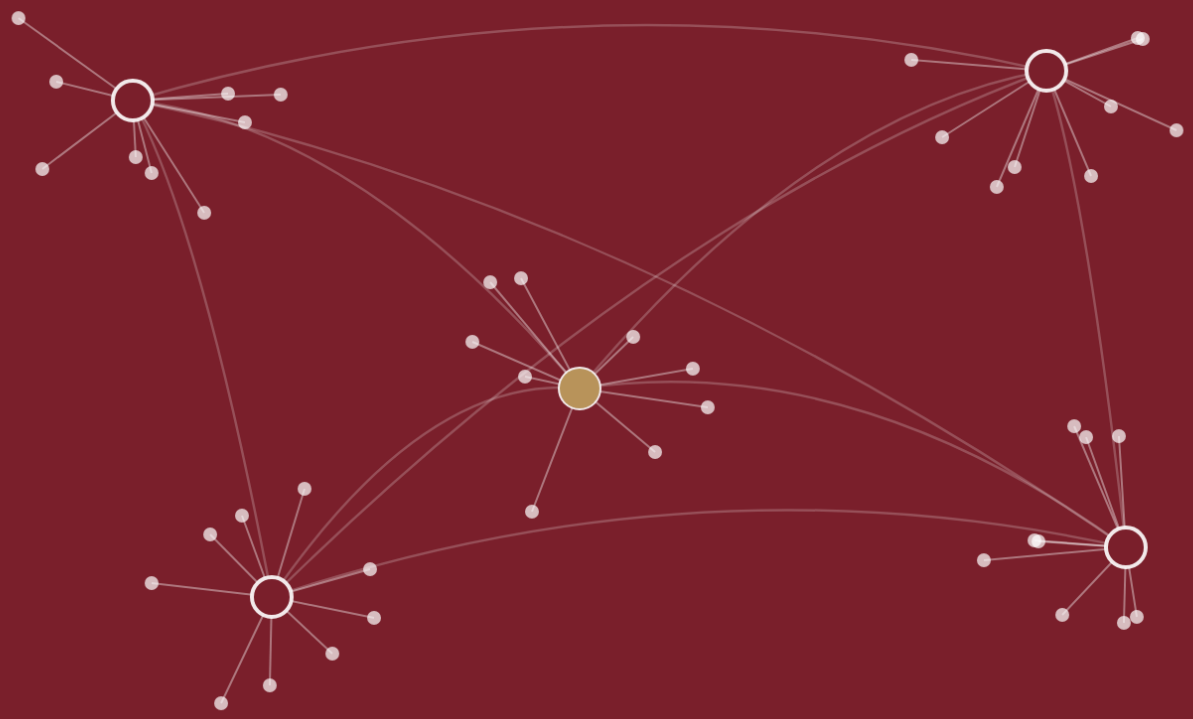
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POLICY PAPER · EPIC-PP-2026-030

Transnational Networks

The Muslim Brotherhood after 2013

EPIC Research Team

October 2026

Transnational Networks: The Muslim Brotherhood after 2013

How the movement adapted, how states responded, and what it means for Gulf policy

EPIC-PP-2026-030 · Extremism & Political Islam · 27 October 2026 · EPIC Research Team

Abstract

Since 2013 the Muslim Brotherhood has lost the governing position it briefly held in Egypt and has been outlawed, designated or restricted by a growing number of states. This paper traces those responses using documented state actions only: designations, laws, court rulings and official reviews. Egypt declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation in December 2013. Saudi Arabia followed in March 2014 and the UAE in November 2014. The response then spread beyond the region. The United Kingdom published the main findings of a government review in December 2015, Austria added the Muslim Brotherhood to its ban on extremist symbols with effect from March 2019, and France published a government report in May 2025 (file dated 2 May 2025). Jordan, long the main Arab case of accommodation, shut the movement down in April 2025. The United States designated the Egyptian, Jordanian and Lebanese branches in January 2026 and a Sudanese branch in March 2026. The paper argues that the movement's transnational structure, long a source of resilience, has made it a shared object of state policy. For the Gulf, the open question is how to coordinate designations, financial controls and evidence with partners whose courts require proof organisation by organisation. The paper closes with recommendations.

Keywords: Muslim Brotherhood; terrorist designation; Gulf Cooperation Council; UAE; Saudi Arabia; Jordan; Austria; United States; transnational networks; counter-extremism policy

1. Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928 and spread through national branches, affiliated associations and individual networks across the Middle East and beyond. The US executive order of November 2025 describes it as having "developed into a transnational network with chapters across the Middle East and beyond" (White House 2025). Several governments now share that description in different words, and their policies increasingly reflect it.

The paper asks how states have responded to the Muslim Brotherhood since 2013, and what those responses mean for Gulf policy. It also considers what the documented record shows about how the movement has adjusted. It does not repeat EPIC's earlier paper on the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, *Entryism by Due Process* (EPIC-PP-2026-014), which examined French, German, Swedish, Austrian and British policy in detail. European cases appear here only in summary.

The method is deliberately narrow. The paper relies on official texts, including government statements, gazettes, court rulings, executive orders and sanctions notices, supported by established news organisations where the official text could not be retrieved. Claims about the movement's internal organisation that cannot be documented are left out. Section 2 sets out the turning point of 2013 and 2014. Section 3 covers the Gulf, Section 4 Jordan, Section 5 Europe and Section 6 the United States. Section 7 considers adaptation. Sections 8 to 10 set out gaps, recommendations and a closing assessment.

2. The turning point: 2013 and 2014

On 25 December 2013 Egypt's interim government declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation. It blamed the group for a bombing that week that killed 16 people, announced that anyone who was a member would be punished, and said that anyone giving the group financial support would also be punished. As CNN reported, a US State Department spokeswoman noted that the Muslim Brotherhood had denounced the bombing and that Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis had claimed responsibility for it (CNN 2013).

Saudi Arabia acted on 7 March 2014. An Interior Ministry statement listed the Muslim Brotherhood alongside al-Qaeda and its branches, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Al-Nusra Front, "Hezbollah in the Kingdom" and the Houthi group as terrorist organisations. The statement set out the conduct that would be held to account, including belonging to such groups, supporting them, sympathising with or promoting their ideologies and funding them, inside or outside the Kingdom, and gave its effective date as 9 March 2014 (BBC News 2014; Asharq Al-Awsat 2014).

The UAE followed in November 2014. UAE Cabinet Decision No. 41 of 2014, made under Federal Law No. 7 of 2014 on combating terrorist crimes, approved a list of designated terrorist organisations, which WAM published on 15 November 2014 (UAE Cabinet 2014; WAM 2014). The list named the Muslim Brotherhood organisation and groups, and the UAE Muslim Brotherhood, together with associations in Europe and North America that the UAE assessed as linked to the movement. As EPIC-PP-2026-014 records, WAM's published list has 85 entries, one of which appears twice.

These three decisions created a new legal fact. In the states that had taken the strongest position, membership and support became criminal offences. They also set out a logic that later spread: the network itself, and the associations around it, became the object of policy, in place of a narrower focus on a violent fringe.

3. The Gulf: from designation to doctrine

3.1 The 2017 rift and its resolution

In June 2017 Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt severed diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar and closed Qatar's only land border (BBC News 2021). One of the main issues was Qatar's support for Islamist groups. As the BBC put it, Qatar acknowledged providing assistance to Islamist groups designated as terrorist organisations by some of its neighbours, notably the

Muslim Brotherhood, while denying that it aided jihadist groups (BBC News 2021). The rift ended with the Al-Ula Declaration of 5 January 2021. The declaration required the measures announced on 5 June 2017 to be lifted within one week of signature, and committed the signatories to "strengthen their cooperation to combat terrorist entities, movements and organizations, or any such actors that threaten the security or stability of any of their number" (Al-Ula Declaration 2021).

The Al-Ula text matters for this paper because it does not name the Muslim Brotherhood. It replaced a dispute over specific groups with a general commitment to cooperation against terrorist entities. That formula ended the rift. It also left each state's own designations as the instruments that actually operate.

3.2 Religious authority

In November 2020 the religious establishments of Saudi Arabia and the UAE added doctrinal weight to the legal position. On 10 November 2020 Saudi Arabia's Council of Senior Scholars said the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist group that does not represent the approach of Islam, describing it as a deviant group that pursues partisan goals behind a religious cover (WAM 2020a). On 23 November 2020 the UAE Fatwa Council declared its full support for that statement, which it said echoed the positions of the UAE and Saudi governments that consider the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organisation. The Council also said it is not permissible to pledge allegiance to anyone other than the ruler, or to a clandestine leader (WAM 2020b).

These statements matter because the movement's claim to legitimacy has always been religious. A legal designation answers the security question. A statement by senior scholars engages the movement on its own ground, and the point about clandestine allegiance goes to the heart of how a secret membership network operates.

3.3 Enforcement in the UAE

The UAE has continued to enforce its designation through the courts and the financial system. On 10 July 2024 the State Security Department of the Abu Dhabi Federal Court of Appeal convicted 53 defendants and six companies in Case No. 87 of 2023, known in the media as the "Justice and Dignity Committee" case. The court described the defendants as leaders and members of the Muslim Brotherhood organisation. Forty-three were sentenced to life imprisonment, and the six companies were each fined AED 20 million, dissolved and had their assets confiscated. The court dismissed the cases against 24 defendants and acquitted one. WAM noted that the verdict could be appealed before the Federal Supreme Court (WAM 2024).

On 8 January 2025 the UAE added 11 individuals and eight entities to its Local Terrorist List "for their links to the terrorist Muslim Brotherhood organisation", under Cabinet Resolution No. 1 of 2025. All eight entities were based in the United Kingdom. Financial institutions and regulators were instructed to take the necessary measures (WAM 2025). The listing shows the direction of Gulf enforcement: towards the companies and property vehicles through which a network holds money abroad.

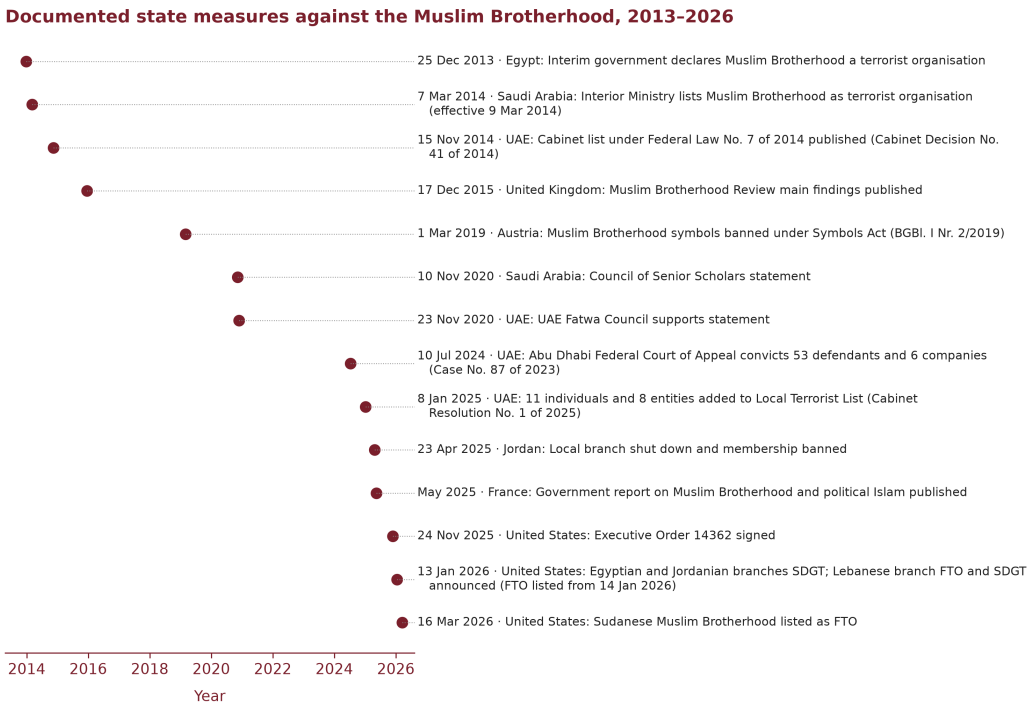


Figure 1. Documented state measures against the Muslim Brotherhood, 2013–2026

4. Jordan: the end of an exception

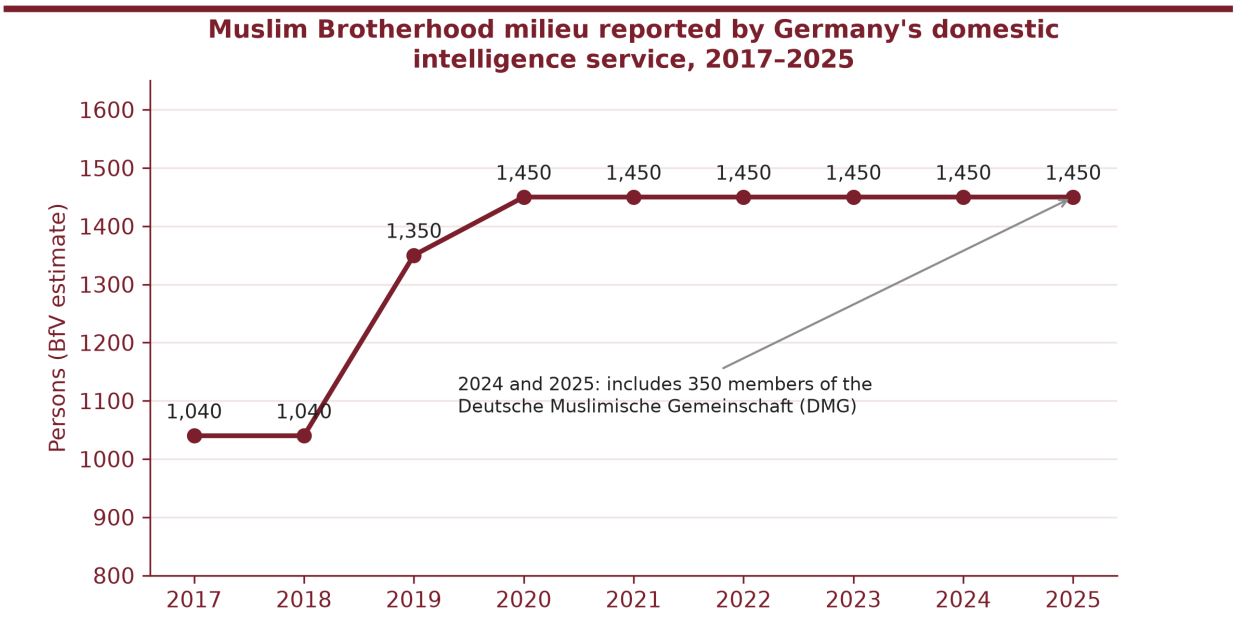
Jordan was for decades the clearest case of a state that tolerated the Muslim Brotherhood as a lawful actor. That changed in stages. The US Treasury notes that the Jordanian branch "was officially dissolved by a Jordanian judicial verdict in 2020" (US Treasury 2026). On 23 April 2025 Jordan said it was shutting down the local branch and banning membership. The ban came a week after the authorities announced the arrest of 16 people accused of training militants, making explosives and plotting to strike targets in Jordan with rockets and drones. The Muslim Brotherhood denied any involvement in the alleged plot. Jordan's cybercrime unit said that publishing anything on social media relating to the Muslim Brotherhood would be met with legal action (The Guardian 2025).

The case matters to the Gulf for two reasons. It removed the main Arab example of accommodation. It also raised the question of whether a state can separate a movement from a political party associated with it. The Islamic Action Front, which The Guardian describes as the group's political wing, won 31 of 138 seats in the September 2024 elections. The party's secretary-general said its work would continue and that it had "no organisational link with any other entity" (The Guardian 2025). Where that line falls is now a legal question in Jordan, and it is the same question that European courts ask.

5. Europe: regulation by instrument

Europe has moved more slowly and by different means. EPIC-PP-2026-014 covers this in detail, so only the main instruments are noted here. In December 2015 the UK government published the main findings of its review. These concluded that aspects of Muslim Brotherhood ideology and tactics, in the UK and overseas, were contrary to British values, national interests and national security, and that much about the movement in the UK, including membership and fundraising, remained secretive (UK Government 2015). Austria added the Muslim Brotherhood to its Symbols Act, which bans the public display of the symbols of listed groups, with effect from 1 March 2019 (Austria 2019). In May 2025 (file dated 2 May 2025) the French government published a report on the Muslim Brotherhood and political Islam in France (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2025). Germany's domestic intelligence service has put the Muslim Brotherhood milieu at 1,450 people in each year 2020–2025 (BfV, various years).

European states regulate funding, symbols and association, and they seldom prohibit the movement outright. Their constitutional systems require proof that a specific organisation pursues violent or unconstitutional ends. Austria's experience shows the cost of moving faster than the evidence: the Graz Higher Regional Court found that some of the house searches carried out in Operation Luxor in November 2020 were unlawful (ORF 2021).



Source: BfV, Verfassungsschutzbericht (page numbers are PDF pages): 2019, p.181; 2021, p.181; 2024, pp.204, 245; 2025, pp.231, 273 (printed pp.229, 271). DMG note: 2024, p.245, fn 105; 2025, p.273, fn 122.

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Figure 2. Muslim Brotherhood milieu reported by Germany's domestic intelligence service, 2017–2025

6. The United States: designation by branch

On 24 November 2025 the US President signed Executive Order 14362, published in the Federal Register on 28 November 2025. The order did not designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole. It set in motion a process by which "certain chapters or other subdivisions" would

be considered for designation as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists, naming the chapters in Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt (White House 2025; Federal Register 2025). On 13 January 2026 the Treasury designated the Egyptian and Jordanian branches as Specially Designated Global Terrorists for their material support to Hamas. The State Department designated the Lebanese branch, al-Jamaa al-Islamiyah, as both a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (US Treasury 2026). The State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations records the Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood from 14 January 2026 and the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood from 16 March 2026, the date its designation notice was published in the Federal Register (US Department of State 2026; Federal Register 2026). The Treasury had added the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood to its sanctions list as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on 9 March 2026 (OFAC 2026).

The US approach differs from the Gulf approach in its unit of analysis. The UAE and Saudi designations treat the Muslim Brotherhood as one organisation. The US designates national branches one at a time, each on its own evidence, and uses financial sanctions as the main tool. For Gulf states this creates a practical opening, because evidence on a named branch or entity can now be acted on in Washington.

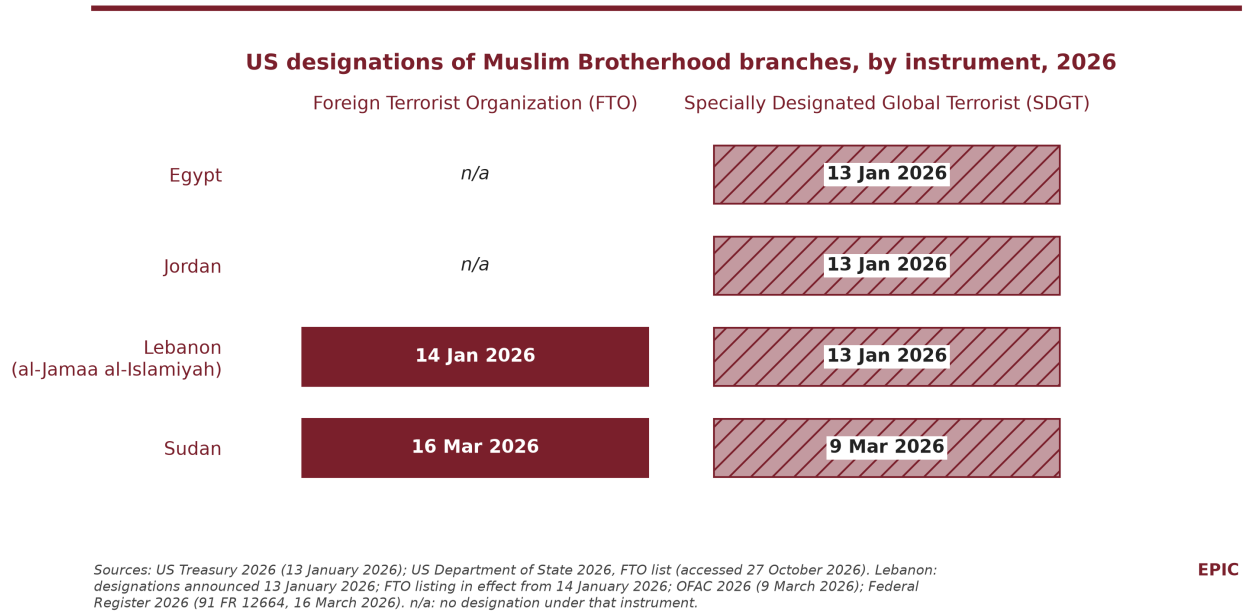


Figure 3. US designations of Muslim Brotherhood branches, by instrument, 2026

7. How the movement has adapted

The documented record supports two observations about adaptation. They are stated cautiously, because they rest on what states and courts have found and published, and the movement's own records are not available.

The first is reliance on a distributed structure. When one state closed the movement down, branches and associations elsewhere continued. The US order's description of a "transnational network" points to the same feature, and it explains why a designation by one state has limited effect on its own. The UAE's January 2025 listing of eight UK-based companies, and the UK

review's finding that Muslim Brotherhood affiliates used London as a base for activism elsewhere (UK Government 2015), show how activity and assets sit in jurisdictions other than those that have banned the movement.

The second is reliance on legal separation between the movement, political parties and associations, combined with contesting measures in law and in public. Jordan's Islamic Action Front insists it has no organisational link with any other entity. In Austria, defendants in Operation Luxor won rulings that some searches were unlawful. The French report and the European cases in EPIC-PP-2026-014 turn on the same question of what counts as part of the movement. Each successful challenge raises the evidential bar for the next measure.

8. Gaps

Different legal standards. Gulf states designate the movement as a whole. Western states designate branches or regulate conduct. This gap limits the effect of Gulf designations abroad.

Public evidence. Gulf designations are seldom accompanied by a published evidential statement. Partners with judicial review need evidence that their courts will accept.

Coordination. The Al-Ula Declaration commits signatories to cooperation against terrorist entities, but no shared GCC list naming the Muslim Brotherhood was found in the sources reviewed.

Measurement. Few states publish data on the size of the movement. Germany's annual figure is an exception (BfV, various years).

9. Recommendations

1. **Publish evidential summaries.** When the UAE designates an entity, a short public summary of the grounds would help partners act and would strengthen the designation's standing abroad.
2. **Work with the branch-level approach.** The US designations of 2026 create an opening. Gulf states can share evidence on specific branches and entities, which fits the evidential standards of partners.
3. **Use financial channels.** Designations take effect through banks. Gulf financial intelligence units can coordinate with partners on entities already listed by the US and others, and on the foreign companies named in the UAE's 2025 listing.
4. **Build on Al-Ula.** GCC states could agree a common approach to listing, using the declaration's commitment to cooperation without reopening the 2017 dispute.
5. **Keep the religious argument public.** The statements of senior scholars in 2020 engaged the movement on religious ground. Continued scholarly engagement complements legal measures.
6. **Sustain research.** EPIC will continue to track state measures, building on EPIC-PP-2026-014 and this paper.

10. Assessment

The Muslim Brotherhood now faces a wider and more varied set of state responses than at any point since 1928. Jordan's 2025 ban removed the last major Arab case of accommodation, and the US branch designations of 2026 brought Washington into the field with financial tools. The decisive variable for Gulf policy is evidential. A Gulf designation that arrives in a European or American court with a published, branch-specific case behind it can be enforced there. One that arrives without it will be tested against the standard the Graz court applied in 2021.

About this paper

This paper was prepared by the EPIC Research Team. All facts are drawn from the documented sources listed below, which were checked on 27 October 2026 (Asia/Dubai). Charts use only cited data. It complements EPIC-PP-2026-014, *Entryism by Due Process*.

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Verification notes

- Opened and checked on 27 Oct 2026: White House EO page, Federal Register record (90 FR 55033), US Treasury sb0357, State Department FTO list, CNN 2013 (including the State Department remarks on the Muslim Brotherhood's denunciation and the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis claim), OFAC recent action 9 Mar 2026, Federal Register 91 FR 12664, BfV report PDFs 2019, 2021, 2024, 2025 (page numbers as cited), BBC 2014, Asharq Al-Awsat

2014, BBC 2021, Al-Ula Declaration (UNTS PDF), WAM 2014, 2020a, 2020b, 2024, 2025, The Guardian 2025, ORF 2021, UK Main Findings PDF (assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a817cdaed915d74e6232892/Muslim_Brotherhood_Review_Main_Findings.pdf), Austrian Symbols Act (RIS consolidated text via search index; direct fetch hit a bot check).

- Reused from EPIC-PP-2026-014 (verified 20 Oct 2026), not reopened today: Ministère de l'Intérieur 2025 report.
- Dropped from the 08:10 draft because they could not be opened today: Reuters 2013, 2014, 2024, 2025 (401), AP 2025 (timeout), Petra 2025 (server error 522).