

“Hizb ut-Tahrir” in Kyrgyzstan: Conditions and Trends
(Field study)

Esenamanovna N., Kyrgyz State Academy of Law

Veytsel R., Institute of Strategic Analysis and Forecasting,
Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University named after Boris Yeltsin

INTRODUCTION

Developments in recent years in countering violent extremism have highlighted new challenges, such as the “Islamic State” (IS) and its closely associated ideologies of Takfiri, Jihadism, and Salafism. Against their background, Hizb ut-Tahrir seems like a less important, unfashionable organization. At the same time, however, IS practices show that other radical and extremist organizations and groups may also accede to it.

Certain members of Hizb ut-Tahrir have expressed sympathies toward IS. In this regard, it is worth questioning whether Hizb ut-Tahrir may, having followers in Kyrgyzstan, cooperate with IS or become even more radicalized. According to the a Ministry of the Interior, there are over 1,300 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan.¹

For this reason, in 2015, a team of experts supported by an international nonprofit organization, “Search for Common Ground” (SFCG), conducted a field study to assess the actual state of affairs “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” a banned group that is by law termed extremist.

“Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami” is an international, radical, extremist religious organization banned in the Kyrgyz Republic in accordance with the Resolution of the Kyrgyz Supreme Court on August 20, 2003.²

A similar ban is imposed in all the Central Asian States, plus Russia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Pakistan, Oman, and others. Amongst European countries, the organization is illegal in Germany and Denmark for its anti-Israel narrative.³ In other European countries, plus the United States, Ukraine, and some Arab states, the organization has not been banned. Its head office is now in Vienna, Austria. Until recently, it was in London.⁴ The managing body, directly overseeing the Central Asian region up until 2014, were residing in Crimea. However, according to Russian media reports, recently it moved to the Ukrainian city of Lviv.⁵

This study is aimed at identifying the actual state of affairs of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan, revealing new trends in connection with its international geopolitical processes.

1 http://zanoza.kg/doc/324251_v_kyrgyzstane_vyjavleno_okolo_2_tys._priverjencev_ekstremistskih_organizacij.html

2 Banned Religious Associations. State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA) under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. – URL: http://www.religion.gov.kg/ru/not_registration_union.html

3 Avtushenko M.N. An issue of ideology and objectives of the political party “Hizb ut-Tahrir”. – URL: http://www.pglu.ru/science/researches/nii-panin/vestnik/v1/Avtushenko_M_N.pdf

4 Saliev A.A., Hizb ut-Tahrir. – URL: <http://materik.ru/rubric/detail.php?ID=16167&print=Y>

5 Interfax – Religia: Hizb ut-Tahrir activists move from Crimea to Lviv under the guise of asylum. – URL: <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&div=54806>

In achieving the targeted goals, the following **tasks** were prioritized:

- To collect information about the organization using open Russian- and Kyrgyz-language sources;
- To interview experts and religious leaders, and government authorities;
- To organize a survey among members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, of both individuals who are in places of detention, open prisons, already convicted, are under trial, and those who withdrew from the organization;
- To analyze the information obtained and draft a report.

An in-depth interview **methodology** was used throughout, focusing on open-ended questions. Most interviews were one-on-one. Religious books and prayer mats were given to the interview subjects in exchange for their cooperation, along with headscarves and cosmetics for the women.

A total of 22 face-to-face interviews were held with current or former members of the organization, of which 16 were serving their sentence in penal colonies, open colonies and pre-trial detention centers; two were currently under proceedings before the court, and four were ex-members, who voluntarily left the organization. Several of the respondents reported engaging in criminal activity before joining Hizb ut-Tahrir. Others were highly educated, intelligent, and relatively wealthy.

Twenty of the interview subjects were males and two were females. Eleven were ethnic Kyrgyz, eight Uzbeks, and three Uighurs. All were citizens of Kyrgyzstan.

By regional breakdown, one was a native of Bishkek, three were from Issyk-Kul, five from Naryn, six from Osh, and seven from Jalal-Abad oblasts.

Respondents seemed quite open, as each found it important to stress their points of view through this survey. Interviewed respondents agreed to provide information anonymously. We should note certain limitations on the obtained information. In particular, the researchers cannot ensure the complete accuracy of the information received through discussions with acting or former members of this organization, as well as with experts and religious leaders directly engaged in religion and accordingly having diverse worldviews and personnel opinions.

The researchers shall not take a position of any party (neither organization members, nor state authorities, or experts) and consider it important to formulate an objective understanding in regards to Hizb ut-Tahrir. The researchers endeavored to listen openly to the respondents, and learn their true feelings and opinions.

The key element of the study is to test prevailing public opinion stereotypes and myths towards this extremist organization. Those myths lead to the following ideas we tested:

- There is an increased number of “Hizb ut-Tahrir” followers in Kyrgyzstan.
- Poverty and low standards of living are the key factors driving people to join Hizb ut-Tahrir.
- Higher levels of families’ religiosity and knowledge gained during study at madrassa are the contributing factors to join Hizb ut-Tahrir.
- Nearly all the members of the organization are ethnic Uzbeks.
- Most of the followers of the organization travel to the territory of Islamic State.
- Law enforcement agencies are unable to mitigate the extremists.

In addition, the researchers consider it necessary to deeply examine the issues of ideology, possible organizational splits, and trends.

The study reviews and analyzes ideology, structure, educational system, schisms, relationships with other *jamaats* (assemblies of Muslims) and motivations toward becoming a member of the organization. **The novelty** of the present study is that while determining the status and trends of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan, certain myths and stereotypes about the organization were destroyed.

Moreover, an analysis of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s website content on Central Asia and the Middle and Near East⁶, revealed that 48% (!) of the publicly available materials are dedicated to Kyrgyzstan. This suggests that today the Kyrgyz Republic may be a center for Hizb ut-Tahrir, or a critical state for the dissemination of its ideas. This assumption is supported by a statement made by a former member of the party, who found that the organization exists mainly for Middle Asia (Tahrir followers do not use term “Central Asia”).

Myth 1: There is an increased number of Hizb ut-Tahrir followers in Kyrgyzstan.

Law enforcement agencies of the Kyrgyz Republic keep statistics on the total number of crimes having extremist nature. According to the law enforcement officers interviewed, about 80% of the prisoners convicted on extremism charges are followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir.⁷

Judiciary authorities heard 76 cases under Article 299 of Kyrgyzstan's penal code (“Incitement to ethnic, racial, religious, or interreligious hatred”) in 2010, 89 cases in 2011,

⁶ <http://ru.hizb-turkiston.net/>

⁷ Interview with two representatives from Ministry of Interior (MVD) of Kyrgyzstan and State Service for the Execution of Punishments (GSIN) of Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek. March 2015

and 101 cases in 2013.⁸ In 2013, a total of 234 cases of extremism were registered, with 283 in 2014.⁹ Although, when compared with 2005 there were only 74 similar cases registered.¹⁰ By that, we can make a straightforward conclusion about an increasing number of suspected members under the above article of the penal code of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Factors supporting withdrawal of the significant number of followers from the organization (approximately 100 members) indicate that organizational popularity has decreased; however, somehow membership seems to remain stable at present.

Personal opinion: During the interview with the prisoners it appeared that they feel no remorse for being sentenced. They believe they fight for a just cause.

Myth 2: Poverty and low standards of living are the key factors driving people to join Hizb ut-Tahrir.

By analyzing the economic situation of members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the researchers could establish that in general only a few of them enjoy standards of living below the national average. The majority are middle and higher-middle income people. There are also a certain number of successful businesspeople.¹¹ Consequently, research revealed the **inconsistency of the argument that poverty is an indispensable factor encouraging people to join the extremist organizations.**

An important feature of the organization under review is the **mutual aid among its members, who contribute approximately 10% of their income to a “common fund.”** Amirs of oblasts and the Amir of Kyrgyzstan allocate these funds for both publishing their own books and arranging social PR events designed to influence public opinion, such as food distribution, attractions for children, etc., and during holidays they sometimes assist the families of sentenced members of the organization.¹² Support for the immediate family of Hizb ut-Tahrir followers who have received a prison term and principles of mutual assistance are contributing factors to organizational sustainability. **The main reason for this aid distribution is to recruit to Hizb ut-Tahrir family members and others close to those**

8 Public Foundation “Otkrytaya Poizitsiya”: Review of religious freedoms in the Kyrgyz Republic. – p.17. – URL: <http://www.osce.org/hy/yerevan/105307?download=true>

9 Sultan Muratov, representative from the MVD 10th Main Directorate. – URL: http://www.24kg.org/obschestvo/7741_religiyakg_islamskiy_terrorizm_ili_politicheskie_igryi/

10 Terrorism in Central Asia. <http://www.ekstremizm.ru/baza-znaniy/item/53-terrorizm-v-centralnoy-azii>

11 Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the Organization. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Kara-Suu and Village of Aravan.

12 Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and with 4 members who left the Organization. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Kara-Suu and Village of Aravan.

who have been imprisoned, at a time when these individuals are most vulnerable to outside influence and in need of aid.

According to the words of its members, fundraising is performed by the head of each cell and transferred to senior management without providing a financial report of how much money was spent and for what purposes.¹³ Within the economic system of the extremist group under review, there were certain flaws associated with the opacity of funds utilization discovered. In particular, those who left the organization informed the researchers that one of the reasons that led them to make this step was the **deception by Hizb ut-Tahrir's management and embezzlement of joint funds by individual amirs**. The amirs manage the funds using their sole discretion and often use those financial resources to develop their own businesses as well as lending joint funds at interest, even while they have substantial funds in bank accounts.¹⁴

Personal opinion: During interviews with prisoners, it became clear that they have peace of mind regarding the material security of their families and loved ones. One member stated that his family is materially supported by the organization during religious holidays.

Myth 3: Nearly all the members of the organization are ethnic Uzbeks

The study of Hizb ut-Tahrir revealed that in recent years there has been in the organization a separation into at least **three groups along the bases of language, ethnicity, and geography. These groups include Kyrgyz-speaking (ethnic Kyrgyz), Russian-speaking (ethnic Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Russians, and others who live in Northern Kyrgyzstan), and southern Uzbek-speaking collectivities.**¹⁵ Police sources say that the largest group comprises ethnic Uzbeks. According to law enforcement agencies, they comprise about 80% of all members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁶ However, the study revealed that the significant number of Uyghurs and probably Russians are joining this group. Other Russian speakers also join the organization. These ethnic groups merge with the other Russian speaking members from the northern part of the country.¹⁷ The Kyrgyz-speaking Hizb ut-Tahrir group is almost totally monoethnic throughout the country.

¹³ Interview with Hizb ut-Tahrir member. Village of Aravan. March, 2015

¹⁴ Interview with four ex-members of the organization who withdrew from Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bishkek, March 2015

¹⁵ Interview with a representative from Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Internal Affairs. Karakol Town. March 2015

¹⁶ Interview with a representative from **SSEP** of Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek, March 2015

¹⁷ Interview with representative from Kyrgyzstan MVD. Kara-Suu Town. March 2015

The structure of the organization is designed into a cell-based network, so that a single member only knows four or five members around them. The group's propaganda literature is written in three languages, and the distribution networks seem to be organized around primary languages. A vital characteristic is that among members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, those in the southern Uzbek group do not know and do not cooperate with members of the Kyrgyz-speaking group, and vice versa.¹ In fact, in the south of Kyrgyzstan, there are two parallel structures within one extremist organization in the region. The organization does not seem to be able to unite different ethnic groups in the south of the country, although in the north of the country different ethnic groups do work together, apparently because they speak a common language: Russian. However, in the north of the country, the Russian-speaking and Kyrgyz-speaking groups operate separately.

During the interviews with Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters, a trend toward declining numbers of Kyrgyz-speaking members in Northern Kyrgyzstan has recently been observed – dozens of members are leaving the organization. However, the same members of the organization said that the southern Uzbek-speaking group is stable and continues strong advocacy.¹⁸ Several established members of the organization said that they lived and worked in Uzbekistan years ago.

Although the group maintains that it does not divide members or populations by ethnicity, and wants to unite all Muslims, we found latent ethnic divisions. Notably, the ethnic-based division of Hizb ut-Tahrir into two groups emerged after the events of 2010 in the South of Kyrgyzstan.¹⁹ Now, the organization seems to have taken a more local approach, and members speak directly about ethnic problems. At the time of the study, it was almost impossible to separate what had become a **combined ethnic and religious identity** among the group members.

Those sentenced for extremism talked about pressure from both corrupt law enforcement, as well as prejudice against them personally.²⁰ Taking into consideration different ethnicities of convicted members and law enforcement representatives, naturally such pressure is perceived much more sensitively than if the two sides would belong to one ethnic group. There was an overriding impression within the organization that some were resentful regarding their exclusion from controlling and distributing financial resources, and that certain individuals were noncompliant with internal regulations. Meanwhile, ethnic minorities claimed marginalization due to their lack of engagement with public and political government

¹⁸ Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 4 members who left the Organization. Bishkek, March 2015

¹⁹ Generalized conclusion from interview held with 4 members who left the Organization. Bishkek, March 2015

²⁰ Interview with **the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir**. Karakol. March 2015

structures and processes in society. The organization says that the government should solve the problems of ethnic minorities, for example, by opening Kyrgyz-language schools for them, to decrease their marginalization.

Myth 4: Factors that contribute to encouraging individuals to join Hizb ut-Tahrir include higher levels of families' religiosity and knowledge gained during study at a madrassa.

Interviews with respondents who are members of Hizb ut-Tahrir revealed that **higher levels of family religiosity are not a key factor encouraging them to join the organization.** Thus, most of the convicted members reported that their parents were not practicing Muslims, and that they started following religion on their own. Moreover, conflicts frequently took place between children who were Hizb ut-Tahrir followers and parents who were more secular-minded.²¹ We observe the generational conflict when children reproach their parents for practicing “the wrong Islam” or almost living without beliefs. **There is a discontinuity between generations and influence of ideology that came from abroad.**

In the families of convicted persons and those who are under investigation, we may also observe **ideological disputes with relatives**, including frequently with wives who deny the ideology. However, it should be noted that in most of the cases, the families of convicted persons regularly receive material support from other members of the organization, which allow the preservation of family ties.

Low levels of both religious understanding and education are also contributing factors in encouraging people to join this extremist organization. Some of the respondents also had low levels of secular education. Prior to joining the organization, most of the members reported being quite secular-minded; some used to use and abuse alcohol, and others had other bad behaviors. However, having started practicing Islam and met members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, after a short period, these individuals have become radical members of the party. Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir have had a series of “convincing” arguments, while recruiting a neophyte, and particularly when recruiting a person lacking deep knowledge about Islam and about world order in general. As a result of poor education, a man has no answers to questions and arguments against a recruiter's suggestions, and, as a consequence, comes under his influence. We may conclude that **religious and secular illiteracy are key contributing factors in encouraging people to join this extremist organization.**

In accordance to the above thesis, it was revealed that none of the interviewed followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir had any religious education obtained in madrassas or other Islamic institutions. People who have a good knowledge about Islam understand the basis of the

²¹ Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 13 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Village of Aravan.

religion, and someone cannot easily convince them through referring to certain Quran Ayahs and Hadith of the Sunna in isolation from the general sense and spirit of Islam. **A secular-minded man or an atheist is easier to engage rather than a believer, who has knowledge in matters of religion.**

The researchers had the overriding impression that the interviewed respondents were people who mainly had difficult life experiences, previously lived a lifestyle they now consider to have been inappropriate; some had been suffering from addictions. At some point, they are provided with information about Hizb ut-Tahrir's interpretation of Islam, which dramatically changed their lifestyle. People started going from one extreme to the other and seeking and struggling for justice. Their propaganda and analysis explains who is guilty of all troubles. The researchers found that through this organization people can realize and highlight themselves. In turn, everything becomes simple and clearly determined---what is bad and what is good, who to blame, and what to do.

Myth 5: Most followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir travel to the territory of the Islamic State.

In relation to the emergence of IS and travel of some citizens to the Middle East, issues of the relationship between Hizb ut-Tahrir and this terrorist organization have become particularly relevant. During conversations with Hizb ut-Tahrir followers, it was revealed that most of them have negative attitudes regarding ideas of establishing a caliphate by force. They believe **IS is not an Islamic organization, but only perpetrated in the name of religion and in flagrant violation of the Sharia.**²²

However, among a minority of members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, there are supporters who believe their participation in the war in the Middle East is quite possible, along with a "Hidjra", e.g., a move to the territory of IS.²³

Adversaries of IS pointed to the fact that when a group of Hizb ut-Tahrir followers had travelled to "Caliph" Al-Baghdadi, ostensibly to tell him the truth about his misconception.

²² It is noteworthy that right after the visits of Study Group the researchers to places of detention and interviews with convicted members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, who were asked about their relationship to IS, a detailed response denying the ideology of IS and identifying it as wrong, was published on the official website of the organization. <http://ru.hizb-turkiston.net/2015/04/03/%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%B9%D1%85%D0%B0%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%B0%D0%B1%D1%83%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%88%D1%82%D1%8B%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B4%D1%83%D0%BF/>

There were no such information before. However, it may probably be a coincidence.

²³ Interview with Hizb ut-Tahrir member who was undergoing trial. Karakol Town, March 2015

Nevertheless, in response, after a while a video was published in the Internet, where IS members massively executed those followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir.²⁴

Hizb ut-Tahrir “formally” does not recognize the “Caliph” proclaimed by IS in Syria and Iraq and does not support it due to disagreements on establishment order and governing a potential Caliphate; however, most of the followers still sympathize with “brothers in the faith” “fighting for the benefit of Muslims.”²⁵ **A trend and readiness to unite and merge with different political forces and radical groups is being observed among the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in achieving targeted organizational goals.** In this connection, we may subsequently see Hizb ut-Tahrir’s transformation toward proactive support of IS and other extremist and terroristic organizations having Takfiri orientation.

Myth 6: Law enforcement agencies are unable to mitigate the extremists.

It is worth noting that followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia have a common ideological center on <http://ru.hizb-turkiston.net/> and its magazine “Al-Vay”, which can be accessed on the Internet. To close these resources, in accordance with law of the Kyrgyz Republic, requires expert conclusions and a certain period of time, which delays such activity.

Completion of such activities would require a significant amount of resources, and therefore law enforcement agencies focus on operational work rather than closing extremist websites. Within the online space, establishing competitive information resources on Islamic issues (disclose positive aspects of Islam and point at mistakes of extremists) has been proposed, which will ensure more effective prevention.²⁶

Another problem, which the law enforcement system faces, are the gaps in preventing and rehabilitating supporters of extremist organizations. Interviews with the prisoners clearly revealed that it is extremely challenging to persuade them to return back to the social life. It necessitates continuous conversations during which time Hizb ut-Tahrir activists should be asked a set of specific rather than general theoretical questions and brought into contradictions, thus creating doubts. Only then, we may try to persuade an ardent extremist by providing an alternative evidence-based system and ideology.

Despite efforts, one more gap, which hampers comprehensively accomplishing these activities within the penitentiary system are the open-type prisons designed for detention of convicts, which lack the possibility of isolating those individuals who have resigned from membership in an extremist organization. Even with the successful rehabilitation of a person from extremism, a person must nonetheless return to the society of his fellow inmates again,

²⁴ Interview with the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Karakol. March 2015

²⁵ Opinions of 16 members of the party. March, 2015 r.

²⁶ Interview with MVD representative on fight against extremism. Bishkek. March 2015

many of whom are strong Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters. A factor of numerical superiority, the overt pressure exerted by the remaining members of the organization, and complications to enter into the other groups of the “prison world” also play a key role.²⁷

Therefore, law enforcement officials stress the need for **construction of single cell prisons, where extremists would be detained by degree of danger in order to avoid further propaganda of their criminal ideology.**²⁸

Earlier, members of Hizb ut-Tahrir used to observe a rule in accordance to which an activist of the organization must openly recognize his/her membership in the party. More recently, they were permitted, in order to ensure conspiracy and avoid criminal prosecution, to publicly renounce their membership in the organization as well criticize Hizb ut-Tahrir through mass media. This, in a certain way, also renders it difficult for law enforcement to perform their duties.²⁹

However, it is noteworthy that law enforcement agencies are making tremendous efforts and almost all active members of Hizb ut-Tahrir are either convicted and detained at prisons or registered by police. Nonactive members of the party remain at large.³⁰ Convicted, conditionally suspended, and previously convicted persons **rarely abandon their religious beliefs and continue transmitting them into the society.**

Demands made by the senior leadership of the state in regard to the need to counter extremism and terrorist organizations have resulted in more than 1000 public awareness-raising activities held in the South of Kyrgyzstan in 2014 organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in cooperation with Muftiate and State Commission for Religious Affairs (SCRA).³¹ The efforts were aimed at preventing the spread of Takfiri and Jihadi ideology; however, it is assumed that improved knowledge and information about extremist organizations that exploit religion also prevents individuals from joining Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Ravshan's Perspective (names are changed):

There has never been held a dialog with Hizb ut-Tahrir so that people could sit together and talk. Discussions are mainly around the idea. However, knowing the truth requires comparison of points of view, a dialog. For what reason the law forbids so that I can disseminate my vision, my beliefs? Moreover, they are not contradicting any laws or the

27 Interview with GSIN representative. Bishkek. March 2015

28 Interview with GSIN representative. Bishkek. March 2015

29 Interview with ATC GKNB representative. Bishkek. March 2015

30 Interview with MVD representative on fight against extremism. Bishkek. February 2015

31 Recent 5-10 years forecast of religious situation is positive. MVD 10th Main Department, URL: <http://www.islamsng.com/kgz/news/8607>

Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic. Dialog is what is needed in generally for the society of Kyrgyzstan and for any other State.

Ideology and Structure of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan

Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami is a radical and political party (Party of Liberation) founded in 1953 in Baitul – Maksud (Syria) (by other sources in Jerusalem) by members of a Palestinian branch of another known religious and political Party “al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun” (Muslim Brotherhood).³² The person who initiated separation from religious and political Party “al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun” (Muslim Brotherhood) was its first leader Taqiuddin al-Nabhani al-Phalastini (1909-1979). The Party has branches in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and other Arab States, plus Turkey as well as some European countries.³³

The ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir, published in numerous brochures, books, articles and the Internet, are based on ideas of al-Nabhani, which could have been written at times when he belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood was a strong influence on al-Nabhani's works and his followers.³⁴

Excluding al-Nabhani's works, the party activists consider the holy book of Islam - the Quran - and the Sunnah as the core sources of their ideology. Interviews with members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, however, revealed that they interpret the Quran's Surahs and Ayahs while removing them from their context, thereby substantiating the group's ideology to establish a caliphate as an essential principal of Islam.³⁵ For instance, members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan argue that the need to **establish a caliphate** is reflected in Surah “An-Nur” Ayah 66 and refer to the translation done by Alauddin Mansur, including hadiths. However, independent experts in theology point to the absence of an express statement to establish a caliphate in the Quran, and that **hadiths which are referred to by members of this extremist organization considered as Zaeef (not as strong, not credible hadiths, e.g., they are lacking clearly featured chain of transmission).**³⁶

For some portion of practicing Muslims in Kyrgyzstan today, the construction of an Islamic state and the caliphate is an abstract ideal they do not necessarily wish to pursue in reality.

32 K. Malikov. The short tutorial on Islam. Bishkek. 2013.– p. 111.

33 B. Babadjanov “About Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami” in Uzbekistan//Islam in post-Soviet States: insight.-M. 2001. p.156.

34 B. Babadjanov “About Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami” in Uzbekistan//Islam in post-Soviet States: insight.-M. 2001. p.156.

35 Generalized conclusion from interview held with members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Kara-Suu, Village of Aravan. March 2015

36 Interview with expert – theologian. Osh. March 2015. Interview with theologian. Bishkek. March 2015

Those who are struggling for it by violent or illegal methods are extremists. Interviewed members of Hizb ut-Tahrir advocate for the following³⁷:

- Nonrecognition and condemnation of democracy and secular power in general;
- Nonrecognition of existing laws and authorities in the state;
- It is indicated that the only legitimate laws are those that are divine, reflecting the power of Allah;
- Denial of sovereignty of the state. The caliphate is a single state which must cover the territories of all the present countries of Central Asia, the Middle East, etc.
- Caliphate according to Hizb ut-Tahrir followers is the best and fair model of state and public administration. They idealize not only the period of the four Righteous Caliphs, but also the subsequent Islamic theocratic state entities, including the Ottoman Empire. Existing contradictions and civil wars within those states are ignored.

Rasul's Perspective: No terrorist group appeared on ideological principles. They were all created by intelligence services of different states. Hizb ut-Tahrir formally and legally exists in Ukraine, however, they did not participate in political demonstrations. The state authority in Kyrgyzstan remains weak as well and a crowd of 5 to 10 thousand people can easily overthrow the existing regime, as it was in the past.

However, the supporters of the previous regime continued in power again. Primarily, this is due to the corruption and venality of people themselves voting for money. I believe the government must be strong. For this, it is necessary to change the entire system.

The main initial stage for establishing a caliphate in Kyrgyzstan, according to members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, is to **promote their ideas among the general population and to mobilize mass support**. When a certain part of the population is sufficient to “lobby” for their interests in society and people in the political arena subscribe to such ideas of creating a caliphate, the time will come to usurp authority. Party representatives say that the caliphate should initially be created on the territory of the Arab States and Turkey, and that Central Asia and other regions will be annexed as new territories by the newly formed states.³⁸

However, it is worth noting not only the potential danger of members of Hizb ut-Tahrir’s transition from ideological work towards direct actions in changing the constitutional order by force, but also appeared during the conversations with the convicted supporters the **trends to talk about the possible armed Jihad by members of the organization, to start a war**

³⁷ Generalized conclusion from interviews held with members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Kara-Suu, Village of Aravan. March 2015

³⁸ Convicted member of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Balykchy March 2015

against both government and other countries in order to create a caliphate. These topics preliminary come from the “top” to the cells on the ground.³⁹

Members of this extremist organization allow for “Jihad” within foreign policy after establishing the caliphate. So, they believe that those countries which deny recognition of a newly created caliphate shall have to pay “Jizya,” e.g., taxes for the benefits of Muslims. In case of rejection, **then the armed Jihad will be carried against those countries.**⁴⁰

While talking about geopolitics, the international economic situation, and the process of world globalization and integration of states and societies, Hizb ut-Tahrir followers are unable to provide substantiated explanations. Instead, they try to find comparisons in the past, in the days of the Prophet Muhammad and the Righteous Caliphs, despite the fact that those processes could have had other causes in the past, and differ materially from modern processes. Such an unstable ideological foundation potentially favors an opportunity to encourage the majority of the party activists to take **radical actions**. This will likely lead to a new separation and internal struggle within the party itself.

In terms of the internal organization of caliphate, Hizb ut-Tahrir followers **recognize the right of Christians and Jews to live within its borders**. However, they will be required to pay Jizya, cannot hold political appointments, yet are said to nonetheless enjoy the same rights as Muslims in everyday and economic life. They are also permitted to drink alcohol and eat pork, but only within the premises of their houses.⁴¹

It is noteworthy that the members of the party pretend to have an absolute truth regarding the establishment of a caliphate and Sharia, however, there are still **contradictions observed in their views on numerous issues of the society after establishment of a caliphate**, which indicates that the organization lacks a clear vision of this stage.

Thus, certain members of Hizb ut-Tahrir recognize the right of atheists and other denominations not related to Christians and Jews to live in the caliphate in addition to the People of the Book. Other respondents admit that only Muslims and the People of the Book who profess monotheism, e.g., Christians and Jews, may live in the caliphate.⁴²

In the future, according to the words of members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, the group provides the heaviest penalties in the caliphate for Muslims who converted to other religions and those

39 Interview with convicted member of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Osh, 2015. Publications Analysis in magazine “Al-Vay”.

40 Interview with convicted members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Balykchy, Bishkek, Osh. March 2015

41 Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 16 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the Organization. March 2015.

42 Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the Organization. March 2015.

who recognize themselves as Muslims, but do not read Namaz. In the beginning, an apostate is given time to return to Islam while others attempt to persuade him, and in cases where he does not return to Islam, the person should be executed. With respect to a Muslim who does not read Namaz, he is also granted a specific time. If, after expiration of this period, a person does not start prayers, he will also be punished.⁴³

During interviews with members of this extremist organization, uncertainty and divisions had been observed regarding the issues of who should be considered “a Muslim” and who a “Kafir” (infidel, or enemy of Islam). All recognize the need to pray five times a day and conduct other rituals. However, some believe that if a person does not perform Namaz five times daily, then he is not considered a Muslim anymore. Others find it important to perform this practice, but maintain that if a person visits a mosque only on Fridays, he is still a Muslim.⁴⁴

All members of Hizb ut-Tahrir **criticize and oppose Western values and democracy as a form of government**, seeing it as a path toward moral degradation of society, political weakness of the state, and civil strife.⁴⁵

The party has a pyramid-based structure, which is headed by an “Amir” of Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Branch is also governed by its own “Amir.” The internal division into cells corresponds to the administrative division in Kyrgyzstan: seven oblasts. So, in every oblast the organization is headed by so-called “Mosul” (*Arab. – “In charge”*). Accordingly, there are seven mosuls in the country. Each oblast has its own “Jihoz” governed by “Naqib” (*Arab. – “Deputy”*). Each “Jihoz” has 4-5 people in a so-called “Hizbi,” e.g., permanent members of an extremist organization under review. Their functions are to train and ideologically indoctrinate several “Dorises” (students). Each doris has about four “Ziyarats,” e.g., those who are being prepared for training, i.e., people gradually exposed to ideological indoctrination and yet holding flimsy ideological positions.⁴⁶ This network, in principle, allows central management of the entire organization. **Several members of Hizb ut-Tahrir highlighted that at present there is a tendency towards strengthening the personal rule of Amirs.**⁴⁷

43 Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 12 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. March 2015

44 Interviews with 12 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the Organization. Bishkek, March 2015

45 Generalized conclusion from interview held with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the Organization. March 2015.

46 Interviews with 4 members who left the organization. March 2015.

47 Seven members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bishkek and Osh. March 2015.

An important factor while working with representatives of this party is that **members of one cell are unaware of the other cell members and they do not interact with them.** This allows the organization to maintain secrecy, but creates difficulties for law enforcement.⁴⁸

The education system in the party is based on network principles, where knowledge, information about the ideology, and organizational principles are transferred from Amir through a supply chain network to rank-and-file members. **An emphasis is on teaching ideology that has a “revelatory” character condemning the policy of the secular states, Western values, etc... It includes “guilty” States and regimes responsible for some specific problems. Protest and opposition rhetoric is used.**⁴⁹

All the interviewed former and acting members of the party are highly politicized and consider international and political problems from geopolitical and conspiracy theory viewpoints. Training topics are as follows:

- Islamic policies;
- Sharia;
- Ijtihad;⁵⁰
- Capitalism;
- Socialist ideology;
- Liberal ideology;
- Democracy;
- Secular politics;
- Geopolitics, etc.

According to members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, there are trainings on improving communication skills, conviction, and recruitment. Among the respondents, there were persons whose training had lasted from a year to five, and they claim their training is continuing. The members study and consider secular and religious themes, today's agenda, problems of specific regions, countries, and geopolitics, which mainly are interpreted from a conspiracy theory point of view. The educational system of Hizb ut-Tahrir demonstrates its effectiveness, as the vast majority of active and former members, even if they renounced their

48 Generalized conclusion from interview with experts. Bishkek, Osh. March 2015

49 Generalized conclusion from interview with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bishkek, Balykchy, Karakol, Osh, Kara-Suu, Aravan Village. March 2015

50 Ijtihad (from Arabic) means “independent reasoning,” an ability and right of a competent Islamic jurist, or “Faqih,” to independently interpret Islamic law, solve contentious religious, and sometimes political, issues based on the Quran and Sunnah, governed by Fiqh methodology. A Faqih, whose conclusions are recognized by the whole Muslim community or by the majority of an Islamic group is called a “Mujtahid.” Sunnis, since the four main Madhhabs had been established by the 10th century, have not recognized anyone subsequently who can practice Ijtihad (“closure of the doors of ijtiḥad”). Some Hizb ut-Tahrir activists believe that their Scholar can still practice Ijtihad. Source: G.M. Gogiberidze. Islamic Dictionary. Rostov-on-Don, 2009. – p. 77-78.

membership in the organization, do not abandon the ideas they were taught. Methods of training and recruitment is designed on free flowing question-and-answer principles---a method of “brainstorming.” The questions are formulated in such a way that respondents undereducated in secular and religious terms and in matters concerning international politics start contradicting themselves, questioning their own beliefs, and easily get recruited.

Moreover, Hizb ut-Tahrir activists believe they are more competent, well-educated in terms of politics, geopolitics, and Sharia-related issues than the members of other “Jamaats.” While recruiting, a potential candidate openly was told that this party is banned. Recruiters attract new members covering the following topics and issues such as:⁵¹

- Knowledge and interpretation of today’s challenges;
- Already formulated answers to all the question a believer may have;
- Already formulated answers regarding Sharia and its interpretation;

All this knowledge and these answers are provided as the party interprets them through manipulating religious feelings and idealizing the caliphate.

When a new member is recruited, he becomes the subject of a “security clearance,” or inquiry regarding issues such as his biography, family, information regarding relatives working in police, if a person lives according to Islamic principles, if he regularly performs Namaz, etc.

Relationships to other Islamic organizations

Concerning **Salafism followers, almost all the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir consider this “Jamaat” and its activists as to be “brothers in the faith,”** potential allies, despite ongoing ideological disputes between them.⁵² Yet, after the recent arrest of an imam from Kara-Suu, Salafists offered to jointly start protests, but members of Hizb ut-Tahrir opposed it.⁵³ It should be assumed that the contradictions between the Salafists and the members of Hizb ut-Tahrirists may be overcome in case of any incident that may be used to accuse authorities of oppressing and killing Muslims.

Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters also believe “Dawatists” (members of “Tablighi Jamaat”) are their “brothers in the faith.” However, they claim there is insufficient theological training of Dawatists and that they generally have a low level of education. The latter are in

51 Interviews with 3 members who left the organization. Bishkek. March 2015

52 Interview with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the organization. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Kara-Suu, Aravan Village. March 2015

53 Interview with MVD representative. Kara-Suu. March 2015

line with their own established frameworks that relate to noninterference in politics.⁵⁴ Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir criticize what they see as a relationship between Dawatists and the state. The Dawatists are said to be “people of the authorities.” However, no signs of hostility towards these preachers were noted. Some prisoners stated that previously they had been promoting their ideas as Dawatists, although they preferred to refrain from using such methods in the present.

With regard to the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan (DUMK), members of Hizb ut-Tahrir find it to be **entirely subordinate to the official authorities and not expressing the opinion of believers**. The members of Hizb ut-Tahrir criticize, in particular, of what they see as corruption in the Muftiyat during the Hajj period, as well as low levels of education among its clerics, who they say perform mostly ritual services and have no knowledge of theology, and give no explanations to ordinary citizens on religious matters.⁵⁵

Generally, in respect to all Jamaats, the Hizb ut-Tahrir members consider all Jamaats as their potential allies, who are now “misguided.” At the same time, with regard to others, they express their snobbism and arrogance, seeing themselves as the political elite in the future caliphate. Of particular pride is their political program to establish the Caliphate, which only members of Hizb ut-Tahrir have and other Jamaats do not, according to them. Although, when researchers asked specific questions on how to act in a particular situation while creating a Caliphate, the party activists often gave contradictory answers or said they needed to know what the amirs say about this matter. According to members, Hizb ut-Tahrir is the only party, which speaks the truth about government policy, corruption, moral decline in the society, the negative impact of values of Western democracies, and so on.

Policy, Politics, State Authorities, and Hizb ut-Tahrir

Probably because of their own experiences, Hizb ut-Tahrir followers mainly support those individuals who belong to the opposition and were prosecuted by the authorities.

Hizb ut-Tahrir, over the years of its existence, has become a political resource for politicians, and an activist organization in political events and processes in Kyrgyzstan. For example, the followers of this organization attempted to infiltrate the regional governments and state agencies, as well as to use its human resources during the election processes.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Interview with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Kara-Suu, Aravan Village. March 2015

⁵⁵ Interview with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and 4 members who left the organization. March 2015. Bishkek, Karakol, Balykchy, Osh, Kara-Suu, Aravan Village. March 2015

⁵⁶ Interview with 2 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Kara-Suu and Aravan Village. March 2015

Hizb ut-Tahrir's participation in these processes are natural, as its main goal is to achieve **political power**.⁵⁷ Moreover, as has already been noted above, in order to achieve its main goal of building a caliphate, **the organization is ready to cooperate and merge with political and radical groups**. On the official website of the party in Central Asia, <http://ru.hizb-turkiston.net>, for instance, researchers saw that at the time of this research the war in Syria is mainly presented in a positive light despite the declared principles of nonviolence and condemnation of IS.

Mirlan's Perspective: When the time comes and the order is issued to start establishing the caliphate, then law enforcement authorities will be unable to do anything, because, for example, 9000 inhabitants live in Shamaldysai Town and 2000 of them are the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Authorities will not be able to arrest all the 2000 people due to the prevailing number of followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir. If about 50 thousand people would join today's power-holders, then the government will exit the arena and withdraw from state administration.

Organizational Split⁵⁸

According to some members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, who we succeeded in meeting with, **program documents does not reflect the future of Middle Asia**⁵⁹ **and it has no benefits to the region. The program of the organization is advantageous for countries and the people of the Middle East.**

Another factor is that previously Hizb ut-Tahrir members could familiarize themselves with 25 basic conceptual books, which comprehensively describe the ideology of the party. However, currently there only 1-2 books among the materials that the party has, which are used during the trainings. Information is transferred limitedly and only thorough amirs, thus increasing their own importance.

In addition to training, there are issues related to compliance with their charter, observance of rights and obligations in the organization. Thereby, the previous generation of members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were guided by the so-called Idara, a book that documents the entire structure, duties, and responsibilities of the members. However, the new generation is not permitted to familiarize themselves with Idara **since amirs sometimes commit their own violations**. They just refer to that book, saying this is the way it should be.

According to former members, **nonexecution of the program and nonobservance of the internal charter has weakened the party.**

⁵⁷ Interview with 2 experts. Bishkek and Osh. March 2015. Including our own conclusion.

⁵⁸ Interview with 4 members who left the organization. Bishkek, March 2015.

⁵⁹ Hizb ut-Tahrir uses this term to refer to the five former Soviet nations, commonly called Central Asia.

According to Hizb ut-Tahrir members, **in most of the cases poor supporters of the party are subject to arrests and detention** while wealthier members can find ways to avoid prosecution.

One of the key factors that may have contributed to a split of the party, from the words of former members of Hizb ut-Tahrir is that in Kyrgyzstan almost all the **central and managerial positions as well as assignments responsible to allocate financial flows within Hizb ut-Tahrir are exclusively monopolized by representatives of Uzbek ethnicity.**

The aforementioned fact of embezzlement and use of common funds by amirs for their personal needs also served as an underlining reason resulting in the withdrawal of about 100 members from the organization. Thus, it can be concluded that an organizational **split in the party is observed, driven by a struggle for power in the organization and control over financial resources,** as in all political formations.

Another key point, which led to frustration and withdrawal of some Hizb ut-Tahrir members from the party, was that a financially wealthy activist of the Party had a multi-year experience of touring through Arab states and Turkey, where supposedly the Party has its branches. The wealthy member attempted to meet with party representatives. However, according to the member, he did not succeed in meeting any party supporter in those countries. Consequently, he was disappointed, believing that the organization operates only in Central Asia.⁶⁰ He was encouraged to search for his other party members in Arab states, because Hizb ut-Tahrir establishes a certain time frame for the creation of a caliphate, while its members believe that only Allah may know when this will happen. The Kyrgyzstan branch **has been given promises to establish a caliphate every year, however, the call to embark on the path to establish it has always been postponed.** This caused doubt among some members who understood that **Hizb ut-Tahrir is used by certain powers to achieve their goals in Central Asia.**

However, in spite of the fact that Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan has become “less popular” and “out of fashion,” having given way to more radical “Salafi” structures and IS supporters, it still has achieved a certain measure of success in expanding its social foundation and **seeding the idea of establishing a caliphate as the most fair and acceptable model of a state for Muslims among certain groups of the population.** Those who have renounced their membership in this organization often reject the organization as an institution. However, even those who reject the organization as an institution often remain committed to the basic ideas and ideology of the party. Members become frustrated with the actions of certain amirs and the structure of the organization and break ties with it, but nonetheless remain committed to the ideas of establishing a caliphate.

⁶⁰ Interview with the leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Karakol. March 2015

Motivations to Join Hizb ut-Tahrir (from the words of its supporters)⁶¹

- One of the main motivations for Kyrgyzstan citizens to join extremist organizations is the weak leaders of the official spiritual administration. Believers or people who are spiritually searching often do not receive answers to their questions concerning religious, family, and social affairs, except with various extremist organizations. Besides, the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir are more entrenched in their ideas when they see theological illiteracy among the significant number of imams who mainly perform ritual activities, however, lacking sufficient public awareness for work with the population, do not condemn corruption. Imams, often interpret complex theological issues differently amongst themselves.
- A key factor is the corruption of the Muftiyat when organizing the Hajj, which is holy for a Muslim.
- Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters often cite the corruption of state authorities, schools, and hospitals, and a poor level of social services as motivations to join the party. As a result, they start searching for an alternative to present realities in the party itself and ideas of the caliphate.
- Most wealthy members of this extremist organization cite pressure on them and their businesses by law enforcement as one the factor that led them to search for an alternative in diverse radical ideologies. When law enforcement officers and businesspeople belong to different ethnicities, the actions of people vested with power are perceived with particular acuteness.
- Lack of fairness, social equality in the society, and responsibility among authorities encourages individuals to search for an ideal. Members of this party believe that those who are in power unfairly allocate benefits, which results in increased poverty and moral degradation in the society. All this is compared with the period of Jahiliyyah - the pre-Islamic Arabian society.
- Amongst the Uzbek population, in our opinion, there is often a focus on marriage over education, and, hence, lower educational achievements, particularly among women. Many young Uzbek men, in particular, plan to work in Russia and do not pursue higher education, and often drop out of school before graduating high school. Both Uzbek and Kyrgyz populations lack sufficient critical thinking skills when considering religious literature and ideas. This leaves certain segments of the population more prone to radicalization.
- A factor of mutual financial assistance and well-being of families during difficult periods of life, and the imprisonment of a party member, plays a significant role when new members join the organization.
- Increased personal status among the neighbors and the local community – “struggle for the faith, for justice.”

⁶¹ Generalized conclusion from interviews held with 18 members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and with 4 members who left the organization. Bishkek, Balykchy, Karakol, Osh, Kara-Suu, Aravan Village. March 2015

- Belief in Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology. The idealization of the caliphates. The members of the party believe that the only solution to the aforementioned problems can be the establishment of a caliphate and introduction of Sharia rules using punishment methods of that period.
- Personal fulfillment within an extremist party.

Social and Psychological Profile of Hizb ut-Tahrir Members in Kyrgyzstan

Age distribution of the interviewed members ranged from 30 to 50 years; only one at the time of the interview was 25 years old. Most of the respondents said that before joining Hizb ut-Tahrir, they lived a secular life, and that they were in "Jahiliyyah,"⁶² suffering addictions, abusing alcohol drinks, and conducting a disorderly lifestyle. They also said that after having turned toward Islam through the organization, they became righteous Muslims. Consequently, it may be concluded that this personality type goes from one extreme to the other.

Based on the fact that members of the party are mainly people over 35 years of age, it was concluded that the current **younger generation is less interested in joining Hizb ut-Tahrir, giving preference to other groups, especially to the Salafi-oriented ones.**

As for the level of education of Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters, it was concluded that the vast majority of members had no formal university education. In general, the bulk of followers have secondary or vocational education, although there were individuals with higher education, even university lecturers. Amongst the Uzbek group, a significant number of people have incomplete secondary education, which further increases their susceptibility to the ideas of extremism. The ethnic Kyrgyz group is more educated. Accordingly, it should be concluded that lacking or holding a higher degree in higher education does not have an impact on whether one joins this extremist organization; i.e., a man with or without higher education could become influenced by the ideology.

According to party activists, they knowingly joined the organization after being informed about its illegitimate status; moreover, many of them are repeat offenders, i.e., consciously and repeatedly committing the same crime, for which they have previously been convicted. For example, first, some members of the organization had been convicted of possessing banned literature, according to members of the organization, and, subsequently, the police allegedly planted extremist materials on them. Nonetheless, many activists do not abandon the ideas of the party.

⁶² Jahiliyyah (from Arabic) means "ignorance." In terms of ethics, Jahiliyyah means rudeness, life of ignorance, driven by human passions, which is opposite to Islamic Hilm (wisdom, forbearance). Source: G.M. Gogiberidze. Islamic Dictionary. Rostov-on-Don, 2009. – p.56.

Recommendations:

Spiritual Administration of Muslims:

1. Eradicate corruption at the Muftiyat. The Hajj should no longer be organized by the Muftiyat, but organizers of the Hajj should still pay a fee to the Muftiyat per pilgrim. Lack of financial flows that may trigger temptation will enable the Muftiyat to improve its internal situation, proceed to its complete reformation, and restore public trust.
2. Improve the knowledge of the Muftiyat's imams and its workers in facilitating effective outreach to the local population, and eradicate involvement in extremist organizations, which necessitates:
 - 2.1. Implement and observe the results of regular certification practices, which will enable releasing the weakest, including older imams who have learning difficulties, from their assignments and replace them with new staff. Certifications should be arranged through gradually increasing the complexity of issues and the scope of topics under review. This will enable the Muftiyat to replenish its staff with imams and improve the quality of their community outreach activities.
 - 2.2. Provide systematic advanced training courses for imams at the country's theological departments.
 - 2.3. Ensure that khutbahs (the sermon) in mosques do not reflect the same topics each week, but also cover socially important issues, such as family relations, loans, extremism, community life, and more. Imams should remain in mosques after their sermons and conduct individual consultations with worshippers, participate in conflict resolution, and help solve other problems by providing counsel.
 - 2.4. Ensure that imams and Muftiyat personnel participate in advanced training courses and seminars on religion through the state universities adhering to the Hanafi Madhhab in Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey, and elsewhere. Theologians from those countries may also be invited to provide teaching at the Muftiyat.
 - 2.5. Develop a program aimed at raising public awareness on negative aspects of ideologies of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Salafism, etc., along with academicians and relevant government agencies. Compile a “compendium” with answers to complex questions concerning the issues of ideology, and bring them to the attention of imams.
 - 2.6. Continue providing advanced training courses to Dawatists by significantly increasing the number of those who participate in those trainings. Encourage experts on Islam from academia and responsible national agencies to attend those courses.

3. Enhance Islamic educational system in the universities and madrassas by means of the following:
 - 3.1. Expanding the scope of issues under review;
 - 3.2. Introducing secular topics into curriculums;
 - 3.3. Establishing a dissertation council at the Islamic Institute of Kyrgyzstan;
 - 3.4. Initiating implementation of state licensing procedures for Islamic science-oriented universities.
4. The Council of Ulema should include competent representatives from all major ethnic groups present in Kyrgyzstan, including Dungan, Uzbeks, and Uighur ethnicities. Ulema members are to be selected based on credibility within their own ethnicity groups, following Hanafi Madhhab and government policies.

Recommendations to the State Agencies

State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA):

1. Developing implementation mechanisms regarding the SCRA initiative to prevent underage citizens of Kyrgyzstan from traveling abroad to obtain religious education at foreign educational institutions. Forbid individuals from sending children to foreign madrassas or educational institutions without them first obtaining general secular and elementary religious education in Kyrgyzstan. Develop a reporting mechanism for this.
2. Implement activities towards evaluating religious materials in order to expand assortment of Islamic books and satisfy the public's needs in their spiritual search.
3. Enhance work towards creating a series of documentaries on Hizb ut-Tahrir and other extremist organizations. Bring to the general public's attention the necessary information on the fallacy of those ideologies through mass media.
4. Create, in cooperation with the security agencies, an Internet portal and inform the public of its existence through media. The site shall provide citizens with an opportunity to anonymously report the existence of any extremist and / or terroristic materials or content, calling for interethnic strife within the Internet, media, books, magazines, and elsewhere. Such information should be sent to experts and then measures should be taken to ban access to those resources.
5. Provide support using intellectual resources to law enforcement and the Muftiyat in public awareness campaigns and particularly youth advocacy on the nature of extremist and terrorist organizations.

Recommendations to the SCRA and Ministry of Education and Science:

1. License religious universities and madrassas;

2. Develop, in cooperation with religious communities, universal educational standards and monitor their implementation;
3. Introduce into the school program religious studies as a basic subject of education. Train appropriate staff members at the national universities and develop required educational materials.

Recommendations to state agencies involved in planning and arranging the Hajj:

1. Ensure transparency in arranging the Hajj, eliminate elements of corruption, which creates a core condition repelling citizens from the state and clergy and encouraging them to join extremist organizations. In order to ensure greater transparency it is advisable to:
 - 1.1. Creating a dedicated website, which will enable realtime display of the number of people who have applied for the Hajj and their sequence number. Those people not included in the quota for the current year should automatically be transferred to the following year's list.
 - 1.2. Enable a system so that applications should be forwarded in real time directly and only to the Bishkek and Osh branches of the Muftiyat without any intermediaries.
 - 1.3. Grant access to those who want to make pilgrimage for the second, third, or more times only in case of availability within the national quota.
 - 1.4. Ensure transparency during the tendering processes for freight companies with a journalist's participation and publish all the information regarding the conditions and offers made by those companies.

Recommendations to law enforcement:

1. Arrange public discussions within penal colonies. It would be effective to arrange public debates, involving all the prisoners and media representatives, between the leaders of Hizb ut-Tahrir and other extremist and terrorist organizations and those who have "backtracked" from extremism, disappointed in the ideology and are able to argumentatively oppose extremist views.
2. Focus not on reforming staunch supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir, but on rehabilitating new members to prevent their deep engagement with the organization. This requires construction of single cell colonies, in which the members of terrorist and extremist organizations with the highest level of radicalization would be detained separately, thus cutting them off from the followers who recently adopted an extremist ideology and ensuring more effective rehabilitative work than in open-type prisons. A system of single-cell prisons will not permit the most radicalized members to create a more powerful conglomerate, as well.

3. Improve religious literacy among members of the law enforcement, which requires regularly organizing advanced training courses engaging SAM, the Muftiyat, and independent experts.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Finance:

1. Considering the possibility of allocating funds from the state budget of the Kyrgyz Republic to pay salaries for imams.

Recommendations to the international organizations:

1. Provide support for the implementation of the aforementioned recommendations.
2. Create a hotline on issues related to religious extremism, inviting the participation of experts in the area of religion, including theologians, psychologists, etc. An Internet website may also be created, where citizens could ask specialists any questions they are concerned about, and receive a qualified answer, particularly to complex religious questions having a religious nature.
3. Establish a rehabilitation center, which will enable extremists to return to a law-abiding life in the society. Involve relevant experts. In the future, to create a database on extremism and its ideology in Kyrgyzstan as well as rehabilitation methodology of members of that each organization.

Most important systematic recommendations for the state:

- It is paramount to create and implement an adequate state-driven up-to-date ideology that should include a religious component. This will increase feelings of patriotism among the population.
- Struggle – in facts, not just words – against corruption. Improve the efficiency of the state bodies and its ability to provide full legal protection will be supported by all ethnic groups and will enable ethnic minorities' claims against the authorities.
- It is relevant to form a religious intelligentsia; it will appear itself when the aforementioned objectives are implemented.