

Why Did We Disown the Muslim Brotherhood?

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ABSTRACT

Islamic movements had seemed to be ubiquitous, but a little work had profoundly looked at the internal issues of those movements that marked their increase and influence. Some Islamic movements are reckoned as intermediate, missionary, or terrorist Islamic groups. However, in this research paper, we ascertained that giving much attention to one of the most influential Islamic movements globally, the Muslim Brotherhood "Ikhwanul Muslimin", will conceivably provide ample information for the literature regarding, not just Ikhwanul Muslimin. But generally, Islamic movements such as Ikhwanul Muslimin are considered the mother and fulcrum of political Islam and the emergence of Islamic movements. Conclusively, this research paper interviewed the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin in exile to investigate why they disowned Ikhwanul Muslimin? Moreover, to closely understand the current role of those ex-members in society and whether they joined other Islamic movements, for instance. This research paper ascertained that Ikhwanul Muslimin leaders would likely play a business role by launching schools and companies in Turkey instead of leading the Egyptian opposition against al-Sisi.

Keywords: *The Muslim Brotherhood, Ikhwanul Muslimin, Coup, Politics*

The political vicissitudes in Egypt significantly after the Arab Spring had led political and sociological researchers to assiduously explore the influence of critical political players on the Egyptian political scene. It happened to understand that the collapse of the Mubarak Regime in 2011, after 18 days of acrimony – and – peaceful demonstrations, led critical political players from different political backgrounds to seek the opportunity to obtain political dominance over Egypt. One of those vital political players in the Muslim Brotherhood was *Ikhwanul Muslimin*. The focus on studying *Ikhwanul Muslimin* in Egypt had historically been the favourite topic of many researchers due to the tremendous influence of this Islamic organisation on Muslims worldwide. Profoundly, *Ikhwanul Muslimin* seems ubiquitous in Europe, Africa, Southern Asia and elsewhere. With this, *Ikhwanul Muslimin* in Egypt is not just the organisation's headquarters but the mother of all other Islamic organisations. The influence of *Ikhwanul Muslimin* on other Islamic organisations, including al-Qaeda and ISIS, is not a direct impact where the members of those organisations disown *Ikhwanul Muslimin*. It is undisputed that the literature of *Ikhwanul Muslimin* authors has been used as an educational curriculum for those so-called terrorist organisations. However, it is palpable how huge is the influence of *Ikhwanul Muslimin* behind the Egyptian borders. Thus, is *Ikhwanul Muslimin* shares the same effect on the Egyptian soul? It was predominantly a question that had been answered accordingly, especially since the dominance of *Ikhwanul Muslimin* on all elections and constitutional amendments after 2011 alerted the organisation's dissidents that democracy can bring Islamists to political power, and thus their existence conceivably evaporates. Regrettably, a military coup led by the Minister of Defence Abdul Fatah al-Sisi consigned the obtained democracy from January Revolution to retrograde. The military coup instigated unstable political fields, the incarceration of political activists, and,

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most importantly, a massacre in Rabaa and Nahda Square. The military coup had also bifurcated Ikhwanul Muslimin into two sides: one which adopts peaceful resistance against the military coup and another approach that believes in violence to overcome the military coup. Conclusively, some Ikhwanul Muslimin members had disowned the movement and not been *purged* for obscure reasons. For this reason, we interviewed a group of Ikhwanul Muslimin members who had somehow disowned the Islamic organisation to investigate why they left.

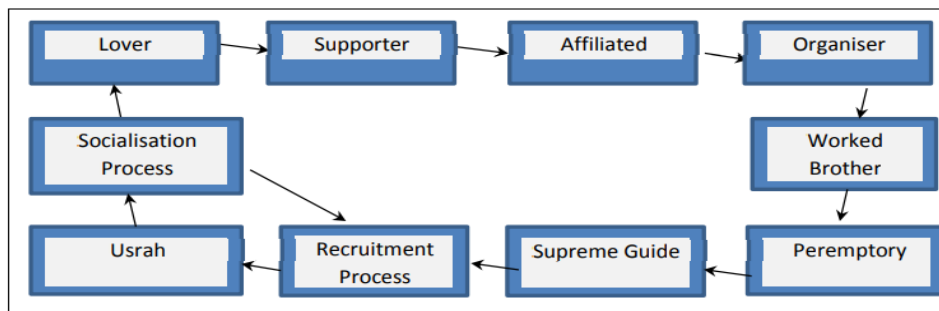
Methodology

It is important to note that helping the now-banned Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt and contacting them will lead to incarceration. Hence, it is vividly crucial to address that the interview with the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin had taken place outside Egypt. Besides, none of the informants' information, personal details or position in their previous role is mentioned in this research for their safety and ethical approach.

This research conducted five interviews with ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin. The interview of the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin focused on answering the research questionnaires. Another interview was conducted with one of the ex-Ikhwanul Muslimin leaders who had a high position within the organisation prior to his resignation. The reason for conducting a separate interview with the leader, who we shall name A.R because he rebuffed to have a focused interview discussion and preferred to remain anonymous among the other ex-members.

According to Pandian (2020) the recruitment system of Ikhwanul Muslimin is systematically organised from *Muhib* lover stage until Worked Brother stage. During this process, the individual has to go through five stages to fully become a member of Ikhwanul Muslimin:

Figure 1: Muslim Brotherhood Socialisation Framework



This figure shows the first the socialisation process of Ikhwanul Muslimin until the individual reach the peremptory stage *Bay'ah* to the Supreme Guide (Pandian et al. 2020). After this, the individual can recruit his friends, family members – or whoever he assumes will become felicitous for the organisation.

Number	Position	Country	Age
Informant 1	Organiser	Malaysia	26
Informant 2	Worked Brother	Turkey	30
Informant 3	Organiser	Qatar	28
Informant 4	Worked Brother	Turkey	31
Informant 5	Worked Brother	Turkey	30

This table shows the criteria of the information of the informants.

This research had interviewed five ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin who had previously played a vital role inside the Islamic organisation. Some of them were in charge of Usrah, which means a

group of five members of the Ikhwanul Muslimin conduct a weekly meeting to discuss their social, personal, religious and political issues. However, all informants are currently ostracised by Ikhwanul Muslimin and play no role in Egyptian politics.

The history of Ikhwanul Muslimin has been in favour of tribulations and political deprivation. The Islamic organisation had faced various tribulations that bifurcated it into two groups. Such the first argument between Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the organisation and Ahmed al-Sokari, the financier and the organisation sponsor, led the latter to resign from Ikhwanul Muslimin (Abdelhalim 1979), his tribulation had also conducted several members to follow al-Sokari resignation; the history of Ikhwanul Muslimin has been in favour of difficulties and political deprivation. Such the first argument between Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the organisation and Ahmed al-Sokari, the financier and the organisation sponsor, led the latter to resign from Ikhwanul Muslimin. This tribulation had also conducted several members to follow al-Sokari resignations, which doubted in other members if al-Banna could lead Ikhwanul Muslimin individually. Another tribulation during Gamal Abdel Nasser's presidency buffeted the Ikhwanul Muslimin structure when Nasser established a parallel organisation to limit the expansion of Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt's society. Nasser pursued not just to disavow the Ikhwanul Muslimin's influence on Egypt's culture – but he sought to dissolve the organisation and supplant it with his new social and national organisation.

The death of Nasser had provided the emancipation for Ikhwanul Muslimin to again – practise their political agenda under Sadat's supervision, who had politically released Ikhwanul Muslimin members to circumscribe the influence of socialism on the university students (Zollner 2009). The relationship between Sadat and Ikhwanul Muslimin had seemingly been built on mutual interest until the emergence of Takfir wal-Hijrah: the extremist organisation that disowned Ikhwanul Muslimin and adopted takfiri ideologies (Pandian et al. 2021). Ikhwanul Muslimin had also been favoured in Sadat's book to circumscribe the expansion of Takfir wal-Hijrah that utilised the violent approach against the state. The ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin in Takfir wal-Hijrah had solely sought vindictiveness against the previous regime of Nasser that deprived them of humanity and tortured them far from the law's eyes.

Historically, Takfir wal-Hijrah had also placed Ikhwanul Muslimin into a new tribulation that led dozens of the organisation's members to join Takfir wal-Hijrah. This tribulation bifurcated the members of Ikhwanul Muslimin into two groups. Those associated with Takfir wal-Hijrah, and other group members remained stalwarts for Ikhwanul Muslimin. Especially after the published book *Du'a la Quda* "Preachers not Judges" written by the Supreme Guide Hassan al-Hudaybi, to respond to the doubts of Takfir wal-Hijrah members (Khatab 2001).

Furthermore, the Egyptian revolution of 2011 and the military coup in 2013 came with various tribulations that eventually led some dozen leaders of Ikhwanul Muslimin to disown the Islamic organisation. Such as Mohamed Habibi, the previous deputy of the Supreme Guide, and Kamal El-Helbawy, the former spokesman for Ikhwanul Muslimin in Europe and Tharwat el-Kherbawy, the lawyer and the former leader in Ikhwanul Muslimin.

Hitherto, the military coup had incarcerated thousands of Ikhwanul Muslimin members and led thousands of them to flee Egypt for safety. With this, Ikhwanul Muslimin in Turkey and Sudan, for instance, witnessed several incidents in which the members of the organisation and even leaders in high ranks had disowned the organisation. Of course, some of them had established a parallel system and declared the legitimacy of Ikhwanul Muslimin. These hassles and misunderstandings ultimately led us to investigate the truth behind the internal conflict in Ikhwanul Muslimin and answer the vital question of this research, why did the Ikhwanul Muslimin members disown the organisation?

The Ideology of Ikhwanul Muslimin

Ikhwanul Muslimin's ideology focuses on the coalescence of politics and Islam as one body, part and – both should not bifurcate. This *da'wah*, however, had taken no place prior to the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey. At this juncture, politics was wholly a part of Islam, and thus

the definition of political Islam and politicians did not even emerge among the rulers and people. Still, after the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate, several ideologies emerged in Egyptian's lives, emphasis on the separation of Islam and politics, for instance, communism, secularism and socialism. These ideologies emphasise that religion and politics are dichotomous. Many Islamic scholars adopted new concepts to revive the Islamic spirit again in society. Sheikh Mohamed Abdu is an example of those Islamic scholars, yet his plan was a desultory attempt solely for Al-Azhar and the political elites. Hassan al-Banna, the founder of Ikhwanul Muslimin, developed Abdo's work and established Ikhwanul Muslimin. The focus of al-Banna revolved around the influence of Islamic teachings in society after its disappearance due to the vivid Western impact on Egypt. For al-Banna, the Islamic influence on society had played no role: even Al-Azhar and the other Islamic organisations failed to unite the Egyptians beneath an Islamic banner.

On the contrary, Egyptians joined al-Wafd and the National Parties, where they seemed to adopt nationalistic ideologies rather than Islamic. It seemed arduously impossible for an Islamic ideology to politically spread among Egyptians, particularly after the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate. Notwithstanding, al-Banna's approach at social clubs, cafes and schools to preach his ideology had led him to recruit hundreds of Egyptians at the beginning of his da'wah in 1930. Not all Egyptians rebuffed al-Banna's ideology that politics and Islam must coalesce. Therefore, the rapid expansion of Ikhwanul Muslimin on all Egyptian diameters is sociologically a question mark for sociologists – how did Ikhwanul Muslimin dominate the Egyptian society, albeit the political restriction on the movement?

Political Islam founded by al-Banna had successfully disseminated among Egyptians and inveigled judges, military officers and inhabitants to follow al-Banna. The domination of political Islam over Egyptians seemed to become a political key factor juxtaposed with other political ideologies such as "liberalism and socialism". The difference between political Islam adopted by Ikhwanul Muslimin and the other Islamic doctrines, for instance, Wahhabism, al-Qaeda and ISIS, is the awareness of democracy and political discourse as an approach to achieving the political agenda. Wahabbism in Saudi Arabia believes in one state ruler in the King's hand. On the other side, al-Qaeda and ISIS consider political discourse and democracy the adversary of Islam. However, the ideology of political Islam had also founded its adversaries, particularly in the Middle East. Most of the Arabian regimes declared political war on the political Islam led by Ikhwanul Muslimin. As a result, Ikhwanul Muslimin had faced political disenfranchisement, incarceration (Munson 2001) and the killing out of the law during Nasser and al-Sisi presidencies (Magued 2018)

On the contrary, political Islam and Ikhwanul Muslimin are highly welcomed in Europe and Southern Asia, especially Malaysia and Indonesia. Ikhwanul Muslimin has many branches where they conduct social and political activities in Europe. The UK constantly reckon Ikhwanul Muslimin as a political alliance, and hitherto, the UK rebuffs to consider Ikhwanul Muslimin, a terrorist organisation (Mellor 2019). Moreover, the London Bombings in 2005 brought Ikhwanul Muslimin to the British political scene to disavow and circumscribe the so-called extremist Islam adopted by al-Qaeda and Hizbul Tahrir.

So, despite the blessing relationship between Ikhwanul Muslimin and the West, it is internally obscure inside the Islamic organisation – why did its members disown the organisation during this time? And who harangued them to leave the organisation? Perhaps, they disowned the organisation due to an internal dispute! In fact, more questions will be asked to the informants to obtain an active stance on this issue.

Ostracised by Leaders

Being a member of Ikhwanul Muslimin is a political challenge full of tribulation, incarceration, and sometimes death. Most of the informants of this study had been at least 12 years members of Ikhwanul Muslimin. Moreover, most of them had been recruited by their family members:

"When I grow up, I found my parents member in Ikhwanul Muslimin and those people who I used to socialise with at mosque and club are already members of Ikhwanul Muslimin" (Informant 1).

"I joined Ikhwanul Muslimin by my family". (Informant 2).

"My father used to take to the mosque, but he never told me that we are members of Ikhwanul Muslimin, I realised that when I was at high school". (Informant 3).

"When I was a kid, my father was arrested by police, so I asked my mother why did they take my father? She told me because we are Ikhwanul Muslimin, and we love Egypt". (Informant 4).

Four informants stated that they joined Ikhwanul Muslimin through their family members. And this highlights the importance of family socialisation in shaping the individual character at an early age to follow his family's political ideology. Sociological scholars proved that family is the most vital agent of socialisation during children's lives. Children learn values, languages, and beliefs through their families (Bassis, Gelles & Levine 1999). As a corollary by the four informants, they have been *Islamically* socialised by their families and continued this method of socialisation by Ikhwanul Muslimin. However, the military coup on the third of July 2013 led many Ikhwanul Muslimin members to flee from Egypt. For instance, the informants of this study left their families and studies to seek another opportunity far away from the Egyptians' incarcerations. In fact, one of the informants had been incarcerated:

I was arrested when I was 18 years old during a demonstration prior to Rabaa massacre". (Informant 1).

Currently, Ikhwanul Muslimin students have continued their studies in Malaysia and Turkey. Of course, those who came from well-to-do family's study in Australia and the United Kingdom. However, the informants who continued their studies had been in contact with Ikhwanul Muslimin and used to attend the weekly *usrah* meeting:

"I used to attend the usrah every week except during the exams". (Informant 1).

"I used to attend usrah and also, I was responsible on the young children usrah". (Informant 5).

The coherence structure of Ikhwanul Muslimin shows how their system is eloquently solid. Yet the ignominious failure of Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt had palpably led to an internal crisis among the organisation's members, who had lost trust in their leaders. The military coup led by the former Minister of Defence Abdel Fattah al-Sissy had without – no surprise – bifurcated Ikhwanul Muslimin into two groups. Many members chafed against the established rules by their leaders to cease the military coup, which proved an ignominious failure. Thus, the military coup and the leaders' strategy in ruling Ikhwanul Muslimin are the banes of the organisation's bifurcation. However, those members who showed vigorous opposition towards the organisation's strategy became ostracised on the margin – banned from participating in activities and disenfranchised from the internal elections.

"I saw my friends attend the usrah while I was not told about the usrah date". (Informant 1).

The leaders of the Ikhwanul Muslimin, not all of them, of course, had fallen into a tempestuous relationship with the ostracised members. The latter realised that those leaders have no legitimacy to ostracise them. This relationship proves a certain piquancy to the so-called "*Ikhwah*" Brotherhood that it is solely a symbol and propaganda while the Ikhwanul Muslimin members are unfairly treated overseas. This had ultimately proved when the Malaysian government deported four members of Ikhwanul Muslimin and accused them of terrorism without interference from the organisation's leaders to cease the deportation (Aljazeera 2019). The deportation of the four members highlighted a vital concealed issue inside Ikhwanul Muslimin – are the Ikhwanul Muslimin members safe outside Egypt? Perhaps, only the leaders are safe:

"Most of the leaders have Turkish passports, and specific youth who follow the leaders. And some of us cannot even renew the Egyptian passport". (Informant 5).

This new citizenship advantage left the question to the members to decide if, for instance, they want to obtain such an advantage should they bear a peremptory towards their leaders?

The Forgotten Issue

The military coup in 2013, which filled the Ikhwanul Muslimin ambition to govern Egypt based on the Islamic teachings, was a nightmare in the Ikhwanul Muslimin members' dreams. Egypt seems to have existed for military rule, not civilians nor Islamists. The military coup has become a vexing problem not just for Ikhwanul Muslimin, who suffered the most in incarceration and exile, but for all Egyptians in different aspects, including politics and economics (Grimm & Cilja 2018). After the military coup, the political practice of Ikhwanul Muslimin disappeared at which the organisation failed to open up a political discourse with al-Sisi, the leader of the coup. Conclusively, Ikhwanul Muslimin broadcasted T.V channels from Turkey and established an ensemble of dissidents on Turkish soil to resist the military coup. It seemed that the political opposition would instigate problems for the Egyptian regime, especially after the focus of the opposition propaganda that harangued Egyptians to demonstrate in the streets. Paradoxically, Ikhwanul Muslimin's propaganda was sapped by many purposes and sudden factors. For instance, Ikhwanul Muslimin leaders focused more on business: they opened schools, companies and even universities with neglecting of the issue '*qadiyah*' to topple the military regime:

"I know some people made a business and don't like to talk about our issue in Egypt". (Informant 5).

The focus on socioeconomic with palpable neglect of resistance against al-Sisi's regime had become one of the reasons that led the members of Ikhwanul Muslimin to disown the movement. The ex-members concede the fact that social life in Turkey had morphed the leaders of Ikhwanul Muslimin into businesspeople. At this juncture, some ex-members had to seek a job in Turkey to support their families in Egypt:

"We are not allowed to work in Turkey, but I have to work to financially support my family in Egypt and myself in Turkey". (Informant 2).

"It is illegal for students to work in Malaysia, but I have to work to help myself". (Informant 1).

Another problem with the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin is the purposed abandonment of their leaders regarding their social issues. It is crucial to highlight that most of the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin had psychologically suffered in the Egyptian incarceration. They also envisage their repatriation to home – to Egypt. On the contrary, Ikhwanul Muslimin leaders abnegate the psychological challenge of their members. Still, this problem seems unpragmatic for them, and the members, especially the youth, must persist as they are in the middle of a battle. The Egyptian opposition led by Ikhwanul Muslimin did not introduce a tangible movement on the ground against al-Sisi, albeit Ikhwanul Muslimin spends millions of dollars on their T.V challenges. In Egypt, the abomination against al-Sisi's regime is predominately ubiquitous. And that was proved when Mohamed Ali, an ex-Egyptian contractor who worked closely with the Egyptian president al-Sisi and the military, unveiled the military corruption (Springborg 2021). Mohamed Ali had also demanded "*beseched*" Egyptians to demonstrate against al-Sisi and call him to resign (Gruenberg 2019). Ali's call shifted into physical demonstrations that showed the acrimony of Egyptians against al-Sisi. Despite that, the demonstrations failed and met with rigorous arrests (Zakarriyia 2021), but Ali had succeeded to call Egyptians to demonstrate, which Ikhwanul Muslimin as a group failed to achieve during their exile in Turkey.

The Current Situation in Ikhwanul Muslimin

If the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin had no longer affiliated with the group, thus what are they doing now? Did they join other Islamic movements? Will they join any political activities against al-Sisi's regime?

In fact, many sociological questions examine the current role of the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin in society. The importance of this concern is to highlight social movements' socialisation and the role of the ex-members of the terrorist movements. Some countries banned and revoked their inhabitant's citizenship after their allegations and affiliations with ISIS (McCabe 2016; Govier 2020). Many ISIS ex-members declared their disownment from the terrorist movement – but their countries rebuffed their repatriation. Regarding Ikhwanul Muslimin, the Egyptian government, however, did not declare whether it would welcome the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin – or not. Regardless, to understand profoundly and obtain vivid details on such an issue, the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin stated that.

"I just do not want to be involved in politics anymore". (Informant 1).

The loss of identity can be seen vividly by looking at the political events and challenges that marked the rise of this issue. Political education is one of the most crucial factors of Ikhwanul Muslimin's ideology. Ikhwanul Muslimin constantly socialises its members on politics and its vital role in leading the global to reach the so-called *Ustaziatul Alam*, which means to govern the world based on Islamic teachings. This political ideology identifies the religious culture of Ikhwanul Muslimin. It is utterly the base that shapes the personality of each member. Thus, such a failure in this 'political ideology' threatens the movement's existence, as just Ikhwanul Muslimin distinguishes itself from other Islamic movements by – solely – *political Islam*. From here, it is understood that Ikhwanul Muslimin has historically become sophisticated with politics and Islam. Some ex-members regretted their participation in the demonstration after the military coup:

"I joined the protests, and was abounded from my university, now I had to restart studying from the beginning". (Informant 1).

As most Ikhwanul Muslimin members are students, they have faced difficulties studying in Malaysian universities. They had to improve their English first and provide a sum of the tuition fees, which most of them could not provide, and thus they had to seek part-time jobs.

Losing affiliation with Ikhwanul Muslimin had also led some ex-members to start a new life by marrying non-Egyptian women to receive a residency or citizenship. For instance, some students studying in Malaysia married Malaysian women and ceased their political participation. For them, politics had involved them in many problems without a tangible endorsement from their leaders. Even in Turkey, some students married Turkish inhabitants to stay legally in the country.

One of the social problems is disregarding the previous level of socialisation in Ikhwanul Muslimin. Ironically, Ikhwanul Muslimin members go through a long process of socialisation, where family, schools and peers have direct influence to socialise/educate the members on the passion and love for the movement. But, based on the interviews, it seemed satisfactory for the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin to commence a new life and disregard their previous role in Ikhwanul Muslimin. For this reason, we asked the ex-members if they could return to Ikhwanul Muslimin if, for instance, the leaders reformed the internal systems of the movement and allowed youth to re-join Ikhwanul Muslimin again.

All five informants emphasised that they could return to Ikhwanul Muslimin if such reform occurred. Their statements highlight a crucial aspect of the study - that the ex-members of Ikhwanul Muslimin are still stalwarts of the movement or – ideology. Yet, they have not participated adequately with Ikhwanul Muslimin due to leadership misleading. Hence, Ikhwanul

Muslimin members live with their ideology and Islamic education; even though they disowned the movement because of an internal conflict with their leaders, their political and religious ideologies are never-changing creed.

As a conclusion, the result of this study has not just answered the research question of why we disowned the Muslim Brotherhood. Still, it augmented new information and data for the literature and researchers to understand to what level the military coup of 2013 impacted Ikhwanul Muslimin. Even though Ikhwanul Muslimin is the most influential Islamic movement worldwide, it politically failed to unite its members during the political crisis that bifurcated them into two groups. And despite that, the informants of this study emphasised their abandonment of Ikhwanul Muslimin is not due to ideological conflict but a lack of leadership experience.

The military coup did not occur on the Egyptian borders solely; its influence reached behind the borders to place Ikhwanul Muslimin members and whoever affiliated with the movement in a vortex situation. The informants of the study had psychologically suffered in the Egyptian incarceration, and hitherto the consequences of their imprisonment influenced their lives. Moreover, Ikhwanul Muslimin failed to provide an apt environment for its members to keep their loyalty and help them avert depression and stress. Instead, it left the ex-members, who are youth with no experience living abroad, facing various challenges that ultimately led to their abandonment of politics and Ikhwanul Muslimin.

Many informants were students in Egypt and fled to Malaysia and Turkey to escape the military coup; however, they have been in a vortex of stress as financially they suffered. With unpalpable help on the ground from Ikhwanul Muslimin's leadership, the members of the group found no way but to focus on their life where they have to find more than a job and ways to procure money for themselves and their families in Egypt, besides that to live a good life. On the other hand, some Ikhwanul Muslimin leaders have solely focused on opening businesses to increase their income; whilst they have Turkish passports, other members are still in deep concern about how to renew their Egyptian passports.

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