

*MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN KUWAIT*

**Name:** Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait

**Year of Origin:** 1952<sup>1</sup>

**Founder(s):** Abd al-Aziz al-Mutawwa<sup>2</sup>

**Place(s) of Operation:** Kuwait

**Key Leaders:**

- **Nasser al-Sane:** Secretary-General of the ICM [[Image](#)]<sup>3</sup>
- **Jamaan al-Harbashi:** Deputy Secretary-General of the ICM [[Image](#)]<sup>4</sup>
- **Tariq al-Suwaidan:** Key member [[Image](#)]

**Associated Organization(s):**

- Hadas<sup>5</sup>
- Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM)<sup>6</sup>
- Jamiyat Ikhyia al-Islakh al-Ijtimai<sup>7</sup>
- Kuwaiti Ikhwan<sup>8</sup>
- Social Reform Society (SRS)<sup>9</sup>

The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) is represented in Kuwait by the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM), a minority political party that seeks to instate sharia (Islamic law) as the country's primary source of legislation. The Kuwaiti Brotherhood also operates a charitable arm known as the Social Reform Society (SRS), sanctioned as a terrorist organization by Russia and Kazakhstan and accused by the latter of financing terrorist activity and engaging in "armed jihad."<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Scheherezade Faramarzi, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood," *Jadaliyya*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5116/>.

<sup>2</sup> Hazem Kandil, *Inside the Brotherhood*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 158.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Lansford, *Political Handbook of the World 2014*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 792.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Lansford, *Political Handbook of the World 2014*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 792.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwait-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

<sup>6</sup> Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> "Country Reports on Terrorism 2006, Russia," U.S. Department of State, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.sras.org/news.php?m=961>.

<sup>8</sup> Scheherezade Faramarzi, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood," *Jadaliyya*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5116/>.

<sup>9</sup> Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf); Elizabeth Dickinson, "Saudi action puts Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait on spot," *Al-Monitor*, March 10, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/muslim-brotherhood-kuwait-saudi-terror.html>; "The list of prohibited on the territory of the RK foreign organizations," MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND CIVIL SOCIETY OF

*MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN KUWAIT*

The global Brotherhood movement started to gain traction in Kuwait in the 1930s and 1940s when, facing repression from secular governments in Egypt and Syria, Brotherhood members began to relocate to Kuwait.<sup>11</sup> The first iteration of the Kuwaiti Brotherhood, the “Islamic Guidance Society,” was formed in 1952 by Abd al-Aziz al-Mutawwa, an associate of Brotherhood founder [Hassan al-Banna](#). In 1961, following Kuwait’s declaration of independence from Britain, the group rebranded to the “Social Reform Society,” or SRS.<sup>12</sup>

The SRS maintained formal organizational links with the Egyptian Brotherhood until 1991, when the group split from its parent organization over the latter’s support for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990.<sup>13</sup> The Kuwaiti Brotherhood immediately formed the ICM, which quickly established itself as a leading political opposition party, repeatedly winning several seats in parliament.<sup>14</sup> The ICM and the SRS—still considered the Kuwaiti Brotherhood’s charitable arm—are often referred to in Arab and Western media outlets as simply the “Kuwaiti Brotherhood.”<sup>15</sup>

The Kuwaiti Brotherhood is believed to have ties to prominent extremists, including notorious 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Kuwaiti television personality Tariq al-Suwaidan, listed by U.S. federal prosecutors in 2007 as an unindicted co-conspirator in a U.S. terrorist financing trial.<sup>16</sup> According to reports, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) joined the Kuwaiti Brotherhood at the age of 16 before joining [al-Qaeda](#) in the late 1990s. KSM’s brother, once head of the Kuwaiti chapter of the Brotherhood, is believed to have financed KSM for

---

THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, accessed February 17, 2017, [http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok\\_zaprexhennyx\\_organizaci/](http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok_zaprexhennyx_organizaci/); “«THE SOCIAL REFORM SOCIETY»,” MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND CIVIL SOCIETY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, accessed February 17, 2017, [http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok\\_zaprexhennyx\\_organizaci/?cid=0&rid=464](http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok_zaprexhennyx_organizaci/?cid=0&rid=464); “Country Reports on Terrorism 2006, Russia,” U.S. Department of State, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.sras.org/news.php?m=961>.

<sup>11</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, “Kuwait’s Muslim Brotherhood under pressure,” *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

<sup>12</sup> Nathan Brown, “Pushing toward Party Politics?,” Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Scheherezade Faramarzi, “Kuwait’s Muslim Brotherhood,” *Jadaliyya*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5116/>.

<sup>14</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, “Kuwait’s Muslim Brotherhood under pressure,” *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>; Nathan Brown, “Pushing toward Party Politics?,” Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, “Kuwait’s Muslim Brotherhood under pressure,” *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>; Nathan Brown, “Pushing toward Party Politics?,” Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf); Scheherezade Faramarzi, “Kuwait’s Muslim Brotherhood,” *Jadaliyya*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5116/>; Habib Tourmi, “TV manager fired over Muslim Brotherhood links,” *Gulf News*, August 18, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/tv-manager-fired-over-muslim-brotherhood-links-1.1221473>.

<sup>16</sup> “List of Unindicted Co-conspirators and/or Joint Venturers,” United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, May 2007, 8.

*MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN KUWAIT*

years.<sup>17</sup>

The Kuwaiti Brotherhood is also represented by Tariq al-Suwaidan, a controversial Muslim cleric implicated in a U.S. terrorism financing case. In May 2007, U.S. federal prosecutors named Suwaidan as an unindicted co-conspirator in the case against the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, convicted of financing [Hamas](#).<sup>18</sup> Suwaidan was banned in August 2013 from Saudi-funded al-Risala TV for publically admitting membership in the Kuwaiti Brotherhood.<sup>19</sup> Despite Suwaidan's suspension from al-Risala TV, the prominent Brotherhood member has continued to amass a large following on social media.<sup>20</sup> As of early 2017, Suwaidan reaches audiences of over 8.1 million and 8.4 million on Twitter and Facebook, respectively.<sup>21</sup>

While the Kuwaiti government has long tolerated its domestic Brotherhood arm, tension has mounted in recent years between the government and the ICM, particularly during the Brotherhood's brief reign in Egypt between 2012 and 2013.<sup>22</sup> The ICM publicly criticized the Kuwaiti government's anti-Brotherhood messaging during [Mohammed Morsi](#)'s 13-month tenure as president.<sup>23</sup> Following Morsi's July 2013 ouster, Kuwaiti politicians accused the ICM of taking orders from the Egyptian Brotherhood, as well as engaging in a number of criminal activities, including terrorism, money laundering, and plotting a coup against the Kuwaiti government.<sup>24</sup> In turn, the ICM castigated the Kuwaiti government for its public statements supporting Morsi's removal, as well as its move to welcome interim Egyptian President Adly Mansour on an official state visit.<sup>25</sup>

Today, the ICM continues to seek the implementation of sharia by participating in Kuwaiti politics. The ICM boycotted Kuwaiti parliamentary elections held in 2012 and 2013, protesting

---

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Jocelyn, "Osama bin Laden on the Muslim Brotherhood," Long War Journal, May 10, 2012, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/05/osama\\_bin\\_laden\\_on\\_the\\_muslim.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/05/osama_bin_laden_on_the_muslim.php); "AL QAEDA AIMS AT THE AMERICAN HOMELAND," National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, accessed February 22, 2017, [http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report\\_Ch5.htm](http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Ch5.htm).

<sup>18</sup> "List of Unindicted Co-conspirators and/or Joint Venturers," United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, May 2007, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Habib Tourmi, "TV manager fired over Muslim Brotherhood links," Gulf News, August 18, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/tv-manager-fired-over-muslim-brotherhood-links-1.1221473>.

<sup>20</sup> Habib Tourmi, "TV manager fired over Muslim Brotherhood links," Gulf News, August 18, 2013, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/tv-manager-fired-over-muslim-brotherhood-links-1.1221473>.

<sup>21</sup> "طارق السويدان," Twitter profile, accessed February 16, 2017, <https://twitter.com/TareqAlSuwaidan>; "طارق السويدان Dr. Tareq AlSuwaidan," Facebook profile, accessed February 16, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/Dr.TareqAlSuwaidan>.

<sup>22</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>; Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

<sup>24</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

<sup>25</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

*MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN KUWAIT*

changes to Kuwait's electoral laws that would further consolidate governmental power.<sup>26</sup> In November 2016, however, the ICM ended its boycott, fielding six candidates in Kuwaiti parliamentary elections and winning four of 50 seats.<sup>27</sup>

The SRS has meanwhile retained its status as a charitable nongovernmental organization in Kuwait, though the organization was designated as a terrorist organization by the Kazakh and Russian governments in 2005 and 2006, respectively. According to the Kazakh government, the SRS has financed terrorist activity and engaged in "armed jihad."<sup>28</sup>

**History:**

- **1930s-1940s:** Brotherhood members from around the Arab world move to Kuwait, then reportedly receptive to Brotherhood exiles.<sup>29</sup>
- **1952:** Abd al-Aziz al-Mutawwa establishes the Brotherhood's branch in Kuwait, known at its founding as the Islamic Guidance Society (IGS).<sup>30</sup>
- **1961:** The IGS rebrands as the SRS following Kuwait's declaration of independence from Britain.<sup>31</sup>
- **1991:** The Kuwaiti Brotherhood severs ties with the Egyptian Brotherhood. Kuwaiti Brothers found the ICM, which goes on to repeatedly win seats in parliamentary elections.<sup>32</sup> The SRS remains as the Kuwaiti Brotherhood's local charity arm.<sup>33</sup>
- **May 2007:** U.S. federal prosecutors name Tariq al-Suwaidan as an unindicted co-

---

<sup>26</sup> Agence France-Presse, "Kuwait's Main Opposition Group Ends Polls Boycott," Naharnet, March 26, 2016, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/210179>.

Agence France-Presse, "Kuwait's Main Opposition Group Ends Polls Boycott," Naharnet, March 26, 2016, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/210179>.

<sup>28</sup> Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf); Elizabeth Dickinson, "Saudi action puts Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait on spot," Al-Monitor, March 10, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/muslim-brotherhood-kuwait-saudi-terror.html>; "The list of prohibited on the territory of the RK foreign organizations," MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND CIVIL SOCIETY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, accessed February 17, 2017, [http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok\\_zaprexhennyx\\_organizaci/](http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok_zaprexhennyx_organizaci/); "«THE SOCIAL REFORM SOCIETY»," MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND CIVIL SOCIETY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, accessed February 17, 2017, [http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok\\_zaprexhennyx\\_organizaci/?cid=0&rid=464](http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok_zaprexhennyx_organizaci/?cid=0&rid=464); "Country Reports on Terrorism 2006, Russia," U.S. Department of State, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.sras.org/news.php?m=961>.

<sup>29</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

<sup>30</sup> Scheherezade Faramarzi, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood," Jadaliyya, April 18, 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/5116/>.

<sup>31</sup> Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Scott Williamson and Nathan Brown, "Kuwait's Muslim Brotherhood under pressure," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2013, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/11/20/kuwaits-muslim-brotherhood-under-pressure/>.

<sup>33</sup> Nathan Brown, "Pushing toward Party Politics?," Carnegie Endowment, January 2007, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79\\_brown\\_kuwait\\_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/cp79_brown_kuwait_final.pdf); Elizabeth Dickinson, "Saudi action puts Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait on spot," Al-Monitor, March 10, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/muslim-brotherhood-kuwait-saudi-terror.html>.

*MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN KUWAIT*

conspirator in the terrorism financing case against the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, convicted of financing Hamas.<sup>34</sup>

- **2012-2013:** The ICM boycotts parliamentary elections.<sup>35</sup>
- **November 26, 2016:** The ICM wins four of 50 seats in parliamentary elections, having fielded six candidates.<sup>36</sup>
- **December 2017:** After U.S. President Donald Trump announces U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, ICM members participate in anti-U.S. protests outside the Palestinian embassy in Kuwait City. ICM Member of Parliament Ossama al-Shahin demands that the Kuwaiti government “take measures against US interests.”<sup>37</sup>

**Violent Activities:**

The ICM does not explicitly endorse violence as a means to implementing its political agenda. However, the Kazakh government has claimed that the Kuwaiti Brotherhood’s charity arm, the SRS, has financed terrorist activities and engaged in “armed jihad.”<sup>38</sup>

Separately, in 2003, the United Nations listed an Afghanistan- and Pakistan-based subsidiary of the SRS—humanitarian organization Lajnat Al-Daawa Al-Islamiyya (LDI)—as a group associated with al-Qaeda. The listing effectively froze LDI assets worth 1.4 million Kuwait Dollars (\$4.5 million at the time). In September 2013, however, the UN Security Council deleted LDI from the sanctions list after considering a delisting request submitted via the Office of the Ombudsman.<sup>39</sup>

The Kuwaiti Brotherhood is further implicated in terrorist activities through prominent member Tariq al-Suwaidan. U.S. federal prosecutors named Suwaidan as an unindicted co-conspirator in the terrorism financing case against the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development,

---

<sup>34</sup> “List of Unindicted Co-conspirators and/or Joint Venturers,” United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, May 2007, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Agence France-Presse, “Kuwait’s Main Opposition Group Ends Polls Boycott,” Naharnet, March 26, 2016, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/210179>.

<sup>36</sup> David Pollock, “Kuwait’s Snap Election Revives Parliamentary Opposition, But Not Reform,” Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 28, 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/kuwaits-snap-election-revives-parliamentary-opposition-but-not-reform>; B Izzak, “Election fever grips Kuwait as snap elections set for Nov 26,” *Kuwait Times*, October 17, 2016, <http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/election-fever-grips-kuwait-snap-elections-set-nov-26-political-groups-tribes-name-candidates-soon/>.

<sup>37</sup> “Kuwait protests following Trump’s Jerusalem move in a rare show of defiance,” *The New Arab*, December 10, 2017, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2017/12/10/rare-protest-in-kuwait-after-trump-jerusalem-move>.

<sup>38</sup> “«THE SOCIAL REFORM SOCIETY»,” MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND CIVIL SOCIETY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, accessed February 17, 2017, [http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok\\_zaprexhennyx\\_organizaci/?cid=0&rid=464](http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok_zaprexhennyx_organizaci/?cid=0&rid=464).

<sup>39</sup> “Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Deletes Lajnat Al-Daawa Al Islamiya from Its Sanctions List,” September 4, 2013, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11109.doc.htm>; “Kuwait Finance House Opens Up To OFAC,” February 15, 2014, WikiLeaks, [https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04KUWAIT495\\_a.html](https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04KUWAIT495_a.html).

*MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN KUWAIT*

which was convicted of financing Hamas.<sup>40</sup>

**Ties to Extremist Groups:** Not determined.

**Designations by Governments and Organizations:**

**Russia**

The Russian government designated the SRS as a terrorist organization in July 2006.<sup>41</sup>

**Kazakhstan**

The Kazakh government designated the SRS as a terrorist organization in March 2005.<sup>42</sup>

**In Their Own Words:** Not determined.

---

<sup>40</sup> “List of Unindicted Co-conspirators and/or Joint Venturers,” United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, May 2007, 8.

<sup>41</sup> “Country Reports on Terrorism 2006, Russia,” U.S. Department of State, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.sras.org/news.php?m=961>.

<sup>42</sup> “The list of prohibited on the territory of the RK foreign organizations,” MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS AND CIVIL SOCIETY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN, accessed February 17, 2017, [http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok\\_zaprexhennyx\\_organizaci/](http://www.din.gov.kz/eng/press-sluzhba/spisok_zaprexhennyx_organizaci/).