

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/4/116196/Opinion/Sinai-and-terrorism.aspx>

Sinai and terrorism

Military and security measures are needed to control terrorism in Sinai. But a long-term solution must address the economic and social dimension of the problems in the peninsula

Hicham Mourad ,

11/23/2014

Egypt launched in Sinai the most vigorous anti-terrorist campaign ever undertaken in the country. The attack on 24 October, which killed 31 military, has been the trigger of this broad offensive of muscular means, including the establishment of a buffer zone 500 meters wide along the 14 kilometre of border with the Gaza Strip.

The goal is to better control the border area, infested by smuggling activities of all kinds, including an illicit arms trade and the movement of terrorists. The sophistication of the attack of 24 October convinced the Egyptian authorities of the existence of foreign aid, via the Gaza Strip, to jihadist groups operating in Sinai.

Although no foreign terrorist organisation has been officially blamed, the "Islamic State" has often been quoted to have made contact with, and tried to assist in the preparation of attacks, the terrorist group of Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis, the most dangerous in Egypt today, which claimed responsibility on 15 November for the deadly attack of 24 October.

The border with the Gaza Strip, therefore, has been in the crosshairs of the Egyptian authorities for several months. Hence the idea of creating a buffer zone in northeast Sinai, which involves the demolition of 802 homes and the displacement of 1,156 families. According to security sources, the creation of the buffer zone has so far helped to discover 117 smuggling tunnels. Not to mention hundreds others that had been destroyed by the army in recent months.

Needless to say that military and security measures are needed to curb the wave of terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula. But a long-term solution must also address the multifaceted economic and social sources of the problem.

The first is the economic backwardness of the peninsula, which suffers, despite repeated government promises, from a lack of economic development. Sinai has often been the object of attention of governments when terrorist attacks are committed. This attention often leads to the announcement of financial allocations for development projects and to create jobs in order to reduce the high unemployment rate among young bedouins. But these projects are rarely brought to completion or often fall into oblivion once security seems to be restored. They re-emerge with a new explosion of violence.

One of the main obstacles to the eradication of terrorism in Sinai is the illicit trade of all kinds of products, including weapons, through tunnels with the Gaza Strip. However, this illegal activity is a source of "bread and butter" for many members of bedouin tribes at a time when the poverty rate has reached 45 percent in Sinai, according to the 2013 figures of the Social Fund for Development.

Under these conditions, a security fight against terrorism cannot be effective if it is not accompanied by a specific plan of economic development, according to an established schedule, that compensates for financial losses caused by the destruction of smuggling tunnels. Government also neglects infrastructure and basic services such as health and education, which are necessary to better link the bedouin to their country and strengthen their sense of citizenship.

An almost exclusively security vision in dealing with Sinai affairs and the feeling of being left behind has led several young bedouin to marry religious extremism and the use of violence against the state and its representatives. Helped by a steep geography and a neighbourhood — the Gaza Strip — in favour of the spread of extremism and terrorism, Islamist militancy in Sinai would be hard to put down without a comprehensive plan, for the long term, that takes into account both security concerns and the economic and social aspects of the particular situation of the peninsula.