Definition: Muslim Brotherhood from Chambers Dictionary of World History

An Islamic movement, founded in Egypt in 1928 by an Egyptian schoolteacher, Hasan al-Banna. Its original goal was the reform of Islamic society by elimination of Western influences and other decadent accretions. Subsequently, it became more radical, and its goal of a theocratic Islamic state found support in many other Sunni countries. → Sunnis

Summary Article: Muslim Brotherhood
From The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Sunni Islamic movement founded in Egypt in 1928 and active throughout the Arab world. Its aims are to establish a Muslim state governed by Islamic law. Despite its commitment to achieving its goals through democratic means, it was banned in most countries until the Arab Spring of 2011, when it successfully supported popular movements against autocratic regimes and became influential where elections were subsequently held.

The movement, founded in Egypt by Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), also has branches elsewhere in the Arab world, including Algeria (People of the Call – Ahl al-Da'wa), Bahrain (Al-Menbar Islamic Society), Iraq (Iraqi Islamic Party), Jordan (Islamic Action Front), Palestine (Hamas), Somalia (Al-Islah – Reform Movement), Sudan (Muslim Brotherhood), Syria (Muslim Brotherhood), and Tunisia (Ennahda Movement – Renaissance Party). It began as a religious social movement, spreading Islamic teaching and running hospitals and schools, but, from the mid-1930s, opposed British rule in Egypt. It was banned in 1948 after involvement in bombings and assassinations. The ban was briefly lifted 1952–54, when the military overthrew Egypt's monarchy, but in the 1960s thousands of the Brotherhood's members were imprisoned. After it rejected violence in the 1970s, Egypt's military-dominated regime gave it a measure of tolerance, allowing its candidates to contest elections as independents and releasing some of those imprisoned. It was legalized after the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011 and it set up the Freedom of Justice Party, which won 37% of the vote in the parliamentary elections of November 2011 to January 2012.

The Muslim Brotherhood is headed by a 'supreme guide'. It has grown to become the most prominent Sunni Islamic movement, and gained political acceptance in Jordan, in 1989, joining the government in 1991. In the Palestinian Authority, Hamas secured political control over the Gaza Strip in 2007 and in Sudan the Brotherhood gained influence after Omar al-Bashir came to power in 1989. However, in Syria, membership became a capital crime in 1980.

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