

# Drivers And Barriers Impacting Propensity Toward Violent Extremism

## TAFIELA: TARGET LOCATION ANALYSIS



*Tafila City, Tafila governorate.*

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*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."*

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## List of Acronyms

AJYC:	All Jordan Youth Commission
AQ:	Al Qa'ida
DK:	'Don't Know' (GQ Answers)
EU:	European Union
FSA:	Free Syrian Army
GID:	General Intelligence Directorate (Jordan)
GQ:	Guided Questionnaire
IAF:	Islamic Action Front
ISIS:	Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham
JAF:	Jordanian Armed Forces
JD:	Jordanian Dinar
JN:	Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) <sup>1</sup>
MB:	Muslim Brotherhood
RF:	'Refuse to Answer' (GQ Answers)
UK:	United Kingdom
USAID:	US Agency for International Development
USD:	US Dollar
VE:	Violent Extremism
VEO:	Violent Extremist Organization

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

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

With less than 100,000 inhabitants, Tafiela is the least populous governorate in Jordan. Roughly half of these residents live in the main urban center, the town of Tafiela. The rest of the governorate is largely rural and the economy is dependent on agriculture, though Tafiela is also host to Jordan's largest phosphate processing works, which is an important local employer. Tafiela is traditionally seen as a loyalist area of Jordan, so the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and civil service are also leading employers in the governorate. That said, its tribal heritage and ties to the central government have not prevented Tafiela from being the location of a series of large protests against the government, most recently in November 2012, but also the 1989 demonstrations against the price of bread that led to the end of three decades of martial law in the country. These protests have frequently been the result of opposition to reductions in state subsidies and reflect strong concerns about the weak local economy, unemployment, and a lack of job opportunities expressed by many respondents in Tafiela. They also demonstrate that locals in Tafiela feel more comfortable taking to the streets to air grievances than residents of other governorates.

While the difficulty in finding work, especially for high school and university graduates, was a major concern for the majority of respondents, they were less worried about radicalization, religious extremism and the existence of violent extremist organization (VEO) sympathizers in Tafiela. Since the start of the Syrian Civil War, a number of locals have traveled to Syria to fight with armed groups, including Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS) and Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) (JN); however, local estimates of the total who have left to fight were generally less than twenty people. Consequently, few consider VEO participation a common phenomenon, and the vast majority expressed strong opposition to all of the major VEOs, though Al Qa'ida (AQ) and JN were better regarded than ISIS. It was clear from research that ISIS' reputation was significantly damaged by its murder of Jordanian Air Force pilot, Moath Al Kasasbeh in January 2015. Indeed, where prior to this incident some saw it as a positive force in Syria, it now has few, if any, open supporters in Tafiela. In contrast, JN was seen more favorably by a minority of locals for opposing the Assad regime, protecting Sunni Syrian civilians, and limiting its activities to Syria rather than seeking to expand throughout the region. AQ also attracted notable support in Tafiela, with a fifth of Guided Questionnaire (GQ) respondents stating that locals in their communities were in favor of the VEO. Positive views of AQ were generally linked to residual admiration for Osama bin Laden and the VEO's historic opposition to the US. However, theoretical support was not believed likely to translate into physical action, as few respondents considered AQ an active or a relevant organization since Bin Laden's death in 2011.

The group most strongly associated with religious extremism and VEO support in Tafiela were the Salafist Jihadists; however, unlike in some other governorates, they have little or no presence in Tafiela. This was widely attributed to the hostility of leading tribes in the governorate, notably the Alshabatat and Alqatameen, which view Salafist Jihadists with suspicion and fear that they will attempt to radicalize young male tribal members. As such, those locals who are known to have joined VEOs in Syria following association with Salafist Jihadists met them and were radicalized in neighboring Ma'an governorate, where they maintain a strong presence. With that in mind, the more moderate Salafist Quietists are better regarded in Tafiela than in other parts of Jordan. Indeed, almost half of GQ respondents saw some level of support for Salafist Quietists in their communities. This may be due to the fact that, where in other

governorates, Quietist and Jihadist Salafists can be confused given their similar dress and overall appearance, locals from Tafiela can be confident that any Salafist they see is a Quietist. Notably, support for Salafist Quietists was thought to be similar to support for the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in the governorate, and both groups benefit from a local population that is largely religiously conservative.

Though religious extremism was seen as a problem by a minority in the governorate, the leading causes of local grievances in Tafiela were related to a lack of opportunities for employment and the associated issue of bored and inactive youths in the governorate. Both high school and university graduates find it difficult to secure employment on finishing their education, and the resulting boredom can lead to feelings of frustration and anger toward the central government that some feared could make youths vulnerable to VEO recruitment. Unemployment was also identified as a driver of VEO participation because these groups were thought to offer high salaries, which could become increasingly tempting the longer an individual is out of work. In addition to increasing propensity toward VEO membership among locals, the number of under-occupied youths was also thought to be a major contributing factor driving social issues in the governorate, notably drug abuse and petty crime. With that in mind, respondents also equated youth boredom in Tafiela to a lack of dedicated youth clubs and activity centers in the governorate, especially in areas outside Tafiela City. Many stated that, if youths were provided with positive alternatives to inactivity, they would be less vulnerable to VEO propaganda and less likely to consider VEO membership.

## 2.0 ISLAMIST AND VEO SUPPORT

### 2.1 SUPPORT FOR VEOs

Though the majority of local remain strongly opposed to JN and AQ, support for the VEOs is higher than in other governorates.

Support for VEOs – particularly ISIS, JN and AQ – was limited in Tafiela governorate. In fact, most expressed strong hostility to these groups, and they were often described as ‘extreme’ or ‘terrorist’. That said, some acknowledged that these were better perceived in the early years of the Syrian conflict,<sup>1</sup> as they were thought to be fighting the unpopular Assad regime and protecting Syrian civilians.<sup>2</sup> The decline in support was linked to turning points in public opinion, notably the killing of Jordanian pilot, Kasasbeh,<sup>3</sup> as well as a general perception that armed groups in Syria were not improving the situation and/or were fueling the Syrian conflict, rather than helping bring it to a conclusion.<sup>4</sup> There was also a perception, reinforced by the testimony of locals who had joined VEOs only to return after becoming disillusioned by their behavior,<sup>5</sup> that armed groups in Syria were expending their energy fighting one another over territory, rather than the Assad regime.<sup>6</sup> The armed opposition, principally the Free Syrian Army (FSA), was also viewed in this light. While they were initially thought to enjoy widespread support for their anti-Assad position, they have come to be seen by many in Tafiela as ‘criminal’ or part of the problem in Syria rather than part of the solution.

Of the three main VEOs, AQ was seen as largely obsolete, despite attracting support from a significant minority of respondents. JN enjoyed much higher levels of support than ISIS, with 19 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents stating that they thought locals ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ supported it, compared to 9 percent who said the same of ISIS.<sup>7</sup> Despite modest popular support for VEOs, principally JN,<sup>8</sup> few locals

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<sup>1</sup> “All these radical, armed groups started on the right path, but then money, corruption and mercenaries got involved.” (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>2</sup> “In the past people in Tafiela supported Al Nusra and Ahrar Al Sham, and anybody else who fought against Assad.” (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>3</sup> “At the beginning of the Syrian conflict, people in Tafiela were supporting these groups because they didn’t know what they were really like. They only knew they were fighting the Syrian government but after Moath, many people changed their views and stopped supporting them.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>4</sup> “Although ISIS, Jabhat Al Nusra, and Al Qa’ida have different names they share the same principles. They are all similar because they kill people and want control and power.” (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>5</sup> “One guy who went to Syria from Tafiela, his brother told me that he found out that the situation in Syria is completely different than what he thought. He thought he was going to Syria to fight the Syrian government, but actually they were fighting other groups.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>6</sup> “He went to fight jihad in Syria because of the reputation of the regime there, it was rumored that the regime was killing Sunni Muslims so that’s why he decided to go for Jihad. Actually, those violent extremist groups kill innocent people and children and this was the main reason he returned back to Jordan. He was young man who travelled to fight for God’s sake and kill disbelievers, then he found out that they were killing children and innocent people and he was definitely surprised when he discovered that and he left.” (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>7</sup> “Al Qa’ida is non-existent now. I think people here support Al Nusra more than ISIS. They have maybe ten percent of the people behind them.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

were thought to have traveled to Syria to fight jihad, and of those who did so, some became members of JN, and others joined ISIS. Some respondents also observed that, even for locals who had joined VEOs, their principal motivation was to participate in jihad rather than to become a member of a specific VEO.<sup>9</sup> Respondents largely thought that locals from economically deprived areas of the governorate, notably Hasa,<sup>10</sup> were more likely to go to Syria to fight than those living elsewhere in Tafiela; however, they often described these individuals as loners and outliers in the general population.<sup>11</sup> A number of former fighters, including returned members of ISIS and JN, have come back to Tafiela after becoming disillusioned by their experiences with these VEOs, and they say that they were surprised by the level of infighting between armed groups in Syria. A common sentiment was that what they saw in Syria with VEOs did not correspond to their expectations of jihad, causing them to return where they were generally released after a brief period of incarceration by the security forces.<sup>12</sup>

*"At the beginning of the conflict, things in Syria were very confused but it was clear women and children were dying so people here were against the Syrian regime, and were against the Shias. Then, in time, things became clearer and Al Nusra emerged, and everyone thought they were good – but soon, we found out that they were bad. Finally, Daesh came and everyone thought that they represented an Islamic State, but then it became clear that they were the worst and the most criminal of all the armed groups which preceded them."*

*(Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)*

AQ is supported by up to a fifth of locals in Tafiela, though positive views are generally linked to the VEO's historical achievements rather than its current performance.

AQ attracted support from a significant minority of respondents, some of whom expressed respect and admiration for former leader Osama bin Laden,<sup>13</sup> while others praised the VEO for its long-term opposition to the US.<sup>14</sup> It was also credited with being the oldest group of its kind, in contrast to VEOs based in Syria, which have only emerged since the start of the conflict there. However, both supporters and detractors observed that AQ was no longer considered a significant and/or influential group, and some doubted whether it continues to exist in any meaningful way following bin Laden's death.<sup>15</sup> Despite

<sup>8</sup> "It became harder to express your opinion after Moath was killed, but sympathy with these radical groups exists here." (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

<sup>9</sup> "People didn't travel to join ISIS or Jabhat Al-Nusra; they travelled for Jihad." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>10</sup> "We heard that so and so went to Syria, and every individual that went from Hasa to Syria, was a shock to us, because none of them seemed radical." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>11</sup> "I think that around seven people went to Syria from the Hasa neighborhood and I think out of all the people in the area seven is a not very many." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>12</sup> "The reality of what is happening in Syria has been exposed, and there are people who returned when they saw what was happening there. They thought that it was jihad in the beginning, and when they returned, they told the people what was happening in Syria – that it was not jihad at all, only chaos." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>13</sup> "Al Qa'ida is different to ISIS and Al Nusra. Osama Bin Laden created it and they were in Chechnya and got the Russians out and they were defending their religion but now Al Qa'ida is not very strong." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>14</sup> "The people used to support Al Qa'ida because they were against the U.S." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>15</sup> "Regarding Al Qa'ida, I feel they disappeared and are not active anymore." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

this, several respondents linked AQ with ISIS<sup>16</sup> and presented it as the parent organization of both ISIS and JN.<sup>17</sup> In fact, in some instances, ISIS was portrayed merely as AQ's branch in Iraq, with JN described as the corresponding branch in Syria, implying that some respondents still see AQ as the leading VEO in the region.<sup>18</sup> With that in mind, 64 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to AQ in their community, while a sizeable minority (20 percent) reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support. Notably, 7 percent stated that they had 'not heard of' the VEO, indicating that it does not enjoy the same recognition as ISIS (see Figure 2). Comparisons with other VEOs were sometimes positive, and several respondents argued that, unlike ISIS and JN, AQ does not seek to take over territory in the region and is not responsible for the chaotic situation in Syria.<sup>19</sup>

*"Al Qa'ida emerged 25 years ago, but Daesh and Al Nusra only emerged in the last two or three years, so Al Qa'ida has been working for years, and has its own supporters and policies, while the others are new and have only been around for a couple of years."*

*(Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)*

**Though JN attracts more support in Tafiela than in other governorates – in part for its opposition to the Assad regime – most consider it a terrorist organization.**

The vast majority of respondents expressed opposition to JN, though it was generally better regarded than ISIS. Several young men from Tafiela governorate have joined the VEO in Syria since the start of the conflict there,<sup>20</sup> one of whom was only 17 years old.<sup>21</sup> Some were thought to have become members because they felt a sense of moral duty to help Syrians oppressed by the Assad regime and thought this was one of JN's principal objectives,<sup>22</sup> while others joined because they found the group's Islamic

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<sup>16</sup> "The media showed us that they were one, that Al Qa'ida became Daesh, Al Qa'ida was defending Islam and the territory of Afghanistan when they transformed into Daesh, their ideology changed, they began to defend Damascus and Iraq." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>17</sup> Daesh are terrorists, they are repulsive and filthy; Al Nusra are also terrorists; and as for the FSA, we don't even know what their story is. We see them as the same as Daesh and Al Nusra." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>18</sup> "Al Nusra supporters say that ISIS is extreme. Al Nusra is an al Qa'ida's branch in Syria and ISIS is Al Qa'ida's branch in Iraq. ISIS decided to take the charge of Syria and Iraq with Al Nusra as their organizer, but Al Nusra refused claiming that they are loyal to Al Qa'ida only. This is how the conflict started and whoever says that ISIS is right is a Salafist Jihadist." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>19</sup> "Al Qa'ida is less radical than Daesh, they fight anything foreign or anything non-Arab but they don't turn people against one another or make countries break up like Syria." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>20</sup> "I think that maybe he was communicating with these groups online or that one of these groups recruited him via the Internet. I found out from his parents that he joined Al Nusra." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>21</sup> "I was director of a prison for minors and one of these prisoners was a thief and a troublemaker, and he had damaged some public property. After a while, I was surprised to find out that he had gone on jihad, and then heard he was martyred in Syria. He was 17 years old and he was with Al Nusra." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>22</sup> "It is possible that one of the reasons he went to join JN was because he was a moral person and he rejected the oppression of people in Syria." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

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ideology attractive and consistent with their own religious beliefs.<sup>23</sup> JN's ideology was widely seen as Salafist in origin, and, for this reason Salafist Quietists in the governorate and elsewhere in Jordan were thought to support JN, while their more radical Jihadist counterparts were believed to prefer ISIS. Furthermore, JN was strongly distinguished by some respondents from AQ and ISIS, and it was portrayed as less radical than these VEOs,<sup>24</sup> and less violent in its behavior. In particular, it was praised for protecting Syrian civilians from attacks by the Assad regime forces and for its lack of territorial ambitions outside Syria. Some observed that, in contrast to AQ and ISIS, JN has never attempted a terrorist attack in Jordan and, consequently, was not a threat to Jordan's national security.<sup>25</sup> With that said, 64 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to JN in their community, while a sizeable minority of 19 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support. Additionally, 9 percent said that they had 'not heard of' JN, suggesting that JN has a lower profile than either ISIS or AQ in Tafiela (see Figure 2). Though several locals have joined the VEO in Syria, in most cases endorsement of JN has not translated into active participation as a member of the VEO. It was widely seen as a contributing factor to the chaos and instability that has affected Syrian civilians. As such, JN is unlikely to expand its support base in Tafiela in the future or draw recruits from the governorate. However, it is likely to retain some level of nominal support from locals, especially those who see the VEO as the face of armed groups opposing the Assad regime in Syria.

*"Personally, I think that Al Nusra has more support than ISIS, especially given that moderate Salafists support Al Nusra and reject ISIS. Meanwhile, the Salafist Jihadists support ISIS more than Al Nusra."*

*(Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)*

### ISIS enjoys a degree of name recognition in Tafiela, but remains unpopular.

ISIS was opposed by the vast majority of respondents, some of whom judged it to be the same or similar to other VEOs in Syria. The VEO was repeatedly condemned for its brutal treatment of civilians and prisoners in the territories under its control, especially the immolation of Kasasbeh in January 2015. Despite this, most believed ISIS is the best-known VEO among locals in Tafiela. Aside from its online propaganda, ISIS's establishment of a functioning state in Syria and Iraq has distinguished it from other armed groups like JN. Several respondents also made reference to incidents where protestors in Tafiela have publically expressed support for ISIS, but argued that they only did so to bring attention to their demands, which were mainly related to the shortage of available jobs in the public sector.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "I know someone from Tafiela who joined Al Nusra in 2012, when they first emerged in Syria. He joined them because he found their ideology attractive. He found them on Facebook and through social media." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>24</sup> "ISIS and Al Qa'ida are more radical than Al Nusra." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>25</sup> "I think Al Nusra is the least extreme group because they do not have any operations outside of Syria. They only operate within Syria and they have not caused any explosions in Jordan." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>26</sup> "No one raised the ISIS flag in sympathy. They are Bedouins demanding jobs. They might be promised a job at the Intelligence Agency or with the police, so when they didn't get the job, they used ISIS flag to tease the authorities." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

Consequently, 82 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is ‘strong’ or ‘some’ opposition to ISIS in their community, while only 9 percent reported that there is ‘strong’ or ‘some’ support (see Figure 2). Pro-ISIS views were often based on sectarian positions that depicted ISIS as a necessary evil to oppose Shia domination of Iraq and Syria. However, most respondents were confident that ISIS enjoyed little or no support in Tafiela. With that in mind, it seems unlikely that the group will be able to build a support base in the governorate, given the current depth of hostility toward it.

*“ISIS has a strong presence because of its victories, its creation of a state, a government system and an economy in its lands. In a short time, ISIS built a state with resources, heavy weapons, an economy, cities, administrators, ministers and everything you would see in any other country, so it was better than other groups such as Al Nusra, which is just a group of fighters who are against the regime.”*

*(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)*

**Focus: While locals once supported VEOs, including ISIS, they have become disillusioned by their brutality.**

*“People used to support Al Qa’ida because they were fighting in Afghanistan and Chechnya. They kicked out the Russians, and many people thought they were doing the right thing. But now it’s not about killing Russians and Americans. Now, they kill Muslims, and that’s why people stopped supporting Al Nusra and ISIS and AQ. Before Moath’s passing, people supported ISIS. Now they don’t. People supported ISIS at first because they said they wanted to free Palestine and wipe out Israel. We want the Palestinians to be free and they thought ISIS was against Israel, but it turned out they want to wipe out the whole Arab world. I don’t know why the people didn’t support Al Nusra in the past like the supported ISIS, maybe they didn’t hear of them. I heard of ISIS before Al Nusra.*

*(Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)*

ISIS is widely seen as a threat to Jordan’s national security, and many cited the killing of Moath Al Kasasbeh as a reason for this.

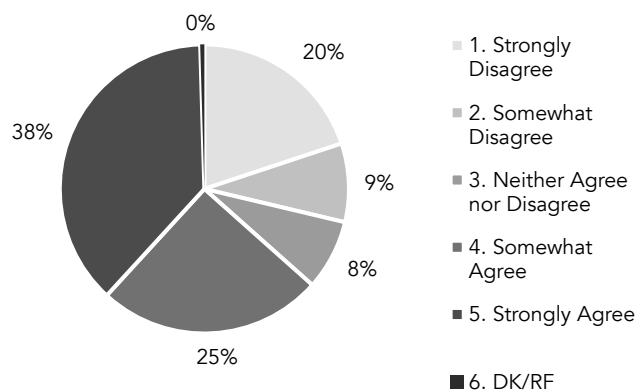
While ISIS was highly unpopular among respondents in Tafiela, it was also considered by most a threat to Jordan’s national security, and the majority identified the execution of Kasasbeh as a turning point in perceptions of ISIS among locals in Tafiela.<sup>27</sup> They also stated that, before Kasasbeh’s violent death – the video of which was widely available on the Internet – some locals were either loosely supportive of the VEO or held a neutral view toward it.

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<sup>27</sup> “When ISIS first appeared in Iraq, there was a lot of support for it, it managed to hold back the Shias. They enjoyed a lot of support then, but when they began torturing the people and killed Moath, things changed.” (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

One respondent estimated that, in the beginning, as much as half of the population in Tafiela held somewhat positive views of ISIS; however, following Kasasbeh's murder, the majority of both supporters and neutrals became opponents of the group.<sup>28</sup> It was also feared that the VEO's long-term intention is to combine Jordan with existing ISIS territory in Iraq and Syria.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, 63 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that ISIS is a threat to Jordan's national security, while 29 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 2). While ISIS's military losses in Iraq and Syria in 2015 and 2016 – notably the VEO's ejection from the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi in Iraq and Manbij and Kobani in Syria – would seem to indicate the group was struggling, some respondents were still afraid that it was able to expand the territory under its control and threaten Jordan directly.<sup>30</sup>

Figure 1. To what extent do you agree that ISIS is a threat to Jordan's national security?



*"ISIS threatens the security and stability of Jordan, because it plans to build its own state. They already have an existing entity in Syria and Iraq, which are Jordan's neighbors in the east and the north. This group has its eyes on Jordan and plans to join it to their state. It has issued threats to us before."*

*(Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)*

Though the FSA enjoys some support in Tafiela, it is widely condemned as corrupt, self-serving, and perpetuating the conflict in Syria.

The FSA was initially supported in Tafiela; however, over time, its image as an armed group protecting Syrians from abuse by the Assad regime's forces has been tarnished by allegations of corruption and repression. Consequently, some respondents expressed strong criticism of the opposition group, and several even equated the FSA with VEOs including ISIS and JN.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the FSA was perceived to be

<sup>28</sup> "Before Moath, 50 percent of people here supported ISIS or at least didn't voice their opinion. After he was killed, the number dropped down significantly. After what happened to him I believe many people also changed their minds about jihad in Syria." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>29</sup> "Jordan was part of the global alliance against ISIS and we entered the conflict and attacked them in Syria so one of their responses was to shoot down the aircraft of Kasasbeh and to murder him. They also declared that we are a target so there is no doubt ISIS wishes to attack Jordan now." (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

<sup>30</sup> "ISIS is the group that receives the most support and occupies the most territory. They are spreading fast." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>31</sup> "Daesh are terrorists, they are repulsive and filthy, Al Nusra are also terrorists and as for the FSA, we don't even know what their story is, and we see them as the same as Daesh and Al Nusra. People in Tafiela hate the FSA." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

contributing to the complex and chaotic situation in Syria, rather than helping to resolve it. 37 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' support for the FSA in their community, while 36 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition. Notably, 24 percent of respondents thought locals in their community were neutral toward the FSA (see Figure 2). Advocates of the moderate opposition group highlighted how the FSA's stated aim is to defend Syrians from the Assad regime, which was strongly condemned by the majority of respondents. However, it was clear that, as the conflict has progressed, and other armed groups including ISIS and JN have proven themselves to be more militarily effective, the FSA's reputation has declined, and it is unlikely that it will be able to reverse this decline and increase its support base in Tafiela.

*"Al Nusra emerged, and everyone thought they were good, then we found out that they were bad, and after that the same thing happened with the FSA, people thought they were good but they turned out to be bad."*

*(Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)*

**Hezbollah retains some support for its historical opposition to Israel, but is nonetheless criticized by the majority in Tafiela for its part in the Syrian conflict.**

59 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Hezbollah in their community, while a significant minority of 27 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support (see Figure 2). That said, though some respondents commended the group for its historic opposition to Israel, others criticized the VEO for its support for the Assad regime, which was widely disliked in Tafiela both for its treatment of Syrian civilians and its alliance with Iran. Some respondents tied Hezbollah to a perceived Iranian plan to extend Shia control across the region into a 'Shia Crescent' that would include Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. In the absence of any recent high-profile military engagements with Israel that could restore its reputation as a group fighting for Palestinians – most of whom are Sunni Muslims – Hezbollah will struggle to recover its former levels of support in Tafiela.

*"Iran wants everyone to be Shias. Most of what is happening in Syria is because of Iran and they are doing the same in Bahrain and Yemen. The Houthis in Yemen are spreading because of Iran, and the same goes for the Alawites and Hezbollah in Syria. My guess is that they want control over the Gulf area."*

*(Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)*

**Hamas is endorsed by roughly half of respondents in Tafiela, demonstrating general hostility to Israel and sympathy for Palestinians in the governorate.**

Most respondents held positive views of Hamas. Indeed, 51 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hamas in their community, while 31 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to the group (see Figure 2). The group was commended for its military opposition to Israel and its role as a representative of the Palestinian people, who attracted strong

sympathy in Tafiela.<sup>32</sup> The vast majority of respondents also strongly differentiated between Hamas and VEOs active in Syria, especially ISIS, and argued that Hamas cannot be compared with them, as it is a political organization with political goals.<sup>33</sup> Some also acknowledged that Hamas was founded on Islamic principles, but denied that this made it similar to a VEO, as it has no desire to establish an Islamic state. Of those who expressed criticism of Hamas, some argued that its tactics of firing rockets into Israel from Gaza are irresponsible and often result in Israeli retaliations that kill innocent Palestinian civilians.<sup>34</sup> However, the majority nonetheless depicted Hamas as an important part of the Palestinian resistance against Israel. Therefore, the group can be expected to retain a large part of its support in Tafiela.

*"Hamas' goals are clear, and so they have a right to exist. They are not radical. They just want to defend their people from the Jews. Hamas didn't go to Iraq or Yemen or Turkey or the US and didn't go to Belgium and France. They don't tell others they are infidels."*

*(Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)*

**Though Hizb ut-Tahrir remains a banned, fringe organization in Jordan, the group has a handful of supporters in Tafiela, most notably in Tafiela City.**

46 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Hizb ut-Tahrir in their community, while 24 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support. Notably, 17 percent stated that they had 'not heard of' the group (see Figure 2). Out of all political organizations, Hizb ut-Tahrir had the lowest profile and worst level of name recognition. That is, respondents either stated that they were not familiar with the group, or associated it with its Palestinian branch, which was thought to be fighting against Israel. As it is banned in Jordan, Hizb ut-Tahrir has no official presence in Tafiela. However, respondents believed that some of the group's supporters have staged protests in Tafiela City. One of these was intended to protest against the arrest of a local youth by the police in March 2012, and another was a commemorative march in March 2015 to mark the end of the Ottoman Caliphate. Given the group's status as a banned political organization in Jordan, which seems unlikely to be reversed by the central government, it will struggle to expand its support and/or membership base and will continue to be viewed as a fringe party that rarely manifests itself in Tafiela.

*"There are some supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Tafiela governorate, but you will find they are supporting this party in Palestine not in Jordan, since the Palestinian branch is fighting Israel. They took part in the demonstrations in Tafiela asking to release a youth from the governorate that the*

<sup>32</sup> "Hamas is different: they are patriots, and they are the people of the land for which they are fighting. Hamas is more of a nationalistic movement than a religious group." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>33</sup> "Hamas is different to ISIS. Hamas's goal is different to other radical groups. Hamas is in Gaza and not in Raqqa or Mosul so people don't look at them in the same way. Hamas is a religious group but they don't have a political goal of building their own Islamic state." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>34</sup> "I don't know who Hamas is helping when they launch a rocket and kill no one, and then Israel retaliates by bombing civilian buildings in Gaza, killing and injuring many. I don't know what is the point of the acts that Hamas commits." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

*police arrested in March 2012. Their last activity was in March 2015, when they started a demonstration in Tafiela after Friday prayers. They gathered downtown and headed to the governor's building for the 94th anniversary of the end of the Islamic Caliphate."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

**Salafist Jihadists are highly unpopular in Tafiela and often associated with VEOs, especially ISIS.**

51 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Salafist Jihadists in their community, while 16 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support. Notably, 22 percent stated that they had 'not heard of' them, reinforcing the impression given by many respondents that there are limited numbers of Salafist Jihadists in Tafiela governorate (see Figure 2). Salafist Jihadists attracted strong criticism from respondents in Tafiela. They were frequently associated with ISIS<sup>35</sup> and were widely accused of attempting to radicalize locals.<sup>36</sup> Though they were linked to disturbances in Zarqa in 2011 that injured more than 80 members of the local police forces,<sup>37</sup> respondents believed that there were few, if any, Salafist Jihadists in the governorate itself. They cited only one instance in which a local from Tafiela traveled to Syria to fight jihad in the company of Salafist Jihadists, whom he met in Ma'an.<sup>38</sup> There is reason to believe that support for Salafist Jihadists peaked before the Syrian conflict, but sharply declined afterward as a result of increasingly negative attitudes toward VEOs like ISIS.<sup>39</sup> Given the strength of general hostility to Salafist Jihadists in the governorate, as well as the opposition of the powerful local tribes, it is unlikely that they will be able to develop a significant following in Tafiela in the near or distant future.

*"There are no parties in Jordan who would fight with these radical armed groups other than Salafist Jihadists. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood have their differences with Salafism and the left wing definitely oppose them, so everyone considers them enemies except those who adhere to the Salafist Jihadist ideology."*

*(Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)*

<sup>35</sup> "Personally, I think that Al Nusra has more support than ISIS, especially given that moderate Salafists, as they call them, support Al Nusra and rejects ISIS. Meanwhile, the extremist Salafists support ISIS more than Al Nusra." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>36</sup> "Jihadist Salafists are to blame for radicalization and violent extremism in my community." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>37</sup> Gavlak, Dave 2011. 'Jordan protests: Rise of the Salafist Jihadist movement', BBC News, April 22, 2011.

<sup>38</sup> "What I understood is that the guy worked in Ma'an with his company and met guys there who also worked with him and they were Salafists. They all went together to Syria from Turkey and stayed there for seven months." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>39</sup> "A small number of individuals support the Salafist Jihadists here in Tafiela as they believe they are following the right form of Islam and consider jihad as a legitimate way to defend Islam, especially during the Afghanistan war and US invasion of Iraq. But after the Syrian crisis began they have had less and less support as those jihadist groups don't practice jihad to defend Islam they use it to kill and to impose their power." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

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

There is widespread support for Salafist Quietists, who are not associated with religious radicalism by the majority of locals.

48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Salafist Quietists in their community, while 24 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition (see Figure 2). In Tafiela, Salafist Quietists were largely seen as pacific and were often considered a barrier to VEO support.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, many respondents distinguished between Salafist Quietists, who they considered admirably observant and religious without appearing radical,<sup>41</sup> and Salafist Jihadists, who were seen as unacceptably extreme and widely associated with VEOs like ISIS and JN.<sup>42</sup> Salafist Quietists have been present for some time in Tafiela without attracting any negative associations,<sup>43</sup> and leading Salafist Quietists including Ali Al Halabi were praised for their anti-VEO stance. In fact, one respondent argued that Al Halabi has openly opposed AQ since the 1990s.<sup>44</sup> Behavior linked with Salafist Quietists, particularly the growing of beards, was also seen by some locals as a positive and harmless indicator of enhanced religiosity, especially among youths.<sup>45</sup> Despite Salafist Quietists being more widely accepted than in other governorates including Amman and Zarqa, tribal groups in Tafiela, especially in rural areas, were considered a barrier to the spread of Salafism in the governorate. Several respondents reported that the tribal leaders in these areas do not permit Salafists to establish themselves, possibly due to concerns that they may radicalize locals and draw them away from their tribes.<sup>46</sup> A minority of respondents was unable to distinguish between Salafist Quietists and observant locals who wear similar long robes and beards, and this perhaps partly accounts for the 18 percent who stated that they had 'not heard of' them.<sup>47</sup> Some respondents were critical of Salafist Quietists, and believed some of them hold

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<sup>40</sup> "I see Salafist Quietists as a barrier to joining these radical groups because they are totally different. Radical groups want to kill people but Salafists do not." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>41</sup> "The Salafist Quietists regularly approach people in Tafiela town and other districts to persuade them to be more committed to Islamic duties like prayer, zakat and fasting. They remind people about the importance of being closer to God, but and they are very kind and their words are sweet and they are always smiling. They also visit people in their houses." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>42</sup> "In terms of Quietist Salafists, they are not political and they represent the religious approach and is very different from Jihadist Salafism." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>43</sup> "The threat that Jordan faces is an external threat not internal, we have been living with Salafists for long time and we didn't have any problems with them." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>44</sup> "Al Halabi, who belongs to the moderate 'Scientific Salafism' that rejects Al Qa'ida, is doing a good job in opposing violent extremism. They have rejected Al Qa'ida since the 90s." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>45</sup> "You see some guys growing beards and wearing like them like Islamists. This was common in Tafiela. I used to look at those guys and wonder what happened. Our community considered them normal and thought they became religious, which is good." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>46</sup> "It is known that the nature of the tribes in the southern villages forbids the existence of religious groups or Salafist movements." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>47</sup> "As for Salafists I don't know anything about them and I don't know the distinction between Salafism and jihadism." (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)



radical religious views,<sup>48</sup> that they are in favor of jihad even if they did not practice it themselves,<sup>49</sup> and that they promote the concepts of jihad and martyrdom that in turn lead some people to consider traveling abroad to fight.<sup>50</sup> However, they were in the minority, and given the broadly positive picture painted by many respondents, Salafist Quietists are not associated with religious radicalism and will continue to be welcome in Tafiela.

*"For Salafist followers, it is very hard for them to join violent extremist orientated groups. Salafists are divided into two divisions, either violent or peaceful. All the Salafists here are peaceful, so it is very hard to join violent extremist orientated groups. The first law for Salafists is to follow their leaders."*

*(Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)*

### **The MB are generally regarded as a barrier to VEO membership and/or participation.**

48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said there is 'strong' or 'some' support for the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in their community, while 30 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to the group. Moreover, 22 percent thought people in their community were neutral toward the party (see Figure 2). Together, the MB and its political wing the IAF have a strong presence in Tafiela, with a number of Qur'an study centers and religious schools operating across the governorate. Consequently, it enjoyed support from the majority of respondents in Tafiela and was largely seen as a moderate religious organization that does not promote radical religious concepts like jihad and Takfir.<sup>51</sup> Some also said that they approved of its attempts to secure constitutional reforms, depicting it as a liberal political grouping, in contrast to "radical" religious groups like Salafists, who do not engage in the political process at all.<sup>52</sup> The MB was praised for its charitable work and was thought to have a positive effect on locals through its Qur'an study centers,<sup>53</sup> which also organize free activities in summer for locals, including holiday camps inside Jordan.<sup>54</sup> Some respondents also thought membership of the MB made locals less likely to join

<sup>48</sup> "Some individuals from the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist Quietist groups are supporters of extremism, though others are against it." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>49</sup> "Salafists are easier to recruit than Muslim Brotherhood members, because their religious views are already radical." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>50</sup> "Salafist movements in general are radical. They promote jihad as a great thing and say you will be rewarded with heaven and virgins, which will create a personal and religious motive which will lead people to fight." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>51</sup> "The Muslim Brotherhood is moderate and religiously non-extremist and they have a moderate religious ideology." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>52</sup> "The Muslim Brotherhood are quite liberal as they participate in political life and lobby for constitutional reforms. The Muslim Brotherhood do not have a problem with elections, but Salafism is more radical and they consider elections as a form of infidelity." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>53</sup> "The Muslim Brotherhood is a charitable organization not political one. The Muslim Brotherhood's ideology is charitable, humanitarian and they have no military wing." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>54</sup> "The Muslim Brotherhood has a building in Tafiela Town in the Wadi Zaid area beside the Prince Hassan School. This building includes the Muslim Brotherhood office, the Islamic Action Front and a Quranic center that is open for



VEOs in Syria.<sup>55</sup> This was because the MB ensures that its members have a deeper understanding of Islamic concepts like jihad and martyrdom, which allows them to question and/or refute the religious arguments of VEO recruiters.<sup>56,57</sup> That said, several respondents questioned whether the MB was a unilateral barrier to violent extremism (VE) and VEO participation and observed that, despite the MB officially opposing jihad in Syria and forbidding its members to go there to fight, some MB members had joined VEOs in Syria.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, others depicted the MB as a watered-down version of VEOs and suggested that its members are on a path leading to radicalization.<sup>59</sup> The MB also attracted criticism for its perceived failure to openly denounce radical groups.<sup>60</sup> Despite this, with its network of Qur'an centers and schools in the governorate the MB is likely to remain relevant and to maintain its prominent position as a charitable organization, though it may struggle to appeal politically to locals in Tafiela.<sup>61</sup>

*"It's harder to recruit someone that belongs to the MB because people from the Brotherhood have a religious background, so their religious foundation is good. If they don't know something they have sheikhs to refer to, so it is very difficult to influence them."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

both men and women to memorize the Qur'an. This center also holds activities in summer such as swimming and trips inside Jordan and all of this is for free." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>55</sup> "I see the Muslim Brotherhood as a barrier because they stop people from joining radical groups." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>56</sup> "People who are members of the Muslim Brotherhood are difficult to radicalize for extremist groups, because they are aware about their religion and know if they are being radicalized." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>57</sup> "It is harder for a person with the Muslim Brotherhood to join ISIS because he is already religiously aware, but for people who don't have such backgrounds it's easier. Not so many people with the Muslim brotherhood went to fight jihad with radical groups. Only few and they had problems with the Muslim Brotherhood in the first place." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

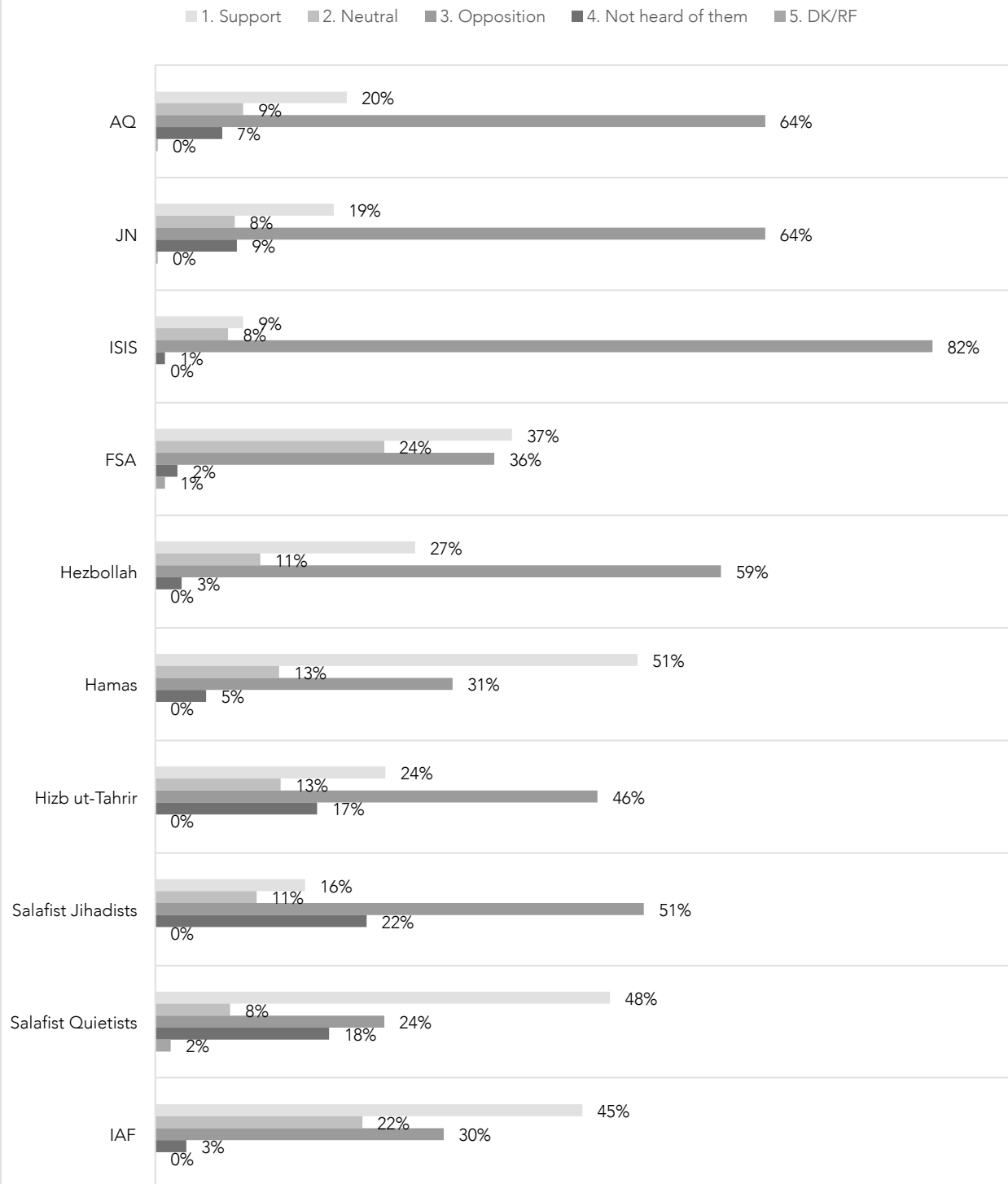
<sup>58</sup> "We hear about people that go to Syria, some of them have a past with the Brotherhood or the Quietists, and then they went to join Daesh or Nusra, even though these groups publically claim they are against Daesh and Nusra." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>59</sup> "We cannot deny that all radical organizations are an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al Qa'ida, Al Nusra and ISIS are considered the second stage of Hamas and the Brotherhood extremism which produced Salafism and then ISIS." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>60</sup> "I blame radicalization in my community on the silence of the big religious groups in Jordan such as the Muslim Brotherhood. They led people to go in the direction of Jihadist Salafism because their leaders remained silent on the issue." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>61</sup> "The MB is widely accepted in Tafiela for the services they provide, but on a political level the people in Tafiela don't support them and don't want to get engaged in politics." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

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



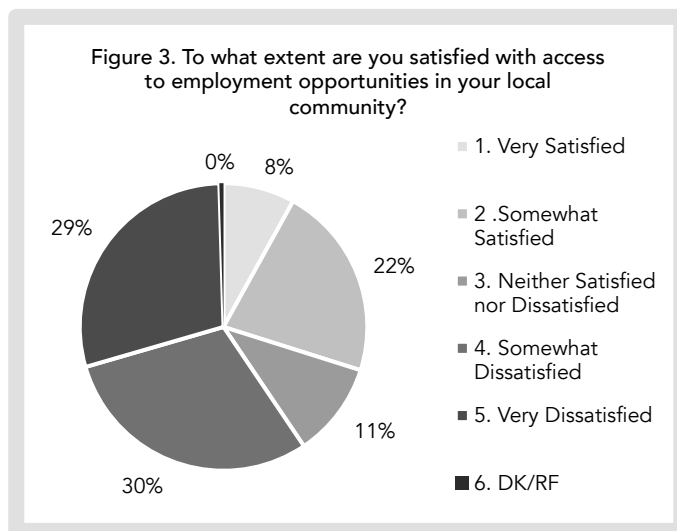
### 3.0 BASIC NEEDS DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

#### 3.1 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is a significant concern in Tafiela, and while the state sector is the main employer in the governorate, it struggles to offer jobs to unemployed locals.

Unemployment was described by most respondents as one of the leading issues in Tafiela. Indeed, 59 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said they were 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied with their access to employment opportunities in their local community, while 30 percent were 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied (see Figure 3). Specific areas of the governorate were identified with high levels of unemployment and economic hardship among locals, particularly Hasa and Qadisias.<sup>62</sup> This was a concern because the unemployed were widely seen as more vulnerable to VEO recruitment than those who work,<sup>63</sup> as inactivity due to a lack of available jobs can lead to boredom, isolationism and resentment against society and the central government, especially among youths.<sup>64</sup>

Though some people have jobs related to tourism, notably through the Dana nature reserve, Tafiela locals often look to the central government to provide jobs for them in the public sector, either in the JAF, police, civil service or the state-owned phosphate works in the governorate. However, such government jobs are often poorly paid, with starting salaries as low as 150 Jordanian dinars (JD) per month, and there is limited availability even for those willing to accept these wages.<sup>65</sup> Lay-offs in local industries have also aggravated the situation. For instance, in January 2016, up to 25 locals from the village of Wadi Alabiyad in the Hasa district were fired from their jobs in the local phosphate plant,



<sup>62</sup> "Qadisias village in the south of Bsaira district suffers from a high unemployment rate in addition to poverty. Many families in Qadisias don't have electricity in their houses since they aren't able to pay the electricity bills to the government and some families have to sell things from their houses just to be able to buy basic things as bread and milk." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>63</sup> "Sometimes a person becomes poor and needs money so they would be attracted to such radical groups. It's easy to change a person for the worse if they are poor and unemployed." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>64</sup> "The lack of work opportunities has killed hope among the youth. There is nothing left to motivate them, and this will destroy them. They either resort to extremism or drugs." (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>65</sup> "Most of youths from Tafiela governorate are educated and they finish their studies with a university degree but then they are unemployed and don't have any kind of work. From time to time they can find work opportunities in the Army or the security sector but the salaries are really bad, starting from only 150 JD per month, and they are not always available." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

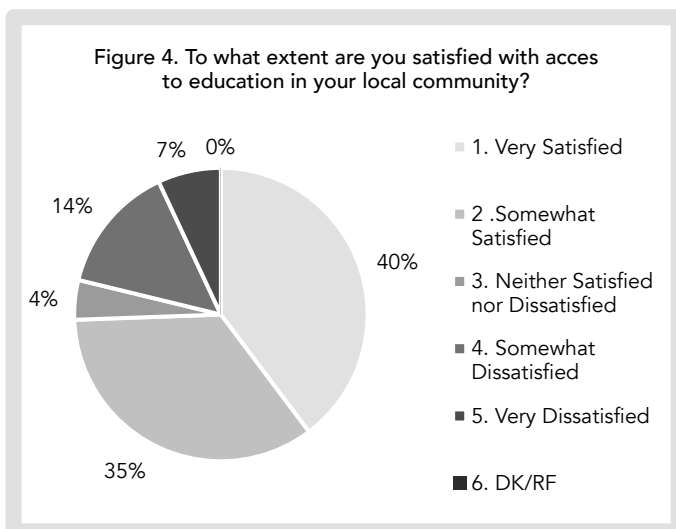
adding to the poor employment prospects that led youths in the same village to protest in 2014.<sup>66</sup> As the public sector seems unable to absorb the excess of unemployed locals, especially recent high school and university graduates, it is clear that unemployment will continue to be a leading grievance in Tafiela. Consequently, some locals may consider joining VEOs as a way to improve their financial situation.

*"I think youths from 18 to 25 are more vulnerable to radicalization because some of them are still students or looking for job. They are energetic and enthusiastic to work. However, when they are unable to find a job and are unemployed, they just stay at home and go to mosques, at which point anyone with a different ideology can influence them."*

(Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

Locals in Tafiela are satisfied with their access to education in the governorate, though many criticize the quality of the educational system.

The majority of respondents were happy with their access to education in Tafiela. Indeed, 75 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said they were 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to education in their local community, while 21 percent were 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 4). Despite having the lowest population of Jordan's governorates, Tafiela has one university, which opened in 2005, ensuring that locals are not obliged to leave to pursue higher education elsewhere in the country. However, many criticized the quality of the education system in their community, especially at the high school level. The high school curriculum attracted the most criticism and was described as outdated and in need of changing. Attempts by the central government to improve it were thought to have failed.<sup>67</sup> Some also complained that the university curriculum contained material that could make students more vulnerable to approaches by radical groups, though other respondents believed that this had been addressed in recent years.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, there was also a perception that the



<sup>66</sup> "In February 2014 youths living in Hasa from the Alhajaia tribe held public demonstrations in Alwadi Alabiyad village to demand that the state find jobs for them. There is a phosphate mine and fertilizer factory which is only three kilometers from the village and in January 2016 about 25 workers from Wadi Alabiyad village were fired under the pretext of restructuring the factory. The government is not able to find jobs for them or these unemployed youths from Hasa." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>67</sup> "Our education is bad and follows an old system that has not changed for years. Jordan has tried to make the education system better but has failed." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>68</sup> "Last year there was a change in the university curriculum. Some of the ideas in the curriculum that used to support extremism were removed." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

main urban centers were favored with the best available teachers at the expense of the smaller villages in the governorate, negatively impacting the studies and future prospects of some children. Local educational establishments in the governorate were criticized for failing to engage with the topic of extremism by organizing courses to ensure students were fully informed about the dangers of radicalization, making them less likely to be vulnerable to VEO recruitment in the future.<sup>69</sup> Taken together, the views of respondents on the education system made clear that, while most children are able to attend state-run schools with relative ease, the quality of state education needs to be improved with a focus on raising teaching standards and addressing the topic of radicalization.

*"Our schools do not pay any attention to their students and they are very bad. Bad teachers are always sent to the outskirts of the governorate and they always try and put the good teachers in the center. As a result, our students are not doing very well in their studies."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

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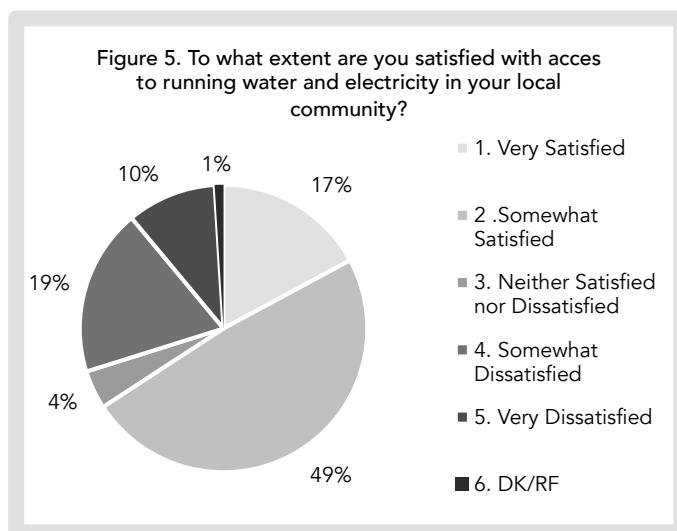
<sup>69</sup> "What they teach in schools, the topics they engage with do not raise awareness among children or students about extremism." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

### 3.2 UTILITIES AND SERVICES

A majority of locals are happy with access to utilities, but they noted that the supply of water and electricity varies across Tafiela.

66 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said that they were 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to running water and electricity in their local community, while 29 percent were 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 5). That said, while the majority of respondents were content with basic service provision in Tafiela, the availability of both water and electricity was shown to vary across the governorate. Moreover, the cost of water and electricity can be a burden for poorer locals. With that in mind, while Tafiela City enjoys a consistent supply of water and electricity, smaller urban areas in the governorate, notably Bsaira and Qadisah, can experience power cuts and breaks in water supplies of up to two weeks in the summer months.<sup>70</sup>

There is also an issue of some locals being unable to pay their utility bills, meaning that those living in poverty can have their water and electricity cut off at any time, causing resentment to the central government. VEOs could capitalize on these sentiments with anti-establishment messaging, possibly increasing propensity toward VE in the governorate.



*"The water supply in Tafiela is considered very good, especially by people who live in Tafiela Town, although in some other areas like Bsaira district and parts of Tafiela district they can face cuts to the water supply for up to two weeks, especially in summer."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

A majority of locals are happy with healthcare provision in their community, even though Tafiela has only one hospital.

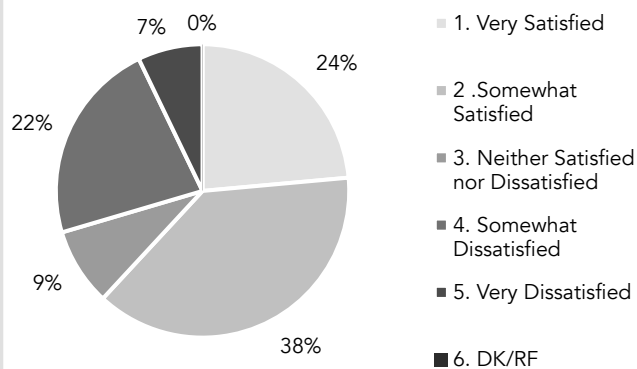
62 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said they were 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to healthcare in their local community, while 29 percent claimed to be 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 6). That said, as a rural governorate with a low population relative to its size, some locals live distant from their closest healthcare provider, which can be inconvenient. The main hospital for the governorate is the government-run Prince Zaid Bin Al Hussein Hospital in Tafiela City, giving the majority

<sup>70</sup> "The electricity supply in Tafiela Town is very good, but in the towns of Bsaira and Qadisah they have regular cuts. Also the problem is that there are a lot of poor families in Tafiela governorate and they are not able to pay the electricity bills, so their houses get cut off." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

of the population easy access to advanced healthcare. Smaller towns and villages like Qadisia are served by one of a network of 21 smaller clinics.<sup>71</sup>

With that in mind, some respondents complained that these local clinics are closed in the evenings, meaning that the only way to access healthcare services at such times is to drive to the main hospital in Tafiela City. Those who expressed criticism of the healthcare system generally focused on the lack of options in terms of hospitals in the governorate and the gap in medical expertise. However, in general, it was clear that healthcare is not a significant grievance in Tafiela, and that locals are adequately served at present, though the system could be improved by additional hospitals and longer opening hours at smaller health clinics.

Figure 6. To what extent are you satisfied with healthcare in your local community?



*"In our area of Qadisia they have only one health center and this center closes every day at 16:00 and so if anyone gets sick at night they have to go all the way to the military hospital in Tafiela Town."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

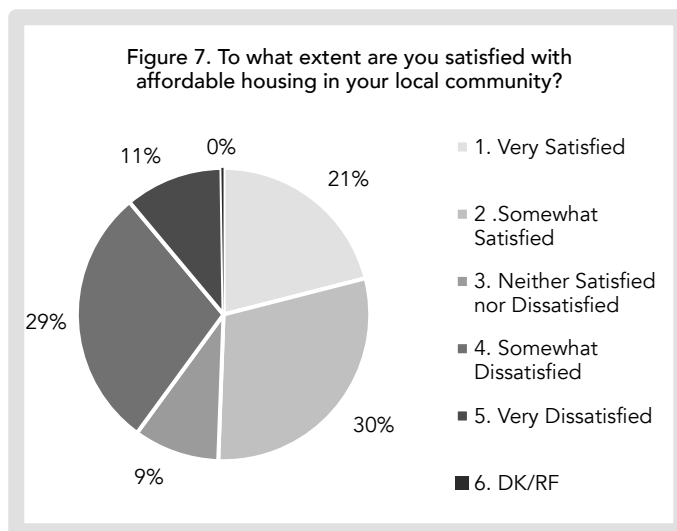
<sup>71</sup> "The health services in Tafiela could be better even though we have 21 health center the governorate, and one hospital, but we don't have any non-military hospitals and lack some medical specialists. For example, there is no dermatologist." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

### 3.3 ECONOMY, HOUSING AND DEBT

Rents for residential properties are increasingly unaffordable for a significant minority of locals in Tafiela.

51 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said they were 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to affordable housing in their local community, while 40 percent were 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 7). With that in mind, though the majority of respondents were happy with the availability of low-cost housing in Tafiela, a significant minority complained that rents have become increasingly unaffordable in the governorate. As a rural governorate where salaries in the public sector can start from as little as 150 JDs per month, rents between 200 and 300 JDs are increasingly beyond the reach of locals. The lack of cheap housing was sometimes blamed on refugees, particularly

Syrians, who were accused of driving up prices in Tafiela and in the rest of Jordan. In the absence of any significant improvement in the economic environment in the governorate, such as through an expansion of privately owned businesses that would improve local employment prospects, the price of housing will continue to present a significant challenge to a sizeable proportion of the governorate's residents.



*"Jordan received the most number of refugees, although it does not have the required resources to host such populations. In the past, you could rent a house for 50 JDs per month, but now the rents have risen up to 200 or 300 JDs. We simply cannot do it for very much longer."*

*(Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

Personal loans are widely available in Tafiela and many locals are burdened with significant debts.

Most respondents identified personal debt as a significant issue for locals in Tafiela and pointed to availability of personal loans as the reason for a spike in borrowing. As such, 75 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that debt is a problem in their community, while 20 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 8).

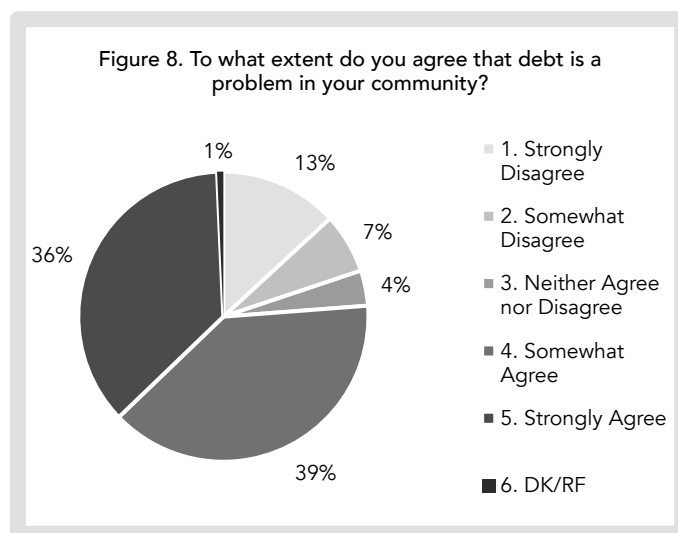
Given the spread of loans available from local and regional bank branches in the governorate, borrowers in Tafiela can obtain money for a variety of purposes, including house and vehicle purchases, though many were felt to put themselves in debt in order to finance their children's university education. Unsecured personal loan interest rates generally start around ten percent per annum in Jordan, meaning



that lower-income households can struggle to repay borrowings.<sup>72</sup> There was some concern that financial problems could lead locals to consider VEO participation, as radical groups in Syria were thought to pay up to 5,000 US dollars (USD) per month – far more than most locals could earn working in Tafiela’s poor job market.<sup>73</sup>

*“When a young man sees his father has struggled to put four children through college with borrowed money because his salary was never enough, and then they cannot find a job after graduation, and realizes that only 10 percent of the people control the state’s economy they feel oppressed. This has nothing to do with religion, it is injustice that creates terrorism.”*

*(Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*



<sup>72</sup> The Arab Bank 2016, ‘Lending Rates’, The Arab Bank, September 19, 2016.

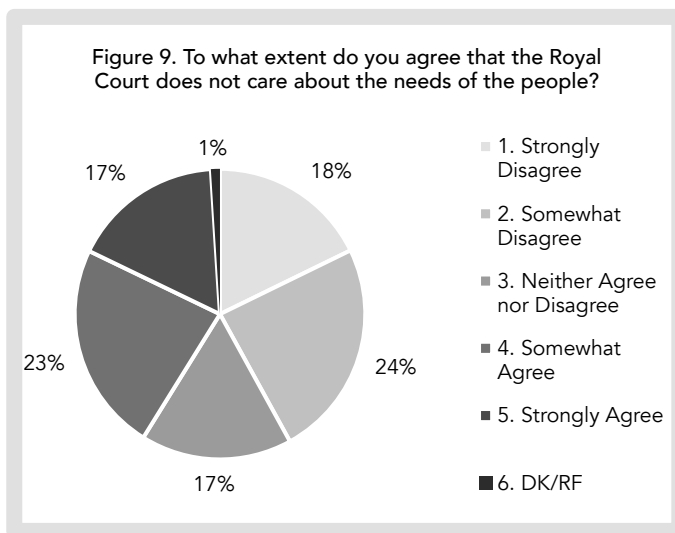
<sup>73</sup> “According to what I understand, fighters with ISIS get something between 2,000 and 5,000 USD every month.”  
(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

## 4.0 GOVERNANCE DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 4.1 CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Support for the Royal Court in Tafiela is linked to the person of the king and tribal ties to the monarchy.

Tafiela is often described as a governorate dominated by East Bank tribal groups that have a strong connection with the Royal Court and are therefore supportive of the king.<sup>74</sup> Many respondents echoed this, emphasizing the relationship between the monarchy and the tribes. Consequently, members of the royal family, including the king and Princes Hashem and Hamzeh, were thought to be sympathetic to the suffering of locals and were praised for their response to the ISIS attack on a Jordanian border post near Rukban that killed six soldiers,<sup>75</sup> as they traveled from Amman to personally convey their condolences to the victims' families.<sup>76</sup> However, the governorate has also played host to protests where protesters have called for King Abdullah II's removal,<sup>77</sup> most notably in November 2012, though these calls are often linked to economic grievances. The 2012 protests, for example, came after a reduction in fuel subsidies that outraged locals in Tafiela.<sup>78</sup> With that in mind, respondents' views on the Royal Court and whether it cares about the needs of the people were mixed. 42 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Royal Court does not care about the needs of the people, while 40 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 9). Support for the Royal Court was generally linked to the person of the king. Abdullah II was complimented for attending the funerals of leading local tribal figures and soldiers killed in terrorist



<sup>74</sup> "Extremism is not a problem in Tafiela because we have a dominant tribal culture, and the tribe is still the safety valve for people. Before being a state, Jordan was ruled by a tribal system, and this system remains a well-respected heritage up to this day, and people are still loyal to their customs and traditions" (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>75</sup> Black, Ian 2016. 'Jordan seals border after suicide attack', Guardian, June 21, 2016.

<sup>76</sup> "We love our country and the royal family like Prince Hashem and Prince Hamzeh and our MP. They all oppose extreme actions like the attack against the guards on the border with Syria. They visited the families of martyrs and they all came from Amman to pay respects. This means a lot to the family of those who died and to us." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>77</sup> "It is not right to say that all Jordanians are happy with the work of the King, the ministers, the security forces, the GID and the army." (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

<sup>78</sup> Paul, Katie 2012. 'In Jordan's Tafiela, demands escalate for King's downfall', Al Monitor, November 16, 2016.

attacks in Jordan in 2016,<sup>79</sup> as well as for leading the campaign against ISIS following Kasasbeh's death.<sup>80</sup> Opposition to the Royal Court was often a result of an impression that Tafiela governorate was neglected by the state,<sup>81</sup> and that it does not receive the level of investment of other areas of the country. Additionally, there was a small minority who argued that the Royal Court held too much power and that Jordan would be better served by a constitutional monarchy; however, few called for dramatic changes to the monarchical system of government. a

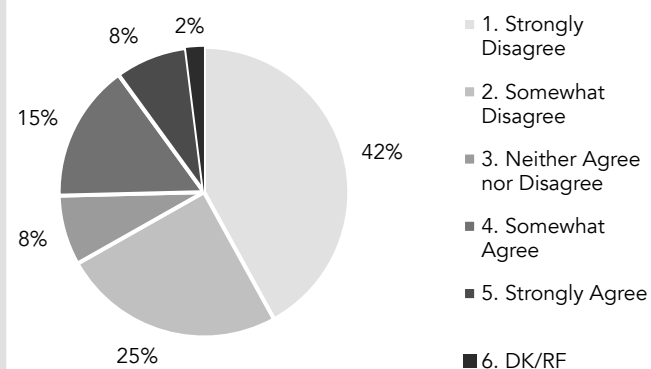
*"The people of Tafiela have a profound loyalty to the king, and this loyalty derives from the tribes' reverence for the king. That is why not many people from Tafiela have joined terrorist groups, because they fear the anger of their tribes, which will consider this an act of treason against the country and the king."*

*(Female, 35, Researcher, Tafiela)*

**Most are confident that the central government is taking all necessary steps to curb radicalization and protect locals from VEOs.**

67 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not want to control VE, while 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 10). With that in mind, the majority of respondents expressed confidence that the central government is taking a proactive approach to limiting the spread of VE in Jordan and is serious in its desire to prevent VEOs from establishing a presence that would enable them to carry out terrorist attacks in Tafiela. Many also stated that they did not personally feel that VEOs constituted a threat to Jordan because of the central government's policies to address possible attacks.<sup>82</sup> Jordan's General Intelligence

Figure 10. To what extent do you agree that the central government does not want to control VE?



<sup>79</sup> "The king is a good leader and I wish everyone was like him. The King provided us with security. He talked about terrorism and was against it and made sure the security services were prepared for it. He also went to the funeral of the soldier who died in Irbid and he cried for him." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>80</sup> "The king participates in funerals and takes revenge for us, like bombing ISIS after Moath. That's what makes us want to keep our regime." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>81</sup> "Tafiela is neglected and the south in general. I don't know why. This is a different story. It has to do with the history of the area." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>82</sup> "I think our government is trying to maintain peace in the country, and that it also works on the humanitarian and military situations at the same time. Maybe two or three incidents happened in Jordan in the last few years, but we haven't faced any real threats." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

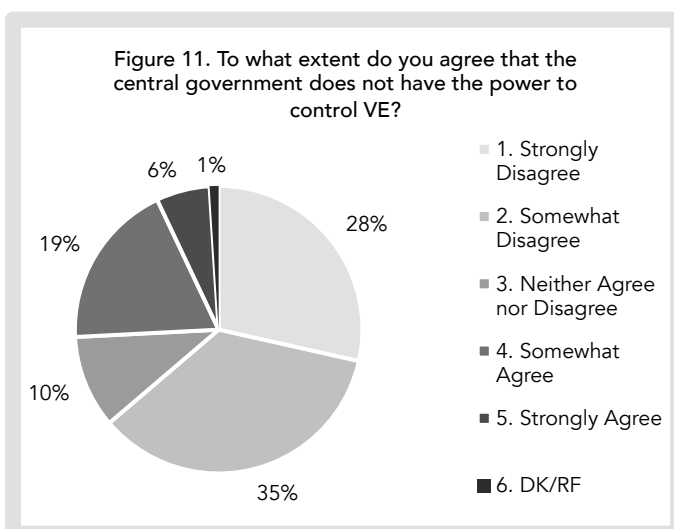
Directorate (GID) is active in Tafiela and is known to have detained and interviewed those locals who returned after fighting in Syria, as well as their relatives when they originally left to fight.<sup>83</sup> The security services also actively monitor social media websites like Facebook, and have been known to shut down pages advocating jihad in Syria,<sup>84</sup> which is part of a broader campaign to crack down on locals calling for jihad, which respondents judged to be effective.<sup>85</sup> Of those respondents who questioned the state's willingness to counter extremism in Tafiela, several argued that certain areas of the governorate – notably Hasa – had been neglected; they complained that no government-sponsored counter extremism programs or workshops had ever been conducted there.<sup>86</sup> However, in general, the central government inspires confidence that it is doing its best to control VEOs both in Tafiela governorate and the rest of Jordan.

*"The Jordanian Government is successful in fighting radical groups, but they should find an outlet for young people, because if this group is discouraged, it would be easy to recruit them. So, from a security point of view, they are successful – but there is always more to do."*

*(Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

Respondents are happy with the security situation in Tafiela, which they attribute to the close-knit nature of local communities in the governorate.

63 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does not have the power to control VE, while 25 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 11). With that in mind, the majority of respondents did not believe that VE is a significant problem in



<sup>83</sup> "He came back from Syria and the intelligence forces kept him for a month and his parents knew nothing about it. After that, he went out of prison and came back to his family, but he had lost his job. He stopped his radical activities and became an introvert and didn't want to communicate with people." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>84</sup> "I do know there were Facebook pages calling for jihad in Syria since these pages kept being shut down by Jordanian Intelligence." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>85</sup> "In the beginning, talking about Jihad in Syria in Jordan was normal. Nowadays it is not permitted to speak about Syria, because it is known that if you do the Jordanian intelligence will bring you in because the government now is taking harsh measures." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>86</sup> "In Hasa I have not seen any example of the government trying to fight extremism. Honestly, they have done nothing, nothing at all." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

Tafiela and thought that the security situation in the governorate was good.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, some stated that they feel much safer in the close-knit community in Tafiela than other parts of Jordan, especially the capital of Amman, which was thought to be too large and full of foreigners to be secure.<sup>88</sup> Central government efforts to identify and apprehend locals who have either been radicalized or are contemplating traveling abroad to fight with VEOs are assisted in Tafiela by a sense of citizen activism, and by the tight-knit nature of the local communities there. Some villages or urban neighborhoods can consist of members of a single family or tribe, making it harder for outsiders to engage with and radicalize locals.<sup>89</sup> Many respondents also stated that if they were suspicious that a friend or relative was considering going to Syria for jihad, they would inform the authorities, or members of their family, who could then pass that information on to security.<sup>90</sup> However, many were nonetheless concerned that unemployment and boredom could push locals, especially youths, to become involved with radical groups as a form of escapism and/or out of frustration at their lack of opportunities in the governorate.<sup>91</sup> As such, they felt that the central government should be doing more to prevent the spread of VEO narratives.<sup>92</sup> They believed that the government should be increasing awareness about religious extremism, in particular through initiatives specifically targeting youths.

*"At the beginning the government was not involved and guys used to go easily, but recently they became more active and guys are coming back from Turkey before even going to Syria. I know two guys who were arrested and they were taken back from Turkey before entering Syria. The police contacted the Turkish officials to get them back. The government can trace any person. Our security is very strong and they can bring back our youths. If our government has serious intentions to combat terrorism they are now doing a good job – but in the beginning they weren't. The government likes to have these people who joined radical groups outside the country."*

*(Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)*

<sup>87</sup> "Our security is strong. We don't have a big issue regarding radicalism and we hope it won't pose a threat in the future. Right now our country is safe and we don't have problems, but we have to be careful and monitor radical people." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>88</sup> "In Amman security is a problem because there are many nationalities. We now have Syrians, Yemenis and Libyans and we don't have security anymore. In the capital city people don't know their neighbors. In Tafiela everybody knows me, but in Amman I feel unsafe." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>89</sup> "The guy who joined JN was from Basira town in Tafiela governorate but I think that his recruitment happened outside Basira district as all the villages consist of one family and it would be hard for a stranger to infiltrate these villages." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>90</sup> "If someone said to me that he wanted to go and fight in Syria I would inform the authorities. I don't have any problem in doing so. I would do it immediately before he had a chance to go anywhere." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>91</sup> "The government fights terrorism through the media and mosques leaders, but these are very traditional ways to appeal to people. We need youth initiatives and to make more jobs for youths." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>92</sup> "I do not feel there are serious awareness campaigns about extremism in Jordan. These ideologies should be fought scientifically, but we rely on television and mosques, which no longer have much impact." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs plays a key role in coordinating the central government's campaign against radicalization in the governorate.

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs plays a central role in disseminating anti-VEO and counter extremist narratives in Tafiela, particularly through the network of mosques in the governorate,<sup>93</sup> and via the state-controlled television channels, which broadcast Friday sermons, ensuring that even locals in remote areas can watch them. Such sermons frequently engage with topics related to radicalization and the importance of fighting extremism in local communities, as well as addressing religious concepts linked to VEOs like Takfir.<sup>94</sup> Other than the Friday sermons the Ministry reiterates its anti-radicalism narrative through televised lectures and classes on religion, ensuring that locals are constantly exposed to material intended to minimize the risk that VEOs will be able to use religious arguments to recruit.<sup>95</sup> The Ministry also focuses on educating imams in the many mosques in the governorate in an effort to ensure that they do not promote a radical theology that might lead locals to contemplate VEO participation.<sup>96</sup> The result of such campaigns is that many locals in Tafiela have directly engaged with central government-led counter-radicalization material, reducing the risk that they will be successfully radicalized and/or recruited by VEOs.<sup>97</sup>

*"Religious leaders play a positive role. When we go to Friday prayers, the sermons are focused on raising awareness about these extremist groups and they show that these groups are destroying ancient civilizations whether in Iraq or Damascus or Jordan. Such sermons are in all the mosques in Tafiela; every mosque I have been to speaks about this."*

*(Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)*

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<sup>93</sup> "Mosques are against radical groups in Tafiela. They always talk about them and how bad terrorism is." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>94</sup> "Friday sermons in mosques talk about obeying the king and avoiding Takfir, extremism and takfirist groups like Al Qa'ida. 90 percent of the mosques in this area address the issue of combatting extremism, especially in Ma'an, Tafiela, Alshaydiah, and Alharith. These sermons are also broadcast on Jordanian television, so people in the villages can see them." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>95</sup> "Television programs did a great job in spreading awareness about radical groups. Jordanian television did that through lectures and religions lessons, which is mostly organized and promoted by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>96</sup> "The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has organized many lectures. They call on religious leaders to teach people and tell them to be careful and call for a balanced ideology. In my opinion, our government is successful in fighting terrorism." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>97</sup> "In my area the government conducts workshops against terrorism. Many people from the government come and speak to us. They do that in youth centers here." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

**Focus: How the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is leading the fight against radical groups in Jordan.**

*"The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is playing a positive role in Tafiela. For example, two months ago they began to conduct workshops focusing on local society and religion. The objective was for all citizens that took part in the workshops to become more aware about religion. The workshops were run by employees from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs – whether they be teachers, university professors, Ministry employees, or people that are trusted by the Ministry. The topics were extremism, terrorism, the basis of Sharia, the rules of Fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence], and raising awareness about religion. The meetings took place in mosques and centers owned by the Ministry."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

**The majority of Tafiela locals are critical of the performance of the local government and cite corruption among government officials as a particular grievance.**

The municipal administration in Tafiela was widely seen as inefficient, corrupt, and unresponsive to the needs of locals in the governorate and was criticized for failure to properly maintain infrastructure.<sup>98</sup> Many respondents stated that the roads in the governorate are in poor condition, both in urban and rural areas, and complained that neither the municipality nor the Ministry of Planning had effected repairs for up to five years despite repeated requests from locals.<sup>99</sup> Local officials were also believed to have done little to address the problem of flooding in the winter months. As a result, 52 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the local government does not care about the needs of the people, while 32 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 12). Corruption was often blamed for the failure of officials to adequately perform their roles. Consequently, 47 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that government officials are corrupt, while a minority of 34 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 13). With that in mind, respondents' opinions of the local government in Tafiela were, on the whole, negative. If left unchecked, VEOs could capitalize on these negative sentiments and thereby increase propensity toward VE in Tafiela.

*"Each winter there are floods that sometimes enter houses, but the residents often don't have the money to repair or rebuild their homes. In addition, the streets are really bad and are in very bad condition, even though the municipality and the Ministry of Planning built them only five years ago."*

<sup>98</sup> "We need the government to build dams in Tafiela to collect the rain water, since there can be a lot of rainfall during winter. This can sometimes cause floods that enter into people's houses and also destroy the streets." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>99</sup> "The roads in the governorate are very bad. You can find broken roads in Hasa and Bsaira district, and even parts of Tafiela town. Residents complain all the time to the municipality about the holes and bumps in the roads, but no one from either the municipality or the Ministry of Planning has carried out any maintenance in Tafiela for the last 5 years." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

(Male, 28, Student, Tafiela)

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

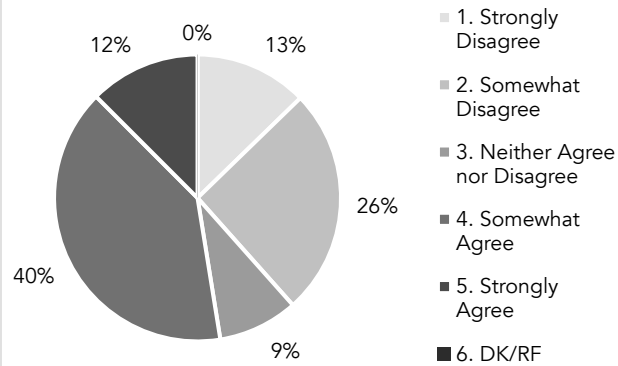
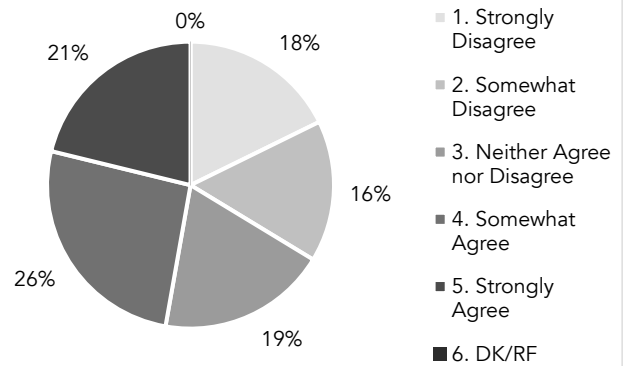


Figure 13. To what extent do you agree that government officials are corrupt?





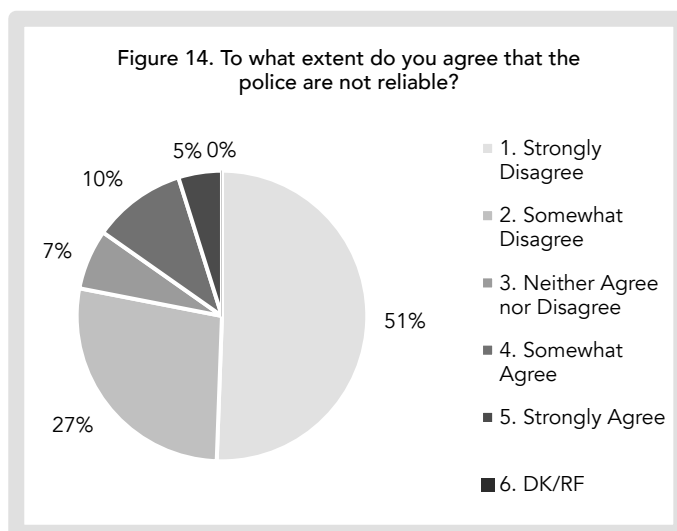
## 4.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT

### Locals praise local police for both their efficiency and fast response times.

78 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that the police are not reliable, while only 15 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed (see Figure 14). With that in mind, the majority of respondents expressed confidence in the local police force in Tafiela, and many commented on the visible police presence on major roads in the governorate, where they were noted to frequently stop drivers to check their IDs. This was thought to help the security situation by making it harder for individuals who might have links to VEOs to travel through the governorate without being stopped and questioned by the police. The three main police stations in the governorate

are in Tafiela town, Hasa and Bsaira. Each department was praised for its fast response times, and officers were described as efficient and attentive to locals’ concerns.<sup>100</sup> That said, some respondents voiced concerns that, should police become violent – even with people suspected of being radicals – propensity toward VE would increase in Tafiela. This was not cited as a particular concern, however, considering that 89 percent of respondents stated that they or their families had never suffered from excessive police authority, while only 11 percent said that they or their families had (see Figure 15).

Despite their overall good opinions, some were concerned that some areas of the governorate were not properly policed, particularly the town of Ein Albadiya, where there has reportedly been a spate of robberies and cases of vandalism. This town has no police station. Respondents believed that, if one were opened there, it is likely that crime would be significantly reduced.



*“Now, we are suffering on the main road since there is a police patrol that searches you and asks for your identity every two kilometers. I don’t know if they are trying to scare the people or if they are just being cautious.”*

*(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)*

<sup>100</sup> “The police in Tafiela are very good. They maintain security and work effectively. There are police cars at intersections on the main roads to check drivers’ IDs, especially during the night. They are also very active when it comes to reporting crimes or issues, so if you have a problem and call the police they will come to your house within a maximum of five minutes.” (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

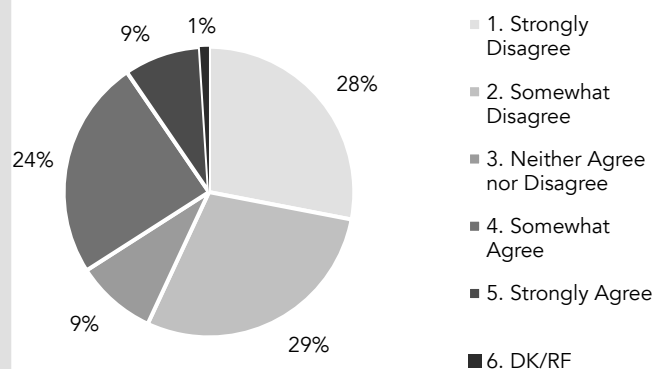
Figure 15. Have you or your family directly suffered from excessive police authority?



### The civil courts in Tafiela are considered equitable and convenient for locals.

Tafiela has a Court of First Instance, which is limited to handing down a sentence of one week or less, or a fine not exceeding 10 JD, with two judges adjudicating on criminal matters and one on civil matters. This means serious cases must be tried in Amman. Unlike some other governorates, Tafiela's civil courts are able to directly issue documents proving that the holder has no criminal record, which are necessary to apply for a job and to hire accommodation in the governorate. The alternative would be to drive to Amman to acquire these documents. Despite this, however, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the civil court system in the Tafiela, emphasizing its overall convenience and even-handed nature in dealing with cases. Accordingly, 57 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the civil courts in Jordan are not effective, while 33 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. To what extent do you agree that civil courts in Jordan are not effective?



*"The court system operates very well in Tafiela governorate, and the law of courts is applied to everyone regardless of their influence. The courts in Tafiela are better than in other governorates, as we have a section for criminal investigations and a department that issues documents to show people do not have a criminal record. Without this, people cannot get a job. In other places people have to travel all the way to Amman to get this."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

## The JAF recruits heavily in Tafiela and is considered a vital barrier to VEO attacks in Jordan.

The vast majority of respondents held positive views of JAF as an organization, and believed the organization to be a vital barrier to VE in the governorate. Accordingly, 87 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the JAF lack the ability to keep Jordan safe, while only nine percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 17). The behavior of individual members of the JAF also attracted praise. 82 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the JAF do not behave in a respectful way, while 10 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 18). Tafiela's population is dominated by tribal groups with strong ties to the monarchy in Jordan. As a result, the JAF, being an extension of the central government's security apparatus, recruits heavily in the governorate, ensuring that many locals have either served in the JAF themselves or have friends and family in the military. This serves to enhance the bond between locals and the JAF and reinforces positive perceptions of the Jordanian military in the governorate. Local support for the JAF has been bolstered by the government media, which reportedly encourages solidarity with the JAF.

*"Through the media like television and the newspapers, I can see the government is fighting terrorism. All Jordanian channels talk about this and the newspapers as well. So the government is doing a good job and I don't think these groups can affect us. Our government is successful in spreading awareness. The way they portrayed the recent events made us feel solidarity with the soldiers, and it was well done. They appeal to people's emotions."*

*(Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)*

Figure 17. To what extent do you agree that the JAF lack the ability to keep Jordan safe?

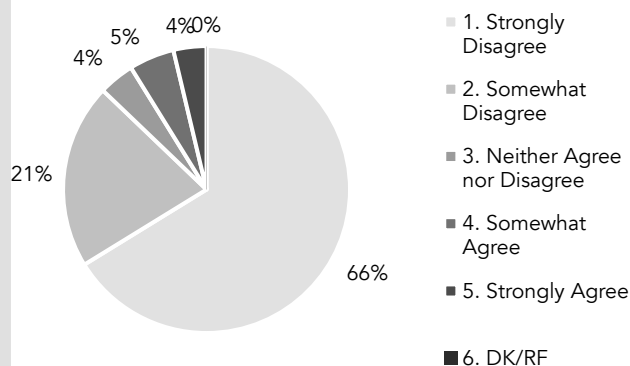
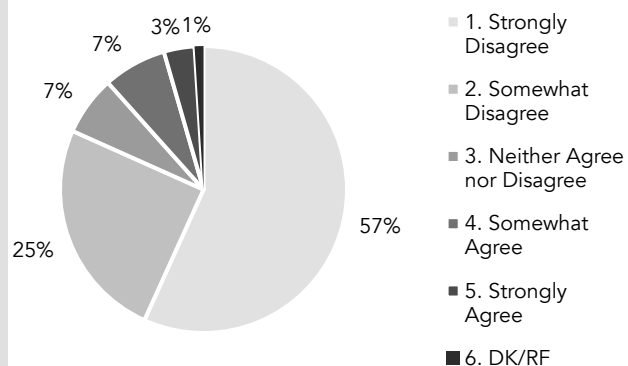


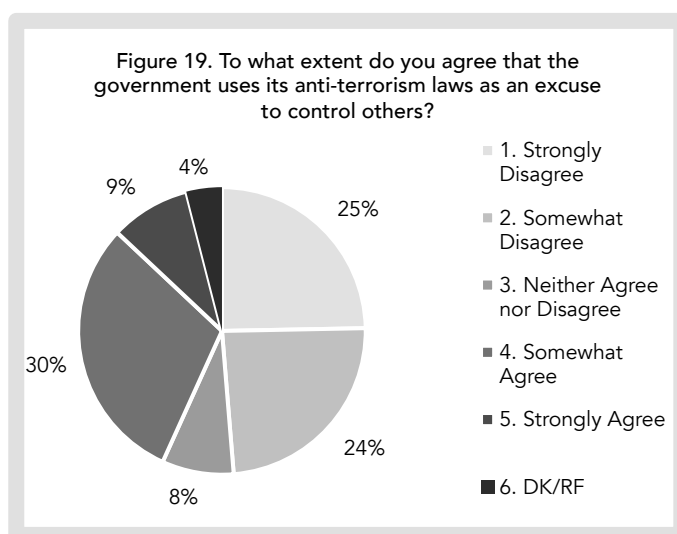
Figure 18. To what extent do you agree that the JAF do not behave in a respectful way?



### 4.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Though a minority has concerns that their civil liberties are threatened by the central government, most are content with the status quo and prioritize physical over legal security.

The central government's legal framework for countering terrorism and VEO activity in the country was seen as acceptable by the majority of respondents. Accordingly, many saw preventing attacks in the country as more important than preserving civil liberties.<sup>101</sup> This attitude also extended to anti-terrorism laws passed by the central government, which international human rights organizations have condemned as injurious to civil freedoms in the country.<sup>102</sup> 49 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government uses its anti-terrorism laws as a way to control others, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 19). That said, Jordan's anti-terror laws



were not without their detractors; however, respondents generally felt that they do not affect civil liberties in the country. This was reflected in the 72 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms, while only 18 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 20).

All that said, there was some concern that anti-terror laws have been used specifically to control the press in Jordan. Indeed, a significant minority of respondents believed the domestic press to be subject to excessive government censorship. Despite this, however, a greater proportion of Tafiela GQ respondents (44 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government interferes too much in the Jordanian press, while 41 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 21). Taken as a whole, these findings indicate that, while some respondents in Tafiela have concerns about actual or potential government suppression of their civil liberties, the majority is content that the central government will not use legislation to remove or reduce their civil freedoms.

*"We have democracy here in Jordan so this is not a reason why people would go to fight in Syria. People are free here to say what they want. I heard people curse the king many times and they were never arrested. This is not necessarily bad. In fact, it may be what saves us from radical groups."*

*(Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)*

<sup>101</sup> "Jordan is working seriously to combat terrorism, especially inside Jordan, because these radical groups see Jordan as a target." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>102</sup> Human Rights Watch 2014. 'Jordan: Terrorism amendments threaten rights', HRW, May 14, 2014.

Figure 20. To what extent do you agree that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms?

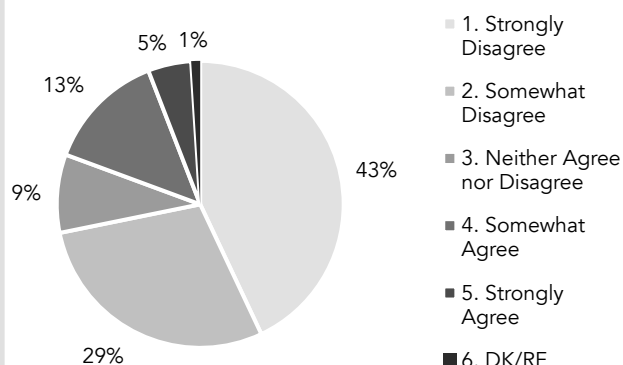
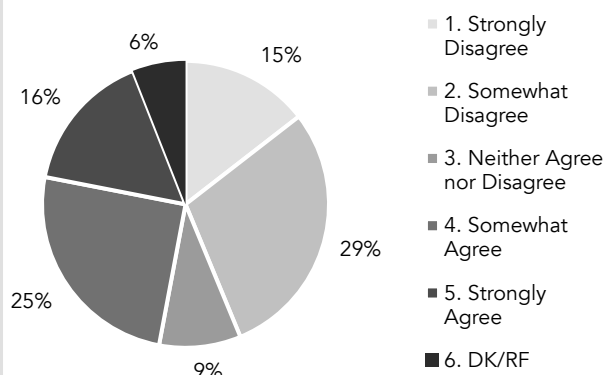


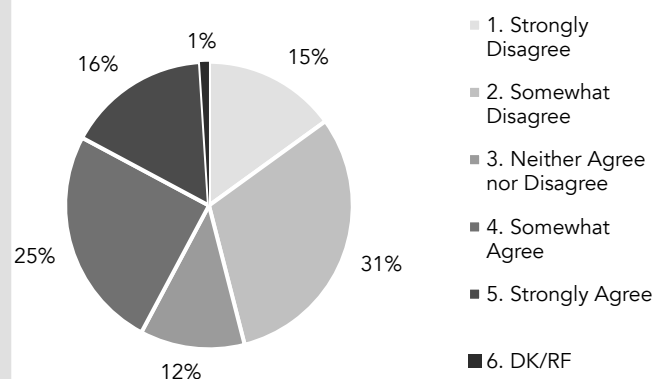
Figure 21. To what extent do you agree that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press?



### The majority believes that there is political freedom in Tafiela.

While some respondents expressed grievances against the central and local governments – including but not limited to the poor quality of local infrastructure and the lack of jobs for youths – many thought that most civil rights of citizens have been preserved. Indeed, 46 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that the government interferes too much in controlling political parties, while 41 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that this was the case (see Figure 22). That said, a sizeable minority of respondents in Tafiela believed that political expression in Jordan is limited,<sup>103</sup> and that the government exerts excessive control over political organizations.<sup>104</sup> However, many

Figure 22. To what extent do you agree that the government interferes too much in controlling political parties?



<sup>103</sup> “The situation we face socially, economically and politically makes Jordan a breeding ground for these groups in Jordan. We have a political problem as there is a lack of freedom of expression. Real democracy doesn’t exist here.” (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

<sup>104</sup> “The Muslim Brotherhood was never in power. The government is always in control, and it uses the method of divide and conquer. Sometimes they used the Islamists to beat the communists, and afterwards all the communists and leftists were oppressed and jailed, and then they brought the liberals to beat the Muslims and so on and so forth.” (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

also argued that, though this was not an ideal situation, it was preferable to a state of civil conflict like that in Syria.<sup>105</sup> To this end, the instability and violence in Syria was often presented as a likely alternative if Jordanians were to press for greater political freedom, making demonstrations in favor of enhanced political freedoms unlikely in Tafiela. Given quantitative data relating to the government's control of political parties, it is clear that locals are divided on whether this is good for the country or not.

*"The laws and regulations prevent the establishment of political parties that are able to effectively oppose the government. This means that young people cannot find the opportunity to express themselves and participate politically, and many opposition parties, whether we agree or don't agree with them, are banned."*

*(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)*

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<sup>105</sup> "People in Tafiela understand that we do not want Jordan to become like Syria. We all know that the people are the ones suffering there – it is the children, the girls, the youths, the women, and the sheikhs that are being killed there." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

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## 5.0 PSYCHOSOCIAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 5.1 LOCUS OF CONTROL

Many in Tafiela are frustrated with the central government and do not believe that it is addressing local issues, particularly unemployment.

The majority of respondents did not think that the central government is responsive to the needs of locals in Tafiela. In particular, they believed that issues like unemployment have gone unaddressed for too long, possibly increasing propensity toward VE, especially among youth, and they cited the demonstrations that took place around the time of the Arab Spring as proof of the fact.<sup>106</sup> However, others argued that the very fact that Jordan did not experience a revolution as other Arab countries did is proof that Jordanians were more concerned about preserving Jordan's historic stability than forcing action from an unresponsive central government.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, economic concerns were prominent in the interviews, and there was widespread concern in Tafiela in mid-2016 that Prime Minister Hani Al Mulki might increase prices of staples like bread and/or services like water and electricity. This was the case despite public denials in July 2016 that price rises were being considered by the government.<sup>108</sup> The depth of frustration with the unreceptive nature of the authorities can be seen in the 47 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to them, despite the 43 percent who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 23). This also demonstrates frustration with a democratic system in which participation in elections rarely secures the investment locals demand. A significant minority (44 percent) of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that there is no point voting, as it doesn't change anything, while 50 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 24). Given the weak economy in Tafiela and the high rate of unemployment, economic concerns will remain a significant element governing popular perceptions of, and attitudes to, the central government.

*"If you pay attention to what is being said in the streets, and you conducted a study in the streets, you would see everyone talking about the rise in basic prices that Al Mulki could order. People on every street are talking about these price rises and they are very concerned."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

<sup>106</sup> Paul, Katie 2012. 'In Jordan's Tafiela, demands escalate for King's downfall', Al Monitor, November 16, 2016.

<sup>107</sup> "I think people have become more concerned about what is happening outside Jordan. There are fewer and fewer demonstrations here because people are afraid the situation would become like Syria. They don't want things to turn out this way, so they lie low." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>108</sup> Jordan Times 2016. 'Economy is "on right track" – Mulki', Jordan Times, July 16, 2016.

Figure 23. To what extent do you agree that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to you?

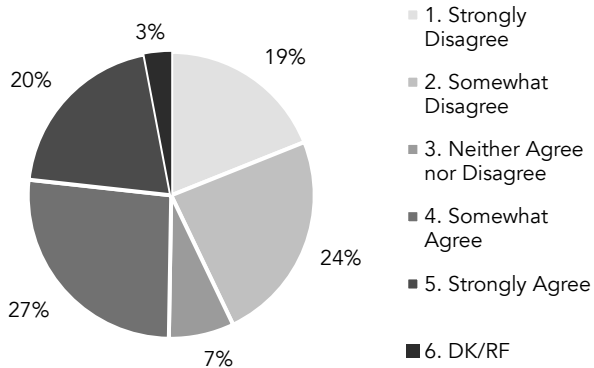
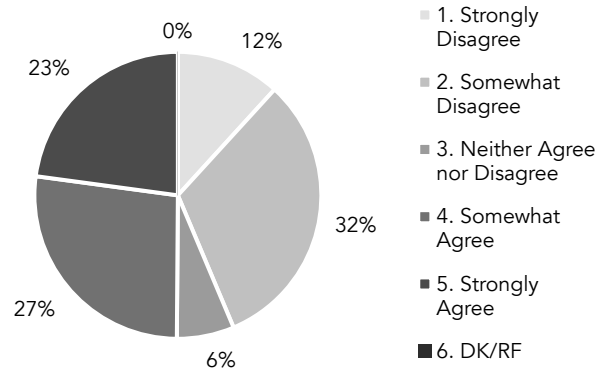


Figure 24. To what extent do you agree that you do not feel that there is a point in voting, as it doesn't change anything?

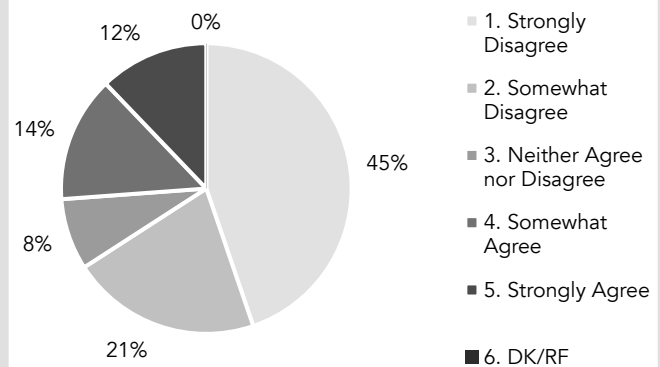


A minority of locals, particularly youths, feel isolated from their communities, making them vulnerable to VEO narratives.

Many respondents were concerned that some in Tafiela – particularly young males – feel increasing estranged from society. This was felt to increase their vulnerability to VEO propaganda that is geared toward empowering youth and giving them a sense of purpose in life outside of their home communities. Though the majority (66 percent) of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that they do not feel part of their community, a significant minority of 26 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 25). Unemployment was considered a significant factor leading youth to disengage from society, as well as major factor affecting both high school and university graduates in the governorate, who are often unable to find work upon graduation.<sup>109</sup> The poverty resulting from joblessness was thought to prevent such youth from leading active and healthy social lives.

Moreover, some respondents argued that a lack of areas where youth can gather in Tafiela – whether it be in urban, suburban or rural areas – has caused youth to distance themselves from their peers. The lack of youth clubs, sports clubs and cafés is reportedly more pronounced in economically deprived districts like Bsaira and Hasa than in urban centers like Tafiela City. Respondents called upon the central government to address this imbalance by simultaneously creating jobs and much-needed youth centers.

Figure 25. To what extent do you agree that you do not feel part of your community?



<sup>109</sup> "Some guys graduate from college but they don't have money and are at home all the time. This causes them to hate their society." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

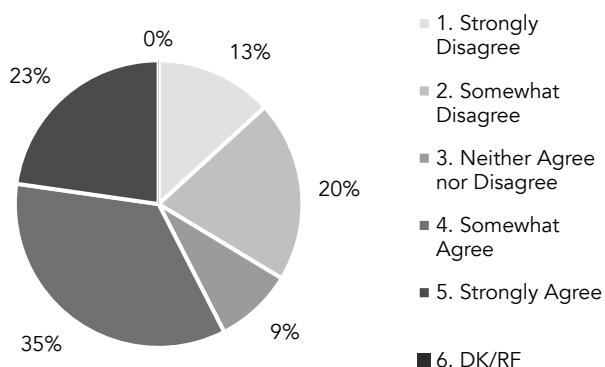


They claimed that the benefits of acting quickly on this issue are many. More domestic investment in the welfare of youth could reduce propensity toward VE among local youth, but it could also address social issues afflicting the governorate – issues like drug abuse and rising crime.

**Locals think that, if young men do not feel as though they are adequately rewarded in their home communities, they may join VEOs in order to be rewarded in heaven when they die.**

There was a sense that even those locals who have been able to find jobs are not adequately rewarded. This is supported by quantitative data, which states that 58 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the people who work the hardest are never rewarded, while 33 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 26). Depression caused by isolation, an inability to find employment and a sense of the injustice of their situation can lead to suicidal tendencies among youth. In such cases, respondents feared they could be drawn by the prospect of martyrdom to fight for a VEO in Syria. As Islam explicitly forbids suicide, jihad in Syria and/or Iraq offers a way for locals to end their lives without contravening their religion.<sup>110</sup> In fact, social marginalization of any kind increased individuals' vulnerability to radicalization;<sup>111</sup> however, outside of the youth population, social marginalization was not considered a significant problem, which many attributed to the close-knit, tribal society in Tafiela.<sup>112</sup>

Figure 26. To what extent do you agree that the people who work the hardest are never rewarded the most?



*"I know a guy who studied business and finished university, but he ended up with a radical group. Before he went to Syria he had no political activities and he was a normal guy from the middle class. For three months, the guy stayed at home after graduation. When he was still at university he used to go out and socialize. His parents didn't notice he became isolated after graduation because there are no places for young people to socialize in the north of Tafiela. Added to this was his economic situation, which was bad as he was unemployed."*

*(Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)*

<sup>110</sup> "Some people don't care about death or life, or find death to be more merciful. Therefore, they want to die a martyr and they convince themselves that fighting in Syria is the best way to do this." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

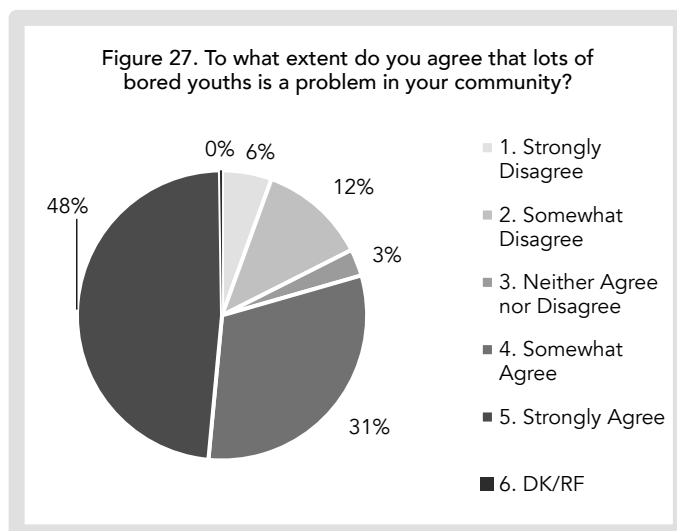
<sup>111</sup> "The people who can be manipulated the most easily by extreme groups are those who are social outcasts and don't have any ambition or social awareness." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>112</sup> "Social marginalization is not a big issue in our rural areas, but the poisonous ideas radical groups try to plant is a big issue in the whole region." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

Locals believe that bored youths is a problem in their community, and one that many increase propensity toward VE in the long run.

Most respondents acknowledged that the number of bored youths in their community is a significant issue in Tafiela and saw this problem as the result of a lack of job opportunities across the governorate. To that end, they were concerned that youths are more vulnerable to radicalization than if they had ways to occupy themselves.<sup>113</sup> Bored youths can become frustrated, as well as isolated from their peers, making them more exposed to VEO recruitment.<sup>114</sup> Respondents from Hasa were especially concerned about the lack of diversions for youths there and complained that there was not one social club or sports club in a neighborhood of 10,000 people.<sup>115</sup> There was

also concern that many areas of Tafiela lacked any social spaces at all for youths to congregate, like cafés or restaurants, meaning that they had little choice but to remain at home or gather in small groups near highways or on street corners.<sup>116</sup> As such, 79 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that bored youths is a problem in their community, while only 18 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed (see Figure 27). With that in mind, the central government has been involved in some initiatives to engage with youths and to prevent them from becoming involved with radical groups, notably through the All Jordan Youth Commission (AJYC), a body set up by the King Abdullah Fund for Development. The AJYC organizes events in Tafiela governorate and across the country, targeting youths and inviting them to engage with the topics of terrorism and radicalization.<sup>117</sup> One respondent from Tafiela observed that at



<sup>113</sup> “I think teenagers between 15 and 18 years old and also young men between 20 and 30 are most at risk of joining radical groups, because men of this age want to prove themselves by going on jihad.” (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>114</sup> “Jobless people and youths between 18 and 24 years old are most at risk of radicalization. They don’t have social lives. Also, males are more free to travel so they join radical groups more than girls.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>115</sup> “I want to tell you about my area: Hasa has 10,000 residents and it is poor. We have a population that is 60 percent youth, but we don’t have any cultural clubs or athletic clubs. I would say that 90 percent of their time is free time, so that means they are thirsty for anything to do. That’s not good, in my opinion.” (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>116</sup> “There is nothing for young people here. What we need are youth centers that hold lectures and seminars and trips, but we don’t have anyone that is doing that. It would be good if we had even cafés and restaurants, but we don’t have anything. People just hang out by the desert road or in coffee shops. That’s no way to live.” (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>117</sup> “The government conducts workshops and debates. The day before yesterday, I attended a workshop against terrorism and it was good session organized by the All Jordan Youth Council for youths aged between 18 to 25, also, the government representative was a guest at that event. It was about terrorism, its effects and how we should be all fight terrorism together under the Hashemite’s leadership. 250 young people joined the initiative, participated in the event and shared their thoughts and agreed that those are violent extremist groups.” (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

least seven such events had been held at his local youth development center.<sup>118</sup> A branch of the national Princess Basma Youth Resource Center is also responsible for arranging events for youths in Tafiela, but it was clear that respondents believed more should be done to engage with youths across the governorate.

*"Youths in Tafiela usually feel neglected. Tafiela has the biggest companies in the country involved with potassium and phosphates. The land is also very fertile. But youths here feel like they are not getting any benefit from this. There are no development programs for them."*

*(Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)*

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<sup>118</sup> "All the youth clubs did lectures about extremist ideas and extremist thinking. At our development center, we organized seven or eight lectures for school students and the local community and social activists. Those activities were government-funded." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

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## 5.2 RELIGIOUS VALUES, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

The majority in Tafiela sees religion as a personal choice and accepts that religious minorities are a valuable part of society.

The majority of respondents in Tafiela denied that religious segregation is a problem in their community. And while they acknowledged that most of the population of the governorate is Sunni Muslim, they insisted that religious minorities are seen as fully integrated into society.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, they claimed that the Christian minority in particular has successfully coexisted with the Muslim majority since the creation of the Jordanian state. This is reflected by quantitative data, which states that, while 25 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, the majority (66 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims (see Figure 28). The concept of freedom of religion was also strongly endorsed by most respondents, many of whom depicted an individual's right to observe his or her own religion as an important indicator of the balanced nature of society in Tafiela. To this end, 71 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that people should be free to practice whatever religion they choose, while 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 29). These findings demonstrate that, while most respondents in Tafiela may be observant Muslims, they also have a balanced attitude to, and respect for, religious minorities in the governorate.

*"The Christians are a part of our society, they were here in Jordan before us, for 100 years, we couldn't convince them to become Muslims, so we should treat them based on the saying "you have your religion and I have mine"."*

*(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)*

Figure 28. To what extent do you think that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims?

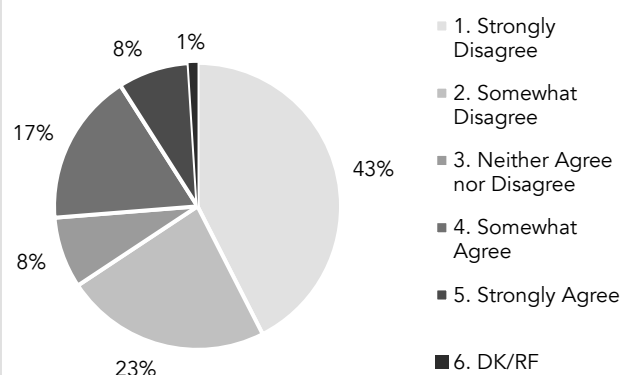
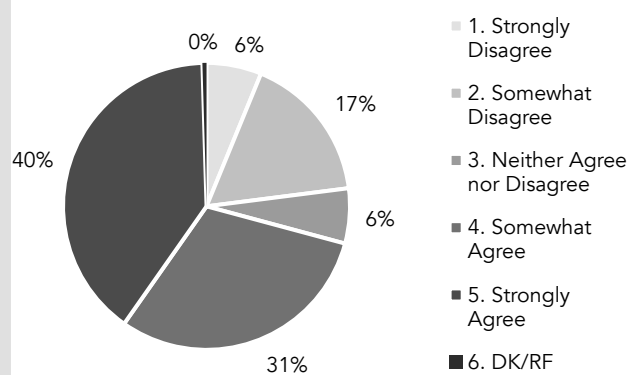


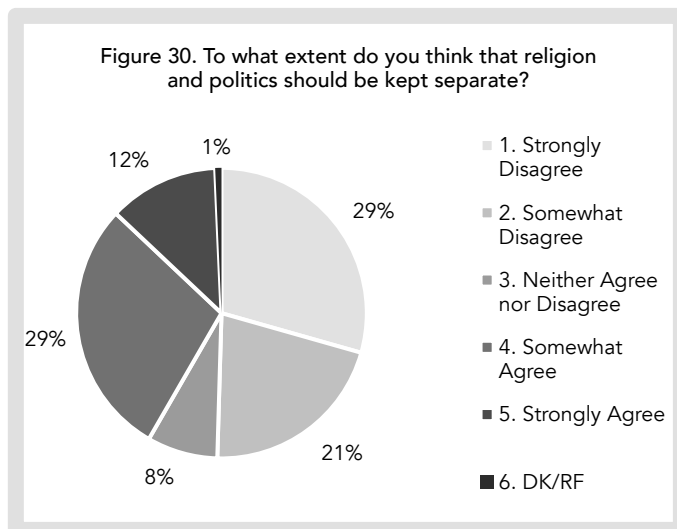
Figure 29. To what extent do you think that all people should be free to practice whatever religion they choose?



<sup>119</sup> "Most of the people here are Sunni, but we all respect religious minorities. They are completely integrated into Jordanian society, so there is no difference between us and them." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

The majority in Tafiela believes religion should play a role in governance in Jordan, but many worry that state-employed religious figures do not possess the necessary influence to govern.

Respondents were divided on whether religion should play a role in the running of the country, with a slight majority believing that religion is inseparable from proper governance. Indeed, a majority of 50 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that religion and politics should be kept separate, while 41 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 30). That said, some believed that established religious figures (i.e. those employed by the state) do not have the requisite influence to run the country, unlike independent religious leaders. For example, one respondent identified the JAF's top cleric, Mufti of the Armed Forces Ahmed Hlayyel, as a potential figurehead for an anti-extremism campaign, but thought his appeal might be undermined by his official position. This finding is evidence of the importance of religion to the governorate's Sunni Muslim majority on both a personal and a national level, and reinforces the importance that many locals attach to the central government having religious legitimacy. However, it should not be taken to mean that respondents hold radical views of governance. To say so would be a gross mischaracterization of locals' religious and political views.



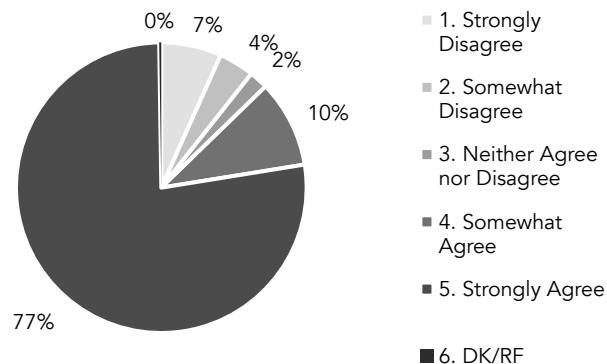
*"The Mufti of the armed forces, Ahmed Hlayyel, rejected extremism. Ahmed Hlayyel is very popular, but people prefer that religion is separate from the state. He used to deliver the official state viewpoint with a religious appearance through religious sermons and religious programs on television."*

*(Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)*

Respondents in Tafiela reject the idea that Islam is compatible with killing, particularly the killing of fellow Muslims.

The vast majority of respondents rejected the assertion that Islam permits violence, particularly the killing of other people, and many were especially critical of the idea that Muslims could be justified in killing their Muslim brothers.<sup>120</sup> Consequently, 87 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that Islam does not allow the killing of other people, while only 11 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed (see Figure 31). Many associated the issue of intra-Muslim conflict, and indeed the killing of civilians regardless of their sect, with VEOs, particularly ISIS and JN, though ISIS was mainly criticized for killing captives where JN was unpopular for engaging in armed conflict with other groups in Syria. Some respondents argued that, while Muslim locals in Tafiela may agree with the radical ideologies of VEOs in theory, they disagree in practice.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, given the continued use of extreme violence by ISIS, and to a lesser extent JN, including the gruesome executions of Muslims and religious minorities, the rejection of any link between Islam and killing by the vast majority of respondents indicates that VEOs will struggle to radicalize and/or recruit in Tafiela both at present and in the future.

Figure 31. To what extent do you think that Islam does not allow the killing of other people?



*“Al Nusra and ISIS and Qa’ida are similar in that they don’t have a religion. They don’t represent Islam, even if they say otherwise. They are all alike with their killing and their radicalism. They kill Muslims and this is not Islam.”*

*(Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)*

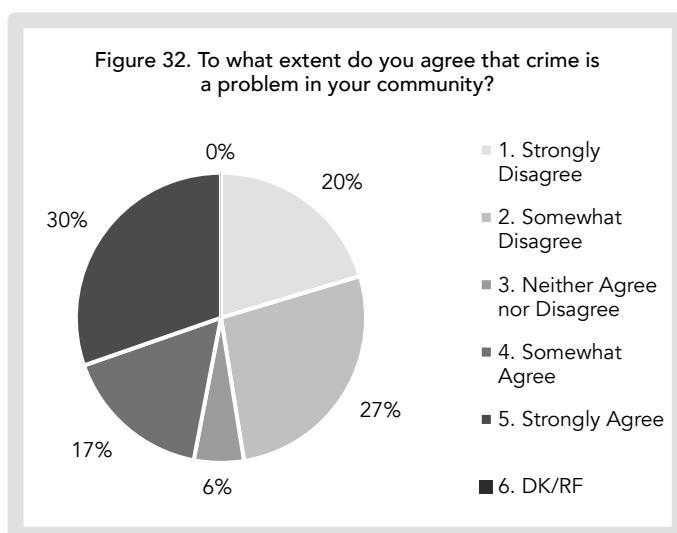
<sup>120</sup> “Islam is a humane religion. The Qur’an is clear that Muslims should take care of one other and respect one another. There is a saying that ‘I will break down the Ka’ba one stone at a time if Muslim brothers kill each other’.” (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>121</sup> “ISIS, Al Nusra, Al Qa’ida and regular people have one thing in common and that is the Islamic identity, but how they apply Islam, this is where they differ.” (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

### 5.3 EXPOSURE TO CRIME AND CONFLICT

Crime is considered a greater problem in the south of the governorate than elsewhere, due to a weak police presence.

The majority of respondents did not identify crime as a significant problem in their community. Moreover, they were complimentary of the role played by police officers, who were seen as vital to Jordan's fight against VE. That said, some complained that their local area suffered from a lack of police coverage, leading to crimes including robbery and vandalism. This was thought to be an issue in the villages and small towns in the south of the governorate, especially those that did not have a police station, with Ein Albaiyda identified by several respondents as the most lawless area of the governorate. As such, 47 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that crime is a problem in their community, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 32). Despite a sizeable minority of respondents stating that they saw crime as a problem in their community, there was a gulf between those who were concerned about crime and those who stated that they had actually experienced it in their community. Indeed, while 85 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents stated that they or their family had never directly suffered from crime, only 15 percent said that they or their family had (see Figure 33).



*"Ein Albaiyda is a town in the south of Tafiela governorate, and there have been many examples of shops there being robbed and also at least four cars have been set on fire during the night outside their owners' houses there. This is because they don't have a police station in the town and there are no police patrols at night."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

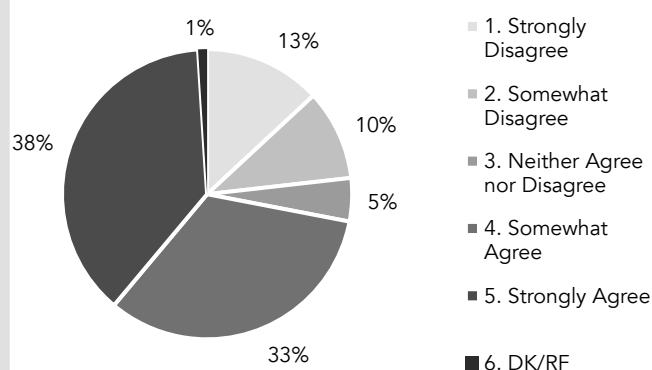
Figure 33. Have you or your family directly suffered from crime?



The availability and widespread use of drugs in Tafiela is considered a leading social issue in the governorate, and one that disproportionately affects youths.

Drug abuse was described as a major social issue in Tafiela, and one that was thought to disproportionately affect youths in the governorate. Indeed, 71 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that drugs abuse is a problem in their community, while 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 34). With that in mind, drug use and addiction were often linked to high levels of unemployment and a lack of job opportunities for high school and university graduates. This was particularly apparent in more economically deprived parts of the governorate, notably Hasa and Qadisias.<sup>122</sup> Respondents claimed that youths who are unable to find work

Figure 34. To what extent do you agree that drug abuse is a problem in your community?



upon leaving school are at risk of boredom, inactivity and depression, all of which can be, at least in some way, alleviated by drug use. These drug-addicted youth were considered especially vulnerable to radicalization and eventual VEO recruitment, not least because such groups offer addicts a way to reform their lives and to find a sense of purpose,<sup>123</sup> though others doubted that even drug and alcohol problems could make VEOs attractive to locals. The central government has tried to address the issue of drug use in Tafiela and has sponsored a number of workshops in the governorate to raise awareness about the

<sup>122</sup> "A big problem in Qadisias Village is the widespread abuse of chemical drugs, and this is mainly an issue with youths and men." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>123</sup> "Don't forget the offers that radical recruiters make concerning virgins and heaven. These are all very convincing for someone that is a drug user and for them this offers a way to reform themselves by joining these groups." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)



problem and to discourage locals, especially youths, from taking drugs.<sup>124</sup> However, these programs appear to have had only a limited impact on levels of drug abuse in Tafiela.

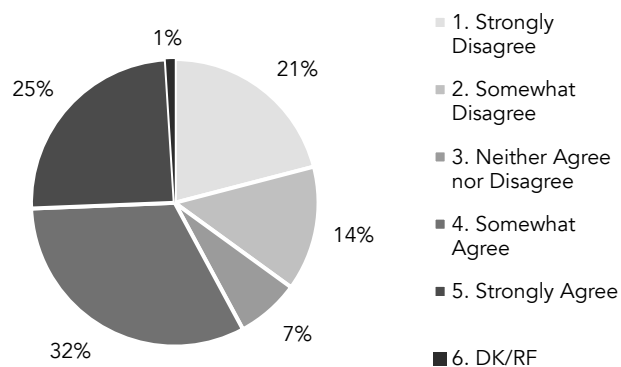
*"People can be dragged into taking drugs or drinking alcohol, but they would not think about going to join these violent, radical groups. This is because the people in Tafiela think very differently to them, even if they have a problem with drugs and alcohol."*

*(Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)*

The use and sale of illegal weapons is a relatively minor issue in Tafiela but is often associated with the drug trade.

The majority of respondents did not see the presence of illegal weapons as a serious concern in Tafiela. Indeed, while 57 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the availability of weapons is a problem in their community, 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 35). That said, respondents often linked the issues of drugs and unlicensed weapons in Tafiela and believed that drug users – and especially youths – are also often involved in the illegal sale of weapons. The public misuse of weapons was commonly associated with 'festive firing' incidents at weddings, where wedding guests – who are often of tribal origins in Tafiela – shoot into the air in celebration. Such firing can cause accidental injuries and/or deaths, and has been significantly reduced in Tafiela and across Jordan by a law prohibiting such behavior in 2010. The penalties for those who violate the law can include fines and time in jail, and stronger enforcement countrywide has seen a sharp reduction in the number of deaths and injuries.

Figure 35. To what extent do you agree that the availability of weapons is a problem in your community?



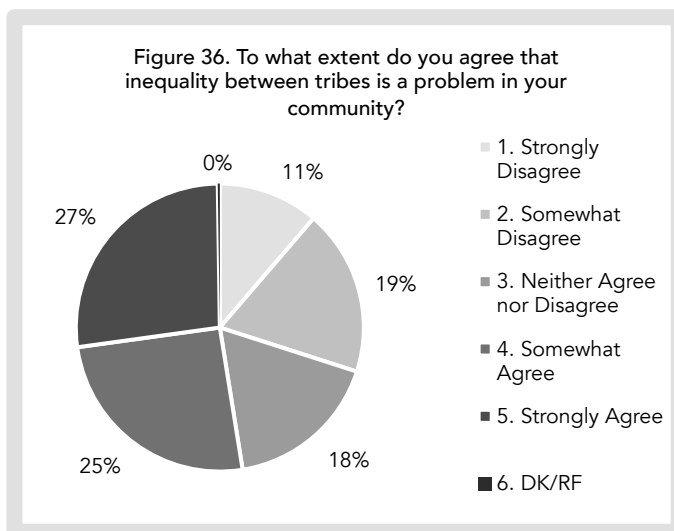
*"Recently we have seen many youths starting to use drugs or sell weapons and this makes people concerned as it is not good for them or for society in Tafiela."*

*(Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)*

<sup>124</sup> "I once went to a workshop that was organized by the government. It aimed to raise awareness about drugs." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

The prominence of larger tribes in Tafiela can cause resentment among members of smaller and/or less influential tribes.

52 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that inequality between tribes is a problem in their community, while 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 36). That said, the relative influence and prominence of the different tribes in the governorate can be a source of resentment and/or conflict. The largest tribes were felt to wield the greatest influence in the governorate, giving their members better access to education and jobs in the public sector. These tribes include the Alqatameen, the Alhanaqta, and the Alshabatat.<sup>125</sup> In particular, some tribes – such as the Albadayneh – were associated with parts of the public sector, such as the GID, and were believed to have a monopoly on those jobs. In light of an increase in tribal conflicts, particularly at Jordan's universities, this is an alarming trend. Overall, the tribal groups in Tafiela were widely seen as a closely linked network that impedes the spread of extremism in the governorate.<sup>126</sup> Because tribal members have a strong sense of tribal identity, which is often linked to a nationalist Jordanian identity,<sup>127</sup> they were thought to overwhelmingly reject groups with radical religious views, notably Salafist Jihadists.<sup>128</sup> However, this loyalty to the king would not prevent them from squabbling among themselves, causing significant problems for the regime they all claim to support. Though this has not yet happened on a large scale in Tafiela, it could become a problem in the future, if nothing is done to alleviate the strain of smaller tribes.



*"Tafiela is considered one of the most conservative governorates in Jordan – a place where the people maintain their tribal customs and traditions despite the change in times. The majority wishes to follow in the footsteps of parents and grandparents, and they work hard to maintain the traditions that they inherit."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

<sup>125</sup> The Alshabatat tribe are mainly from Ein Albaiyda. It is considered one of the most important tribes in Tafiela since it is the biggest tribe in the governorate." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

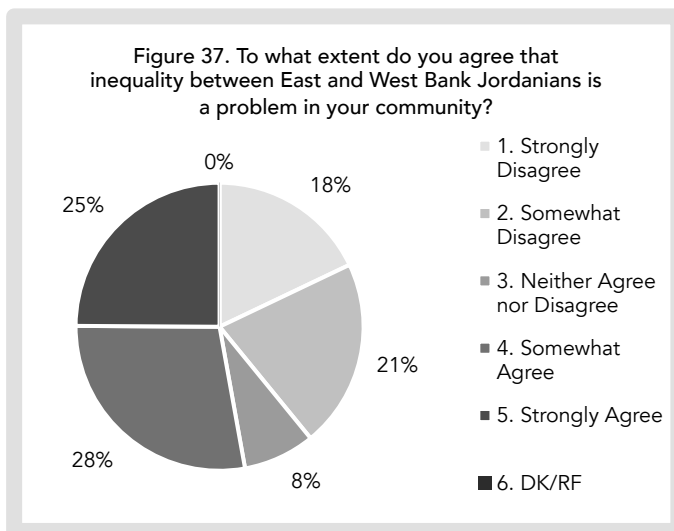
<sup>126</sup> "Tribal groups oppose any extremist ideologies." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>127</sup> "In Tafiela, every young man has a tribal identity and has a national identity and he doesn't need to look for a new identity." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>128</sup> "All the tribes in Jordan are connected somehow. Whether they are in the north, south, or central, they all respect and know one another. They have the same principles and values, and ideology, and that is what is protecting this nation from any danger." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

West Bank Jordanians have a harder time finding jobs in Tafiela, particularly in the public sector and phosphate industry.

53 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that inequality between East and West Bank Jordanians is a problem in their community, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 37). Tafiela is widely acknowledged to be a governorate with a primarily East Bank Jordanian population. Indeed, in some instances, entire villages or neighborhoods can be made up of the members of one or several East Bank Jordanian tribes. Many of the tribes have strong links to the central government, not least through long-standing associations with the Hashemite royal family dating back to the Great Arab Revolt and the subsequent formation of Transjordan. As a result, East Bank Jordanians find it easier than West Bank Jordanians to secure coveted jobs in the public sector, either in the civil service, security services, or in state-owned factories in Tafiela involved in the phosphate industry. Given the demographic divide in the governorate and the improbability that the central government will risk angering its core East Bank constituency, it is unlikely that employment inequality between the two communities will be addressed in the near future.



### There have been serious conflicts between locals and Syrians in Tafiela.

Opinions concerning the effect of refugees on Tafiela and Jordan as a whole were split, though the majority of respondents expressed negative views about Syrian refugees in the governorate itself.<sup>129</sup> In particular, they complained that refugees are more likely to radicalize than locals,<sup>130</sup> that they place excessive strain on public services,<sup>131</sup> and that they are competing with locals for available employment opportunities. Several respondents were also concerned that refugee communities in Jordan as a whole could be centers of religious extremism, and they, in turn, associated the increase in VE in Jordan with the arrival of refugees.<sup>132</sup>

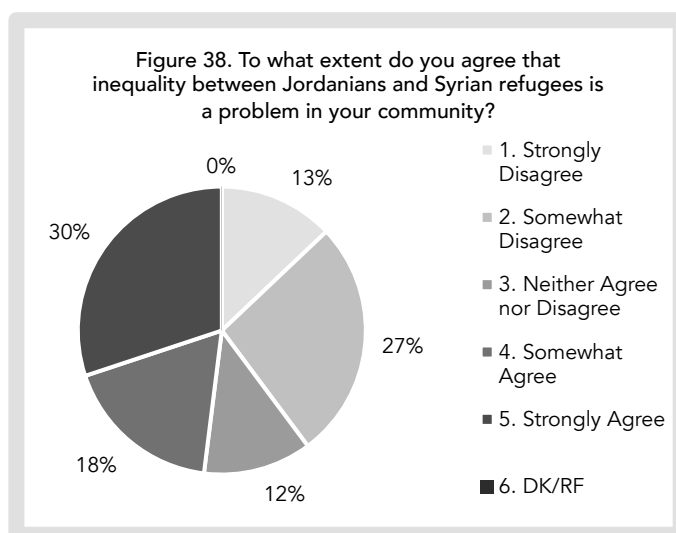
<sup>129</sup> "Sometimes, conflicts between the locals and the refugees break out, though the media never reports on them. We only learn about them from family and friends. Refugees sometimes start shooting at local police stations or soldiers whenever they are angry about something. They have protests in Zaatari refugee camp. The refugees are anything but angels." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>130</sup> "I say the refugees and those living in camps are more prone to extremism and extremist ideas because they arrive here after losing everything they have." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

<sup>131</sup> "We are burdened by refugees from Syria and Iraq. We were in debt before their arrival but we were able to survive. We were able to provide for 4 million people – but we can't do it for 9 million. We are a country that depends on aid and we can only provide aid for 4 million." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>132</sup> "A jihadist ideology did not exist before refugees arrived. If it did, then it only existed in closed circles. But it expanded with the arrival of refugees." (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

With that in mind, respondents also referenced incidents of violence between Syrians and locals, particularly one instance in October 2014 in which a Syrian killed a man from the prominent Alsawalqah tribe, leading the major tribes in the area to declare that all Syrians should leave the governorate.<sup>133</sup> That said, some respondents did not think Syrian refugees have had a negative impact on the governorate and rejected suggestions that refugees could pose a threat to Jordan's stability, as they doubted many have any ties to VEOs active in Syria.<sup>134</sup> This may account for signs of division in the quantitative data, which indicates that, while 48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that conflict between Jordanians and Syrian refugees is a problem in their community, 40 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 38).



*"When the Syrians came here, they ruined our country. They compete with Jordanians for work and now we serve them in restaurants."*

*(Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)*

The commiseration of fallen VEO fighters was widely criticized in Tafiela, though locals have been known to mourn with the families of dead VEO members.

Tafiela has not experienced the phenomenon of 'martyr weddings', which are common elsewhere in Jordan.<sup>135</sup> However, respondents held clear views on these ceremonies, which are meant to honor fallen warriors. Indeed, some were highly critical of families who hold public funerals for their sons, especially when those young men have been involved with terrorist groups that are seen as the enemies of Jordan. That said, locals killed in Syria – at least one of whom was a fighting for JN – have had funerals held for them in Tafiela, which attracted a number of mourners from among their family and friends. However, respondents claimed that, in those cases, those who attend such funerals are not necessarily showing

<sup>133</sup> "In October 2014 a Syrian guy killed a guy from Alsawalqah tribe from Tafiela, and after this incident all the tribes from Tafiela decided to kick out all the Syrians from the governorate. This happened on a large scale, but some of them are still there." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

<sup>134</sup> "For five years, we have welcomed many refugees and nothing has happened. Refugees have nothing to do with radicalism. Maybe most terrorist acts are now happening in Syria but not all of them are Syrians. For sure some of the refugees who come here to Jordan have ties with radical groups, but they are few in number." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>135</sup> "I've never heard the words 'martyr wedding' in Tafiela and this has never taken place here." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

support for VEOs, but merely mourning in a socially appropriate manner.<sup>136</sup> Again, these ceremonies are rare in Tafiela, a fact that is supported by quantitative results, which state that, while seven percent of Tafiela GQ respondents said that they or their families had suffered directly from VE, the vast majority (93 percent) stated that they had not (see Figure 39).

*"A young man who joined JN was killed in battle in 2013. Reactions differed but everyone grieved for him as if they were related to him or knew him, and his family set up a mourning tent for him in town. They may have disagreed with him on an ideological level, but they mourned with the families all the same."*

*(Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)*

Figure 39. Have you or your family directly suffered from VE?

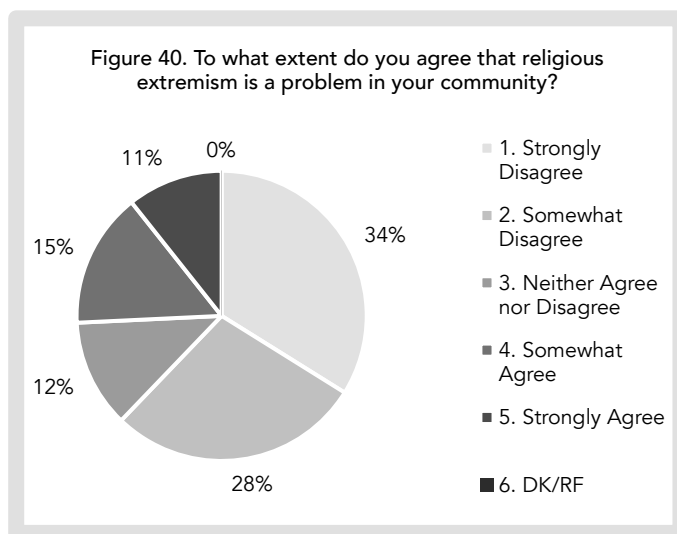


<sup>136</sup> "When someone goes to Syria, maybe his parents don't even know he went, and when they hear he died there they may not know he was with ISIS or Al Nusra. Therefore, their natural reaction is to open a mourning house for him. Some people feel sorry for them and go, whether they agree with what the boy did or not." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

## 5.4 EXPOSURE TO VE AND PERCEPTIONS OF VEO THREAT

Few consider religious extremism a problem in Tafiela, and tribal groups are frequently identified leading barriers to VE in their areas of influence.

The majority of respondents did not consider religious extremism a significant issue in Tafiela.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, while 26 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, the majority (62 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that religious extremism is a problem in their community (see Figure 40). That said, the tribal nature of society in Tafiela was presented as the main barrier to radicalization among locals.<sup>138</sup> The tribal groups in Tafiela were said to reject VEOs and their radical ideology and prevent their members from joining them.<sup>139</sup> However, many were nonetheless concerned that VEOs are using religious arguments to attempt to radicalize and then recruit an impressionable



minority of locals, especially youths in their late teens and early twenties.<sup>140</sup> The key religious concepts VEOs were thought to exploit include jihad and the obligation of Muslims to perform jihad in Syria, as well as martyrdom, with heaven presented as the reward for those killed while on jihad.<sup>141</sup> However, in some cases, respondents observed that many of the locals who have traveled to Syria and joined VEOs did not give the impression of being deeply religious and/or observant Muslims at all.<sup>142</sup> Where respondents expressed concern that religious extremism was an issue in their neighborhood, they often linked it to a lack of an alternative religious ideology to that presented by those with extreme, generally

<sup>137</sup> "We don't have extremism in our area. People are helpful and they know their religion well. I think in Jordan we don't have radicalism. Maybe only one percent of the people in Zarqa or Ma'an have a radical ideology." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>138</sup> "Those [radical] groups can never get to Tafiela. We are a tribal area and everyone knows us, so if a stranger comes, we will know." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>139</sup> "Tribalism plays a positive role here because it unites people. Also, if a person from a certain tribe joins these radical groups, his family will abandon him." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>140</sup> "In Hasa it's like South Sudan: if someone brings five kilos of sugar and rice, we will follow them. The people are poor and uneducated. We don't have a religious foundation, or any knowledge about the origins of religion, so it is normal for people to be dragged into any faction, no matter what it is." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>141</sup> "With regard to materialistic temptations, I don't think that this local guy who joined JN was in need of anything, or that he was lacking anything. Maybe they [radical groups] used religion and jihad and heaven to persuade him to join them." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>142</sup> "I know many stories of people who were raised in normal conditions and had no Islamic views but still joined extreme groups. I don't think that a person's upbringing affects his decision to join these groups." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

pro-jihad, religious views. They were worried that youths were not better able to reject arguments used by those seeking to radicalize, and thought that there was a lack of youth programs organized by the central government and prominent religious leaders who could appeal to youths in Tafiela and across Jordan.<sup>143</sup> With that in mind, the influence of tribal leaders may not be a sufficient barrier to VE in the long run, especially in light of the fact that tribal inequality – brought on by disproportionate political influence, control over resources, and rising unemployment – is reportedly on the rise in Tafiela.

*"This extremism is not a serious problem for us. We live among a tribal society, so if anyone who is tempted by radical groups and ideologies, his tribe will prevent him from believing going too far with it. When people grow up in a tribal community, they will not radicalize."*

*(Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)*

**Focus: How desire to fight jihad and help Syrian civilians led one local to travel to Syria.**

*"I know a young man, 23 years old, who went to fight in Syria. He left three years ago after he graduated from university. I went to high school with him and he seemed like an ordinary guy. I did not see anything wrong with him – he was not overtly religious or political. Moreover, he was good at school and a calm person. When I first met him, I noticed that he did not fast, and that he rarely went to Friday prayers. After college, he got a good job with a high salary, and that's when we lost contact for a while. Afterwards, I heard of him every once in a while, from people in the town, and they said that he had started attending the mosques pretty regularly. They said that he felt bad for the people in Syria and desired to help them. We thought nothing of it. In fact, we thought it was natural that he'd want to help them. Then, suddenly, it happened. He went to Syria, and everybody in town was talking about it. I never thought it would happen so quickly."*

*(Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)*

The majority believe that VEO members should be imprisoned upon their return to Jordan, though a significant minority believe that fighters can be rehabilitated.

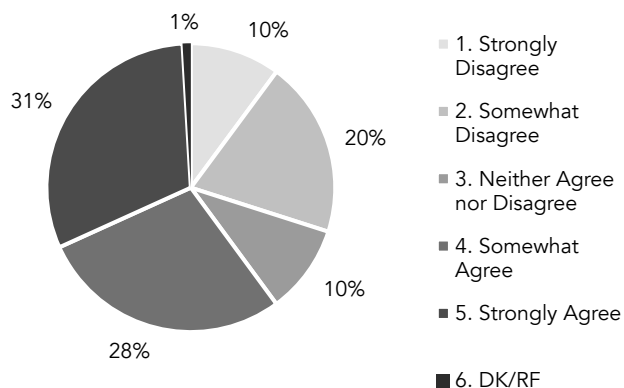
Consistent with the finding that jihad in Syria was opposed by the vast majority of respondents in Tafiela, most also thought that locals who return after fighting with VEOs in Syria should be jailed. Indeed, 59 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that returned fighters should be imprisoned, while 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 41).

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<sup>143</sup> "If we want to fight certain ideologies, we have to have alternatives for the people. I can't blame some people who have radical views. They don't get the bigger picture of Islam. The government should have a role in raising youth awareness. There is no religious leadership working toward that message." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

That said, a sizable minority argued that they should be permitted to re-integrate into society.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, several offered examples of locals who had been able to return to their former lives after fighting in Syria, generally following a short period of incarceration following arrest and questioning by the security forces.<sup>145</sup> This included one local who was a member of JN in Syria before he renounced the VEO upon his return home. Respondents who opposed incarceration as the best way of dealing with returned fighters described how locals who had come back from Syria had become wholly disillusioned with their experiences fighting with armed groups there, including VEOs like ISIS and JN, and how they no longer saw Syria as a legitimate location for jihad.<sup>146</sup> Some also argued that returned fighters should be allowed to rejoin society, but only after completing rehabilitation courses.<sup>147</sup>

Figure 41. To what extent do you agree that returned fighters should be imprisoned?



*"I know a young man who travelled to Syria and returned back. He is an engineer and he was 22 years old when he went to Syria. He used to work here. He travelled to Syria and joined Jabhat Al Nusra one year after graduation. I ran into him recently in Tafiela and his ideology has completely changed. He no longer belongs to Jabhat Al Nusra, ISIS or any other violent extremist groups."*

*(Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)*

<sup>144</sup> "When he returned back from Syria, we did our best to welcome him. We didn't blame him for going for Jihad and we empathized that he realized the truth about the situation in Syria and returned back home. We chose this approach to make him feel welcomed in order for him to stay here and not to return back to Syria." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

<sup>145</sup> "Many guys left to fight, then came back and were arrested. After they were released, they blended back in with society normally, especially the educated ones." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>146</sup> "People who came back described all the bad things going on in Syria. They say their idea was to fight jihad but now these groups are killing each other, even though all Islamic groups should be working together. These people changed their minds about everything and came back to Jordan." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>147</sup> "However, we don't want to isolate them and exclude them from our society. So if they want to return back to our society, they have to join rehabilitation programs." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

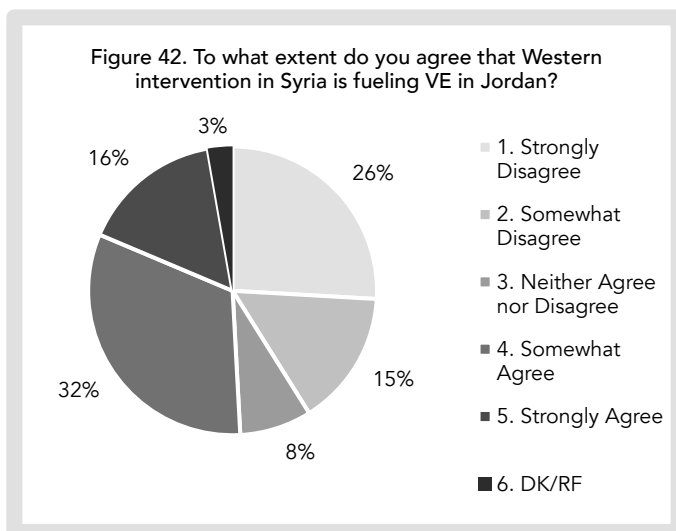


## 6.0 EXTERNAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 6.1 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

The US and its Western allies are widely blamed for destabilizing the Mena region but are praised for their development programs.

Despite close diplomatic, economic and military ties with Jordan, many respondents expressed hostility to the US and argued that its foreign policy – culminating in the 2003 invasion of Iraq – has had a disruptive effect on the region.<sup>148</sup> The US, along with its Western allies, was also accused of deliberately destabilizing Syria as part of a foreign policy intended to control the eventual leader who would emerge after Assad.<sup>149</sup> This was sometimes tied to a broader anti-US and anti-Western narrative that argued the goal of US foreign policy in the Middle East is to ensure that there is instability and conflict in the Middle East in order to keep Arab states weak and divided and, moreover, to ensure that the West has a large export market for its weapons.<sup>150</sup> Consequently, 48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that Western intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, while 41 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed (see Figure 42). In particular, the US drew criticism for its support of Israel, which, given past conflicts between Jordan and Israel, is highly unpopular with most in Tafiela.<sup>151</sup> This contributed to the 48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents who thought the US has a ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ negative impact on Jordan, while 33 percent believed its impact is ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ positive (see Figure 45). That said, the US did draw some praise for its development work in Jordan and in Tafiela, notably US Agency for International Development (USAID) funding and support for the Dana Nature Reserve, which is the governorate’s main tourist attraction and an important generator of jobs and revenue.<sup>152</sup>



<sup>148</sup> “The crises in Syria and Iraq started when America invaded Iraq in 2003. This led to a chain reaction and the rise of radical groups across the region.” (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

<sup>149</sup> “It is in America’s interest for Syria to be war-torn. It was the only Arab state not under their control. It looks like America supported and funded these terrorist organizations to enter this region and target the Syrian regime, because after it falls, the next leader will be chosen by the United States of America.” (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>150</sup> “The West just wants to sell weapons. The US is the biggest weapons dealer in the world, so it has created a market here for its product by dividing countries where peace could have lasted.” (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>151</sup> “Jordanians believe that their enemies are Israel and the USA. These two enemies work together at all times.” (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>152</sup> “Some people in Tafiela view the USA in a positive way, since they provide Jordan with aid and are also involved in many development projects in Tafiela, particularly the USAID projects in Dana.” (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

*"No one sympathizes or supports any violent extremist groups, whether it be ISIS, Jabhat Al Nusra or Al Qa'ida. The sympathy only existed during the Iraq war when people were with those who fought against America. Some people here used to sympathize with anyone who fights against America, under any name. There was no Islamic state or Jabhat Al Nusra, it was only Al Qa'ida at that time."*

*(Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)*

Attitudes to the EU are varied and generally linked to positive or negative perceptions of individual member states, rather than the bloc as a whole.

Where respondents expressed opinions of the European Union (EU) and its relationship with Jordan, they generally tied them to their perceptions of a particular state within the bloc. Thus, while Germany was praised for admitting Syrian refugees over the course of the Syrian crisis, the United Kingdom (UK) was blamed for its colonial past in the region and, moreover, for its colonial links to Jordan and/or its support for the US invasion of Iraq. In respect to France, some respondents expressed sympathy for the victims of the recent terrorist attacks in the country, while others condemned the French for their ban on the face veil and support for the satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*. In general, views on the EU were mixed, with 33 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents saying that the EU has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, and 33 percent believing its impact to be 'very' or 'somewhat' positive. Notably, 22 percent of respondents stated that the EU's impact was 'neither positive nor negative' (see Figure 45).

*"Sometimes, people blame the UK for supporting the USA in its invasion of Iraq, and sometimes they go back to our colonial history, when UK colonized Jordan, and see this in negative way. Most of the people in Tafiela are neutral toward France. While they sometimes sympathize with the victims of the terrorist attack in Nice and France, they say that France is against Islam because of the Charlie Hebdo drawing that insulted the Prophet Mohammad. For the most part, people admire Germany, since it helped the Syrian refugees. They consider Germany the most democratic and humane country in Europe."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

Iran is criticized for expanding Shia influence throughout the Mena region and prolonging the Syrian conflict.

Iran was strongly criticized by the majority of respondents for its foreign policy in the region, which they were concerned is geared toward increasing Iranian, and particularly Shia, power and influence at the expense of the indigenous Sunni Muslim populations there.<sup>153</sup> As such, Iran, along with its local Shia allies, was accused of taking power in Iraq and, moreover, attempting to drive Sunnis out of the

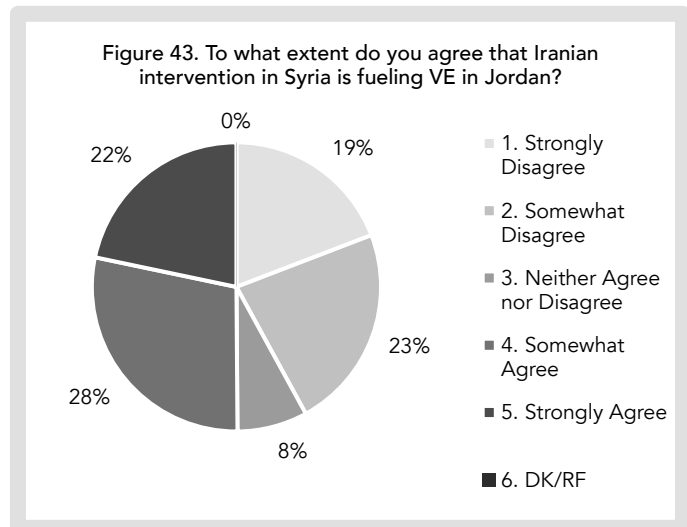
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<sup>153</sup> "Iran, as an Islamist country, tries to impose its opinions and beliefs on the region." (Male, 40, Community Worker, Tafiela)

country.<sup>154</sup> It was also attacked for its policy of directly supporting the Assad regime in Syria, mainly through its proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah.

Furthermore, because of its support for Assad, Iran was accused of prolonging the war and pushing more than a million Syrian refugees into Jordan. Consequently, despite its geographical distance and the negligible number of Shia Jordanians, 70 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents thought Iran has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while only 14 percent believed its impact was 'very' or 'somewhat' positive (see Figure 45). Similarly, a high number of respondents (50 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Iranian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, though a sizable minority (42 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 43).

Given strong anti-Shia sectarian views among respondents, as well as outrage over Iranian foreign policy, it is likely that the majority will continue to be hostile to Iran in Tafiela.



*"Radical groups are supported by Iran and the West because they want this region to be at war. Iran wants everyone in the Muslim world to be Shias. Most of what is happening in Syria is because of Iran and they are doing the same in Bahrain and Yemen."*

*(Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)*

### Most respondents praised Saudi Arabia and believe that it has a positive impact on Jordan.

Saudi Arabia was well regarded by the majority of respondents, many of whom depicted it as the leading Sunni Muslim power. Furthermore, it was praised for opposing what many see as a Shia expansion in the region, which they thought to be led by Iran.<sup>155</sup> Tafiela shares no land border with Saudi Arabia and has limited direct links with Jordan's neighbor, particularly when compared with Aqaba governorate, which receives large numbers of Saudi tourists annually. However, the majority of respondents nonetheless described Saudi Arabia's influence on Jordan as beneficial. 70 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents thought Saudi Arabia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan, while 15 percent believed its impact was 'very' or 'somewhat' negative (see Figure 45). That said, there were some detractors, who associated Saudi Arabia with support for AQ. They went so far as to suggest that other VEOs, including

<sup>154</sup> "We know that Iran is in Iraq. For a while, they have been pushing the Sunni Iraqis out in an attempt to make Iraq a Shia country." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>155</sup> "The Arab coalition is supported by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries in order to stop the Shia expansion." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

JN and ISIS, are still being funded by Saudi Arabia.<sup>156</sup> These, however, represented a negligible portion of interviewees.

*"Saudi Arabia was supporting Al Qa'ida when they were in Iraq, and after that they appeared on Syrian territory because that is where there is oil, and of course they are still providing enormous support. It's scary."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

Turkey is thought to have a positive effect on Jordan despite the distance between the two countries.

Despite being geographically remote from Tafiela and the rest of Jordan, Turkey was nonetheless viewed positively by the majority of respondents, many of whom said that they respect Turkey's strong economy and depicted it as an important regional power. Others highlighted the cultural links between Turkey and Jordan and observed that Turkish soap operas, when translated into Arabic, are very popular in Tafiela and give viewers a good impression of Turkey and its inhabitants. Accordingly, 69 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents thought that Turkey has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan, while only 14 percent believed that its impact is 'very' or 'somewhat' negative (see Figure 45). A minority of respondents were critical of Turkish. In their case, the main concern was its behavior in regard to the Syrian conflict. They argued that the Turkish government is assisting VEOs in Syria, either by directly funding them and supplying them with weapons, or by allowing others to do so through Turkish territory.<sup>157</sup>

*"People in Tafiela view Turkey in a positive way, and even though it is a secular country they are still impressed that it was able to build such a strong economy and position in the region. On the national level Jordan doesn't have many close links with Turkey but most people think there are good diplomatic relations between the two countries."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

The majority thinks the Syrian conflict has had a negative effect on Jordan as a whole, but does not believe it has had a significant impact in Tafiela.

While the majority of respondents thought that, on the whole, the Syrian conflict has been bad for trade and tourism in Jordan,<sup>158</sup> many doubted that it has had a profound impact on Tafiela, not least because

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<sup>156</sup> "ISIS in Syria, Al Nusra and Ahrar Al Sham have received loads of money, and most of the funds came from the Gulf countries, and especially Saudi Arabia." (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>157</sup> "The funding and arming of radical groups, the facilitation of the transfer of weapons, and money smuggling are not random. In fact, it is very organized. I blame Turkey for facilitating all these things." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>158</sup> "Tourism in Jordan was impacted because tourists used to come here to tour the region and visit Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Nowadays, they don't come because they can only come to Jordan." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

it is in the south of the country, far from the Syrian border.<sup>159</sup> Given its geographic remoteness from the epicenter of the Syrian conflict, Tafiela has not been a premier destination for Syrian refugees. With that in mind, respondents did not convey the sense of resentment toward Syrian refugees evident in governorates like Irbid and Amman. In these areas of Jordan, refugees were often blamed for making life harder for locals by pushing up rents, competing for jobs, and even spreading VE. However, residents of Tafiela voiced no such complaints. Indeed, a few argued that the Syrian Civil War has had only a small impact on Jordan, and they likened it to the conflict in Iraq, which they believed had done little beyond inspiring sympathy among locals. These views were rare, however, since, to most respondents, the overall impact – at least on the national economy – of hosting a large population of Syrian refugees was apparent. With that in mind, a majority of respondents (53 percent) thought that Syria has a ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ negative impact on Jordan, while 25 percent believed its impact was ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ positive (see Figure 45). Despite widespread criticism of the Assad regime’s treatment of its own people – which was thought to have motivated a number of locals to go to Syria to fight jihad – some respondents were concerned that, if the Assad regime were to fall, then the successor government or regime in Syria could pose a threat to Jordan.<sup>160</sup> This, they claimed, could be far worse for Jordan than the current refugee crisis.

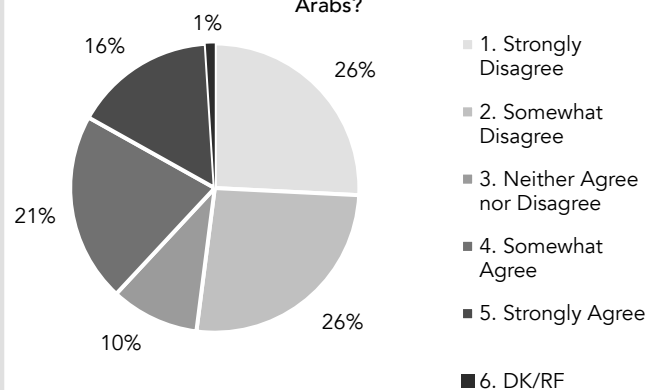
*“I have to say, we have barely felt any impact from Syria. Look, the conflict in Syria is like the conflict in Iraq, and the conflict in Iraq did not have an impact on our society, aside from the fact that the community was sympathetic to what was happening in Iraq.”*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

Though Israel is widely condemned in Tafiela, the majority of locals is content with the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

Israel was highly unpopular among respondents in Tafiela, many of whom described it as an ‘enemy’ nation. Some observed that, at protests in the governorate in the past, including one in November 2012, locals have called for the suspension of the 1992 peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, mostly because of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Some respondents also implied that Israel

Figure 44. To what extent do you agree that the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty is a betrayal for Islam and Arabs?



<sup>159</sup> “The conflict in Syria and Iraq has not impacted Tafiela as a governorate. We do not have a border with Tafiela)

<sup>160</sup> “If the Syrian regime fell, it will be the new Iraq and this would create a new map for the region and would pose a threat to Jordan.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

has some links to VEOs in Syria by highlighting an incident in which JN fighters injured in the Golan Heights were treated in an Israeli hospital.<sup>161</sup> As such, 82 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents thought Israel has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while 10 percent believed its impact was 'very' or 'somewhat' positive (see Figure 45). That said, despite the apparent level of hostility between the people of these two countries, the majority of respondents appeared to be happy with Jordan's peace with Israel. Indeed, 52 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is a betrayal for Islam and Arabs, while 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 44). This indicates that, notwithstanding strong negative perceptions of Israel linked to local sympathy with Palestinians, the majority in Tafiela was happy with the status quo and did not want to see Jordan engage in hostilities with Israel.

*"People in Tafiela view Israel as an enemy country and they hate the Israelis very much. This is because they sympathize with the Palestinians, whom the Israelis have mistreated for some time. During the demonstrations in Tafiela, protestors were chanting 'Death to Israel' and demanding that the government cancel the Wadi Araba Treaty."*

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

### The majority of locals is critical of Russia's involvement in Syria.

Most respondents condemned Russia for its political and military support for the unpopular Assad regime in Syria. In this case, they associated it with the perceived abuse by the regime of Syrian civilians since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011. Russia's involvement in Syria was seen as motivated by self-interest, as respondents believed it wished to retain its influence in the region, and feared that the collapse of the Assad regime would mean a loss of its main Middle Eastern base.<sup>162</sup> Russia was also criticized for its treatment of Muslim Chechens<sup>163</sup> and was even seen by some as an ally of Iran, further damaging its reputation, given strong anti-Shia sectarian sentiments in Tafiela. Quantitative results showed that 58 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents thought that Russia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while 11 percent believed its impact was 'very' or 'somewhat' positive. 19 percent stated that they considered the country's impact to be 'neither positive nor negative', and 12 percent said that it has had no impact at all (see Figure 45). These findings suggest that, while most views on Russia are negative, many in Tafiela do not hold strong opinions of the country and prefer not to take a stand either for or against it.

*"Most of the people in Tafiela are neutral when it comes to Russia and Russia's role in the region, and many of them don't even know about the Russia intervention in Syria."*

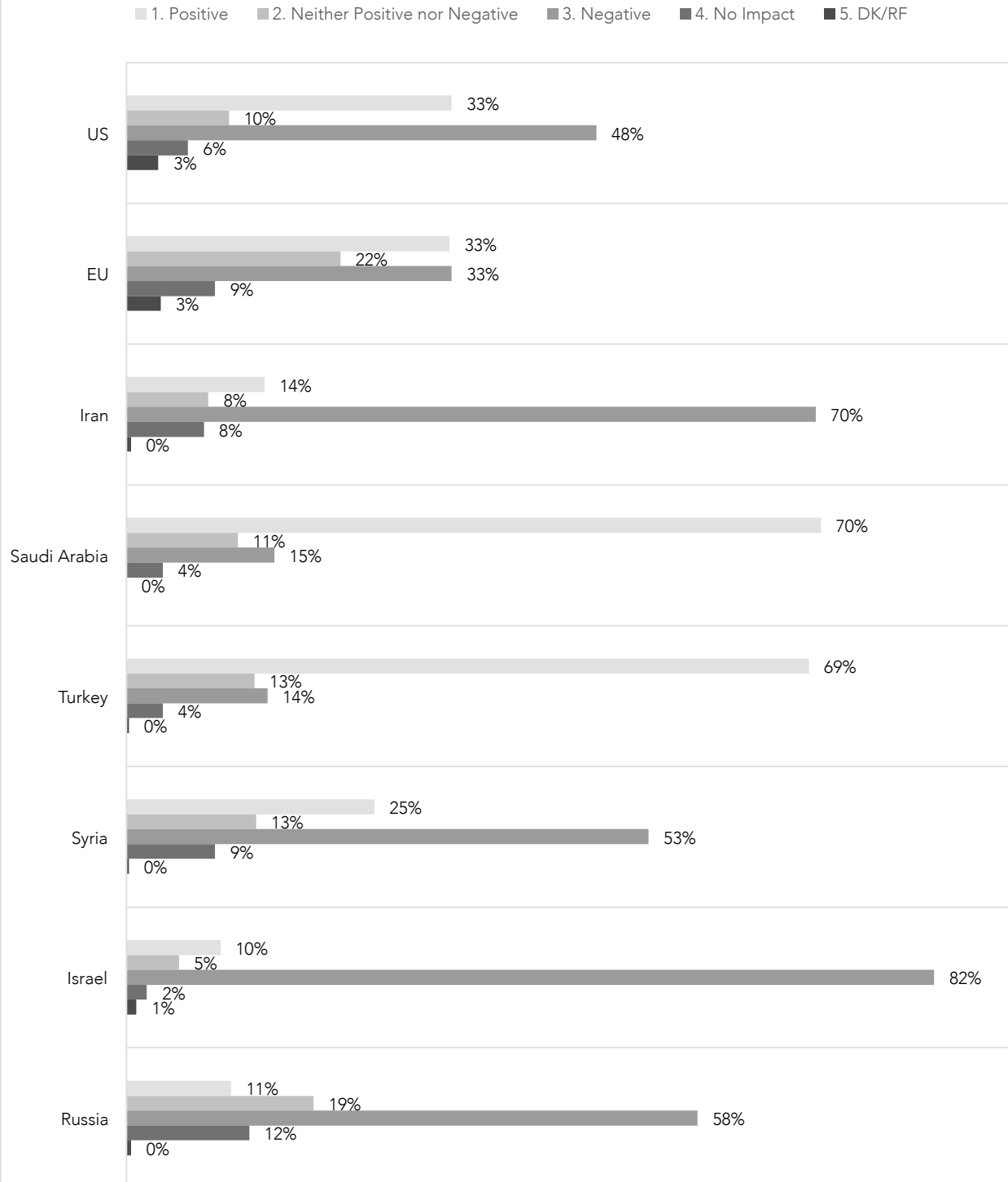
<sup>161</sup> "We read in the news about the Israelis treating wounded fighters from radical groups. There was a story about Al Nusra fighters who were taken to Israel for treatment." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>162</sup> "The Syrian regime is the last hope for Russia. If Syria is gone, Russia will be out of the game, so they need the regime to stay." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>163</sup> "What the Russians are doing to the Chechens, this also is not being covered by the media and it is terrible. They are oppressing them." (Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

*(Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)*

Figure 45. To what extent do you think that the following countries have a positive or negative impact on Jordan?





## 6.2 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INTERVENTIONISM

A significant minority in Tafiela thinks the West interferes in Jordan and heavily influences the central government, driving resentment that can fuel radicalization.

A sizeable minority of respondents was concerned that the central government is beholden to Western donors, notably the US. This was reflected by quantitative data, which indicated that 44 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government does what the West says, while 38 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 46). This toxic relationship was thought to be driving resentment against both the central government in Amman and its allies, as well as possibly increasing propensity toward VE in Tafiela. In fact, while 49 percent of respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 47). Some even believed that Western nations – but primarily the US – are cynically interested in furthering instability and conflict in Jordan and the Middle East in order to sell weapons to benefit their own economies.<sup>164</sup> This belief is perhaps an alarming one when applied to Jordan, given common opinions that the central government is not doing enough to address pressing problems like unemployment, systemic poverty and tribal inequality – all of which were determined to increase propensity toward VE.

*"The US is seen in a negative light because of its foreign policy. It has tremendous influence, and it almost always uses that influence for evil – at least in the Middle East. During the demonstrations in Tafiela, the people were chanting 'America is a snake', implying that the USA is behind all the things that are going wrong in this country and around the Middle East."*

*(Male, 25, Student, Tafiela)*

Figure 46. To what extent do you agree that the central government does what the West says?

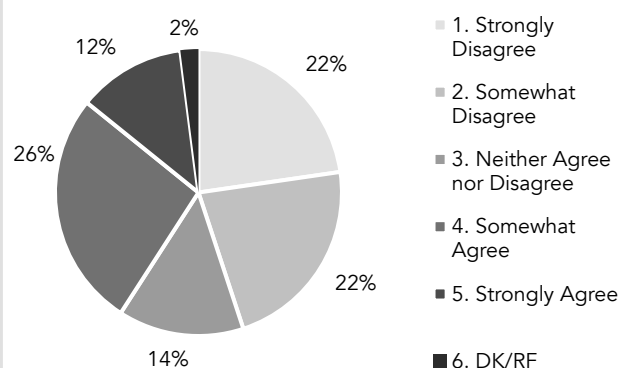
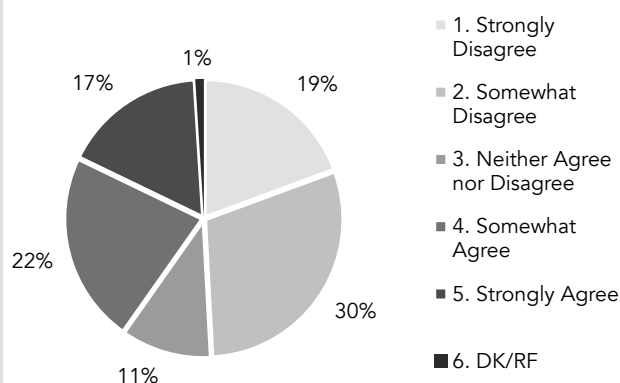


Figure 47. To what extent do you agree that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan?



<sup>164</sup> "Many countries – like the UK, the US and Germany – produce a lot of weapons. They need this region to be at war so they can keep selling weapons to us." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

Outrage at the murder of Moath Al Kasasbeh has ensured that most respondents are strongly supportive of Jordan's participation in the coalition against ISIS.

71 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Jordanian intervention against ISIS is justifiable, while 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 48). This should be interpreted as meaning that, while some respondents were unsure if Jordan's involvement in Syria was a good idea, few doubted that Jordan should be attacking ISIS after the VEO's public murder of Kasasbeh. With that said, there is reason to believe that, while Tafiela locals may agree that retaliation against ISIS is justifiable, and may support actions against the VEO in theory, many of them may be against Jordanian intervention in Syria. Indeed, some respondents believed that, by supporting the US-led coalition against ISIS, Jordan may inadvertently increase propensity toward VE within its own borders.<sup>165</sup> This was supported by quantitative data, which indicated that, while 50 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that Jordanian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 49). Of the minority who disagreed with Jordan's aerial campaign against ISIS, many argued that, by attacking ISIS, the VEO had been encouraged to commit acts of terrorism in Jordan by way of revenge, thereby threatening national security more than it otherwise would have.

*"Jordan was part of the global alliance against ISIS. We entered the conflict and attacked them in Syria. One of their responses was to shoot down the aircraft of Kasasbeh and to murder him. They also declared that we are a target, so there is no doubt ISIS wishes to attack Jordan now."*

*(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)*

Figure 48. To what extent do you agree that Jordanian intervention against ISIS is justifiable?

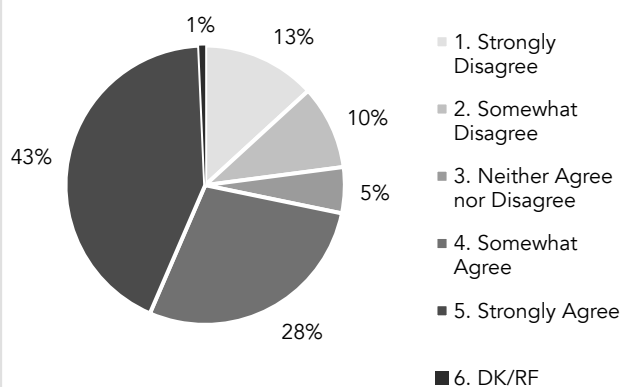
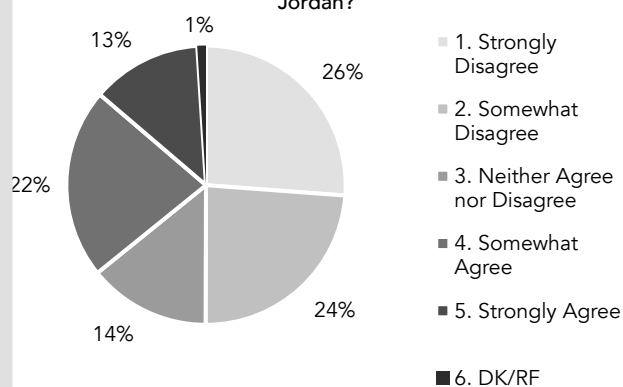


Figure 49. To what extent do you agree that Jordanian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?



<sup>165</sup> "Maybe the government supported radical groups in an indirect way. Jordan is part of the coalition and they want it to be successful." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

## 7.0 COMMUNICATION DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 7.1 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM PROPAGANDA

VEO recruitment propaganda is a major concern in Tafiela, and ISIS' material is considered particularly powerful.

Many respondents observed that VEOs – but mainly ISIS and JN – are adept at using a variety of methods and platforms to distribute their propaganda,<sup>166</sup> including the Internet and social media, as well as CDs and memory sticks. In fact, a sizeable minority of respondents thought that such propaganda could succeed in attracting recruits in their communities, and believed the most effective arguments used by VEOs to appeal to potential members were based around religious themes, including the 'duty' of Sunni Muslims to defend fellow Sunnis in Syria and Iraq.<sup>167</sup> That said, ISIS' propaganda was widely seen as superior to JN's, and many believed that the group's main platform to be Twitter.<sup>168</sup> As such, 60 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that ISIS propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan, while 29 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 50). Conversely, JN's relative weakness in promoting itself can be seen in the 41 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan, the 37 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, and the 21 percent who 'neither agreed nor disagreed' with this statement (see Figure 51). This is perhaps an indicator that a sizable minority of respondents are either not aware of any JN, or think it is not relevant to the people of Tafiela. This is supported by the fact that there are few Salafist Jihadists living in Tafiela. Salafist Jihadists are known as recruiters for JN, so, if their presence is lacking in the governorate, JN's influence is probably lacking as well.

*"I am not necessarily talking about just TV channels. ISIS use internet websites, CD's, flash drives and sound clips to get their messages across to people. They use a wide array of media tool nowadays."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

<sup>166</sup> "I believe that ISIS has its own resources and media agencies to spread its ideology." (Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)

<sup>167</sup> "The most effective message radical groups use is that people should be defending Muslims who are being killed in Syria and Iraq." (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>168</sup> "Twitter is the main platform for radical groups, since it is less traceable than Facebook. ISIS' Twitter accounts are out there and it is easy to contact them, so everybody has to watch who they talk to." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

Figure 50. To what extent do you agree that ISIS propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan?

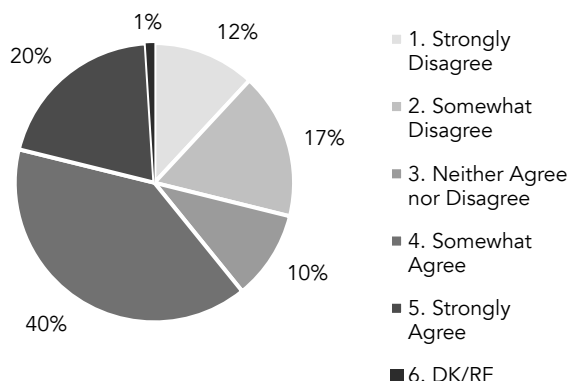
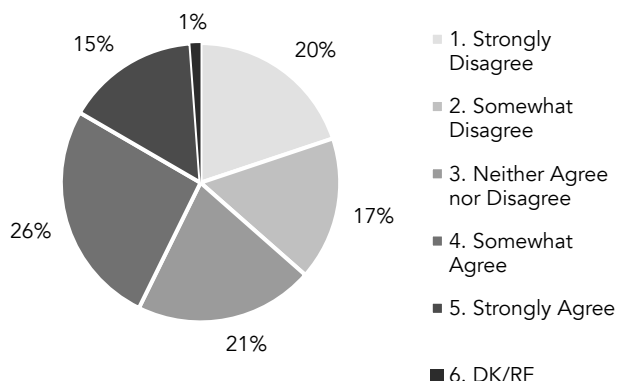


Figure 51. To what extent do you agree that JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan?

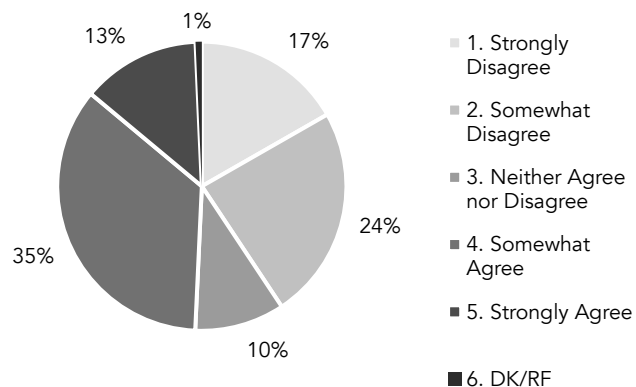


The Internet and social media are widely seen as the main platforms VEOs use to recruit in Tafiela, but many respondents questioned how effective they are at attracting new members.

The Internet and social media were seen as the principal ways in which VEOs communicate with locals and try and persuade them to become members. Furthermore, some respondents believed VEOs – including JN and ISIS – have successfully recruited locals online to fight in Syria since the start of the conflict there, using platforms like Facebook and Twitter.<sup>169</sup> Both the Internet and social media are widely available in Tafiela through Internet cafés and, more recently, smartphones.<sup>170</sup> Almost all local youth also have Facebook accounts and most regularly use WhatsApp and Twitter, all of which can be used by VEO recruiters to reach potential recruits.<sup>171</sup>

With that in mind, 41 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that the Internet and social media is fueling VE in Jordan, while 48 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that this was the case (see Figure 52). These findings

Figure 52. To what extent do you agree that the Internet/social media is fueling VE in Jordan?



<sup>169</sup> “I think that maybe he was communicating with these groups online, or that one of these groups recruited him via the Internet. I found out from his parents that he joined Al Nusra.” (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>170</sup> “I don’t think that he was recruited or lured by anyone in Jordan. No, I think he was targeted by these groups online, that he was influenced by external forces and not internal forces on the ground. He was always online, usually at the Internet café in town.” (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>171</sup> “There are people who support radical groups who are active on the Internet, especially on Twitter. Maybe they’re the ones who are reaching out to the boys who are eventually recruited.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

indicate that many in the governorate believed that the power of the Internet and social media to help VEOs radicalize and/or recruit in Tafiela is overstated. This may be tied to the common perception that the population of Tafiela is largely made up of closely interlinked tribal groups, which act as natural barriers to VEO recruitment.

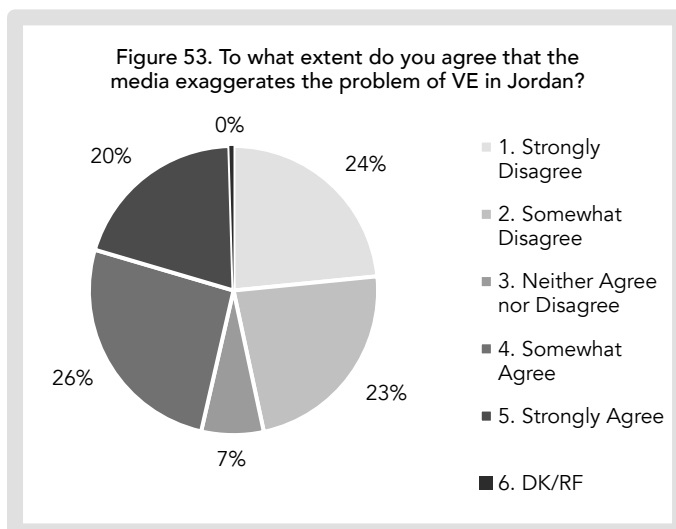
*"I know someone from Tafiela who joined Al Nusra in 2012, when they first emerged in Syria. He joined them because he found their ideology attractive. He found them on Facebook and through social media."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

## 7.2 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

There was criticism for television channels that report on VE in Jordan.

The media in Jordan, both state-run and foreign, was seen as hugely influential in Tafiela. That said, opinions were split as to whether the media can be trusted and whether it is able to offer a subjective view of events in the region,<sup>172</sup> especially regarding VEOs.<sup>173</sup> This was supported by quantitative data, which indicates that, while 47 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that the media exaggerates the problem of VE in Jordan, 46 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed (see Figure 53). Aside from the state media channels, Al Jazeera was frequently identified as one of the most popular media outlets in Tafiela, though even it attracted



criticism for ‘promoting’ VEOs, and especially AQ in the years after its foundation in the 1990s.<sup>174</sup> To that end, respondents accused the media of raising the profile of VEOs, and especially ISIS by extensively reporting on them.<sup>175</sup> This, they contended, was thought to have made locals more likely to join the group.<sup>176</sup> In particular, it was said to spread sectarian rhetoric throughout the country and, in Tafiela’s case, was thought to have inspired a local man to travel to Syria to join a VEO.<sup>177</sup> Consequently, it was clear that while the news media has considerable influence and is widely viewed in Tafiela, there was little consensus as to which channels could be trusted, particularly where VEOs are concerned.

*“The media is what makes these groups famous. When people watch these groups in the media a lot, they get to know them better. While the media has not covered Nusra, it has covered Daesh, and that’s why it’s so big.” (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

<sup>172</sup> “I consider the Jordanian television to be out of touch with reality.” (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>173</sup> “The Jordanian population is politically ignorant. They are guided by the media, whether the Jordanian media, or the Western media, and the media lies to them on a daily basis.” (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

<sup>174</sup> “I blame Al Jazeera for the increase in extremism because it has been the official platform for extremists since the 1990s, when it of course promoted Al Qa’ida.” (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>175</sup> “Al Qa’ida came first, then we had Daesh. They are two groups that were made famous by the media.” (Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)

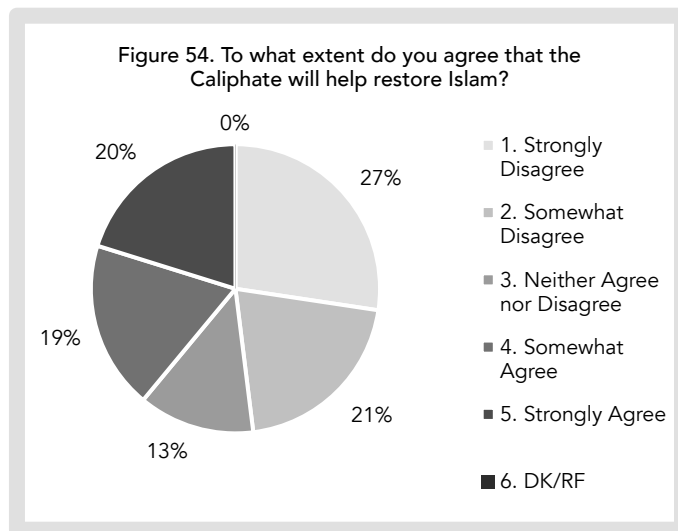
<sup>176</sup> “ISIS says it is Islamic, but this is wrong and the media lies about it all the time. How can ISIS build an Islamic nation like this in Iraq and Syria? Our Prophet told us not to kill kids in war, or the elderly, or babies – but ISIS wants to build an empire by killing people. And the media has made all that possible.” (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>177</sup> “The media, the war in Syria, and the sectarian propaganda on TV all led to this guy joining a radical group in Syria. I do not know which channels he followed, but Al Jazeera in general has the greatest impact in Tafiela.” (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

### 7.3 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

Though most locals hold conservative religious views, they overwhelmingly reject the actions of major VEOs and do not consider them vanguards of Islam.

The majority of people in Tafiela are Sunni Muslims. With that in mind, strict religious observance was considered positive for both youths and older locals.<sup>178</sup> For example, youths growing beards to demonstrate their adherence to strict Islamic principles was seen in a positive light, and locals did not consider it an indicator of radicalization.<sup>179</sup> This strong religiosity translated into division over some common VEO narratives, in particular, a belief that a caliphate would restore Islam. Indeed, while 48 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that the Caliphate will help restore Islam, 39 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed (see Figure 54). To that end, some



respondents thought that an idealistic desire to live in a caliphate, and to be part of the formation of an Islamic state,<sup>180</sup> had motivated some young men from Tafiela to join ISIS in Syria and/or Iraq;<sup>181</sup> however, most rejected the idea that ISIS’ state deserved to be the face of the Caliphate. That said, considering that respondents generally rejected the actions of VEOs and believed that the practice of *Takfir* to be entirely un-Islamic, quantitative data relating to other VEO narratives do not necessarily reflect any growth in VE in Tafiela. Indeed, though 73 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that Sharia should be the only source of law (see Figure 55), and 63 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that only Islam can guarantee justice (see Figure 56), the majority of evidence suggest that respondents wholly reject the actions and ideals of the major VEOs. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether VEOs who promote more conservative views of Islam will be able to appeal to youth who already appear to support their ideologies. Respondents believed that the influence of tribal leaders, for one, presents a significant barrier to VE in Tafiela.

*“Our dream is to have a powerful Arab, Islamic State that would bring back our glories and win*

<sup>178</sup> “Most men care about two things: having a good personal financial situation and going to heaven when they die.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>179</sup> “You see some guys growing beards and wearing them like Islamists. This is common in Tafiela. I used to look at those guys and wonder what happened. Our community considered them normal and thought they became religious, which they saw as good.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>180</sup> “Some of the people who went with these radical groups were convinced because they wanted to create an Islamic state.” (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>181</sup> “I think there are two types of guys who go on jihad: one dreams of a caliphate and one wants an Islamic state.” (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

*victories and help us to get rid of injustice. Groups can use these ideas to make youths sympathize with them since these ideas are the dream of many Arab youths."*

*(Male, 45, Administrator, Tafiela)*

Figure 55. To what extent do you agree that Sharia should be the only source of law?

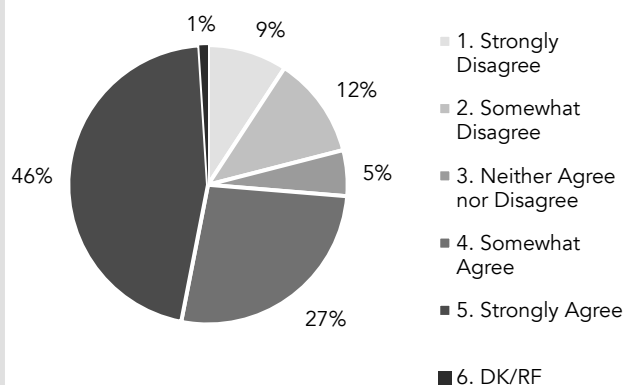
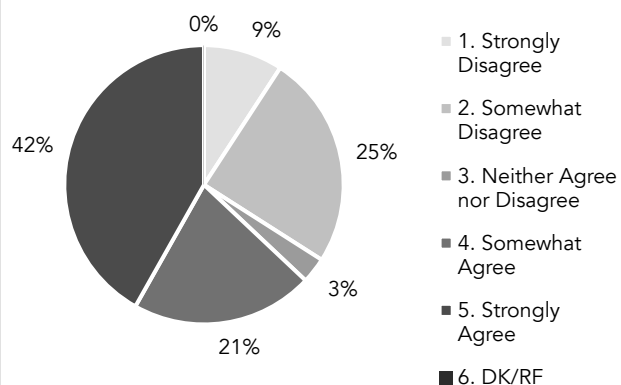


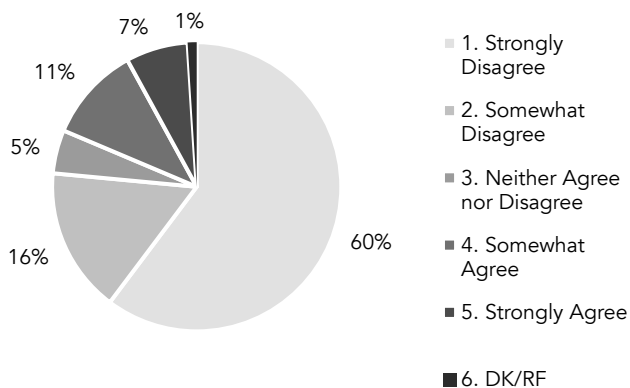
Figure 56. To what extent do you agree that only Islam can guarantee justice?



The concept of Takfir is associated with the ideologies of major VEOs and is therefore widely condemned in Tafiela.

The vast majority of respondents in Tafiela rejected the concept of Takfir, described it as radical, and closely associated it with VEOs, particularly ISIS. Takfir – as it is used by VEOs to declare individuals or groups to be infidels – was described as a radical creation of Wahhabist and Qutbist theology, named after Sayyed Qutb, the founder of the MB.<sup>182</sup> Many argued that only those who have been “brainwashed” would agree with the manner in which ISIS applies Takfir. Some even found it so improbable that VEOs would be able to persuade locals to accept their interpretation of Takfir that they assumed radical groups must primarily use financial incentives to recruit and then

Figure 57. To what extent do you agree that the practice of Takfir is justifiable?



<sup>182</sup> “When you look back in history (the beginnings of the Muslim Brotherhood and Jihadist Salafism), takfirist ideology was produced by combining the ideologies of Sayyed Qutb with Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism is based on Aqidah (creed). Qutbism developed into the takfirist movement during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which produced Al Qa’ida in the 90s after the end of the war.” (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)



subsequently oblige members to adopt their ideology. These findings are supported by quantitative data, which states that 76 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the practice of Takfir is justifiable, while only 18 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 57). As Takfir is one of the pillars of the ideologies of various VEOs, particularly ISIS, these findings underline the strength of popular rejection of VE in Tafiela.

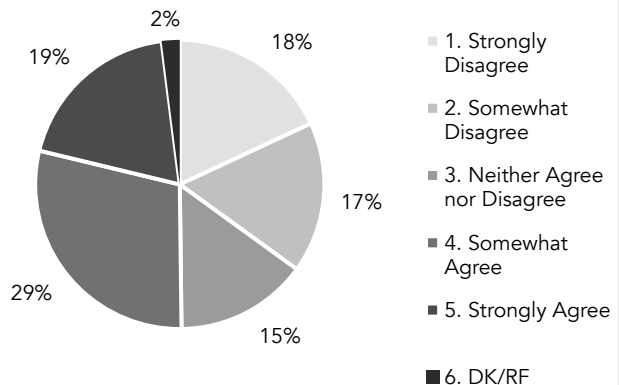
*"Sometimes there are people that are brainwashed by the takfirist ideology. They are brainwashed by radical groups and terrorists who are not balanced in the way they see Islam. They use religion to soften people's hearts, and they give them money and tell them they will go to heaven if they kill infidels. This strategy works with some people."*

*(Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)*

**Violent jihad in Israel is considered acceptable by many respondents, reflecting historical sympathy for Palestinians.**

The vast majority of respondents expressed strong hostility to Israel and believed it is illegally occupying Palestinian land and frequently oppressing the indigenous Palestinian population. Many also argued that Israel is a legitimate destination for those wishing to fight jihad and distinguished between calling for jihad in Israel and calling for jihad in Syria. For instance, where many did not consider Syria a possible destination for jihad, they believed Israel is – so much so that they contended that groups like MB and Salafist Quietists could legitimately advocate jihad in Israel without behaving in a radical or extreme manner. As such, 48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad in Israel is justifiable, while a sizeable minority of 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 58). That said, some described jihad in Israel as impractical, given its military strength and the tightly controlled border between Jordan and Israel. Consequently, while there may be significant enthusiasm for the idea of locals going to fight jihad in Israel, this is unlikely to translate into physical action, due to the impracticality of committing attacks there.

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



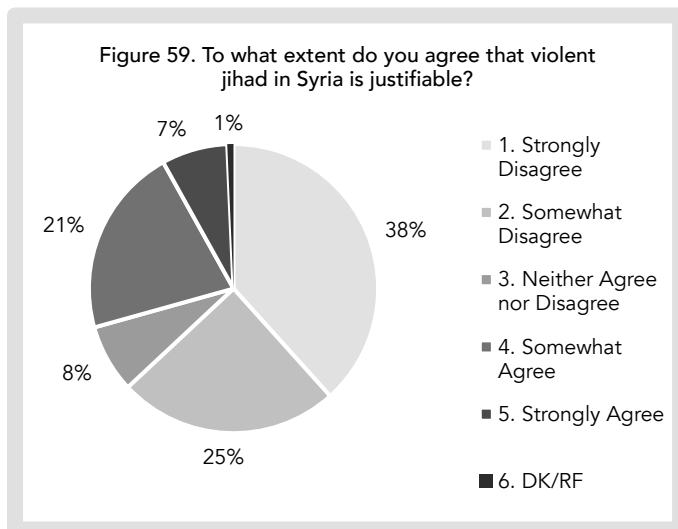
*"No Arab or Muslim accepts the Israeli occupation of Palestine. However, we cannot do anything about this, because we are weak and they are strong. For every Jew we kill, they will kill 20 or 40 Muslims."*

*(Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)*

Most locals do not consider violent jihad in Syria to be justifiable, since they are unsure of the true nature of the situation on the ground in the country.

The vast majority of respondents did not consider Syria an appropriate location for jihad.<sup>183</sup> Indeed, many doubted whether even the friends and families of those who have joined VEOs in Syria supported their loved ones' actions.<sup>184</sup> This is because, on the whole, locals are unsure of the nature of the situation on the ground in Syria – that is, who is killing whom and why – and whether it meets the criteria of legitimate jihad.<sup>185</sup> In this regard, there were fears that those who do go off to fight jihad may end up killing fellow Sunni Muslims, and that Israel is where jihadists should focus their energy. Furthermore, this sense of confusion and disappointment with

the lack of 'jihadist' behavior among VEOs was echoed by some returned fighters, who told respondents that their experiences in Syria had not matched their expectations of jihad, leading them to return to Jordan. Together, these factors informed the sentiments of the 63 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable, and the 28 percent who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 59). With that in mind, opposition to jihad in Syria was not solely linked to religiosity. Indeed, many locals condemned those who have gone to fight in Syria from Tafiela and from the rest of Jordan. For example, despite being strict Muslims, the family of the fiancé of a local who went to Syria to fight broke off their daughter's engagement when they discovered that her fiancé had left. Afterwards, they would not consent to the marriage even after he had returned.<sup>186</sup> Stories



<sup>183</sup> "Even if religion demands that we practice jihad, it does so within certain restrictions, so jihad is only for certain things, and not in Syria, since fighting there doesn't meet the criteria of legitimate jihad in the first place." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>184</sup> "The reaction of the parents of the guy I know who joined JN was that they were extremely dissatisfied because he was their son and he went to do something that was wrong, he didn't go to do something right. Anyone that tells me that they want to go practice Jihad, I try and make them understand that it is wrong, and anyone that tells me that my friend did something good, I tell them no, he did not. His family is upset, and surely he is in a bad place, so he did not benefit from going, not in this life or the afterlife." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>185</sup> "What is happening in Syria is that there are Arab Muslims that are killing each other, slaughtering each other with no justification. nobody knows what is right and what is wrong, even those that go to Syria don't know what is going on, who is fighting who are the Muslims or non-Muslims, the situation in Syria is a fitnah, everyone is killing everyone, and this is very wrong." (Male, 26, Unemployed, Tafiela)

<sup>186</sup> "This guy was engaged, and when he left to fight in Syria, both families fought because the fiancé's family didn't like what the guy did and wanted them to break the engagement. When he came back, he had lost his fiancé and his job." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

like these clearly demonstrate a strong sense of unease among respondents in respect to the situation in Syria, as well as widespread opposition to the idea that Syria is a legitimate location for jihad.

*"The reality of what is happening in Syria has been exposed, and there are people who returned when they saw what was happening there and have since changed their convictions. They thought that it was jihad in the beginning, and when they returned, they told the people what was happening in Syria, that it was not jihad."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

There is a widespread perception in Tafiela that the West is deliberately insulting Islam, which has given rise to the minority view that jihad in Europe is justifiable.

Respondents frequently expressed a sense of outrage and frustration at the manner in which Muslims are treated by the West. Indeed, 75 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the West is humiliating Islam, while 21 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 60). Common examples of supposed Western discrimination against Muslims and their religion included the ban of the face veil worn by some Muslim women in France, as well as the infamous *Charlie Hebdo* cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammad, which caused particular offence.<sup>187</sup> This sense that the West has an intuitionally negative perception of, and attitude to, Islam can be seen to account for quantitative data relating to violent jihad in Europe. While 66 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, a significant minority of 24 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable (see Figure 61). That said, this hostility to the West – though strongly voiced in some instances – is unlikely to translate into acts of violence against Western citizens or interests within Jordan. Instead, it should be taken to reflect popular outrage at the perception that Islam and Muslims are being targeted in some Western nations.

*"If I want to blame Western countries, I would blame Israel, America, and in general all Western countries for taking the rights of Muslims and for not allowing Muslims to build mosques in their countries – which was happening even before Daesh and Al Nusra emerged. In the West, there was a time when they wouldn't let Muslim women wear the hijab or pray in public places. We here in Jordan know this, and we think it's despicable."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

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<sup>187</sup> "Most of the people in Tafiela are neutral about France, and they sympathize with Nice victims and express their sorrow at their deaths. However, some of them say France country is against Islam because of the Charlie Hebdo drawings that insulted the Prophet Mohammad." (Male, 31, Researcher, Tafiela)

Figure 60. To what extent do you agree that the West is humiliating Islam?

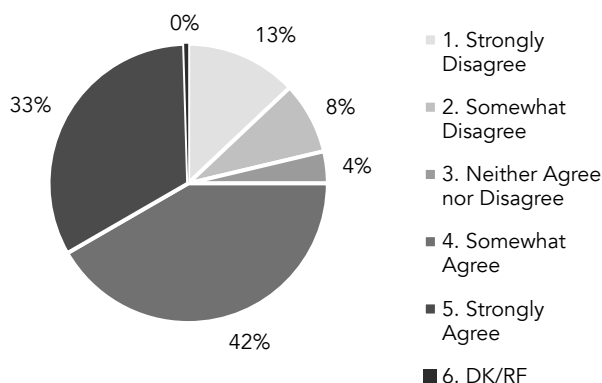
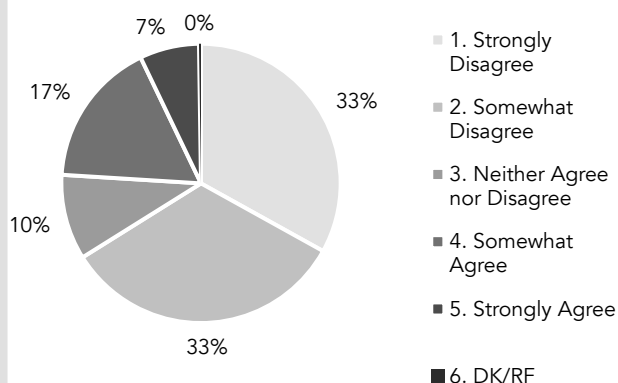


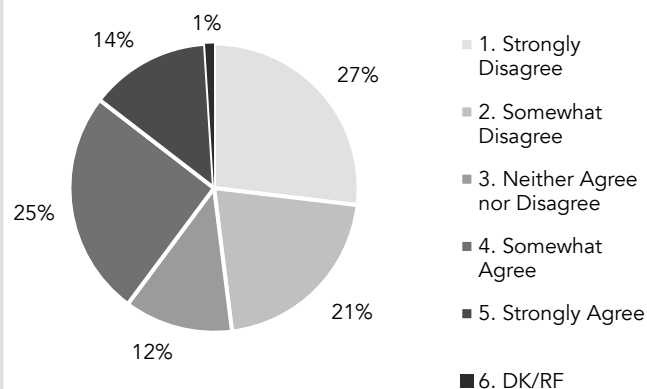
Figure 61. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable?



Many respondents hold strongly sectarian, anti-Shia views and believe that acts of violence against Shias can be considered a justifiable form of jihad.

A significant proportion of respondents expressed sectarian views denigrating Shia Muslims, and saw jihad against Shias as legitimate. Indeed, while 48 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, a significant minority (39 percent) 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that jihad against Shias is justifiable (see Figure 62). That said, sectarian narratives focusing on the differences between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and the duty of Sunnis to fight against Shias, were frequently associated with VEOs and were thought to be commonly used to persuade people to join armed groups in Syria and/or Iraq.<sup>188</sup> Such narratives often link a perceived

Figure 62. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable?



'Shia expansion' in Iraq to the Alawite Assad regime in Syria, which was portrayed as a Shia regime allied with Iran. And while many respondents rejected these narratives,<sup>189</sup> a sizeable minority expressed anti-Shia views, which were often linked to a perception that Sunnis in Iraq and Syria were suffering at the hands of Shias. Some respondents linked an increase in anti-Shia sectarian sentiment in Tafiela to the 2003 Iraq War, which brought Shia leaders to power in Iraq, and especially contributed to the demise and

<sup>188</sup> "Radical groups use a religious narrative that starts with Sunnis and Shias and their civil war in Iraq and says that Sunnis are on the right path and Shia are in the wrong. They appeal to people's emotions by saying that Bashar Al Assad is an Alawite and Sunnis in Syria should be defended from his wickedness." (Male, 26, Engineer, Tafiela)

<sup>189</sup> "We can't throw the Sunnis in the sea or throw the Shias in the sea. Syria is for everyone. We have to coexist with others." (Male, 45, Salesman, Tafiela)

eventual execution of Saddam Hussein, who was popular in Tafiela.<sup>190</sup> With that in mind, quantitative data highlighted that, despite the fact that Shia Muslims make up only a fraction of the population of Jordan, sectarian VEO narratives relating to violence against Shias are likely to hold a lasting appeal for locals in Tafiela governorate.

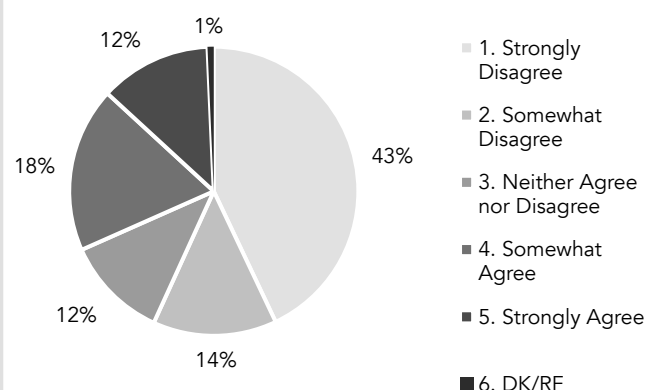
*"As for ISIS in Iraq, we hate them, but we want them to destroy the Shias even more. When ISIS was in Fallujah and Iraq wanted to liberate Fallujah from ISIS, people were supporting the people of Fallujah, and not ISIS, because the people of Fallujah are Sunnis. There is an ideological war here, we cannot ignore any of the involved parties – whether they be Sunnis, Shias, or Liberals – because they are all fighting each other. What's clear is that we here in Jordan sympathize with Sunnis first and foremost, and then with anyone who fights Bashar in Syria. We feel this way because we want a solution to the chaos."*

*(Male, 42, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

### Many in Tafiela believe that VEOs offer members significant amounts of money.

Though the majority of respondents did not believe VEOs are attractive to potential recruits because they offered financial rewards to their members, a minority thought that some local youth have been drawn into radical groups,<sup>191</sup> including ISIS, by the prospect of earning a good salary.<sup>192</sup> They also believed that locals in Tafiela are more likely to be tempted by the perceived monetary rewards of VEO membership than people in other governorates in Jordan, due to the high level of unemployment in the governorate.<sup>193</sup> In fact, some respondents thought that youth in the southern governorates of the country – including Ma'an, Tafiela and Karak – were

Figure 63. To what extent do you agree that violent jihad is an easy way to earn money?



<sup>190</sup> "When Saddam died, we were so sad. Some people say he was a tyrant and a killer, but at the end it is an Islamic country and we felt so sad for its leader's death." (Female, 42, Accountant, Tafiela)

<sup>191</sup> "For sure, poverty and social status play a role. Poverty makes people join these radical groups. They also attract people who have money, but they have to convince them by talking about religion." (Male, 46, Imam, Tafiela)

<sup>192</sup> "If there is a guy who doesn't have a job but has a religious ideology, and then someone tries to convince him to go to Syria and earn 3,000 USD a month, he might see it as an opportunity." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

<sup>193</sup> "A guy who is 22 years old and has nothing to do and no money or food might join ISIS just to survive." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

especially vulnerable to the lure of financial incentives offered by VEOs because the scarcity of jobs and the sense of frustration and hopelessness generated by long-term unemployment in those areas.<sup>194</sup> This belief should be considered a factor contributing to quantitative data, which indicates that, while 57 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad is an easy way to make money, a large minority of 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 63).

*"The people are prone to extremism in my area – but only if they are provided with financial support by radical groups."*

*(Male, 28, Civil Servant, Tafiela)*

**While a minority of locals think ISIS is organizationally cohesive and militarily effective, many see the VEO's loss of territory as proof of its weakness.**

Though most respondents did not think VEOs were militarily effective, some thought that there was a perception among a significant minority of locals that members of radical groups were good soldiers. Perceptions of VEO fighters can be linked to the many videos uploaded onto the Internet by these groups, notably ISIS, which depict mainly young, male fighters as effective and well-coordinated while enjoying a strong sense of camaraderie. This perception appears to have divided locals, since 49 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that members of VEOs always look after each other, while 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 64). That said, considering that ISIS in particular has been steadily losing territory in Iraq and Syria throughout 2015 and 2016, their reputation has been weakened, a fact that may also weaken their appeal among youth. This is evidently the case, considering that 50 percent of Tafiela GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that members of VEOs are skilled fighters, while 38 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 65).

*"As I heard, this guy went there thinking he would be holding a weapon and fighting the Syrian government, but apparently these radical groups told them to wait until they are trained and instead make them do paperwork or get involved in the [Islamic] courts. So they are shocked because they want to hold weapons and fight."*

*(Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)*

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<sup>194</sup> "Youth in the south – in places like in Ma'an, Tafiela and Karak – are prone to radicalism. The economic situation in those places is very bad and there are no jobs, so they think nothing of joining extremist groups." (Male, 28, Journalist, Tafiela)

Figure 64. To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs always look after each other?

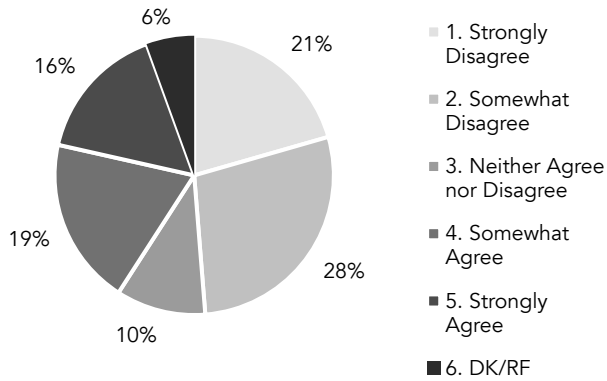


Figure 65. To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs are skilled fighters?

