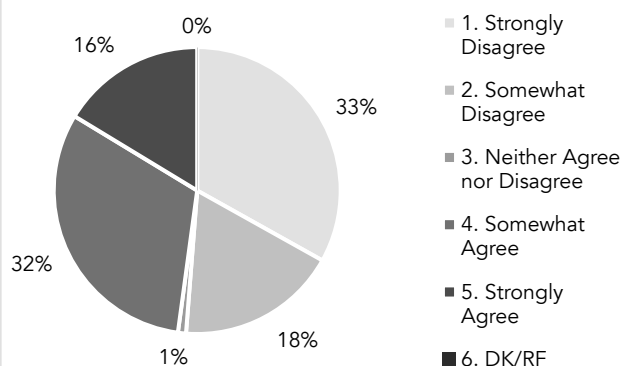
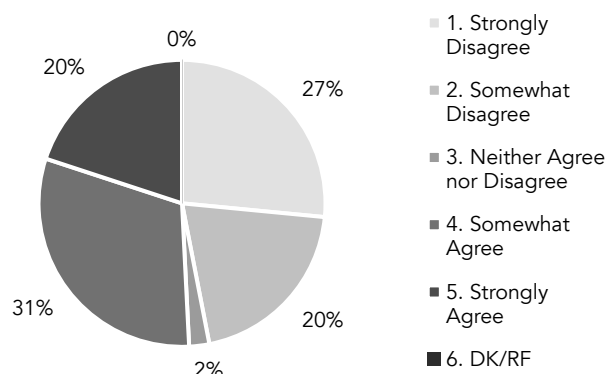


Figure 17. To what extent do you agree that the central government does not have the power to control VE?



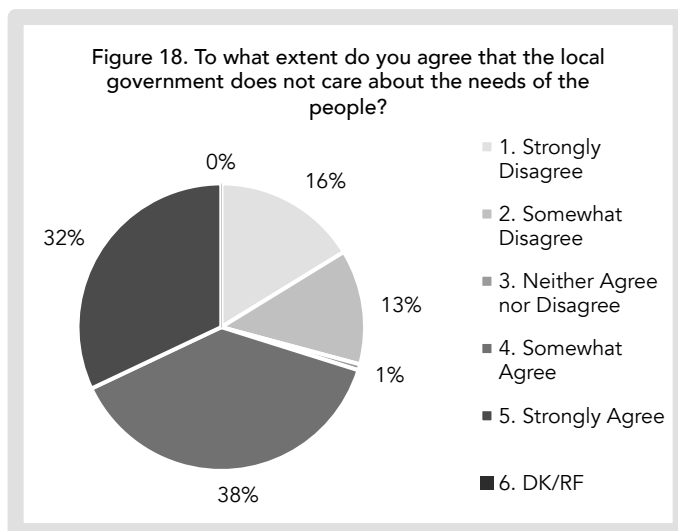
¹³⁸ "As for parliament members, they should have a role [in the fight against VE] but they are useless here. They have to solve the youths' problems." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹³⁹ "Some imams don't have the necessary awareness and the Ministry of Awqaf [and Islamic Affairs] is not trying to educate them in order to increase their awareness. For example, when I visit the village I am originally from and listen to the Friday speech, the speaker [exhibits] extremism and exclusion." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹⁴⁰ "I know a person who wrote many articles about extremism and its mistakes. He explained the Amman Message. He argued against many takfirist Salafists and was a reason for them getting back on the right track. I believe that this person was excluded and ignored by the government. He was a moderate Salafist and he was fighting the jihadist takfirist Salafists. He had successful experiences. For example, one of the leaders of the takfirist jihadist Salafists admitted that he was back to the right track because of the person I am talking about. I was there when that happened." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

Many locals feel marginalized by the government and municipality and have protested in a number of ways.

In response to a lack of local facilities, youth have expressed their frustrations through public dissent. For example, in April 2016, students of Al Bayt University boycotted Mafraq's autobus services to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the system. Their principle concerns were that there are too few buses to accommodate a rising number of students, and that the bus fares are excessively high.¹⁴¹ More generally, the lack of facilities in Mafraq is generating a sense of indignation among locals, some of whom conclude that Mafraq is exceptional in its degree of government neglect.¹⁴² Meanwhile, in response to the increasing economic



pressures brought about by the influx of refugees, residents criticize the government for not imposing higher and stricter minimum wages, and for firing youth from public sector work.¹⁴³ These residents have also expressed strong resentment in reaction to their deteriorating living standards in other ways. One example is the erection of a mock 'Jordanian refugee camp' as a symbol of public protest.¹⁴⁴ Some locals are also directing their frustrations toward the local municipality for failing to provide sufficient services. A particular point of indignation is that of intra-governorate inequality of service provision (see 3.2 Utilities and Services). Quantitative findings revealed that these views are reflective of a majority across the governorate. Indeed, an overwhelming 70 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 29 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the local government does not care about the needs of the people (see Figure 18). Likewise, 76 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 22 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not care about the needs of the people (see Figure 19). To that end, there is a wide perception that the government is not heeding the public's calls for change. As revealed in quantitative findings, 77 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while only 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to them (see Figure 20).

¹⁴¹ Goussous, Suzanna 2016. 'Mafraq university students want better transport services', The Jordan Times, April 10, 2016.

¹⁴² "There are no youth centers in Mafraq, unfortunately. There is no interest in development and cultural projects. Mafraq is marginalized." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

¹⁴³ "Some people were fired from the army or governmental jobs, similar to the case of shop owners that were affected by the arrival of foreign labor. The foreign workers stopped them from finding jobs, so now it's easy for them to join terrorist groups." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁴⁴ Malik, Nikita 2014. 'Syria's spillover effect on Jordan', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 13, 2014.

"When I demand from a municipality a paved road, they wouldn't respond to my demand [even] when other people have roads. I will be angry and I will revolt against them. There is no justice in service distribution. There should be justice and equality in services between the local communities."

(Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

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

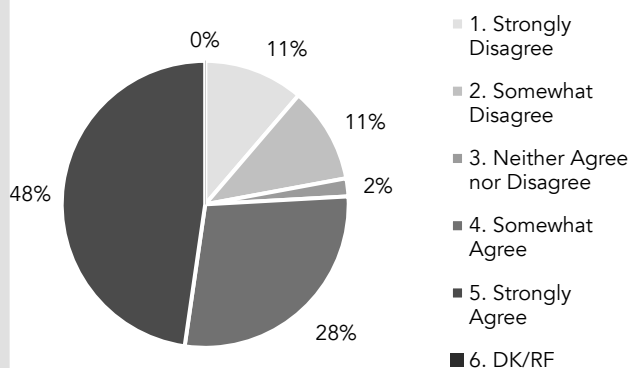
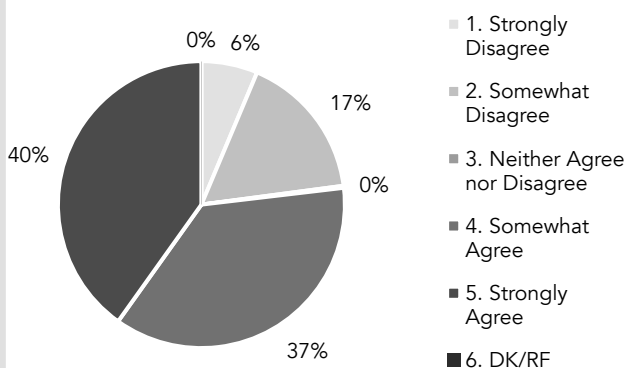


Figure 20. To what extent do you agree that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to you?



Tribal communities in rural areas are supportive of the government and the king and hold the state security apparatus in high esteem.

Mafraq has experienced bouts of mass protest in recent years. One example is the November 2012 pro-reform demonstrations, largely in response to the government's decision to lift fuel subsidies.¹⁴⁵ Another example is the January 2013 riots following the country's parliamentary elections.¹⁴⁶ While these protests have been staged within cities, Mafraq's Badia population – which expressed strong tribal links – has generally condemned them. Accordingly, these communities have praised the government for extinguishing the demonstrations efficiently.¹⁴⁷ On occasion, they have even participated in pro-government street rallies to express their support for the regime.¹⁴⁸ One example is the June 2016 Arab Revolt Centennial, which was organized by the Royal Court. Hundreds of residents from the Badia region

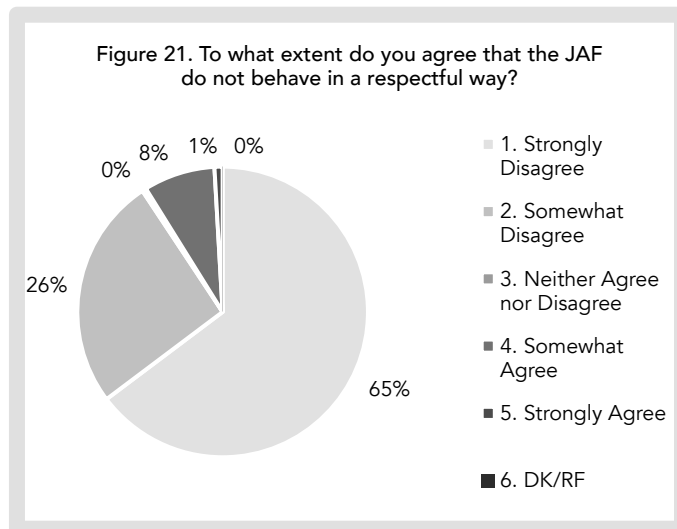
¹⁴⁵ Ammon News 2012. 'Tense protests in northern Jordan, clashes in Mafraq, Madaba', Ammon News, November 16, 2012.

¹⁴⁶ Samadi, Tamer 2013. 'Jordanian political crisis deepens as riots enter third day', Al Monitor, January 28, 2013.

¹⁴⁷ "In Jordan, when demonstrations started there were people whose objective was to vandalize. But with the wisdom of the leadership, officials and the Jordanian people, the situation was controlled. Such things disappeared and only happen occasionally." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁴⁸ "All the Jordanian people were invited to a demonstration to support the government. Most of the areas in the Badia participated. The latest one was the one in memory of the Arab revolution. Everyone went to support the king." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

reportedly attended this event, raising national flags from their vehicles and playing songs that eulogize the king. In addition to their regime dedication, many respondents from Mafraq's rural tribal communities were enthusiastic about the competence of the state security forces in controlling radicalization and terrorism.¹⁴⁹ They cited the 2005 failed suicide attack by Sajida Rishawi (in Amman) and the March 2016 Irbid raid as evidence of this. Accordingly, there is a high degree of respect for, and affinity with, Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) soldiers, not only in the Badia areas, but also across the entire governorate.¹⁵⁰ This was manifest in strong expressions of grief over security personnel deaths caused by terrorist attacks, such as that claimed by ISIS in Ruqban on June 21, 2016.¹⁵¹ Respect for the JAF was also reflected in quantitative findings. An overwhelming 91 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, while only nine percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the JAF do not behave in a respectful way (see Figure 21).



Respondents from Badia regions expressed general support for the government and rebuked state-opposition groups for attempting to undermine it.¹⁵² The GID is receives similar plaudits for its high levels of proficiency, which is producing a sense of security among locals. For example, one respondent praised the GID's ability to obstruct communication between VEOs – notably ISIS – and Jordanian youth.¹⁵³ The aforementioned pre-emptive March 2016 Irbid raid also contributed to this kind of assurance.¹⁵⁴ It is

¹⁴⁹ "Our government is strong and our king is standing in the face of those terrorists so they don't spread chaos all over the country and around us. They have a great role in decreasing violence." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

¹⁵⁰ "The Jordanian Army is not like any other army – the members of the army and the security forces and the civil defense, those are not mercenaries. We didn't buy them with money and they are not security firms. They are our sons. Go into any house and you will find in every Jordanian family a son in the army or a relative in the security forces or a husband in the civil defense. Those are our sons and we support them." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

¹⁵¹ "Those people who died aren't only soldiers who serve to protect their country, but they are also our children." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁵² "We have political oppositions that tried to take advantage of the situation, but nobody responded to them and what happened in Irbid. The government and security forces played a big role in controlling it before they were able to achieve their objectives. This indicates that the government is in control and these radical groups are under the scope." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁵³ "If we assumed that ISIS or members of it can communicate with young Jordanian people easily, then everything would be different. The security systems stop this communication. Of course it is hard to completely stop it because there are social media tools and ISIS has Internet specialists. But the Jordanian government is trying with all its tools to stop these young people from getting involved." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁵⁴ "Thanks to God [we have] one of the best intelligence agencies, and every once in a while, we hear that our patriots caught a cell, like the cell they caught in Irbid. These are things that make me feel safe and secure." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

understandable then, that locals are keen to cooperate with the GID when necessary, even against their own families.¹⁵⁵ That said, state support from tribal rural communities in Mafraq extends to the monarchy, as well. This was particularly evident in Badia areas, such as Salhiya, where one respondent championed the integrity and commitment of the monarchy, notably its resistance to regional influence from other states. The former King Hussein in particular remains popular for this reason. The strong support for government and monarchy detailed here renders these rural communities less likely to be receptive to anti-regime messages promoted by Salafists and Islamists.

"Since its establishment, the Kingdom of Jordan has been a target for different parties. There were attempts by a number of neighboring countries to change the regime in Jordan, such as Syria, Egypt and Libya. They used to come in and work for the sake of ending the rule of the Hashemite family because it's a royal system and has remained for several years. There were a number of Palestinian movements supported by a number of neighboring countries. But with the expertise of King Hussein, he was able to control the situation."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

Urban residents are less enthusiastic about the government and the king, but are equally impressed with the security apparatus.

There exists a widespread recognition of increasing security threats posed by VEOs in Mafraq's cities, but most residents believe strongly in the capacity of the security services to suppress these dangers.¹⁵⁶ One respondent also praised the security services' prudence in dealing with captives. Correspondingly, there are high levels of support for the JAF in Mafraq's cities,¹⁵⁷ and faith in the JAF's capabilities is strong across the governorate. For example, 92 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, while seven percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the JAF lack the ability to keep Jordan safe (see Figure 22). Yet, despite these appreciations, there were accusations of government deceit, allegedly in order to underplay local terrorist threats and boost public confidence.¹⁵⁸ This includes its concealment of information regarding planned and foiled extremist plots. The extent of government confidentiality on such issues has been demonstrated through arrests of individuals exposing security or

¹⁵⁵ "If a person were in front of me and told me he wanted to join [a VEO] and I couldn't convince him otherwise, I would tell the police for his own sake to protect him, not to beat him. Even if he were my son I would tell the police." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁵⁶ "These groups [VEOs] are continuously trying to attack Jordan but our strong army will always be there to protect us under the Hashemite leadership." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

¹⁵⁷ "Firstly, the army and the intelligence are strong, and secondly, the whole public stands with the army." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

¹⁵⁸ "Our government is trying to cover it [extremism] up and make people believe that we don't have any violence or terrorism incubators. I mean, if there was a terrorist attack or the government suspected a terrorist attack, it wouldn't announce it. I heard from some of my friends that work in the security agencies in Jordan that the intelligence is catching many terrorists or cars that the terrorists wanted to use. But the government doesn't announce it in order to not scare the public." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

intelligence activities, such as that of journalist Ghazi Al Mayarat of Al Rai newspaper in July 2015.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, urban residents were less explicit in their support for the king, perhaps accounting for the significant levels of disappointment with the royalty's engagement in Mafrq. Accordingly, an overwhelming 78 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 20 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Royal Court does not care about the needs of the people (see Figure 23). Again, there is reason to believe that levels of dissent were higher in urban areas than in rural towns and villages.

"The army is working day and night to protect the borders and this country from ISIS' dogs. For example, the police are always in the streets trying to catch those criminals and cleaning the country of drugs. Even when they catch one of these terrorists, they try to convince him that what he's doing is wrong and ask him for information. After [confirming the accuracy of this] information, they try to solve the problem."

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

Figure 22. To what extent do you agree that the JAF lack the ability to keep Jordan safe?

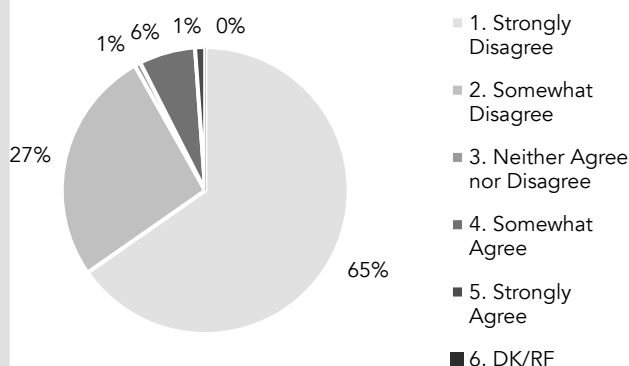
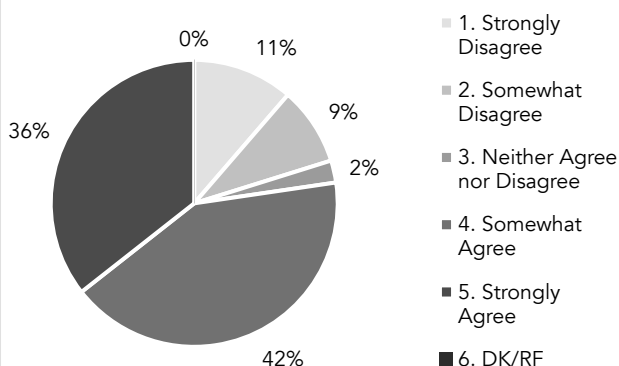


Figure 23. To what extent do you agree that the Royal Court does not care about the needs of the people?



Perceived government corruption is generating public resentment, which Salafist Jihadists are encouraging in order to strengthen support for their own agendas.

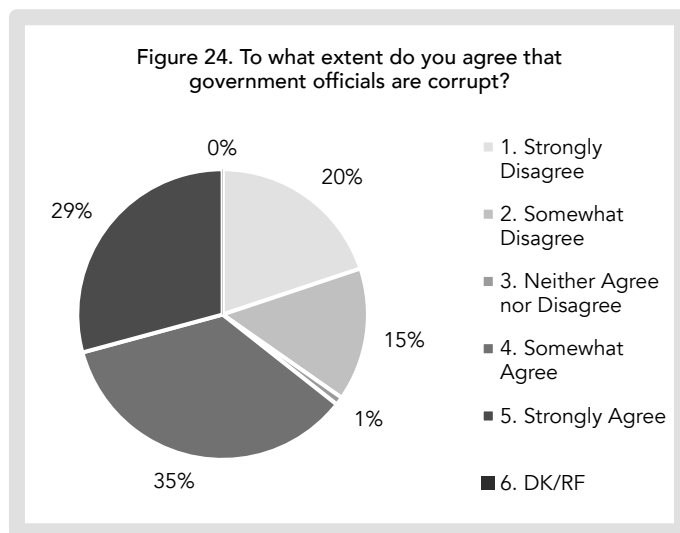
Of Mafrq's numerous street demonstrations in the twenty-first century, probably the most notorious occurred in January 2012. It was then that MB-led protests escalated into violent clashes between pro-reformers and suspected state-sponsored "thugs," culminating in an arson attack on local IAF offices.¹⁶⁰ This has fueled concerns, notably from the MB, that the state is using its influence to violently suppress

¹⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch 2015. 'Jordan: Journalists, writers facing terrorism charges: vague law being used to curb media freedom', HRW, July 15, 2015.

¹⁶⁰ Schenker, David & David Makovsky 2012. 'A full agenda for King Abdullah of Jordan's White House visit', The Washington Institute, January 13, 2012.

peaceful protests.¹⁶¹ Aside from such disquiet about state malpractice, government corruption was in fact among the main complaints of the protestors during this incident.¹⁶² Politicians such as former Prime Minister Awn Shawkat Al Khasawneh have since addressed these complaints, at least in gesture. For example, Al Khasawneh reopened government-related scandal cases of the past including the Casinogate gambling project by the Dead Sea, which had been pursued without appropriate approval by former Prime Minister Ma'ruf Al Bakhit.¹⁶³ Another example is the case of businessman Khalid Shah, who was controversially released from prison after being convicted of bribery.¹⁶⁴ However, state-corruption within Jordan has continued and appears still to be rife. For example, in a particularly high profile case, reports emerged in 2016 of large-scale weapons theft from officials within the ranks of the GID.¹⁶⁵ According to commentators, intelligence officials have been stealing arms intended for Syrian rebel trainees and selling them on the black market.¹⁶⁶

The majority of respondents, too, were of the opinion that government corruption continues to occur. 64 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that government officials are corrupt (see Figure 24). Mafrq's population is also renowned for its vehement disapproval of lavish behavior within the royal family, specifically that of Queen Rania.¹⁶⁷ For Jordan's Salafist Jihadists, revelations of state malpractice offer a major opportunity for them to justify their state-directed criticisms and simultaneously promote alternative forms of governance that accord with their extremist ideology. For example, Irbid's Abu Mohammad Al Tahawi has capitalized on public frustrations relating to government corruption by reasserting the case for Sharia rule.¹⁶⁸



¹⁶¹ Brand, Laurie A. & Fayez Hammad 2012. 'Just what does Jordan's Abdullah understand', Foreign Policy: The Middle East Channel, January 17, 2012.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Mazzetti, Mark & Ali Younes 2016. 'C.I.A arms for Syrian rebels supplied black market, officials say', The New York Times, June 26, 2016.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Lister, Tim 2012. 'Analysis: Jordan's King Abdullah faces crisis', CNN, November 17, 2012.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Many deem the government politically manipulative and undemocratic and are uncomfortable with perceived state media interference.

Perceptions of government misconduct are also discernible in its political activities vis-à-vis opposition parties. Most notable among the latter in Jordan is the MB, whose relations with the government have soured since around 2007, and particularly 2011. A critical dimension to the worsening relationship has been a sense that the government has been meddling beyond acceptability in the structure and activities of the MB. For example, in 2007, the government dissolved the board of directors of the MB's charitable and social division, the Islamic Center Society.¹⁶⁹ The same year, there were allegations that the government rigged the parliamentary elections that produced the MB's worst performance in its electoral political history.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, in 2015, after government-MB tensions had intensified since the latter's participation in numerous post-2011 pro-reform demonstrations, the state declared the MB an illegal political entity based on its failure to renew its political party license.¹⁷¹ Meanwhile, the government began influencing changes from within the MB, endorsing the newly emergent MB Society to which it redirected lucrative assets from the original MB.¹⁷² The extent of this intervention has drawn criticism that the government has co-opted the MB Society to serve its own political aims.¹⁷³ More recently, in March 2016, the government banned the MB from holding internal elections and subsequently shut down numerous MB offices, including those in Mafraq.¹⁷⁴ Given these developments and the media attention afforded them, it is not surprising that a majority of Mafraq's population perceives the government to be politically meddlesome. This was reflected in quantitative findings, which state that 59 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government interferes too much in controlling political parties (see Figure 25). Accordingly, a considerable majority of Mafraq's residents feel politically marginalized and underrepresented. This is also evident in quantitative findings, which suggest that 71 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 27 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that there is no point in voting as it doesn't change anything (see Figure 26).

¹⁶⁹ Al Naimat, Tareq 2014. 'The Jordanian regime and the Muslim Brotherhood: a tug of war', Wilson Center: Middle East Program, July 2014.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ MEE & Agencies 2016. 'More Muslim Brotherhood offices shut down in Jordan', Middle East Eye, April 14, 2016.

¹⁷² Alami, Aida 2015. 'Rift deepens within Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood', Al Jazeera, August 17, 2015.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Malkawi, Khetam 2016. 'Old Brotherhood cries foul as internal elections banned', The Jordan Times, March 29, 2016.

Figure 25. To what extent do you agree that the government interferes too much in controlling political parties?

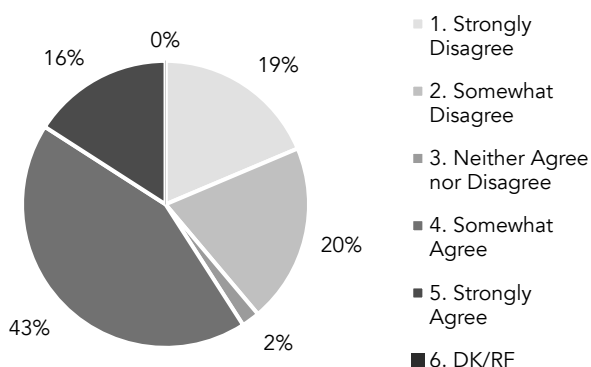
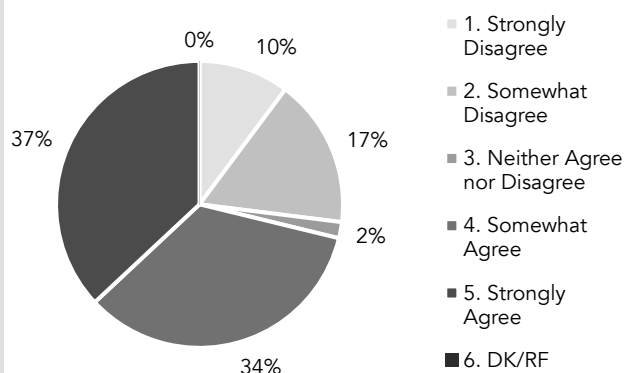


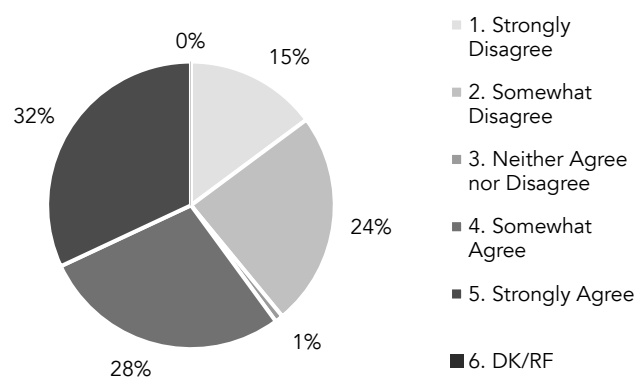
Figure 26. To what extent do you agree that you do not feel that there is a point in voting, as it doesn't change anything?



Many in Mafrq fear that that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press.

Many respondents are uncomfortable with what they see as excessive government intervention in the media. Indeed, as revealed in quantitative findings, 60 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press (see Figure 27). Perceptions of heavy government media intervention may derive from past incidents whereby the state has attempted to steer the media toward its political objectives. This occurred in 2012, for example, when there were accusations that the GID had encouraged a media campaign to galvanize opposition against MB political activism.¹⁷⁵ This followed intense clashes in Mafrq between security officials and the MB when the latter joined street protests calling for political reform. Meanwhile, locals appear to be either mistrustful or uninterested in the state owned channel, Jordan TV, which is reportedly not widely watched in Mafrq, or in other governorates, for that matter.

Figure 27. To what extent do you agree that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press?

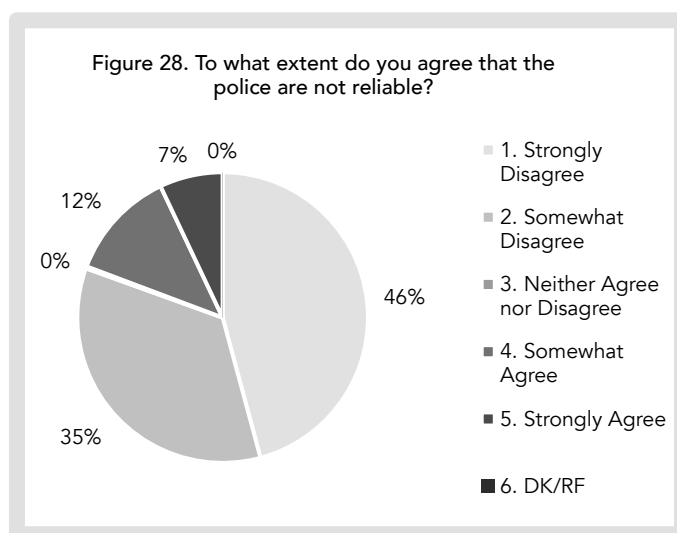


¹⁷⁵ Al Sabbagh, Rana 2012. 'Journalists accuse Jordanian security forces of pressuring the media', Al Monitor, January 13, 2012.

4.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT

Despite several protestations, the majority of respondents were positive about the role of the police in Mafrag.

One example of objection to police activities in Mafrag occurred in July 2012, when young protestors blocked the Jaber Al Serhan road as part of a demonstration against the police's arrest of a local youth. However, the overwhelming appreciation of the police's role in Mafrag among the local population was manifest in quantitative findings. 81 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, while 19 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the police are not reliable (see Figure 28). Public faith in state security has been strengthened in response to an increasingly visible police presence, notably on local roads, that has reportedly been successful in reducing drug trafficking. This has been more perceptible in Mafrag City than it has in Badia areas, with police checkpoints located on King Talal street, Baghdad International Highway and Zarqa street. Such is confidence in the police and security forces that one respondent proudly compared the strong local police presence with the weakness of that in neighboring pre-war Syria.¹⁷⁶ Particular qualities for which locals appreciate the police are its efficient communications systems, effective response to community concerns and capacity to resolve tribal conflicts.



Locals complain of a lack of police presence in some areas, most notably in the Badia region.

That said, police services are uneven across the governorate. As noted above, police road presence in Badia areas is lacking compared with that in Mafrag City. Additionally, locals complain that, especially in Badia areas, there is no police patrol on the streets at night. Residents are concerned about this in particular because many sense a threat from Syrian refugees in the Badia.¹⁷⁷ Aside from East and West Bank residents, there are signs of strong anti-police sentiments from Mafrag's substantial Syrian refugee population. One source of objection has been the tightened police presence around Za'atari Camp amid concerns that loose controls have been enabling corruption, exploitation and illegal activity to occur. Rather than generating a greater sense of internal security, many perceive the tightened controls as an economic strategy aimed at mitigating the deteriorating circumstances in surrounding cities exacerbated

¹⁷⁶ "I went to Syria before the conflict and it's horrible – there's no system and no police. Here in Jordan, when you drive down the road, you find six-seven police stations. We are very lucky." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrag)

¹⁷⁷ "In some areas of the Badia we suffer from [a lack of] police patrols. They don't come to the streets at night to ensure all is good as they are doing in Mafrag City and Za'atari Refugee Camp. And their presence is important since we are not comfortable about the Syrian refugees; we feel there are sleeper cells." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafrag)

by the arrival of large refugee numbers. Consequently, camp residents have begun to liken their home to a prison.¹⁷⁸ However, these views are not widespread among Jordanians, as revealed in quantitative findings, which state that 89 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents disagreed, while only 11 percent agreed that they or their family had directly suffered from excessive police authority (see Figure 29).

"We find many police patrols on the roads that [carry out] some security measures and car inspections. This made the highways safer, and they caught some drug dealers and cleaned the streets of such people."

(Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrq)

Figure 29. Have you or your family directly suffered from excessive police authority?



Though local tribes handle most disputes in Mafrq, locals are happy with the efficiency of civil and Sharia courts.

For issues relating to civil rights or minor disagreements, residents typically take their cases to tribal adjudicators rather than formal courts (although for minor – typically financial – disputes, locals are increasingly opting for civil courts). That said, this appears to be more out of tradition and/or convenience rather than a lack of confidence in civil or Sharia courts. For instance, the majority appeared satisfied with the operations of the local civil court system, including the magistrate court in Rwaished (Al Shamali neighborhood) and the Court of First Instance in Mafrq City (Governmental Building, Al Tarkhees street), in which Judge Rizq Abu Al Foul oversees cases of minor offense.

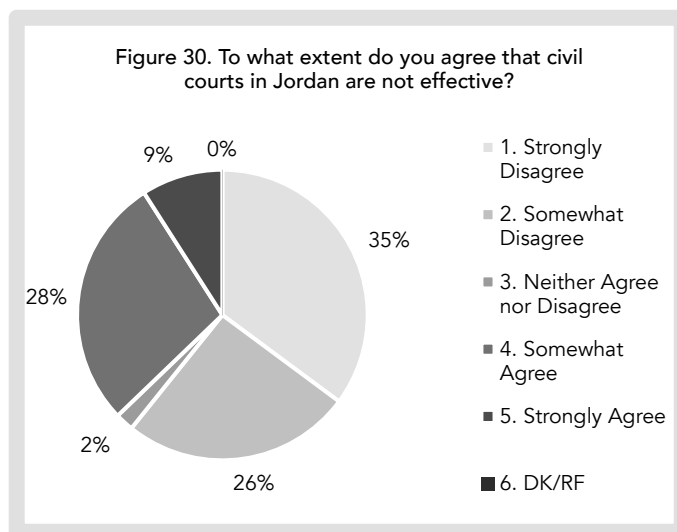
Wide appreciation of these courts' functionality was revealed in quantitative findings, which stated that 61 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that civil courts in Jordan are not effective (see Figure 30). Perhaps accounting for the considerable minority of dissatisfaction here, respondents explained that one of the greatest sources of

¹⁷⁸ Sommerfelt, Tone and Mark B. Taylor. 'The big dilemma of small soldiers: recruiting children to the war in Syria', *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre*, February 2015.

frustration with civil courts relates not to their accuracy but to their efficiency, with cases being notoriously protracted.¹⁷⁹ Aside from civil courts, there are a number of Sharia Courts in Mafrq, which deal with cases relating to personal status for Muslims, *diya* (blood money) and Islamic endowments. These include Mafrq City Sharia Court, presided over by Salameh Mustafa Smadi; Bal'am Sharia Court, presided over by Mohammad Oqlah Hamasha; Sabha Sharia Court, presided over by Ali Odeh Fankhour; and Rwaished Sharia Court, presided over by Tariq Ahamad Alsharida.

"People in Mafrq rarely deal with the courts, and mostly they go to the tribes to take their rights – even the foreign workers [predominantly Egyptian]. If a man works for someone and he doesn't pay him, he will go to his tribal leader and the tribal leader will [restore his rights]."

(Male, 38, Researcher, Mafrq)



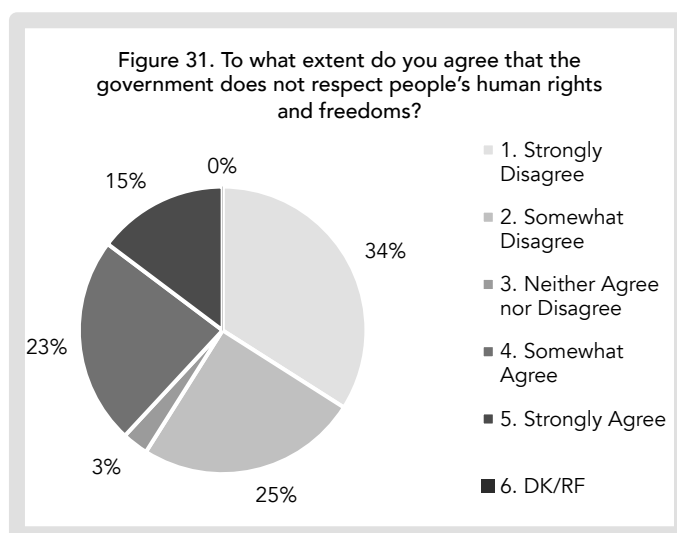
¹⁷⁹ "What they are doing is good; they take all the evidence and witnesses correctly. But they take a long time in the sessions and to release their order." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafrq)

4.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Despite controversial criminal charges that risk contravening freedom of expression, most locals are satisfied with the preservation of their human rights.

In March 2013, Jordan's state security court detained five university students from Mafrq's Al Byat University on charges of sectarian incitement.¹⁸⁰ The charges came after the students were accused of desecrating a Qur'an and disposing of it in a lavatory as part of a religious ritual. The decision prompted aggressive calls for retribution on Facebook and elsewhere, including from such prominent Salafist Jihadists as Mohammad Al Shalabi, a.k.a Abu Sayyaf. But it also caused outrage from Human rights observers and the families of the accused, who refused to recognize any criminal behavior on behalf of their accused relatives. On the contrary, there were calls for the trial of approximately 200 other students

alleged to have assaulted the five defendants following the incident in question. Understandably, in an environment that enables such incidences of perceived injustice and violation of human rights, a considerable minority of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the extent to which they are able to practice their human rights. However, the majority of Mafrq's population appears to be content in this regard. Indeed, while 38 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, 59 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms (see Figure 31).



Stringent anti-terrorism laws are silencing residents, creating grievances and precluding the revelation of potentially insightful knowledge.

In April 2014, the Jordanian parliament passed amendments to the country's anti-terrorism laws.¹⁸¹ Among other measures, the new legislations stipulate that anybody found guilty of inciting terrorism online will be charged and detained.¹⁸² A striking reflection of this law's implementation is the five-to-seven year imprisonment of over 100 people on charges of "electronic terrorism."¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch 2013. 'Jordan: students accused of devil worship', Human Rights Watch, March 26, 2013.

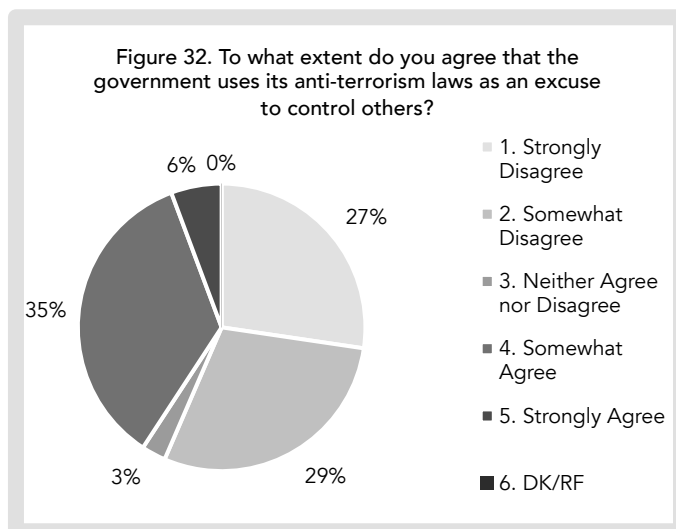
¹⁸¹ Reporters Without Borders 2014. 'King urged to repeal draconian changes to anti-terrorism law', RWB, June 16, 2014.

¹⁸² Booth, William and Taylor Luck 2014. 'Jordan cracks down on Islamic State on Facebook and Twitter', The Washington Post, October 13, 2014.

¹⁸³ Laub, Karin 2015. 'Jordan tries to stem IS-style extremism in schools, mosques', Business Insider, August 07, 2015.

A byproduct of these measures is that residents are reluctant to divulge the sources from which they have gained insights into VEO activities. One respondent for instance, having claimed that ISIS communicates with prospective recruits through Internet websites, refused to specify what these pages are called and declined to revisit them for fear of pursuit by the GID.¹⁸⁴

Meanwhile, there are local VE-related concerns about the consequences of an increasing number of arrests and detentions. One respondent, for instance, maintained that youth with official criminal backgrounds are more likely to be socially marginalized and discriminated against in the job market, leaving them with a heightened vulnerability to VEO recruiters.¹⁸⁵ That said, aside from the consequences of charges relating to the anti-terrorism laws, there are accusations that the laws themselves are occasionally erroneously applied, as well as concerns that VEOs might exploit the resultant indignation among falsely charged youth. Similarly, a large proportion of Mafraq's population believes the government to be abusing its powers through these laws. Indeed, a considerable 41 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 56 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government uses its anti-terrorism laws as an excuse to control others (see Figure 32).



"There are individuals with extreme orientations, and some are falsely accused by the government. I mean the youth who are wronged by the security forces and wrongfully accused. It's clear that injustice forces people toward vengeance and sabotage, especially if used by terrorist groups"

(Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

¹⁸⁴ "Even if I do [know what these websites are], I won't try to check it because the intelligence is controlling and watching these pages and websites. Honestly, I don't want that headache." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

¹⁸⁵ "It is known that youth with criminal records or who have been imprisoned are the class that suffer the most from unemployment. This class is unemployed because they are marginalized. They couldn't find a job opportunity. These youth are easy targets for [VEO] recruiters since their minds can be easily manipulated." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

5.0 PSYCHOSOCIAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

5.1 LOCUS OF CONTROL

Unlike crowded cities, sparsely populated tribal communities are inimical to VE.

VE in Mafraq is concentrated in densely populated areas such as cities. Here, Salafist Jihadists are more easily able to communicate their messages and do so in secret. In addition to the cover provided by crowded communities, Salafist Jihadists' stealth is enabled by the ethnic diversity that characterizes cities more than rural areas.¹⁸⁶ This multiculturalism reduces the social familiarity among locals, rendering manipulative outsiders less visible. In sparsely populated rural areas, on the other hand, physical communication is less accessible, and when exercised it is more exposed. Additionally, the physical open spaces within these communities,¹⁸⁷ as well as their high levels of social cohesion, leave strangers highly conspicuous.¹⁸⁸ These factors are inhibitive to Salafist Jihadists intent on furtively radicalizing local youth. Many respondents explained that Badia areas are particularly immune to VE influences due to the strong tribal loyalties prevailing there.¹⁸⁹ In Salhiya district, for instance, the tribal culture is considered a barrier to VE for a number of reasons. First, it provides social solidarity and creates group mentality. This, in turn, cultivates relatively high levels of awareness among youth and leaves few individuals vulnerable to external manipulative forces.¹⁹⁰ Second, in tribal communities, religious extremism is uncommon and religion is generally expressed apolitically. Indeed, tribal communities are actively hostile toward politico-religious organizations such as the MB and civil activist groups (see 2.2 Support for Political and Non-Violent Islamist Groups). For example, the Bani Khalid tribe associated with Khaldiyyah district, is known to have issued a warning to the political activist group, Hirak, in 2011 against attempting to mobilize locally.¹⁹¹ Third, the strength of loyalty that local tribes cultivate toward the king serves to counter-balance the anti-regime messaging of VEOs.¹⁹² Finally, the structure of the tribe is such that there are certain influential and well-respected figures of authority in which the population trusts, and with whom they can

¹⁸⁶ "Cities are targeted because there are many people of different backgrounds living there." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁸⁷ "In the Badia, thanks to god, [we] live in villages, and our areas are desert areas, and we are Bedouins. Each person lives in a big area, meaning between each house there is a space; there is no overcrowding." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

¹⁸⁸ "Maybe they [VEO operatives] can enter cities and people would not know about them. But in the desert we all know each other and if a stranger comes we immediately report him to the police." (Male, 45 Nurse, Mafraq)

¹⁸⁹ "In the desert they are all the same people and the same tribe, and they all know each other." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁰ "In the desert we all know each other and we know nearby towns and all the tribes from different areas. But in the cities neighbors don't know each other. In our desert, if we hear a stranger's voice we all go to check and see who he is, and if a fight happens we all go to help. We are one here, and we don't allow strangers to abuse us." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁹¹ Yom, Sean L. 2014. 'Tribal politics in contemporary Jordan: the case of the Hirak movement', *The Middle East Journal* 68 (2): 229-247.

¹⁹² "I don't think that it [VE] is a big problem [...] because it's different here in the Badia: we are controlled by the clans and they rule the social system. And the clans are well known for their loyalty to the system and to the king specifically." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

consult on personal and social issues. Moreover, such is the stature of these individuals among fellow tribesmen that their word is virtually sacrosanct.¹⁹³ One prominent example is Sheikh Uqlah Akhu Ershideh of the Al Ghazala tribe, whose social prominence is such that he is reported to have influence over all of Mafraq's tribes. The influence of tribal leaders obstructs the potential for VE activists to present themselves as youth mentors and incubators for youth grievances. Even some of the areas that have witnessed the largest intakes of Syrian refugees have managed to uphold significant levels of tribal cohesion.

"In Mafraq and the desert area, violent extremism is not considered a problem, as these are tribal areas. Extremism is mostly found in highly populated areas, such as cities, where communication is easier and extremism can be concealed. But in desert areas, extremism is exposed due to the strong loyalty toward the tribe and the awareness of the youth. This is with the exception of a few that have fallen into drug issues and are more vulnerable to being dragged into extremism. In desert areas there is no extremism. Even the number of sympathetic people with terrorism and extremism is low."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

The weakening of tribal influence and cultural traditions is restricting the capacity for tribal sheikhs to counter VE.

Although serving as a potential bulwark against pernicious influences, tribal solidarity is no panacea for violent extremism. The case of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, whose connections with the Bani Hassan tribe failed to contain his jihadist pursuits, is illustrative of this. In addition, there is a perception among certain locals that tribes are not playing such a positive role as they have done in the past,¹⁹⁴ and that their influence over society has weakened since the turn of the twenty-first century. This may be related to the erosion of local traditions, which have reportedly been weakened since at least 2006. For example, women have gained increasing liberty in the employment sector, ridding themselves of the shame associated with work beyond a limited set of occupations. Meanwhile, formerly extravagant wedding celebrations have been significantly scaled back, largely in response to financial constraints. Furthermore, and more directly linked to receding tribal influence, locals are increasingly choosing to use civil courts rather than consult their tribal leaders in order to settle petty disputes – usually as a result of financial strain. According to one respondent, tribal traditions provide a social adhesive that served to protect communities from pernicious influences.¹⁹⁵ Concerns over the erosion of these traditions are

¹⁹³ "We don't have problems in the desert because we live by traditions and we have a sheikh for our tribe and people listen to him and he is aware. When you have someone like him people refer to him for their problems." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁴ "Our tribe's leaders don't all work correctly for the country. In the past they were more effective but now they aren't." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁵ "Yes there are traditions and morals but now young people tend to be more extremist because the environment forces them to be. Life and ways of living change every day; if you go and ask about the Badia 10 years ago, traditions connected people together. If you look at the Badia now, you'll see that these traditions are becoming less effective at holding us together." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

compounded by the impression that VEOs are specifically targeting the Badia areas with terrorist attacks.¹⁹⁶ The influx of Syrian refugees is an additional factor that has inhibited the ability of tribes to monitor and regulate their communities. For example, a significant presence of foreign families renders it difficult to identify strangers. That locals from the Badia demonstrated an inability to recognize Salafist Jihadists, or indeed to distinguish them from Salafist Quietists, is potentially cause for concern. More controversially, there are indications that, to a certain degree, tribal relationships may actually be encouraging participation in the Syrian conflict, rather than preventing it. Despite these concerns, in those areas where tribal culture is prevalent, respondents asserted that tribal leaders should be at the forefront of CVE initiatives. This is because they still command respect within their communities and have strong and positive relationships with the king, despite their waning influence.¹⁹⁷

"In the past 15 years, we decreased the tribes' role, which made the leader of the tribe incapable of affecting the youth and making them stay away from extremist groups."

(Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁶ "Radical groups may target the desert because, as you see, incidents are increasing so we are afraid." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁷ "In the desert, tribe leaders must be in the front in fighting terrorism because people listen to them. They can also reach youth in all areas and should send messages to the leaders of the country...Our king is very loved and he has to visit the tribes so he can encourage them." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

5.2 RELIGIOUS VALUES, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

Family and friend networks are, to a certain extent, blamed for VE in the community due to their perceived failures to encourage moderate Islam.

In allocating blame for the radicalization of local youth, many respondents held families accountable. As far as locals are concerned, families should be monitoring their children's behavior and setting appropriate examples – especially regarding moderate Islam.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, weak religious foundations emerged as a major precondition for radicalization among Mafraq's youth, and locals demonstrated an awareness of this.¹⁹⁹ Simultaneously, however, one respondent asserted that exceptionally religious families may be priority targets for VEOs and relatively more receptive to their messaging.²⁰⁰ In terms of intra-family surveillance, respondents emphasized the role of the mother, who is deemed more receptive to changes in children's behavior. Moreover, several respondents indicated a willingness among women to collaborate with intelligence services, even if it means reporting their own children for the sake of improved security.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, respondents indicated that friends within the Badia area transmit strong influences upon one another and are more mutually outspoken than they are with their families. Although this strengthens the potential for peers to protect one another from malign forces, locals fear that it also enables friends to circulate extremist tendencies and drag one another into bad company.²⁰² The local saying, "a friend can pull," embodies this concern.²⁰³

"Families should teach their kids and raise their awareness, steering them away from radicalism and never allowing anyone to brainwash them. They should also monitor their kids. They can monitor their kids through knowing their friends and who they go out with, and about their pocket money, where they go out and who they talk to over the Internet. Kids are more honest with their friends than their parents because they fear that their parents might hit them or harm them if they do something wrong, so they confide in their friends."

(Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁸ "The family is to be blamed if it neglects their children and does not observe them, noticing changes in them such as religious extremism." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

¹⁹⁹ "The lack of understanding of religion can lead to radicalization." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

²⁰⁰ "A religious family would be more targeted [by VEOs]. The extremist groups use religious language in their discourse." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

²⁰¹ "A child is the most precious thing for a mother, so any change in the son would be notice. They know their children and how they raised them, so [upon noticing] any weird thought or action they should take action, and inform the child's father. And they need to understand that it's not wrong to inform authorities; by doing so they will be protecting their sons." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

²⁰² "If you have a friend who joined or is planning to join ISIS, it will definitely affect you." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

²⁰³ "We have a known saying, 'a friend can pull', which means that the friend can have an effect on a person and sometimes a person would be pulled toward extremism because of an extreme friend of his. Bad friends can drag one another into the bad hidden worlds such as drugs or brainwashing meetings for the youth in order to recruit them to fuel the war ISIS is leading." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

Religious freedom is a widely held value, but inter-religious interaction is more controversial.

Respondents did not recognize any religious minority representation within Mafrq, except for Christians. According to several respondents – many of whom were East Bank Jordanians – the co-existence between the majority Sunni Muslims and Christians in their society is peaceful, and their relationship is genial. This relationship is apparently facilitated by the fact that Muslims and Christians study and work together, observe the same customs and traditions, and have a shared nationalist commitment. Mutual respect for one another's religious commitments is also likely to be a contributing factor. For example, 80 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 18 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that all people should be free to practice whatever religion they choose (see Figure 33). That said, somewhat contradicting these findings, a large minority of respondents objected to inter-religious engagement. For example, 44 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 56 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims (see Figure 34). With that in mind, there are numerous factors that may be discouraging inter-religious interaction. One example is the school curricula. Although they received minor modifications in 2016 in response to heightened criticisms, they have consistently been denounced for failing to recognize and depict a Christian representation in Jordan, including images of churches alongside mosques inside textbooks.²⁰⁴ Interestingly, quantitative findings on relative satisfaction levels with the local education system (see 3.1 Education and Employment) closely correlated with those on inter-religious interaction as presented here. There are also influential and popular public figures that have discouraged engagement with religious minorities. One example is Amjad Qourshah, who is reported to have discouraged his followers – some of whom exist in Mafrq (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives) – from offering Christmas greetings to Christians.²⁰⁵

"In Jordan, I didn't feel sectarianism because we have the same religion and sect. Other than us, there are only Christians, and we consider them our brothers. They study with us and they are our work colleagues, and we have the same traditions and customs. They respect our religion and we respect theirs. In short, we coexist. Thanks to God they like the country like we do."

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrq)

²⁰⁴ Azzeh, Laila 2016. 'Curricula changes trigger heated debate between conservatives and anti-extremism activists, The Jordan Times, September 24, 2016.

²⁰⁵ Bulos, Nabih 2016. 'Jordan scholar falls from government grace after criticizing role in fight against Islamic State', Los Angeles Times, July 5, 2016.

Figure 33. To what extent do you think that all people should be free to practice whatever religion they choose?

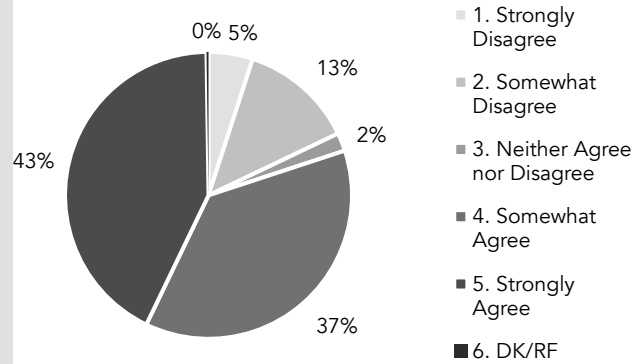
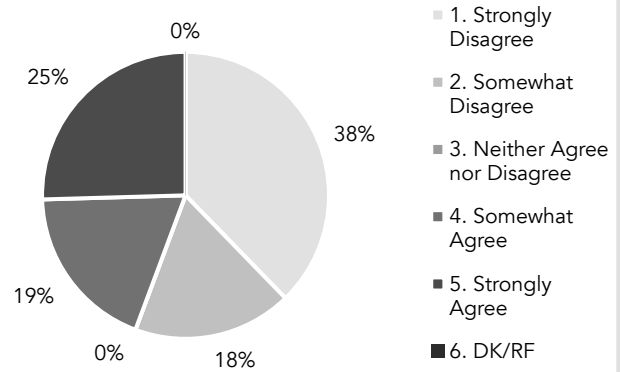


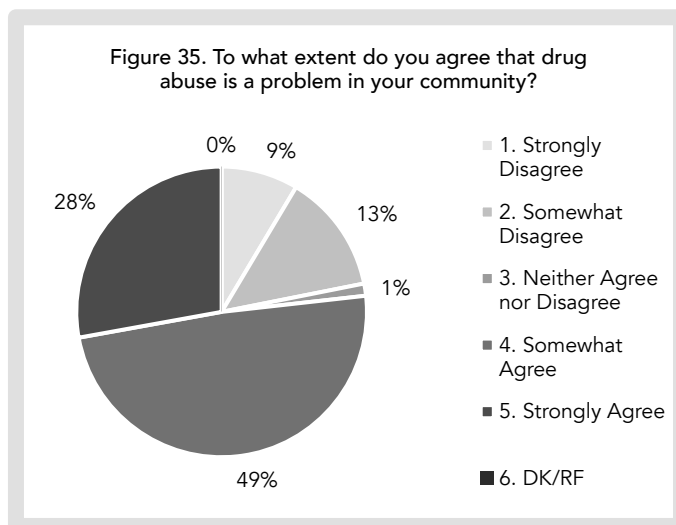
Figure 34. To what extent do you think that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims?



5.3 EXPOSURE TO CRIME AND CONFLICT

Substance abuse is associated with a greater propensity toward VE.

Due to its proximity to the Iraq and Syria borders, Mafrq is at the heart of Jordan's drug smuggling corridor. Numerous recent narcotics raids in the governorate reflect the drugs culture that continues to prevail in the area,²⁰⁶ and several respondents were forthright in their recognition of this - especially in Badia areas, such as Salhiya district, Sabha City and Dafyaneh (Sabha district), where there is a notable absence of policing.²⁰⁷ Here, young people are known to be engaging in high levels of drug abuse within their homes rather than on the streets, rendering what little formal or informal community surveillance largely redundant. For



example, some locals explained that, though tribes wish to tackle drug abuse, they are largely unable to do so because it takes place behind closed doors. Accordingly, drug abuse is a major concern, not only in Badia areas but across the entire governorate, including in Khaldiyyah district, Irhab district and Za'atari village. This was revealed in quantitative findings, which stated that 77 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while only 22 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that drug abuse is a problem in their community (see Figure 35). Many residents are also participating in the drugs trade - predominantly selling stimulants - as a source of income due to a lack of alternatives.²⁰⁸ These stimulants are most likely Captagon pills, which security forces have discovered on several occasions in Mafrq.²⁰⁹ One example occurred in August 2014, when a local driver was captured while attempting to smuggle 65,000 Captagon pills across the southern border.²¹⁰ High levels of drug dealing activity are also reportedly evident in Mafrq City. Perhaps most concerning for locals are rumors that local drug dealers are targeting school children. This is known to be happening in Zamleh (Sabha district), where locals reported that some pupils from Al Amir Ghazi Secondary School for Boys are being drawn

²⁰⁶ The Jordan Times 2016. 'Jordan remains corridor country for drug smuggling - report', The Jordan Times, April 13, 2016.

²⁰⁷ "Drugs have a strong effect. In our area, honestly, guys use them in celebrations and parties, and then they fight for the most stupid reason because they are unaware. They can kill each other for drugs. We have this problem in the desert. I wish the government had more control over it. This leads to radicalization." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

²⁰⁸ "There are no job opportunities in the Badia. Most people rely on the military service or government sector, since there is no private sector and are no businesses. There are people who sell drugs for money, and most of the drugs in the Badia are uppers." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrq)

²⁰⁹ Hussein, Rana 2016. '19 arrested in drug busts in Amman, Mafrq - PSD', The Jordan Times, August 4, 2016.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

into drugs circles because dealers target them during the daytime in the areas surrounding the school premises. The same phenomenon is also reported to be occurring in Khaldiyyah town (Khaldiyyah district). For similar reasons, many local parents are reluctant to send their children onto the streets in the evenings.

Respondents made several indirect connections between local drug use and susceptibility to VEOs, which is more applicable to Mafraq City than it is to the Badia. First, heavy drug users in Mafraq tend to be unemployed youth or young men, who are typically more impressionable and needy than those with secure employment; it is these characteristics that enable Salafist Jihadists both to brainwash individuals and to seduce them with material benefits, including drugs themselves.²¹¹ Indeed, one respondent indicated that ISIS-affiliated drug dealers might use their influence over addicts to transform them into ISIS recruits.²¹² This potential manipulation is facilitated by the fact that drug users are typically lacking in mental resilience.²¹³ Second, local drug users are often socially disconnected, and it is apparently not uncommon for them to have been abandoned by their relatives. Finally, respondents claimed that drug dependency among locals was more likely to drive them toward VEOs because the financial benefits of recruitment offer the possibility of feeding their addiction.²¹⁴ Captagon consumption among youth is of particular concern for locals, who fear that the drug's effects can impair the user's ability to recognize people and numbs his fear of death. Thus, it is likely that manipulative strangers are more easily able to approach such youths and feed them the idea of honorable jihad in Syria.

"Mostly the unemployed are dragged behind things such as drugs, so they will be going after the substance in any possible way. It is easy for the extremist groups to get control over those young people and win them to their side."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

There have been numerous attempts to counter drug abuse in Mafraq, though their effects are difficult to gauge, given locals' complaints.

There have been numerous attempts to counter drug abuse in Mafraq, though their impact has not been possible to gauge. One example is the June 2014 campaign entitled "Drugs Are Killing Us", launched by the Sadhiya tribe (Sabha district) in collaboration with local police. Around 300 people, most of them aged 18 and over, attended the event, which was hosted in the Badia Youth Centre at the Sabha Triangle

²¹¹ "Whoever consumes drugs needs the substance because they got used to it. So they will do anything in order to get the drugs, and the extremists secure their needs in order to take advantage of them and achieve their goals." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

²¹² "When the number of [drug] addicts increases, each one of them becomes like a slave to those dealers. So if the dealer asks them to join ISIS in order to give them more drugs they will go." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

²¹³ "We are suffering in the Badia from drugs. The drug addict is more exposed to join these groups; all of his concern is to find whatever can guarantee the substances that he is hooked on, and for this source to be available all the time. The drug addict is not mentally qualified; I hear stories that it affects the human brain and that it affects his personality. So they might influence him." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

²¹⁴ "Drug addicts are more inclined to join these groups because drug addicts are always in need of money. They might do anything to get their money." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

(Salhiya district). The event included private testimonies from attendees about drug abuse within their own families. A second example, also from June 2014, is the awareness campaign conducted by the police that targeted schools within the Badia such as Zamleh Al Amir Ghazi School for Girls. The events focused on teaching locals how to recognize drugs and highlighting their harmful effects. The latter was reportedly achieved through theatre. A third example is the USAID initiative to use the unveiling of a new football field in the Nafir area as an opportunity to distribute flyers raising awareness about drugs. Local religious leaders have also participated in anti-drugs campaigning. One example is Izz Al Den Shogair, imam of Sho'aib Mosque, who has engaged directly with drug-users in an attempt to provide positive guidance, reportedly with successful outcomes.²¹⁵

An apparent increase in urban violence and the use of weapons coincides with economic deterioration and soaring unemployment.

Contrary to the majority of Badia-based respondents, Mafraq's urban population identified VE as a significant problem within their locality. In doing so, they made distinctions between VE and religious extremism, asserting that increasing violence has been more discernible than Islamic extremism. For one respondent, an escalation in violence is closely correlated with deepening economic difficulties and ensuing unemployment among youth – circumstances that are allegedly driving young people into bad company.²¹⁶ This perception was substantiated by quantitative findings that revealed local crime is an issue for the governorate's majority. 55 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that crime is a problem in their community (see Figure 36). Meanwhile, there has been a notable proliferation in weapons ownership across the governorate – notably in Irhab district – which locals associate with an intensification of tribal violence (see below). Although the availability of weapons in Mafraq has long been a problem, there has reportedly been a notable increase in gun smuggling since the onset of the Syrian crisis. Indeed, a striking 81 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 18 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the availability of weapons is a problem in their community (see Figure 37). Notwithstanding these observations, however, the vast majority of respondents have not been affected by violent crime. As revealed in quantitative findings, 96 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents disagreed, while only 4 percent agreed that they or their family had directly suffered from crime (see Figure 38).

"When small problems happen, instead of dealing with it normally between two people and ending it in a friendly way or at the police station, everyone now carries his own weapon, just in case. When things reach [the level of] bloodshed, many families get affected since they would be forced to leave their homes for tribal reasons." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

²¹⁵ "He [Izz Al Den Shogair] always guides people to good. A month ago, he met with drug users and thieves. He guided them and talked to them, and later they became positive people in their community." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

²¹⁶ "Many problems happen between reckless guys - these groups of reckless and careless guys increased [with unemployment]; [they] have nothing to do with a lot of their time. Therefore, they will get involved with these bad groups and gangs due to their thoughtlessness." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

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

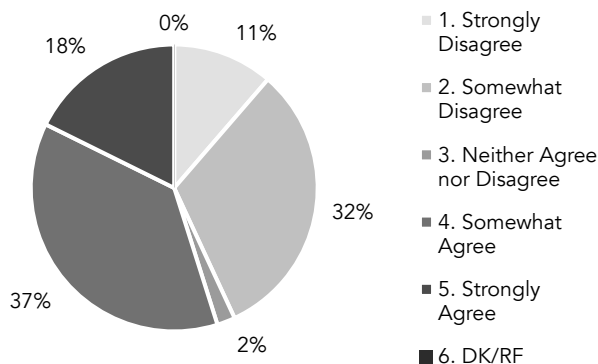


Figure 37. To what extent do you agree that the availability of weapons is a problem in your community?

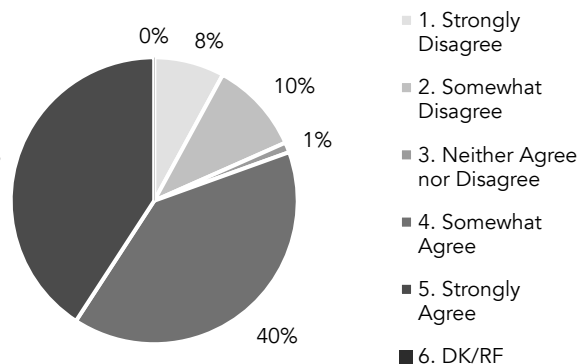


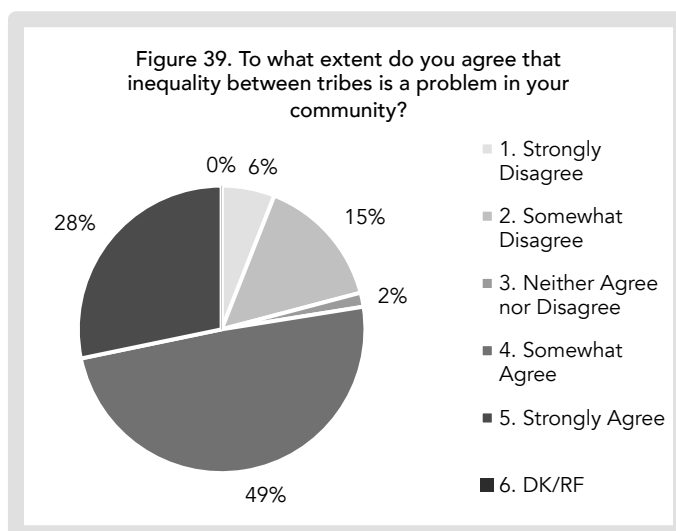
Figure 38. Have you or your family directly suffered from crime?



Mafraq's tribes cooperate and have shared traditions, but there are several instances of tribal conflict and many consider inter-tribal inequality a problem.

Tribal influences permeate Mafraq society, but strong tribalism is not particularly apparent. For instance, some locals maintained that where tribes co-exist within their community, they are barely distinguishable apart from their names. This is largely because Mafraq's tribes often share the same traditions, values and extra-tribal allegiances. For example, Mafraq's tribes are united in their active support for the King (see 4.1 Central and Local Governance) and opposition to political Islamist groups such as the MB (see 2.2 Support for Political and Non-Violent Islamist Groups). That said, despite these similarities, there have been numerous incidents of inter-tribal violent conflict, often resulting from personal disputes. For example, in July 2012, a confrontation between members of the Bani Khalid and Al Sab'awiyeh tribes in Khaldiyyah district escalated into clashes involving stones and other weapons.

On another occasion, in Hosha district in April 2009, accusations by one individual culminated in a large physical fight between members of the Al N'eim tribe on one hand and the Bani Hassan tribe on the other. A further tribal-related concern is that of inter-tribal socio-political inequality. One respondent hinted at this, implying that there have been occasions whereby certain tribes have been excluded from the political process, while others have received preferential treatment from MPs. This was perceptible in quantitative findings, which indicated high levels of inter-tribal inequality across the governorate. 77 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while only 21 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that inequality between tribes is a problem in their community (see Figure 39). One tribe that is known for its disproportionate privileges is the Bani Hassan, whose exceptionally large membership reportedly has access to the best available jobs. Similarly, the Al Sardi tribe, located in Sabha district and Sbeiha, has many members occupying important governmental and military positions.



"When [there is] a powerful tribe whose members live in a city where all the tribe's sons work, while another, less powerful tribe whose sons live in the same city doesn't get the same treatment the powerful tribe gets, this situation plays a role in extremism. MPs play a role in extremism [through] the election process: if a tribe is excluded, [this] can play a role in extremism."

(Male, 38, Professor, Mafrq)

Table 1: Important tribes, their leaders and geographical concentration.

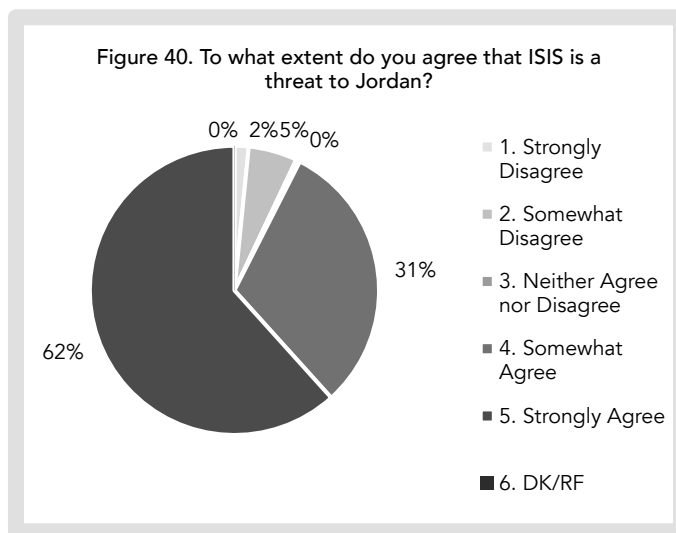
TRIBE	LEADERS	LOCATION
Bani Hassan	Abd Al Karim Al Daghami (former MP) and Mifleh Al Khaza'ala (former MP)	Spread across the entire governorate
Bani Khalid	Mazen Al Qadi (former MP)	Khaldiya and Hosha districts
Al Sardi	Fadel Al Sardiya (former MP) and Maysar Al Sardiya (former MP)	Sabha district and Sbeiha
Al Amosh	Yusuf Al Qallab and Musa Al Shabil	Mafrq City: Hammamat Al Umoush, Hamnaneh, Dier Waraq, Nadra and Al Mdawar

Al Ghazalah	Sheikh Uqlah, Mohammad Al Khaled, Mifleh Al Rafali, Akhu Ershideh and Torkey Akhu Ershideh	Mafrq City: Hain Al Mishrif, Irhab, Al Z'frane and Al Djineh
Mashabqa	Nasser Al Daghmi, Abd Al Kader Al Mutaleb, Amin Al Mashabqa	Mafrq City: Tayeb Isim, Rajem Sabe' Al Shamali, Bouyadat Al Hawamdeh, Um Al Enam Al Sharqaiah, Azniah, Al Mzar'a, Al Kherba Al Samra, and Azaytoneh
Al Zioud	Mohammad Al Zioud and Sayil Al Zioud	Mafrq City: Al Ghadir Al Abiad, Hmamet Al Alimat, Dahel, Buaidat Al Alimat, Al Zniah and Al Bustan
Al Shdifat	Sheikh Elias Shdifat, Muhammad Malates	Mafrq City: Manshiyah Bani Hassan, Umm Allulu, Sa'ed, Um Al Rumanah
Al Harasheh	Sheikh Nawaf Al Aitan and Muhammad Majid Al Aitan	Mafrq City and Irhab district

5.4 EXPOSURE TO VE AND PERCEPTIONS OF VEO THREAT

A porous Syrian border enables encounters between foreign violent extremists, Syrian refugees and local communities.

Many Syrian refugees have reported traveling back and forth between their home country and their Jordanian residence, circumventing border controls with relative ease.²¹⁷ This passage has enabled the import of large quantities of guns, among other items, which locals have traded between themselves.²¹⁸ Respondents lent substance to this observation when discussing the presence of Syrian refugees bearing weapons supplies (see below). Gulf Salafists are also reportedly exploiting the relative ease of passage into northern Jordan. According to some accounts, many of these men are penetrating Za'atari Camp in order to secure marriages to young, vulnerable Syrian girls.²¹⁹ King Abdullah II has expressed similar concerns about the permeability of border areas with reference to the Ruqban and Hadalat refugee camps located at the remote Badia border within the Rwaished district of Mafrq. In an interview in February 2016, he claimed that there are numerous ISIS members entering the country via these camps.²²⁰ The June 21, 2016 suicide car bomb attack outside Ruqban Refugee Camp – for which ISIS claimed responsibility – lends credence to such claims,²²¹ as does the 2015 investigation into the existence of an ISIS cell in Mafrq.²²² Several respondents shared these concerns, speculating that there may be Salafist Jihadist elements among the refugees arriving from Iraq and Syria who are influencing local host communities (see below). The fact that many refugees have come from ISIS-held territory in Syria has amplified such anxieties.²²³ Indeed, one respondent predicted that in the future, ISIS will continue and even escalate its terrorist activities in Jordan. This view is shared widely across the governorate, as revealed in quantitative findings, which suggest that an overwhelming 93 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while only seven percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that ISIS is a threat to Jordan (see Figure 40).



²¹⁷ Sommerfelt, Tone and Mark B. Taylor 2015. 'The big dilemma of small soldiers: recruiting children to the war in Syria', Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre Report, February 2015.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ The Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan 2016. 'Interview with His Majesty King Abdullah II with BBC's Lyse Duet', The Jordanian Embassy, February 2, 2016.

²²¹ Moore, Jack 2016. 'ISIS claims responsibility for suicide bomb on Jordan's border', Newsweek, June 27, 2016.

²²² Albawaba News 2015. 'Daesh cell discovered in Jordan', Albawaba News, March 17, 2015.

²²³ "Experts were warning us of such attacks since most of the refugees were from Raqqa, Homs and northern Syria. These areas contain many ISIS members." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

Another respondent was more geographically specific, maintaining that VEOs target Mafraq specifically due to its socio-economic neglect, high proportion of refugees and proximity to the borders.²²⁴ Accordingly, there are many calls for tighter border controls and a reduced intake of refugees.

"Maybe there are radicals who came from Iraq and Syria, and they affected our economy and emotions, our kids and our jobs."

(Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

There are suspicions of VEO sleeper cells located within densely populated communities, but residents are unable to identify them.

Respondents were generally reserved in their discussion of VEOs, evidently cautious to avoid endangering themselves and attracting unwanted curiosity through their answers. Thus, they were frequently inexplicit as to where their information was derived from, whether through empirical evidence, rumors or speculation. Nonetheless, there was a general perception among respondents that VEO sleeper cells are residing in local cities and camps, where a dense population enables them to remain inconspicuous. Reports that there were 26 VEO sleeper cells discovered in Za'atari Camp in 2015 alone lend a degree of credibility to such suspicions.²²⁵ The idea of local VEO sleeper cells provides residents with a simple explanation for the increase in VE that they have witnessed around them since the onset of the Syrian crisis. However, it also fuels anxiety – especially the notion that extremists are widely dispersed but altogether undetectable.²²⁶ Most notable was the view held by some respondents that ISIS sleeper cells are operating in Mafraq disguised as refugees in local camps.²²⁷ This belief is partly influenced by the March 2016 raids in neighboring Irbid, in which several of the culprits are believed to have come from Irbid Camp.²²⁸ But equally, if not more significant, was the alleged discovery of an ISIS cell made up of six Syrian refugees within Mafraq in March 2015. There are also rumors that ISIS operatives have been stealing Jordanian-registered Mitsubishi and Toyota Hilux pickup trucks in Mafraq.²²⁹

²²⁴ "[VEOs are] targeting all provinces, but especially Mafraq because it is more marginalized and neglected than other areas. It has no services and it hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees. It's also dangerously close to the borders." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

²²⁵ Omari, Raed 2016. 'Around 2,000 Daesh agents estimated to have mingled with refugees – army', The Jordan Times, May 5, 2016.

²²⁶ "The hidden cells are not known between people. They are in camps and houses, but we don't know exactly where they are. We only hear stories. They pose a threat for sure, but it's a mysterious threat." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

²²⁷ "ISIS sends them for a limited period of time and they act normally, so people do not raise any suspicion around them. They wait until they are ordered to execute terror attacks and they are located in highly populated areas. Not exclusively ISIS but also different groups, maybe." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

²²⁸ "The problem that happened in Irbid: many of the people who got arrested there were from the camp [Irbid Camp]. Camps are very crowded with people, and the percentage of poverty is very high. Anyone can enter them, [and] they are not strong communities like [those of] Bedouins." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

²²⁹ "It is something commonly known that some people steal pickups for ISIS. Two years ago, it was known that the stealing of pickups – especially the Hilux and Mitsubishi – increased a lot. Look at ISIS vehicles on the news and you

"It is possible that refugees themselves allowed for terrorist cells to enter, and by terrorist cells I mean people who are part of terrorist organizations and have certain agendas that are still hidden. I can almost confirm that they are the reason for all the extremism that has happened in Jordan. It wasn't like this before. I'm sure some of these refugees are sleeper cells."

(Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrq)

Locals fear that Syrian refugees are infiltrating their communities, bringing drugs, crime and VE.

In accordance with the belief that there are VEO sleeper cells present in Mafrq, many locals fear an increase in violence within their communities. These concerns are largely based on encounters or rumors in which Syrians within Jordan have displayed violent intent, sometimes resembling the takfirist attitudes associated with certain VEOs. For example, one respondent recounted an occasion whereby a family of refugees attacked a Jordanian family and accused them of apostasy after having received their hospitality.²³⁰ Another related account described the presence of Syrian refugees carrying and dealing weapons from within their tents in northern Zamleh (Sabha district).²³¹ Anxieties deriving from these revelations are compounded by the knowledge that refugees are breaching the confines of the camp and entering local communities,²³² potentially introducing additional security dangers. Thus, some residents are worried that their children may be vulnerable to manipulation by Syrian extremists.²³³ They are therefore keen for refugees to be confined to camps, rather than being permitted to enter wider society. Despite widespread disquiet about local VE threats, the vast majority of Mafrq's residents have not yet encountered them first-hand. As revealed in quantitative findings, 97 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents disagreed, while just three percent agreed that they or their family had directly suffered from VE (see Figure 41). That said, it is clear that locals' concerns in relation to Syrian refugees are fueling antipathy toward the latter. Indeed, there were few expressions of sympathy from respondents for the plight of refugees in Mafrq. One individual even blamed Syrian civilians for the war currently blighting their country. Specifically, one respondent condemned the Syrian revolution, blaming the movement for the rise of regional VEOs.²³⁴ More intense criticism was manifest in accusations that Syrians in general are

will see that all of their pickups look like those [that] were stolen. When I was there [in Syria] I saw a lot of cars with Jordanian registrations but then ISIS changes them." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

²³⁰ "The refugees who are here: we fear that some of them might be radical. My nephew works with the military. He told me that they once welcomed a family who came from Haj and they gave them food. And then suddenly they [the guests] attacked them and called them infidels." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

²³¹ "I once was in a car with my son and the driver told us a story about how one guy was looking for weapons. He went to a Syrian guy living in a tent and asked him for weapons. He showed him three different weapons." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

²³² "The refugees who come, they not only settle but they also get weaved into the Jordanian social fabric." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrq)

²³³ "We fear for our children from refugees. They affected our children. This effect can be direct or indirect...they might also motivate our children to participate in these groups [VEOs]." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrq)

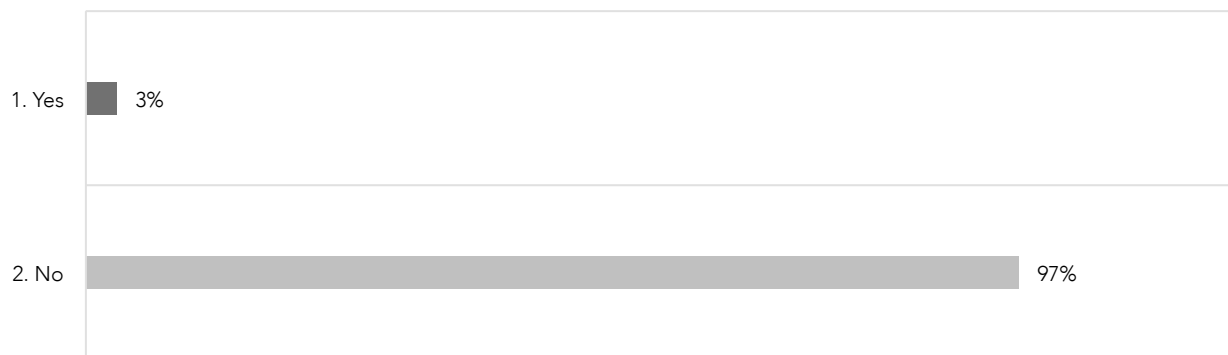
²³⁴ "In Syria they started to seek freedom and now look at where freedom got them. They became refugees and built terrorism, and left their countries to come here." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

intent on bringing harm to Jordan. Such hostility toward the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was supposedly evident in exhibitions of jubilation among Syrian refugees following ISIS' murder of Moath Al Kasasbeh.²³⁵

"Some of the refugees carry ideas. I mean, we have one million Syrian refugees, but is it possible that all of them are just refugees? I can't figure out from which direction, but they carry extremist thoughts. Therefore, they shouldn't be allowed to leave the camps."

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrq)

Figure 41. Have you or your family directly suffered from VE?



While there has been a degree of sympathy for those who have died as VEO combatants, the majority prescribes incarceration for returning fighters.

Mafrq has witnessed several public exhibitions of support for Jordanian foreign fighters who have died in Syria. For example, one respondent recalled numerous 'martyrs weddings' held within local communities for former ISIS combatants.²³⁶ Likewise, in 2013, a family from Mafrq City held a 'martyrs wedding' for their son who had died fighting with JN in Syria. The son, a 21 year-old individual named Amin Hassan Al Jayousi, was from Mafrq City's Shaikh neighborhood. Having left for Syria in March 2012, Al Jayousi died as a suicide bomber against Assad regime troops in May 2013 in eastern Ghouta. As for those VEO fighters who return home alive, some locals are expressly cautious about the prospect of interacting with them. For one respondent, these misgivings are based on concerns that such

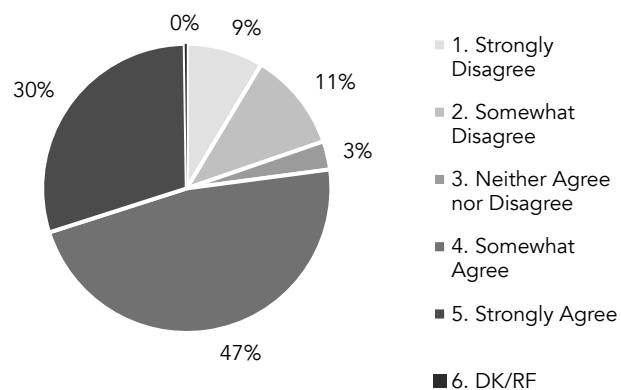
²³⁵ "Most Syrians don't like Jordan and they talk trash about this country. I believe they are the ones who do bad things here because they want to cause problems and this leads to killing. After Kasasbeh died, they were supporting this – they were happy that he died because they said that he came to kill their families in Syria. They ask for our help and then they say we are criminals. We will not let them manipulate us." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

²³⁶ "When the Jordanian comes back dead, they call him a martyr and they open a Condolence House for him. Calling them martyrs proves that people sympathize with them. Some young men went and fought with ISIS, and their bodies were sent back to their parents and they were called martyrs." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

individuals would retain extremist attitudes and prey on local children.²³⁷ Consequently, returning fighters from Syria are often feared and socially ostracized, especially those who are known to have joined ISIS.²³⁸ For example, one local ISIS defector explained that employers refused to hire him upon learning of his past affiliation with the VEO.²³⁹ There are also reported cases of local families confining their former VEO-affiliated children to the household,²⁴⁰ or even disowning them in order to disassociate themselves from VEOs.²⁴¹ With that in mind, 77 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 20 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that returned fighters should be imprisoned (see Figure 42).

Notwithstanding the potential threat posed by returning foreign fighters, other respondents recognized the potential benefits of reintroducing them into society. For these individuals, the driving factors of extremism are socio-economic rather than personal, and by re-engaging with former VEO fighters, lessons can be learned. Thus, they believe that those who have joined VEOs are the victims of societal failure and should be given a second chance. Indeed, they stressed that society has a responsibility to rehabilitate wayward youth who have been seduced by extremism. One respondent, for example, praised the government for its humane treatment of returned foreign fighters.²⁴² Nevertheless, it was evident from discussions with respondents that the relative acceptance or rejection of returning foreign fighters is dependent on the ideological orientation of local families.

Figure 42. To what extent do you agree that returned fighters should be imprisoned?



"A study should be made on each individual alone to treat their problems, see what the reason is

²³⁷ "I would forbid my kids to mingle with them [returning fighters from Syria] because I don't want them to brainwash them. Even if those people repent they will still have these thoughts and can tell their stories to people, and maybe attract them without knowing." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrag)

²³⁸ "They see him [a fighter who returns from Syria] as an unwanted person and a shame on his family. Nobody wants to talk to him. Everybody is scared of him talking to their kids. They try to avoid him. Especially the one who came back from ISIS – he is a socially dead person." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrag)

²³⁹ "The problem is with the business owners: once they know that I was with ISIS, they refused to hire me." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

²⁴⁰ "Once he came back [to Jordan from Syria], his family kept him inside the house. He's not allowed to go out." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafrag)

²⁴¹ "An example is about a family whose sons went to fight. They paid a lot of money to get their children back. Once they came back they disowned them. They denounced their relation to Iraq and Syria." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafrag)

²⁴² "They [the government] deal with those who came back from there [Syria] as human beings. That's good and might stop this problem in the long run." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

behind them going there [to Syria], bring them back and rehabilitate them so that they can interact with the Jordanian society... Those 2000 are our sons and the sons of Jordanians. They followed the wrong path and we're supposed to put them back on the right track."

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrag)

6.0 EXTERNAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

6.1 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

Objection to Jordan's relationship with Israel is strong and frequently expressed through public demonstrations.

Such is the degree of animosity toward Israel among Mafraq's residents that at least some consider it to be the primary enemy of the Arab world. Thus, it is unsurprising that there have been frequent demonstrations against Jordan's conciliatory arrangements with Israel. For example, Mafraq's population has actively participated in nationwide protests against the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty, such as those in October 2015.²⁴³ On occasion, locals have also expressed their disapproval of Jordan's economic agreements with Israel. For instance, after the signing of a gas deal between Israel and Jordan's National Electric Power Company in September 2016, Mafraq's residents, encouraged by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, took to the streets as part of a wider protest campaign demanding the cancellation of the deal.²⁴⁴ Following this, around 40 percent of Mafraq's households turned off their lights to signify their rejection of the agreement and raise awareness of the issue.²⁴⁵ Further indication of widespread objection within Mafraq to Jordan's relationship with Israel was apparent in quantitative findings: 84 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that Israel has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative, while only 13 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50).

"People generally are convinced that their first enemy is Israel, which is the reason for the suffering of all Arabic people directly or indirectly."

(Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

²⁴³ Al Jazeera 2015. 'Jordanians urge Amman to scrap peace treaty with Israel', Al Jazeera, October 16, 2015.

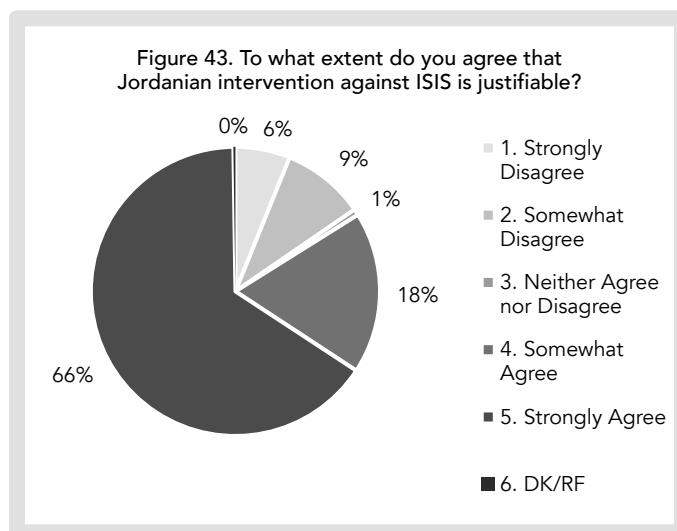
²⁴⁴ Goussous, Suzanna 2016. 'Across Jordan, lights go out to protest gas deal with Israel', The Jordan Times, October 3, 2016.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

6.2 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INTERVENTIONISM

The majority of respondents supported the government's role in combatting ISIS, but considered Jordanian intervention in Syria as a driving factor of local VE.

In late 2014, Jordan established itself as a player in the US-led international coalition against ISIS.²⁴⁶ Following the murder of Moath Al Kasasbeh in January 2015, King Abdullah II vowed to intensify these efforts against the VEO.²⁴⁷ The majority of Mafrag's population has supported this move. This was evident in quantitative findings, which revealed that an overwhelming 84 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 15 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Jordanian intervention against ISIS is justifiable (see Figure 43). That said, at the same time, many locals in Mafrag identified Jordan's intervention in Syria as a cause of increasing VE at the local level.



Indeed, 66 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 33 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Jordanian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 44). Meanwhile, Jordan's collaboration with Western powers in the region risks fueling the rhetoric of government critics including VEOs and local Salafist Jihadists (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). Perhaps most obvious among these criticisms is the idea that Jordan is subservient to Western interests, based not least on the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty and international coalition against ISIS. In fact, this message already finds wide acceptance across Mafrag. 61 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does what the West says (see Figure 45).

"I see that the terrorist attacks on Jordan are going to increase as a result of the events happening in the area [...] in addition to the fact that Jordan is an active player in the international alliance to fight ISIS."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrag)

²⁴⁶ Spencer, Richard 2014. '10 Arab states join the US in battle against Isis', The Telegraph, September 11, 2014.

²⁴⁷ Agence France-Presse in Amman 2015. 'Jordan carries out new airstrikes after pilot's murder', The Guardian, February 5, 2015.

Figure 44. To what extent do you agree that Jordanian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?

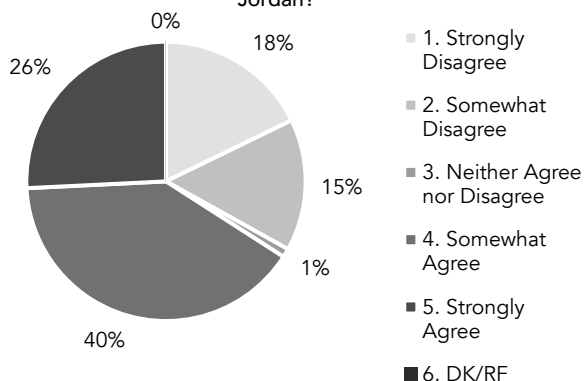
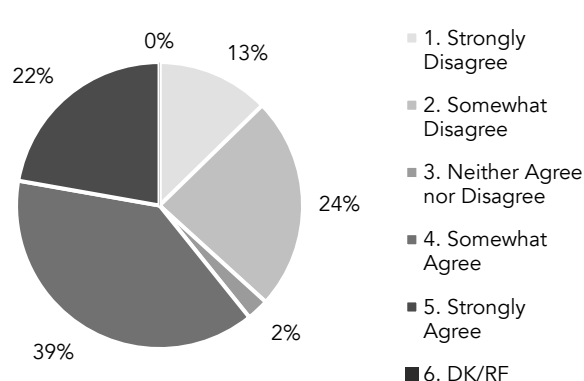


Figure 45. To what extent do you agree that the central government does what the West says?



There is strong opposition to the US, and its intervention in Iraq is understood to have been critical to the expansion of regional VEOs

Many respondents traced the intensification of VE in Jordan to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, placing the blame on the US and its subsequent disbanding of the Iraqi army.²⁴⁸ Most significantly, these events are considered to have given occasion to violent sectarianism, which soon spread throughout the region.²⁴⁹ Moreover, it was after these events that the local economy deteriorated further. First, Jordan lost a valuable source of oil subsidies previously provided by Saddam Hussein.²⁵⁰ Second, the conflict that ensued after 2003 drove hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees into Jordan, putting a strain on basic resources.²⁵¹ Another local consequence of the 2003 Iraq invasion was the exposure of concealed sectarian tensions, namely those between Sunni and Shia families.²⁵² These particular observations set Mafraq's population – especially those living closest to Iraqi border – apart from their neighbors in Irbid, where the impact of the Iraq war is not strongly associated with the rise in local VE. Aside from the indirect routes through which US regional intervention is seen to have exacerbated VE in Jordan, there are indications that locals are backing VEOs as a way of directly expressing their antipathy toward the

²⁴⁸ "In 2003, the American army entered Iraq, and to this day, Iraq is in conflict. All this helped in the rise of terrorist groups." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

²⁴⁹ "Iraq is to blame [for local violent extremism] because it's a hot area and there's sectarianism. We blame them because the Iraqi army was dissolved in 2003. There was a problem that led to sectarianism, which is the root of the problem, and its gets exported to the other countries. Extremism came out of Iraq in the first place." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

²⁵⁰ Terrill, Andrew. 2010. *Global Security Watch: Jordan*. California, Colorado & Oxford: Praeger.

²⁵¹ Harper, Andrew. 2008. 'Iraq's refugees: ignored and unwanted', *International Review of the Red Cross*, March 31, 2008.

²⁵² "I had a neighbor and she used to pray like us, but we discovered she was a Shia. When Saddam died they were so happy. For five years she was near us and never told us. She feared us because we are Sunni. Then, she left the country." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

US.²⁵³ This is alarming in a context where the vast majority opposes the US: 72 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents reported that the US has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact, while only 27 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50). Significant among the many possible explanations for widespread anti-US sentiments in Mafrq is Washington's perceived commitment to upholding Israeli interests in the region.²⁵⁴

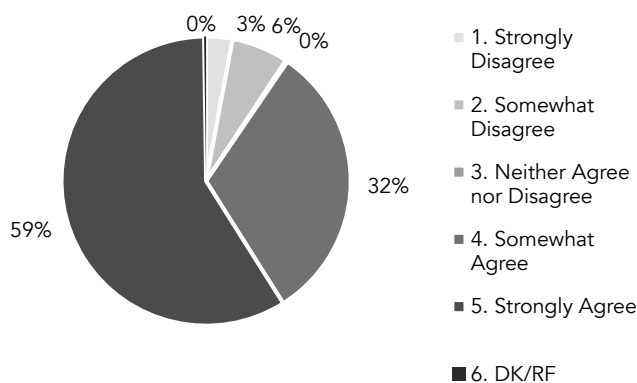
"Other countries, especially Western countries created problems and fueled terrorism – especially the USA, which created problems in Iraq. The destruction of Iraq and disbanding of the Iraqi army made it easy for these individuals to be dragged behind terrorist organizations, and they started to form bases in Iraq that deploys terrorists. Most people were from Jordan, especially those who have a tendency toward terrorism."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrq)

The West is unpopular due to its regional intervention, support for Israel, neglect of refugee assistance, and perceived gains from regional conflict.

As well as linking the US removal of Saddam Hussein to the rise of regional VEOs, respondents were highly critical of the West's perceived role in encouraging the Arab Spring for the same reason. For many locals, the region was more stable in the hands of the former autocratic regimes than it has become now.²⁵⁵ In fact, more recent Western interventions have fueled conspiracies that the West is intent on disrupting the Middle East and is benefitting from the ensuing disorder.²⁵⁶ For example, one respondent maintained that the Syrian conflict is a product of the West's ambitions to make the Arab world entirely dependent on Western aid, and thus facilitating the West's – and by extension, Israel's – colonial ambitions in the region.²⁵⁷ The West's supposed sponsorship of VEOs in Syria is cited as supporting evidence for this theory.²⁵⁸ Perhaps

Figure 46. To what extent do you agree that the West is humiliating Islam?



²⁵³ "You will find people who support terrorism because it's against the USA. For instance, people support Al Qa'ida, even if they do not agree with them on an ideological level." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

²⁵⁴ "My opinion is that Israel is the spoiled child of America." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafrq)

²⁵⁵ "The Western countries encouraged what is called the Arab Spring that took place in the Arab countries. The moment the regime collapses, the country will collapse because the regime is stronger than the existing organization. In nearly all cases, ending the regime means destruction." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrq)

²⁵⁶ "The West has benefited from Arab countries. Any conflict that happens here benefits Western countries directly." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafrq)

²⁵⁷ "[Syria] was a country that spoke the language of 'no', meaning it didn't have any debts to the World Bank or any of the major countries. Its economy was independent. Now Syria is receiving aid – its people are receiving aid and

culminating from these ideas is the perception that the West is systematically undermining the Islamic world. For instance, an overwhelming 91 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while nine percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the West is humiliating Islam (see Figure 46). Furthermore, a majority of respondents identified the West's activities in Syria as a contributing factor to local security hazards. Indeed, 71 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 28 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Western intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 47). The West's local interference is similarly associated with heightened security risks. For example, 67 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 48). Meanwhile, one respondent questioned the democratic claims of Western countries, lamenting that they are only tolerated in the Arab world because their potential economic and/or political assistance is invaluable. With that particular notion in mind, locals complained that the level of assistance provided by the West is entirely insufficient, notably in relation to alleviating the strain of refugees on host countries.²⁵⁹ Europe was specifically singled out in this respect, with one respondent criticizing the continent's countries for their reluctance to host a comparatively small number of refugees.²⁶⁰ Perhaps contributing to this negative view of Europe is the perception that European countries are exceptionally wealthy,²⁶¹ and therefore have a greater capacity to accommodate large numbers of refugees. Accordingly, 60 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that the European Union has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact, while 27 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50).

"Western countries intend to sabotage. For example, a while ago Condoleezza Rice said that there will be chaos in the Arab countries. This is a proof that they were involved in the vandalism. But the problem is that most Arab countries need assistance from the West."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

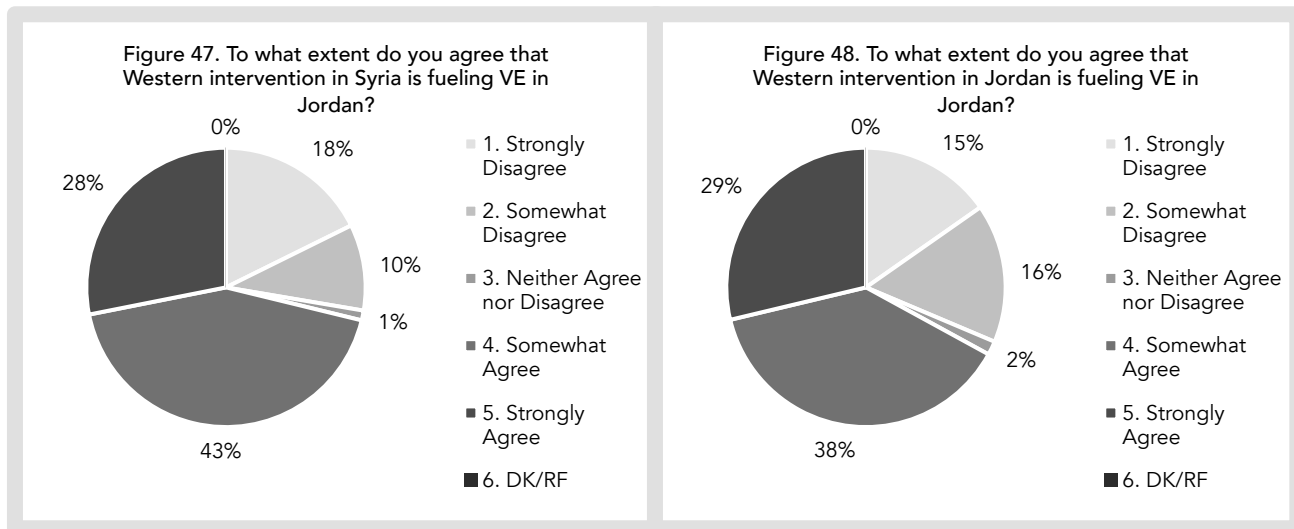
this benefits the major powers. This is a project to destroy the Arab opposition powers [and] to support the colonization plans – like what Israel does. The destruction [is] caused by international Zionists." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

²⁵⁸ "The terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq were funded by the West to serve their goals in dividing the Arab world and allowing Israel to colonize Palestine." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

²⁵⁹ "Western countries said they would support us if we welcomed them [refugees], but when they came they [Western countries] stopped supporting us." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

²⁶⁰ "We see now in Europe, which received a small number [of refugees], they are complaining that they will change the demographics." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

²⁶¹ "People in European countries have good financial statuses; their people live in luxury." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)



To a degree, Gulf States are blamed for negligence in respect to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

Being the wealthiest states in the region, Gulf countries probably have the greatest capacity to influence conflicts in neighboring countries. Yet, for locals, these states – namely Saudi Arabia – have made little, if any, effort to alleviate or contain the crises in Syria and Iraq. Furthermore, having offered zero resettlement places to Syrian refugees,²⁶² respondents deplored the Saudis' refusal to share the regional humanitarian burden. Worse still, one respondent condemned Riyadh for fueling the conflicts in Syria and Iraq by transferring weapons into the countries – an undertaking that has received widespread attention with respect to Syria in particular.^{263 264} Despite these reproofs, the majority of Mafraq's population does not appear to regard Saudi Arabia as detrimental to Jordanian interests. On the contrary, 77 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that Saudi Arabia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact, while 23 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan (see Figure 50). Such high levels of positivity regarding the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's local impact are likely to be based in part on the substantial financial aid that the country has provided to Jordan.²⁶⁵

With that in mind, other Gulf States are subject to accusations of funding VEOs, sometimes via Jordanian 'charitable associations'.²⁶⁶ These allegations are consistent with revelations that countries in the Gulf – specifically Kuwait and Qatar – have permitted substantial financial donations to be channeled to groups like ISIS and JN in Syria via various fundraising organizations.^{267 268} A further criticism of Gulf countries

²⁶² Amnesty International 2016. 'Syria's refugee crisis in numbers', Amnesty International, February 3, 2016.

²⁶³ Gardner, Frank 2015. 'Gulf Arabs "stepping up" arms supplies to Syrian rebels', BBC News, October 8, 2015.

²⁶⁴ Sengupta Kim 2015. 'Turkey and Saudi Arabia alarm the West by backing Islamist extremists the Americans had bombed in Syria', The Independent, May 12, 2015.

²⁶⁵ Obeidat, Omar 2014. 'Jordan receives JD 1.2b foreign aid in 11 months', The Jordan Times, December 8, 2014.

²⁶⁶ "Some of the Gulf countries were donating money for extremism goals. Don't think that the objective of such associations is always charity; some of them, especially in Jordan, have clear extremist and terrorist objectives." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

²⁶⁷ Rogin, Josh 2014. 'America's allies are funding ISIS', The Daily Beast, June 14, 2014.

with regards to the spread of VE hinges on the promotion by influential sheikhs of 'honorable jihad', sometimes through popular media (see 7.2 The Role of the Media).

"There's blame on the Gulf countries. Although they have not interfered on land, they could've solved the problem by other means. Rich countries should support poor countries. We all know that Saudi provided Iraq and Syria with weapons, which made the problem even worse. Saudi, in the end, didn't take any refugees, unlike the rest of us. To me, that is despicable."

(Male, 28, Teacher, Mafrq)

Turkey is regarded as a major source of terrorist expansion.

Because of its infamously porous borders,²⁶⁹ locals are highly critical of Turkey for allowing VEOs to move around the region with ease. Moreover, several respondents claimed that locals who have gone to join VEOs in Syria have often done so by travelling via Turkey and negotiating with ISIS smuggling networks,²⁷⁰ which has been well documented.^{271 272} Some locals even accuse Ankara of actively fueling terrorism in order to intensify the pressure on the Assad regime. Notwithstanding these negative perceptions, however, 67 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents reported that Turkey has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact, while 37 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan (see Figure 50). One explanation for this might be a sense of respect for, and affinity with, Turkey regarding its sharing of the regional refugee burden. One respondent, for instance, considered Turkey alongside Jordan as a victim of other countries' failure to contribute significantly to the accommodation of Syrian refugees.²⁷³ There were also implications that Turkey is handling its refugee population more appropriately than Jordan is doing, notably by confining refugees to camps as opposed to enabling their attainment of social power and influence at the expense of the host population.²⁷⁴

"In my opinion, Turkey supports extremism and terrorism because it allows terrorists to get in. This is because the Turks are against the [Syrian] regime."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrq)

²⁶⁸ Gilligan, Andrew 2014. 'How our allies in Kuwait and Qatar funded Islamic State', The Telegraph, September 6, 2014.

²⁶⁹ Taştekin, Fehim 2016. 'How the Islamic State is still seeping through Syria-Turkey border', Al Monitor, February 01 2016.

²⁷⁰ "[There is] more than one way [to reach ISIS]: going straight to the border, travelling to Turkey and getting smuggled into Syria by ISIS affiliates is one way." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrq)

²⁷¹ Worth, Robert F. 2016. 'The reluctant jihadi: how one recruit lost faith in ISIS', The Guardian, April 12, 2016.

²⁷² Rayner, Tom 2016. 'Foreign IS recruits using fake Syrian passports', Sky News, July 4, 2016.

²⁷³ "I believe that countries should be blamed for the huge concentration of the number of refugees in Jordan and Turkey." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

²⁷⁴ "In Turkey, they [refugees] exist in camps; they don't mix [with the indigenous population] and they don't get out. But here, refugees are like sheikhs – if you want something you go to a refugee." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrq)

President Assad is unpopular, and his activities are generating sympathy for the Syrian revolution as well as VEO ideologies.

The local population deplores President Assad's activities in Syria. Not only is the conflict having noticeable spillover effects in terms of extremist influences in Jordan (such as the large influx of refugees), but one respondent claimed that Assad is intentionally encouraging terrorism in Jordan in order to divert attention from his own atrocities in Syria.²⁷⁵ Accordingly, 85 percent of Maaraq GQ respondents reported that Syria has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact, while 12 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50). Another accusation is that the Syrian regime is deploying spies disguised as refugees inside Jordan.²⁷⁶ Indeed, this accords with reports from 2012 that the Jordanian government had exposed false Syrian Army defectors operating as active spies in Maaraq.²⁷⁷ Accordingly, one respondent condoned the revolutionary cause in Syria. Indeed, for him and others, the 'uprising' was a legitimate appeal for democracy in response to an oppressive regime that administered an intrusive and corrupt security apparatus. It is noteworthy that these views lend themselves to the rhetoric advanced by VEOs such as ISIS and JN, employed to generate duty-bound recruits. ISIS, for instance, has promoted the narrative of victimized Muslims at the hands of the Assad regime in its online magazine Dabiq: the first issue of the magazine (July 2014), highlighted fatalities and injuries of women and children in Raqqa caused by Syrian regime airstrikes.²⁷⁸ Several respondents confirmed that both prospective ISIS recruits engage with such material,²⁷⁹ and that atrocities by the Syrian regime toward civilians are a major motivation for VEO recruits. A former ISIS member himself confirmed the latter.²⁸⁰

"I am one of the people who used to go to Syria before the conflict, and I remember that everyone feared to say anything about the system. They always used to say that 'walls have ears'. What happened in Syria was a matter of dignity. They didn't have democracy; that's why the revolution started. The Syrian security system was very powerful and strict; they were allowed to enter any house at any time without a court order. A soldier in the Syrian army can do whatever he wants – he can enter a house, hit the mother [and] insult the father. This is an attack on human dignity; this is insulting and wrong."

(Male, 28, Teacher, Maaraq)

²⁷⁵ "The Syrian regime tries exporting violence and terrorism to Jordan and creates chaos in the country in order to divert the world's attention from the massacres committed against Syrian people." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Maaraq)

²⁷⁶ "Some of them were sent by the Syrian regime and came here as spies. But they are pretending that they're refugees." (Male, 27, Salesman, Maaraq)

²⁷⁷ Haddadi, Anissa 2012. 'Jordan arrests 10 'army defectors' on suspicion of spying for Bashar al-Assad', International Business Times, March 26, 2012.

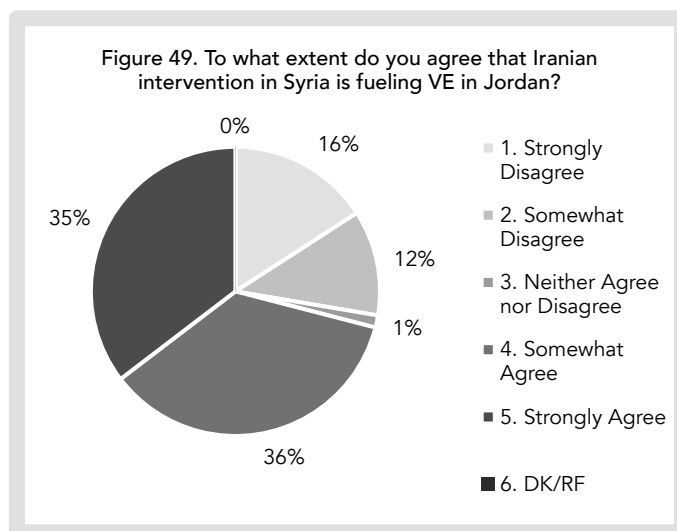
²⁷⁸ Dabiq 2014. 'The return of the khilafah', Dabiq, Issue 01, July 5, 2014.

²⁷⁹ "His [a former ISIS recruit] family found these things, not me; they found things talking about Dabiq." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Maaraq)

²⁸⁰ "[ISIS] were showing me pictures of dead people and the Syrian army hitting people's houses and killing them. Frankly, when you see this you will get affected." (Male, 27, Salesman, Maaraq)

Russia and Iran receive criticism for their role in the Syrian conflict and contribution to the spread of extremism.

Although it featured little in discussions, there was a general awareness of Russia and Iran's participation in Syria's conflict. Furthermore, it is evident that the majority of respondents viewed this participation negatively. A common frustration was that, regardless of their motives, these countries' involvement in Syria has aggravated the conflict, rather than alleviated it. Recognition of the detrimental spillover effects from Syria into Jordan – such as a refugee influx, fears of extremist infiltration and provision of ideological fodder for VEOs – may, in part, account for a wide perception that Russia and Iran are unfavorable to Jordanian interests. Indicative



of these negative perceptions, 68 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that Russia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact, while only nine percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50). That Jordan's exposure to the consequences of Russia's activities might be limited to the indirect effects of its Syria intervention is indicated by the fact that a considerable 21 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that Russia has no impact at all on Jordan (see Figure 50). On the other hand, respondents regarded Iran's impact on Jordan as more immediately apparent. Indeed, an overwhelming 92 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents reported that Iran has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact, while only four percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50). A major component of this perceived impact is Iran's activities in Syria, which a majority of respondents blamed for exacerbating local VE. As revealed in quantitative findings, 71 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 28 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Iranian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 49). In accordance with global popular consensus, respondents recognized Iran as a key ally of the Syrian regime. For one respondent, this allegiance is based on the country's desire to maintain strong links with Hezbollah. Thus, from this viewpoint, the survival of the Assad regime provides a common point of interest for both Iran and Hezbollah – and a point at which this bond can be maintained.²⁸¹ For other respondents, Iran's regional ambitions are less focused. For example, one respondent asserted that Tehran is systematically encouraging the spread of VE throughout the region in order to destabilize the existing geopolitical order.²⁸² These negative attitudes toward Iran have intensified since the eruption of

²⁸¹ "[Iran] needs the survival of the Syrian regime in order to keep the line between it and Hezbollah in Lebanon." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

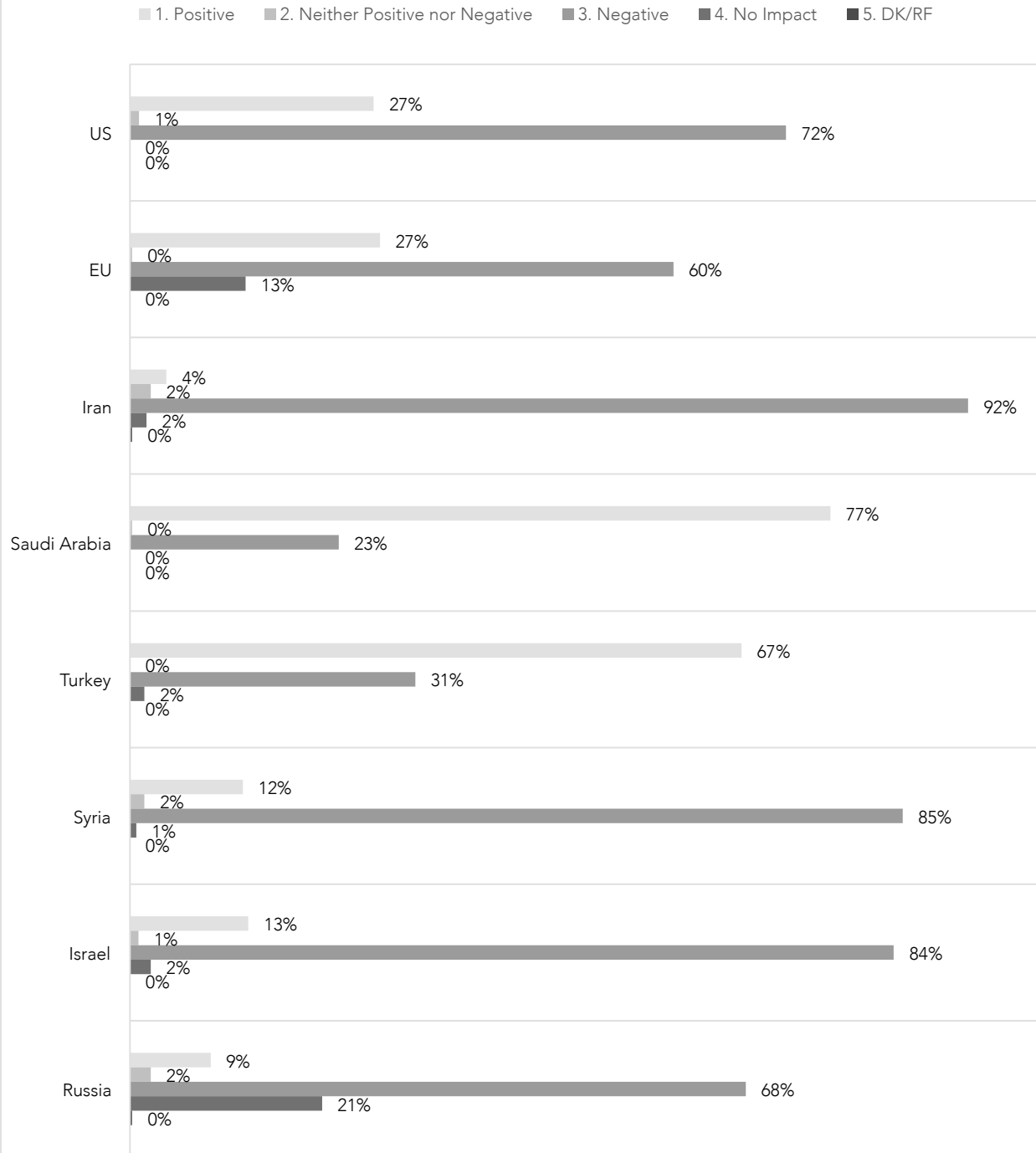
²⁸² "Shias, like Iran, are trying to spread religious extremism in the Arab countries to destabilize them." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

conflict in Syria and Iraq: while in the past, some Jordanians appreciated Iran's contribution to the wider Islamic cause, the country has now become synonymous with violent sectarianism.

"A while ago, Jordanians did perceive the alliance of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah as an Islamic power supporting Muslims' causes and the Palestinian cause. Now, the Iranian role in Syria and Iraq can be described as a sectarianism conflict, which is reflected in the opinion of Jordanians about Iran. Our attitude toward Iran now is not just political but sectarian as well."

(Male, 41, Freelance Researcher, Amman - on Mafrq governorate)

Figure 50. 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

VEO activists operate with stealth and caution, typically communicating anonymously but effectively via social media before expanding to alternative channels.

Many respondents indicated that it is often not possible to identify violent extremists within their community, especially in more densely populated areas. This reflects the ability of VEO operatives to maneuver with a large degree of freedom, and to intermingle with locals, gauging their inclinations before revealing any recruitment motives. Indeed, one respondent admitted it was likely that they had encountered or even socialized with violent extremists unbeknown to them. One reason for this is that many extremists adopt pseudonyms in order to conceal their true identity.²⁸³ Another reason why extremist radicalizers are able to operate undetected is that they typically employ covert communication channels through which to actively recruit. This includes telephone communication, social media sites,²⁸⁴ smartphone applications and Thuraya satellite communication.²⁸⁵ Skype has also provided a recruitment channel in Mafrq, specifically for ISIS. With virtually all of Mafrq's population (at least in Badia regions) owning cellphones with 3G capacity, these communication channels enable access vast audiences within the governorate. Even when VEO activists or sympathizers pursue physical communication – including in mosques – they reportedly do so discreetly, typically in closed groups.²⁸⁶ Such gatherings are facilitated by the fact that, in Mafrq, unlike in some other governorates (e.g. Irbid), mosques are reportedly open 24 hours a day. Further underlining VEO precaution, several respondents explained that the recruitment process for VEOs – but specifically ISIS – typically begins via social media (mainly Facebook), where they are able to effectively vet prospective recruits. After scrutinizing their personal details, they engage in dialogue with prospective recruits via Internet chat platforms. At this latter stage, one respondent singled out ISIS representatives as being particularly proficient, using written language in such a way as to convincingly refute negative claims about the organization.²⁸⁷ Facebook, Shuhada'a Al Jannah and Khaledun are three sites that ISIS has used for such purposes in Mafrq. In all cases, it is after an online

²⁸³ "Some individuals in the country that give themselves different names promote sabotage." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrq)

²⁸⁴ "They [violent extremists] use certain numbers for communication and people told us not to answer any weird number. Communication is done secretly over the phone and Internet." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafrq)

²⁸⁵ "Normally audio and video occurs through mobile phones and through 'Thuraya', an undisclosed and undisciplined technology that cannot be controlled and spied on." (Male, 48, Journalist, Amman - on Mafrq governorate)

²⁸⁶ "Becoming an affiliate [of a VEO] happens in the closed meetings, sometimes in mosques." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

²⁸⁷ "I saw their [ISIS'] words: quiet, comfortable, purposeful and guided – different from what is being said about them." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

relationship has then been thoroughly established here that regular physical encounters follows.²⁸⁸ Even then, VEOs exercise similar levels of secrecy.²⁸⁹

"Most communication between recruits and recruiters happens on social media, since there are thousands of people that are easy to be reached. Based on their background and their civilian jobs, ISIS will pick the best way to get to them."

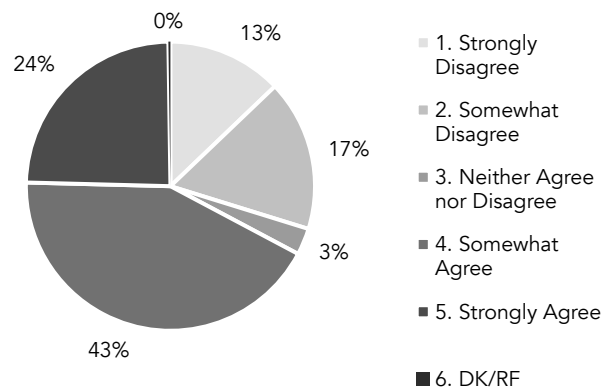
(Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrag)

ISIS online material provides a powerful means of engagement with the organization for prospective recruits.

There is evidence to suggest that locals who have joined ISIS have spent time learning about the organization on the Internet prior to recruitment.²⁹⁰ For example, some respondents demonstrated an awareness of ISIS' Twitter activity and ISIS' websites, suggesting that they have played a crucial role in generating local recruits.²⁹¹ Furthermore, at least one local that joined ISIS is known to have accessed video releases showing the organization's various operations. While local ISIS recruits are found to have been visiting ISIS websites, they have also been conversing with members of the organization via Skype.²⁹² Indeed, the latter is a typical platform through which ISIS recruiters converse with prospective recruits.²⁹³

There is additional evidence to suggest that local ISIS recruits have downloaded the organization's online magazine, Dabiq (see 6.2 Perceived Impact of Foreign and Domestic Interventionism). One respondent highlighted the wide availability and the technical quality of ISIS' online material as key characteristics serving to strengthen the organization's appeal among locals. Quantitative

Figure 51. To what extent do you agree that the Internet/social media is fueling VE in Jordan?



²⁸⁸ "When they [ISIS] felt that you could be trusted, they sent people to communicate with you such as sitting together." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

²⁸⁹ "They [ISIS] asked me not to tell anyone about our weekly meetings." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

²⁹⁰ "Frankly, I wanted to have knowledge about ISIS's ideas and their directions before I joined. All of that was widely available on the Internet." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

²⁹¹ "ISIS recruited young people by using Twitter. Twitter had a huge role in getting to young people. They use social media and Twitter accounts." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafrag)

²⁹² "We found in his [a local ISIS recruit] computer device some videos about operations of ISIS and videos about the organization. And [we found] that he was visiting sites belonging to the organization and talking to them via Skype." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrag)

²⁹³ Bardin, Jeff 2015. 'What's it like to be recruited by ISIS online?' Business Insider, May 22, 2015.

findings supported such observations, since 67 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Internet/social media is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 51).

"If you follow ISIS' websites and Twitter accounts, you would see its accounts and its media publications. They are available to anybody with an Internet connection. When ISIS shoots videos, it uses the best techniques and the newest technologies."

(Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

Some Salafist Jihadists use public gatherings to encourage support for VEOs.

Several respondents contended that there are active religious figures in their communities condoning or promoting VE through local mosques (see below). Additionally, in support of claims that Syrian extremists are penetrating local communities (see 5.4 Exposure to VE and Perceptions of VE Threat), one respondent cited occasions whereby Syrian Salafist Jihadists have exploited other public spaces to promote their ideologies. Traditional lifecycle and community events are thought to have provided one such platform. To accompany a wedding or funeral, locals traditionally erect a *dawaween* tent for three to four days, under which time the site typically attracts a large gathering. During one of these occasions, a Syrian individual spoke to a *dawaween* gathering at a wedding party in the Badia, where he attempted to enhance the public reputation of ISIS. The individual reportedly rebutted negative claims about the organization and emphasized the group's humanitarian activities.²⁹⁴ Commemoration events for fallen combatants, or 'martyrs weddings' are additional opportunities that Salafist extremists are known to exploit in order to spread their ideologies.²⁹⁵ Extremist sheikhs are also known to have issued *fatwas* calling on youth to fight in Syria.²⁹⁶ One such individual is Abu Mohammad Al Tahawi from neighboring Irbid, who's written appeal for youth to undertake jihad against Assad in early 2012 is thought to have successfully mobilized Jordanian foreign fighters.²⁹⁷ Perhaps due to the sensitivity of these insights, respondents themselves refused to provide details of local venues or individuals engaging in the promotion of VE.

"Leaders, especially religious ones, should be blamed for encouraging people's sympathy toward such extreme terrorist organizations. Sometimes, some sheikhs refuse to call ISIS members terrorists. I can't tell you about a specific person, but you can ask and look for names. I can't give

²⁹⁴ "One day, we were sitting in a *dawaween* tent and a Syrian person opened the subject [of VE]. And I felt that he was supporting ISIS with what he was saying. He said that not everything that is said about ISIS is true, and that when he was in Syria they used to help him and provide him with food." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

²⁹⁵ "Half of the Salafists are there [at Condolence Houses] to talk about themselves and explain their opinions and say that they are defending Muslims." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

²⁹⁶ "He [an ISIS recruit] was attending some lectures by sheikhs who issue *fatwas* that incentivize youth to go and fight in Syria." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

²⁹⁷ Green R. 2012. 'The global jihad movement versus the Assad regime', The Middle East Media Research Institute: Inquiry and Analysis Series, March 16, 2012.

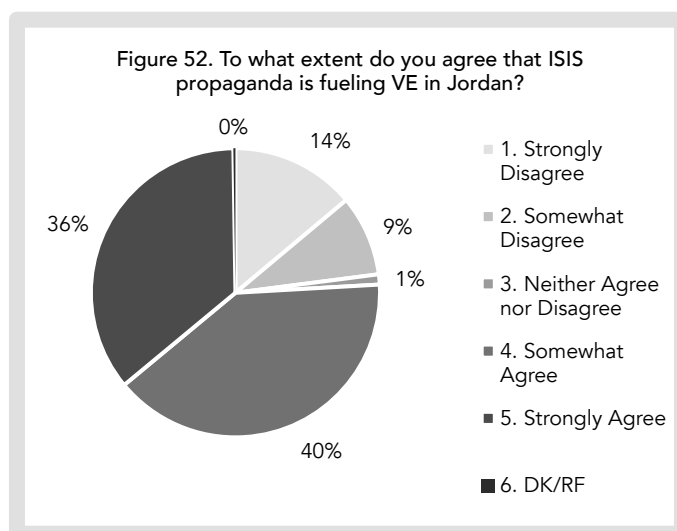
you any. These sheikhs confuse the public and make them question whether ISIS is a terrorist group"

(Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrq)

VEOs are presenting themselves as liberation movements against the Syrian regime and the regional expansion of Shia Muslims.

To complement the narrative of 'honorable jihad' (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives), VEOs are competing to present themselves as the most legitimate liberation movements with which to achieve martyrdom. As made evident by one respondent, some VEOs are successful to this end, which is reportedly boosting their appeal.²⁹⁸ JN is likely to feature strongly among such VEOs, due to its significant victories – most notably in Idlib governorate – against the Assad regime,²⁹⁹ and, as with ISIS, media circulation of the organization's activities (see below). The corresponding perception among some locals that JN has a more clearly defined agenda – to

combat the Syrian regime – than other VEOs is also complementary to the group's image as a liberation movement (see 2.1 Support for VEOs). The organization's July 2016 self-rebranding as Jabhat Fatah Al Sham, along with its disassociation from Al Qa'ida and a reaffirmed commitment to fighting in Syria,³⁰⁰ is likely to have enhanced this reputation. However, due to the power and pervasiveness of ISIS propaganda material, and the organization's dominance over other VEOs in the mainstream media, it also achieves the reputation of a Syrian liberation movement among locals. In fact, one respondent claimed that ISIS is more representative of an effective liberation force than any other organization present in Syria, which could supposedly account for any support it enjoys among the public. The perceived success with which ISIS is propagating this image of itself to generate support is captured by quantitative findings. 76 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that ISIS propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 52). By comparison, JN's messaging appears to be either relatively less influential, or less closely associated with VE. For example, 56 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 53).



²⁹⁸ "Extremist groups say that they are going to liberate Syria and then will hurry to liberate Palestine. Therefore, they gain high popularity." (Male, 38, Professor, Mafrq)

²⁹⁹ Cafarella, Jennifer 2015. 'Assad regime loses Idlib to Jabhat Al-Nusra and rebel offensive', Institute for the Study of War, March 31, 2015.

³⁰⁰ Uhammedm 2016. 'Jabhat al-Nusra leader Abu Mohammad al-Julani announced the disengagement with al-Qaeda', YouTube, July 28, 2016.

Regardless of their ability to portray themselves as legitimate liberation movements, and despite coverage of their battlefield victories, quantitative findings suggested VEOs have been largely unsuccessful in presenting themselves as militarily adept. For example, only 23 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 73 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that members of VEOs are skilled fighters (see Figure 54). However, while this may serve to stem the flow of support for these groups, non-VEO military factions in Syria, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA), are even less effective, according to one respondent.³⁰¹ This is despite being recognized as a more legitimate resistance movement than ISIS and JN.³⁰² Thus, those determined to make an impact against the Syrian regime may be more inclined to join one of the latter over the FSA. This comes despite the fact that quantitative findings indicate that the FSA far surpasses ISIS and JN in its levels of popularity. Only 25 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support, while the vast majority (72 percent) reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to the FSA in their community (see Figure 2).

"The majority of those who support these groups support ISIS because they don't want Bashar Al Assad [to rule] and they [ISIS] are the only ones who fight Bashar Al Assad effectively."

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

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

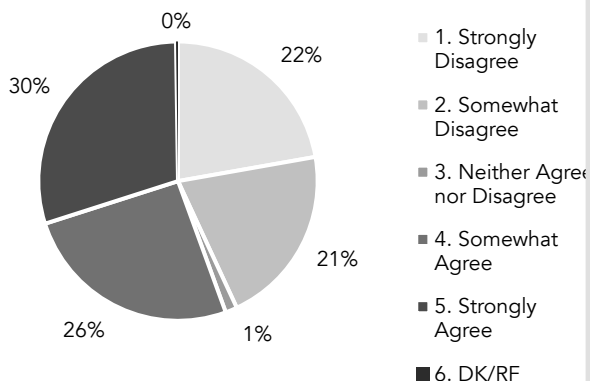
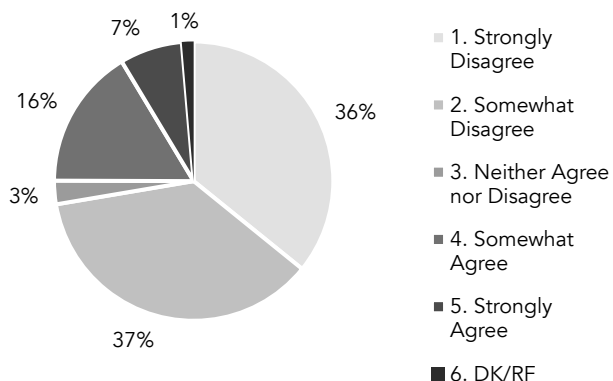


Figure 54. To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs are skilled fighters?



³⁰¹ "[The FSA] has not threatened the Syrian regime as much as ISIS has." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

³⁰² "The free army [FSA] is native. They don't kill nor steal like ISIS or Al Nusra [JN]. All that they want is to free their land from Bashar Al Assad and for him to stop murdering their sons and daughters. They are not interested in stealing or anything else other than being liberated from the injustices of the regime." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

Mosques are a frontline in the ideological battle between moderates and extremists.

In endeavoring to disseminate VE ideology, Salafist Jihadists exploit mosques as a platform for communication. While direct VEO recruitment remains largely covert, mosques are used more as a means to promote ideas and religious interpretations.³⁰³ In some cases, individuals engaging in such activity are refusing to denounce ISIS as a terrorist outfit and are encouraging congregations to reconsider such accusations against the organization. Some of these imam's are allegedly of Syrian origin.³⁰⁴ Criticism of mosque activity is equally applicable to moderate religious leaders, whom respondents asserted should be providing counter-narratives in local mosques. Mafraq's most popular mosques include Mafraq Al Kabir Mosque, located in the center of Mafraq City between Zain Al Abdin street and King Talal street. Situated close to markets and workplaces, it is exceptional for its substantial size, popularity and location. A second example is Omar Bin Al Khattab Mosque, located on the highway to the north of Mafraq City (close to Mafraq bus station). Due to its particular location, many travelers attend this mosque. A third example is Khalid Bin Al Walid Mosque, also located on the highway to the north of Mafraq City (at the Al Sa'i Triangle). The mosque is notable for its substantial size and the popularity of its imam, Ahmad Rabei' (see also section 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). A fourth example is Zamleh Mosque, located in Zamleh Al Tarqi village in Serhan district, which is also favored for its popular imam, Ali Al Sardi (see also section 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives). A final example is Al Khairat Mosque, located Al Hashmi neighborhood in Irbab district. This mosque's popularity derives predominantly from its convenient location, as it is situated in a residential area.

"Mosques [are good locations for CVE activities] because people are not always in parks, and they visit the mosque frequently. This is where people communicate with each other five times a day. Religious leaders should raise the awareness of people and tell parents to teach their kids and give them a suitable environment so that they don't leave the house alone for a long time because they might be brainwashed."

(Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

³⁰³ "In mosques, they [violent extremists] use religious speech in order to spread extremism." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

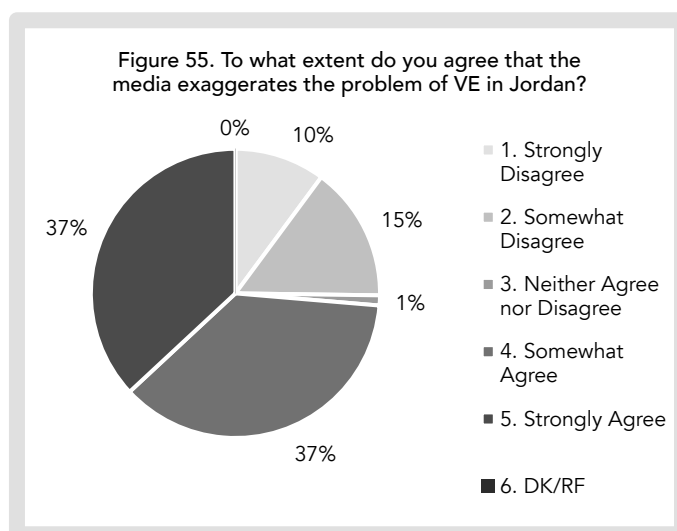
³⁰⁴ "I heard that there are Syrian imams in some mosques." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

7.2 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Locals accuse the media of producing a negative portrayal of Islam while exaggerating the problem of VE.

As far as respondents were aware, popular media is doing very little to tackle issues related to VE. In fact, only one respondent reported that the media had raised his awareness of VEOs in a way that undermined them.³⁰⁵ To the contrary, there were accusations that the media is tainting the image of Islam both through presentation and omission. Regarding the former, one respondent decried the unattractive Muslim representatives that appear on TV. In terms of omission, respondents bemoaned the lack of anti-extremist content, as well as the absence of positive messaging relating to Islam, such as the promotion of Islamic morals. In suggesting ways to overcome this media deficiency, one respondent suggested Dr. Mohammad Nouh Al Qudah as an appropriate media personality to represent true Islam. This is based on his remarkable popularity among locals, who both adore and respect him.³⁰⁶

In addition to its neglect of anti-extremist material, there are concerns that the media is giving disproportionate attention to issues pertaining to VE, including the violence in neighboring Syria as well as insecurity in Jordan. Consequently, there is a risk that the media is exacerbating local security-related anxieties among locals. This was reflected in quantitative results, which indicate that 74 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 25 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the media exaggerates the problem of VE in Jordan (see Figure 55). One such channel is Al Jazeera, which purportedly misrepresented local events on March 24, 2011, when clashes took place between pro-reform protesters and riot police leading to the death of two civilians and the injury of hundreds.³⁰⁷ According to locals, Al Jazeera presented the incident in a way that depicted the Jordanian police as excessively violent, and promoted rebellion against the Jordanian regime. For example, one respondent contested the claim that civilian deaths were a result of police brutality as claimed by Al Jazeera.³⁰⁸ Consequently, the channel's



³⁰⁵ "ISIS and Nusra [JN] are serving specific agendas [...] that's what we see and read in the media." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrag)

³⁰⁶ "Sheikh Nouh Al Qudah can talk to people through the media because people listen to him and he is loved here." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrag)

³⁰⁷ Al Jazeera 2011. 'Two dead, scores hurt in Jordanian clashes', Al Jazeera, March 25, 2011.

³⁰⁸ The people who died in them [the protests] were ill, not because of the army." (Male, 60, Teacher, Mafrag)

reputation has diminished in Mafraq,³⁰⁹ where loyalty to the king and respect for the security services has grown stronger (see 4.1 Central and Local Governance). As well as potentially exaggerating the threat of violence, intensive media exposure to disturbing local and regional events risks complementing the narratives of VEOs (see 7.3 The Role of Violent Extremist Narratives).

"The media has to show programs to spread awareness. They ruin Islam's image when you see on TV that they choose the ugliest person to act as a Muslim. The West shows the best of what they have so people will be drawn to their morals. Why don't we show what Islam can teach us about morals? We have great morals and they should be reflected in our TV shows."

(Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

There are concerns that the media is encouraging VE and promoting VEOs.

More severe criticism of the media was based on its contribution to VE among youth. One respondent, for instance, referred to the hugely popular series, "Bab Al Harra," as exemplary of this.³¹⁰ Moreover, some respondents highlighted the popular media's apparently active promotion of VEOs and contribution to VEO narratives. For example, one respondent claimed that there are TV channels broadcasting programs that advertise JN and ISIS military victories. Another respondent described encounters with extremist Gulf sheikhs on TV, who reportedly promote jihad by advertising the idea of martyrdom to viewers and denounce counter-extremism campaigns. One such individual is Sheikh Hassan Yare, and two channels allegedly providing a platform for these sheikhs to broadcast lectures are Aloma and Al Hilal. Respondents were either unable or unwilling to provide further details of these programs, their content and their presenters.³¹¹ That said, another way in which the media is potentially facilitating the interests of VEOs is by reiterating VEO propaganda and advertising VEO recruitment rewards. For example, one respondent claimed to have learned through the media that VEO fighters receive a salary of 1000 USD and a guaranteed place in heaven.³¹²

"Unfortunately my cousin went to fight with ISIS three years ago and was martyred there, and he was very sympathetic with ISIS. In my opinion, this is because of some sheikhs from the Gulf who gained his sympathy with ISIS. I always noted that he pursued or followed sheikhs on television. Aloma Channel is the program. My cousin was always following them [extremist sheikhs] and attending

³⁰⁹ "People in Mafraq feel this channel lost its integrity after it spread some false news about Jordan during the March 24, 2011 [protests. [Mafraq's residents] thought it published the news in way that showed to the world that the police are brutal and that people should rebel against the Hashemite regime." (Male, 38, Researcher, Mafraq)

³¹⁰ "They screen violent TV shows. The youth are busy imitating violent villains, like Bab Al Harra. There should be more historical TV shows of positive influence, helping citizens to become more loyal to their homeland." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

³¹¹ "I heard that these channels work on giving a positive image for these groups. I don't remember names of these channels; I deleted them from TV. One of them was for Jabhat Al Nusra, and another was for ISIS. They used to announce all their victories on TV." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

³¹² "Based on media reports, they [VEO recruits] get paid about 1000 dollars as a salary and the promise of heaven." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

[watching] their lectures without any boredom, even though they were filled with hate messages against those who are fighting extremist groups."

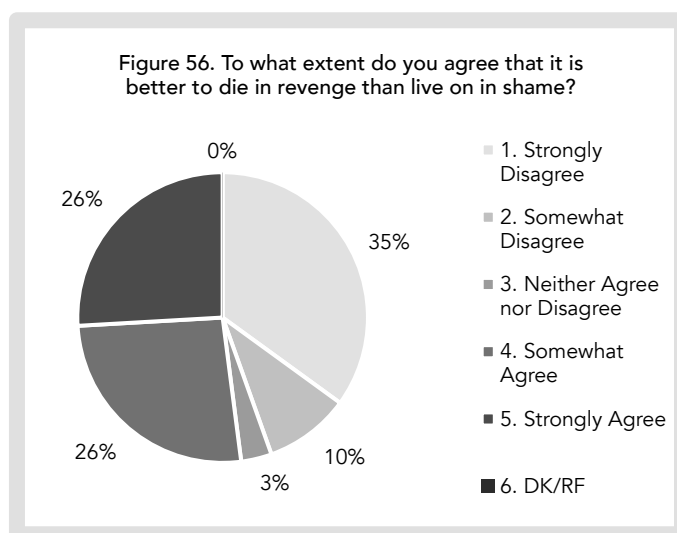
(Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafrq)

7.3 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

The notion of honorable jihad is a major recruitment message for VEOs, who support the idea with religious text.

Although respondents claimed to be unaware of the specific religious messaging used by VEOs targeting recruits in Mafrag, they did discuss their understanding of the discourse used. Among the supposed core VEO narratives is the idea of 'honorable jihad'. This, several respondents claimed, is promoted in such a way as to inculcate feelings of guilt in prospective recruits and to inspire them toward the attainment of martyrdom through combatting "infidels" and "apostates." Combative resistance on behalf of beleaguered Syrians features strongly in this jihadist narrative, and religious extremists are known to promote this as a path to redemption.³¹³ Several respondents noted that

the jihadist-related narratives highlighted here are perpetuated by Salafist Jihadists within their communities, who advance the notion that Sunni Muslims have an obligation to defend Islam.³¹⁴ In fact, they allegedly sometimes attempt to impose this duty onto parents, urging them to send their children to Syria. Some famous public figures have also contributed to the promotion of jihad in Syria. One example is the professor and preacher, Amjad Qourshah, who is reported to have discussed "infidel" Syrian regime atrocities with his students, encouraging them to take up arms with JN. Indeed, his support for JN in Syria has been widely addressed in mainstream media reports.³¹⁵ Such jihadist messaging has apparently been increasingly resonant with locals as they witness atrocities committed by the Assad regime and its Shabiha militia in Syria and Iraq. Accordingly, Qourshah continues to command respect among elements of Mafrag's population, even since his arrest in June 2016.³¹⁶ Quantitative findings also indicated that the message of 'jihad as duty' might be especially powerful within Mafrag when supplemented by exposure to the suffering of fellow Muslim civilians in Syria. For instance, 52 percent of Mafrag GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 45 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that it is better to die in revenge than to live on in shame (see Figure 56). This was inherent in the account of a former ISIS recruit who was persuaded to join the VEO through Facebook. Here, through



³¹³ "Many religion scientists are not real scientists; they play [with] the minds of youth and convince them to fight in Syria by telling them that this is the road to heaven." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrag)

³¹⁴ "They also tell them that we are Muslims and we have to defend other Muslims. They convince them that jihad is a must." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafrag)

³¹⁵ Bulos, Nabih 2016. 'Jordan scholar falls from government grace after criticizing role in fight against Islamic State', Los Angeles Times, July 5, 2016.

³¹⁶ "Qourshah has people supporting him and people who don't." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrag)

written speeches supplemented with images of regime-violence in Syria, his recruiter effectively convinced him of a duty to combat the “injustices” of the Assad regime and Shia expansion.³¹⁷ As is manifest in quantitative findings, such messages will likely find a receptive audience in Mafrq. For example, 54 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed, while 45 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable (see Figure 57). Similarly, a considerable 47 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed, while 52 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable (see Figure 58). This is unsurprising, considering the widespread belief in Mafrq that the West is pursuing its own interests in the region at the expense of locals, and that it is humiliating Islam (see 6.2 Perceived Impact of Foreign and Domestic Interventionism).

“There are even some sheikhs who support ISIS and lure youth to join them. These sheikhs tell youth that they should go and fight in Syria and they ask questions such as why didn’t you go to Syria? Why didn’t you send your son to Syria? Are you scared for your son? What about others who went there?”

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

Figure 57. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable?

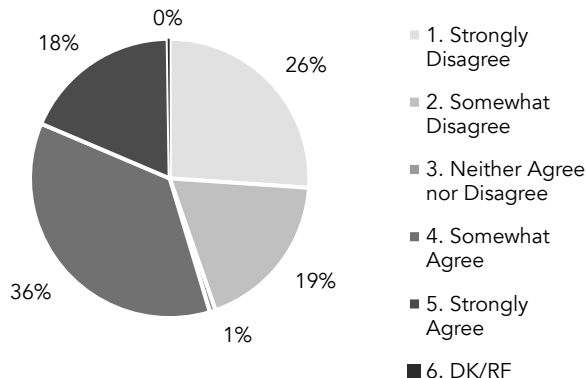
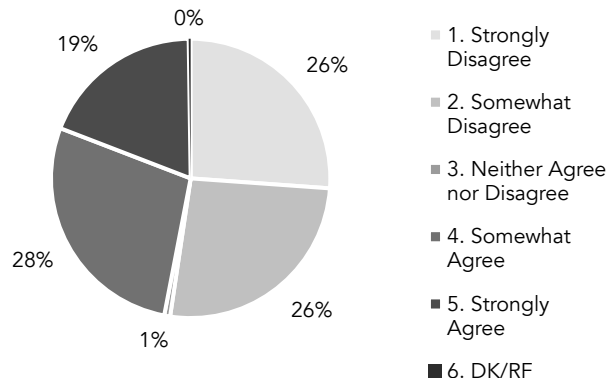


Figure 58. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable?



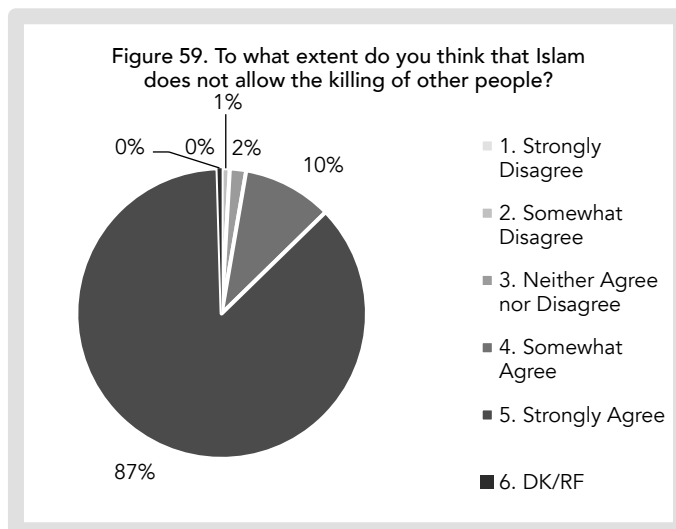
³¹⁷ “He was talking to me about the situation in Syria: war, the Syrian regime, the Shia, and about the injustice of the situation in Syria. And he was convincing me to go to Syria to fight the Syrian regime. Frankly, I admired his speeches and after short time I agreed on going to Syria to fight with ISIS.” (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

Though locals agreed that VEO messaging is powerful, the vast majority disagree that Islam is compatible with the killing of innocents.

In seeking to strengthen the resonance and legitimacy of these messages, VEO operatives are drawing on specific Islamic texts, often publishing them on social media platforms.³¹⁸

One example is the prophet's hadith: "Whoever dies without having fought jihad, or without thinking about jihad, has died a hypocrite." A second example is the Qur'anic verse, "And kill them [the unbelievers] wherever you find them" (Surah Al Tawbah 9:5). A third example, also a verse from the Qur'an is, "Oh Prophet, strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is hell – an evil refuge indeed" (Surah Al Tawbah, 9:73). To

some degree, these messages promoting 'honorable jihad' in Syria are resonating with local youth, and are likely therefore to have provided an effective motivation for those foreign fighters from Mafraq that have left to participate in Syria's conflict. As one respondent explained, when local youth learn of the plight of their Muslim "brothers" in Syria, they feel compelled to help. Supposedly, this is particularly applicable to those of a religious disposition. However, at the same time, the near-unanimous view across Mafraq is that violent conflict is incompatible with Islamic principles. For example, an overwhelming 97 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while only one percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Islam does not allow the killing of other people (see Figure 59).



"The current events are playing a major role in increasing extremism [because] some people who are religious are seeing their brothers [fellow Muslims] being killed and treated with injustice. The Syrian people are being killed. Youth are sensitive; when they see Syrian people suffering, they try to help them in all ways, even if they have to go to fight with them."

(Male, 38, Professor, Mafraq)

³¹⁸ "The extremist groups use the Qur'an and Sunnah. The proof is the ISIL [ISIS] platforms on Twitter." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

Focus: A local youth was seduced by ISIS on Facebook, where Syrian regime atrocities proved a decisive recruitment narrative.

"He [an Iraqi ISIS affiliate] showed me photos and videos about massacres that the Syrian regime was committing. He is from Ramtha City and I met him at Irbid City on a Friday night. I stayed for three days and there was a group of youth who were talking about ISIS and [saying] that they're fighting to liberate the land of Islam, Iraq and Syria. [They said that ISIS'] objectives are to re-establish the Islamic caliphate, to rule people by the laws of God, to stand up to the US invasion of the Arabs and stop Iran. [They said that] jihad is a duty to liberate Syria, to go back to Palestine and the glories of Arabs. I noticed some people came from Syria but from different nationalities, and they were giving me money and telling us that this money was our cut from [loot taken from the enemy]. After three months, I went to Iraq with two young people and I was trained for two months on everything. After that, I was sent to fight in Syria. Then I discovered that they [ISIS] were fighting [in order to] steal and have sex with women and I thought more than once to run away. Finally, I was able to escape to Turkey then to Jordan."

(Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)

Sunni-Shia sectarian messaging is widely accepted across Mafraq, but the vast majority object to the practice of Takfir.

At the same time as it is fueling the 'jihad as duty' messages propounded by VEOs, the conflict in Syria and Iraq is feeding the sectarian component of these groups' ideologies. ISIS, for one, has capitalized on this by successfully presenting itself as a defensive force against regional Shia expansion.³¹⁹ Indeed, Mafraq's population appears to be increasingly receptive to sectarian messaging as they witness atrocities committed by the Assad regime and its Shabiha militia in Syria and Iraq, as well as elements of the PMF in Fallujah.³²⁰ Accordingly, Sunni-Shia sectarianism is widely accepted, if not normalized in Mafraq.³²¹ One respondent even asserted that Shia Muslims have surpassed Jews as the chief enemy of local Sunni populations. However, quantitative findings contradicted this perception. Compared with the 78 percent support rate for violent jihad in Israel (see 2.1 Support for VEOs), only 57 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 43 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable (see Figure 60). Also contradictory, the majority of respondents were strongly opposed to the practice of Takfir as espoused by groups like ISIS against Shia and other Muslim minority groups. Indeed, 81 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or

³¹⁹ "ISIS sends messages to show itself as the fighter against the renegade Shias in order to stop the extension of the Shia Crescent." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

³²⁰ "Try to have a political conversation with any person and you would notice him talking about terrorist groups and sympathizing with them. He will talk specifically about Al Assad and the Shabiha, and their actions against Sunni people in Iraq. He will be saying that Shias and the Syrian regime deserve what ISIS is doing to them, or he will tell you to go and see what the Shias have done in Al Fallujah or after the American invasion." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

³²¹ "Families lack awareness and they sympathize with extremist Sunni groups since 99 percent of Muslim Jordanians are Sunnis. Therefore, they perceive the conflict with Shias as a normal thing." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafraq)

'somewhat' disagreed, while only 18 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the practice of Takfir is justifiable (see Figure 61).

"The ideological belonging to extremist groups is increasing in Jordan as a result of the conflict between the regime and the extremist groups fighting against it in Iraq and Syria. When you say Shia regime, people think that the duty of Sunnis is to fight it and they consider Arab Shia more dangerous than Jews."

(Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

Figure 60. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable?

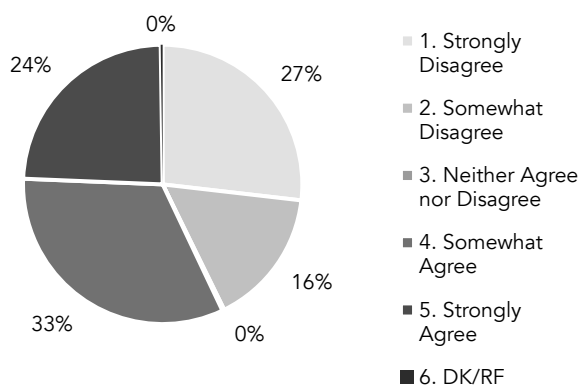
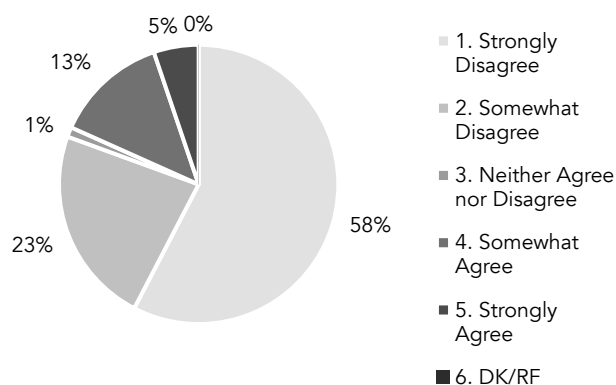


Figure 61. To what extent do you agree that the practice of Takfir is justifiable?



The idea of an impending Islamic caliphate is one of the most powerful VEO narratives due to its broad appeal and historical significance.

Because strong religious foundations underlie local society, residents are highly receptive to Islamic justifications as a mechanism of persuasion. Some respondents asserted that VEOs exploit this receptivity to advance their recruitment campaigns. In particular, residents are easily persuaded if evidence from Islamic sources is presented to substantiate a claim. VEO operatives are renowned for their effective rhetoric through which they convey their ideologies to impressionable youth.³²² Probably the most powerful element of VEO ideologies is the notion of an Islamic caliphate, which has resonance even for moderate-leaning Sunni Muslims in Mafrq.³²³ This was captured in quantitative findings, with 56 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreeing, and 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat'

³²² "They convince him with religion. If a person is a criminal and was killed in front of another person, Islam says that a killer must be killed and there is evidence. Then they will convince this person. Or if I told a person that women [should] have all their rights taken [from them] and I showed them evidence, they would believe me. They [VEOs] use this rhetoric so they can influence people." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafrq)

³²³ "The idea of an Islamic caliphate – it draws anyone. We all wish for it and for the return of the Islamic empire, and for the Islamic religion to be number one." (Female, 50, Retiree, Mafrq)

disagreeing that the Caliphate will help restore Islam (see Figure 62). Correspondingly, though there were claims that the Badia regions are opposed to political Islam – evidenced by tribal opposition to the MB – many believed that Mafraq is exceptional in its levels of support for political-religious interaction. Indeed, 66 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed, while 27 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that religion and politics should be kept separate (see Figure 63). According to several locals in Mafraq, the aspiration for Islam’s ascendancy over other religions can be partly explained by a shared nostalgia for the Islamic empires of the past and a deep-seated antipathy to US global dominance. Among the most prominent former Islamic empires is the Rashidun Caliphate of Omar bin Al Khattab. It is this popular vision that VEOs are attempting to tap into by emphasizing their imperial ambitions.³²⁴ ISIS for one has used this ideal to attract local youth into its ranks.³²⁵ Respondents suggested that young people are especially receptive to ideas like this, as they are undergoing personal development and are therefore ideologically malleable.³²⁶

“The words ‘Islamic caliphate’ are shiny. Anyone would like the Islamic caliphate to be back. God dignified us Arabs with Islam, that’s why we didn’t have a state or an empire but in Islam. To say to anyone ‘Islamic caliphate’ is to call Omar bin Al Khattab to his mind.”

(Female, 50, Retiree, Mafraq)

Figure 62. To what extent do you agree that the Caliphate will help restore Islam?

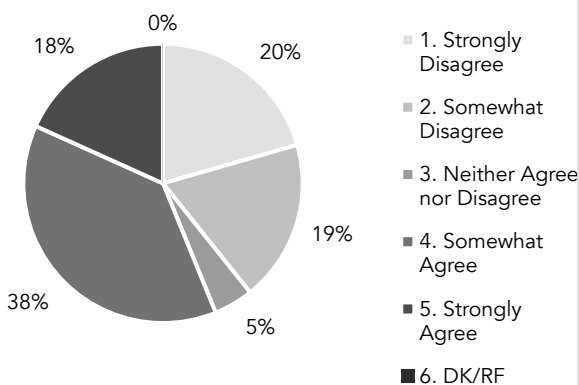
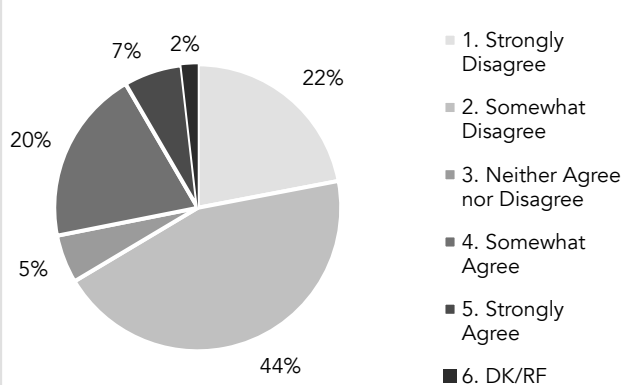


Figure 63. To what extent do you think that religion and politics should be kept separate?



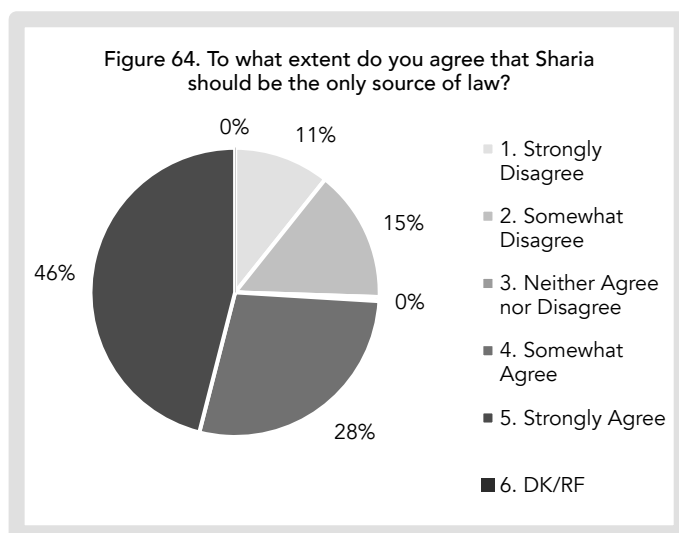
³²⁴ “They know that we as Arabs and Muslims love Islam and love to have an empire and be number one in everything. They came from this idea.” (Female, 50, retiree, Mafraq)

³²⁵ “In my cousin’s case, he was a sympathizer – actually not just a sympathizer, he believed that ISIS is going to bring the Caliphate glory back to the Muslims and fight infidel Americans.” (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

³²⁶ “Youth between the ages of 13 to 20 [are most at risk of being radicalized] because they are still naive and don’t know right from wrong. They are excited and they get mad easily – even against their mothers – and their genes change. Anyone can brainwash them.” (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

Salafist Jihadists depict the Jordanian state as illegitimate and exploit anti-state grievances to generate support.

It is predominantly on the basis of Islamic principles that Salafist Jihadists criticize the central government. This is consistent with Salafism as an ideology that denounces Western-influenced political systems as illegitimate.³²⁷ Thus, typical anti-government charges center on the notion of state infidelity. The government's rejection of Sharia supremacy is another major point of Salafist Jihadist condemnation, as it conflicts with one of the core tenets of Salafism as observed by groups such as ISIS, who prescribe absolute Sharia governance.³²⁸ Quantitative findings indicated the absence of Sharia rule to be a frustration shared by a majority across Mafrq. Indeed, 74 percent of



Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 26 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Sharia should be the only source of law (see Figure 64). Likewise, 72 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 27 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that only Islam can guarantee justice (see Figure 65).

Respondents reported that there are a number of locals who attempt to nurture social resentment against the state. They do this through messages distorting state economic neglect and by advancing rumors of pernicious state motives. One such accusation is that the state is capable of providing generous financial assistance to local families, but chooses instead to maintain poverty in some areas as a means of securing power. Another avenue of discourse through which Salafist Jihadists and VEOs attempt to inflame and capitalize on antipathy toward the state is that of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty. Some locals are aware that ISIS in particular is amplifying the notion that the Jordanian regime is supporting Israeli interests at the expense of Palestinians.³²⁹ The extensive acceptability of this message within Mafrq is manifest in quantitative findings. 60 percent of Mafrq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 38 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty is a betrayal for Islam and Arabs (see Figure 66).

³²⁷ Rumman, Mohammad Abu 2014. *I am a Salafi: a study of the actual and realized identities of Salafis*, Amman: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

³²⁸ "ISIS leaders tell you that they are trying to retrieve the glory of Muslims and the Caliphate and that they want to apply God's laws on earth." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafrq)

³²⁹ "ISIS shows Jordan as the protector of Israel and that Jordan helps Israel against our brothers and sisters in Palestine. By doing this, ISIS is trying to gain the sympathy and support of Jordanians and turn them against the Jordanian government." (Male, 27, Project Coordinator, Mafrq)

"Somebody said in front of me that the government and the state is able to give every Jordanian family five million dinars. But that the country doesn't wish to do so in order to keep the people under its control and maintain regime followers. So the people remain poor. This corrupts the minds of Jordanians and the Jordanian citizen starts thinking that the state wants me to have a tiring life, and then he holds a grudge against the government. This is one of the things that may change the idea of loyalty toward the regime."

(Female, 38, Lawyer, Amman - on Mafraq governorate)

Figure 65. To what extent do you agree that only Islam can guarantee justice?

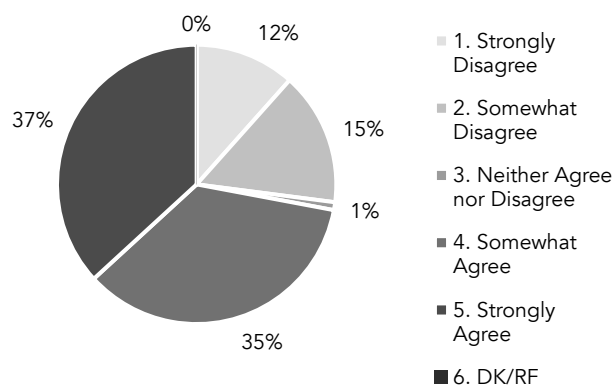
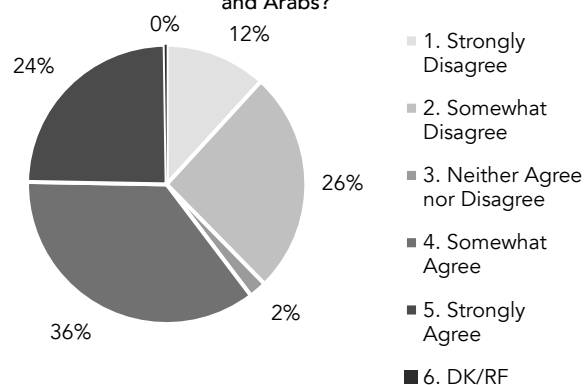


Figure 66. To what extent do you agree that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is a betrayal for Islam and Arabs?



Religious leaders are not tackling VE head-on and there is a lack of local moderate role models.

With mosques being crucial platforms for the spread of VE by Salafist Jihadists, respondents suggested that CVE efforts be directed toward the mosques in Mafraq. However, evidence suggests that, as of now, this is barely happening. For example, some respondents complained that local religious leaders are at best avoiding the subject of VE, and at worst promoting it unwittingly. Consequently, religious leaders are a point of frustration for local residents, who consider them to be shirking their responsibilities.³³⁰ Meanwhile, several respondents lamented that local religious leaders lack to capacity to effectively promote moderate Islam due to their limited education and awareness.³³¹ Accordingly, 50 percent of Mafraq GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, while 47 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that religious extremism is a problem in their community (see Figure 67). Even in the Badia areas such as Salhiya, where VE is not perceived to be a significant issue, respondents bemoaned the

³³⁰ "Those groups [VEOs] are heartless and they kill everyone. Religious figures should stop them from doing that. They have to talk louder about it [violent extremism]. They are not doing a good job. They have to let youth love Islam and their country and teach them real Islam." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

³³¹ "Some preachers and counselors lack culture and education; [they have] no social responsibility or social studies. All they know how to do is to read [the] Qur'an and explain the *Hadith Nabawi*. Preachers should be specialized in philosophy, sociology and widely cultured. Not everyone is fit to be a guide." (Male, 65, Mayor, Mafraq)

scarcity of moderate religious voices raising awareness.³³² Meanwhile, there is little enthusiasm for the capacity of religious leaders to connect with the public in the Badia, where clerics are thought to be relatively powerless.³³³ The general absence of publicly influential religious figures was inherent in the fact that no respondent was able or willing to name a single religious leader from their locality.³³⁴

It was only upon further investigation that a number of names of admired imams emerged. Among these individuals are Ali Al Sardi, imam of Zamleh Mosque in Zamleh Al Tarqi village (Serhan district); Majed Awad Al Zaboun, imam of Al Khairat Mosque in Al Hashmi neighborhood (Irbab district); Abdullah Rsheidat, imam of Bilal Al Rabah Mosque in Al Bareed neighborhood; Izz Al Den Shogair, imam of Sho'aib Mosque; Ahmad Muhsin, imam of Mashrafa Mosque; and Ahmad Rabei', imam of Khaled Bin Al Walid Mosque in Hamra town (Hosha district). Reinforcing the potential for such influential figures to make effective contributions to CVE is a local appetite for greater engagement between local religious leaders and youth. One respondent expressed this with particular emphasis on the value of the mosque as a venue for raising awareness on a regular basis, especially during the well-attended Friday prayers.³³⁵

"There are some religious leaders to blame due to the lack of awareness, because they tackle subjects of minor importance rather than other subjects, such as terrorism. They do not focus on the important issues – only occasionally or when an explosion takes place. In this period, they should focus on extremism subjects in order to spread awareness between people, because there are individuals trying to direct people to radical groups and convince them using religion."

(Male, 60, Teacher, Mafraq)

There are a number of moderate role models who can influence Jordanian youth, including television presenters, scholars and comedians.

Aside from religious leaders specifically, there is also a perceptible absence of moderate role models for youth in Mafraq. Indeed, of the few names that respondents provided when discussing inspirational moderate figureheads, not a single one was Mafraq-based. This includes the Egyptian celebrity preacher Amr Khaled, who locals respect for discouraging youth from violent activity; the Syrian scholar Mohammad Rateb Al Nabulsi, who promotes moderate Islam through radio TV channels such as Al

³³² "They have to teach people to avoid such subjects through shows on TV and teach people about real Islam, and that it's not radical. Religious people are not very active about this in Friday prayers – they don't talk about this. In Mafraq they don't talk about radicalism because there are no real incidents happening here, but we have to educate youth, or else it will start happening here." (Male, 45, Nurse, Mafraq)

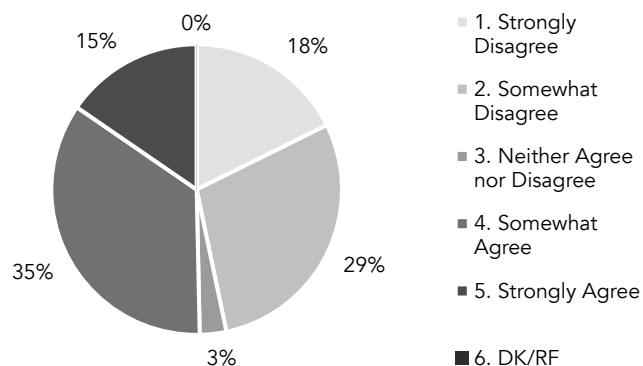
³³³ "Religious lecturers in the Badia are not very powerful; Irbid is more famous for its religious leaders." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

³³⁴ "You can ask the youth about good religious figures that attend the mosques. I don't know them; I only hear stories." (Female, 45, Unemployed, Mafraq)

³³⁵ "During Friday prayer, where most people gather to pray, they [religious leaders] should talk about extremism and convince people that it [VE] is not Islam. Different people come together during Friday prayers, so it can be an effective platform to spread awareness." (Male, 28, Teacher, Mafraq)

Hayat;³³⁶ controversial university professor, Amjad Qourshah, who was arrested in June 2016 for criticizing Jordan's participation in the international coalition against ISIS;³³⁷ Al Roya TV presenter Mohammad Al Khalidi;³³⁸ stand-up comedian Rajae Qawas, who is exceptionally popular with youth;³³⁹ and Jordanian celebrity Dr. Mohammed Nouh Al Qudah. The consequences of an absence of local religiously moderate role models can be socially critical for youth. For example, one individual explained that had there been someone with the willingness and capacity to explain the dangers of VEOs and expose their ideological extremity, they might have prevented him from joining ISIS.³⁴⁰

Figure 67. To what extent do you agree that religious extremism is a problem in your community?



³³⁶ "He [Al Nabulsi] is considered a moderate sheikh. Young people love him. When a sheikh says that killing a human being or stealing is prohibited, young people trust him and listen to him." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

³³⁷ Azzeh, Laila 2016. 'Muslim scholar detained 'over comments on Jordan's role in anti-Daesh war', The Jordan Times, June 15, 2016.

³³⁸ Arab Media Partnership 2013. 'Mohammad Al Khalidi – presenter at Roya TV, Jordan', YouTube, February 12, 2013.

³³⁹ "If Rajae made a series about terrorism, he would enlighten youth's minds and the results would be excellent." (Male, 34, Business Owner, Mafraq)

³⁴⁰ "It was possible [that someone could have stopped me from going to Syria]. If I sat with a good sheikh who would have told me that ISIS' members are not real Muslims, or if an elder who would have increased my awareness and showed me the real truth about ISIS, I probably wouldn't have left." (Male, 27, Salesman, Mafraq)