**Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait**

**Name:** Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait

**Year of Origin:** 1952[^1]

**Founder(s):** Abd al-Aziz al-Mutawwa[^2]

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

**Key Leaders:**
- **Nasser al-Sane:** Secretary-General of the ICM [Image][^3]
- **Jamaan al-Harbashi:** Deputy Secretary-General of the ICM [Image][^4]
- **Tariq al-Suwaidan:** Key member [Image]

**Associated Organization(s):**
- Hadas[^5]
- Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM)[^6]
- Jamiat Ikhya al-Islakh al-Ijtimai[^7]
- Kuwaiti Ikhwan[^8]
- Social Reform Society (SRS)[^9]

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.”[^10]

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. 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.

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. The Kuwaiti Brotherhood immediately formed the ICM, which quickly established itself as a leading political opposition party, repeatedly winning several seats in parliament. 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.”

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. 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


years.17

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.18 Suwaidan was banned in August 2013 from Saudi-funded al-Risala TV for publically admitting membership in the Kuwaiti Brotherhood.19 Despite Suwaidan’s suspension from al-Risala TV, the prominent Brotherhood member has continued to amass a large following on social media.20 As of early 2017, Suwaidan reaches audiences of over 8.1 million and 8.4 million on Twitter and Facebook, respectively.21

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 2013.22 The ICM publicly criticized the Kuwaiti government’s anti-Brotherhood messaging during Mohammed Morsi’s 13-month tenure as president.23 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.24 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.25

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

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

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.”

**History:**

- **1930s-1940s:** Brotherhood members from around the Arab world move to Kuwait, then reportedly receptive to Brotherhood exiles.
- **1952:** Abd al-Aziz al-Mutawwa establishes the Brotherhood’s branch in Kuwait, known at its founding as the Islamic Guidance Society (IGS).
- **1961:** The IGS rebrands as the SRS following Kuwait’s declaration of independence from Britain.
- **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. The SRS remains as the Kuwaiti Brotherhood’s local charity arm.
- **May 2007:** U.S. federal prosecutors name Tariq al-Suwaidan as an unindicted co-

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conspirator in the terrorism financing case against the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, convicted of financing Hamas.\(^{34}\)

- **2012-2013:** The ICM boycotts parliamentary elections.\(^{35}\)
- **November 26, 2016:** The ICM wins four of 50 seats in parliamentary elections, having fielded six candidates.\(^{36}\)
- **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.”\(^{37}\)

**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.”\(^{38}\)

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.\(^{39}\)

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,

\(^{34}\) “List of Unindicted Co-conspirators and/or Joint Venturers,” United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, May 2007, 8.


which was convicted of financing Hamas.\footnote{“List of Unindicted Co-conspirators and/or Joint Venturers,” United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, May 2007, 8.}

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

**Designations by Governments and Organizations:**

**Russia**

**Kazakhstan**

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