

## Drivers And Barriers Impacting Propensity Toward Violent Extremism

### ZARQA: TARGET LOCATION ANALYSIS



*Youths in Zarqa City, Zarqa governorate.*

November 2016

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

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## List of Acronyms

AQ:	Al Qa'ida
DK:	'Don't Know' (Guided Questionnaire Answers)
EU:	European Union
FSA:	Free Syrian Army
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
MP:	Member of Parliament
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
RF:	'Refuse to Answer' (Guided Questionnaire Answers)
UK:	United Kingdom
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.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Zarqa is the second most populous governorate after Amman and Zarqa City is the second largest urban area in Jordan, but in contrast to the country's capital both Zarqa City and other urban areas in the governorate, most notably the town of Rusaifeh, suffer from limited government investment and inadequate basic services and infrastructure. This is compounded by high levels of unemployment, particularly among youths, and a poor educational system characterized by overcrowding in classrooms and, some locals fear, themes that may be conducive to violent extremism (VE) within the curriculum. Locals in Zarqa are religiously conservative and the governorate has strong links to Salafism. A number of locals have also traveled to Syria since the start of the conflict and have joined violent extremist organizations (VEOs), including Jabhat Al Nusra (Al Nusra Front) (JN) and the Islamic State in Iraq and Al Sham (ISIS), contributing to the area's reputation as a hub for VEO activity and support. However, quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that the vast majority of respondents in the governorate are opposed to VEOs operating in Syria, particularly ISIS and JN, although many expressed sympathy for the suffering of Syrians and hostility toward the Assad Regime and its regional allies Iran and Hezbollah. Respondents also frequently refer to the murder of Moath Al Kasasbeh by ISIS in early 2015 as a turning point in local attitudes toward VEOs and some think VEO support or sympathy was higher in Zarqa prior to his death.



Locals have mixed attitudes toward the state, and while the majority are supportive of the King and Royal Court, many are hostile to the central government and weak basic service provision is believed to reflect neglect of Zarqa as much as poor municipal governance. The central government is criticized for failing to provide appropriate oversight to prevent mismanagement and corruption among local officials, though corruption and nepotism are also seen as widespread in the capital as well. Few locals think that Zarqa is properly represented in the central government or that it has any interest in improving the situation in the governorate, and as a result there is considerable apathy among voters. The central government also draws criticism for being overly influenced by Jordan's Western allies, and the general picture is one of a population that is frustrated by the country's politicians and has little faith in the democratic process. This can be a gateway to VEO support and/or membership as VEOs such as ISIS play on anger against the state in their propaganda. It may also be leading more locals to embrace Salafism as both the Quietist and Jihadist strains reject the concept of a non-Islamic system of government, and many respondents see membership of Salafist groups, primarily Salafist Jihadists, as a leading gateway to VE.

Despite disappointment with the record of governance in Zarqa, most locals are confident in the ability of the central government and the security services to oppose VEO narratives and recruitment, and to crack down on VE rhetoric. Many referenced Salafist Jihadist protests in Zarqa City in 2011 that became violent, resulting in injuries to police and protesters and scores of arrests. The majority was satisfied that the police acted appropriately, although a minority of locals thinks the police sometimes use excessive force, causing resentment that, combined with other factors such as general discontent with the political system and a

sense of hopelessness about the future, can push some people, most notably youth, toward VE. Locals also have a strongly positive view of the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), underlining the persistence of historical ties between Zarqa and the armed forces, which are also a driver of positive perceptions of the King given his position as Commander in Chief. Although most believed that the security forces will be able to protect them from VEOs and respondents claimed that exposure to VE is uncommon in Zarqa, many locals are afraid of the threat of VEO attacks in Jordan. This is often related to the murder of Kasasbeh and fears of reprisals, though concerns of an imminent attack have lessened as time has passed and no incidents have occurred.

One of the most pressing concerns for respondents was the number of youths who are bored, generally because they are unable to find work, and many think this is contributing to social issues including high levels of drug usage and petty crime, as well as general frustration that is feared to be making them more vulnerable to recruitment by Salafist Jihadist groups and/or VEOs. The majority of respondents see this as a serious issue and 69 percent of Guided Questionnaire (GQ) respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that lots of bored youths is a problem in their community. Many fear that these youths are often increasingly estranged from their own communities, making them more isolated and limiting available counterweights to VE messaging and VEO recruitment. The majority of respondents also think that there is a clear link between poverty and vulnerability to VEO messages in Zarqa, which makes VE more likely in the most economically deprived areas of what is considered to be one of the poorer governorates in the country, particularly Rusaifeh and Hay Massoum. Respondents also believed that the financial aspect of VEO participation makes it attractive to unemployed locals living in poverty as it is seen as lucrative both for recruits and recruiters, and VEO members are thought to be able to earn up to 1,500 US dollars a month, which can be sent back to support family members.

Respondents hold negative views toward the US and its European allies, especially France and the United Kingdom (UK), and frequently mention the 2003 invasion of Iraq as evidence of Western foreign policy failures that have contributed to the suffering of people in the region, particularly Sunnis. Iran is similarly poorly viewed and many locals hold strongly sectarian opinions of Shias, which VEO look to exploit by promoting a narrative that there is a Shia expansion across the region that aims to dispossess the Sunnis living there, with Iraq often given as an example of this process. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is mainly positively regarded, reflecting the economic and political links between the two countries, although some locals expressed concerns that Saudi Arabia is sponsoring extreme religious groups, particularly Salafists in Zarqa. Although there is widespread sympathy for the suffering of Syrians, the majority of locals do not see participating in violent jihad in Syria as acceptable, and this reflects a widespread view that the various armed groups and VEOs are increasingly part of the problem rather than the solution in the conflict, making VEO participation less acceptable than in the past.

## 1.0 ISLAMIST AND VEO SUPPORT

### 1.1 SUPPORT FOR VEOs

VEO support is limited to a small proportion of locals in Zarqa, despite its reputation for social and religious conservatism and as a center of VE in Jordan.

Despite its reputation as a jihadist hub, support for VEOs, including ISIS, JN, and Al Qa'ida (AQ), is low in Zarqa, although a number of local youths are known to have joined JN or ISIS in Syria or Iraq since the start of the conflicts in those countries. Where locals agree with specific VEOs, they express support either for JN or rival ISIS, although some others struggle to differentiate between them and/or AQ. Moreover, although Zarqa governorate is often associated with former AQ leader Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, the majority of locals are dismissive of him and he is not considered an example to be emulated. Further, a growing perception of ISIS as excessively brutal and violent has increased opposition and driven away potential supporters. The murder of Jordanian pilot Moath Al Kasasbeh in early 2015 is the most controversial of such actions by ISIS and is widely seen as a tipping point in public attitudes to the group. Nevertheless, many respondents reported that there is still strong support for ISIS and JN among Salafist Jihadists and some are known to be actively involved in recruitment for JN.

Salafist Jihadists constitute a distinct and self-contained community in Zarqa and although the security services are taking an active approach to monitor and arrest Salafist Jihadists where necessary, there seems to be a limit to how fully they can regulate their behavior if they do not explicitly endorse VEOs or make any attempt to join them. As a result, they continue to spread their ideology, despite the fact that it is similar with that of VEOs in a number of ways, including attitudes to *Takfir* and the necessity of creating a Caliphate, and male youths who are persuaded to become Salafist Jihadists are much more likely to progress to VEO participation or sympathy than their less religious peers. However, most locals dislike and are suspicious of Salafists in general and associate them with VE, although Salafist Quietists are marginally better regarded than Salafist Jihadists because they are considered less openly radical and were not involved in violent demonstrations by Salafist Jihadists in Zarqa City in 2011. Despite this, many respondents think Salafist numbers, from both the Quietist and Jihadist strains, are increasing in Zarqa governorate. Salafist Jihadists are more successful at expanding their membership than Salafist Quietists and, in particular, have thrived in areas with high levels of poverty and low levels of education.

Further, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) retains a strong support base in Zarqa, which it cultivates through social programs, as does its political wing the Islamic Action Front (IAF). Despite an official policy that rejects extremism, elements within the MB are believed to be spreading VE and some members have left the party to join VEOs. Further, it is notable that the popularity of Hamas has waned, although it still enjoys much greater support from locals than any other VEO. It is seen as a resistance group rather than a VEO by most respondents, given its military and political opposition to Israel, and particularly benefits from the support of many locals of West Bank origins, although some support Fatah and are hostile toward Hamas.

*"Once, when I came to see my brother and a young guy from Bir Al Sabe'a was sitting with the two others. I said hello and sat down. He asked me if I wanted to declare my allegiance to Abu Bakr, I asked him which Abu Bakr he was speaking about and if he meant the prophet's friend 'Abu Bakr'"*

*who died thousands of years ago. He said "Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi." I told them to leave our house when he said that. I don't know Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi. I know my King, King Abdullah the Second, and I am a Muslim, I fast and pray, this is what God ordered me to do. One month later, we heard this guy was arrested."*

*(Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)*

While support for both JN and AQ is low overall, there is support among a segment of the population, especially the Salafist Jihadist community, members of which are actively involved in recruitment.

There is limited support for both JN and AQ among locals and, while several respondents personally know individuals from their neighborhoods who have traveled to Syria and become members of JN there,<sup>1</sup> not all went with the express purpose of joining JN.<sup>2</sup> However, the portrayal of Zarqa by Salafist Jihadist sources as resembling a major artery pumping new blood into JN would not seem to be borne out by the views of the vast majority of respondents. In fact, 63 percent of Amman GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to JN in their community, while only 15 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support (see Figure 1 below). Support for AQ is also limited, although slightly fewer GQ respondents thought there is active opposition to the group than JN. 58 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to AQ in their community, while 16 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support (see Figure 1 below). This indicates that the majority of locals does not have the relationship to JN as portrayed in the global media and that, although there is considerable support for the suffering of Syrians at the hands of the Assad Regime, this only translates into active endorsement of membership of JN for a fraction of the population.<sup>3</sup>

In particular, members of the Salafist Jihadist community in Zarqa are widely believed to be both supportive of JN and in some cases to be playing an active role in radicalizing local youths and persuading them to join the VEO in Syria. Salafist Jihadists have been actively involved with JN in Syria since early on in the conflict, using smugglers to facilitate the passage of men and weapons into southern Syria.<sup>4</sup> A number of Salafist Jihadists have promoted JN in Zarqa city following the VEO's emergence as a distinct entity and some are thought to have become senior leaders of the group in Syria.<sup>5</sup> Although they are careful not to advertise their presence publicly, some Salafist Jihadists have been acting as JN recruiters and there are concerns they are targeting youths, and particularly those who are worshippers in local mosques. One respondent whose cousin went to Syria to fight with JN was even able to identify a local butcher as the individual responsible for recruiting and training his cousin on behalf of JN, as well as facilitating transport for local youths to go to Syria. This and other reports indicate that the risk remains

<sup>1</sup> "Most of the people who went from Jordan to fight inside Syria joined JN." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>2</sup> "Our neighbor went to Syria. I do not know really how he went but this was in mid-2014. I only knew this when they opened his house for condolences. He went with no affiliation to a certain group and then he joined JN." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>3</sup> Anjarini, Suhaib 2015. 'How Jordanians have come to dominate JN Front', Al Akhbar News, January 16, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Al Hamadi, Tamer 2013. 'Jordanian Salafists provide lifeline to Syrian Opposition', Al Hayat, translated from Arabic at Al Monitor, April 23, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

that locals may be radicalized and persuaded to join JN as fighters, despite efforts by the central government and security services to crack down on recruitment and VEO membership.

*"There was a butcher in the neighbourhood, and he suddenly turned into a Salafist. My relative started hanging out with this butcher. They became good friends and started going to the mosque together... suddenly he disappeared. After several days, he called his parents and told them I'm in Syria. This was around 2012 to 2013, that butcher was the one who helped him go. He used to tell his parents that after the night prayers, and that he was staying out because he was learning the Qur'an, but it appeared to be that this butcher is actually training them on how to use arms... He didn't only help my relative [join JN], he also helped a group of other male youths to go to Syria. One of them was 11 years old."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

**Former AQ leader Abu Musab Al Zarqawi is not well regarded by the majority of locals, with the notable exception of members of the Salafist Jihadist community.**

Many respondents referenced former Al Qa'ida in Iraq leader and Zarqa local Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, whose VE ideology is considered to have a strong influence over Salafist Jihadists, despite his death in a US airstrike in Iraq in 2006. However, most maintained that support for him and his messages declined significantly in Zarqa after the 2005 Amman hotel bombings and never recovered.<sup>6</sup> Al Zarqawi was a member of the East Bank Jordanian Bani Hassan tribe, which is the largest and most influential tribe in Zarqa, but he is not well regarded by the majority of locals or even fellow tribesmen, many of whom publically disowned him following the 2005 attacks.<sup>7</sup> One respondent, whose uncle was engaged to Al Zarqawi's sister, stated that many people who had met him thought he was mentally unbalanced. Al Zarqawi is mainly seen as a radical and an extremist and expressing open support for him and his ideas is not considered acceptable for the vast majority of locals. This can be seen in the loss of personal popularity that two MB Members of Parliament (MPs) from Zarqa suffered as a result of their decision to attend a gathering to offer condolences to Al Zarqawi's family following his death.<sup>8</sup> Al Zarqawi does not seem to be the figurehead he is sometimes portrayed as for the vast majority of locals, with the notable exception of the Salafist Jihadist community who are still felt to revere him.

*"Abu Musab Al Zarqawi is from my tribe, my uncle was engaged to his sister but I have never met him. Those who met him said he wasn't well, that he was a degenerate and he had many behavioral*

<sup>6</sup> "When the US occupied Iraq and Abu Musab Zarqawi, the Jordanian Center for Strategic Studies found that 95 percent of Jordanians viewed Zarqawi as a freedom fighter, fighting American imperialism. After the attacks of 2005, this percentage declined." (Male, 52, Academic, Amman)

<sup>7</sup> "If you remember Musab Al Zarqawi, he used to work on a bus. He was a troublemaker in Zarqa and he was well-known about it. He used to hit people and we used to talk about it." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa disowned by extended family, clan', NBC News, November 29, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> "Another example that Zarqa rejects extremism; when Abu Musab Al Zarqawi died in Iraq, three parliament members from the MB went to offer their condolences, two from Zarqa, Ibrahim Al Mashwaqi and Ali Abul Sukkar, they lost their popularity after this." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)



issues.”

(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

VEO supporters who are mostly members of the Salafist Jihadist community back either JN or ISIS and the VEOs compete for support, although many other locals struggle to differentiate between the two.

In the instances where respondents were prepared to openly admit that they support a VEO, they either endorsed JN or ISIS but not both.<sup>9</sup> In such cases JN supporters usually positively distinguished the VEO from ISIS,<sup>10</sup> as it is seen as less violent toward civilians.<sup>11</sup> The division into two camps supporting rival VEOs can be linked to the increased friction between JN and ISIS in Syria and is reflected in the views of sympathetic locals. Incidents of fighting between the two groups in Syria have obliged supporters to choose sides and have drawn some male youths in locations like Zarqa and Rusaifeh away from JN and toward ISIS. Interestingly, despite extensive media coverage and the well-publicized murder of pilot Moath Al Kasasbeh by ISIS in February 2015, many locals cannot distinguish between JN, ISIS, or AQ,<sup>12</sup> and consider them to be essentially the same group,<sup>13</sup> or parts of the same group.<sup>14</sup> Some also believe that both JN and ISIS have the same ideology,<sup>15</sup> and although they judge JN to be presenting a less violent image than ISIS, the VEOs are considered identical in most other respects.<sup>16</sup> This indicates that many locals are essentially ignorant about the distinguishing features of various VEOs active in Syria, even if they are broadly sympathetic toward those fighting against the Assad Regime and the suffering of Sunni Muslims.

There has been competition for supporters and recruits between ISIS and JN, reflecting the conflict between the two VEOs in Syria. Both ISIS and JN recruiters are active in Zarqa, with most respondents reasoning that it would not be possible for locals to find their way to Syria or Iraq to join VEOs without help.<sup>17</sup> In June 2015, one Salafist sheikh from Rusaifeh confirmed that support for VEOs was split between factions supporting ISIS and those supporting JN and that there was considerable *fitnah* (internal conflict/strife) between members of the VEOs, as a result of which he encouraged potential Jordanian

<sup>9</sup> “I believe that violent extremist individuals who follow the Jihadist Salafist people lean toward JN and not ISIS.” (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>10</sup> “I believe JN are way milder than ISIS.” (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>11</sup> “People perceive JN to be better than ISIS and AQ, because in the people's eyes ISIS targets civilians while JN and AQ target their external enemies. JN is more accepted.” (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>12</sup> “People who attend my lectures regularly think ISIS and al-JN and AQ are infidels, but normal people think they are all the same.” (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>13</sup> “JN and ISIS are the same and people can't differentiate between JN and ISIS.” (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>14</sup> “We can say that JN and ISIS are exactly the same.” (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>15</sup> “What about JN and Daesh? They hold the same ideology” (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>16</sup> “I believe there is no difference between ISIS and JN in terms of ideology, it's only strategic. They are the same, but al-JN's visible message is less violent.” (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>17</sup> “Someone recruited them and organized them and helped them find the way to Syria. They didn't just leave on their own. They were trained here in Jordan before they left of course. It's not about just picking up a gun because Daesh in Syria are not operating as individuals.” (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

recruits to remain in Rusaifeh rather than exacerbate existing divisions between the VEOs.<sup>18</sup> ISIS has also reportedly been actively targeting supporters of other groups in Zarqa, particularly those of Hamas, and aiming to lure away its supporters through propaganda that specifically questioned Hamas's strategy and even its right to exist. Crucially, some respondents reported that ISIS might actually be attracting support in neighborhoods including Rusaifeh because locals of West Bank origins believe that its success in Syria and Iraq offers the best chance of recovering Palestine from Israel.<sup>19</sup>

*"People stand with JN and think JN is better than ISIS, many people believe this, I was shocked to find this, I was surprised how many supported them; most of the people I spoke to. They did not consider JN to be terrorists, they see them as the ideal example of Salafism, that they are protecting Muslims and from the first time JN appeared in Syria they were there to help the Syrian people and they gave them food and shelter. The Syrian refugees told the people in Zarqa that JN helped them and supported them so people in Zarqa believe JN are better than ISIS."*

*(Female, 22, Researcher, Zarqa)*

The growing perception of ISIS as excessively brutal has driven away some potential supporters but support for ISIS is strong among Salafist Jihadists and some locals are actively recruiting for the VEO.

While ISIS has some supporters, especially among the Salafist Jihadist community,<sup>20</sup> locals are overwhelmingly suspicious or openly critical of ISIS and many have been repulsed by its behavior, particularly since the murder of Kasasbeh.<sup>21</sup> Such well publicized and easily accessed brutality, which includes videos of the murder of civilians in Syria and of Christians in Libya, are taken by some locals to indicate that ISIS members are not even Muslims, despite their propaganda emphasizing the religious justifications for the actions of the VEO.<sup>22</sup> The murder of Kasasbeh is widely acknowledged as a turning point in local attitudes to ISIS,<sup>23</sup> and while it may not have lost the VEO many existing and firm supporters, it has turned locals who had neither a positive nor negative attitude prior to the event strongly against ISIS.<sup>24</sup> Support for ISIS is thought to have been higher, but not widespread outside certain communities,

<sup>18</sup> Su, Alice 2015. 'The boy named jihad: From the ashes of the Arab Spring to the battlefields of Syria', 19 June 2015.

<sup>19</sup> "In Rusaifeh, some people support ISIS, and some support the Salafists. They may work or see it as a way to free Jerusalem. ISIS that is. This is how I see it." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>20</sup> Anjarini, Suhaib 2015. 'How Jordanians came to dominate JN Front', Al Akhbar, January 16, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> "The media content ISIS published showcasing the violence pushed people away." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>22</sup> "People in my area are convinced that ISIS are coming with an American agenda, they are not Muslim. Since they published the films of the Christians near the sea (The Egyptians). When they burned Moath [Al Kasasbeh], they say that they are foreigners they aren't Muslim, they claim to be representing Islam" (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>23</sup> "After Moath the people's view of ISIS changed, and now they believe that ISIS is a terrorist group and is a danger to them." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>24</sup> "At first the attitude to VE participation was neutral now it is rejected by the community I live in. They no longer accept it, and although it was a bit sympathetic due to the injustice in Syria now it is no longer accepted especially after the incident of Kasasbeh." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

particularly Salafist Jihadists, before Kasasbeh's death.<sup>25</sup> As a result, 67 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to ISIS in their community, while 17 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support. Some locals even interpreted the VEO's behavior as being so grotesque that ISIS in fact has a foreign/US agenda, making support even less likely.<sup>26</sup> However, some believe there is a residual presence of ISIS supporters in Zarqa. Notably, in the video in which Kasasbeh was killed, ISIS identified the homes in Zarqa of other Jordanian Air Force pilots and offered financial rewards for information about them, as a result of which a number of locals were arrested by the security forces for attempting to make contact with ISIS and supply these details in order to claim the reward.

Despite a growing public rejection of ISIS, many local Salafist Jihadists are ISIS supporters and have much in common with the VEO ideologically, making them more likely to become active VEO members.<sup>27</sup> This view is reinforced by instances of public demonstrations by Salafists in Zarqa in support of ISIS, including one gathering in 2014 at which participants publically proclaimed their allegiance to Baghdadi, the video of which was widely circulated on the Internet, although it drew derisory comments from some viewers.<sup>28</sup> One respondent also stated he had observed Salafist Jihadists in his home neighborhood of Rusaifeh celebrating the capture of Kasasbeh. In fact, Salafist Jihadists have been actively trying to radicalize male youths in Zarqa and often by targeting them in mosques and parents have reported that children and youths in some instances started to say that they wanted to go and fight jihad in Syria, having never previously shown any VE inclinations.<sup>29</sup> In one case parents were so alarmed that they complained to the authorities and those Salafist Jihadists believed to have been grooming local children for jihad were told to leave the neighborhood, along with their families.<sup>30</sup> This indicates that Salafist Jihadists risk angering locals if they are too open about promoting their own or any VEO ideology and that these locals are not afraid to take action, especially if they think their children are being indoctrinated.

Further, some individuals in Zarqa have been working to promote ISIS in their communities,<sup>31</sup> also for recruitment purposes, although they are careful to conceal their identities. However, some recruiters are certainly active in targeting male youths in Zarqa using printed propaganda material like flyers and pamphlets, which draw on the Qur'an and the Hadith to give religious arguments in favor of jihad and to

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<sup>25</sup> "It's hard to get the sympathy of Jordanians and Palestinians especially after the Moath Kasasbeh situation. Before that the situation was that ISIS were fighting America and that was a way of getting our sympathy." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>26</sup> "Some people say ISIS is a creation of the US just like AQ." (Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)

<sup>27</sup> "They do call me an infidel. Everyone who is not with them or did not abide by their Caliphate is an infidel in their opinion." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>28</sup> Al Kawn News 2014. 'Jordanian citizens acclaimed Caliph of the Muslims Al Baghdadi in Zarqa governorate', Al Kawn News, July 31, 2014.

<sup>29</sup> "I remember that in Shoumar, two years ago, Salafists jihadists or those who belong to ISIS, (I do not differentiate between them), they started working with the same methods as Tablighi Jamaat, they were in the mosques 24/7 and very close to the youth... my aunt told me that when the youths got back to their homes they were saying that they wanted to go to Syria." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>30</sup> "I remember at that time many people made an official complaint. I do not know if this was via the security forces or was through the tribes but those groups were expelled from the city and their families were asked to leave...later we were certain that they belonged to ISIS." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>31</sup> "If we look for people in Jordan who talk about ISIS, you won't find any. Especially in the past year." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

support ISIS's interpretation of Islam.<sup>32</sup> One respondent stated that a friend of his brother who had fought for ISIS in Syria and Iraq had told him he was recruited by an individual working for ISIS in his neighborhood, and who was paid by the VEO to find recruits in Jordan.<sup>33</sup> Others in Zarqa demonstrate their sympathy for ISIS by using ISIS flags to decorate their homes, and some have gone as far as to pledge allegiance to Baghdadi. This includes a number of locals from the neighborhoods of Awajan and Bir Al Sabe'a,<sup>34</sup> who declared their allegiance via a phone conversation with ISIS members.<sup>35</sup> The city of Zarqa and the smaller town of Rusaifeh are the main locations for ISIS supporters and recruiters, and several respondents described how specific mosques in these urban centers are known locally for their association with ISIS.<sup>36</sup>

*"Look, if it wasn't for what happened with Kasasbeh Jordanians would sympathize with Daesh. I mean until now they hate the Syrian regime and hate Bashar, but not only Bashar. They hate the Syrian state. They don't want there to be a state. After Kasasbeh they were very moved by that incident, they were saddened and they had respect for the martyr that he was. They had a reaction toward that so if someone was still in agreement with Daesh, he didn't voice that opinion. Inside of him he still wanted to have an Islamic state. He still supported the Islamic movement and supported all this sectarian hatred. He was still proud of being the righteous Sunni. He wouldn't dare call himself Daesh anymore thought. Out of respect or fear. Out of fear for the government or because he would consider himself to be humane and that this isn't the true face of Islam."*

*(Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)*

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<sup>32</sup> "[The ISIS supporters] had their flyers and booklets, I never took anything from them, because I don't like the group. They would distribute the flyers to those they trusted, the content included: The Qur'an, and the Hadith, with their own explanation of it, encouraging people to join jihad. Aiming to brainwash people...they have explanations of the Qur'an and the Hadith, this is how they attract and convince youths. They tell them that ISIS is following proper Islam." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>33</sup> "My brother's friend went to Syria to join ISIS then he was transferred from there to Iraq, and then he came back. At that time he was about 26-27 years old. When my brother asked him, he told him that the people who recruit them to go to Syria receive money from the groups." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>34</sup> "In [the Zarqa suburb of] Awajan, there are maybe 15 people, other than the ones that announced their allegiance to Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi on the phone and got arrested, who went [to prison for supporting ISIS] then came back. Near us, there are two guys, Bedouins from Bir Al Sabe'a, who announced their support for ISIS on the phone and one managed to enter Syria. Another two guys who announced their fealty [to ISIS] got sentenced to five years each [in jail]." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>35</sup> Al Shishani, Murad Batal 2014. 'Jihadist way of life in Jordan', BBC News, February 18, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> "One time a person told me that he doesn't want to go to the mosque close to his house because he doesn't like the sheikh there, so I told him why don't you go to that other one, he said the other mosque is an ISIS mosque." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

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Support for Hamas has waned as the followings of VEOs active in Syria have grown but Hamas continues to largely be seen as a legitimate resistance group rather than a VEO.

Respondents were divided as to whether or not Hamas has many supporters in Zarqa: 42 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hamas in their community, while 32 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition (see Figure 1 below). Most respondents emphasized that Hamas is seen as distinct from other VEOs because it is seen as a legitimate resistance organization opposing Israel,<sup>37</sup> in addition to which some maintained that other pro-Palestinian groups including the Al Qassam and Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades are also considered to be distinct from VEOs like JN and ISIS.<sup>38</sup> Several respondents confirmed that Hamas enjoys strong support in their immediate neighborhoods, including one respondent from Bierain who judged that most locals there back Hamas.<sup>39</sup> However, Hamas does not have the backing of all West Bank Jordanians because many of them are Fatah supporters. However, it is difficult to establish the exact split between Hamas and Fatah supporters in Zarqa,<sup>40</sup> since locals who side with one faction or the other are not official members.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Hamas has alienated some supporters as a result of its governance of Gaza, which some see as repressive. Although some reported that most people in their communities are pro-Hamas, mainly due to strong local sympathies for Palestinians, several also argued that Hamas is no longer considered to be a relevant group. In particular, its popularity has declined as that of VEOs active in Syria, including ISIS and JN, has risen, as many locals see these VEOs as more active and successful,<sup>42</sup> as a result of which locals are also far more likely to discuss ISIS than Hamas.<sup>43</sup> While Hamas offers an alternative to VEOs in terms of ideology and there is a certain amount of natural sympathy for it as a faction that represents Palestinians and opposes Israel,<sup>44</sup> it therefore has rivals in the form of Fatah as well as JN and ISIS.

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<sup>37</sup> "Most of the people here differentiate between Hamas and other groups." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>38</sup> "For many people who are not politically involved or affiliated with a certain group or tribe, Hamas has a different status (from VEOs), and not just Hamas, but also Al Qassam, al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and even the Brigades of the Popular Front; Abu Ali Mustafa." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>39</sup> "Hamas is very popular among the people in Bierain. For example, even for people who are not politically involved, from the tribes or those people who adopt socialist ideologies, Hamas is different. The rest [JN/ISIS/AQ] are taken all together in one package however JN is not as bad as ISIS." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>40</sup> "Support for Hamas increased after the last war in Gaza, but as you know people in Zarqa are mostly Palestinian and some of them are Fatah supporters, and the others support Hamas, and if you are a Fatah supporter it's normal not to support Hamas and the same applies if you are Hamas supporter, you don't support Fatah. Some liberal people see Hamas as an exporter of terrorism, and believe that they don't allow the people of Gaza to live in safety, and they stole their chances for better life. Some people who support Hamas only do so because of Hamas is ultimately a religious group." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>41</sup> "There is not more support for Hamas in Zarqa because some people do not support Hamas, they support Fatah but no one can tell how many people support each party as they are not organized political parties here in Jordan. People support them and believe that they belong to them but are not official members." (Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)

<sup>42</sup> "They see ISIS and JN as a success story. They are ignorant of people that are actually making a difference and fighting for their freedom, like Hamas and other resistance groups." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>43</sup> "[In Zarqa] no one speaks about Hamas. Everyone only speaks about ISIS." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>44</sup> "ISIS or JN or any other groups in Syria or Iraq have a major difference between them and Hamas. Hamas is actually resisting an occupation against those who took Palestine by force." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

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*" Hamas is completely different [from VEOs], it's a resistance faction that is defending the people of Palestine, they have integrity and are fighting honorably for the benefit of Islamic and Arab people. As for Hamas, many people in Jordan sympathize with Palestinians. Many Jordanians are members of Hamas, and people differentiate between someone who is fighting Israel and someone who is fighting in Syria against Muslims."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

**Hizb ut-Tahrir is not popular among most locals and has the worst name recognition of any leading political or religious group in Zarqa.**

There is limited support among locals for Hizb ut-Tahrir despite it being the oldest Islamist party in Jordan,<sup>45</sup> and some think that the party has little or no members in the two largest urban areas in the governorate, Zarqa and Rusaifeh.<sup>46</sup> Respondents often contrasted Hizb ut-Tahrir with Salafist Quietists and Salafist Jihadists,<sup>47</sup> and one emphasized that it is a political party that focuses on the political sphere in contrast to the Salafist Jihadists, who are not considered to be political.<sup>48</sup> More specifically, 44 percent of GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Hizb ut-Tahrir in their community, while 23 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hizb ut-Tahrir (see Figure 1 below). Hizb ut-Tahrir also had the highest percentage of GQ respondents who stated that they had 'not heard of them' of any political or religious group active in Zarqa, at 12 percent, indicating that it struggles to appeal to locals in the governorate and is seen as a fringe party that has limited relevance or impact in Zarqa.

*"Most people in Zarqa don't know about Hizb ut-Tahrir. Some areas like Hashmiyeh, Bieran, Dleil and some areas of Zarqa city are not full of very educated people, which means many people don't know or have not even heard of groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir."*

*(Female, 22, Researcher, Zarqa)*

**Despite a visible presence in Zarqa, Salafist Jihadists lack popular support, although they appear to be gaining support in some parts of the governorate.**

Respondents identified specific mosques that are known for their Salafist Jihadist preaching and membership, such as the Hay Massoum Mosque for instance, and that although the security forces monitor these mosques, there is little they can do to shut them down, as Salafist Jihadists only go there to

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<sup>45</sup> "Jabhat Al Tahrir is the oldest extremist group in Jordan" (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>46</sup> "Other groups, like the Tahrir Party, are rarely seen [in Zarqa or Rusaifeh]." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>47</sup> "Al Tahrir Party is a little different in implementing its ideas than Salafist [Quietists]." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>48</sup> "There's a difference between them [Salafist jihadists] and Tahrir party. The Tahrir party is a political party only. The takfirists behave as if they are not political. That they are religious and and they have their own military. But the Tahrir party is only political, they believe in being supported by other parties." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

pray.<sup>49</sup> Salafist Jihadists usually pray at mosques where the imam is known to share their beliefs and avoid mosques at which imams support the central government and/or the King. Despite the fact that such mosques remain open, respondents confirmed that the security forces have dedicated considerable resources to their surveillance, which has reduced the ability of local Salafist Jihadists to actively recruit or hold events and protests.<sup>50</sup> With regard to protests, there have been a number of well-publicized Salafist demonstrations in Zarqa in the last five years,<sup>51</sup> footage of which is available on the Internet.<sup>52</sup> Some analysts have interpreted these demonstrations as evidence of an increase in support for Salafist Jihadists in Zarqa and focus in particular on the expansion of Salafist Jihadist numbers in the urban centers of Zarqa and Rusaifeh, which is seen to be occurring in parallel with a weakening of traditional tribal practices and linkages.<sup>53</sup> However, several respondents stated that such protests are not explicitly aimed at increasing Salafist Jihadist support and, although they can be taken to show the number of local Salafist Jihadists, highlighted that their main purpose is to protest the incarceration of Salafist Jihadists.<sup>54</sup>

In particular, many respondents linked poverty in a given neighborhood to the number of Salafist Jihadists,<sup>55</sup> with the Saifa area typical of this trend.<sup>56</sup> This may account for the long-standing association between Salafist Jihadism and Zarqa, as it is widely viewed as one of the most economically deprived governorates in the country, especially Rusaifeh and Zarqa city. This has a direct impact on the education levels of locals, as higher education in Jordan is not free and poor families are less likely to be able to send their children to university.<sup>57</sup> One respondent went so far as to say that in very local poor households, even if the father was not a Salafist, then it was probable that the economic situation of the family, not the father's religious inclinations, would cause his sons to grow up to be Salafists.<sup>58</sup> Some

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<sup>49</sup> "In Zarqa you can find specific mosques for different groups. Like Hay Massoum mosque, radical groups gather there. The ministry can't stop them because they can't stop people from praying." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>50</sup> "When you have no good voices being heard, you give place for evil ones to spread. Unfortunately takfirists are spreading now, but because they are being monitored, their activities are minimal." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>51</sup> "I meet Salafist people and see protests organized by Salafists." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>52</sup> Youtube 2011. 'Zarqa demonstration: Salafist Speech, YouTube, April 19, 2011. Available from: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJw1JasxOtw>>

<sup>53</sup> Alami, Mona 2015. 'Jordanian Salafists switch allegiance to IS', Al Monitor, April 20, 2015.

<sup>54</sup> "They had very general demands; but the main one was about the Salafists being arrested a lot by the government and they were calling for the release of imprisoned Salafists." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>55</sup> "We have Salafists in Rusaifeh but sometimes you can't even distinguish between them. We have many different groups and you can't tell which is which. The Salafist protests in 2013 that happened in Zarqa, some people in Rusaifeh believed sympathy for them and some people from here joined them for support. Sometimes you see faces and you recognize them. Some people from my tribe also sympathized with them." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>56</sup> "In Saifa, there is extreme poverty and deprivation, there are Salafists jihadists there." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>57</sup> "Many youths were convinced with their [Salafist jihadist] discourse and especially the youths who were not enrolled in the university." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>58</sup> "They are those who earn less than the poverty line, meaning less than 180 JDs per month, either individuals or people with families. If a person who earns only this amount of money didn't become a Salafist, his children will." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)



respondents, including one who is a teacher, were also critical of the education system in the governorate and explained that it is failing pupils who often leave school with a low standard of education, often highlighting that poor education means youths are less able to question religious arguments and justifications put forward both by Salafist Jihadists and VEOs.

While there was some limited support among respondents for Salafist Jihadists, most opposed them, and several expressed strong hostility, particularly toward the religious sheikhs who are seen as the leaders of the local Salafist Jihadist community. These sheikhs have been active in increasing support among local male youths and have organized demonstrations attended by local youths.<sup>59</sup> Salafist Jihadists have been successful in attracting youths from both East and West Bank communities,<sup>60</sup> and appear to have a clear policy of expanding their membership by targeting youths from poorer backgrounds and with low levels of education.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, older locals are largely hostile toward Salafist Jihadists, believing that they are manipulating male youths into absorbing VE messages,<sup>62</sup> and that it would also be better for the community in general if those with a VE mindset went to Syria rather than remained in Zarqa.<sup>63</sup> In fact, the majority of respondents (52 percent) indicated opposition to Salafist Jihadists,<sup>64</sup> with some reporting that they are keen to help the government oppose them, while a minority (15 percent) reported that there is some support for Salafist Jihadists in their community (see Figure 1 below). One respondent even physically aided the security forces in fighting Salafist Jihadists during protests in Zarqa in 2011.<sup>65</sup> This indicates that despite the both visible and at times vocal presence of Salafist Jihadists in the governorate, they are generally viewed with suspicion and many locals are concerned that they may try to recruit and/or radicalize male youths in their communities.

*"People think its wrong that the youth are joining jihad. People blame the Salafist Jihadist movement and blame those that join jihad. They reject them and they think they are doing*

<sup>59</sup> "We had a [prayer] group near us made up of eight Sheikhs, they were coming for a gathering at Sheikh Sufian's. All Salafists. They met on Thursday night. Sheikh Ali (Sheikh Sufian's brother) Sheikh Saed, Sheikh Mahmoud, and a few others joined a demonstration the next day (Friday) and all the kids in our neighborhood were present at the demonstration. I don't know how they convinced them to join." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>60</sup> "Another guy who went to Syria and came back to Jordan, he was 23 years old when he left. He used to do vocational work. He is part of one of the biggest Jordanian tribes. He was well mannered. I was shocked he went. He used to work in the mosque, and met with the Salafists jihadists. His dream was to be part of them." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>61</sup> "Most of those people [Salafist jihadists] aren't usually educated or cultured, they come from financially unprivileged families." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>62</sup> "The Salafists in general and their leaders [are responsible for VE]. Not all of them, but they show this kind of extremism in some situations such as when they tried to attack some Jordanian policemen." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>63</sup> "[Only] the Salafists are extreme. Everyone hates the sheikhs. The Salafists are the ones that are brainwashing youths. If someone is extremist, we would rather they go to Syria rather than stay in our area" (Male, 25, carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>64</sup> "I would say that 95 percent of the people in Zarqa reject the violent extremist groups... There were festivals rejecting the Salafist jihadist presence and well as demonstrations in Zarqa." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>65</sup> "In Zarqa, people were extremely opposed to the Salafist demonstrations; they attacked and stoned them." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)



*something wrong. During the demonstrations of Salafist Jihadists, the people of Zarqa stood with the state and fought the movement."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

*"In Rusaifeh, there are a lot of Salafists. I reside in an area very close to the area where Mohammad Al Maqdisi used to live so we do have lots of Salafists and also the MB. We can definitely differentiate between them, we have Salafist Jihadists and the other ones which are quite close to the approach of Maqdisi... The Salafist Jihadists are the most active group."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

**Hezbollah is not popular among most locals, largely due to negative perceptions of its role in the Syrian conflict.**

The majority of respondents expressed negative views of Hezbollah. In particular, its participation in the Syrian conflict on the side of the Assad Regime and its association with Iran reduced the level of support that it enjoyed prior to the start of the conflict.<sup>66</sup> Some also expressed hostility toward Hezbollah specifically because it is a Shia group,<sup>67</sup> that some believe is directly controlled by Iran, and is viewed as an element of a broader Shia expansion across the region.<sup>68</sup> However, there is some limited support for Hezbollah among locals, mainly due to its role as a resistance group against Israel.<sup>69</sup> Several respondents commended its support for Palestine and successful military campaigns against Israel, including the 2006 war and the guerilla warfare against the Israel Defense Forces that ultimately moved them to pull out of South Lebanon in 2000.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, 53 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Hezbollah in their community, while only 11 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for Hezbollah (see Figure 1 below). As the local population is mixed between East and West Bank Jordanians, it might have been expected that more respondents would see Hezbollah in a

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<sup>66</sup> "The Syrian Regime requesting that Hezbollah and Iran fight ISIS and the other groups pushed people more to join the violent extremist groups to fight against the Shia." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>67</sup> "My mother is Palestinian and she hates Hezbollah and sees them as a bad Shia group and thinks that all the Shia people are very bad. Some Syrians think Hezbollah has destroyed their county and is with Assad's Regime. They say who are Hezbollah to change the Syrian culture and to change our politics, who are they? The Palestinians have reasons to hate and to love Hezbollah." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>68</sup> "Shias whether we like it or not are enemies for Muslims and Arabs, they look at us from Persian point of view. I wanted to write a tweet about Arab countries wanting to consider Hezbollah a terrorist group, I was amazed on how late they are in realizing that. We are against them 100 percent because they are against Islam. When Hassan Nasrallah said 25 years ago that Lebanon is an Iranian state, what do you think this meant?" (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>69</sup> "There is a difference between Hamas and other extremist groups in Syria, Hezbollah too is considered different." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>70</sup> "Hezbollah was founded in Lebanon, and they were defending their territory, because there was an occupation." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

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positive light given its opposition to Israel, however it seems clear that its reputation has suffered from the well-publicized decision of the VEO to send fighters to support the Assad Regime.

*"Hezbollah is the opposite of the MB and the Salafists and some people are with the MB and Salafists and they are against Hezbollah. They think Hezbollah are the bad guys because they went to Syria and they destroyed Syria, but many West Bank Jordanians do not agree and we have many of them in Zarqa City, maybe there are more of them here than even East Bank Jordanians. They support Hezbollah because it has supported the Palestinians for many years and it has a close history with Palestine and in the recent war in Gaza Hezbollah stood with the Palestinians and they help Palestinians in Lebanon."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

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

**Salafist Quietists are better regarded than Salafist Jihadists among most locals, although Salafist Jihadists have been more successful in expanding their support base in Zarqa.**

While Salafist Quietists are not popular in Zarqa, their exact numbers are difficult to ascertain due to the similar appearance of Salafist Quietists and Jihadists.<sup>71</sup> Some respondents reported that Salafist Quietists have been able to build their support base in Zarqa because the central government has been supporting or at least not obstructing them, as they oppose violent behavior and provide a counterweight to VEO ideologies.<sup>72</sup> Despite their rejection of jihad, most locals are generally hostile toward Salafist Quietists and many include them in a broader group along with Salafist Jihadists and even ISIS supporters, although they are marginally better regarded than Salafist Jihadists. 47 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to Salafist Quietists in their community, while 20 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for them (see Figure 1 below). Salafist Quietists are concentrated in particular neighborhoods, including Hashmиеyeh,<sup>73</sup> and some respondents also positively differentiated Salafist Quietists from Jihadists as better educated,<sup>74</sup> while many others see them as two sides of the same coin.<sup>75</sup> Notably, there have been some tensions between the groups and one respondent, a leading Salafist Quietist, emphasized that there are considerable differences between Salafist Quietists and Jihadists,<sup>76</sup> that they strongly disagree with each other on a number of topics,<sup>77</sup> and that it was likely that there would have been physical fighting between them if the security forces were not so effective. The disjoint between the two groups would appear to indicate that the Quietist branch is a barrier rather than a gateway to VE given their opposition to jihad but popular hostility also shows that

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<sup>71</sup> "You cannot tell which group this person belongs to, Salafist Jihadist, Salafist Quietists, or ISIS. They have almost the same attire, the Afghani look, dresses, turbans, and beards. It was easier before, because the Afghani attire was available in the market. It's the fashion of sheikhs. A beard alone doesn't tell you much. But the Afghani attire is almost a sure sign. This is for Salafists in general. There is no difference [in dress] between Salafist Jihadists and Salafist Quietists." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>72</sup> "The Salafists are the most active, because the Jordanian government supports them. I'm not trying to defend the government, but I think they did that because they were trying to distinguish a between the Salafi movement and Daesh. I mean that even though they were extremist they were not Daesh." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>73</sup> "The Salafists quietists are the most active group in Hashmиеyeh and they have the most support." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>74</sup> "I noticed that Salafist [Quietists] are in general educated and care about knowledge and books, they teach the youth about religious doctrine. As for Salafists jihadists, most of the people I met had a criminal history." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>75</sup> "Any Salafist is an active Salafist all day long; it's like having a group who only supports a certain ideology and another group who is actually a believer of that ideology. It's hard to find a Salafist who is not an activist, and just a supporter." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>76</sup> "So referring to the takfirist as Salafists is wrong. I wrote a tweet on my twitter account criticizing Al Jazeera because they called the takfirist "Salafists", this is also how they reported on the recent events in Irbid, they called the troublemakers Salafists and this is not right. Salafists are the ones who get hurt the most by those takfirists. But in their reports they call them Salafists, and sometimes they call the Salafists jihadists, and I think they do this deliberately." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>77</sup> "They don't like each other; but yes they might meet in mosques." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

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many locals consider their religious views to be extreme even if they eschew jihad in general and specifically fighting in Syria and Iraq.

Although Salafist Quietists have been making efforts to expand their membership base, potential recruits have been lost to the Jihadist strain.<sup>78</sup> One Salafist Quietist cleric stated that the Salafist Quietists do not have an organized program to recruit new members, although their sermons are aimed at attracting listeners.<sup>79</sup> The Tablighi Jamaat organization is also active in reaching out to locals although its focus is on increasing observance and religiosity in general rather than enhancing Salafist Quietist numbers per se. In contrast, Salafist Jihadists have been more success in attracting new members, particularly among male youths. Some of these youths originally attended classes given by Salafist Quietists but when these classes were banned by the central government around 2001 many of the same youths were attracted to the Salafist Jihadist community instead.<sup>80</sup> Locals nonetheless expressed disquiet at the expansion in Salafist Quietist numbers, as they are still seen as a group with radical views. Of particular concern is the number of Salafist Quietist schools that are feared to be indoctrinating young children with radical religious views and are in some cases replacing formal government-run education.<sup>81</sup> While Salafist Quietism could offer an alternative to Salafist Jihadism, which is ideologically closer to VEOs and whose members are more likely to go to fight abroad, but Salafists of all types are unpopular among most locals, many of whom fear that any kind of Salafism is a step toward VEO membership. This view would seem to be corroborated by the admission of a respondent who is a leading Quietist cleric in Zarqa and Jordan as a whole that Salafist Jihadism is both growing at a faster rate and more appealing for some youths than Quietism.

*"The difference between Salafist Quietists and takfirists is huge and they fight all time on this subject. I believe that takfirists are extremists. We can't meet at all. A lot of them in their writings mention that we are wrong and they believe they should kill us. Its more than just differences in belief, but the differences are political, religious, beliefs, and how to apply religion. That's why we can't meet and discuss religious issues together. Of course there were feuds between us but thank*

<sup>78</sup> "We preach to people to become Salafists. Our Sheikh, may God rest his soul, told us to preach what we know. He used to give advice and that's it. No orders. Even my kids, I just give them advice. I'm not violent at all with them. Now when I preach in mosques, I urge people to make their society a better place. If someone doesn't agree with me so what? I do what I do for society's sake and to be rewarded by God. Yes I want to affect society, but I consider this a positive thing." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>79</sup> "I consider that Salafism is the real definition of Islam. I told you before that Salafism is not a political party. Salafists preaching is based on grounded knowledge. Our activities consist of writing books about religious preaching and we sometimes write articles. We don't recruit people. In my classes, I might find 100 people attending and I won't even know the names of 10 people because we are not a political party and we welcome anyone." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>80</sup> "We have a 1000 [Salafist] books, because our teaching is based on knowledge. I have a program on TV. We have Fatwas." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>81</sup> "You can even believe how Salafist [Quietists] influence society itself. In my area, I used to hear voices of young children reading the Qur'an in a house I pass by every day while I'm going to work. I thought it was a school at first, but I knew there was no school there so I thought maybe it's a TV. One day, I was a bit late, so I saw a Kia bus carrying young children in very large numbers, and they were all wearing Salafist costumes. I then realized that those children are actually not going to school, they are coming to this house instead." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

God our security in Jordan is very strong... I can say that the [Salafist Jihadists] are spreading more than Salafist Quietism among the people unfortunately. In the past I was banned from giving lectures for five years, this happened 15 years ago but for no real reason. During this time I noticed that takfirists spread more, because when you have an empty glass, you fill it with different things. You might put honey inside, or you might put blood. This is exactly what happened. Youths in Zarqa used to attend our weekly lectures and sometimes twice a week, when these classes stopped, our youth started to attend takfirists classes because they didn't know who they were. This period of time is what converted people."

(Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

**Focus: Tablighi Jamaat are active in spreading Salafist Quietist values in Zarqa.**

"The groups from Tablighi Jamaat, they work on their own. They dress like the Salafists. They wear the dishdasha which is kind of an ankle length garment and they say 'Islam is a religion for humanity, Islam aims to bring light to people's hearts', and they use peaceful methods to spread their messages like 'Allah is love, Allah is Peace.' They focus on the emotional aspect of matters. This is their gateway. They tour certain cities every three weeks and they try to talk to youths. They are similar to Salafists but we do not consider them to be the same. Every three weeks, they go to either the countryside or the cities inside Jordan and also they go to countries like Bangladesh or Afghanistan. They walk in the streets and talk with the people, they go to the mosques, they go to the shops and talk with the vendors. Similarly to the work of Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, they talk to people they find smoking, and if they find photos and so on but they do not try to impose like other groups. At the end of the three weeks, they start working with the youths they meet in the mosques and they try to recruit them to come to attend their camps in order to include them in the work. They are not targeted by the government, they do not have any political involvement or activities. So they take the people to training camps and then they are given the choice either to continue working with them or not. Their attitude and speeches were really nice. When he was 15 or 16 years old, they came to the mosques and my brother was very excited about them and started to go frequently to their lessons. So after a while they asked him if he would like to join them... and it was a bit strange for us. Nothing really changed that was obvious, but what did change were his general attitude and how often he attended the mosque."

(Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

**The MB has substantial support in Zarqa, which it cultivates through social programs.**

There is strong support among locals for the MB, particularly among West Bank Jordanians, who make up a significant percentage of the population of the governorate, and the MB is believed to have considerable influence and to be wealthy, allowing it to finance its social programs and study centers. Most respondents made the assessment that the MB is the most prominent political and social Islamic movement in Zarqa and has a strong support base. However, support for the IAF, the political wing of the MB, was modest and 44 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some'

support for the IAF in their community, while 29 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition (see Figure 1 below). The MB maintains its influence and membership in Zarqa through its network of Qur'anic centers and develops its grassroots support base by providing free religious education to locals,<sup>82</sup> as well as funding and organizing religiously-themed holiday camps and activities for local children and youths,<sup>83</sup> such as soccer games and book clubs.<sup>84</sup> The main aim of this program of events and clubs is to attract and retain supporters to ensure that they and their relatives will vote for MB candidates in elections.<sup>85</sup> The MB generally dominate local and parliamentary election when they are not boycotting them, as they did in 2013,<sup>86</sup> although some locals maintained that a less conservative party would likely outperform them.<sup>87</sup> Over all, the MB continues to be seen as politically dominant in the governorate, despite the view of some respondents that support for the group had been damaged by divisions within the party, which has led to some of the leadership and membership-base breaking away from the official entity to form several competing parties in the course of 2015,<sup>88</sup> and which caused it to lose some of its influence among locals.<sup>89</sup> As a result, if the MB or the central government were to make use of the MB's social capabilities in Zarqa to combat the spread of VEOs then they would be able to reach many locals.

*"Zarqa is home to a large number of Palestinian refugees, sons of tribes from Jordan coming to train to join the JAF, Chechens, Circassians and the Bedouins from the Bani Hasan [tribe], a real mixture of people. By nature, Zarqa is a civil, conservative society. The MB always wins the elections in Zarqa. In 1989, a fair parliamentary election, the MB won. The city is conservative and religious. Most people in Zarqa are of Palestinian origins and they tend to vote for the MB."*

<sup>82</sup> "The MB could push people toward extremism. This might be done indirectly but the more committed extreme sects could lead people to join jihad. For example the MB has their programs where they take youth for two months in the desert to learn the laws of Islam. They also work in Palestinian refugee camps where the conditions are dire, they brainwash people." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>83</sup> "I was involved in a number of centers working on different issues of reading, volunteering, and understanding and applying the teachings in the Qur'an. In each neighborhood there was around six centers, I worked in several of these centers so I am well informed on this matter." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>84</sup> "There is something else about MB, maybe they are the only ones who have this in Jordan. They keep you entertained and busy; they fill your free time; you won't believe you have free time. They take you to play soccer and to learn Qur'an on the weekends, and have weekly sessions. There are some groups in the movement that have weekly reading sessions of general books." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>85</sup> "They just aim at keeping you a member of the movement that's all, so that you would vote for them in elections or tell your family to vote for them." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>86</sup> Der Spiegel 2013. 'Elections in Jordan: The system is corrupt', Der Spiegel, January 28, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> "If there was a group that was less conservative than MB, you would find people from Zarqa voting for them." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>88</sup> "The MB are political but they show themselves as religious. They are now divided into different parties, like Ikhwan Zamzam, Ikhwan Jam'yehe, Ikhan al-Qudama'a, they are now divided into 4 or more groups. If we look for the real reasons, they are all political. There is no religious reason behind their division" (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>89</sup> "In Zarqa, the MB used to be more influential but not anymore." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

**Extreme elements within the MB are believed to be spreading VE in Zarqa, despite an official policy against it, and some members have left the party to join VEOs abroad.**

The local MB is believed to contain extreme elements, meaning the group could be acting as a driver of VE, which is especially disconcerting given its broad membership base and activities with local youths and children. It is even thought that some members of its leadership are supportive of ISIS, although they cannot openly express their support,<sup>90</sup> and several respondents argued that this is clear from their failure to condemn ISIS.<sup>91</sup> MB MPs are known to pay condolence calls to the families of VEO members killed in Syria and there have even been instances of MB members leaving the party to join VEOs, including ISIS.<sup>92</sup> One respondent described how a MB member she knew had left the party to join a VEO in Syria because he found the MB to be insufficiently extreme and was angered by what he saw as it siding with the central government rather than demanding reforms. In fact, some members of the MB are viewed as equally extreme in their religious views as Salafists.<sup>93</sup> Several respondents, including a former MB member, also accused the MB of acting as a gateway to VEO participation by failing to prevent individuals within their centers and holiday camps from spreading VE messages to their young students,<sup>94</sup> also as a result of ideological similarities with VEOs.<sup>95</sup> This is reinforced by the fact that the MB has been losing members to Salafist Jihadist groups, making it in some cases an ideological bridge to VEOs like JN and ISIS.<sup>96</sup>

*"He was part of the MB and after the collapsing of the protests in Jordan he thought that the MB was helping the government and he criticized the MB on Facebook. If you go back to his profile, you will see those views. He started to view violence as the only means of change. Afterwards he went to Syria."*

(Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>90</sup> "The MB is a gateway for terrorism. The Jordanian government showed these groups to people and showcased their real terrorist actions. You can't trust them." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>91</sup> "There are groups from the MB [in Zarqa], some leaders, especially the extremist parts of it, like Al Suqoor. One of its leaders supports ISIS and extremism yet they are afraid to publically announce it. They don't condemn ISIS, or think what they are doing is not acceptable. Some of our parliament members from the MB go to pay condolences [at the house of dead VEO fighters]." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>92</sup> "Young, uneducated, poor people are most likely to support ISIS, also MB members and Salafists, many have changed to support ISIS." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

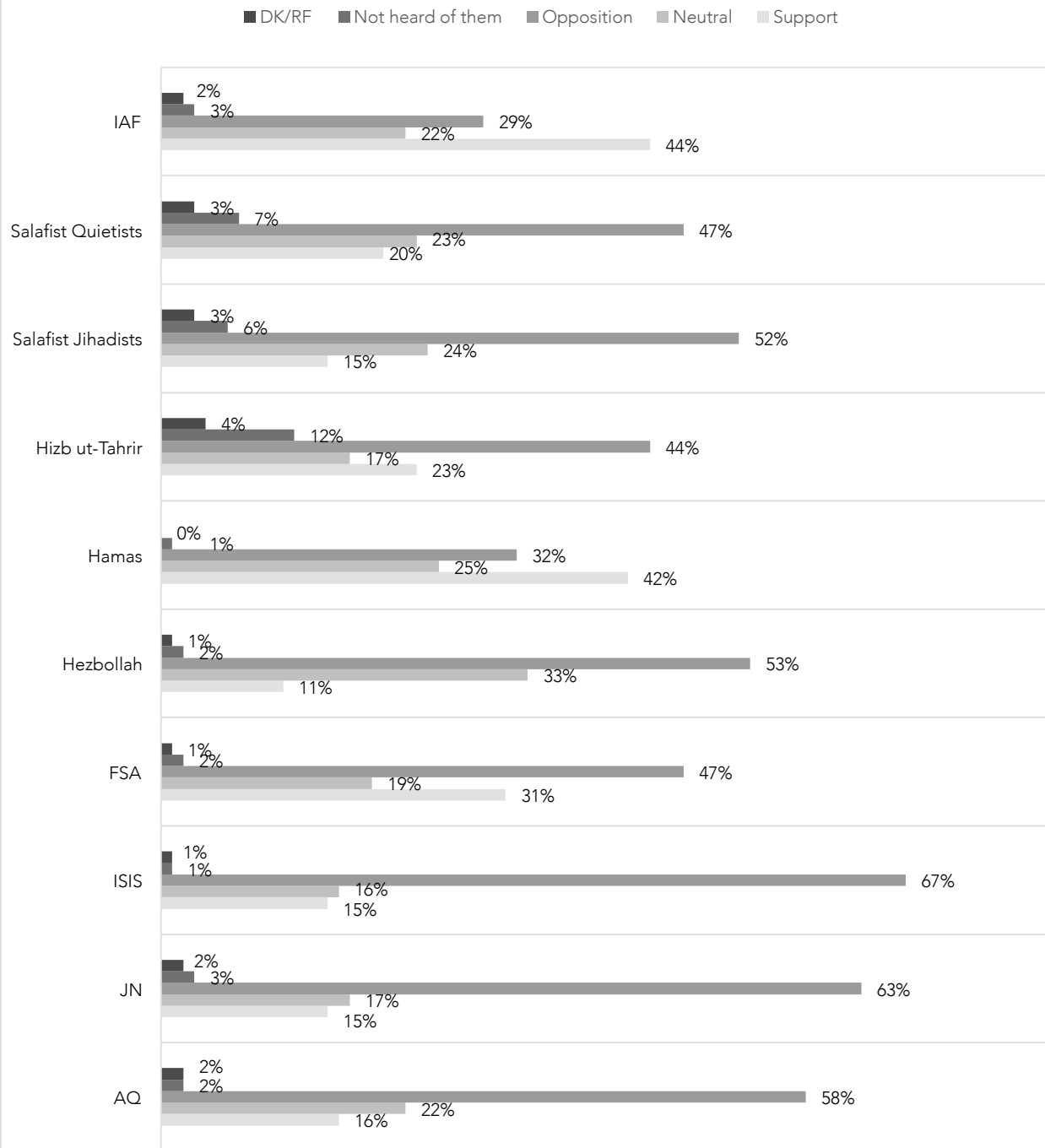
<sup>93</sup> "I see the MB and Salafists as similar as they share many ideas and many actions. One group affects the other and many people agree with me, I know politically and religiously they are different but many people do not see the difference." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>94</sup> "The MB, yes supposedly [it is a gateway to VE], because it depends on many things; people doing their jobs correctly when working in their camps, clubs and scouts." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>95</sup> "I personally see them as gateway and not a barrier [to VE] because the ideology is the same." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>96</sup> "There are a lot of people who started with the MB and ended up Salafists." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

Figure 1: To what extent do you think there is support or opposition for the following groups in your community?





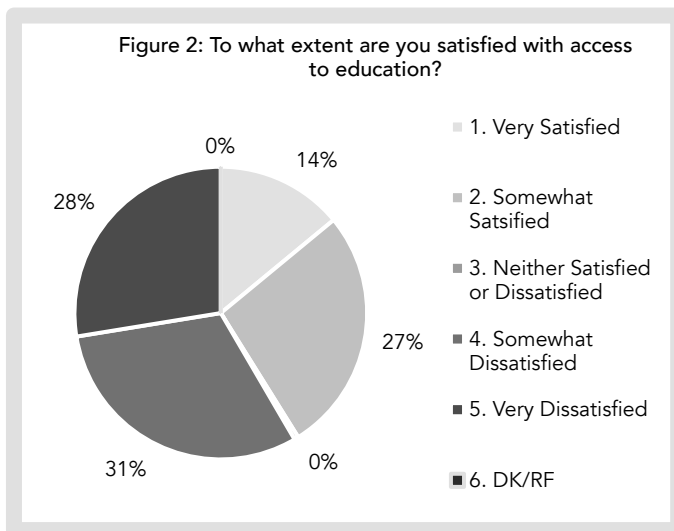
## 2.0 BASIC NEEDS DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 2.1 EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The standard of education in Zarqa is low, leaving pupils vulnerable to VE messages in the school system and on graduation.

Access to education in most neighborhoods is broadly acceptable,<sup>97</sup> but the standard of the available schooling is low and many locals are concerned that religiously radical and/or VE messages affect children.<sup>98</sup> Some respondents believe that religious education in government-run schools neither makes any attempt to engage with and counter VE messages and in some instances may be making pupils more likely to hold extreme views on religion that may make them more vulnerable to recruitment by Salafist Jihadists or VEOs. Some respondents blamed the central government for allowing the MB to become involved in the structure and content of the school syllabus as early as the 1980's and alleged that the MB used this to ensure that religious instruction in schools still verges on the extreme decades later.<sup>99</sup>

The cost of higher education also prevents many locals from attending university, which in turn reduces their employment prospects and making them more likely to be frustrated and thus vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment into VEOs. As a result, 55 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to education, although a sizeable minority of 34 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 2). Zarqa has benefitted from improved rates of literacy and school attendance but its educational infrastructure has also been obliged to accommodate the children of Syrians fleeing the conflict since 2011. UNICEF estimated that there were over 15,000 school-age Syrian children in Zarqa by 2013, which has placed a



<sup>97</sup> Department of Statistics of Jordan 2013. 'Population and Family Health Survey 2012', Department of Statistics of Jordan/ICF International, October 2013.

<sup>98</sup> "The schools are not doing their jobs, the youth are talking and doing many inappropriate things." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>99</sup> "Extremism starts in schools because the curriculum in school teaches children to be Daesh. From schools and universities. We have no freedom, this helps. At the time when the state was busy fighting the socialists and leftists, they let the Muslim Brothers take over the Ministry of Education. They embraced the Muslim Brothers in order to fight all of these groups and they let them take over since the beginning of the 1980s. They took over the Ministry of Education and the government didn't care, they only cared about national studies or anything that had to do with the history of the Hashemite kingdom in Jordan and how Jordan started and the rest was left to become more like Daesh." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

strain on its local education system,<sup>100</sup> although it seems to have been inadequate even before the refugee influx.

Many respondents linked vulnerability to recruitment by VEOs with a low level of education,<sup>101</sup> particularly among local male youths,<sup>102</sup> and identified those who have not finished high school and are ignorant of the outside world as at risk of indoctrination by radical religious groups and VEOs.<sup>103</sup> One respondent gave the example of five male youths from his neighborhood that had gone to fight with various VEOs in Syria, most of whom were in their early 20's, and stated that all of them had not completed school. Others singled out Salafist Jihadists in their areas as the clearest example of the link between VE and low levels of education.<sup>104</sup> Respondents described that many Salafist Jihadists are poorly educated and generally ignorant about the fundamentals of Islam,<sup>105</sup> often simply learning by heart certain phrases and ways of expressing their belief structures without fully understanding them.<sup>106</sup> The education system in Zarqa would therefore seem the ideal place to counter VEO narratives, as respondents frequently identified youths as the demographic most vulnerable to VEO propaganda, as well as recruitment by extreme religious groups that can be a gateway to VEO sympathy or active support like Salafist Quietists and Salafist Jihadists. If children were provided with a broader and more moderate grounding in religion, particularly through religious arguments that can be used to counter common VE narratives like the duty of fighting jihad and the rewards of martyrdom, resilience to VE narratives among youths would be strengthened.

*"Five people left to join jihad from my area, four of whom were under 22 years of age, they are school dropouts. Most of them have criminal pasts, they are considered degenerate in the community. They drink alcohol, have sex. I know one of them personally, he was our next-door neighbour, he had no clue about anything, he isn't educated, he doesn't know what the parliament is. They brainwash them, promising them heaven and sex with the virgins."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>100</sup> UNICEF 2013. 'Needs assessment review of the impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan', UNICEF/Hashemite kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, November 2013.

<sup>101</sup> "Some people from Rusaifeh went to Syria to fight with radical groups. Most of the people who went were brainwashed by Sheikhs. Some of them had financial struggles or were unemployed. This affects them. Also religion. Most of them were young in age. Only a few were older." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>102</sup> "As for the [VE] motivation I believe it has to do more with poverty, marginalization and a lack of education, I'm saying this based on my own experience in dealing with people who are extremist, they are always less educated, we are speaking about the majority not all of them of course." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>103</sup> "Ignorance and lack of proper understanding [leads to VE]." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>104</sup> "If he was a scientist who was religious, extremists wouldn't bother to talk to him about their ideas. They pick the uneducated people. My colleague had no idea about Islam, then out of the blue he started going to the mosque. After the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, he started his big change." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>105</sup> "Most Salafists are not knowledgeable about religion, even I, as an agnostic, easily beat them in debates." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

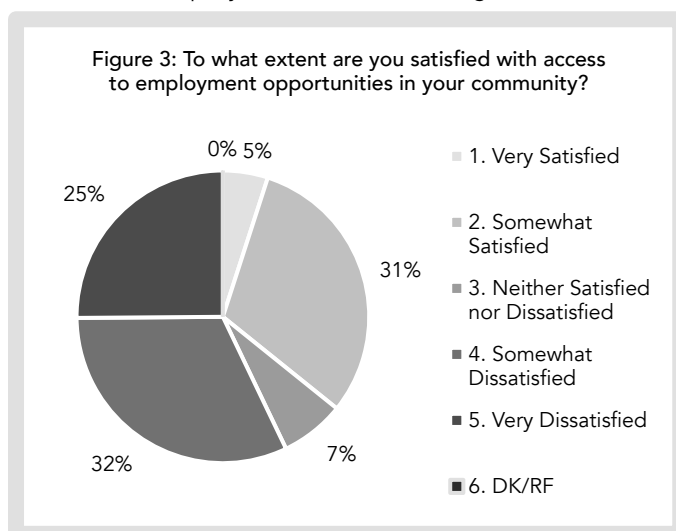
<sup>106</sup> "Most Salafists in Zarqa are actually not that very aware of what they are saying, they just memorize what other sheikhs tell them to say." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

Unemployment is high in Zarqa, particularly among youths, leaving them with few outlets for their energies and making them more vulnerable to VEO messages.

Most respondents reported that Zarqa suffers from a lack of job opportunities and that this has had an especially negative impact on youths, which is supported by a 2014 Jordan Department of Statistics study that identified Zarqa as having the second highest rate of unemployment of Jordanian governorates, at 18.1 percent.<sup>107</sup> As a result, 57 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied with access to employment opportunities, while 36 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied (see Figure 3). The earnings potential of locals employed is also believed to be low in general with one respondent estimating that few households in Rusaifeh earn more than 300 Jordanian dinars (JD) per month, while the average household in Zarqa has to survive on even less.<sup>108</sup> University graduates also struggle to find jobs appropriate to their qualifications and are often forced to look for jobs in Amman.

Some respondents expected that there would be better skilled job prospects if more large companies had offices in the governorate.<sup>109</sup> Many graduates are reported to be frustrated that most of the openings in Zarqa are for unskilled or clerical positions working in restaurants or shops, which offer salaries and prospects well below their expectations. Some respondents blamed the universities in Zarqa for not adequately preparing their students for the labor market. As a result, the job prospects of locals who do not finish their education is often viewed as better than those of highly educated locals, even if their earnings potential was lower. While the public sector does offer some career paths for the unemployed, mainly in the police or the JAF, such positions often go to members of East Bank tribes, particularly from the Bani Hassan, to the frustration of other locals.<sup>110</sup>

Many respondents linked poverty to a greater vulnerability to VE messages and VEO recruitment among locals in their neighborhoods and in the governorate in general.<sup>111</sup> Some respondents maintained that VE is rife in poorer urban areas, with many naming Rusaifeh as a location where VE narratives are widespread,



<sup>107</sup> Jordan Times 2014. 'Tafileh, Zarqa governorates top Jordanian unemployment list', Jordan Times, April 14, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> "Not a lot of people earn more than 300 JODs per month in Rusaifeh, or even in Zarqa in general, most people earn less than that." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>109</sup> "People who live in Zarqa really suffer from the lack of job opportunities, that's why they tend to work in Amman. We don't have job opportunities and big projects and companies in Zarqa. Most youths who didn't finish their education find jobs inside Zarqa, mainly in the service sector and in manual labor rather than doing business or administrative work." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>110</sup> "An option [for employment] would be to become a member of the security forces." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>111</sup> "When a city is very poor and marginalized, it might have more Salafists than other cities, so extremism is just one of the consequences of the main problem, which is poverty and marginalization." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

emphasizing the poor economic conditions there,<sup>112</sup> and reporting that ISIS in particular has been taking advantage of people there.<sup>113</sup> However, not all agreed that poverty and limited job prospects are the principal motivating factors causing individuals to join VEOs,<sup>114</sup> although most acknowledge that it has some role in facilitating the radicalization process,<sup>115</sup> and highlighted the importance of other contributing factors, including among others: a lack of education and radicalization following time in prison.<sup>116</sup>

*"The problem is that graduates are not satisfied with the quality of the job opportunities available in the market in Zarqa because most of the jobs in Zarqa are unskilled like working as a cleaner, a worker in a restaurant, or as a cashier in shops and cafes. Those people who finished a university degree will not work in such jobs and accept a low salary. Graduates mostly find skilled work in Amman, not Zarqa. The universities have a problem with preparing students for the job market."*

*(Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)*

**Focus: Unemployment, poverty, and a lack of education are contributing factors to VE in Zarqa city and Rusaifeh, especially among youths.**

*"The nature of people that live in Zarqa and Rusaifeh is simple. They have a simple education, simple minds, and a simple thought process. Most people that live here don't have a good education because of their economic situation. Unemployment is high. The government institutions don't play a role in supporting these areas. They don't provide jobs. Corruption is high and nepotism is the norm. People who come from certain tribes like the Bani Hassan for example, when the governor was from that tribe they used to be able to find jobs easily, now he has changed so it's not so easy for them anymore. In general people are poor and these extremist groups take advantage of this situation. Youngsters sit around with nothing to do and they have lots of energy. There is a lot of ignorance here, social ignorance and political ignorance. They take advantage of them when they go to the mosques."* (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

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<sup>112</sup> "It's hard for me to name specific neighborhoods at risk of VE by name, but generally speaking, I would say the poorest neighborhoods. In Rusaifeh, they are everywhere. There is no specific area where they are mainly located. Especially that Rusaifeh is known to be strict and conservative." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>113</sup> "Most Jordanians that support the Daesh's ideology live in the poor areas, in the north and in the south and in Rusaifeh. They take advantage of people that are in need." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>114</sup> "You need to study each one's reasons to know why they would go. Their financial situation can be a reason but it's not the main one. Some would go because of religion." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>115</sup> "I believe that economic reasons are a secondary reason leading to extremism. I don't think its one of the main reasons, from one to ten, one being most the important, I would give economic reasons number six." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

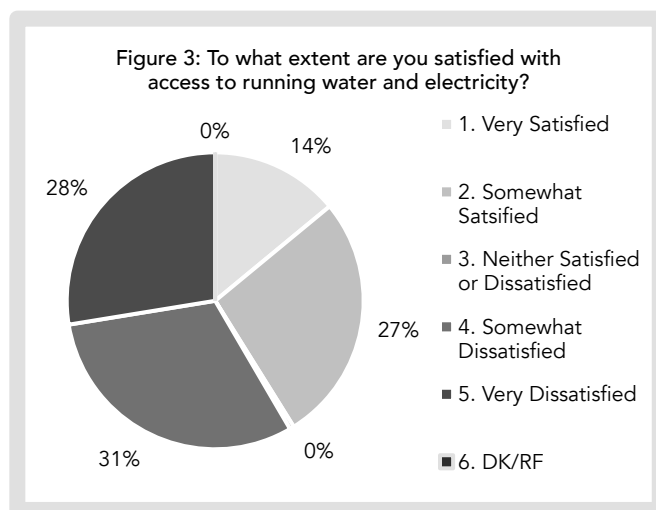
<sup>116</sup> "I think 18-35 year old males, who have a bad financial situation and are uneducated are most at risk of radicalization. Maybe one doctor from Zarqa left for Syria and also a judge, but in general the ones who go are uneducated." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

## 2.2 UTILITIES AND SERVICES

Access to water and electricity is generally adequate but can be poor in some areas, which drives resentment toward the central government.

The majority of respondents assessed their access to basic government services like water and electricity as passable but some were critical of the provision of such services and identified poor service provision as a factor, along with poverty among locals in general, that is driving the growth of extremism in their communities.<sup>117</sup>

Accordingly, 41 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied with access to running water and electricity, while 59 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied (see Figure 3). This is supported by a 2013 study showing that inhabitants in Zarqa governorate meet their water needs through a combination of



government-supplied piped water, water bought from privately-owned water trucks, and bottled water purchased from convenience stores or dedicated government-regulated filtered water premises. Government-supplied water is subsidized and is affordable for the vast majority of households but in the summer months the supply is often rationed, so where a household can expect piped water access up to four times a week in winter, in summer it can be as infrequent as once every 10 days.<sup>118</sup> The quality of both water and electricity can vary greatly by location and some respondents reported that water and electricity provision in their neighborhoods were particularly bad compared to the norm in the governorate, with one respondent from Rusaifeh stating that basic service provision was extremely poor and that water and electricity in the town would stop working on a weekly basis.<sup>119</sup> A lack of such basic services, although some locals appreciate that Jordan has problems with its water supply and are inclined to be accepting when it is poor, can only drive frustration with the central and municipal governments, which VEOs can exploit to drive recruitment by criticizing the Jordanian state.

*"Zarqa has a shortage of water because it is in the desert and we don't have enough water for the whole population of Zarqa and we don't have good electricity or good streets to walk in. The water normally only comes on once a week to fill our water tanks and sometimes only once every two weeks in summer in Zarqa city. The electricity is better than water but in summer it can be turned off,*

<sup>117</sup> "There are social reasons for radicalization including poverty, unemployment and lack of services from the state." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>118</sup> Wildman, Thomas 2013. 'Water systems in Balqa, Zarqa & informal settlements of Amman & the Jordan Valley', Oxfam/EU, August-October 2013.

<sup>119</sup> "Even the basics of the infrastructure are not available, water and electricity cuts off every week, that's how it is in Rusaifeh." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

*especially in the afternoon. The electricity infrastructure in Zarqa is bad and needs a lot of work to fix it and it always overloads in summer, so they turn off electricity in some places and not others."*

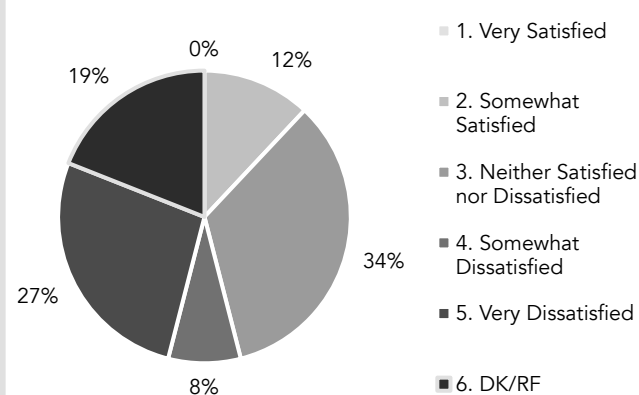
*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

A significant proportion of locals are concerned about the standard and availability of medical services in the governorate.

Many respondents expressed concern with both access to, and the quality of, healthcare in Zarqa and 46 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied with access to healthcare, while 36 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied (see Figure 4). Many locals in Zarqa city either work for the JAF or have access to free government healthcare through the JAF, although the facilities at the military hospital are believed to be antiquated. Those locals without permission to use the state system are obliged to pay for private treatment, which can be a drain on personal finances in a governorate where many locals are reported to struggle financially.

A 2015 census found that just over half of locals have health insurance, which is marginally higher than Amman but trails all other governorates, which have coverage varying from 76 percent (Balqa) to 95 percent (Ajloun) of the population.<sup>120</sup> However, the government does fund some free medical programs, including vaccinations, and Zarqa has one of the highest rates of child vaccination against common diseases including measles and polio.<sup>121</sup> Weak provision of healthcare services is invariably blamed on the central or municipal governments and can undermine confidence in the ability of the government to provide services, generating frustration that VEOs can also capitalize on.

Figure 4: To what extent are you satisfied with access to healthcare?



*"The municipal authority doesn't provide good health services, in Zarqa there is the JAF hospital, which is the most popular government hospital in Zarqa but the service is terrible and the people hate it. Zarqa has a close link to the military as there are many bases nearby and many people from Zarqa have joined the military and so they have health provided by the government but the JAF hospital has not changed since the 60's. Many people died there because the healthcare is so bad although some people have private health insurance."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>120</sup> Ghazal, Mohammad 2016. 'Population stands at around 9.5 million, including 2.9 million guests', Jordan Times, January 30, 2016.

<sup>121</sup> Department of Statistics of Jordan 2013. 'Population and Family Health Survey 2012', Department of Statistics of Jordan/ICF International, October 2013, p.126

## 2.3 ECONOMY, HOUSING AND DEBT

The high price of accommodation is a strain on household finances and further contributes to significant personal debt among locals.

Many respondents reported that housing is a significant issue for locals,<sup>122</sup> although it is viewed as a lesser concern than in Amman. In particular, many blame the presence of Syrian refugees for pushing up housing costs and impacting on the ability of locals to find accommodation appropriate to their budgets. More specifically, 62 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' dissatisfied with access to affordable housing, while 29 percent reported being 'very' or 'somewhat' satisfied (see Figure 5). Many locals struggle financially, also due to the limited employment prospects in the governorate, which magnifies the problem of the lack of affordable housing and can force locals to borrow money to keep up rent payments, placing even greater strain on limited incomes. As a result, the availability of loans and high levels of personal debt are viewed as a significant problem for locals, who enter a cycle of debt that can be difficult to escape due to low average incomes in the governorate, and borrow money for various purposes, including financing private education for their children or for large purchases like cars.<sup>123</sup> Accordingly, 71 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that debt is a problem in their community, while 20 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 6). Crucially, there was also widespread agreement that locals in financial difficulties are more likely to be tempted by the idea of earning a salary by joining a VEO, meaning that the price of living in Zarqa can be tangentially related to VEO recruitment for practical reasons, even if potential recruits are not of an extremist mind set themselves.

*"Housing is not expensive like in Amman but for people in Zarqa sometimes life is expensive because of the Syrian refugees but we cannot compare the cost of living in Zarqa to Amman."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>122</sup> "Five years ago a Jordanian could rent his house for 50 or 60 JD now you can't even find a home for 250 JD, and so it has had a direct impact on Jordanian people themselves." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>123</sup> "Debt is a problem for all Jordanian people and in Zarqa as well. Private schools are very expensive for people so they take loans, but most children go to government schools." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)



Figure 5: To what extent are you satisfied with access to affordable housing?

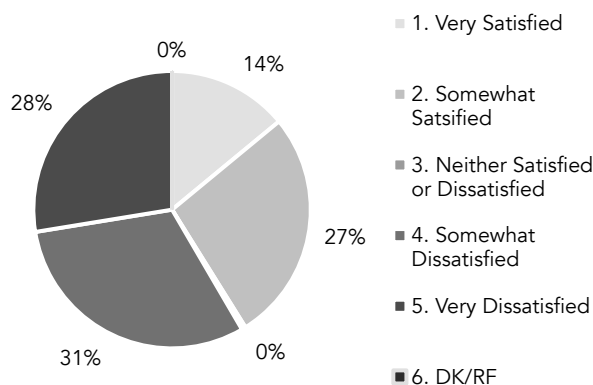
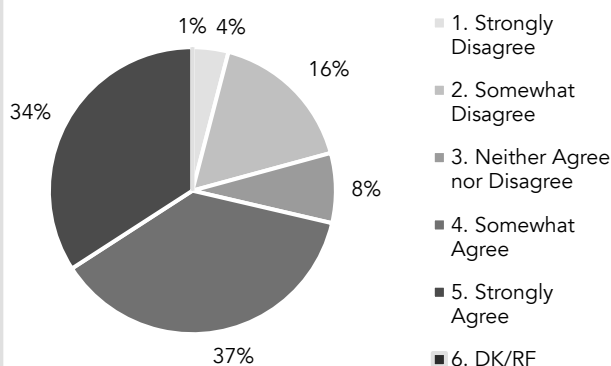


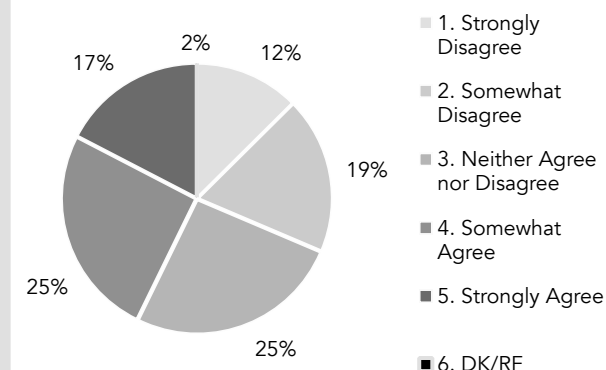
Figure 6: To what extent do you agree that debt is a problem in your community?



VEO participation is seen as lucrative both for recruits and recruiters, although not all recruits are motivated by financial reward.

Many respondents made the assessment that VEO membership is a good way to make money and that both the recruiters in their neighborhoods,<sup>124</sup> and the fighters themselves, can benefit financially from VEOs in Syria,<sup>125</sup> that offer good salaries,<sup>126</sup> and which is a particularly strong draw in economically deprived governorate like Zarqa,<sup>127</sup> where locals are often out of work but still need to support themselves and their families.<sup>128</sup> Accordingly, 42 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad is an easy way to earn money?



<sup>124</sup> "I heard from one of the people who went that by paying 500 JD, they can get inside Syria and a certain person would help them at the border. Most of the people would even get paid to go. Only a few did go to Syria through Turkey. The radical groups would even wait for them at the border." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>125</sup> "I believe this area is more affected than others as most youths here are not cultured or educated. They are not aware truly or knowledgeable, and they are easily drawn to the money they are offered and the idea of jihad." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>126</sup> "Another point behind radicalism is unemployment. Radical groups attract people to join them by offering the money. ISIS is being said to be the richest group in the world." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>127</sup> "Most of the people who go to fight have a bad economic situation. Abu Sayyaf in Ma'an has shares in a phosphate company in Jordan, why won't he join the fighting groups? The guy I'm telling you about, he just wanted to run away from his situation. He died there and now his wife and kids live off charity." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>128</sup> "This is a reason for them joining JN or ISIS, they give them and their families money. If someone gets good money and their family gets good money they will join [a VEO]." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)



'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad is an easy way to make money, while 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 7). One respondent reported that a contact inside Syria told him that a local religious sheikh in Zarqa was facilitating the entry of locals into Syria to join VEOs in exchange for cash payments and that the recruits themselves were paid a monthly salary,<sup>129</sup> and another stated that salaries paid by VEOs can reach up to 1,500 USD per month.<sup>130</sup> However, most respondents maintained that the primary motivator for many locals who joined VEOs in Syria was religious rather than financial and several gave examples of individuals they knew personally that had engaged in jihad despite enjoying a comfortable personal economic situation,<sup>131</sup> including two brothers whose father owned a supermarket and who were well provided for financially but were nevertheless driven to join a VEO in Syria for largely religious reasons.<sup>132</sup> While it is certainly not the only motivating factor in VEO participation, the offer of both regular and one-off cash payments remains attractive to some locals in Zarqa, where average incomes are low and high unemployment persists.<sup>133</sup>

*"He was a very talented boy and very cultured, he was very clever but his family was very poor and this situation guided him to join JN. He was sending money to his family. His family know this and maybe they didn't talk about it, it is like a secret piece of information, but they were definitely getting money from JN."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

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<sup>129</sup> "[Sheikh Sufian] doesn't use his personal money to send the youth to Syria, he takes money for each one he sends. I heard this from a trusted source from Syria; everyone he sends gets a monthly salary when they arrive in Syria. He takes a percentage. Sheikh Saed told us, when we asked him why he would go to Syria, he said they give him a monthly salary when he arrives there." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>130</sup> "I think they used religion to manipulate them into going. I mean they were motivated by religion, but behind all this is an economical reason, because they went there in exchange for money, they use to get paid a monthly wage. They get paid every month. I heard that it was about 1,000 or 1,500 USD per month." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>131</sup> "It was religious reasons that pushed him to join [a VEO]. Mahmoud's family was doing fine financially, his dad was a blacksmith and he worked hard." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>132</sup> "Two people who are sons of the local supermarket owner, they went [to Syria to join a VEO] and never returned. Someone brainwashed them with a religious message I'm sure and sent them to Syria. They were doing very well financially. Their father was surprised they left." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>133</sup> "On average people at risk of radicalization are in the age group of 18 to 35 years old, single and mostly in a bad economic position. They are unemployed and not making ends means. Like any other person of their age they have hopes and dreams, but their economic situation is very bad." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

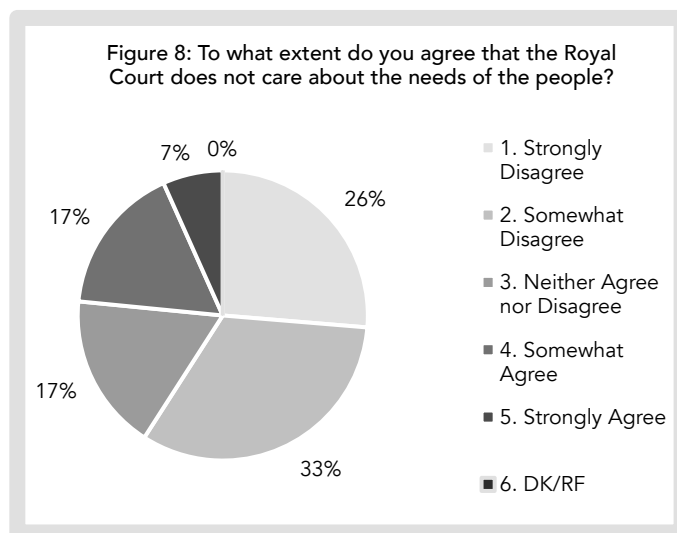
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### 3.0 GOVERNANCE DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

#### 3.1 CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The Royal Court is mainly viewed in a positive light, although some locals doubt its effectiveness.

Many respondents were supportive of the Royal Court, which is generally associated with King Abdullah, rather than as his personal office and the extended royal family, and strongly differentiate between the Royal Court and the central government. However, several questioned the Royal Court's desire to improve the situation in Jordan, complaining that there has been a lack of economic and social reforms, which some believe could improve the employment opportunities available to locals.<sup>134</sup> As a result, almost a quarter of Zarqa GQ respondents were critical of the Royal Court, although the majority, 59 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents, 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the Royal Court does not care about the needs of the people (see Figure 8).



The relative popularity of the Royal Court is largely based on the involvement of many locals in the JAF, which has forged a close relationship between Zarqa city, the site of a number of military training areas and barracks, and the monarchy. The King's late father King Hussein is also credited with the fact that the majority of Palestinian refugees received citizenship in Jordan, in contrast to others living in neighboring Syria or Lebanon, ensuring many West Bank Jordanian locals retain a strong sense of gratitude. However, some respondents were noticeably nervous discussing this topic and constitutes a red line for many, who were reticent about answering questions that risk negative consequences for them.<sup>135</sup> This implies that the exact percentage of the population supportive of the Royal Court is difficult to ascertain but it is clear that the King himself remains largely popular among locals, making VEO propaganda attacking him personally less effective as a recruitment tool than other VEO narratives.

*"Many people in Zarqa have historically held positions in the JAF, so they love the Royal Court and the King but they don't love or accept the government. The King and the government are seen to be different. People can be angry with the government but not with the King. From when we were*

<sup>134</sup> "I blame the government. The government has to do more economic and social reforms." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>135</sup> "Respondents were surprised about the purpose of this study, and the subjects we asked about, and some of them considered some of the questions to touch red lines like asking about Islam and jihad and the police and the JAF and the Royal Court." (Male, 23, Researcher, Zarqa)

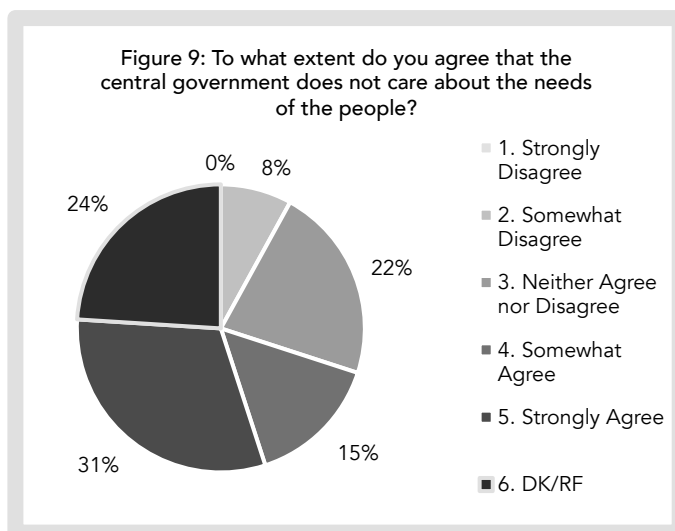
*children our parents taught us to love the King and the Royal Court, they are survivors and they gave us nationality and rights as Palestinians, not like Lebanon for example."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

Weak basic service provision is believed to reflect the neglect of the central government of Zarqa as much as poor municipal governance.

Frustration at the poor standard of basic service provision in the governorate has caused many locals to lose faith in the central government, despite this being the responsibility of the municipal authorities.<sup>136</sup> Many locals believe that the capital Amman is being prioritized in terms of central government investment at the expense of provincial urban areas like Zarqa and anger at perceived central government neglect is reinforced when they visit Amman and see for themselves that the basic services and infrastructure there are better.<sup>137</sup> Many respondents complained that local infrastructure in Zarqa like roads and the electricity network are in a poor state of repair. Poor standards of

governance have somewhat eroded faith in the central government, although not the Royal Court, making locals more vulnerable to VEO propaganda that plays on the idea of a disinterested governing class and increasing the likelihood that they will adopt extreme views toward the government that VEOs can exploit. Despite widespread grievances toward the central government, views were relatively mixed, and 47 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the central government does not care about the needs of the people, while 42 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 9). Notably, as with views toward the Royal Court, many respondents were careful in answering questions on the central government, largely out of fear of incriminating themselves with the authorities.



*"People blame the central government because they don't seem to care about people in Zarqa. There is a problem with the capital being prioritized and they only care about Amman, not about the other cities, all the money is spent on Amman. We have streets in Zarqa that have no lighting at night so they are dark and we can't drive on them. In Amman the roundabouts have lights but not in*

<sup>136</sup> "People believe that the lack of municipal services and opportunities have made the youth believe depressed. Some of them have the feeling that no one cares about Zarqa and even the government don't care about the problems of people in Zarqa." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>137</sup> "People blame the central government because they don't seem to care about people in Zarqa. There is a problem with the capital being prioritized and they only care about Amman, not about the other cities, all the money is spent on Amman. We have streets in Zarqa that have no lighting at night so they are dark and we can't drive on them. In Amman the roundabouts have lights but not in Zarqa." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

Zarqa.”

(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

### Confidence that the central government is active in countering VEOs is strong among locals.

Many respondents expressed concern that VE narratives are prevalent, in particular in the urban areas of Zarqa and Rusaifeh,<sup>138</sup> but also acknowledged that the central government is making an effort in these locations to control both VE narratives and recruitment into VEOs. In one such example of the central government-led response to VEO recruitment, several respondents reported that the government has been asking male youths from Zarqa, who have either been arrested for joining VEOs in Syria or arrested for engaging with VEOs from within Jordan, and their parents (as guarantors), to sign pledges that they will not leave the country.<sup>139</sup> This approach has had mixed results and, although some individuals have kept to the terms of their pledges and remained in Zarqa, others have absconded and joined VEOs in Syria.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, the program is one of the government initiatives that have reassured locals that VE is being addressed and has fed into the generally positive attitude to counter-VE efforts by the government. Accordingly, 63 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that the central government does not have the power to control VE, while 24 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed (see Figure 10).

Moreover, most respondents were confident that the central government is sincere in its desire to curb VEO recruitment and radicalization. As a result, 64 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ disagreed that the central government does not want to control VE, while 23 percent ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed (see Figure 11). Several respondents related how the central government has been keeping track of male youths from Zarqa that have been arrested while trying to cross the border into Syria illegally,<sup>141</sup> and has imprisoned them for up to three years for trying to enter Syria to join a VEO for a second time.<sup>142</sup> In particular, refugee camps in the governorate are viewed as potential incubators of VE that the security services have successfully kept under close surveillance. Notably, some argued that the central government contributed to the spread of VE in their communities since the beginning of the Syrian conflict because its initial policy was not to prevent radicalized individuals from traveling to Syria to

<sup>138</sup> “Many cities and towns in Jordan provide a nurturing environment for VE, examples would be: Rusaifeh, Ma’an, Baqa’a, Sowaileh, and Salt. The government is aware of this.” (Male, 43, Journalist, Amman)

<sup>139</sup> “There is a young man, who went to Syria for about eight months. He comes from a family that cares about their jobs and are not involved in VE at all. He went, stayed for eight months then got hit in the eye. When he returned, he and his father signed a warrant that he will not leave again. He is still here now, however he remains in communication with the [VEO] sheikhs in Syria, that brainwash him to think that what happens in Syria today is jihad.” (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>140</sup> “Mahmoud joined the [VE-inspired] incidents happening here and got arrested in Zarqa; they let him go once he signed a warrant saying that he will not leave the area. Then one night, he calls his family and tells them that he is in Syria.” (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>141</sup> “The Jordanian government played a role in stopping people from going to Syria. I don’t know which specific people but I know in general.” (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>142</sup> “Sheikh Saed (Another young man from our neighborhood), was caught twice when he was crossing the borders. First time, they sent him home, and the second time he was arrested for 3 years.” (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

fight,<sup>143</sup> often for VEOs.<sup>144</sup> Some alleged that the central government had an active policy of turning a blind eye to, or even actively facilitating, some locals,<sup>145</sup> and mainly Salafist Jihadists, going to Syria and Iraq to fight, mainly to rid Jordan of troublemakers.<sup>146</sup>

*"Jordan thank God fights all means of radicalism. For example, in other countries, such a conversation [about VE] wouldn't even take place. Our security is very strong. Although we have bad economy and we have unemployment, we still have security."*

*(Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)*

Figure 10: To what extent do you agree that the central government does not have the power to control VE?

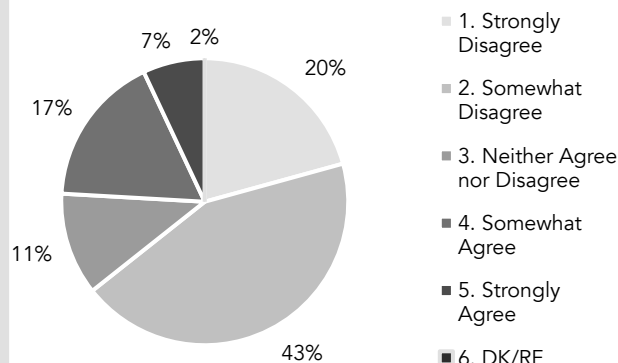
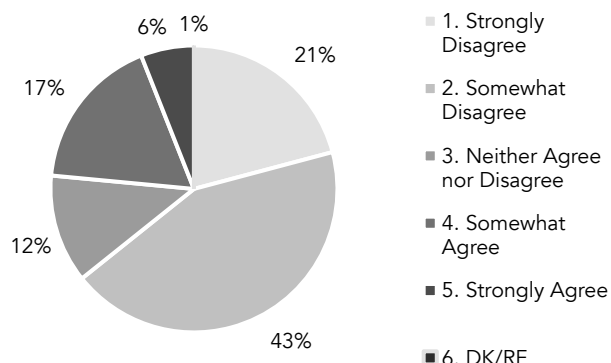


Figure 11: To what extent do you agree that the central government does not want to control VE?



The Ministry of Religious Affairs is seen as playing an especially vital role in countering VE narratives.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is one of the key resources used by the central government to control the spread of VE in mosques,<sup>147</sup> and most respondents were confident that it is effective in preventing the

<sup>143</sup> "The Jordanian government had the borders open. The borders were open. If you wanted to go you could go. Just don't come back. Some people went." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>144</sup> "The government allowed a lot of people, just like that butcher, to recruit people in Syria or Iraq, they knew about them and they never did anything. Everyone says the government knows about it and is not doing anything. It even facilitated their path." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>145</sup> "The government facilitated the departure of people to join extremist groups in Syria and Iraq at one point, maybe not now." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>146</sup> "I believe that Jordan used Syria and Iraq as a garbage can to throw Salafists in. I believe that the Jordanian government helped Salafists to leave Jordan for Iraq and Syria, because it was trying to get rid of them there. But even with the departure of most of them, Salafist Jihadism is still increasing in Jordan." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

dissemination of VEO messages in their neighborhoods.<sup>148</sup> Some described how the central government has been using the Ministry of Religious Affairs to reach out to locals using religious institutions.<sup>149</sup> One example is a class for women that is organized on a monthly basis, providing a forum for the discussion of many issues including VE, which is led by an imam approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.<sup>150</sup> The Ministry regulates mosques to prevent the spread of VE or the use of VE rhetoric and it is known to closely regulate which imams are permitted to preach, especially for the Friday sermon, which is the religious focus of each week and are usually well attended. One respondent, a Salafist Quietist imam, stated that he was only been permitted to teach in local mosques because the Ministry of Religious Affairs authorized him to do so and that he was not allowed to give classes on an individual basis, reducing the risk of radicalization of students by preachers in private.<sup>151</sup>

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has also issued orders that cameras be installed in mosques so that worshippers and preachers could be more closely monitored. The influence of the Ministry of Religious Affairs over mosques in Zarqa, and over the content of the Friday sermon, is also made clear by one respondent who observed that the sermons in all of the mosques in his neighborhood end at the same time, with the notable exception of Salafist-associated mosques, and that the content is usually the same. Imams are instructed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to speak on certain themes that often cast a good light on the government itself,<sup>152</sup> and topics include efforts made by the central government to guarantee national security.<sup>153</sup> Such pro-government reinforcement from religious sources can be seen as a form of counter-VEO messaging that reinforces themes like security provision and the danger of terrorism and encourages local support for the central government and opposition to the destabilizing effects of VEOs.

*"Now it is very hard to use mosques for extremist preaching because of the security situation. I know that from reading the newspapers. I'm not an employee in the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but because people know me, they gave me permission to teach in mosques. Now the ministry is*

<sup>147</sup> "There are Sheikhs in mosques who call for radicalism and I don't know their names, but the Ministry of Religious Affairs follows up." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>148</sup> "All mosques are controlled by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and they do not permit any activity that they do not have full control of." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>149</sup> "The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has responsibility for religious affairs, and their influence is key." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>150</sup> "In my neighborhood, they are doing something very effective to avoid extremism on both sides; they do a monthly lesson for all the women of the city and the inhabitants of the city from all walks of life where they discuss all the updates and talk openly about all matters. The preacher that was there is a certified preacher from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and they decided to do a group lesson or meeting for all and these meetings are still held. They engage with a certain a certain topic and discuss it in a group." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>151</sup> "All my classes are in mosques, nothing is done between closed doors or a one-on-one class. They are all legal and I have acceptance from the Ministry of Religious affairs." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>152</sup> "Our government controls mosques. Sheikhs at mosques are balanced in Jordan." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>153</sup> "The main thing that influences people is the Friday religious speech, and the government is trying to control that speech. You can see that all mosques finish the speech at the exact same time, except for the Salafist mosque, which takes longer. Yesterday's topic was security and safety provided by the government to the people." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

*putting surveillance cameras inside mosques. This helps in spreading security. This helps our country."*

*(Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)*

### **Most locals have a very positive view of the JAF, also due to historical ties with the JAF.**

Despite some criticism of the effectiveness of the central government measures to counter radicalization and VEOs, there is considerable support for the JAF among locals and strong confidence in their ability to defend Jordan against potential terrorist attacks orchestrated by VEOs. As a result, the vast majority of Zarqa GQ respondents, 74 percent, 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the JAF don't have the ability to keep them safe, while only 14 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 12). In addition, approval of the behavior of the JAF toward the public was also strong, and 69 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the JAF do not behave in a respectful way, while 17 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 13). Several respondents highlighted the close association of locals with the JAF and observed that many current and former JAF members and their families live in the city, making these results further consistent with expected attitudes toward the JAF. It also indicates that many locals are naturally disinclined to support VEOs and that any terrorist attacks against members of the JAF are only likely to further increase the popularity of the JAF. Most notably, the murder of Kasasbeh had produced this effect and one respondent was involved with organizing events in Zarqa to commemorate his death,<sup>154</sup> while others stated that they see membership of, and support for, the JAF as a barrier to VEO sympathies.<sup>155</sup> A number of Kasasbeh's fellow pilots in the Jordanian Air Force are resident in Zarqa, which further underlines ties between the JAF and locals in the governorate.

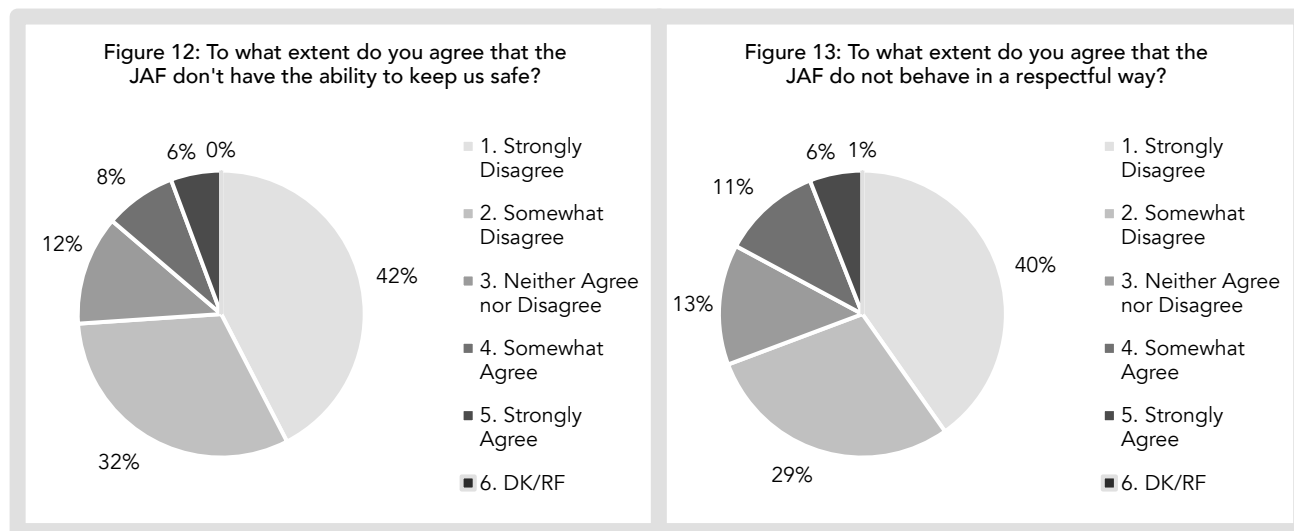
*"Zarqa is known as the city of soldiers and everyone knows it has very close ties with the JAF. This is because a lot of military training takes place in Zarqa and many people from Zarqa are in the security forces."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

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<sup>154</sup> "What ISIS did to our soldier Moath, all Jordanians were touched by that and wanted ISIS to get payback for it. Until now, we feel sad for what happened to Moath." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>155</sup> "Al Hasmieyeh is not considered an extremist area in general and it is a tribal area and the people who live here are Muslims. Most of the people living in the area work with the government and security forces. Some people living here have a Salafists or extremist ideology but they are very few. I know only four people in Hasmieyeh who went to Syria to fight, three died and the fourth one is still fighting there I think." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)



The central government is frequently criticized for being too heavily influenced by its Western allies and for the high level of corruption among public officials.

Many respondents voiced strongly negative perceptions of both of the quality and honesty of public officials and also questioned the capacity of the central government for independent action, as it is felt to be beholden to its Western allies and backers.<sup>156</sup> More specifically, 44 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the central government just does what the West says, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 14). Further, corruption among government officials is considered to be a significant problem impeding the efficient functioning of both the central and local governments, with some locals complaining that municipal functionaries are more interested in lining their own pockets than improving the poor standard of basic services in the governorate. As a result, the majority of respondents (55 percent) agreed that government officials are corrupt, while fewer (30 percent) disagreed (see Figure 15). Despite a common perception that local officials are corrupt, it is considered to be rare for those from large urban areas in the governorate to be prosecuted, while it is more common in rural areas.<sup>157</sup> The perceptions that the central government has done nothing to remove corrupt local officials from their posts and that the quality of basic services has been consistently poor, which is also blamed on financial mismanagement by corrupt local officials, have driven resentment toward the central government. VEOs have reportedly been taking advantage of this resentment by actively harnessing local anger and frustration over poor government services to turn people against the central government and recruit in Zarqa.<sup>158</sup> Notably, ISIS videos often focus heavily on the King and the

<sup>156</sup> "The people here think the government does what the West tells them to do." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>157</sup> "Some people have been convicted of corruption, not in Zarqa city but in Bierain or Hashmiyeh, far away from the city center, in villages. In these places many of the local officials there have been jailed over financial irregularity." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>158</sup> "If you tell them the government is bad then they will believe you because the conditions in Zarqa are so bad, and so ISIS play on this reality to get people to support them." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)



Jordanian government in general and seek to portray both as corrupt and exploiting the people for their own benefit.

*"Zarqa has suffered from the corruption of municipal officials for many years, and they use the municipality's budget for their own personal expenses, even although Zarqa is suffering from a bad sanitation system, poor infrastructure and weak regulations. These are not new problems, we have always had a problem with the same stuff and nothing has ever changed so people have lost faith in the municipality."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

Figure 14: To what extent do you agree that the central government just does what the West say?

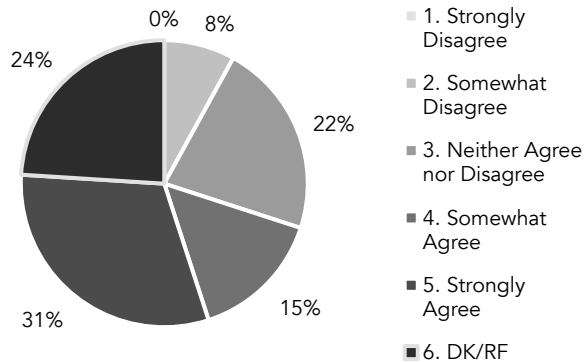
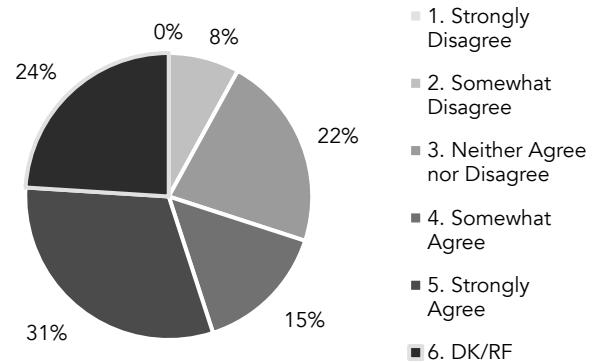


Figure 15: To what extent do you agree that the government officials are corrupt?

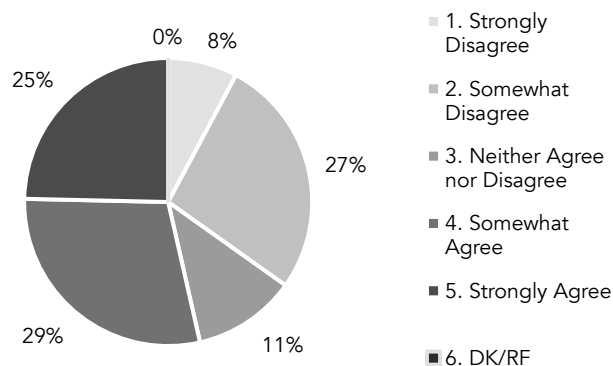


The local municipal authorities are widely disliked for their perceived incompetence, inefficiency, and failure to adequately provide basic services.

Most respondents were critical of the services provided by the local municipal government, condemning its poor record of maintaining and improving civic infrastructure, including roads and sewerage, and its poor delivery of basic services, most notably garbage collection.<sup>159</sup>

Accordingly, 54 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the local government does not care about the needs of the people, while only 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 16). In addition, the road system is widely criticized as being not fit for purpose, with the surfaces of many streets too damaged to be driven on, and the local authorities are reportedly making little or no effort to effect repairs. This is not considered to be a new problem and most believe that the municipality has been underperforming for many years. This has also damaged perceptions of the central government, which is not seen to provide any oversight that might remove inefficient and corrupt local officials.<sup>160</sup>

Figure 16: To what extent do you agree that the local government does not care about the needs of the people?



*"The municipality does not meet the needs of the people, and there are big problems that Zarqa Municipality has not addressed properly. The largest problem is the drainage system as the streets are sometimes full of water and this is not acceptable so they started a maintenance program but it took two years to finish it. Recently we have begun to see some changes in the performance of the municipality and we started to notice that they are dealing seriously with the problem of collecting garbage and the drainage systems and the holes in the streets. In other words, in the past the municipality was guilty of negligence."*

*(Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)*

<sup>159</sup> "Municipal services in Zarqa are very bad, by which I mean the garbage collection, water provision, road repairs and a lack of parking spaces." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>160</sup> "Most people are unhappy with the local government in Zarqa. Zarqa City has had many issues for years but nobody has fixed any of the bad things the local government have done. The streets in Zarqa are terrible, you cannot even drive in many of them because there are holes that break cars and many closed streets because the surface is broken. People in Zarqa all agree that we have to change the local government because they are not doing anything good and they have been like this for many years. Nobody fixes any of the problems." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

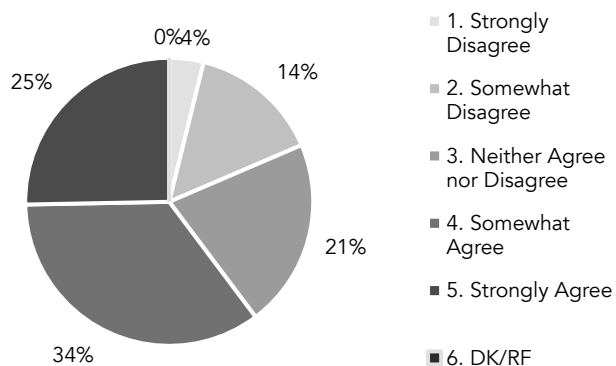
### 3.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT

The justice system is widely assessed as effective and most locals are confident in access to justice.

Most respondents reported satisfaction with their access to justice and assessed the justice system as impartial and fair. Moreover, 50 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that civil courts in Jordan are not effective, while 26 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 17). However, some raised concerns about the use of personal influence to intercede on behalf of friends or relatives and others alleged that there is a parallel justice systems that operates for members of East Bank tribes, meaning that cases involving tribal members are often not dealt with through the official court system. These generally relate to disputes between

individuals from different tribes and are resolved using traditional mediation methods that are not available to those not of a tribal background. Some complained that this is unjust and reported that in some cases, even if the crime is serious, such as causing personal injury, perpetrators can often circumvent incarceration. This gives the impression of favoritism within the official system against West Bank Jordanians and members of smaller East Bank tribes and drives feelings of marginalization and resentment toward the central government and the justice system. In fact, some respondents even reported incidents where personal intercession by friends and relatives has prevented locals being incarcerated, even in instances where they were returning from fighting in Syria, a crime for which many locals have been jailed.<sup>161</sup>

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree that civil courts in Jordan are not effective?



*"Many people think that they have good access to justice but sometimes there are problems between tribes and these are settled between the tribes in a traditional way."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>161</sup> "Another person I know went to fight in Syria in 2014 and came back in 2015 he was injured in his hand. One of his relatives tried to convince the government not to arrest him and they agreed. So he is not in prison and is still in Jordan." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

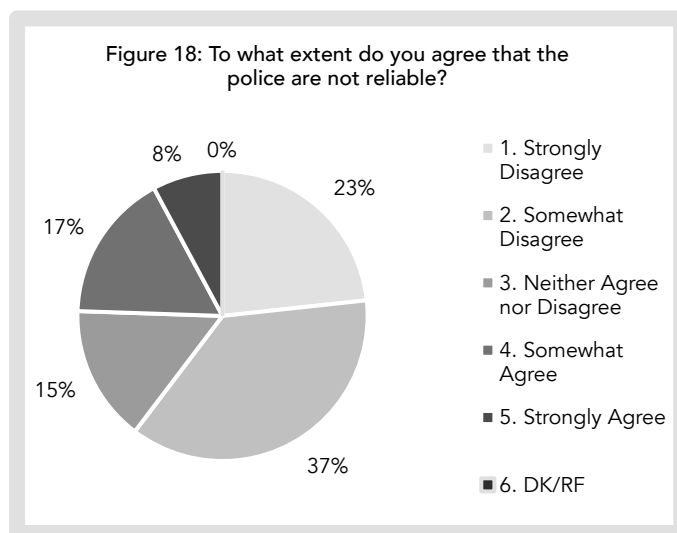
Confidence in the reliability and capability of the security services and police is strong and crime is reported to have dropped, although some believe that excessive police authority is a concern.

Most respondents maintained that the police is effective and some stated that they feel safer in their neighborhood than they did in the past due to the presence of the police, while others praised Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate and think that it is successfully combatting VE in their communities.<sup>162</sup>

Accordingly, 60 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the police are not reliable, while only 25 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 18). Some respondents judged that the police presence in Zarqa has increased in recent years and this is believed to reflect a concerted effort by the central government to improve security and to target VEO sympathizers, particularly in Zarqa city. Police activity has included monitoring the calls of locals suspected of VEO membership and in some cases suspects have been detained and investigated.<sup>163</sup>

Several respondents also reported generally feeling safe in their neighborhoods. One respondent stated that he used to be afraid to walk in his area in the evening because he feared assault by gangs armed with sticks and knives but that this is no longer a problem, while another reported that, while there used to be a serious problem with violent criminals in the neighborhood of Ghoueriyya in Zarqa from 2009 to 2011, this was addressed by the police and the perpetrators were arrested and jailed. In general, it seems that Zarqa has a strong local police force that inspires the confidence of locals and is active in combatting both violent crime and cracking down on VEO sympathizers.

However, some respondents were critical of what they saw as heavy-handed behavior by the security forces and, in particular, portrayed the crackdown on Salafist Jihadists protesters in the past as an example of deliberate police brutality.<sup>164</sup> This sense of being oppressed by the security forces is judged to



<sup>162</sup> "I support the idea of the general intelligence department watching people who show big changes in their lifestyle that would lead to VE. The general intelligence department calls them out and asks them questions about the change that happened in their life. They know who to ask and what to ask them." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>163</sup> "We can see a lot of increased security measures that the government is implementing. We are seeing more police patrols. They are catching people that are communicating by phone with ISIS. This sheikh that I told you about, Al Ajouri, worked only on his laptop, but they still caught him. I'm sure they have all the information he put on his laptop." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>164</sup> "I heard that the public security ordered the gendarmerie to start beating all the demonstrators [in Zarqa], starting with journalists...so they started the violence not the demonstrators." (Male, 34, Sales Executive, Amman)

have pushed some youths toward VE beliefs and ultimately VEOs.<sup>165</sup> Some respondents maintained that police brutality is a key driver of VEO recruitment in their neighborhoods, as it increases the sense of resentment toward the government among youths who have been the victims of police aggression,<sup>166</sup> or have friends or relatives who have suffered physically at the hands of the security forces or been the subject of intrusive police surveillance.<sup>167</sup> Notably, 74 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that they or their family members had not suffered directly from excessive police authority, although 26 percent reported that they had, which is much higher than comparative findings in the capital Amman (see Figure 19). This may largely be linked to the police response to Salafist Jihadist protests in 2011, which became violent leaving a number of protesters and policemen injured.

*"I remember that in the past after nine in the evening we couldn't go out to walk in the streets. I had people threatening me with knives and other weapons. In the past five years, we can see that things have got much better and our area is safer now. The presence of police and security officers was an important factor in this change."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

*"I was present on the day of the Salafist demonstration in Zarqa to call for the release of Salafist prisoners. I went to Omar bin Al Khattab Mosque. I saw people who had sticks and swords. I wondered how the government is letting this happen, and then I saw the clashes between them and the police. I heard that a third of the people that were arrested on that day joined jihadist groups."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

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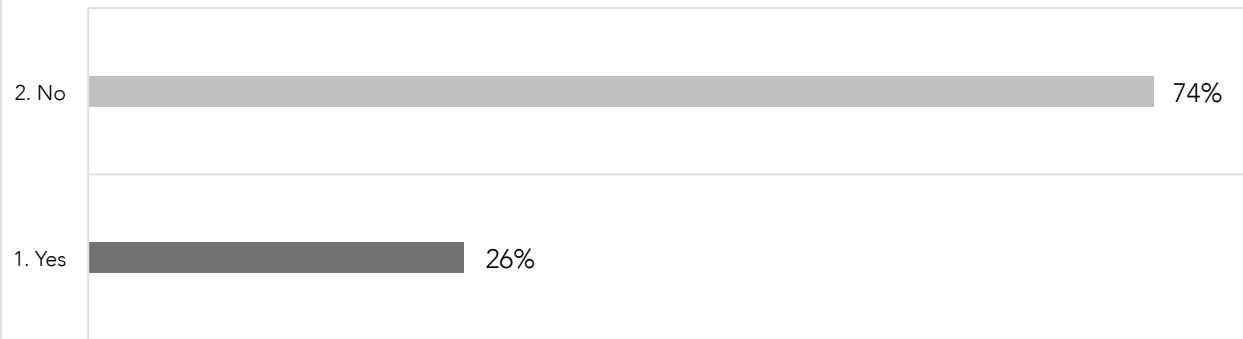
<sup>165</sup> "The youth have believed some freedom since the 14th of March especially, however this change has led to an increase in security oppression. I think that this is one of the reasons people went to Syria." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>166</sup> "The issue of repression and oppression I believe is definitely a reason why many people went to fight, I don't think that people went as a result of a vision or political ideology," (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>167</sup> "The death of people who were close to them or getting arrested or followed by the police [can lead people to extremism]." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

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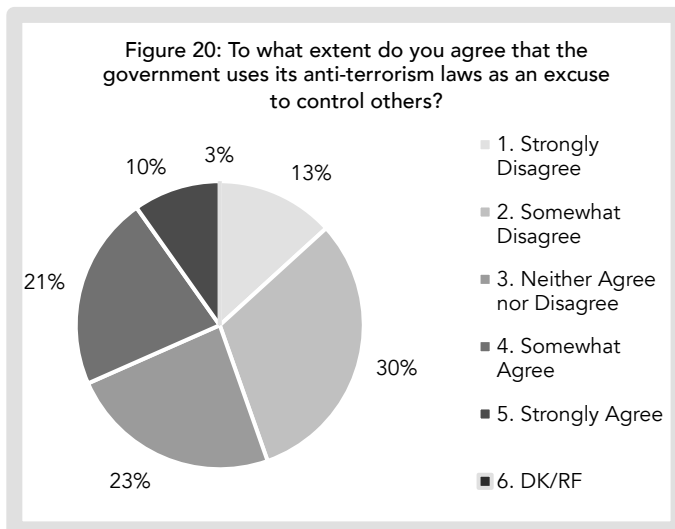
Figure 19: Have you or your family directly suffered from excessive police authority?



### 3.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

Most locals are broadly supportive of anti-terrorism laws, although a significant minority is suspicious that they are used by the central government to control citizens.

Respondents are generally in favor of anti-terrorism legislation and most do not believe that the central government has abused it in order to clamp down on dissent. However, some believe that locals neither understand nor care about such laws unless they have directly experienced them first hand and, given that anti-terrorism cases are tried at the State Security Courts in Amman, protests against them generally take place there rather than locally.<sup>168</sup> Specifically, 43 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the central government uses its anti-terrorism laws as an excuse to control others, although a notable



minority of 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed, indicating that there is some dissatisfaction with the way the central government has been using the anti-terrorism laws (see Figure 20). This may be related to the local Salafist Jihadist community, many members of which have been tried under anti-terrorism legislation and staged protests against the incarceration of fellow Salafists in the past.<sup>169</sup> Crucially, VEOs can tap into this popular sense of resentment in order to build support by using anti-government narratives that play on the oppressive nature of the justice system, although the majority of locals are unlikely to be influenced by such propaganda, as they ultimately prioritize security and are largely supportive of existing anti-terrorism laws.

*"People do not know anything about the anti-terrorism laws, this is more relevant in Amman and many people in Zarqa who work in Amman know about this but for people who just live in Zarqa do not think this is important to them. People in Zarqa do not care at all about some issues. I think they care most about basic services being fixed, then when this happens they will care about other things, the same for human rights."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>168</sup> Black, Ian 2014. 'Courts kept busy as Jordan works to crush support for ISIS', Guardian, November 27, 2014.

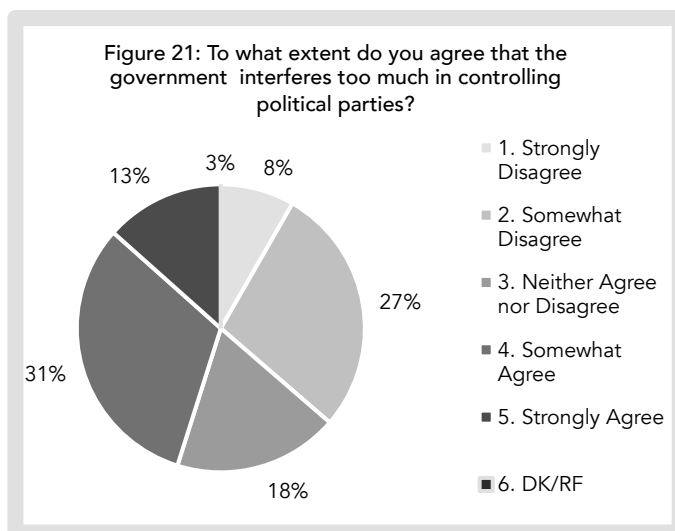
<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

Locals are concerned that the central government exercises excessive control over political parties and the press, although they are confident that human rights are largely respected.

Many respondents reported that a lack of political freedom in their communities is a contributing factor to frustration among locals, particularly youths, and that the central government habitually cracks down on even small forms of political expression and closely regulates political parties.<sup>170</sup> Some complained that the influence of political parties on the central government is currently less than it was in the past and that locals see many of them as ineffectual and therefore unpopular.<sup>171</sup> This is potentially a serious issue and, if left unaddressed, could lead to violent demonstrations and/or increase sympathy toward VE.<sup>172</sup> Political activity offers youths a way

to express themselves and to be more involved in the democratic process, which can make them feel more engaged with the system of government in Jordan and more invested in the status quo but, in its absence, some youths are turning to religion instead.<sup>173</sup> As a result, 44 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the government interferes too much in controlling political parties, while 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 21).

In addition, respondents were critical of the limits to press freedom and 46 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press, while 34 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 22). However, several respondents clarified that many locals lack strong views about the press and largely attributed this to an absence of journalists or activists in the city that raise awareness of press freedoms, in contrast to Amman.<sup>174</sup> In general, and despite popular frustration about the limits to political freedom and the free functioning of



<sup>170</sup> "Political parties worked hard and demonstrated in the streets and helped open people's eyes to so many important issues. But, now people don't have faith in political parties." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>171</sup> "There are leftist and nationalist and communists and other parties, but after they took away so many of the freedoms these parties used to have, people started to feel that these political parties are useless. In the end these restrictions made people hate these political parties." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>172</sup> "If Jordanians kept feeling they have no rights, they will rebel against their country." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>173</sup> "If I was to blame a country for radicalization it would be our own country, we are the ones that gave them room to do such things. We are the ones who completely banned political activity and restricted freedoms like freedom of speech, freedom to organize in political groups. Even freedom of the press. Freedoms are restricted in Jordan and that creates a void. People need to fill that void with something and that something was religion." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>174</sup> "We don't have any media production here in Zarqa so people don't have jobs in the press and don't have opinions on this." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)



the press, many respondents were still confident that their human rights are observed by the central government. 45 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms, while 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 23). Quantitative findings therefore indicate that many locals believe that the central government limits freedom of expression, both politically and in the media, which is consistent with Freedom House's 2015 assessment that Jordan is 'not free' regarding the status of the domestic media, in addition to which it scores poorly regarding the freedom of its political and legal environments.<sup>175</sup> Worryingly, this lack of outlets for expression can contribute to resentment toward the government among youths in the governorate, has pushed some toward religious expression, but also risks driving VE and recruitment into VEOs.

*"You find normal people who live normally, and have some political involvement however the government put pressure on them. We know that the government is not democratic and that it makes an effort to repress any kind of movement especially after the small protests."*

*(Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)*

Figure 22: To what extent do you agree that the government does not respect people's human rights and freedoms?

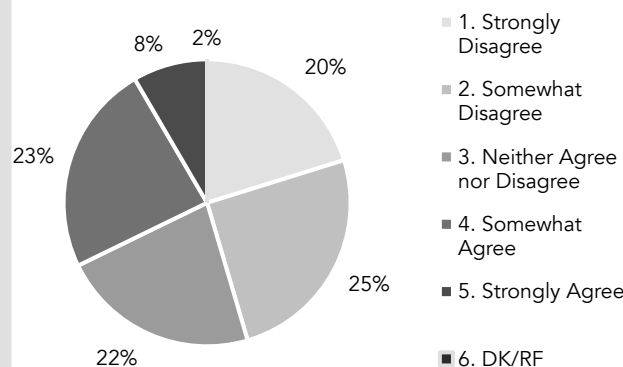
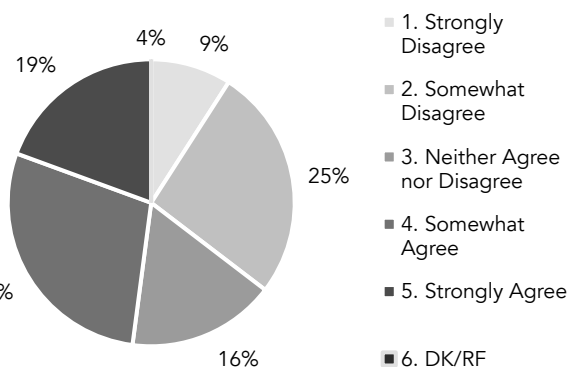


Figure 23: To what extent do you agree that the government interferes too much in the Jordanian press?



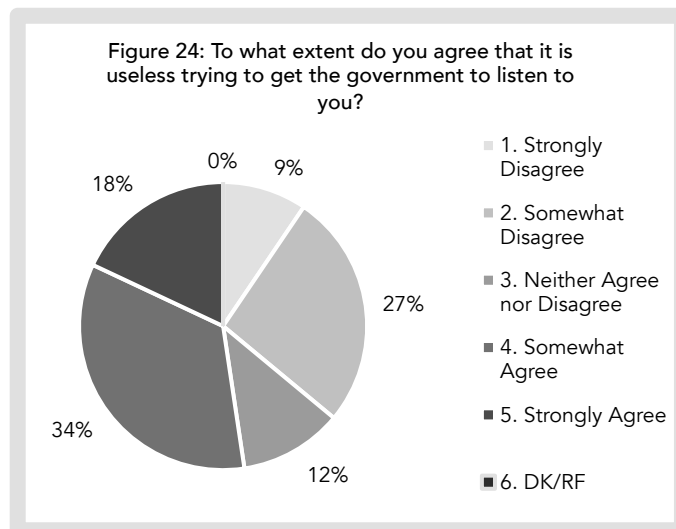
<sup>175</sup> Freedom House 2015. 'Jordan: Freedom of the Press 2015', Freedom House 2015.

## 4.0 PSYCHOSOCIAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 4.1 LOCUS OF CONTROL

The central government is not believed to be interested in improving the lives of locals and apathy is widespread among voters.

Many respondents reported that they do not think that the central government is responsive to the wishes or concerns of locals, explaining that the poor service provision in the governorate and the failure of either municipal or central government officials to improve living standards has sapped confidence that anything will be done in the future. In fact, 52 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that it is useless trying to get the government to listen to them, while only 36 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, indicating widespread dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of the governorate (see Figure 24).



Moreover, many locals do not view voting or the democratic process as important or believe that it has any discernible results, which contributes to a sense of frustration about poor local governance that is also seen as a failing of the central government, as it is not seen to regulate the activities of the municipal authorities.<sup>176</sup> Many respondents also stressed that Zarqa is not a wealthy governorate and that many locals have to work hard to support themselves and their families, and it is relatively common for people to have two or more jobs. In contrast, the cost of living is believed to be increasing and rising prices of necessities like petrol and gas for cooking and heating are as a significant concern, although the central government is not seen to be doing anything to address this issue. This has contributed to a sense of irritation and anger for locals struggling financially. Accordingly, 35 and 53 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that there is no point in voting, as it does not change anything and that the people who work hardest are never rewarded the most, while 33 and 34 percent respectively 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figures 25 and 26).

The general feeling that life is a struggle but that the government makes no effort to address the concerns of locals or to improve the standard of local government, coupled with a lack of faith that the democratic process will bring any change indicates that many locals are deeply frustrated with current situation in the governorate and doubt that it will improve. In this context VEOs can take advantage by offering not only financial rewards to potential recruits but also the chance to make an impact in Syria by promoting members to positions of authority. It also makes it easier to construct credible anti-

<sup>176</sup> "People do not think voting will change anything, and they don't care. There are very few MPs from Zarqa, only two or three. The people are not interested in voting." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

government messages, as locals are already disillusioned with the services they get from the central and municipal authorities, and do not feel that they have the power to improve them democratically.

*"Three years ago there was a small demonstration in Zarqa against the government because of the cost of gas and people couldn't take it any more, it was too expensive, the average salary here is 300 to 500 JD. This is not enough for the lifestyle many people are living. Jordanians have to do many jobs to have a good standard of living, maybe two or three jobs. They think that their hard work is not rewarded and this is why many people are angry with the government, they think they are wasting their money."*

(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

Figure 25: To what extent do you agree that you do not feel that there is a point in voting as it doesn't change anything?

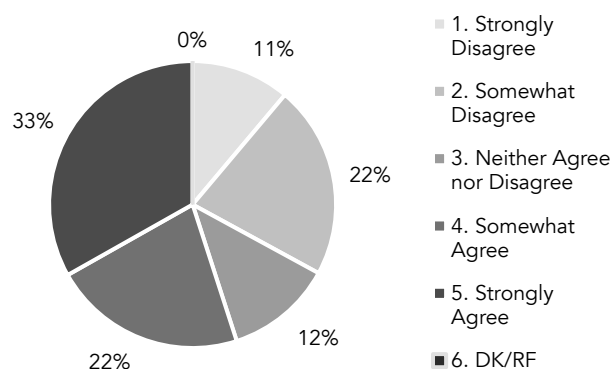
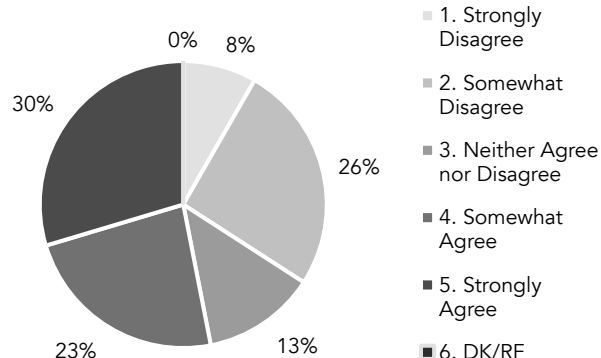


Figure 26: To what extent do you agree that the people who work hardest are never rewarded the most?



### Many youths are estranged from their communities, making them vulnerable to VE messaging and VEO recruitment.

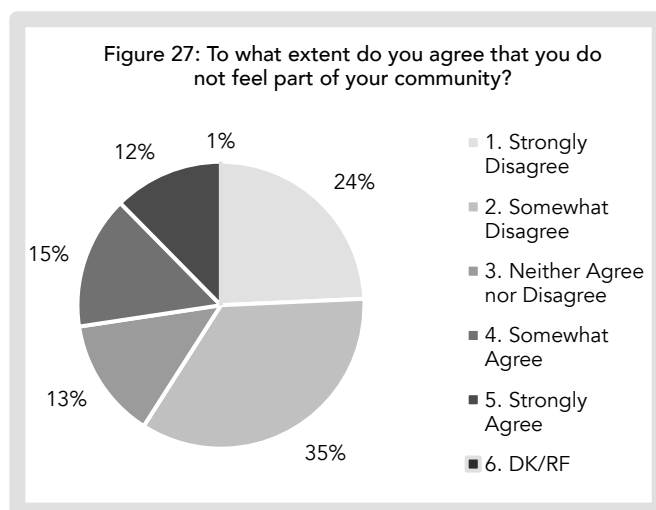
For youths in Zarqa, particularly male youths, not feeling part of their communities has been driving a sense of dislocation from society making them vulnerable to VEO messages.<sup>177</sup> In particular, some respondents tied this feeling of frustration to high levels of unemployment and hopelessness at the lack of job opportunities for youths, while others added that the Arab Spring created a sense of false hope and expectations of reforms and a brighter future that have not been realized. They judged that this perceived gap between expectation and reality has caused a sense of resentment against their communities and the status quo, making them cast around for sources of self-fulfillment, including

<sup>177</sup> "Another reason [for male youths joining VEOs] is a sense of hate for their society. They consider their society faulty and that it do unjust things. This can be found in all societies. So they develop an adverse reaction against their own society, and this drives them to kill others." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

religion<sup>178</sup>. In this context, increased religiosity through becoming a Salafist Quietist or Jihadist and VEO support or participation both offer a way for youths to find direction and meaning in a country where political expression is limited or curtailed. In fact, a significant minority of Zarqa GQ respondents, 27 percent, 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that they do not feel part of their community, although 59 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 27).

Some respondents also linked poverty to social marginalization and identified both as significant drivers of VE, with some judging a weak financial situation to be a stronger driver of recruitment into VEOs than either family or tribal background. Socially marginalized youths are mainly seen as especially vulnerable to recruitment by VEOs,<sup>179</sup> sometimes via membership of extreme religious groups like Salafists, as they are often unmarried and unemployed, so there is less preventing them from joining a VEO in Syria or Iraq. They are also more likely to be at odds with their families and/or friends, which can both be barriers to VE and recruitment into VEOs.<sup>180</sup> In fact, VEO

propaganda, including ISIS videos, often emphasizes the sense of comradeship among VEO fighters, many of whom are male youths, and play up the glamor of fighting in a style that seems designed to appeal to disenfranchised youths in the region and further afield.



*"[Radicalized individuals] are those who are less able to improve their living standards, the marginalized, most of them are looking for jobs. Some of them are from very well-known tribes, some of them are from smaller tribes, or from Palestinian origins, so regardless of the social background, poverty and marginalization is the main thing these people have in common."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

<sup>178</sup> "People want to fill the void and the only thing they have to fill the void with now is religion. Religion came and promised them heaven and virgins and sexual jihad. All this talk is about jihad and martyrdom and the money they offered." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

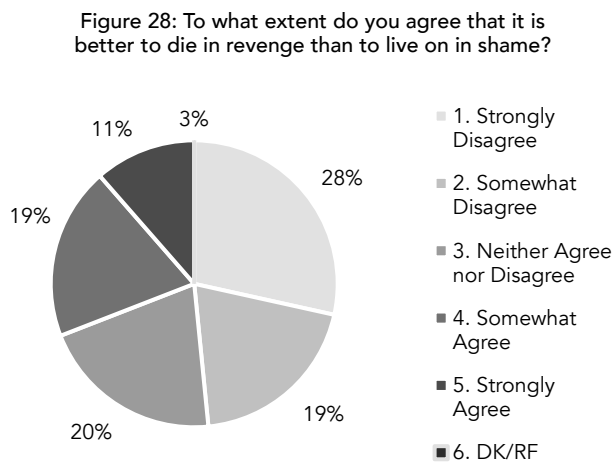
<sup>179</sup> "I was amazed that this person went to Syria because he was very quiet and reserved. His father tried with him many times to help him and even told him that if he wanted he will get him a wife. Of course the guy refused. So his father thought that this was just a phase." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>180</sup> "Family plays a big role in such cases. If I watch my brother and take care of him, it will make it harder for the extremist to play his mind and take him on his side. My family thinks that it's wrong to go and fight abroad." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

Traditional ideas about the relationship between personal and family honor are prevalent among a minority of locals.

Popular attitudes to questions of honor are believed to vary by location in Zarqa governorate and, while most respondents do not think Zarqa has many inhabitants who have strong opinions about personal or family honor, despite being a religiously conservative city, these attitudes are thought to be more prevalent in locations like Rusaifeh. Rusaifeh is the second largest urban center in the governorate and seen by many respondents as economically deprived, and some think it is a hub for Salafists, who hold austere religious views. For instance, 47 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that it is better to die in revenge than to live on in shame, while a minority

of 30 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 28). This concept is also applied to family honor, such as instances where a relative, who is almost always female, has transgressed the honor code, usually through illicit sexual activity that is perceived to bring shame on the wider family. There have been a number of documented honor killing cases in Zarqa over the last decade, including one incident in 2013, where two brothers strangled their sister on the basis that she had shamed the family.<sup>181</sup> This indicates that in some areas locals see murder, even of their own relative, as acceptable and implies that they may be open to VEO narratives that appeal to concepts of honor, such as ones that link the fighting in Syria and Iraq to defending women, children, or the wider Muslim community.



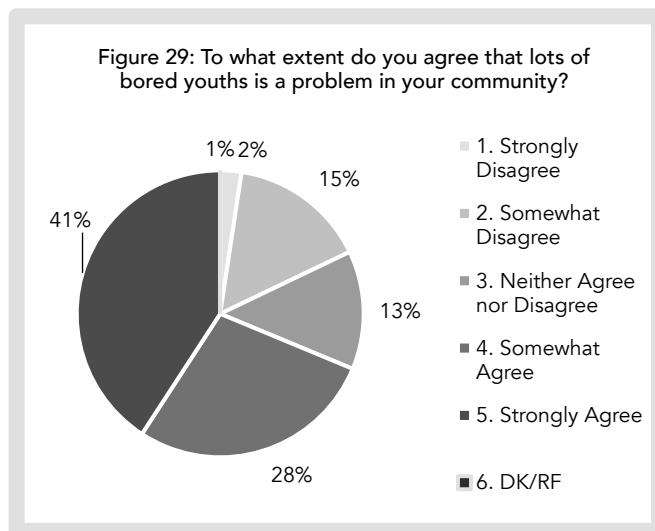
*"People in Zarqa care more religious than in Amman, they are conservative. They don't care about honor issues but this is sometimes a problem in Rusaifeh."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>181</sup> AFP 2013, 'Jordan to execute brothers for strangling sister in 'honor killing'', Al Akhbar News, December 29, 2013.

Bored youths are commonplace and are targeted by Salafist Jihadists who are setting some on the path to VEO participation.

Many respondents identified high youth unemployment as a serious issue that is making male youths more likely to be exposed to VE narratives.<sup>182</sup> The majority of respondents agreed that unemployment is a serious problem in their communities and, in the absence of paid work or any other options for diversion, like social clubs or societies, youths have few alternatives to boredom and inactivity. Accordingly, 69 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that lots of bored youths is a problem in their community, while only 17 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 29). One respondent starkly summed up the choices available to youths in his area as



crime or the mosque and others agreed that both of these could be pathways to radicalization.<sup>183</sup> They judged that frustration and hopelessness at the lack of employment opportunities or social activities has led local youths to become alcoholics, drug addicts, criminals, and members of extreme religious groups like Salafist Jihadists.<sup>184</sup> Some respondent identified specific areas in the city where unemployed and bored male youths congregate, especially the Awajan neighborhood,<sup>185</sup> and stated that many of the youths there are former convicts, making it even harder for them to find work.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, some respondents are concerned that Salafist Jihadist religious leaders actively target these youths for radicalization and eventual VEO recruitment,<sup>187</sup> and several gave examples of individual male youths who were indoctrinated and eventually traveled to Syria to fight after Salafist Jihadist religious leaders

<sup>182</sup> "Many people get affected by their personal issues and one of these is unemployment. And there's a reason for that. If you don't give the youths something good to be busy with, they will be busy doing something wrong. When a person goes to work every day for long hours, all he thinks of is his work. But when you find an unemployed person, they have nothing to do but to get angry at their government." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>183</sup> "In our neighborhood, you either go to the mosque or go do bad things, these are the only two options to go to." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>184</sup> "You would either have to go the mosque or become a thug and deal with drugs or become an alcoholic, or else you would have to isolate yourself from society." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>185</sup> "Yes many recruits for these groups come from Rusaifeh, from the area of Awajan. There are other stories in Rusaifeh. There is another guy. I saw an interview with him. He said he wished he stayed in Rusaifeh and kept on smoking hash instead of going there to fight." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>186</sup> "Those that hang out at the circle [are at risk of radicalization]. They have nothing to do, and no one would hire them because they are ex-convicts" (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>187</sup> "This guy was used to meeting with Salafists, so suddenly he became radical. I think that he used to follow social media pages for these groups. Especially the Salafists jihadists, who link themselves with AQ." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

convinced them that it was their duty as Muslims.<sup>188</sup> Individual imams are idolized by some male youths and their popularity is used to drive recruitment among unemployed youths in his neighborhood. However, others believe that if bored youths were given the chance to participate in structured activities like sport at local clubs, charity work, or playing a role in educating children, that they would be occupied with positive activities and less vulnerable to VE messages as a result.<sup>189</sup> The large number of youths, particularly male youths, who have few outlets for their energies and little or no opportunity to make their voices heard, provides VEOs with a pool of potential recruits who are already frustrated and in some cases blame the government for their problems, that VEOs needing exactly this demographic as fighters can therefore appeal to.

*"These people are uneducated and easily brainwashed, they usually pray at the mosque and they target them and recruit them there. They won't come to someone like me for example to try and recruit me, they know I can't be brainwashed, but they target naïve youth, who are soul searching or looking for a project to belong to, they tempt them with fighting in the name of God and going to Heaven. Usually the simple naïve people idolize the imams."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

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<sup>188</sup> "Mahmoud, a young man, he minded his own business here in our area and he came from a family of seven people. He was not committed religiously; he didn't even pray. He spent a lot of his time with his cousin, who was a troublemaker, however he was never arrested. One day, he happened to meet a Sheikh we have here in the area, called Sheikh Sufian, who took him to the mosque, and explained to him what is happening in Syria, and what our role as Muslims is (i.e. to join jihad)." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>189</sup> "Charity work and the donations for providing education; I think that being involved in education and sports would make them divert from extremism." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

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## 4.2 RELIGIOUS VALUES, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

### While locals are largely religiously conservative, most do not hold radical views.

Most respondents stated that locals in their communities, while often religiously conservative, largely view religion as a personal choice and reject extremist religious concepts. Accordingly, the majority (59 percent) of respondents disagreed that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims, although a significant minority (29 percent) agreed (see Figure 30). Several respondents gave personal examples of how friends and family members interacted with non-Muslims and one respondent described how his uncle had married an unveiled woman but that this had not been a problem, despite the local norm that women wear a head covering.<sup>190</sup> Some also stressed that Zarqa has always been a city with a minority that was not Muslim and that the various communities had always been able to coexist peaceably,<sup>191</sup> although the Salafists in the city hold radical views and are often hostile toward non-Muslims, with some even going so far as threatening to kill Christians in the city. However, the majority of respondents (69 percent) agreed that all people should be free to practice whatever religion they choose, while far fewer (17 percent) disagreed (see Figure 31). Further, respondents were also largely opposed to the idea that religion could justify killing, and the majority (67 percent) agreed that Islam does not allow the killing of other people, while a minority (21 percent) disagreed (see Figure 32).<sup>192</sup> Notably, a significant proportion of respondents (41 percent) also supported the view that religion should play a role in politics, while fewer (36 percent) disagreed (see Figure 33).

*"Some Salafists are Takfiris and two years ago some Salafists took action, they were walking around with knives in Saadeh Street, and they were walking from the mosque toward a Christian area and they wanted to kill Christians and anyone who is not a Muslim. We have a mosque here called Omar Bin Khattab Mosque and the government monitor it closely because every week there is a problem there, it is the most dangerous mosque in Zarqa and many Salafists and MB members go there. I am afraid to go there as I do not cover my hair and I do not dress like a good Muslim so maybe they will hurt me."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>190</sup> "My father used to take me during holidays to celebrate with his Christian friends. My uncle was married to an unveiled woman, and that was OK." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>191</sup> "People in Zarqa have a good relationship with non-Muslims, they believe comfortable to be with them and they have been living together for a long time and they have not had issues with them." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>192</sup> "Everyone that murders an unarmed person is a terrorist. Also those that preach to people to join jihad or promote it now are terrorists and extremists." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)



Figure 30: To what extent do you think that Muslims should avoid interacting with non-Muslims?

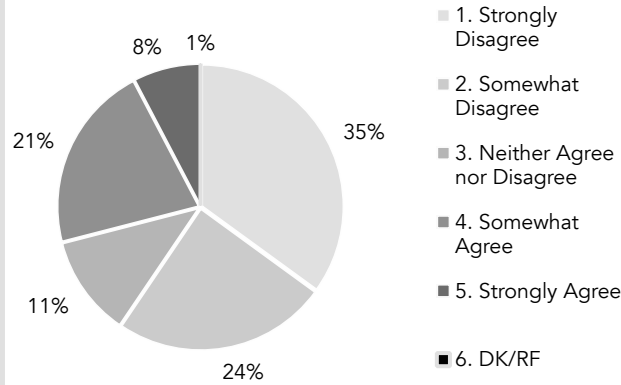


Figure 31: To what extent do you think that all people should be free to practice whatever religion they choose?

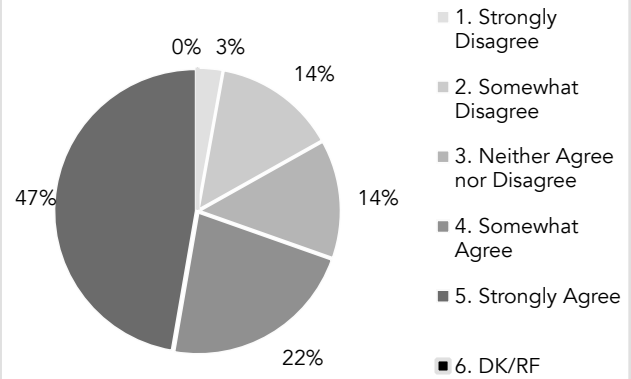


Figure 32: To what extent do you think that Islam does not allow the killing of other people?

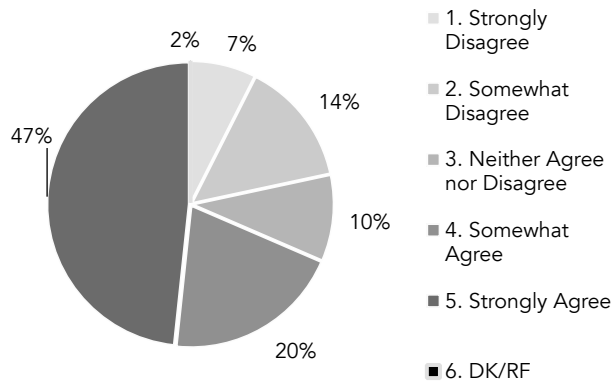
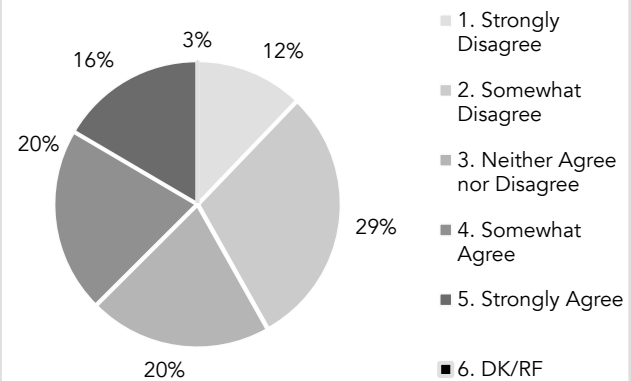


Figure 33: To what extent do you think that religion and politics should be kept separate?

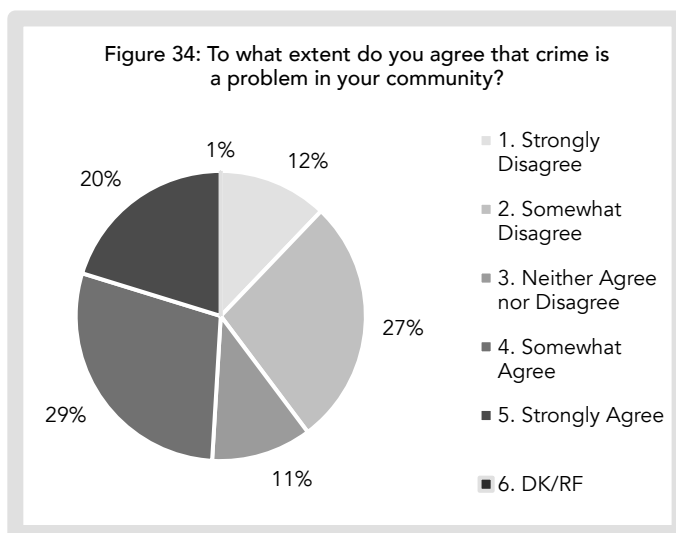


### 4.3 EXPOSURE TO CRIME AND CONFLICT

Many locals see crime as a serious problem but are concerned that incarceration is driving VE, as criminals frequently embrace Salafist Jihadism in jail.

Crime is widely seen as a major a problem in Zarqa and some respondents reported that it is mainly drug users and addicts who commit crimes in their neighborhoods. Accordingly, 49 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that crime is a problem in my community, while 39 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 34). In particular, some see crime as more common in rural than urban areas in the governorate.<sup>193</sup>

However, violent crime is not seen as a significant problem and respondents said they feel safe walking in the streets even if it is late at night. In fact, few respondents have personally experienced criminal activity and 84 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that they or their family members had not suffered directly from crime, while only 16 percent reported that they had (see Figure 35). Current and former convicts are viewed as more vulnerable to being recruited by groups with radical religious views,<sup>194</sup> mainly Salafist Jihadists, because they offer them a way to morally atone for their crimes.<sup>195</sup> Many therefore linked criminality with vulnerability to VE,<sup>196</sup> and observed that individuals in their communities who hold radical religious views often have a criminal past and/or spent time in jail.<sup>197</sup> Many of those jailed for a range of non-VEO related crimes become radicalized in prison,<sup>198</sup> and several respondents gave examples of individuals they had



<sup>193</sup> "Crime is not a problem in Zarqa city but sometimes in the villages there is a problem with crime like burglary and some people do this because they take drugs. People in Zarqa are not worried about this. You can walk at two in the morning anywhere and you will have no problems even if I am a girl walking late at night." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>194</sup> "I heard about many radical people were troublemakers before becoming religious. I don't know of a certain story but I heard this. Some of them even used to get drunk and then all of a sudden became religious or radical." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>195</sup> "A person could have done everything that is wrong, from alcohol, sex, rape, to drug crime. Having done all these wrong things, this person tries to make up for all his wrongdoings, so they would try their best to wipe their slate clean. Through joining camps, spending more time at the mosques." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>196</sup> "In prison there are religious groups that indoctrinate people." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>197</sup> "They work in different fields, very simple and limited. Most of them aren't educated. They don't have professions. Many of them have criminal records." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

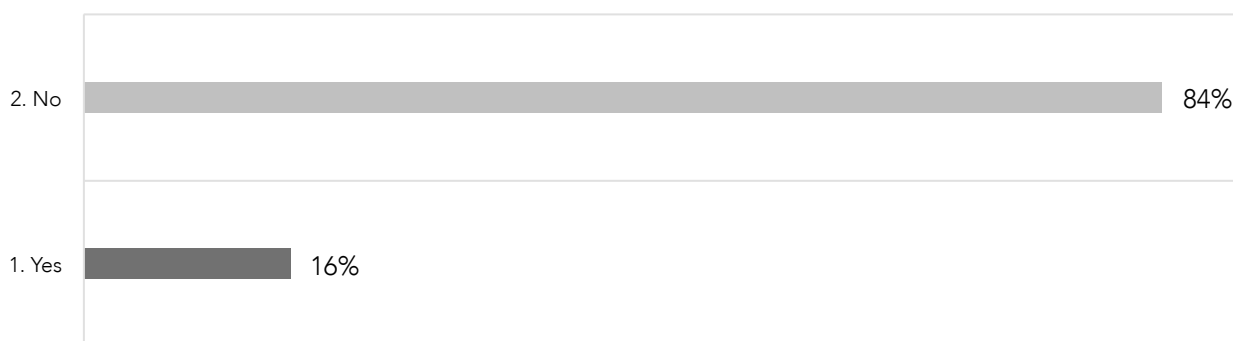
<sup>198</sup> "One guy I knew, he was arrested in the past for stealing. But such people think that if they join a religious group, God will forgive them. But I can say that most of them have criminal records." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

known who had become radicalized while incarcerated and subsequently traveled to Syria to join VEOs.<sup>199</sup> One respondent added that former criminals who have been radicalized in prison also enjoyed the prestige of being religious leaders and reported that such individuals can become Salafist sheikhs even if they are unable to read or write, although he conceded not everyone who becomes a Salafist in jail is a Jihadist and some have emerged as Quietists.<sup>200</sup> What is clear is that prisons provide a captive market for Salafist recruiters and that at least some of those recruited go on to join VEOs. Crucially, some respondents criticized the lack of rehabilitation programs for ex-convicts and called on the government to dedicate more resources to monitoring current and former convicts to prevent them from being radicalized and/or sympathizing with or joining VEOs.

*"I actually witnessed this myself. At that time, I was still a believer and I used to go to the Mosque, there was this person who is very well known as a gangster, everyone was afraid of him, he went to prison and came out with a very thick beard; he turned into a sheikh. He was illiterate."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

Figure 35: Have you or your family directly suffered from crime?



<sup>199</sup> "I know that one of them, Mohammad Khawaldeh, he died fighting with JN. He went to prison, came out and became religious, after a while he went to Syria and later we saw a video of condolences for him." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

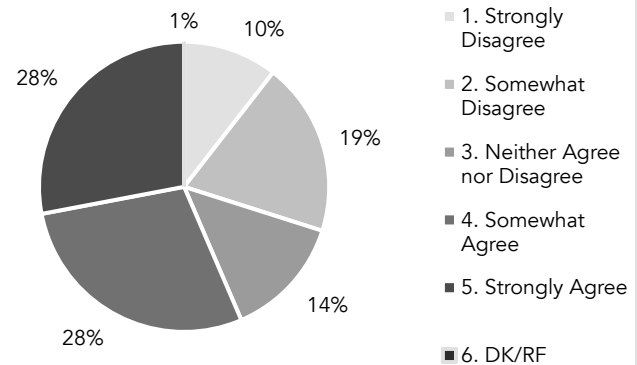
<sup>200</sup> "One of them didn't become a Salafist Jihadist, but a moderate Salafist, so it depends who they encounter [in prison]." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

Drug abuse is seen as a major problem in Zarqa, particularly among youths, and is driving poverty and despair, making users more likely to embrace VEOs.

Many respondents judged that drugs are a significant problem in their communities and that the wide range of drugs available and the ease with which they can be acquired are fueling drug abuse. Accordingly, 56 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that drug abuse is a problem in their community, while 29 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 36). Several respondents described how drugs can be acquired cheaply and, in particular, most feel that joker, a harmful and highly addictive synthetic cannabis product that can cost as little as 0.25 JD per dose, is one of the most harmful drugs available and widely consumed.<sup>201</sup> Some

reported that usage of the drug use is particularly high among youths and university students and that there are drug dealers in every neighborhood, with one respondent even suggesting that government officials could be complicit or involved in the local drug trade. Further, it seems likely that there is a causal relationship between drug usage and both vulnerability to VE messages and an enhanced risk of VEO participation among users and addicts and economic problems caused by the cost of drug addiction are cited by respondents as major contributing factors leading locals to consider VEO recruitment.<sup>202</sup>

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



*"Drug abuse is a serious and significant problem in Zarqa and the problem is dramatically increasing. The number of dealers has increased and you can find at least one dealer in each neighbourhood and now we can see really big dealers who even look like they have the supported of people in the government. We have started to see drug use in schools and universities and some students are even smoking weed and Joker inside the university campus."*

*(Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)*

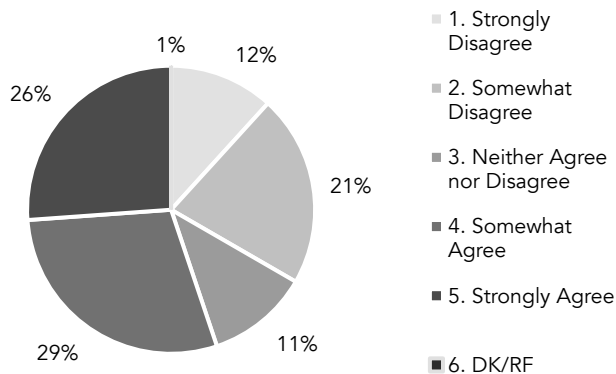
<sup>201</sup> "This problem of drug abuse is not exclusive to Zarqa, it is everywhere in Jordan. Drugs are now everywhere with many different types available, especially Joker. You can find this very easily and it is very cheap, you can buy one Joker cigarette for 0.25JD. There are no programs to fight this horrible problem." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>202</sup> "Especially with the people who take drugs, they fall into economic troubles so sometimes extremism can be their savior." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

Many locals are concerned that weapons are commonplace and easy to acquire, although they are rarely used for illegal purposes.

Weapons are commonplace in Zarqa and most locals view them as a significant problem, even if gun crime is infrequent and the main issue linked to weapons is wedding guests firing into the air in celebration, which was made illegal in 2010, as it can cause death or serious injury among bystanders. This practice continues despite official censure and in late 2014 seven people were injured by so-called festive fire at a wedding that took place in the town of Dhlail.<sup>203</sup> In fact, 55 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the availability of weapons is a problem in their community, while 33 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 37). Many of the weapons in private hands are fully licensed and it is not thought to be difficult to acquire a licence. In particular, weapons are often associated with East Bank locals, also due to the tradition of tribesmen being armed while traveling with their flocks, which may account for the size of the issue in Zarqa, which has many locals from East Bank tribes, including the prominent Bani Hassan tribe. However, the ownership and manufacture of illegal weapons is also an issue in Zarqa and the police are trying to crack down on individuals associated with the illegal arms trade, making several arrests in 2015.<sup>204</sup> Weapons are rarely used to attack the security forces or the JAF but should a VEO cell wish to acquire small arms to perpetrate an attack, then this would be unlikely to present a problem.

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



*"Weapons are a complicated issue here. There are many illegal weapons in the hands of young people and you see many guns in universities. It is always the young men who are causing this problem."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

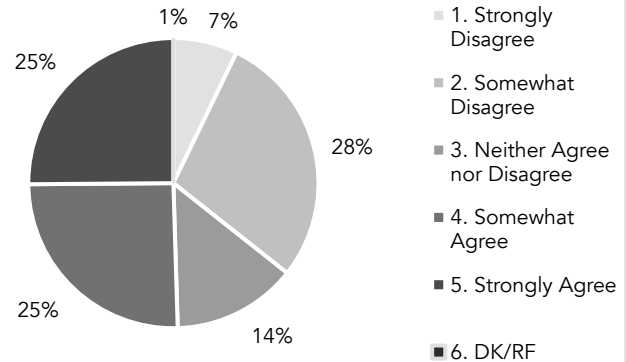
<sup>203</sup> Hussein, Rana 2014. 'Seven injured in wedding festive fire', Jordan Times, September 04, 2014.

<sup>204</sup> Petra News 2015, 'Arms dealer arrested in Zarqa', Petra News, April 11, 2015.

East Bank Jordanian locals resent the strong influence of prominent tribes and conflicts can occur.

The Bani Hassan tribe is the largest and most influential tribe in Zarqa and many respondents reported that its members regularly exploit this fact to ensure good access to jobs in the municipality, the police force, and the JAF. There are limited employment opportunities in Zarqa, so the perception that members of the Bani Hassan tribe have an unfair advantage is a source of frustration and resentment both for the members of smaller East Bank Jordanian tribes and for West Bank Jordanian locals, and can even lead to conflicts and violent clashes.<sup>205</sup> Accordingly, 50 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that inequality between tribes is a problem in Jordan, while 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 38). In particular, several respondents referenced inter-tribal fighting that took place at the Hashemite University in Zarqa following a disputed election for the main student body council. It is widely believed that the student council elections were manipulated in favor of candidates from the Bani Hassan tribe at the expense of another local tribe, the Bani Sakher, leading to violence between both students and their extended families. This pervasive sense of favoritism by the government toward the Bani Hassan risks estranging other locals and further eroding their faith in the central government, which VEOs can exploit to recruit.

Figure 38: To what extent do you agree that inequality between tribes is a problem in Jordan?



*"A lot of people from Zarqa believe that there is inequality between tribes, and this mainly refers to some tribes taking a greater share of government jobs than other tribes. In Zarqa they refer to the Bani Hassan tribe as "the tribe of a million member" and they have many positions in government, and they always use their wasta to hire their relatives and other tribe members. During the Hashemite University elections, an equal number of candidates were nominated from the Bani Hassan tribe and the Bani Sakher tribe, and after the results came in there was a big fight between the two tribes because the Bani Hassan candidates got control of all of the student council. The biggest conflicts are always between the Bani Hassan and the Bani Sakher because they are the most influential tribes in Zarqa, but this doesn't mean they do not also have conflicts with other*

<sup>205</sup> "The tribe people usually talk about is the Bani Hassan. This tribe is based in Zarqa and they have many members in Zarqa city and also they have a big presence in the universities, and many fights that started between students in the Hashemite University turned into tribal conflicts. In reality people believe that this tribe enjoys better conditions than them, because many members of this tribe work for the police or are in the JAF. Zarqa is a very mixed area as most Zarqa residents are Palestinian, but it also has Transjordanians, Circassians, Chechens, and Armenians as well. They all believe they are oppressed when it comes the justice they would receive if they had a fight or an issue with someone from the Bani Hassan tribe." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

*tribal groups."*

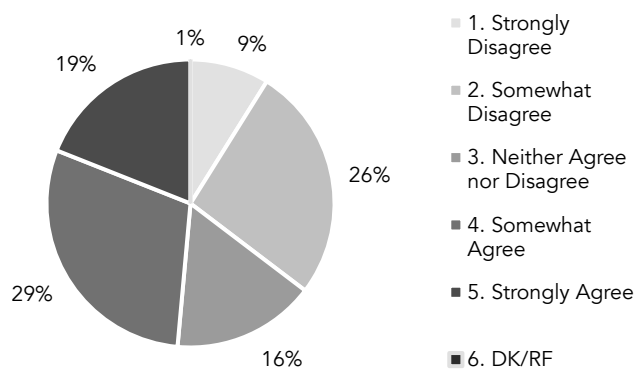
*(Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)*

## Inequality between East and West Bank Jordanian locals is an issue in Zarqa and is fueling resentment.

Although most respondents maintained that there are no active conflicts between East and West Bank Jordanians in Zarqa,<sup>206</sup> many reported that there is inequality in the system through which jobs in the public sector are apportioned and that East Bank Jordanians, especially those from large and influential tribes, benefit disproportionately from public sector jobs. As a result, 48 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that inequality between East and West Bank Jordanians is a problem in Jordan, while 35 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 39). Locals continued to define themselves in terms of whether or not they

have East or West Bank Jordanian heritage and, although this is generally not seen as an issue between the two groups, some maintained that there is lingering resentment among East Bank locals against West Bank Jordanians, who they feel are competing for limited jobs. Respondents also judged that there is inequality in Zarqa between locals from big East Bank Jordanian tribes, particularly the Bani Hassan, and others who are members of smaller tribes, of West Bank origins or minority communities.<sup>207</sup> Conversely, some East Bank respondents voiced concern that it is easier for locals of West Bank origins to find jobs, which can be seen as a result of their close involvement in the private sector due to historical exclusion from public sector jobs. As a consequence, some feared that this might be limiting their job prospects and making radicalization among East Bank youths in Zarqa more likely.<sup>208</sup>

Figure 39: To what extent do you agree that inequality between East and West Bank Jordanians is a problem in Jordan?



*"The Bani Hassan are Bedouin and they think they own Zarqa City, they have power and money and*

<sup>206</sup> "There is no difference whether you are originally Palestinian, from the north, the south, the families, the tribes and so on." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>207</sup> "There is some trouble between the West Bank Jordanians and the tribes because there is strong solidarity between West Bank Jordanians and Palestinians and the East Bank Jordanians don't like this, they think these people came and took their jobs and opportunities. They think the same of Syrian refugees. It is not pronounced in Zarqa as there is a balance between West and East Bank people but other places like Irbid it is a problem." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>208</sup> "Palestinians are stronger economically compared to Jordanians and this affects Jordanians and they become more radical. This means that in the future Jordanians are more prone to being involved in terrorism than Palestinians." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

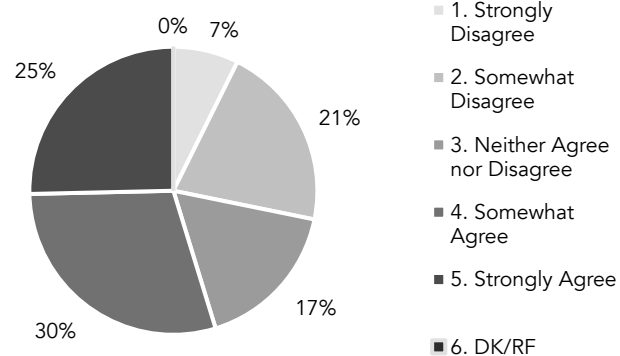
*they think that they are the best people in Zarqa and many people in Zarqa hate them because of this, they think they take their opportunities. To be honest Jordan is a tribal country and the tribes are very powerful and above the law in Zarqa and in all of the country. If the tribes fight then they resolve it through traditional methods, and nobody goes to jail. They sit together and discuss it."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

### Most locals are dissatisfied with the presence of Syrian refugees and tensions between locals and Syrians are on the rise.

Most respondents assessed conflict between Syrian refugees and locals in their neighborhoods to be a problem and that Syrians are having a negative impact on their communities, often because they are seen as placing a strain on limited job opportunities and resources, like water and electricity,<sup>209</sup> although some are also concerned that VE is widespread in refugee communities,<sup>210</sup> and especially refugee camps.<sup>211</sup> Some observed that basic services were poor even before the arrival of refugees, with the limited water supply a problem especially in summer. As a result, 55 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that conflict between

Figure 40: To what extent do you agree that the conflict between Jordanians and Syrian refugees is a problem in your community?



Jordanians and Syrian refugees is a problem in their community, while 28 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 40). Worryingly, some identified friction between host communities and refugees as a direct driver of frustration and VE views.<sup>212</sup> One respondent said that Syrian refugees have found it difficult to adapt to life in Zarqa, which he sees as more religiously conservative than the province of Dara'a, from which most of the Syrian refugees were thought to originate. He also stated that refugees have been stigmatized by the local population and that derogatory rumors have been circulated,

<sup>209</sup> "Other areas there may be extremists, like in Zarqa, why Zarqa? Because they have a huge population which are not citizens, they are not all from one area or one tribe, it is a big city, and where there are Syrians, Iraqi's and others, and this diversity has a negative impact." (Male, 51, MP, Balqa)

<sup>210</sup> "Also immigration affects people. People who immigrate to Jordan, this increases terrorism. The living conditions in Jordan then change and people believe that they have competitors here in Jordan and Jordanians become unemployed. So we have to support them and give Jordanians jobs because they believe they suffer from injustice. This is a crucial issue." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>211</sup> "The areas most at risk of VE are the poor areas and refugee camps. The poorest areas in Rusaifeh are Hitteen refugee camp and an area called Al Mosheerfeh." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>212</sup> "In Rusaifeh, the reason for VE views can be unemployment. Also immigration, Iraqis and Syrians immigrants affected the situation in Rusaifeh. They become radical according to their interests. As for Palestinians, they play with the freeing Palestine card. But with Jordanians, they work on injustice." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)



including one that Syrian women work as prostitutes, which is a possible source of future conflict and resentment among the local refugee community.

Moreover, refugees are widely seen as putting a strain on an already weak job market in the governorate and taking jobs from locals, although such jobs are often poorly paid and unattractive to Jordanians.<sup>213</sup> In fact, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees data estimated that there were 84,489 persons of concern in Zarqa governorate in January 2016, more than half of who live in the city of Zarqa, with the remainder spread across two camps to the southeast of the city.<sup>214</sup> Tensions between Syrians and local communities are increasingly driving resentment among the local population, as sympathy for the difficult situation of refugees fades into the feeling that they have become a burden. VEOs may be able to take advantage both of the marginalization and hopelessness of refugees and the resentment of locals to encourage recruitment and, as Syria continues to be too dangerous for refugees to return in the short to medium term, it is probable that such tensions will only escalate.

*"Since I communicate a lot with Syrian refugees, I've realized that the presence of Syrian refugees here has had an indirect impact in one way or another, because most refugees here in Zarqa are from Daraa, and Daraa is a very conservative city. Some of the refugees were telling us that even when they came to Jordan, they had to become more religious, they had to cover their women more, because Jordanians keep looking at Syrians and stereotyping them, and spreading rumors that Syrian women are working in the sex industry. So Syrians had to become more religious."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

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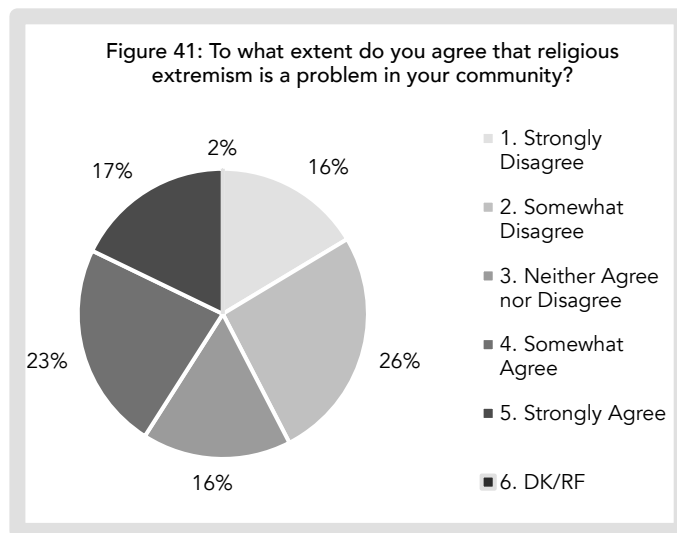
<sup>213</sup> "At the start of the revolution most people were sympathetic to refugees because we are from the same culture and have the same religion but now when there are one million Syrians here people do not believe the same way. Syrian people do unfortunately take jobs Jordanians don't want so Syrians will take jobs being a waiter or working in a gas station so the reasons for hating them are not fair but there are still problems after five years. There aren't fights but Jordanians are unhappy, they have sympathy but they think they are taking jobs and that they are overloading the system, the basic services were bad even before the refugees came so they have made things even worse. You can't blame anyone, not the Jordanians or the Syrians." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>214</sup> UNHCR figures for registered "persons of concern" in Zarqa governorate, correct as of January 19, 2016.

#### 4.4 EXPOSURE TO VE AND PERCEPTIONS OF VEO THREAT

Religious extremism is seen as a growing problem in some areas and attempts to counter extremism through religious education are failing.

Many respondents reported that religious extremism is a problem in their communities,<sup>215</sup> of which several stated that it is getting worse,<sup>216</sup> and identified a number of pathways from religious to VE,<sup>217</sup> including among others: time spent in prison,<sup>218</sup> a desire for social acceptance,<sup>219</sup> and recruitment by Salafist Jihadist religious sheikhs.<sup>220</sup> These sheikhs and other radical preachers are active in disseminating VE messages in some areas and exacerbating the problem of religious extremism,<sup>221</sup> in areas such as Hay Massoum district, Jabal Al Abyad, which is also linked to supporters of Zarqawi,<sup>222</sup> and the village of Masoum, where Al Zarqawi originated.<sup>223</sup>



<sup>215</sup> "There is no doubt that extremism is actually causing more and more problems to the residents of Zarqa." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>216</sup> "The general mood in my area is bad. Economically, socially and psychologically we're not doing well. If the state doesn't make radical changes in treating the problem of extremism, it will get worse." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>217</sup> "I think that radicalism is increasing. There are complaints from people both inside the country and outside. We have radical people in Rusaifeh but not so many and they don't go to people houses and try to recruit them to join extremist groups." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>218</sup> "I know 10 people who moved from the extreme right to the extreme left. One of them raped and killed a child then went to prison and when he got out he went to Syria and joined JN. He was killed recently." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>219</sup> "For thugs and people accused of crimes, the best way to change the society's opinion of them is to become religious and to memories some of the Qur'an so people change their mind and stop calling them thugs, so maybe that's why they joined." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>220</sup> "You find the youth blindly following the sheikhs. In Zarqa in general, they have great influence." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>221</sup> "We have a problem with preachers in this area, there was a very famous one, Naser Al Darabani... They have a lot of influence here in our area." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>222</sup> "If you asked me about Zarqa governorate, there are many radical people there. I know that around 800 people from Zarqa who went to fight inside Syria. I know that because of the nature of my job. A person working with the security forces told me eight months ago that 800 people have gone from Jordan to Syria. Most of them are from Massoum area in Zarqa, as well as Jabal Al Abyad, where Musab Zarqawi's supporters live." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>223</sup> "Massoum village in Zarqa, I heard that they gather there specially because Abu Musab Al Zarqawi was from there. There is also Zarqa camp and only a few are there but they exist. Also the Jabal Abyad, Massoum and Rusaifeh areas have more [violent extremists] than others." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

One respondent, citing the visit of controversial Saudi religious sheikh Mohammad Al Arifi to Jordan in 2015, identified the spread of VE messages by figures like Al Arifi as a key driver of religious extremism.<sup>224</sup> He maintained that Al Arifi's preaching, containing as it does many VE themes including the importance of fighting jihad in Syria and sectarian rhetoric against Shias, is so popular that locals from his neighborhood of Rusaifeh would enthusiastically attend a sermon by him if it were in Zarqa much as if it had been a major soccer match.<sup>225</sup> However, as religious extremism is largely limited to particular communities, views were mixed and 40 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that religious extremism is a problem in their community, although 42 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 41).<sup>226</sup>

Attempts to counter this through religious education in schools are largely thought to be failing, for instance because the religious arguments used are often too complicated for students to understand. In contrast, radical clerics are more effective at using religion as a recruitment tool for VEOs,<sup>227</sup> often by focusing on simple concepts like jihad, achieving paradise through martyrdom, and what is permissible and forbidden in Islam. VEO recruiters are also pitching their messages at a more comprehensible level for youths and therefore successfully indoctrinating them.<sup>228</sup> It is therefore critical that religiously themed counter narratives do not go too deeply into religious theory that poorly educated locals may not be able to understand.

*"To give you a sense of where I live in Bierain or specifically the suburbs of Bierain, half of the inhabitants are not affiliated with any particular ideology, however you believe that they have strong, conservative religious beliefs. The other half, taking into consideration we are talking about a very big neighborhood, are affiliated with the MB. The MB in general is not fanatical like the other groups...We do not have this kind of extremism. So the whole community consequently are either not fanatics or they do not really care. So you would not find any kind of ideology that encourages violence or non-acceptance of others. I have also lived in central Zarqa for 12 years and never witnessed this because most of the people there have a similar mind-set. However, I believed that [there was VE] in Irbid when I went there."*

*(Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)*

<sup>224</sup> Alaraby 2015. 'Controversial Saudi preacher splits opinions during Jordan visit', Alaraby, July 08, 2015.

<sup>225</sup> "Extremism in my society was mainly influenced by propaganda; when Arifi gives a lecture, people who would attend are so many, even more than the people who watch soccer matches." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>226</sup> "Most people still don't accept radicalism. They can differentiate." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>227</sup> "Some people are religious but they do not understand religion." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>228</sup> "The religious rhetoric provided by the schools and state are pitched at a higher level than what these people understand. So [VEO supporters] use simpler rhetoric: jihad, halal, haram, heaven. They think they are doing a good thing [in fighting for a VEO]." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

**Focus: Many locals link religious extremism, especially among local Salafist Jihadists, to recruitment into VEOs in Syria.**

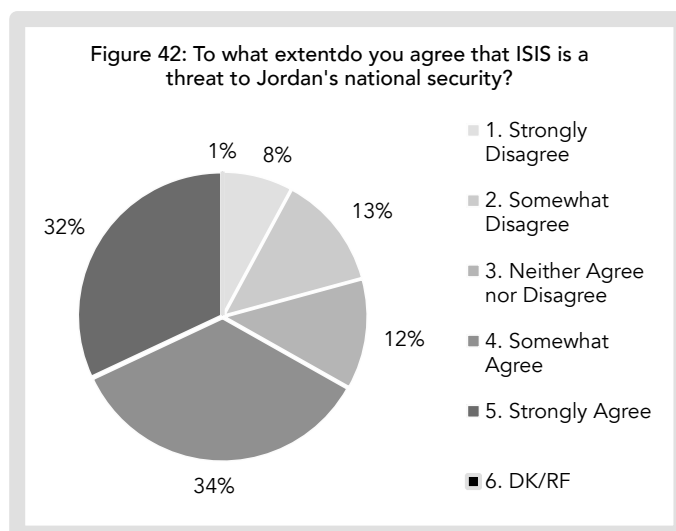
*"In Rusaifeh, I haven't met or seen any violent extremists and I think people in Rusaifeh are not influenced by them. We live in a country that provides us with safety and security. If you remember, a few years ago, a problem happened between the Salafists and Jordanian police in Zarqa city when the police arrested many Salafists and some of them are still in prison. I think we are talking about the same group here. Our colleague, Mohammad Ashour was a Palestinian citizen from Gaza. He was a good guy, classmate, colleague and I knew him very well since we were classmates until high school when he dropped out of school. He was living his life like all the other guys. He wasn't interested in praying. He wasn't that good at school, barely showing up to classes. His life was a typical 'refugee camp son' lifestyle, where you have good, bad, decent and so on. He used to live in Shneller and Hetteen refugee camps. I used to see him in his dad's store, where they were selling fruits and vegetables and one day I was surprised to see him wearing dishdasha, growing his beard so I asked him what happened. He said that God led him to the right path and he prays every day in the mosque. After a while, we heard that he headed to Syria and later they brought his body back from Syria. The Salafists called him a [martyr] since he was fighting infidels and some sort of that talk. Then they put flags on his parents' house and then they buried him. I have no idea how he ended up in Syria and if I had asked him before he left, he wouldn't have said a word about it. They don't talk about their intentions to people.*

*This happened between 2012 and 2013. He was 22 years old. This guy became a better guy, spending most of his time in the mosque, it's good to see a guy who had a bad past and changed to become a good guy. How am I supposed to see that he became an extremist, we can't tell from him spending most of his time at the mosque or if someone became an extremist just by seeing him with a long beard he grew. Most of our sheikhs look the same way as this guy and they are not considered extremists. I believe that he was told to go and do jihad in Syria. He was played. If you go to any of the people who told him to go and fight in Syria and ask him why they didn't go yourself to fight in Syria, his answer would be that he has kids. Once I was in a cab with a very extreme driver, saying that our government is full of infidels, the way he dressed was the extremist way of dressing. The extremists always try to talk and show their opinion to the people to provoke them. Some other Muslims dress in a specific way that are not violent, you can actually have a conversation with them and ask them about Islam since they know more about it. What my colleague did wasn't accepted among his family and our friends but the group who brought him back actually held a martyr's wedding for him. There were some flags that were raised at his funeral. I can't tell if extremism is becoming a bigger problem than the kind of extremism we had in Jordan in 2005."*

*(Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)*

Fear of the threat of VEO attacks in Jordan is widespread, although most locals are confident that the security forces are effective in countering VEOs and preventing terrorist attacks.

Most respondents expressed concerns that ISIS is a threat to Jordanian national security, with most stating that they are worried that there may be some form of ISIS attack in Jordan. Fears of an attack peaked after the murder of Kasasbeh, and subsequent threats by ISIS to attack Jordan.<sup>229</sup> However, as no attacks occurred since then, confidence has grown among locals that the security forces are effective in protecting them from ISIS reprisals. Nevertheless, many remain afraid of possible acts of terrorism by ISIS in Jordan and there are still memories of the 2005 hotel bombings in Amman. As a result, 66 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that ISIS is a threat to the national security of Jordan, while 21 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 42). Moreover, the video released by ISIS showing the murder of Kasasbeh also identified the homes of other pilots in the Royal Jordanian Air Force, some of which reside in Zarqa city, and the VEO offered rewards for information on these men and invited locals to attack them in reprisal for their part in the bombing campaign against the group in Syria.



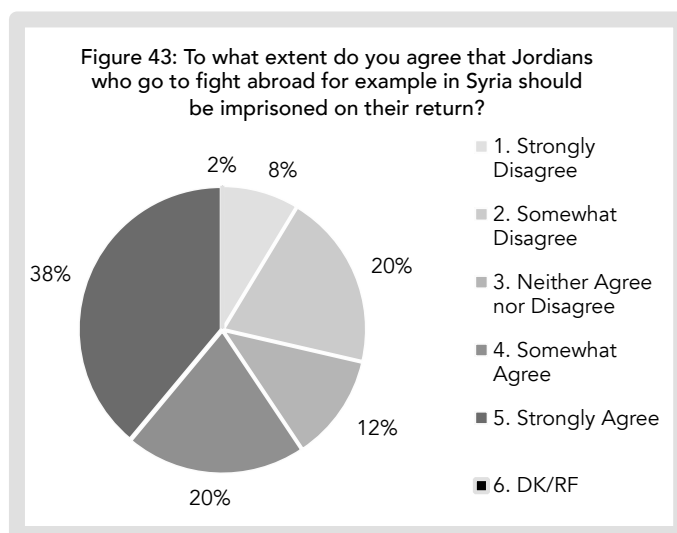
*"There is always anxiety and fear that [ISIS] can do something here, especially with the recent events when they killed the pilot Moath, and with the planes from Jordan attacking their bases in Syria."*

*(Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)*

<sup>229</sup> Chulov, Martin and Malek Shiv, 2015. 'Jordan executes would-be suicide bomber wanted for release by ISIS', Guardian, February 04, 2015.

Returning fighters are generally seen as a danger to society and locals are concerned that the government is failing to rehabilitate them and address the issue of radicalization in the prison system.

Most locals believe that returning VEO members represent a threat to Jordanian national security and that the central government's policy of incarcerating them on their return them is the correct response,<sup>230</sup> although some expressed concern that time in prison can make offenders even more radical.<sup>231</sup> Specifically, 58 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Jordanians who go to fight abroad should be imprisoned on their return, while only 28 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 43). In particular, some respondents expressed concerns that former VEO members do not abandon their extremist ideology on their return and that they will continue to pose a threat. Some also praised the central government's policy of jailing returning fighters because they maintained that it is dissuading many locals still in Syria as members of VEOs from returning to Zarqa. However, those who disagreed explained that, although locals who fought with VEOs abroad in Syria or Iraq are not well regarded by the majority of people in their communities, it is not constructive to incarcerate them on their return, as they might be able to successfully re-integrate themselves,<sup>232</sup> as some of those who have fought in Iraq<sup>233</sup> and in Syria have.<sup>234</sup> Successful reintegration is to an extent linked to the sympathy and support of family members. In some instances those who have been rehabilitated were spared jail following the intercession of family members with the authorities. Crucially, one respondent, whose 18 year-old son was imprisoned for five years when he came back to Zarqa after fighting with JN in Syria, argued that the government's policy of



<sup>230</sup> "I am sure that if people have the chance to come back [to Zarqa] they would, if the state is more lenient with those coming back." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa) "

<sup>231</sup> "One of the guys I told you about who died there, he was arrested here in Jordan and then he was out, after that he went to Syria and died during clashes between JN and ISIS. After he left prison he developed radical thoughts and that's why he went to Syria after four months." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>232</sup> "This neighbor of mine was arrested for eight months when he returned then he got married and a job he's doing really well right now." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>233</sup> "My next door neighbor, who is rich himself and comes from a rich family, he went to fight in Iraq, he returned, was imprisoned and now he's doing well and a law abiding citizen." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>234</sup> "His family then welcomed him and took him back. He lived off charity at the beginning but now he works. He was part of JN. It is believed that the Syrian Army shot him. He was not prosecuted. Anyone who comes back from there and they see he was shot, the government won't arrest them. When he got back to Jordan, he changed completely and stopped believing in radical ideology, and he only follows the Salafists Quietists now." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

imprisoning returning fighters risks pushing them toward more extreme groups like ISIS and that it can only lead to more extremist behavior.<sup>235</sup>

As a result, some respondents were critical of the central government, feeling that it needs to do more to combat VEO recruitment and to better rehabilitate former VEO members. They highlighted that there is a lack of effort and investment on the part of the central government to ensure that those imprisoned for links to VEOs or for traveling to Syria to fight will not reoffend. One complained that there is specifically no program aimed at engaging with prisoners prior to their release and that there were no state-employed prison psychologists to deal with prisoners' psychological issues.<sup>236</sup> In the absence of any structured program, the many aspiring or returning VEO members arrested by the security forces going into or coming back from Syria are in danger of continuing on the VE path that they have begun and potentially recruiting male youths to join them. There is also an acknowledged problem with radicalization in prisons in Jordan that increases the risk that those jailed for VEO sympathies will emerge with the same mindset or even more radical than when they were incarcerated.<sup>237</sup> Several respondents believe that criminals stand a high chance of being radicalized while incarcerated, mainly by Salafist Jihadists.

*"Most people that returned weren't encouraged to come back. Some are arrested, for some the state took advantage of the information they had and they reintegrated those ones into the society, like my next-door neighbor... Honestly, I don't think that the government has a real strategy toward solving the problem. The government only worked on increasing security however I don't think they have done anything comprehensive to combat terrorism and extremism."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>235</sup> Black, Ian 2014. 'Courts kept busy as Jordan works to crush support for terrorists', Guardian, November 27, 2014.

<sup>236</sup> "I believe the state is not paying attention to these people, and isn't spending enough time or effort to rehabilitate the convicts. It's important to work on the psychology of convicts; it's important they play football and have activities. They need more help, they need an opportunity, they need jobs. Many people in Saudi Arabia went through the rehabilitation and went out of prison, then a year after they went back to join AQ. I know people that work at rehabilitation centers. I have done a lot of research. I have gathered a lot of information about this. There isn't one psychology expert working with the convicts." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>237</sup> "One person who was very religious and was arrested and jailed for a year, after his release he went to Syria. Before he was arrested he was a Salafist quietist and then became jihadist." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

Exposure to VE is uncommon and most locals identified the families of potential recruits as a barrier to recruitment into VEOs.

The families of potential recruits are mainly judged to be a barrier to recruitment into VEOs,<sup>238</sup> mainly because most families do not want their relatives to go to Syria due to the risk of death or injury, and do not view fighting in Syria as justifiable.<sup>239</sup> Some respondents also emphasized the positive role that families and entire tribes can play to ensure that their members do not join VEOs.<sup>240</sup> However, in rare cases parents can increase vulnerability to VEO messaging, for instance through neglect of their children, an inability to financially support their children, or not providing alternative outlets for youthful frustrations.<sup>241</sup> Although some respondents have friends, relatives, or acquaintances from their neighborhoods that have become involved with VEOs, the majority has never had any contact with VE. 86 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that they or their family members had not suffered directly from VE, although a notable minority of 14 percent reported they had (see Figure 44). The number of those who stated they have been affected by VE is linked to the number of locals known to have traveled to Syria to fight with VEOs over the entire course of the conflict, including the earlier stages when it was felt to be easier to cross the border and the government was believed to be less vigilant about potential fighters trying to go abroad. As a governorate characterized by large East Bank tribal groups and large extended families, the death of one individual fighting with a VEO in Syria or Iraq also reaches a great number of relatives beyond just their immediate family and friends. A number of respondent also commented on so-called martyrdom celebrations that often take place following the death of a relative fighting in Syria or Iraq, and while these can be taken to indicate widespread endorsement of the deceased's VEO participation, most respondents rejected this interpretation. Instead, attendance at these events is explained by local customs and expressions of sympathy and condolences to the family. For example, one respondent observed that even the father of Kasasbeh attended the funeral of an MP's son who was killed fighting for a VEO.<sup>242</sup>

*"When a person goes to Syria to fight and then is killed, his family celebrates his martyrdom here in Jordan. At the beginning we used to go and visit to mourn their family. Some sheikhs at the mourning house would say Allah Akbar. This is ridiculous. So we stopped going and most of their relatives are against what their sons did. Even some parents are against it. So most people who*

<sup>238</sup> "As for the parents of the fighters, when their sons talk to them, the parents try to convince their kids to come back. (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>239</sup> "We work with the family when we notice a certain person with a radical ideology. Their family can affect them. We convince them to go back to their roots." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>240</sup> "It depends on the family. Some families are effective. Our tribe is effective in combatting radicalization." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>241</sup> "Those recruited were aged 14 or 15 to 24 years old. They focused on the psychological pressure those youths are suffering from, in terms of family conflicts, those who are suffering in their families from economic or social problems. This what those groups focus on reaching out to contain them. The youth do not have anyone to turn to." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

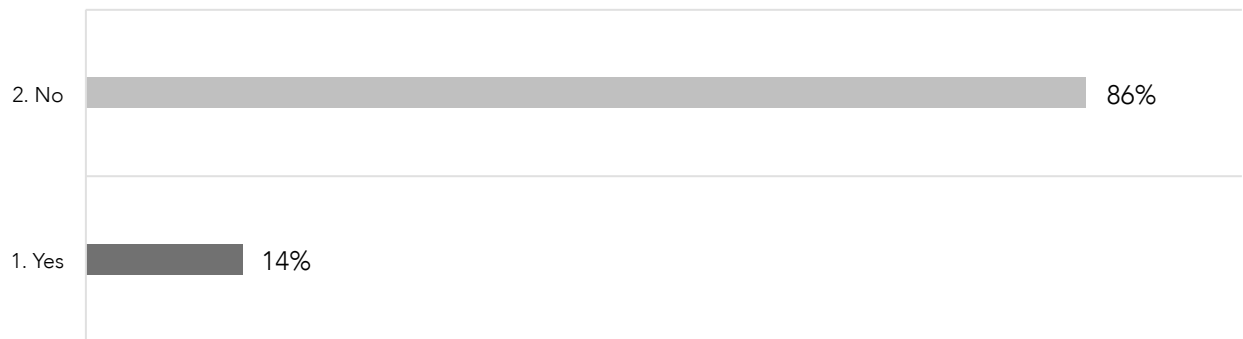
<sup>242</sup> "The father of Kasasbeh went to give condolences when the son the Jordanian Member of Parliament died in Syria. He went to give condolences even though his son died at the hands of Daesh and the other one went to fight with Daesh. People think that this is the right thing to do." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)



*celebrate their death are Sheikhs and friends who have a radical ideology."*

*(Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)*

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



## 5.0 EXTERNAL DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 5.1 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

US foreign policy in the region, particularly the 2003 invasion of Iraq, continues to negatively influence views toward the US.

The majority of respondents assessed the impact of the US on Jordan as negative, with most referencing the 2003 invasion of Iraq and several describing it as a turning point in their perception of the US and its policy in the Middle East.<sup>243</sup> The actions of the US in invading Iraq and becoming involved in the bombing campaign against VEOs in Syria and Iraq are also viewed as drivers of radicalization and recruitment into VEOs, as the US is widely perceived to be interfering in the region and targeting Muslims. Public statements by US leaders have also outraged locals, and one respondent referred to a speech in which then-President George W. Bush was believed to have said that the US was involved in a crusade in the region,<sup>244</sup> which was poorly received as the crusades still have a strongly negative resonance among locals.<sup>245</sup> As a result, a majority of respondents (50 percent) reported that the US has a negative impact on Jordan, although a substantial minority (40 percent) reported that it has a positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50 below).

While perceptions of the US are generally negative across the region, in large part due to popular anger related to US foreign policy, and despite its conservative, Islamist reputation, this confirms that hostility toward the US is far from ubiquitous among locals. Notably, support for the US is also linked to the close relationship between the JAF and the US military, as US military trainers have long been involved in training the JAF and many of its training areas and barracks are near Zarqa city. Many locals are currently or have previously been involved in the military and it is likely they would have come into contact with serving members of the US military and formed a positive impression of them that is then transmitted to their family and friends. This also suggests that anti-US propaganda used by VEOs to recruit might be less effective in Zarqa than would be expected.

*"The main reason why people are against the US is the negative impact that the US has had in the region because the US invasion destroyed Iraq and now Syria is in conflict...They say all that has come from US is war, evil, and hatred for Muslims."*

*(Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)*

<sup>243</sup> "Of course the conflict in Iraq has affected Jordan. What happened in Iraq in 2003 was that the Americans encouraged sectarianism. Not that I would defend Saddam's regime, but when he ruled Iraq that didn't exist, not like it does now with all the Shia and Sunni and all the sects fighting and all that. Iraq became a breeding ground for these factions and that was the start of things." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>244</sup> "George Bush saying that these are the crusades again, this pushed people to fight." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>245</sup> Waldman, Peter and Hugh Pope 2001. 'Crusade reference reinforces fears War on Terrorism is against Muslims', Wall Street Journal, September 21, 2001.

The EU response to the influx of Syrian refugees has improved its image among locals, although it is largely negatively viewed, also due to its perceived close relationship with the US.

Many respondents reported that locals have a negative view of the European Union (EU), also because it is seen as a close ally of the US, which is widely disliked for its foreign policy in the region. Attitudes to the EU are also colored by the actions of the leading countries within the EU, particularly France and the UK. The UK is seen as a close ally of the US and similarly attracts criticism for joining the Iraq War as the junior partner to the US and is also blamed by locals of West Bank origins for its historical failures in Palestine, principally the failure to prevent the creation of the state of Israel. In addition, France also attracts strong condemnation for policies that are seen as anti-Muslim, including the 2014 ban on the wearing of the face veil by public officials, which was later upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in 2015.<sup>246</sup> While 48 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that the EU has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, 29 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact (see Figure 50 below). In particular, the EU response to the Syrian conflict in Europe and Jordan, such as its funding of projects to help refugees and Jordanians in host communities, was praised by some,<sup>247</sup> who maintained that the EU is now more favorably regarded in their communities.

*"The EU did not have a bad reputation before the refugee crisis but since it began the EU's reputation among the people has got better. Some people do not consider the EU to be good but think it is definitely not as bad as the US."*

*(Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)*

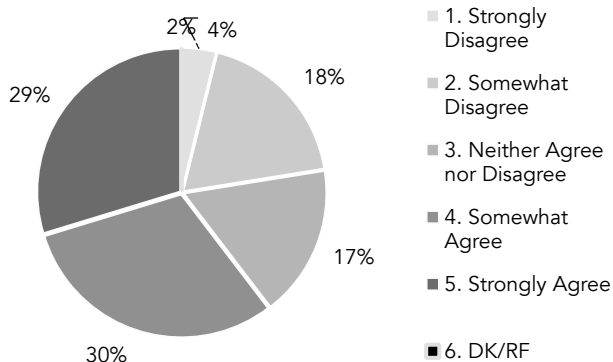
<sup>246</sup> Deutsche Welle, 2015. 'Top European court upholds France's headscarf ban', Deutsche Welle, November 29, 2015.

<sup>247</sup> "Regarding the European union, they see them as the leading supporter of US policies in Arab countries and they have supported the US in many wars and stand beside US. People think they are on the same side." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

Iran is viewed as having a largely negative effect on Jordan and fueling VE through its involvement in the Syrian conflict.

Many respondents agreed that the behavior of Iran, particularly its support for the Assad Regime and Hezbollah, has stoked anti-Shia sectarian sentiment in their communities, which VEOs are harnessing to attract recruits. Accordingly, 72 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that Iran has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while only six percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50 below). Further, some questioned what actual impact Iran is having in Jordan beyond inflaming public opinion through its involvement in Syria and Iraq, and judged that Iranian interference in the Syrian conflict is inspiring some locals to go there to fight, often for VEOs. In fact, the majority of respondents (59 percent) agreed that Iranian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, while far fewer (22 percent) disagreed (see Figure 45). Iranian actions in the region were widely criticized by respondents and contribute to fears that there is a Shia expansion across the region, led by Iran and assisted by Shia Arab Iraqis, with the object of subjugating Sunnis. This fear plays into the propaganda of VEOs, particularly ISIS, which presents itself as protecting Sunnis against Iranian/Shia domination, and quantitative findings indicate that many locals may be receptive to such propaganda and hence more likely to consider joining VEOs to defend their fellow Sunnis.

Figure 45: To what extent do you agree that Iranian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?



*"Now Sunnis in Iran have no representatives in the parliament. In all Iran, you won't find one Sunni mosque. The only countries that do not have mosques for Sunnis are Iran and the Vatican. Everywhere even in the US you can find mosques for Sunnis."*

*(Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)*

Most locals judge that Saudi Arabia has a positive influence on Jordan, although there are concerns that it is promoting VE ideologies.

Many respondents reported that locals in their communities have a positive view of Saudi Arabia, which is largely the result of close economic and religious ties between Saudi Arabia and Jordan. 47 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that Saudi Arabia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan while 24 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact (see Figure 50 below). In addition, positive views toward Saudi Arabia can also be ascribed to factors including the geographical proximity between Zarqa and Saudi Arabia and the presence of prominent Saudi-financed projects in Zarqa, such as a social housing project named after late Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz started in

2007.<sup>248</sup> Positive attitudes can also be linked to the fact that both countries have mainly Sunni Muslim populations, to which widespread anti-Iranian and anti-Shia sentiments also contribute.<sup>249</sup>

In contrast, negative views are largely associated with the perception that Saudi financing, even if indirect, of VEOs, including JN, has been helping VEOs to attract Jordanian recruits.<sup>250</sup> In fact, Saudi Arabians are also believed to be financially supporting groups in Zarqa with radical religious views, especially Salafist Jihadists, and one respondent observed that the central government is aware of these activities but has done nothing to combat them, implying that this is down to the close relationship between the two governments.<sup>251</sup> Further, there are concerns that Saudi Arabia's austere Wahhabist ideology may be indirectly encouraging radicalism in Jordan and the approval given by the central government for the visit of controversial Saudi preacher Mohammad Al Arifi in 2015, who is known for his sectarian rhetoric and is banned from a number of both regional and European nations, including the UK and Kuwait, suggested to some that the closeness between the two countries is facilitating this process.

*"I had a Sufi friend and I was discussing with him once how a lot of sheikhs in mosques are turning into Salafists although they work for the government. So he told me, based on what he saw (so am just quoting him) he said that those sheikhs are usually invited by Saudi Arabia to go do the pilgrimage for free and stay in five-star hotels and while they're there, they give them a course and a bunch of books, and they offer them a monthly salary. They say whenever you want to come back to Saudi we will pay for your trip or if you need more books we'll give you them or if anyone you know wants to come and perform the pilgrimage or take this course, we're ready to pay for that. So it's known that Saudi Arabia is promoting this ideology, not an Islamic ideology but Salafist ideology."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

**Locals are divided as to whether Turkey has a positive or negative impact on Jordan, with many respondents neutral on the issue.**

Attitudes to Turkey were mixed among respondents, largely because most locals are poorly informed about Turkey and its policies. Specifically, 38 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that Turkey has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan, while 32 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan; however, sentiment among GQ respondents was not overly polarized and a quarter stated that they do not believe that its impact on Jordan was discernibly positive or negative (see Figure 50 below). Prevalent views are for the most part informed by the media, which mainly endorses President Erdogan's policies, especially those toward Syria, in particular opposition to the Assad Regime. In addition, support also stem from the country's increasingly religiously conservative

<sup>248</sup> This housing project was named after its chief benefactor, thus it is the 'Housing City of King Abdulaziz Al Saud' and is described in the 'initiatives' section of King Abdullah of Jordan's personal website. Available at: <[http://kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en\\_US/initiatives/view/id/91.html](http://kingabdullah.jo/index.php/en_US/initiatives/view/id/91.html)>

<sup>249</sup> Poole, Thom 2016. 'Iran and Saudi's great rivalry explained', BBC News, January 04, 2016.

<sup>250</sup> "JN's funding and that of the FSA is from Qatar and Saudi who gave them a lot of money so they can pay their people well and they can come back to their countries and live a good life." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>251</sup> "The Jordanian government doesn't support them [Salafist jihadists], but it doesn't confront them, and it doesn't prevent Saudi Arabia from supporting them." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

image, which is typified by President Erdogan and his wife, who wears a headscarf in public, despite the country's secular roots in the post-Ataturk era. However, a few respondents did criticize Turkey on the basis that it exacerbates the problem of VE in Jordan, accusing it of having a policy of facilitating the entry of Jordanians into Syria to join VEO in concert with ISIS, but this viewpoint is rare.<sup>252</sup> Notably, there have also been instances where aspiring VEO members have been detained in Turkey and returned to Jordan, coordinated by both governments.<sup>253</sup>

*"Many people don't know a lot about Turkey's politics so they follow the media which says Erdogan is a good guy because he stands with the Syrian people and the Turkish people so people here think Erdogan is good and that Turkey is good. People who really understand Turkey think it is bad and that it helps the terrorists."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

### **Israeli treatment of Palestinians is seen as a driver of VE and locals are largely hostile toward Israel.**

The vast majority of respondents agreed that Israel has had a negative impact on Jordan, with most referencing the situation of Palestinians, who they think are badly treated by Israel. The vast majority of respondents (81 percent) therefore reported that Israel has negative impact on Jordan, while a minority (11 percent) disagreed (see Figure 50 below). West Bank Jordanian locals are particularly hostile toward Israel for historical reasons, although the notable minority who believe Israel has a positive impact can be seen to reflect the density of East Bank Jordanians who have less reason to express resentment toward Israel. Although anger at Israeli treatment of Palestinians can inflame passions among locals, especially youths, which can be exploited by VEOs, the impracticality of attacking Israeli territory, given Jordanian and Israeli surveillance on their shared border means locals who wish to fight in what they consider a jihad are more likely to go to Syria or Iraq. Some therefore linked anger at maltreatment of Palestinians to greater vulnerability to recruitment into VEOs.<sup>254</sup> In fact, one respondent identified a trend where supporters of jihad in Syria have also been deploying arguments designed to appeal to locals holding pro-Palestinian views, which are based around the idea that once jihad in Syria has been successful and Assad has been overthrown, Palestine will be the next to be liberated, and there is evidence that this idea has traction among some locals.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> "In general Turkey and Qatar are to blame for extremism in Jordan for their support for radical groups. This is known. ISIS and the Turkish Government work together and communicate to help fighters to get inside and I think they also were a big part in fighting the Kurds." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>253</sup> "She returned with the cooperation of the Turkish government, they intervened and by coordinating with our government and they were able to get her back from Turkey." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>254</sup> "Israel first and foremost is responsible for radicalization as when settlers burn children and make it legal, is this not terrorism?" (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>255</sup> "Many believe that the liberation and reform of Egypt and Syria will eventually lead to the liberation of Palestine." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

*"Another reason is injustice, for example what happens in Palestine, this is the main reason why we have extremism. A lot of people say that, not only me, even ministers, because Palestine's case affects the whole region. When you see injustice around you, you become affected."*

*(Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)*

**Most locals believe that the Syrian conflict is a key driver of VE and recruitment into VEOs, although many deny that the Syrian conflict has had a direct impact on their communities.**

Many respondents maintained that the Syrian conflict has been the principal reason for an increase in VE and that in contrast previous conflicts in the region, including the 2003 Iraq war and those between the Palestinians and Israelis in Gaza and the West Bank, did not generate such a clear manifestation of VE.<sup>256</sup> In particular, the perceived crimes of the Assad Regime against Sunni Syrian citizens, particularly women and children, outraged some locals to the point where they were convinced they must go to Syria and fight the Assad Regime. The proximity of Syria has also played a role in attracting locals to Syria and the fact that Syria is Jordanian immediate neighbor has lent immediacy to the daily images showing the suffering of Syrians.<sup>257</sup> Despite popular sympathy for the Syrian revolution, and the suffering of the Syrian people, Syria is overwhelmingly judged to have had a negative impact on Jordan and 61 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that Syria has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, compared to only 18 percent who reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact on Jordan (see Figure 50 below). While many respondents expressed strong views on the Syrian conflict, many youths were ignorant of events in Syria, the details of the conflict, and the parties involved, including the Assad Regime and the Free Syria Army (FSA).<sup>258</sup> While youths are aware of the presence of Syrian refugees in their neighborhoods, most have not been directly affected by the conflict and thus show little or no interest in it. Some respondents therefore played down the impact of the Syrian conflict on locals in their communities and highlighted that radicalized locals would have found an outlet for their violent tendencies elsewhere if Syria were stable, implying that Syria merely provides the closest outlet for VE rather than being the direct cause.<sup>259</sup> Such views confirm that many locals are poorly informed about

<sup>256</sup> "We have only seen this support for VE since the Syrian problem started, we didn't see it during the Iraq war or during any of the conflicts in Palestine." (Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

<sup>257</sup> "The most effective propaganda for Daesh and JN is what people see on the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya news channels with all the images they are showing and the things they are saying about the Syrian regime killing children and killing civilians. As if this is the first war to have civilian casualties." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>258</sup> "The youths said they know about the refugees but they didn't know about the Assad Regime or the FSA, and they didn't care. Maybe this is because they aren't directly affected by the Syrian crisis." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>259</sup> "I don't believe that Syria and Iraq have had an impact on VE in the Rusaifeh area. Not just us as Jordanians, but even with the Iraqi and Syrian refugees living in the area with us. About my colleague who went to Syria, you can't actually be sure that he wouldn't have done something like this if the Syrian crisis didn't happen. Hearing from the news, some Jordanians joined AQ in Pakistan, so it is actually based on their mentors advising them to head to one place instead of another. But I think that the reason behind my friend heading to Syria is that it is closer. It was easier to go to Syria than going elsewhere." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

events in Syria and suggest that appeals from VEOs to local youths, if anything, result in the acceptance of broad narratives rather than detailed information, and also suggest that negative perceptions of Syria might largely be linked to perceptions of the impact of Syrian refugees.

*"Syria had a big influence [on VE in Jordan]. Jordan is a Sunni Muslim state in general. These people have a religious motive to wipe their slates and have their sins forgiven. All the crimes that Al Assad subjected his people to, firstly the political crimes, and then the murders, rape, killing of children and women and the elderly, and destruction, these atrocities pushed people to go and defend the people of Syria."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

### **Most locals dislike Russia due to its support for the Assad Regime and its historical treatment of Muslims in the Caucasus.**

Most respondents explained that they see Russia as an ally of the Assad Regime and mainly have a negative view of Russia as a result of its crimes against Syrian citizens in general and Sunni Muslims specifically. Russia's actions in supporting the Assad Regime are seen as increasing the destruction in Syria, the civilian deaths, and ultimately the amount of time that Zarqa will be required to sustain a large population of Syrian refugees who are seen as putting an increasing strain on already limited employment opportunities and government resources. In addition, negative views of Russia are tied to its conflicts in Chechnya. One respondent said that a video titled Russian Hell shows Chechens fighting against Russians is widely known in his community and is often shown at mosques in his neighborhood. Accordingly, 62 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that Russia has a 'very' or 'somewhat' negative impact on Jordan, while only 11 percent reported that it has a 'very' or 'somewhat' positive impact (see Figure 50 below). This clear majority view is despite any obvious direct Russian involvement in Zarqa or in Jordan itself and reflects the generally negative view of Russia, as a result of which VEOs could likely make use of the argument that recruits would be able to fight against the Russians as a tool to attract new members from Zarqa.

*"Even before the Syrian crisis, since we were young we've always been raised to hate the Russians due to the war in Chechnya. There was a video that was always present in mosques called "Russian Hell." I've never watched it, but it was about how the Chechens fought the Russians. So this used to have an influence on people."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*



Support for the FSA is limited, reflecting its perceived weakness, which means that locals who wish to fight in Syria join VEOs instead.

The FSA is not well regarded by the majority of locals, despite general sympathy both for the suffering of Syrians in the country and hostility to the Assad Regime. Many respondents contrasted the current lack of local endorsement and contributions with higher levels of support at the beginning of the Syrian conflict, when some locals were actively raising funds for the FSA.<sup>260</sup> Specifically 47 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' opposition to the FSA in their community, while only 31 percent reported that there is 'strong' or 'some' support for the FSA (see Figure 1). As the conflict has developed and become more complex in terms of the different armed groups involved, it has become harder for locals to know which groups are having a positive impact on the ground. Some compared it to the situation in Iraq following the 2003 invasion, when resistance groups appealed for support to fight the US invaders but divisions into competing factions made it hard to know whether groups were having a positive or a negative impact. Despite being one of the first structured resistance groups in Syria, the FSA is no longer seen as a leading armed opposition group and has been marginalized by its failure to build on its initial prominence in the Syrian conflict. As a result, locals who wish to make a physical impact by fighting against the Assad Regime in Syria are unlikely to choose to do so by joining the FSA, making it more likely that they will join VEOs, which are widely seen as more effective and better organized.

*"In 2011 the people supported the FSA but now fewer people are with them, they don't support them like they did before. They want the war in Syria to end. They don't think they are criminals but they have issues with the funding of the FSA and the media is talking about the funding and saying that it is from Qatar and Saudi and this shocked people and they don't support the FSA any more. This is the main reason they don't support them, most people stood with the revolution in Syria but now after the funding issue they don't support the FSA."*

*(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)*

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<sup>260</sup> "The situation in Syria has become very complex when compared to the beginning of the revolution. At first, the revolutionaries were calling on the people to help, to send money to the Free Syrian Army, it started out peacefully. People were seeing what Assad was doing to his people. The same thing happened in Iraq in 2003. However, afterwards, the situation became very dangerous." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

## 5.2 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC INTERVENTIONISM

The West is widely perceived to be driving VE in Jordan through its involvement in both Syria and Jordan.

The majority of locals are largely negative about the West's involvement in the Syrian conflict, believing that it is exacerbating the situation there and fueling the conflict. Western participation in the bombing campaign is also thought to be strengthening VE narratives that play on the image of the West interfering in the region for its own ends, and so helping VEOs to recruit. In fact, 63 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Western intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, while only 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed, indicating that most see the campaign in Syria as feeding VE in Jordan and failing in its stated objective to degrade VEOs (see Figure 46).

Moreover, the West is also widely criticized for its perceived interference in Jordan, which is also thought to worsen VE within Jordan, and 48 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan, while 32 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 47). These results reinforce that many locals hold a negative perception of the West and are consistent with the complaints of some that the West, especially the US, interferes in the region. In Jordan this is felt to take the form of political interference, through Western influence on the central government and the King, and which some are concerned is also driving resentment and VE sentiments. By taking an openly anti-Western position, VEOs like ISIS are therefore tapping into local anger toward the West, which provides an important aspect of their propaganda campaigns, for example in videos like the one in which Kasasbeh was killed in February 2015 and where King Abdullah was condemned for his closeness to the Jordanian Western, infidel allies.

*"Jihad is a way to put more pressure on the West to reassess their policies, and I mean countries such as the UK and France. We don't stand with ISIS, but we don't like discrimination and the bad way that Muslims are treated in these countries. They are trying to change the image of Islam by showing it as a criminal religion, while they ignore what they did before during the colonial era."*

(Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

Figure 46: To what extent do you agree that Western intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?

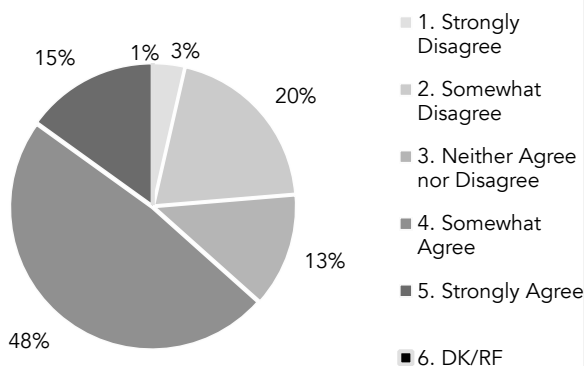
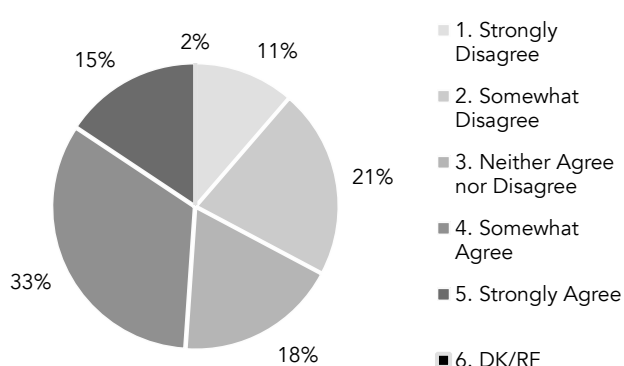


Figure 47: To what extent do you agree that Western intervention in Jordan is fueling VE in Jordan?



Jordanian involvement in Syria is largely seen as just, although some fear that it is strengthening VEO narratives in Jordan.

Some respondents maintained that public opinion in the governorate was originally against Jordan becoming militarily involved in the Syrian conflict, despite many expressing hostility toward the Assad Regime and VEOs, especially ISIS, but that this position shifted following the death of Kasasbeh. The Jordanian involvement in the conflict has since been broadly accepted as a regrettable necessity, reflecting both a fear and a hatred of ISIS. As a result, 50 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that Jordanian intervention against ISIS in Syria is justifiable, while a minority of 25 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 48). Some respondents also raised concerns that Jordanian participation in the coalition against ISIS might drive VE inside the country and plays into ISIS propaganda criticizing the King and the central government. However, the majority (51 percent) of respondents disagreed that Jordanian intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan, while fewer (29 percent) agreed (see Figure 49). In particular, the murder of Kasasbeh is widely seen as a turning point in popular attitudes to Jordanian involvement in the Syrian conflict, after which many locals who were otherwise unconvinced about the need for Jordan to be involved in bombing Syria got behind the campaign. It is likely that the sight of Jordanian planes hitting ground targets in Syria and potentially causing Syrian casualties may turn some locals against the central government and toward VE, but since Kasasbeh's death, it became less likely that the Jordanian role in the Syrian conflict will encourage many locals to become more radical who were not likely to become radicalized prior to the campaign.

*"Before the death of Moath some people were not with the government and many didn't want Jordan to be involved in the war in Syria because we were killing our brothers, people from our own families. People living in Ramtha near Irbid have family in Syria so we were killing our own brothers because some of those people supported JN. After his death they believed directly threatened by ISIS and thought they would come and attack Jordan so now they want to protect themselves and their families so they believe they must accept a bad option which is to agree with being part of the war. Can they stand with Assad and Hezbollah? No? So they must accept the war after we lost our pilot. Many people did not agree with the government when they became involved in Syria but after Moath they believe we all need to stand together."*

(Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

Figure 48: To what extent do you agree that Jordan's intervention against ISIS in Syria is justifiable?

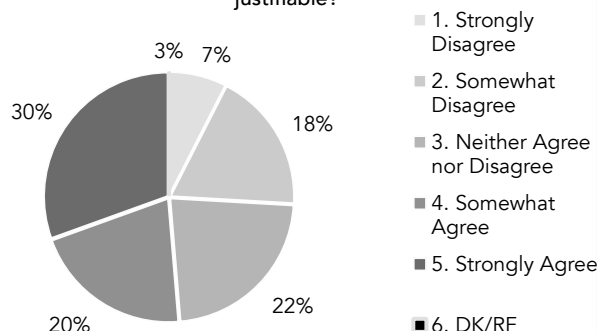


Figure 49: To what extent do you agree that Jordan's intervention in Syria is fueling VE in Jordan?

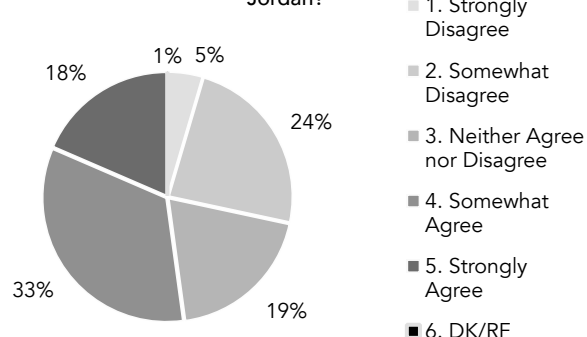
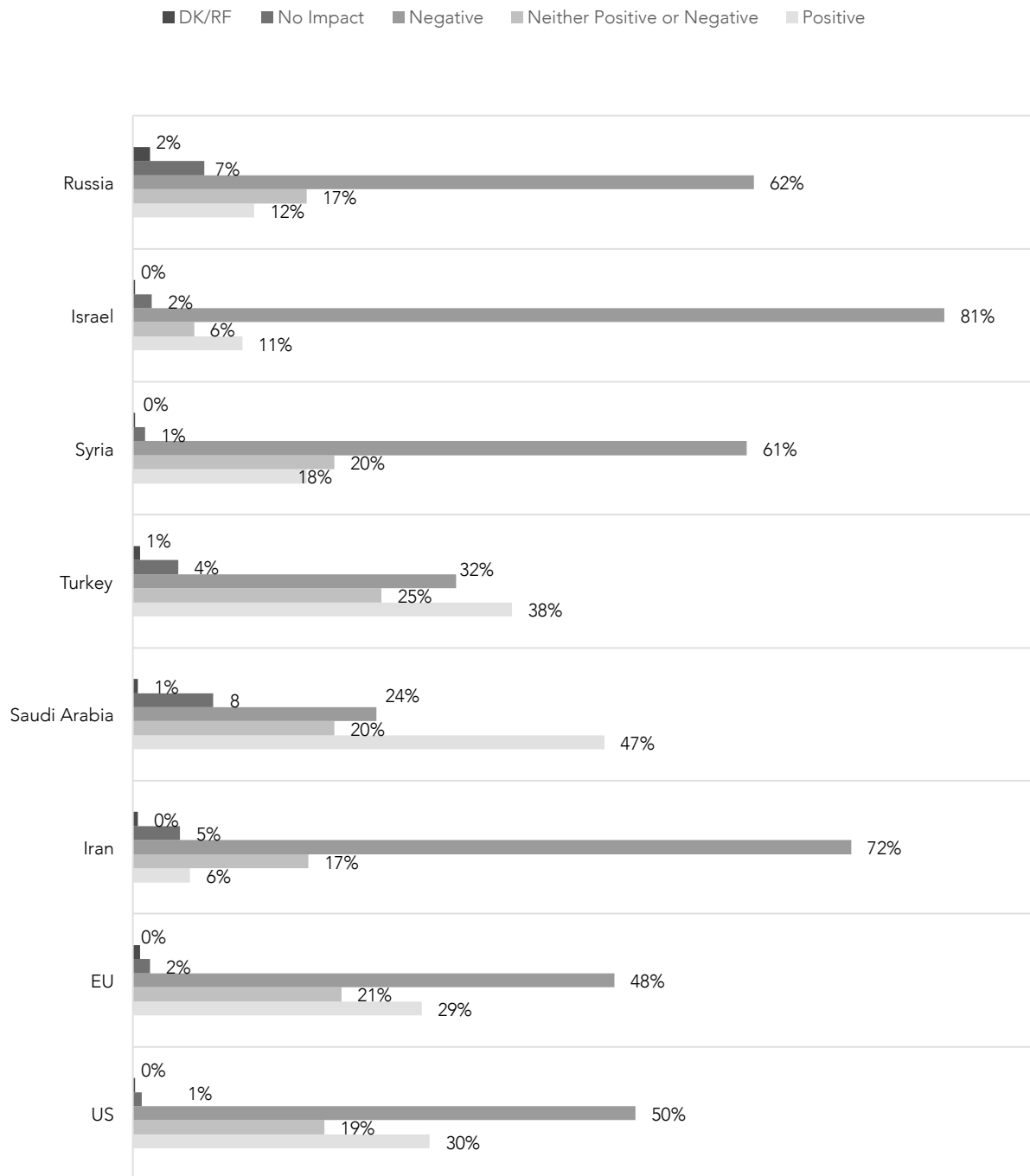


Figure 50: To what extent do you think that the following countries have a positive or negative impact on Jordan?

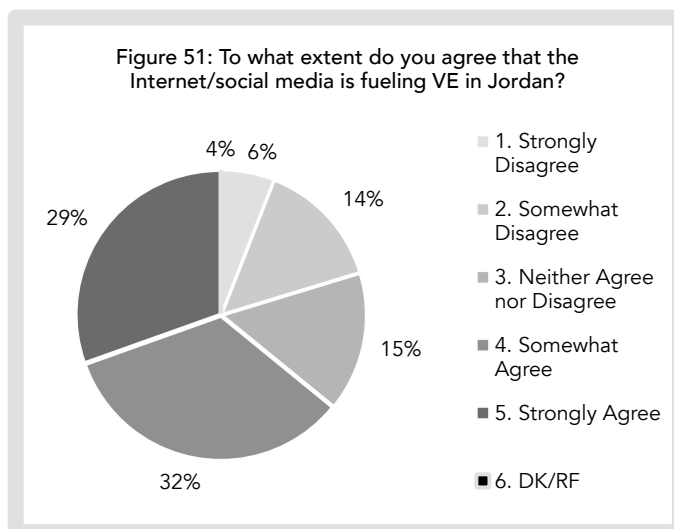


## 6.0 COMMUNICATION DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

### 6.1 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM PROPAGANDA

The Internet and social media play a central role in spreading VEO propaganda among locals.

The majority of respondents (61 percent) agreed that the Internet and social media are powerful tools for exposing locals,<sup>261</sup> particularly youths,<sup>262</sup> to VEO propaganda and are thereby fueling VE in Jordan (see Figure 51).<sup>263</sup> In particular, Facebook, and to a lesser extent Twitter,<sup>264</sup> is seen as a key means through which VEO messages are disseminated and as the most important medium of communication for VEO members and sympathizers.<sup>265</sup> Locals are also concerned that the widespread Internet use among youths in their communities is limiting the power of potential barriers to VE, including the family and Qur'anic centers in Zarqa,<sup>266</sup> and one respondent estimated that 60 percent of radical messages circulating in the governorate originate online.<sup>267</sup> In particular, the Internet is viewed as influential in local communities, and an effective delivery method for VEO messages,<sup>268</sup> since many youths have so few alternatives for their spare time and spend a considerable amount of their day online, either on computers or smartphones. The serious lack of social activities or initiatives for children and youths,



<sup>261</sup> "Those who are most at risk [of radicalization] are youths from the ages of 16 to 20 and the risk due to two reasons, the presence of religious and extremist rhetoric which can influence them, and at the same time, the presence [of VEO propaganda] on social media." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>262</sup> "It's mentioned in the media and through the internet. They can recruit people from Europe and even the Maldives. The internet is the main tool." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>263</sup> "You can brainwash kids, I can brainwash 20 people right now on Facebook." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>264</sup> "Now Al Baghdadi is playing a powerful role. Most people who join ISIS do it because they see them as powerful, not because they believe in what they do. I saw many people who were never even religious become supporters of ISIS and start posting pictures of Baghdadi on their Facebook pages." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>265</sup> "There was this guy who left to Syria and joined JN, one time, a person asked him on Facebook why didn't you join ISIS? Or why do you fight against ISIS? He answered just like Al Jolani, he said we don't fight them, but they force us to fight them, and said I wish God would guide them." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>266</sup> "Now the centers and the families are no longer effective compared to social media and the Internet." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>267</sup> "60 percent of the extremists' ideology is spread via the internet." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>268</sup> "These people, whether Daesh or any other, they do not need to coordinate or be linked to JN or Baghdadi, maybe some of the ideology which they hold came via internet sources, and the outcome is they harm people in one way or another." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

particularly sports clubs, is therefore seen as key in countering VE and several respondents called on the central government to invest in programs that provide youths with such programs.

*"There are not enough cultural clubs or sports clubs to contain as much as youth or they are expensive. This is making the youth and the kids turn to get their information from their peers or the internet."*

*(Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)*

### **Narratives playing on existing sectarian and anti-Assad Regime sentiments among locals are especially effective at expanding VEO support.**

Some respondents identified anti-Shia messages circulated online as important in fueling VE in their communities, with some arguing that these sectarian narratives reinforce the idea of a sectarian struggle in the Middle East, without which they believe VE would be less prevalent in Jordan.<sup>269</sup> In particular, VEO propaganda emphasizes a regional Sunni-Shia conflict to support the idea of jihad in Syria and recruit locals.<sup>270</sup> ISIS has been especially effective in harnessing sectarian dialogues to attract recruits, and videos that present ISIS as fighting against Muslim apostate sects, specifically Alawites and Shias, resonate strongly with some locals.

Further, VEOs are also exploiting an existing desire among local youths to fight the Assad Regime, often sparked by exposure to images on the television and Internet of civilian suffering. For instance, one respondent stated that a former VEO participant he has communicated with told him that he was personally inspired to go and fight in Syria by anger at perceived atrocities committed against Syrians by the Assad Regime. This former fighter also admitted that he and the other male youths he traveled to Syria with were not concerned which VEO they joined as long as they were able to play their part.<sup>271</sup> He continued that, although he joined ISIS, others in his group had become members of JN and that they did not seem to have much input into their allocation to a particular VEO.<sup>272</sup> Ultimately, the Syrian conflict and a wider, although certainly related, anti-Shia sentiment has inspired some locals to join VEOs with the aim of supporting Muslims in Syria, which is a sentiment VEOs have exploited to generate new recruits.

*"The videos that ISIS used to produce were a huge influence, the videos that carry messages about how they fight infidels, represented by Shias and Alawites, people used to sympathize with that."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

<sup>269</sup> "Maybe if the propaganda ended, or there was no longer any talk about a sectarian war in Syria and Iraq, that might lead to more stability." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>270</sup> "ISIS and JN are using the Shia, Sunni conflict to get sympathy." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>271</sup> "Most of the people who go there from Jordan, especially those who went at the beginning usually go just to participate in jihad, they don't care how and through which group." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>272</sup> "They went in a group of male youths and when they got there, they were separated, one joined JN, the other ISIS...etc, they were divided between the groups." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

ISIS has an effective online propaganda machine and its output has been viewed by many locals, some of whom have subsequently joined the VEO.

Many respondents stated that ISIS propaganda videos that are available online have been widely viewed by locals,<sup>273</sup> and judged that the electronic output of the VEO far exceeds that of JN.<sup>274</sup> Some maintained that these videos,<sup>275</sup> specifically the video showing the murder of Kasasbeh, have not had the desired effect and have actually reduced support for ISIS in their communities. Nevertheless, ISIS propaganda is widely viewed as having a major impact and 57 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that ISIS propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan, while 23 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 52). Notably, many locals viewed ISIS much more positively before Kasasbeh was killed, largely because they were supportive of the VEO fighting the Assad Regime and Shia groups in Syria.<sup>276</sup> As a result, some doubted that ISIS propaganda has increased support for the VEO in Zarqa, although most agree that ISIS has been active in disseminating its propaganda online and through printed material.<sup>277</sup> In any case, most agreed that these videos had the desired effect of raising the profile of the VEO.

Furthermore, JN is also believed to be effectively using propaganda to recruit and spread VE in Zarqa, although it does not have nearly as strong a presence online as ISIS, for which it makes up with word-of-mouth endorsements. Specifically, 55 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan, while 25 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 53). In particular, some respondents identified Syrian refugees as a group that is particularly active in improving the image of JN in their communities. These findings confirm that both ISIS and JN are successfully disseminating propaganda to locals, mainly in online form but also through printed material and word-of-mouth.

*"The videos that ISIS used to produce were a huge influence, the videos that carry messages about how they fight infidels, represented by Shias and Alawites, people used to sympathize with that."*

*(Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)*

<sup>273</sup> "Many people, young people, supported ISIS on social media, from Zarqa, from Kerak, from Irbid. We are fighting ideas and these ideas appeal to young, poor and uneducated people." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>274</sup> "ISIS has a greater media influence than JN but a bad one. Some people agree with their ideology." (Male, 64, Municipal Official, Zarqa)

<sup>275</sup> "This guy I'm telling you about was a Salafists jihadist. He always wanted to go to fight jihad and he always wanted to meet Bin Laden. I believe the reason behind this is that he used to follow social media for those groups and watched their movies. This person was not a troublemaker." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>276</sup> "They knew in ISIS, that in Jordan there could be a great number of potential supporters, but some people in ISIS knew that if they killed the pilot Moath they would spread fear and would lose support from Jordan. Before Moath, people would say that they aren't supporting ISIS, however they like that ISIS is fighting Al Assad and the Shia Muslims, but after Moath people had a change of heart and stopped supporting ISIS." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>277</sup> "Now I believe that ISIS is more present in Jordan because they have their own media. This is what I hear from people." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

Figure 52: To what extent do you agree ISIS propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan?

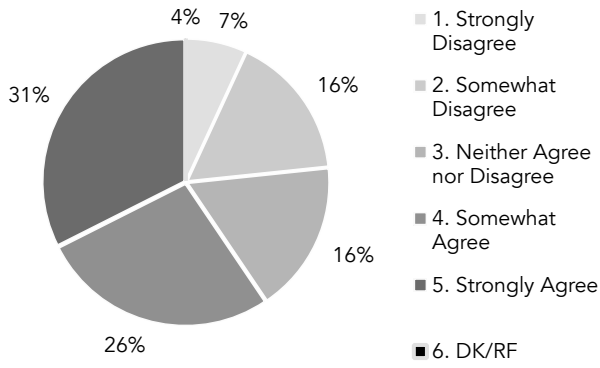
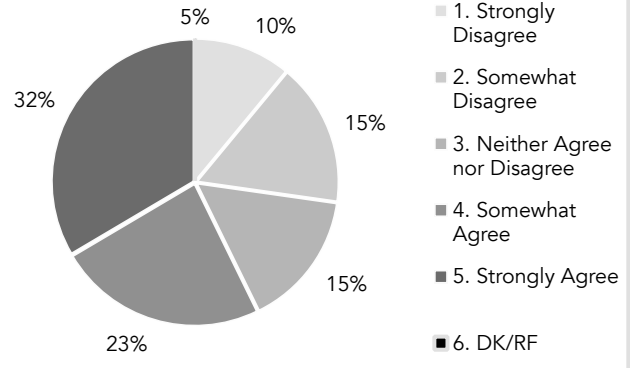


Figure 53: To what extent do you agree that JN propaganda is fueling VE in Jordan?





## 6.2 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

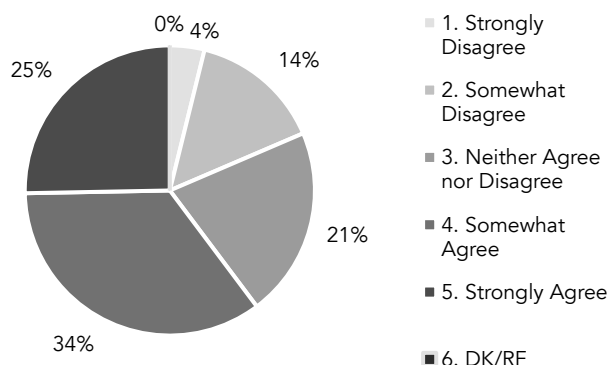
Many locals believe that the media is exaggerating the problem of VE in Zarqa.

Many respondents complained that the media has not accurately reflected the problem of VE in their communities and that the scale of the issue is being greatly exaggerated.<sup>278</sup>

Specifically, 59 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the media exaggerates the problem of VE in Jordan, while only 18 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 54). Despite a number of media reports focusing on Zarqa as a center of VE in the country, they think that VEO participation and in particular the number of locals who were involved in jihad abroad was limited when compared to those who left to fight in Afghanistan in the 1990's. At that time, a far greater number of Zarqa locals are

believed to have traveled abroad to fight than have gone to Syria since the start of the conflict.<sup>279</sup> One respondent, a Salafist Jihadist, also believes that the media is unfairly demonizing Salafists in particular and gave the example of a Salafist sheikh that he knew personally, who was caught on camera holding a sword during a Salafist protest in Zarqa in 2011 that ended in clashes with the police,<sup>280</sup> and portrayed as a violent madman as typical of the way in which Salafists are depicted.<sup>281</sup> It is worth pointing out that despite a lack of physical attacks in the country since the hotel bombings in 2005, the majority of Zarqa GQ respondents stated that they are afraid of attacks by ISIS, and this can in part also be attributed to the portrayal of the VEO as powerful and dangerous in the media.

Figure 54: To what extent do you agree that the media exaggerates the problem of VE in Jordan?



*"I think that these extreme groups are often only fighting to look strong in front of the media, and then they broadcast it so the people see them fighting and think they are powerful. I believe that if Al Jazeera stops reporting on them and their military operations their power will diminish." (Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)*

<sup>278</sup> "If the newspaper says something, it's always half the truth." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>279</sup> "I think that [VE] is becoming less of a problem in Zarqa. Back in 1990's Zarqa was home to many people who left to join jihad in Afghanistan. But now you barely hear about one person a year." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

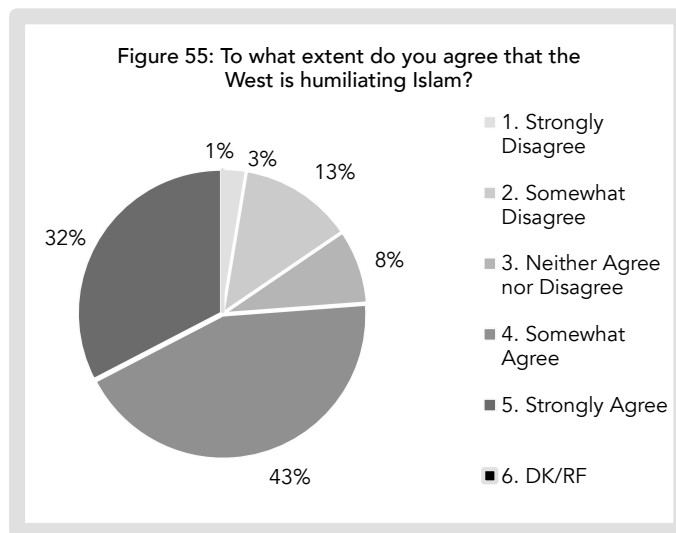
<sup>280</sup> BBC News 2011, 'Jordan Unrest: Salafist clash wounds dozens in Zarqa', BBC News, April 15, 2011.

<sup>281</sup> "Sheikh Jawad Al Faqeeh, in Zarqa, in 2011 he was the one holding the sword. This guy, you would say he is a monster but he is a very good guy, he doesn't stand silently when wronged, but he is a good guy. When interrogated, he flipped the table over. He was portrayed as a monster holding the sword, but he said that he was only speaking, passionately, and someone gave him the sword, he swears he never even held a knife to hurt someone. What I'm trying to say is that the media focuses on things that show Jihadist groups in a bad light. They exaggerate." (Male, 42, Shopkeeper, Amman)

### 6.3 THE ROLE OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

The West is widely believed to be humiliating Islam, which further contributes to anti-US and anti-Europe sentiments and support for anti-Western VEO narratives.

Many locals believe that the West is systematically misrepresenting and humiliating Islam and oppressing Muslims,<sup>282</sup> and that this is contributing to a negative view of Western countries in general and strengthening VEO narratives that attacks on European targets are justifiable.<sup>283</sup> Some respondents pointed to specific examples of a perceived Western plot against Muslims and Islam, including policies such as the banning of face covering in France and absence of gender segregation in schools. Western leaders and politicians, including presidential candidate Donald Trump,<sup>284</sup> have also made comments widely interpreted as derogatory toward Muslims that have inflamed public opinion in Jordan.<sup>285</sup> Many respondents singled out the US as the Western country most hostile toward Islam,<sup>286</sup> with some portraying US actions in the region, particularly the invasion of Iraq, as primarily motivated by a desire to attack Islam.<sup>287</sup> Accordingly, 75 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the West is humiliating Islam, while 16 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 55). Widespread agreement among locals that the West has an agenda against Islam indicates that VEO propaganda that uses anti-Western arguments to justify their behavior and to attract recruits is more likely to have traction in Zarqa than in areas of the country where the West is better regarded and demonstrate a deep-seated distrust of the West that is based on a demonstrably



<sup>282</sup> "The western world needs to work with us, they need to distinguish between the Islamic religion which is based on forgiveness, and the religion which was stolen so to speak by others." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>283</sup> "People believe they are oppressed by the West and this leads them to have a feeling of hatred toward them. Also religious discourses increase this feeling of hatred toward these kufar." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>284</sup> "You see now what Donald Trump is saying about getting rid of Muslims and we see people applauding him. This affected Islam." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>285</sup> Johnson, Jenna 2016, 'Trump says 'waterboarding works', backs torture and 'much worse' ', Washington Post, February 17, 2016.

<sup>286</sup> "For sure America and the West want to control the Arab world so they can steal their money and oil. So many people try to positively change the picture of Islam in the western world, but the Western countries will always make sure to destroy that picture of Islam. They try to show that VE is just in the countries that have a majority of Muslims population. America says that Muslims are killing each other in Syria. I believe it is a conspiracy against Islam and Arabs." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>287</sup> "People in Zarqa portray the US as a big snake that is attacking Islam and creating terrorism and destruction in Arab countries. After the invasion of Iraq people started to develop an obvious hatred toward the US." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

false concept, which is that the West is trying to subvert and blacken Islam. Conversely, messages demonstrating that Western nations have no issue with Islam as a religion would help undermine VEO propaganda.

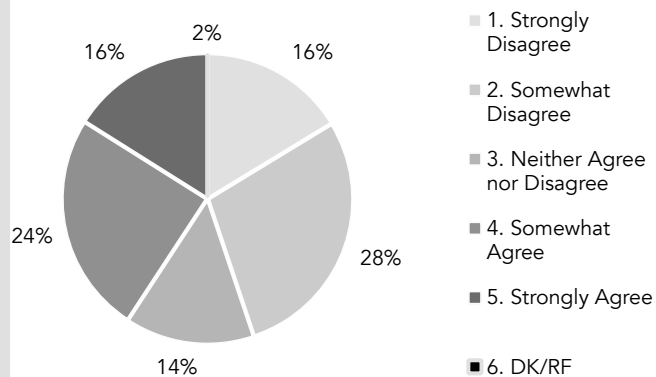
*"People believe that Europe has oppressed the Arabs and Islam for many years, and people see the evidence of this when France wouldn't allow Muslim women to wear the hijab and in many European countries they don't respect the Islamic instructions to avoid the mixing of male and female students in schools. Also they have not forgotten the offensive drawings of the Prophet Mohammad in France and Denmark and they have not forgotten how the UK helped the Jews to establish a country in Palestine."*

*(Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)*

**Many locals hold strongly conservative religious views, which VEOs can exploit to encourage recruitment.**

While respondents reported that Islamic sentiment varies among locals, many supported religious concepts. For instance, a significant minority of respondents (40 percent) agreed that the Caliphate would help restore Islam, although slightly more (44 percent) disagreed (see Figure 56). This indicates that even if they oppose ISIS and its methods, and/or reject its declaration of a Caliphate as legitimate, many locals nonetheless share some ideological grounds with the VEO and could be influenced by it in the future. Islam is also widely seen as an important component of the justice system. In fact, a majority of respondents (56 percent) agreed that only Islam could guarantee justice, while a minority (26 percent) disagreed (see Figure 57). Again, this implies that the radical Islamism of VEOs has some links to the views of many locals and that if they can correctly present themselves, VEOs could build a stronger support base in the governorate that may eventually yield recruits. The religious conservatism, which some respondents referenced and which Zarqa is known for, is also reflected in attitudes to the role that Sharia should play in the legal system. Most respondents (51 percent) agreed that Sharia should be the only source of law, while a minority (24 percent) disagreed (see Figure 58). This reinforces the picture of Zarqa as a governorate in which a significant proportion of locals hold austere religious views and, while opposition to VEOs like ISIS and JN is stronger, indicates that VEOs could attract more supporters from among the local population.

Figure 56: To what extent do you agree that the Caliphate will help restore Islam?



*"This person, who went to Syria and used to study at the university, was involved from the beginning with Salafist people inside the university. He comes from a conservative family but his family was against his beliefs and actions. At the university, he was normal and he wasn't radical. In 2013 he*

went to Syria, he joined al-Nusra. In 2014 he went to Iraq to fight with ISIS, as I heard from his brother. His father one day called him and told him he will be mad at him if he ever joined ISIS whether he was alive or dead. In 2015 he told his father that he left ISIS and re-joined Nusra. In September 2015, it was reported that he died."

(Male, 24, Journalist, Zarqa)

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

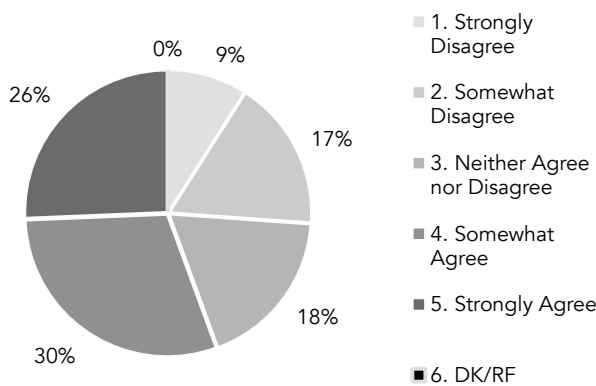
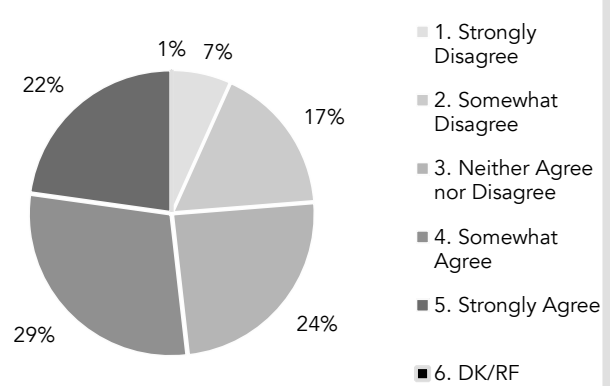


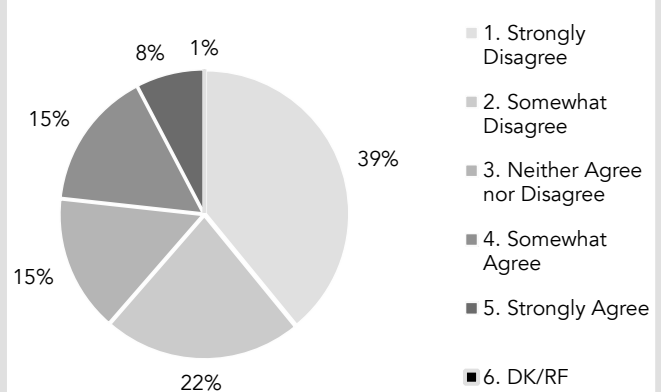
Figure 58: To what extent do you agree that Sharia should be the only source of law?



Although most locals disagree with the concept of Takfir, there is some openness to VEO ideology among locals in Zarqa.

The majority of respondents were emphatically opposed to Takfir and to not regard the practice as justifiable. Many provided religious arguments against it and often implicitly stated that they believe VEOs like ISIS have no right to declare others to be apostates. More specifically, 61 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that the practice of Takfir is justifiable, while a significant minority of 23 percent, almost a quarter of respondents, 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 59). This does not necessarily equate to endorsements of the behavior of VEOs more generally because some respondents viewed Takfir as theoretically permissible in certain situations, although most were explicit that this is only the case under specific circumstances and that to condemn any individual or group as infidel should only be done after careful consideration with reference to Islamic law. Many also stated that they do not consider it permissible to declare other Muslims to be

Figure 59: To what extent do you agree that the practice of Takfir is justifiable?



infidels, although VEOs like ISIS technically circumvent this when declaring Shia Muslims Takfir by claiming that they are not true Muslims. One respondent, a leading Salafist Quietist cleric, argued that Takfir could only be decided by a senior religious figure and rejected the idea that VEOs and Salafist Jihadists, who he referred to as takfirists, have the right to declare anyone to be an infidel.<sup>288</sup> It is clear from these and other findings, especially those indicating widespread support for the concept of a Caliphate, that many locals have a religiously conservative mindset. While this does not necessarily indicate that they also hold VE opinions, it does show that many locals may be sympathetic toward VEOs on some level for their stated intention, especially JN and ISIS, to create a state whose government is based entirely on Sharia, although up to the present moment the brutality of these groups and their habit of killing other Muslims has tempered their appeal.

*"Jihad has its laws and regulations, no one can call for jihad without its conditions being complete, the Khalifah/leader has to call for this. You can't call for jihad against Muslims, and saying that someone is an infidel is a great accusation, and needs to be checked according to Sharia and Islamic rules."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

**Focus: Radical religious leaders teach the concept of Takfir to their students along with other radical religious concepts.**

*"They claim to be following the Qur'an and the Sunnah but it was never mentioned in these that anyone can judge someone to be an infidel. Who are they to tell people that they should do jihad and send them to do it or to decide who is Muslim and who is not? For most people in Rusaifeh, the answer would be no, but it is a problem for those people who don't have any religious awareness. I was the youngest in the family, my dad was an old man, my brothers were busy with their work and life, and therefore none of them was checking on my school work and I was spending my time with the boys in the streets. I was raised in a corrupted society where I didn't know about religion, all I knew was that there is only one God and Mohammad is our Prophet. That is what I know about my religion. I didn't know the real Islamic faith I was following. So I can be considered to represent a small portion of the society and when you do the calculations, you will find a person like me in every 30.*

*This specific person is more easily manipulated with words. It is possible that he didn't have the chance to listen to more than one opinion or to sit with our Islamic scholars, so when he sits with a person who is playing the role of Muslim imam or a sheikh and who starts telling him statements like 'let's go to jihad' or 'this person is an infidel', then that is the first time he hears these kinds of words. He is like a baby learning how to say dad and mom. This will be the principle that he will use to live his life, so this person is a Muslim, and that one is an infidel. He might try to look for some new ideas but the first idea is going to always be in his head. There are ways to affect this person by*

<sup>288</sup> "Only religious figures can decide if someone is an infidel or not. There are certain measures for that, not anyone can do it. I wrote 18 books about this subject." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

*telling them 'come out with us and we will give you money' and 'this is the right thing to do'. They treat him well, take care of him, and treat him like a kid even though he is a grown man but socially and religiously his mind is empty. Honestly, I don't think that these people who manipulate others are visible to the people in Rusaifeh. I think that they work invisibly. I believe they know who to talk to or who is more ready to accept their ideas of violence and terrorism or whatever you want to call it."*

*(Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)*

### **Most locals consider jihad against Israel to be justifiable and view the peace treaty as a betrayal.**

The vast majority of respondents (73 percent), both West and East Bank Jordanians, reported that they regard violent jihad against Israel to be justifiable, with some expressing strong views in favor of attacks against the neighboring Jewish State,<sup>289</sup> and/or even criticizing VEOs for fighting in Syria when they should be fighting in Palestine (see Figure 60).<sup>290</sup> In fact, some local political groups actively promote this idea in the city and the MB staged demonstrations in 2014 aimed at encouraging locals to engage in jihad in Israel rather than in Syria. Their central message was that Muslims should not fight against other Muslims and that those wishing to perform jihad should do so in Israel. Some respondents confirmed that this message gained traction with some youths in the city and that many differentiate between jihad in Syria and jihad in Israel.<sup>291</sup> As a result, there have been disagreements among locals as to whether people should go and fight jihad in Syria or that their first duty, given that many locals are of West Bank Jordanian, should be to fight against the perceived oppressors of the Palestinians.<sup>292</sup>

Feeling against Israel, fed by historical grievances, persist and many locals therefore remain critical of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty that has been in place for more than 20 years. 64 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is an act of betrayal for Islam and Arabs, while 17 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 61). However, respondents stressed that this view does not necessarily indicate strong opposition or animosity toward the central government or the King but reflects the strength of pro-Palestinian sentiments among many locals.<sup>293</sup> It is therefore no surprise that Israel is very unpopular in Zarqa, given the large West Bank Jordanian community and hostility toward Israel by Arabs in the region generally. Notably, the practical difficulties involved in actually attacking Israeli territory, given both Jordanian and Israeli surveillance of the border, have meant that this hostility cannot be translated into action, although VEOs can harness this

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<sup>289</sup> "I come from a Jordanian tribe...the first thing I was taught was my duty to defend Palestine." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>290</sup> "I don't understand why these people have a problem with the Syrian regime so much so that they went to fight there and they don't go to the West Bank to fight for example or Palestine I mean? This is how you know they have been brain washed." (Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

<sup>291</sup> "People differentiate between what is happening in Syria and Israel." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>292</sup> "Lots of people argued, given many of those who go to join VEOs are Palestinians, that who wants to fight in Syria should first think of fighting in Palestine." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>293</sup> "As we all know, who rules Al Aqsa rules the world." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

resentment and desire to participate in jihad against Israel to encourage potential recruits to fight with them in Syria rather than to remain at home and do nothing.

*"The MB held a demonstration here near the northern gate, they were telling people who wanted to join jihad to go to Palestine and not Syria, that what was happening in Syria was not jihad as you might be fighting Muslims. When you go to Palestine, you know who you are fighting and who you are killing. That was a year and a half ago. When the events in Syria escalated, some youths were influenced by this, and some weren't."*

(Male, 25, Carpenter, Zarqa)

Figure 60: To what extent do you agree that violent jihad in Israel is justifiable?

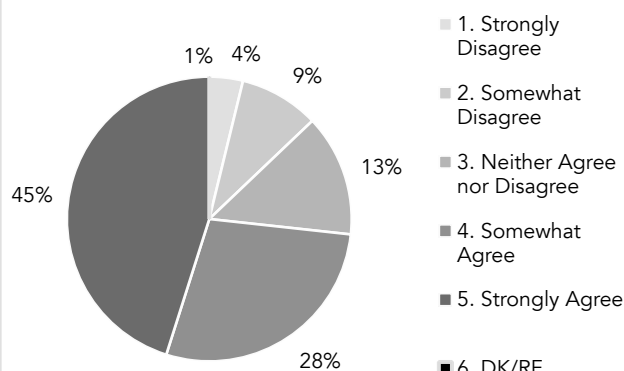
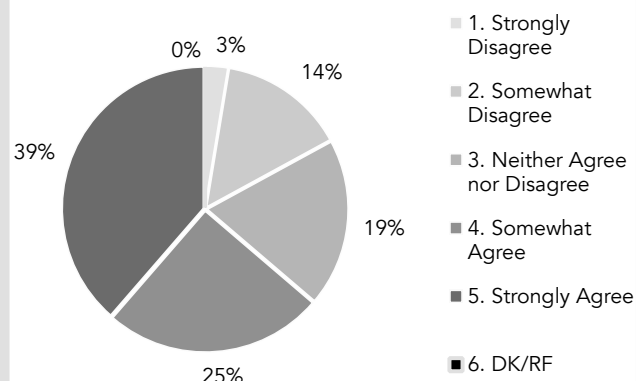


Figure 61: To what extent do you agree that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty is an act of betrayal for Islam and Arabs?



Although there is widespread sympathy for the suffering of Syrians, most locals do not see participating in violent jihad in Syria as acceptable.

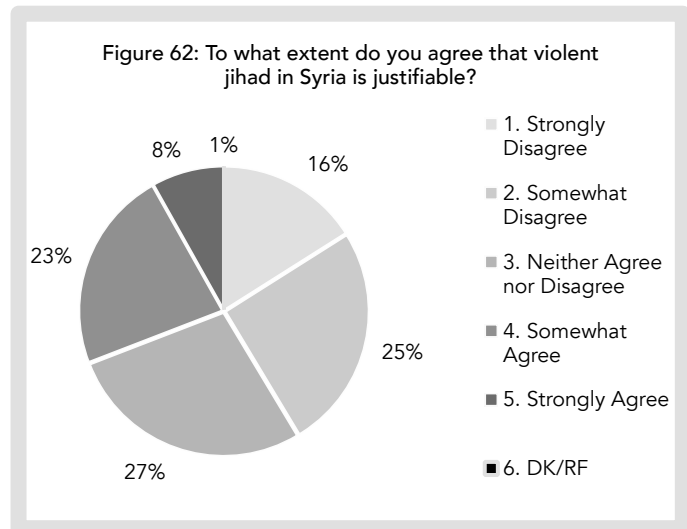
Most respondents expressed their anger at the behavior of the Assad Regime and regret at the many deaths among Syrian civilians but opposed locals who wish to go to Syria to fight,<sup>294</sup> largely as a result of growing conflict fatigue, with some respondents explaining that the different VEOs, as well as the FSA, are just fuelling the conflict and prolonging the suffering and displacement of Syrians. Accordingly, 41 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable, while only 31 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed (see Figure 62). Syrian refugees have become widely unpopular in Zarqa and are blamed for putting pressure on limited employment opportunities and resources. As a result, most are eager for the conflict to end as soon as possible so that refugees can return to their homes. Further, many locals are deeply uncomfortable with the idea that,

<sup>294</sup> "No one is against the act of fighting the Syrian regime. They all believe that the regime is attacking the Sunnis so we have to fight it." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)



despite claiming to be protecting Syrians from the Assad Regime, VEOs are fighting against and killing fellow Muslims in Syria.<sup>295</sup>

Despite the general opposition to jihad in Syria, some still view the Syrian conflict as the main driver of radicalization in their communities,<sup>296</sup> These respondents identified a variety of media sources that encourage locals to believe that violent jihad in Syria is justifiable including broadcasts on the television and radio and Internet sites, as well as discourses in some mosques, which in some cases have been openly supportive of VEOs since early on in the Syrian conflict.<sup>297</sup> While sympathy for the suffering of Syrians is not necessarily any less than earlier in the conflict, most locals do not believe that fighting in Syria will have a positive effect either in Syria or in Jordan.



*"We don't encourage people to go fight in Syria, but when you see a leader like Assad in Syria and he is killing people, what do you think people should do?"*

*(Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)*

### A significant minority of locals considers committing acts of jihad in Europe to be justifiable.

The majority of respondents do not believe that jihad in Europe is either necessary or justifiable, and some think those who endorse attacks in Europe are religious extremists who consider all non-Muslims to be infidels and therefore valid targets.<sup>298</sup> However, a significant minority considers European nations to be an acceptable target for jihadists,<sup>299</sup> especially individuals and locations associated with the national

<sup>295</sup> "I don't know who ISIS and JN are fighting against. They say that they are fighting against infidel. Let's use the word infidel as the person who is being considered an infidel by all religions. These extremist groups are actually fighting against each other. They all say "I believe that there is no god but Allah, and Mohammad is his messenger", but they are killing each other." (Male, 25, Small Business Owner, Zarqa)

<sup>296</sup> "Well VE increased due to the Syria and Iraq conflicts, since many people adopted many of their ideas. So yes it surely increased, there were people who were very normal and then suddenly adopted those ideas such as my neighbor." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>297</sup> "Syria did have an impact, because throughout the conflict, there was a huge amount of propaganda in favor of extremist groups on TV, in mosques, on the radio, a lot of people sympathized with them seeing them as groups that are defending Muslim Sunnis or defending religion in general." (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

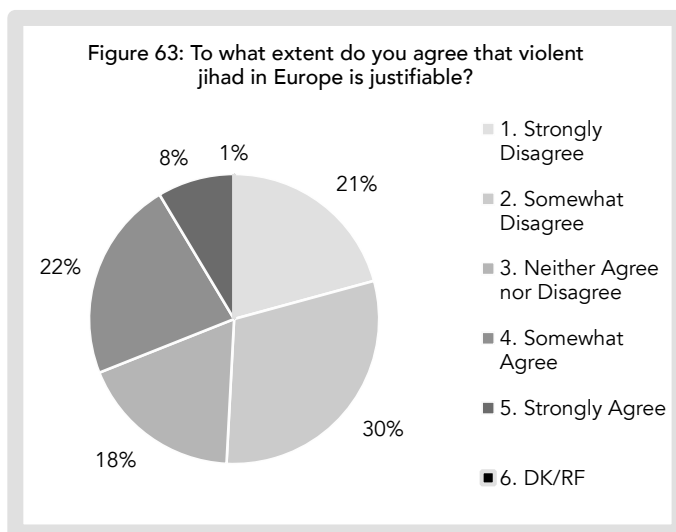
<sup>298</sup> "People who agree that jihad against Europe is justifiable consider Europeans to be are Kufar, and this is the mentality of extremist people." (Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)

<sup>299</sup> "I wish the attacks against the UK [like 7/7] would be more strategic and target the military or members of the government like Tony Blair." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)



governments of the UK, Denmark, and France.<sup>300</sup> As many as 30 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad in Europe is justifiable, against 51 percent who 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 63).

Respondents gave a variety of reasons why attacking specific European nations is acceptable including the perception that European countries and the media in Europe habitually insult and humiliate Islam and Muslims. In this context, the attacks against staff at the offices of the satirical French periodical Charlie Hebdo in Paris in January 2015 are viewed as justifiable on religious grounds,<sup>301</sup> given that their publication insulted the Prophet.<sup>302</sup> Another reason given is that the West, comprising Europe and also the US,<sup>303</sup> has been responsible for so much suffering among Muslims, especially in Iraq and Syria, that it is morally right that Europeans should experience what Syrians and Iraqis have suffered.<sup>304</sup> Respondents often stated that they sympathize with the suffering of victims of Islamist terrorism in Europe, and some were explicit that they think the attacks in Paris in November,<sup>305</sup> and Brussels in early 2016 were not acceptable.<sup>306</sup> However, they also maintained that the indifference of Europeans to the privations of civilians in the Middle East in conflicts that



<sup>300</sup> "Jihad is definitely more justifiable against some European countries than others. When we talk about jihad against European countries we don't mean all European countries, we mean France, the UK, Denmark and Russia." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>301</sup> "The attacks against the Charlie Hebdo staff are justifiable since they insulted our Prophet and they should suffer the consequences of what they have done." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>302</sup> Kenner, David 2015. 'The men who love the Islamic State', Foreign Policy, February 04, 2015.

<sup>303</sup> "Jihad against the US is better than jihad against Europe. Over the last two decades US polices and wars and their intervention and ambitions in the MENA region make jihad justifiable. How we can forget the Iraq war and how Iraq was turned from a prosperous country into one full of conflict, poverty and devastation. The US killed, imprisoned and raped thousands just so they could control all of Iraq's oil. They created the Sunni-Shia conflict in Iraq and moved it to other countries." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>304</sup> "Many believe that Europe supports the US so it is also taking part in the destruction of Arab countries, and they deserve to experience the same terror and destruction that they have caused the Arabs." (Female, 22, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>305</sup> "But the attacks against restaurants and venues in Paris are not justifiable because they are innocent people and civilians they are not the ones who caused the conflicts and supported the destruction in our countries, this is the responsibility of the French government and politicians." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>306</sup> "The attacks in Brussels were not justifiable. Our religion does not allow us to kill civilians or innocent people or those who have not injured or attacked us." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

European countries or their US allies started or exacerbated,<sup>307</sup> make attacks in Europe broadly acceptable.<sup>308</sup> In fact, many locals do not differentiate between Europe and the US, meaning that antipathy toward the US for its foreign policy, especially its interventions in Iraq and Syria, is sometimes directed toward Europe.<sup>309</sup> These findings indicate that some locals either endorse or sympathize with acts of terrorism committed in Europe, although this does not necessarily imply that respondents have any desire to be actively involved in such acts. This can be taken to show the depth of anger that exists toward Europe and the West in general and means VEO propaganda that uses anti-Western sentiment is likely to find local sympathizers, even if they do not agree with the aims or behavior of these groups.

*"People mostly have a negative view of Europe because of the wars in the region. I noticed people don't differentiate between Europe and the US and when I got the chance to discuss it with some respondents they told me those wars are just a way to sell weapons. They need these wars and destruction to sell those weapons and for sure they will not find a better place than the Arab and Muslim countries to do this. Other people say, they are the ones who invented these jihadi groups and sponsor them, they believe like the West, and this includes Europe, are the one who created AQ and later on ISIS. Yes, they feel sorry for those innocent people who died during the terrorist attacks in Europe but they say at the same time this is happening every day in Iraq, Syria, Lybia and Yemen and no one cares about Arabs and Muslims. They believe like the West sees Muslims and Arabs as third class people and they are first class people."*

*(Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)*

### **Anti-Shia sentiment is widespread and is being exploited by VEOs to encourage recruitment.**

Many locals support the view that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable,<sup>310</sup> with some even judging that it is more important to fight against Shias than against Israel, despite the high proportion of West Bank Jordanian locals and historical antagonism toward Israel.<sup>311</sup> 40 percent of Zarqa GQ respondents 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that violent jihad against Shias is justifiable, while 34 percent 'strongly' or 'somewhat' disagreed (see Figure 64). Some expressed strong hostility toward prominent Shia leaders

<sup>307</sup> "The European countries are following the Americans, and the Americans are interested in the entire Arab region, because of Israel" (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>308</sup> "Yes people feel sorry for those innocent people who died during the terrorist attacks in Europe but they say at the same time this happens every day in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen and no one cares about Arabs and Muslims suffering there. They feel like the West sees Muslims and Arabs as third class humans and their own citizens are first class." (Female, 22, Researcher, Zarqa)

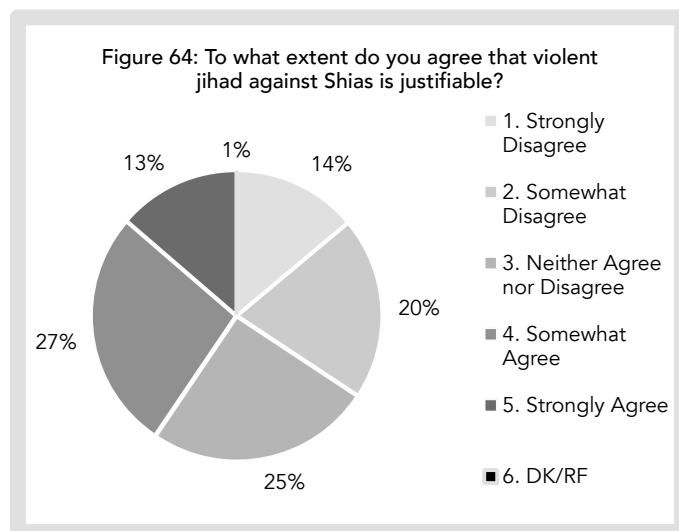
<sup>309</sup> "But the attacks against restaurants and venues in Paris are not justifiable because they are innocent people and civilians they are not the ones who caused the conflicts and supported the destruction in our countries, this is the responsibility of the French government and politicians." (Male, 20, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>310</sup> "People who agree that jihad against Muslim Shias is acceptable consider them to be Kufar, because they have an extremist mentality." (Male, 23, School Teacher, Zarqa)

<sup>311</sup> "A lot of respondents think Shias are the opposite to Sunnis, and they don't want to interact with them. However views were mixed between on whether jihad against Shias is justifiable or not, some of them think it is more important to fight Shias than Israel, and some of them thought jihad against them is not justifiable even though they don't like them." (Female, 22, Researcher, Zarqa)

perceived to be oppressing Sunni Muslims, including former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki, whose administration was seen as Shia-led and continued the persecution of Sunnis begun by the US following the 2003 invasion.<sup>312</sup> Although he is from the Alawite sect, some locals also consider Syrian President Bashar Al Assad to be a Shia, which helps account for the quantitative findings. One respondent, a leading Salafist Quietist, even stated that Shias pose a direct threat to Jordan and to the Sunni Muslim faith, despite the fact that there are almost no Shia Muslims in the country.<sup>313</sup> He also pointed to a speech by King Abdullah from 2004, in which the King used the phrase Shia Crescent with reference to a feared expansion of Shia power across the Middle East,<sup>314</sup> presenting it as evidence that the King shares this view and indicating that some locals feel that sectarian sentiment is even endorsed by the monarchy.<sup>315</sup> Other respondents also referred to a perceived and feared expansion of Shia influence in the Middle East at the expense of the region's Sunnis, with Iran identified as the main driver of this expansion.

Not all respondents expressed anti-Shia sentiments and some have strong concerns that sectarian rhetoric visible in mosques and in the local media is fostering hatred and having a negative effect on their communities.<sup>316</sup> This rhetoric is generally tied into a broader Sunni against Shia narrative that is fueled by the Syrian conflict, which many locals now view as being one between Muslim sects. Respondents variously blamed the King, the central government, the state media, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs for failing to crack down on sectarian rhetoric.<sup>317</sup> Moreover, several respondents stated that in some instances the King and the state media have actively fueled sectarian feelings in Jordan, which they believe is only likely to increase the number of locals going to Syria and Iraq to fight.<sup>318</sup> Some mosques have been spreading



<sup>312</sup> "In Iraq, with the fall of the state and the occupation of Iraq by the US and the West, the deployment of high numbers of forces, and working with Iran, it became an issue of Shia vs. Sunni. The Sunni side began to empower themselves in order to defend their dignity, not because they wanted to become Daesh, because they want to defend themselves, as who else will defend them?" (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

<sup>313</sup> "Nouri Al Maliki, [ex] Prime Minister in Iraq, is a dictator, biased toward Shia. Sunnis were oppressed." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>314</sup> Black, Ian 2007, 'Fear of a Shia Full Moon', Guardian, January 26, 2007.

<sup>315</sup> "As for Shias, they believe everyone who is not a Shia is an infidel. They pose a threat on our country and religion. Our King also talked about this in one of his speeches." (Male, 55, Salafist Quietist Imam, Zarqa)

<sup>316</sup> "The reason behind the deteriorating situation in Arab countries is the Shias and Iran. People think the enemy is Iran and not Israel." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>317</sup> "The sectarian conflict we are living today, Sunni and Shia. The first speech where King Abdullah said that he fears the influence of Shias on Islam, gave people the green light for people to become racist and extremist against Shias." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>318</sup> "For sectarian extremism, I think Zarqa, Irbid and Al Ramtha have the biggest problems. I believe that the Ministry of Religious Affairs is not doing much in this regard." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

sectarian, anti-Shia discourses and promoting the idea that Shias are a threat to Sunni Muslims.<sup>319</sup> Respondents also criticized locally available media outlets for contributing to the spread of sectarian rhetoric including the Al Safa television channel.<sup>320</sup> One respondent observed that the conflicts in both Syria and Iraq are being presented in mosques and on television as being between Sunnis and Shias and that Shias were actively targeting Sunnis, making it the duty of Sunnis in Jordan to participate in what was essentially a sectarian jihad. In light of widespread local anti-Shia sentiments, VEOs can and do present themselves as the protectors of the Sunnis against Shia aggression, playing on widespread anti-Shia sentiments that are evident among locals.<sup>321</sup> VEOs will likely be able to continue to use sectarianism to build support and sympathy among locals and to try and attract recruits until popular attitudes to Shias become more favorable.<sup>322</sup>

*"Many people think this is a sectarian war between Sunni and Shia Muslims; Syria and Iran. People in my area are generally against Shias... If the government allows people to go and fight in Syria, you will see that most people that go will be from Zarqa. Although the population in Zarqa is very accepting they are very extreme when it comes to Shia Muslims, and this can be blamed on the media, even the state media that turns people against the Shias. I have seen many conversations on Facebook about Syria that end in: May God curse the Shia infidels."*

*(Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)*

### VEO members are largely viewed as skilled fighters, if lacking in camaraderie.

VEO members are not widely thought to take good care of one another and there was only limited support among locals for the idea that those in VEOs are some kind of a band of brothers with one another's best interests in mind. In fact, most respondents (44 percent) disagreed that members of VEOs always look after each other, while fewer (33 percent) agreed (see Figure 65). Nevertheless, many respondents reported being impressed by the military success of VEOs, particularly ISIS. Many have a positive view of the abilities of VEO members on the battlefield and most respondents (43 percent) agreed that VEO members are skilled fighters, while fewer (32 percent) disagreed (see Figure 66). This can be attributed to the continued survival of ISIS in the face of attacks, most of them aerial, by the JAF and other countries, including the US, Russia, France, the UK, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. VEO fighters have also captured swathes of ground in Syria and Iraq, some of it from rival rebel groups and the rest from the Iraqi and Syrian governments. These findings indicate that VEOs are successfully presenting themselves and their membership as effective on the battlefield, supporting the glamorous image that they often seek to

<sup>319</sup> "Mosques preach against Shias, they convey messages against Shias and the dangers they pose to Sunni Muslims." (Male, 29, Journalist, Zarqa)

<sup>320</sup> "There was Al Safaa, it uses very strong hateful speech against Shias." (Female, 21, Student, Zarqa)

<sup>321</sup> "The change in opinion to that extent [to VE] is due to propaganda, like promoting the fact that what is happening in Syria and Iraq is a war against Shias because they are killing Sunnites, so people started changing their opinions based on those rumors" (Male, 25, NGO Employee, Zarqa)

<sup>322</sup> "[VEOs use] the idea of a Sunni society, using Shiite vs. Sunni rhetoric about Iraq and Syria in particular, the use of sectarianism and religion." (Male, 54, Politician, Zarqa)

portray in videos and so increasing their appeal to often bored and impressionable local youths, among others.

*"One family I know had three brothers that went to fight in Syria. Young guys between the ages of 22 and 30. The youngest was 22 years old. The first brother to go came back dead. They had a sermon for him. The second one also went to fight and came back dead, then the third one went to fight. He also came back in a body bag and they also had a sermon for him for people to come and pay their condolences. They were considered martyrs for the cause of the Islamic State."*

(Male, 32, Construction Worker, Zarqa)

*"Each group here has a different point of view on VEO members, because Zarqa is a very mixed place with different ideologies, so some people see them as heroes and here we talking about people from Salafist communities and groups, and some of them are neutral. You will be shocked but the neutral ones are often the intellectual and educated people who they think that VEO members should be free to do what they are doing. On the other hand, some people are very critical, and they saying they hope these fighters will be killed since they are going to fight with terrorists. Another group thinks people have the right to fight in Syria or anywhere else but they don't agree that they are killing other Muslims."*

(Male, 23, Teacher, Zarqa)

Figure 65: To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs always look after each other?

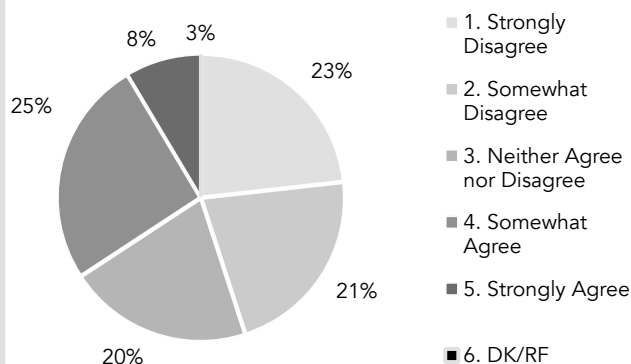


Figure 66: To what extent do you agree that members of VEOs are skilled fighters ?

