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06 May 2004

LBY42502.E

Libya: The Muslim Brotherhood, including its mandate, structure, status and links to terrorist activities or human rights violations (January 1998 - April 2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, a promoter of religious government and the inclusion of Islamic beliefs and values in institutions (*Encyclopedia of Terrorism* 2003, 231; FAS 8 Jan. 2002). According to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), a non-profit organization composed of scientists and citizens with knowledge of political issues (ibid. n.d.), al-Banna based his ideas on the belief that in addition to being a religious observance, Islam was a way of life (FAS 8 Jan. 2002). In line with this belief, he developed *jihadia* training for Egypt's males (ibid.), and developed armed cells that targeted government officials and supporters (*Encyclopedia of Terrorism* 2003, 231). These activities led to a ban of the Muslim Brotherhood by the Egyptian government (ibid.) in December 1948 (*Encyclopaedia of the Orient* 2004; *The Columbia Encyclopedia* 2001). The ban was partially lifted in 1950, when the government legalized the Muslim Brotherhood as a religious group, only to ban it again in February 1954 for its insistence that the Egyptian government rule according to Shari'a (Islamic Law) (*Encyclopaedia of the Orient* 2004). Some members of the Muslim Brotherhood also joined the Arab side in the first Palestinian war (1948-49) (ibid.) against Israel (FAS 8 Jan. 2002).

As at 2003, the Muslim Brotherhood had branches in over 70 countries (ibid.; *Encyclopedia of Terrorism* 2003, 231). According to FAS, throughout its existence, the Muslim Brotherhood has experienced

…cycles of growth, followed by divisions into factions, including clandestine financial networks, and violent jihad groups, such as al-Jihad and al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya in Egypt, HAMAS in Palestine and *mujahideen* groups in Afghanistan (8 Jan. 2002).

An April 2003 article by Agence France Presse (AFP) reported that while the Muslim Brotherhood advocated the establishment of an Islamic state in Libya and in Egypt, it did not sanction the use of violence or the undertaking of illegal activities (26 Apr. 2003).

In Libya, although the Muslim Brotherhood was officially banned in the mid-1980s, a report in 2003 indicated that it continued to operate discreetly (US 2003).

In February 2000, the *Middle East Policy Council Journal* , which is a Washington-based quarterly journal that provides political, economic and social analysis for consideration by United States policy makers on matters involving the Middle East (Middle East Policy Council 2002), reported that

[a]lthough long prosecuted by the [Libyan] regime, the Muslim Brotherhood has been experiencing a revival. Through the establishment of extensive social-welfare projects, the Brotherhood is creating social cohesion in urban centers [that have been] fragmented by economic distress and demographic pressure.

One source reported that Libya's leader, Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi, is committed to the "open propagation of Islam," which has resulted in his opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood (US 2003). More recent information on Qadhafi's position towards the Brotherhood could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Amnesty International (AI) reported in April 2004 that according to Libyan laws, anyone who participates in the formation of a political party or association, or who voices a political opinion that contradicts currently-accepted thinking faces severe punishment, including the death penalty (12). In accordance with its legislation, in 1998, the Libyan government arrested 152 members of the Muslim Brotherhood (AI Apr. 2004, 43). The cases of these individuals had been adjourned several times (ibid.) by the Libyan People's Tribunal in Tripoli (*Al-Quds Al-'Arabi* 6 Apr. 2004) until February 2002 when the Tribunal sentenced two Muslim Brotherhood members, Abdallah Azz-al-Dine and Salim Abu-Hank, to death (ibid.; AFP 21 Feb. 2002; see also *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 17 Feb. 2002), 73 members to life imprisonment and 11 members to ten years' imprisonment (*Al-Quds Al-'Arabi* 6 Apr. 2004; *Independent* 27 Mar. 2004). The Tribunal was scheduled to hear appeals on 7 April 2004 of those sentenced (*Al-Quds Al-'Arabi* 6 Apr. 2004), however, information on the outcome of that hearing could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted.

According to BBC, shortly after Libya was elected to chair the United Nations Human Rights Commission on 20 January 2003 (UPI 20 Jan. 2003; FreeRepublic.com 20 Jan. 2003), the government released all political prisoners, except those belonging to the Libyan Fighting Group and those belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood (BBC 20 Jan. 2003).

In February 2004, the Muslim Brotherhood engaged in consultations with the Libyan government about national reform in politics, society, culture and in the economy (*Al-Quds Al-'Arabi* 17 Feb. 2004).

In late March 2004, *The Independent* , a United Kingdom-based daily newspaper, reported that in Libya the Muslim Brotherhood is "renowned for its peaceful campaigning and has never been reported to have used or advocated violence" (27 Mar. 2004).

Additional information on the mandate, structure, status and links to terrorist activities or human rights violations of the Muslim Brotherhood could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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[Important Notices]