

Middle Easterners Confirm Fear of Growing Jihad, Poll Says

When it comes to Muslims and the Middle East, what do you think of? Ramadan? Mosques? According to the latest Pew Research study, concerns about Islamic extremism are growing in the Middle East.

Between April and May, Pew Research Center surveyed over 14,000 people in 14 countries with significant Muslim populations. In the Middle East, Pew notes, concern about radical Islam is rising. Lebanese, Tunisian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Israeli and Turkish respondents “are all more worried about the extremist threat than they were a year ago.”

A Middle East expert, who must remain anonymous for safety reasons, weighed in recently from Jerusalem.

“Jewish people today are feeling desperate. Muslims, I think, are feeling very unsettled,” he shares. “You can just feel it. There’s a lot of bad situations, and it feels like war coming.”

The exact boundary lines of the Middle East region vary by country, but Encyclopedia Britannica includes the following nations: Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, and “the various states of Arabia proper” (i.e. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, etc.).

Many of these countries—Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Libya, to name a few—are the continual battlefields of militant Islamic factions. Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood are among 29 Islamic Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) identified by the U.S.

Formerly known as ISIS, Islamic State terrorists expanded their reach beyond Syria to Iraq earlier this year. They declared a Caliphate on the first day of Ramadan.

With “these kinds of pronouncements, I think we have to sit back and see. Is this wishful thinking? Or will this be a rallying cry?” our anonymous source notes.

What’s a Caliphate?

Generally, a caliphate is described as an Islamic state led by a single political and religious leader known as a caliph. Several caliphates have existed over the centuries, spanning from 632 to 1924.

The caliphate institution was then formally abolished, until IS revived it last week.

“Will this [IS caliphate] bring all Muslims together to follow one spiritual leader? I think that remains to be seen,” says our anonymous source.

However, past claims by militant leaders to unite the world’s Muslims under one banner have fallen flat each time, he notes. While a “global caliphate”—where the world is united under Islamic rule—is the ultimate goal of radical sects, the concept loses popularity among wider Muslim audiences.

Before completing his thoughts on the topic, our source notes an important clarification. Anytime Muslims and the Middle East are discussed in regard to Islamic extremism, it’s imperative to avoid blanket statements.

“You can’t just look at Islam monolithically, that they all believe everything the same and they’re all walking the same way. It’s just really not true,” he says.

“There’s the fanatical Muslims, there’s the religious Muslims that aren’t fanatical but really are looking. I think they’re sending up SOS signals, wanting to know the truth.”

In the coming days, please surround the Middle East in prayer.

“We ask for the Mission Network News listeners to pray,” requests our anonymous source. “Pray for your brothers and sisters in Syria, in Israel, in Iraq, in Iran, in some of these difficult places, Lebanon, Jordan.

“There [are] believers on the front lines that are risking their lives every day, and the prayer, encouragement, support would be huge for them.”

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