

GIOR | GLOBAL INFLUENCE OPERATIONS REPORT

Implications of the Presidential Directive to Review “Muslim Brotherhood Chapters” for Possible FTO Designation December 1, 2025

Executive Summary

The presidential directive to review “Muslim Brotherhood chapters in the Middle East” creates immediate ambiguity, as the proclamation describes the Brotherhood as a transnational movement with varied structures. Middle Eastern chapters are formal organizations, while Western MB-linked networks—the Global Muslim Brotherhood—are legally separate but connected through ideology and personal ties. U.S. and UK reviews have historically designated only specific violent offshoots such as Hamas, HASM, and Liwa al-Thawra, not the broader movement. For the Global Influence Operations Report (GIOR), the directive reinforces the need to distinguish clearly between formal chapters, global networks, and splinter groups to avoid analytical or legal conflation.

1. Introduction: Ambiguity in the Directive

The presidential directive ordering U.S. agencies to evaluate whether “Muslim Brotherhood chapters in the Middle East” meet the criteria for designation as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) introduces immediate uncertainty because the proclamation describes the Brotherhood as “a transnational organization with chapters across the Middle East and beyond.”¹ This phrasing broadens the conceptual scope of the review and raises questions about which elements of the movement the U.S. government considers potentially relevant. The Brotherhood operates across multiple regions in diverse organizational forms, including formal branches, affiliated movements, and ideologically aligned networks. Without an explicit definition of the entities under review, the risk of analytical and legal conflation is substantial.

2. Distinguishing Middle Eastern Chapters and Global Networks

GIOR’s longstanding typology helps clarify these distinctions. In the Middle East, Brotherhood chapters such as those in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Yemen, and Sudan grew from the historic structure tied to the Egyptian Guidance Bureau, characterized by hierarchical organization, da’wa activities, and political activism shaped by local conditions.²

Western MB-linked networks — **collectively referred to in GIOR analysis as the [Global Muslim Brotherhood](#)** — developed as Ikhwan figures relocated to Europe and North America and established many of the most prominent Islamic organizations in those regions.² These networks maintain

ideological continuity and transnational personal connections, including through conferences, umbrella structures, and informal coordination, while operating within the legal frameworks of their host countries.^{2,3} They maintain publicly distinct organizational identities and are not formally structured as regional “chapters” under a unified global command.

3. Findings of Western Governments and Reviews

These distinctions appear across multiple official assessments. In the United States, **U.S. reviews and statutory practice require assessing individual organizations rather than broad ideological movements**, which has resulted in the designation of specific violent offshoots — including Hamas, HASM, and Liwa al-Thawra — while treating other components of the broader movement under different legal and policy standards.^{4,8}

In the United Kingdom, the 2015 Muslim Brotherhood Review concluded that the movement has a “complex and situational relationship with violence” but did not classify the broader movement as a terrorist organization.⁵ The subsequent House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) inquiry emphasized the varied nature of Brotherhood-linked movements globally, highlighting differences in structure, activity, and threat profile across regions.⁶ The Committee also emphasized that an undifferentiated approach could hinder effective policymaking.⁶

4. The Global Muslim Brotherhood Ecosystem and Its Links to Violent Offshoots

Written evidence submitted to the FAC **by the GIOR Senior Editor** underscored that Brotherhood-linked networks in Europe and North America are extensive, adaptive, and often opaque. The submission documented cases such as the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC), the [European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza](#) (ECESG), and the [Council for European Palestinian Relations](#) (CEPR), noting that various governments — including Israel — have assessed these entities as integral to Hamas or [Union of Good](#) support infrastructures.⁷ The evidence also detailed the [Global Anti-Aggression Campaign](#) (GAAC), describing cooperation between Brotherhood-associated figures and Salafi or Salafi-jihadi leaders, several of whom have been designated by Western governments.⁷

These relationships illustrate how parts of the global ecosystem interact with violent offshoots formally rooted in the *Middle Eastern* Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas declared itself the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood in its 1988 charter, while maintaining extensive links to Western organizations within the Global Muslim Brotherhood network.⁸ Additional Egyptian offshoots — most notably HASM and Liwa al-Thawra — emerged after 2013 and were designated by the United States and United Kingdom due to involvement in targeted attacks.⁹ The timeline is significant: Hamas’s 1988 declaration occurred within the traditional Ikhwan structure, whereas HASM and Liwa al-Thawra emerged nearly 25 years later in the fragmented post-2013 landscape.

Expert assessments submitted to the FAC noted that much of the post-2013 violence in Egypt was carried out by splinter groups rather than the official Brotherhood hierarchy.^{6,7} No Western government has publicly concluded that formal Brotherhood chapters direct these offshoots.^{4,5,6} Under U.S. law, a terrorism designation requires evidence of direct involvement in terrorist activity or material support, evaluated on an entity-specific basis.⁴

5. “Transnational Chapters” in the U.S. Directive

The directive’s description of the Brotherhood as possessing “chapters... beyond” the Middle East introduces interpretive ambiguity.¹ Although the movement’s global networking is well documented — including personal ties, shared leadership circles, and coordinated messaging — Western MB-linked organizations maintain separate legal identities in their respective jurisdictions.^{2,3,6,7} They function as part of a broader ecosystem but are not subsidiary “chapters” in the Middle Eastern model.

Broader wording could raise questions about whether ideologically aligned but legally distinct organizations fall within the scope. Clarification of the intended boundaries will be essential for precise analysis.

6. Practical Implications for the U.S. Review and GIOR

Given prior U.S. practice and statutory requirements, the review is most likely to focus on Middle Eastern Brotherhood branches and specific violent offshoots. This approach aligns with existing legal frameworks for designation and with longstanding U.S. policy that distinguishes between ideologically aligned organizations and those that meet the statutory threshold for FTO designation.

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At the same time, both the FAC report and the ISL0006 evidence underscore the importance of understanding global networking, coordination, and deception practices that connect Brotherhood-associated organizations across regions.^{6, 7} These dynamics, even when not directly linked to terrorist activity, are central to evaluating the movement’s international influence.

For GIOR, the directive reinforces core analytical priorities:

- Maintaining precise terminology,
- Avoiding conflation of distinct organizational types,
- Mapping global networks and alliances,
- Identifying divergences between political rhetoric and established evidentiary baselines.

References

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