6 Ethno-racial grievances

'We were born to hate each other': Sectarian hatred

While most of the identified grievances draw more strongly on a discourse of victimhood or reactionary identitarian affirmations, they sometimes appear in more offensive forms. The most aggressive form in which ethnic, racial and religious grievances manifest themselves is through religious or sectarian hatred. Sectarian or religious hatred also includes the hatred of unbelievers, frequently presented by the media and public discourse as the main motivator of jihadist terrorism.

Forms of sectarian hatred are definitely present in interviewees' narratives, especially in the context of Tripoli but also beyond. During my fieldwork across Lebanon I realised that in the conflict between Jabal Mohsen and Bab-el-Tabbaneh, sectarian hatred is generally assumed to be the main reason for the fighting's flaring up over and over again. Interviewees do in fact express such hatred. Many statements contain expressions of disdain for the respective ethnicity or sectarian affiliation: Alawite residents of Jabal Mohsen are perceived as unbelievers, while BT residents are portrayed as Sunni fundamentalists. Across the interviews and discussions during the fieldwork, however, it became clear that the sectarian hatred towards people from BT was less frequently voiced than the other way around. In fact, residents of BT frequently state that they learned to hate the residents of JM from an early age, illustrated by statements such as 'in 2008, when I first went to fight, it was out of conviction. Religious conviction. When we went, it was because our parents told us they are unbelievers' (Mansour, Lebanon) or 'The people from BT and JM, from the moment we were born, we hated each other' (Walid, Lebanon). Across the narratives, racist statements by residents of BT are always closely intertwined with the massacres committed by the Syrian regime in the 1980s. The residents of Jabal Mohsen being mostly Alawites and predominantly in favour of the Syrian regime, they are seen as accomplices in the massacres. Sometimes, nuances are added when they specify that their problem is not with the Alawites on Jabal Mohsen, but with the leaders of the Arab Democratic Party and the Syrian military officers who were there, even during the fighting from 2007 onwards.

Anti-Shia feelings can haunt individuals in their everyday lives even outside conflict-ridden contexts. In cosmopolitan Beirut, where there is an ostensive

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coexistence between all sects and religions, some narratives indicate persisting Anti-Shia hatred they experience, usually based on their origins (being from the South) or their name. Thulfiqar, for instance, who has a typically Shia name, states that he struggles a lot because of it

> In 2005 and 2006, I couldn't go to certain places because of my name. I had to be careful with whom I was mingling. Even today…sometimes, my employer tells me not to come to certain meetings because people might be put off by my name, or the fact that I am Shii. Sometimes he asks me to change my name for the meeting. It is extremely difficult to handle.
>
> (Thulfiqar, Lebanon)

Another example is Anti-Muslim hatred. Justin and Pierre were both involved with Christian right-wing groups. While Pierre had meanwhile turned to leftist-socialist causes, Justin was still strongly convinced of the righteousness of the Christian Lebanese cause at the time of the interview. He talked openly about his disdain for Muslims, Sunni Muslims especially. In contemporary Lebanon, the main figures incarnating Sunni Islam in the eyes of the Christian nationalist right-wing are the Palestinian and the Syrian refugees. Whereas the hatred towards the Palestinian refugees has a longer history related to the Lebanese civil war, the hatred of the Syrian refugee is strongly linked to stereotypes of Syrian refugees stealing, attacking and raping Lebanese women

> Some time ago, my anti-Syrian sentiments were very strong. I told my family that we should all get our weapons and go down. I said that if I see a Syrian, I would shoot him. That's how far it came. There were many news, a Syrian who raped a girl, killed her etc. …and then I go on the internet, and then I watch the news and then, my mistake, I go down to the comments and see how they insult the Lebanese. They say we are gays, not real men, our women are whores, etc. I can't accept these things.
>
> (Justin, Lebanon)

As Justin's quote also demonstrates, expressions of racial hatred towards a group are narratively linked to a perceived or actual attack by that group or past suffering at the hands of that group. Racial hatred or hatred of designated unbelievers do not arise in isolation.

Importantly, in the Lebanese context, despite (or perhaps thanks to) the many internal sectarian and confessional differences and the collective memory of the civil war, there is a widespread awareness that peaceful coexistence is fragile and needs to be taken care of. For instance, Rashid stated that 'you cannot simply come and disrupt the harmony between Christians, Shia and Sunna in Lebanon. There is a history and you have to respect it' (Rashid, Lebanon). Similarly, in the wake of the terror attack on a mosque in New Zealand in March 2019, several interviewees in Tripoli stressed that it would be wrong to blame all Christians in Lebanon for what happened there

> But you're upset, what should you do? In our street, people were devastated. Believe me, had we been at that place, we would have turned the world upside down. But you can't do anything here. People had nothing to do with it, you can't take revenge on them. I am against that. And you should not accuse Christians or attack churches. I am against that.
>
> (Walid, Lebanon)

According to researcher Yamin, among the Shia in Lebanon, there was also an awareness that sectarian hatred must not be fuelled. With growing sectarian strives in the region, following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Hezbollah maintained a strong stance against sectarian hatred

> But the Shia, aware of this danger, very quickly drew a bold line between the Sunna and the Wahhabites. There is a huge difference. We have a very specific problem with the Takfiri groups. There is a difference, this fight is not against the Sunna but against Wahhabism, the takfiri ideology. So, the Hezb was using sectarian symbols, but not a discourse based on sectarian hatred. There is a huge difference. We use Hussein for instance, but we don't say this fight is against the Sunna or declare the Sunna as unbelievers. But the takfiri groups do this of course.
>
> (Yamin, Lebanon)

'We are suffering everywhere': Madhloumiya

The root of the word Madhloumiya (مظلومية) is *dhulm* (ظلم), which can be translated as injustice. The term Madhloumiya is frequently employed to signify not only a specific act of injustice against a particular individual or group, but a general long-term victimisation of an entire group defined by ethnicity, religion or sect. The term has therefore a clear political connotation and can be frequently found in narratives of resistance, such as the ones collected in this study. Khatir, a researcher I met during my fieldwork in Tripoli, attributed a certain weight to the idea of *'Madhloumyat al-Sunna'*

> You've heard of this idea of Madhloumiyat al Sunna. I don't blame anyone who might believe that. If you look around, Iraq, Syria – Sunni Muslims are the targets. In Lebanon, there is clearly an unfavourable environment for Sunni Muslims. They have less resources, less access to education, justice and politics, and the security forces are very heavy-handed towards them. The reaction to such injustice is going to be violent.
>
> (Khatir, Lebanon)

This feeling of a global perception of Sunni Muslims, or Muslims more generally, is frequently voiced by Islamic activists and former jihadists. It often takes the form of a mix between empirical evidence and conspiratorial hypotheses, such as here expressed by Mansour, a resident of BT in Tripoli and former sympathiser of the IS.

> I am convinced that there is a war against Muslims, not only the Sunna. There is a global war but it's cold. A cold war. A media war and a subtle war. Very cold. But I feel that the war will break out soon… […] New Zealand, yes, that story got people crying. That was the first time I saw my mother cry. We even started thinking about going there! Where does that lead us? We want to go to Syria, then Palestine, now New Zealand! When does that end? There is a war against us. And we think about Yemen, Iraq, etc. there is a war. Libya. On a global scale, from one country to another. It happened here, two explosions in mosques. But it's continuing. It will come back here. It's not done yet. If tomorrow, I hope that we will meet again, I am convinced that this country, and this world, is going to a war.
>
> (Mansour, Lebanon)

This excerpt is particularly interesting because it illustrates the constant mixing between locally oriented and globally oriented grievances. Evidence from different parts of the world is reassembled in order to sustain a narrative of coherence and a perception of systematicity regarding the oppression of Muslims and Islam. This iteration of the dialectic between global and local is a dominant theme in the narratives.

Madhloumiya as an idea is also mobilised by sympathisers of Hezbollah. The dominant narrative among the Shia interviewees includes many references to the century-long oppression of Shia at the hands of Islamic caliphs. Yamin, a researcher at a think tank affiliated with Hezbollah, for instance, explains: 'In the Lebanese context, there is of course the Israeli invasion of Lebanon that mainly affected the areas populated by Shia, but also the attacks by the Mamlouks in Lebanon, by the French, and in general, the attacks against the Shia by takfiri groups, starting in the 19th century'. More generally, the Shia interviewees sympathising with Hezbollah establish a narrative continuity between the early conflicts within Islam, the battle of Karbala and the killing of Imam Hussein, and their oppression across centuries since then. The links between the present transnational oppression of Shia Muslims, attacks against Shia in the Syrian civil war, and the link to historic suffering can be identified in the following two excerpts

> For example, Iraq, yes, or Bahrain. You could say that. If you look at Iraq, after Saddam, but also before it of course. Under Saddam, the Shia were very oppressed. But here in Lebanon, the Shia were oppressed by Israel. Israel was attacking mostly the Shia, not all of Lebanon. Bahrain, Saudi, these are places where Shia can't go out. They are oppressed and attacked. In Yemen, that's a big proof. The Yemeni people, although not all Shia, they are suffering a lot. […] Look the worst news, the one that affected me most, the one where you really felt the mischief, that was the thing that mobilized each of us here. When they wrote on the mausoleum of Saida Zaineb "You will go with Bashar". This was the greatest shock. Because we remember what happened in Karbala, who suffered there. And you come and want to do this?
>
> (Samir, Lebanon)

> So, the same thing happened here…They came officially to delete us, the Shia, Hezb…Here, it became purely religious. I remember that the Hezb sent many people to defend the shrines [in Syria and Iraq]. These were difficult years…before they [Lebanese state and Hezbollah] were able to get some control...We were targeted from all areas and we had to defend ourselves. It was as if we had been thrown back to Karbalah.
>
> (Thulfiqar, Lebanon)

These narratives and those of many others who speak about *Madhloumiya* demonstrate a recurring linking of events in different places of the world with events that are happening in their proximity. Since the collective that is affected is construed as being the same everywhere due to their religious affiliation, interviewees perceive a common trend in the targeting of that group across borders. The perception of *Madhloumiya* of a specific group therefore contributes to the transnationalisation of grievances. Importantly, as seen in the case of Hezbollah sympathisers, but also Christian militants, a narrative connection is also established between present and past situations of suffering and oppression, which sometimes reach back centuries.

'You could feel the coldness settle down': Criminalisation of Arab-Muslim identities in the GWOT

Many of the ethno-racial grievances found in the narratives relate to the securitisation and the criminalisation of Arab-Muslim identities in the age of the Global War on Terror. These experiences relate, on the one hand, to general indignation about the frequent amalgam between Islam and terrorism, felt by all types of interviewees, including researchers and practitioners of (or believed to be of) Arab-Muslim backgrounds. On the other hand, the criminalisation of Islamic identity is experienced more directly by individuals who are themselves associated with terrorist offences or groups or are considered extremist or radicalised. These individuals come face to face with the full weight of the counterterrorism apparatus that has been built on a perception that there are risk groups and factors that need to be policed in order to detect radicalisation, extremism and potential gateways to terrorism. Their narratives allow for an in-depth understanding of how these practices unfold, often at the hands of security forces and outside of public scrutiny.

Across all contexts, interviewees are acutely aware of the symbolic violence of systematically and carelessly associating a wide range of ordinary Islamic practices or culture with terrorism. As a Canadian practitioner recalls, the first years following the outbreaks of the Syrian civil war were difficult for her to cope with

> I felt very bad, I thought that what was happening was absolutely disgusting, hypocritical, horrible and stigmatising. I wanted to give up, but my colleague, who was handling all of this better, perhaps thanks to her distance in terms of identity and background, made me continue. She said we have to change the discourse on this. […] You know it's different for me, when there's a war

> in Syria or Iraq. These are my people. But I had to endure the islamophobia here, see the journalists that harassed the families of the students who left for Syria…It was absolutely disgusting. I could understand how some were so in rage to feel like putting a bomb somewhere.
>
> (Meriem, Canada)

Such strong feelings were repeatedly voiced by interviewees in different contexts. They are testimony to the alienating power of a racialised public discourse, which leads to enormous frustration, grudge and anger towards the dominant powers in society. They can be part of the most violent trajectories. For instance, ex-prisoner Salman, who is from Tripoli and had joined IS, mentions that part of his radicalisation into violent jihadism was related to strong feelings about islamophobia: 'When I was 23 years old, I started asking more questions about why the West hated Arabs and Islam' (Salman, Lebanon).

Experiences of Anti-Muslim racism were more relevant for individuals in Canada and Switzerland, given that Lebanon is a Muslim-majority country. Sabri, a Christian Syrian who moved to Canada, but continues to be strongly invested in causes related to the Arab World, describes this as follows

> For example, I didn't expect marginalisation of immigrant communities and black communities to be so strong…That I would find such a class-based structure here. I also realized how difficult it was to navigate my identity in the post-9/11 context, where I was of course associated with all Arab Muslims that were securitized. And I didn't necessarily distance myself like many other Christians would by adopting the hatred of Arab Muslims, this was never the way I handled these things. But discrimination and the othering definitely played a role in my realizing that I could not belong. That my access to society was hampered. I was that 'Other'. It felt like immigrant communities were just here to be exploited.
>
> (Sabri, Canada)

Asif (Canada) and Justin (Lebanon), also Christian Arabs, have had similar experiences in the post-9/11-context. They feel constantly thrown into the same batch and struggle to maintain a healthy posture, instead of adopting the Anti-Muslim rhetoric themselves. While Asif continues to manage to do so, Justin has, as part of his radicalisation into Christian right-wing extremism, naturally adopted this discourse.

Ziad, a Canadian activist of Arab origin, recalls that the 9/11 years profoundly changed his everyday experience as an Arab-Muslim. Besides isolated incidents of verbal aggression, he would also get frequently controlled, in acts that he perceived as clear instances of racial profiling

> Like, after 9/11…9/11 was the biggest one…that really fucked with me, because all of a sudden…you could feel this coldness settle down on everything…before it was isolated incidents, but then it was all over the place […]

> I remember one time, I was in McDonald's and a drunk girl started yelling at me about like the two towers and shit like that because I had a shirt on with Palestine on it…I'm like…but they were Saudis! [laughs]…[…] And I was often stopped by police…I think almost every time I went home at night…yeah…I mean like I…I made a big deal wearing my kuffiyeh [Arab headdress]… it was a big deal to force them to let me have my kuffiyeh in high school, because it wasn't proper attire or whatever…so I was wearing that everywhere …and then I had my long hair in my beard…yeah… had a much bigger beard than I do now…so yeah…so it wasn't…it wasn't helpful with the cops [laughs] and with the racism…they don't recognize necessarily what it [the kuffyieh] means or anything like that but they know that it's Arab…that's enough to trigger a racist yeah or they might not know it's Arab, but they think of it as Muslim or something right…so it's like, just like a Sikh getting attacked.
>
> (Ziad, Canada)

It is telling also, for instance, that in the terrorism trials before the Federal Criminal Court that I assisted to, the first question that was asked systematically following the name and age of the person, was whether he or she is a practising Muslim. While this has usually little to do with the acts the person is accused of, it demonstrates that the seemingly mundane amalgam between Islam and terrorism persists at the highest echelons of public power.

Another important aspect has to do with visible associations with Islam, such as facial hair in the case of men or vestimentary attributes such as a headscarf in the case of women. Although the choice to wear a long beard or a headscarf is highly individual, in the endless pursuit to find simple and straightforward ways of identifying purportedly problematic shifts in religiousness, seemingly towards excessive rigour or fundamentalism, they have become convenient markers for law enforcement and criminal justice actors to concentrate their efforts on and convey an illusion of toughness and effectiveness to the public.

To Battoul, an activist interviewed in Canada, wearing the headscarf became an early part of her everyday resistance. As part of a general crackdown on Islamists in the postcolonial Arab World, in her home country in Tunisia, under the reign of Ben Ali, women were fined and given a warning for wearing the headscarf: 'At that time, women with a headscarf were considered as intellectually inferior and less civilised. I wanted to prove the opposite' (Battoul, Canada). Finding this unacceptable as a public policy, she continued to wear it although she was repeatedly stopped and harassed because of it. In her new home in Quebec, Canada, she continues to experience widespread public hostility towards the headscarf, which evokes similar feelings and elicits the same resistant posture. The feeling is also shared in more complicated contexts: 'If you appear Muslim, by wearing a headscarf for example, you will be associated with Daesh', Noor (Lebanon) said angrily, during a discussion with him and his brother in a café in Tripoli. Social worker Lina also describes how she herself feels frequently ostracised for wearing a headscarf

> Sometimes I am really shocked when I discover the real personalities of people…For example, when I come in to teach a class, they don't get that I can be a teacher and talk to me like a student or an assistant…And in the teacher's meeting room, there was a situation once…it was really bad…three white women started attacking me for wearing the headscarf…they were saying 'we fought for feminism for such a long time, and now you come along with that headscarf'.
>
> (Lina, Switzerland)

Social worker Sara who does not wear a headscarf also voices her frustration with the discourse she encounters at conferences on terrorism and radicalisation in Europe and the United States

> I am experiencing this racism myself whenever I travel. I don't look Lebanese but as soon as they know it, they ask me What you're Lebanese? Then they ask whether I am with Hezbollah…Why I don't wear a headscarf…Once at a conference, I told them that the German pilot who crashed an airplane into a mountain…had he been Arab or Muslim...he would have been called a terrorist and not simply mentally disturbed. They accused me of being racist. Only the German ambassador applauded.
>
> (Sara, Lebanon)

In the case of men, the main marker has become the beard, especially long beards. Repeated reference is made thereto by individuals from different backgrounds, but it seems that the ones suffering most from this are residents of Bab-el-Tabbaneh in Tripoli. Similarly to the headscarf, the beard becomes an important object not only of suspectification but also of resistance, because many young men continue to wear one despite the difficulties it seems to cause them. Bader regularly gets into trouble and attributes this to his looks

> Look at my hair, my beard. There are people who judge by the looks. If they see me at the checkpoint, they tell me immediately to go to the right.[1]
>
> (Bader, Lebanon)

It is already problematic to have a beard. What's worse, however, is growing one, which tends to attract the scepticism of security forces who presume a sort of radicalisation. Amir, who is one of the very few of my interviewees in Tripoli who shaves their beard, explains his choice as follows

> I mean, I can still go out and see my people. But I am careful about posting things on social media or via WhatsApp. And I don't wear a beard, I shave on purpose. Because they will come get me if I grow a beard. They will come and ask you 'So, you think you're becoming a sheikh?' and take you in for interrogation. The guys with long beards, they know they are being monitored by the security forces.
>
> (Amir, Tripoli)

This practice is particularly visible in the Lebanese context. However, Nooreddine, who wears a long beard, adds an interesting observation, postulating that this profiling practice has become increasingly acceptable in Western contexts as well

> You know, a few years ago, when I was in Egypt or other Arab countries… It was very normal to be stopped because you wore a gown and a long beard. They would ask me a few questions, classify you as a Neo-Salafi and let you off. European countries, which were looking in disdain to such arguably uncivilised practices of profiling, are increasingly adopting them. These days, it becomes normal to be looked at with suspicion if you wear a long beard and are Muslim.
>
> (Nooreddine, Switzerland)

On this aspect, Pasha, a former displaying Salafi, noted similar reactions, but has adopted a more pragmatic stance

> Well of course you often have that feeling like you don't belong... It's normal. Especially when I came back from Syria. And with that anti-Islamic sentiment and all. But in the end, it's also the way you dress, in a way you marginalize yourself, so don't blame society for that. I changed the way I dress and don't have any problems.
>
> (Pasha, Canada)

Another aspect of this securitisation of Islamic identity and practice is the criminalisation of the Islamic prayer, especially when performed collectively. Some interviewees in Tripoli explained that intelligence officers would come to visit them while they were praying at the mosque and advise them to pray at home, unless they wanted to get into trouble with the police. Praying was also considered suspicious during arrests and detention, when officers would humiliate interviewees from BT while they were praying, especially when they would pray together

> As soon as he knows you're from Tripoli, he starts hitting you and humiliating you. I didn't want to pray when I was there. Because as soon as they see two people together praying, they make a big fuss about it. My friend was there with me and he said let's pray. I said, you go first, and then me. But he insisted and so we prayed together. Then they came and got him: 'So, you think you're making an Emirate here?', and they humiliated him – they cut his hair in some places and left it in others. The rest of the 12 days at the court, I wouldn't pray! It simply wasn't worth it.
>
> (Halim, Tripoli)

Nooreddine, a Swiss citizen who was also arrested in an Arab country, recounted similar experiences about his time in detention

> My time in detention was very enriching. We were praying together, doing religious classes. Even though they came from time to time to slap us in the face for that. It was an enriching period.
>
> (Nooreddine, Switzerland)

In Nooreddine's case, the animosity by security officials fed into his resistance identity and his defiant posture towards the state that punishes ordinary Islamic practice. The message that individuals who are treated as such has repercussions beyond the immediate prison context: It confirms the already existing belief that it is not terrorism or violence that is targeted by security forces, but rather the Islamic religion itself. Thereby, such actions performed under the guise of counterterrorism are likely to feed exactly into the narrative that drives some individuals towards violence in the first place. Interestingly, to many interviewees, extremism has already become associated with religiousness. When asking whether the security forces consider them to be extremists, many reply that, of course, they are religious and that they are proud of that.

An important aspect is also the securitisation and criminalisation of political grievances when voiced in relation to causes and conflicts in the Arab-Muslim World. As mentioned earlier, in the current political environment they have been problematised, to the point of being classified as risky by security forces. The differential treatment of grievances provokes feelings of alienation and injustice that can be associated with ethnic, racial and religious grievances. This point is well summarised by researcher and practitioner Khalil

> First, I think it's just the human nature [experiencing grievances]. You should not treat it as a Muslim-specific syndrome. When Notre dame was burning, everyone was crying. If Iran occupied Switzerland tomorrow, you will see huge alliances and sympathies from Western countries. This is just human nature. The thing about the suffering in the Arab-Muslim world, is that this is not "the Other" to these young people. It's the brother, the sister. We share something. This idea of the Ummah Islamiya, the same thing with the Western Ummah: We share values with Israel, that's why we have to defend Israel against Arab countries. The only democracy in the Middle East... The Muslim body. Muslims for the past 200, 300 years have felt that they are being targeted everywhere. For no reason.
>
> (Khalil, Canada)

The example of Nooreddine who has faced condemnation and attempts at incrimination by the public, the media as well as Swiss authorities, makes it very clear how grievances can become criminalised when voiced by individuals who seek to speak for a Muslim collective

> I was very active during that time. My phone was constantly ringing, whenever something would happen, an attack or anything. I was also very vocal abroad. They started to consider us as spokespersons for the Muslims in

> Switzerland. That was something that many took issue with. I think it has to do with something that one journalist made very clear at some point. He said 'Why do I think that they are dangerous? It's because they are fluent in Arabic and they talk to international television channels about Islamophobia in Switzerland. That creates hatred against Switzerland'. That's why most people see us as traitors. And that's why we were problematic.
>
> (Nooreddine, Switzerland)

In the specific context of the years following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, the ones who are associated with religiosity are considered sympathisers of Daesh. This sweeping association earned them an unfavourable and delegitimising treatment by the criminal justice system. As Bader recounts

> You know at the Ministry of Defence, I could tell them anything! If I said I was a drinker and I went out with girls, I don't pray…all these things, I even used to look different! But the judge would just say 'you Dawa'ish[2] you're all like this'. You could say anything, it would be used against you!
>
> (Bader, Lebanon)

The stereotypes have a strong influence on how individuals are treated by the criminal justice system, i.e., by the police and army, the judges and the prison officers. Residents from Bab-el-Tabbaneh are likely to be considered sympathisers or members of IS and therefore treated more harshly, especially by representatives of the army and police.

Although these are recurring instances of discrimination, the cultural setup of Lebanon and the confessionalised political system does not really allow for generalised Anti-Muslim racism to unfold. The impact of Anti-Muslim racism is differential: The criminalisation of Islamic practice and identity is felt disproportionately by Sunni Muslims from the northern regions. Given Hezbollah's political position in the country (especially their domination of the justice system), the beard or the headscarf in combination with a Shii identity does not ring any alarm bell. However, a longer beard worn by a young man from Tripoli matches the dominant perception of a risky subject. This regionalised and specifically sectarian orientation of Anti-Muslim racism was frequently mentioned by interviewees from Tripoli, especially from Bab-el-Tabbaneh. There are many stereotypes about the residents of Tabbaneh being terrorists, jihadists or criminals more generally. These stereotypes were, as some interviewees mentioned, also perpetuated by some media outlets

> It was Black Tuesday on Noor Square in 2008. There was chaos because of the uprising. And then we saw the team of the TV channel Al-Jadeed. They were always depicting us as terrorists. So, when we found them in front of us, we attacked their jeep.
>
> (Mansour, Tripoli)

Interestingly, however, stereotypes also affect residents of Jabal Mohsen, who do not fit the risk profile of a jihadist, due to their Alawite background. In their

case, their stigmatisation is based on the association of North Lebanon with fighting and conflict. In fact, all residents from this neighbourhood in Tripoli seem to be regularly considered as 'troublemakers from the north' which earns them extra scrutiny at checkpoints and enormous difficulties to get employed outside Tripoli

> If you go to Beirut, you want to work, they don't take you, because you're from the North. They don't want us, because they hear that in Tripoli there is fighting, weapons, and stuff.
>
> (Yahya, Lebanon)

Finally, there were also some statements indicating that stigmatisation was experienced when individuals were targeted by NGOs. They would wonder why NGOs would always be focusing on Tripoli: 'Why are they focusing on me?' (Fahad, Tripoli). That was also something that I experienced in discussions and meetings where social workers, practitioners and individuals from BT were around. There was a constant form of voyeurism perceivable in the way questions were asked or individuals were targeted. In light of the general perception that the Tripolitanians were 'terrorists' and therefore 'dangerous', it is almost as if, at times, it became a sign of bravery or coolness to be in touch with these individuals.

In sum, the Global War on Terror has produced a discourse around Islam and violence that has led to various forms of stigmatisation, suspectification, securitisation and criminalisation. The ones found across the narratives include the stigmatisation of Islamic but also Arab identity, of racial and visible markers, of Muslim grievances, the securitisation of Islamic practice that is considered rigorous and finally, the specific criminalisation of Sunni Muslims from poorer northern regions in Lebanon. Importantly, the impact of these practices and discourses nurture a stance of defiance and rebelliousness. While their effectiveness in the fight against terrorism is highly questionable, these practices are clearly effective in entrenching individuals in their quest for an identarian exceptionalism and fostering grievances that can lead them to join groups and organisations that promise them unconditional acceptance. Another impact which is more desirable from the perspective of the state is a growing consciousness among individuals associated with Muslimness that engaging in politics comes with a heavy price tag: Religiousness by itself is unproblematic, yet when they become political, especially in a more radical orientation, they should be wary not to display their religious background too strongly and ideally reject it. It seems to be either religiosity or radicality, from the perspective of the state, because the combination of both rings alarm bells. This realisation struck me particularly when talking to Sheikh Mouloud, who is active politically, yet within a rather uncontroversial tendency, and who provided a mainly religious explanation for the jihadist phenomenon. He told my gatekeeper at the beginning of the interview: 'You know the politics, I leave that to you. I don't like political ideologies and politics is always at the service of an ideology.' (Sheikh Mouloud, Switzerland). This tension between radicality and religiosity can be felt throughout the narratives.

'We are the people from the South': Solidarity in Otherness

Beyond the frustration with the way Arab-Muslims are stigmatised or Sunni or Shia minorities are oppressed, there is another form of othering that could be identified across the interviews. It concerns the othering of Non-Western and Non-white individuals across the globe, individuals from the Global South, as some may suggest. The narratives of these individuals of which many feel somehow out of place, either because of their identity or because of their political orientation, reveal an underlying grudge against the West and the Global North, from which they feel excluded and othered. The flipside of this coin is a sort of internationalist aspiration to unite the struggles of the peoples from the south, people who are different from the dominant majority. This is the case for interviewees of different origins but can be easily reconciled with a quest for Arab solidarity and collective identity. The idea of an internationalist community in the South has been a common theme throughout recent history, especially since the era of decolonisation. This southern internationalist solidarity is symbolised by events such as the Bandung Conference between Asian and African nations that took place in 1955 in Indonesia or alliances between revolutionary groups in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and East Asia. It can be seen as a worldview which reads the injustices in the world along a North–South axis, where White Christian European male hegemony continues to prevail and where mechanisms of marginalisation and oppression are maintained, though in different forms. The Marxist worldviews alluded to above are also often easily reconcilable with this internationalist aspiration, for they consider the class-based struggle as the main vector of oppression around the world.

Interviewees narrate the ways in which these mechanisms have played out in their own lives, how they have been marginalised and delegitimised by dominant groups. They often feel that they are struggling against a hegemonic narrative that excludes them from participating in explaining the world, especially when it comes to pointing out dysfunctionalities and injustices. Daniel shared a very telling example from his time at high school

> We had a history assignment. And a girl in class presented something on the history of Chile. Very bad idea! [laughs] I don't know which book she read but she was basically suggesting that it's thanks to Pinochet, that the Chileans are not poor, that…basically he saved us! And I completely disagree with that version of history! You can't come give a class about Chile and tell me that Pinochet saved us! So I was furious, of course. They sent me out of class… that, I understood, because I was really angry. But afterwards, the director of the school wanted to talk to me and she said…basically that I was too political. It was as if I had violated the neutrality of the school. And basically…it was like…'you're from there so you can't be neutral. You're too involved, so you can't see clearly what's happening.' That was this arrogance of supposed neutrality…it kept haunting me later in my life, in my political trajectory.
>
> (Daniel, Switzerland)

What seems to be particularly problematic across the board – and this aspect comes clearly to the fore in Daniel's example – is the fact that *Otherness*, while already defined by ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic differences from the dominant majority in the context they live in, is exacerbated by politicisation and radicality. Otherness is much less a problem if the Other remains acquiescent, calm and apolitical. However, if strong political positions are assumed, this tends to provoke defensive reflexes that serve to alienate and exclude. The experience of otherness is a central tenet of interviewees' radicality and engagement, because it can be reconciled with a rebellious underdog identity. In fact, at the point of their engagement, interviewees are usually reconciled with their Otherness, and experience this reconciled state as empowering. Interestingly, there seems to be a moment in their trajectory when that reconciliation takes place. It is often concomitant with a feeling of betrayal, which will be explored below.

Practitioners and researchers repeatedly point to the difficulty of handling such othered identities in Western countries. Hakan, a social worker in Switzerland, and Khalil, a researcher and educator in Canada, both stress that the young people they are working with are struggling with the fact of not really belonging 'neither here nor there'. This is especially true, according to them, for second- and third-generation immigrants who have not lived in their country of origin. This feeling of not belonging creates a void that can be filled by groups that promise unconditional membership. It can also facilitate the rupture from society's social tissue and thereby open a vacuum for new ideas and memberships

> The second and third generation…they are struggling...because they are stuck between here and there. It is a form of schizophrenia. There is an identity at home and there is an identity outside…that leads to a form of isolation and feeling lost. And then, someone comes along and gives you that feeling that you belong… 'there, no one cares about you. Here, we care about you'.
>
> (Khalil, Canada)

The mention of practitioners in this respect is not coincidental. In fact, the various interviewees conducted with practitioners who are strongly involved in this phenomenon clearly reveal that the practitioners themselves know the experience of Otherness and unbelonging. They include otherness from a dominant majority due to nationality, religion, culture, poverty, gender or political orientation. This is a crucial aspect, because they seem to be able to draw on these experiences of Otherness in their work with individuals who tend to engage out of a positionality of Otherness as well.

Links between ethno-racial grievances and politico-ideological mobilisation

The findings presented above give an impression of just how widespread ethno-racial grievances are among the interviewees in the three contexts. They refer to historic suffering at the hands of a particular group, identified by racial, ethnic, cultural

or religious markers, against whom hatred builds and persists over generations. This can be clearly identified in Tripoli's jihadists hatred against Alawites and Shia Muslims, or Christian right-wing hatred against Muslims. The idea of *Madhloumiya* was discussed, which refers to an identarian sense of collective and transnational victimhood, such as a sense of worldwide oppression of Sunni or Shia Muslims. Important ethno-racial grievances are linked to the manifestations of the War on Terror, which has bolstered the amalgamation between Arab-Muslim identities and terrorism. The impacts are felt very strongly by interviewees on individual and collective levels. Finally, the narratives reveal a general sense of alienation from and by White European societies, which is connected to a desire to foster links of solidarity between othered peoples around the globe.

The narratives reveal that ethno-racial grievances are connected to strong feelings of indignation. This has to do with the dehumanising effect of the practices and discourses that lead to these grievances: It is not because of anything they do, but for something that they cannot change about themselves that they are stigmatised in the age of the GWOT. Worse even, it is something to which most are strongly attached, whether simply their cultural heritage or their religious identity, that becomes vilified in the general discourse and sometimes manifests itself in practices that affect interviewees directly.

On a cognitive level, ethno-racial grievances can contribute to a perception of systematicity and coherence across time and space. Through the combination of personal experiences of othering and stigmatisation with instances of learning about the discrimination and oppression of others associated with a similar collective yet in very different contexts, a feeling arises that the world is somehow specifically targeting this collective. This can also contribute to feelings of solidarity with othered Others in different contexts and therefore promote pro-social and constructive postures. However, more problematically, it can foster new forms of othering, stigmatisation, hatred and dehumanisation of other collectives, if they are associated with the perceived oppression of one's own collective of reference.

Notes

1 To 'go to the right' (اطلع على اليمين) is frequently used by the interviewees to indicate being searched. I experienced this several times myself, when, at the checkpoint, they would tell me to 'go right' where, a few metres further, there would be another soldier who would ask for my passport and sometimes what I was doing in Lebanon. Many of my interlocutors attributed this to my looks: During my time in Lebanon, I was wearing a beard.
2 Expression used to designate people affiliated with or sympathising with Daesh.