



# Recent Protests in Muslim Countries: Background and Issues for Congress

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## Summary

Muslims in a number of countries have responded in recent days with anger at the United States that many observers describe as a response to a privately produced film circulating on the Internet that denigrates Islam and the prophet Mohammed. In some cases, this outrage has taken the form of public expressions by relatively small groups of demonstrators, and in other countries the demonstrations have been larger. In the most extreme cases, such demonstrations have been accompanied by violent attacks against U.S. diplomatic personnel and diplomatic facilities. Pre-existing anti-U.S. sentiment and domestic political frustrations also appear to be contributing to the unrest. On September 11, 2012, attacks on U.S. interim diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, killed four U.S. personnel, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens. Vandalism and violence against U.S. facilities in Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, and Sudan indicates the potency of the issue, as does the spread of clashes between protestors and local security forces elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa and in some countries in South and Southeast Asia. The geographic scope of the protests and the reportedly broadly shared outrage of participants have overshadowed important distinctions in political context, divergences in host government responses, and the fact that the groups demonstrating, particularly those committing violent acts, are small relative to much larger and diverse populations.

This report provides background information and analysis about the recent wave of protests and includes a summary appendix of select incidents and international responses organized geographically by country. The report discusses several issues of potential interest to Congress, including emerging debates on foreign assistance funding for countries affected by unrest, intelligence and diplomatic security policies, war powers considerations, and the potential effects of the current controversy on long-running international debates on religion and freedom of expression.

## **Contents**

Overview.....	1
Inflammatory Video and Related Domestic Inquiries .....	2
Issues for Congress .....	3
Foreign Assistance Debates .....	3
Extremist Reactions and Counterterrorism Concerns.....	5
Attack in Benghazi: Mode of Attack, Intelligence, and Policy Implications .....	7
Diplomatic Security.....	7
War Powers Considerations.....	8
Role of the United Nations .....	9
Defamation of Religion and Freedom of Speech Debates .....	10

## **Figures**

Figure 1. Map of Select Protests and Violent Incidents Involving Diplomatic Facilities and Personnel as of September 17 .....	12
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## **Appendixes**

Appendix. Select Incidents and International Responses as of September 20, 2012.....	13
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## **Contacts**

Author Contact Information.....	21
Acknowledgments .....	21

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

Muslims in a number of countries have responded in recent days with anger at the United States that many observers describe as a response to a privately produced film circulating on the Internet that denigrates Islam and the prophet Mohammed. In some cases, this outrage has taken the form of public expressions by relatively small groups of demonstrators, and in other countries the demonstrations have been larger. In the most extreme cases, such demonstrations have been accompanied by violent attacks against U.S. diplomatic personnel and diplomatic facilities. Pre-existing anti-U.S. sentiment and domestic political frustrations also appear to be contributing to the unrest. On September 11, 2012, attacks on U.S. interim diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, killed four U.S. personnel, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens. Vandalism and violence against U.S. facilities in Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, and Sudan indicates the potency of the issue, as does the spread of clashes between protestors and local security forces elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa and in some countries in South and Southeast Asia. The geographic scope of the protests and the reportedly broadly shared outrage of participants have overshadowed important distinctions in political context, divergences in host government responses, and the fact that the groups demonstrating, particularly those committing violent acts, are small relative to much larger and diverse populations.

In general terms, the global tempest over the film is the latest in a series of transnational controversies involving material critical of Islam that some Muslims and non-Muslims consider to be hate speech. A set of cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed in a negative light, first published in Denmark in 2005 and re-published by several international newspapers, fueled demonstrations, debate, and, in some isolated cases, violence.<sup>2</sup> Reports of desecration of Islamic religious books have sparked similar trends. From a U.S. diplomatic perspective, the current unrest also echoes a series of parallel incidents targeting U.S. diplomats and embassies in the Middle East and South Asia in 1979, which ushered in reforms that helped define U.S. diplomatic security arrangements.<sup>3</sup> The series of distinct incidents in 1979 was fueled by the siege of Mecca by extremists, the Iranian revolution, and Cold War rivalry, but shares several characteristics with current developments. Apparent spontaneity and raw public emotion commingled with evidence of advance planning by violent groups and manipulation of events by local leaders for political gain. The global environment remains marked by the rapid spread of information and misinformation via somewhat “ephemeral” media. The current demonstrations and recent attacks

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>2</sup> Protests by Muslims occurred in several world cities in 2005-2006 in response to the publication in Danish and other European newspapers of cartoons of the prophet Mohammed that many Muslims viewed as deeply offensive. Many native Europeans asserted the primacy of the right to freedom of expression, regardless of whether the cartoons were insensitive to Islamic beliefs.

<sup>3</sup> In 1979, the State Department evacuated “nearly 1,000 employees and dependents ... from 13 countries throughout the Near East and South Asia” after demonstrations and attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel occurred during the year in Kabul, Afghanistan; Tehran, Iran; Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Pakistan; and Tripoli, Libya. Commenting on the attacks in Pakistan, a State Department official said in 1980 that “attacks on our facilities ... and the demonstrations elsewhere in the region were generated by the deep outrage felt by Moslems everywhere at the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca on November 20 [1979]. Initial international radio accounts apparently led some to believe that the United States might have been involved.... Given the ephemeral nature of the radio medium, we probably never will be able to identify the broadcast or broadcasts which allegedly triggered the ... extreme emotional response in Pakistan.” See Statement of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asia Jane A. Coon before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Operations, June 19, 1980.

reveal the persistence of security challenges for U.S. government personnel and citizens abroad, highlight the unresolved and unrelenting nature of some Islamic groups' transnational grievances, and provide fodder for domestic political rivalries in several countries, including the United States.

The key questions now before Congress and the Obama Administration concern how best to ensure the security of U.S. personnel, facilities, and citizens in the short term while pursuing policies that also preserve longer-term U.S. national security interests. One challenge lies in considering the nuances and complexities of individual countries; for example, noting that long-established governments have more mechanisms and experience to control public displays of anger than newly elected governments in transitioning countries. Additional questions to consider include: How has the Obama Administration responded to the unrest and attacks? Did particular governments temper their expressions of anger at the film with exhortations against violence? Did the publics and governments in a given country express sympathy with the attackers or outrage at their actions? How cooperative has each government been in working with U.S. officials to protect U.S. persons and facilities and to investigate incidents? Congress may wish to hold detailed oversight hearings to explore these possible questions and others, as it did in the wake of previous diplomatic security incidents in the Muslim world.

Some of the largest protests and the most violent attacks have taken place in countries in the Middle East and North Africa that have experienced political unrest and change since 2011, most notably Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. The United States has generally embraced the emergent current of political change, but now faces choices about how to encourage host governments to meet their security responsibilities as they grapple with their own domestic political balancing acts and work to overcome the limitations of their security forces. In Egypt and Tunisia, for example, newly elected Islamist political leaders share the disgust their fellow citizens have for the film, and they have struggled to simultaneously maintain credibility vis-à-vis the public, hard-line domestic rivals, and the United States and other international observers demanding action to limit the potential for violence. In both countries, moreover, these emergent political leaders are still testing the bounds of their relationships with the state security forces, which formed the backbone of previous authoritarian regimes' efforts to repress and contain Islamist activism. Libyan authorities remain dependent on state-affiliated militia groups to help provide security, including at diplomatic facilities.

## **Inflammatory Video and Related Domestic Inquiries<sup>4</sup>**

In 2011, an independent and as yet not fully identified group of individuals secured financing and filmed a crude movie depicting the Islamic prophet Mohammed and his followers. Reportedly working under the guise of a historical action film tentatively titled "Desert Warriors," the group shot the movie using paid actors in California and overdubbed dialogue to include anti-Islamic messages after the fact. The film was uploaded to YouTube.com in June 2012 under a variety of names, including "Innocence of Muslims." Available video segments portray Mohammed and his followers as sadistic buffoons engaged in a range of violent and perverse behavior. Christian and Islamic religious media outlets in Egypt reported on the film in early September 2012, launching the bizarre, inflammatory, and otherwise obscure project to global prominence and sparking

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<sup>4</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428; and William Krouse, Specialist in Domestic Security and Crime Policy, ext. 7-2225.

outrages, protests, and violence that are still ongoing.<sup>5</sup> Google, the company that owns YouTube.com, has restricted access to the online videos in Egypt and Libya, and press reports suggest that authorities in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and other countries have taken steps to block access to the online videos of the film in their countries.

According to press reports, federal authorities and Los Angeles County police have identified a Cerritos, CA, resident named Nakoula Basseley Nakoula as having been involved with the film's production.<sup>6</sup> Reportedly, Nakoula, a Coptic Christian Egyptian American, was questioned in connection with potential violations of supervisory release terms related to past federal fraud charges and was released from police custody on September 17. He is now reportedly in hiding along with his family after threats to his life from angry Muslim extremists.

For a discussion of domestic freedom of speech issues raised by the controversy surrounding the film, see CRS Report WSLG229, *Is Freedom to Incite An International Incident Permitted Under the First Amendment?*, by Kathleen Ann Ruane.

## Issues for Congress

The recent attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities and the ongoing protests and international political controversy present a number of challenging policy questions for Congress. Members of Congress may consider a range of options for responding to the overlapping issues raised by these developments. In considering appropriations for foreign assistance and diplomatic security operations, Congress may choose to pursue detailed investigations into recent incidents in order to make recommendations or inform the placement of conditions on future programs. In considering intelligence matters, Congress may choose to pursue questions about threat assessments available prior to the recent attacks and discuss with intelligence, military, and diplomatic officials the potential implications of the recent unrest and of potential U.S. responses for the future of U.S. relations with countries in North Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia. The following sections explore appropriations, authorization, and oversight issues of potential interest.

### Foreign Assistance Debates<sup>7</sup>

Recent unrest and attacks raise both logistical and philosophical questions about U.S. foreign assistance to several countries that have been part of the wave of upheaval in the Arab world or are important U.S. partners on other regional security priorities, such as the war in Afghanistan. On a practical level, the evacuation of non-emergency personnel from Libya, Tunisia, and Sudan will prevent the continuation of some ongoing assistance programs at least temporarily. Beyond that, some Members of Congress have called for a suspension of U.S. assistance to some countries where attacks have taken place, and others have argued for assistance to be made contingent upon the provision of improved security at diplomatic facilities or full cooperation in

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed account, see Nancy A. Youssef and Amina Ismail, "Anti-U.S. Outrage over Video Began with Christian Activist's Phone Call to a Reporter," *McClatchy Newspapers*, September 15, 2012; and,

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Braun and Gillian Flaccus, "Nakoula Basseley Nakoula Claims Role In 'Innocence Of Muslims,'" Associated Press, September 12, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

the investigation of violent incidents. Still others, along with Obama Administration officials, are advising that violent extremists should not be permitted to damage U.S. efforts to both remain engaged with key security partners such as Pakistan and Egypt or to provide security and transition assistance to Arab countries in the process of fundamental political change. Examples of recent legislative developments include:

- On September 19, Senator Rand Paul introduced S. 3576, which would prohibit the obligation or expenditure of funds for assistance to the governments of Egypt, Libya, Pakistan, and other governments of countries where U.S. diplomatic facilities have been “attacked, trespassed upon, breached, or attempted to be attacked, trespassed upon, or breached on or after September 1, 2012.” The bill would allow for suspension of the prohibition following a certification and request by the executive branch. The President would have to certify that host nations were cooperating with the United States in investigating incidents, working to improve local security, and that persons involved in the organizing, planning, or executing of related incidents have been identified by U.S. law enforcement officials and are in U.S. custody. Congress would have to approve requests for the withdrawal of any prohibition through passage of a joint resolution under expedited procedures outlined in the bill. The bill would also require a report “examining the extent to which advanced weaponry remaining unsecured after the fall of Moammar Qaddafi was used by the individuals responsible for the September 11, 2012, attack on the United States consulate in Benghazi, Libya.” The bill states that “nothing in this section may be construed as an authorization for the use of military force.”
- On September 12 and 13, Senator Rand Paul offered amendments to S. 3457 (S.Amdt. 2815 and S.Amdt. 2838) to prohibit the obligation or expending of funds for Pakistan, Egypt, Yemen, or Libya. The amendments contain language similar to that in S. 3576.
- S.Res. 556, introduced by Senator James Inhofe, would express “the sense of the Senate that foreign assistance funding to the Governments of Libya and Egypt should be suspended until the President certifies to Congress that both governments are providing proper security at United States embassies and consulates pursuant to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.”
- H.Res. 783, introduced by Representative Michael McCaul, would express the sense of the House of Representatives that “the President should immediately suspend all United States foreign assistance” to Libya and Egypt, “until the Governments of Libya and Egypt formally apologize to the United States and condemn in the strongest possible terms the savage attacks on United States diplomats in Benghazi, Libya, and Cairo, Egypt, and assure the safety of United States diplomats in Libya and Egypt.”

Administration officials and some Members of Congress have stated their view that remaining committed to supporting transitional governments in Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt is a sound investment that will contribute to marginalizing extremist voices over time. Secretary of State Clinton has suggested that U.S. engagement and partnership with countries seeking to establish security and complete transitions to democracy should not become a “casualty” of the recent violence.

It remains to be seen what impact the unrest and violence will have on current Administration policy priorities before Congress. In early 2012, the Administration

requested \$770 million for a Middle East North Africa Incentive Fund (MENA-IF) to provide flexible, multi-year funding for responding to transition needs in the Arab world. As of September 2012, the House Appropriations Committee had declined to include funding for the MENA-IF initiative in its version of the FY2013 Foreign Operations appropriations bill (H.R. 5857). The Senate Appropriations Committee included \$1 billion for the MENA-IF, an increase over the Administration's request (S. 3241).

The enactment of a continuing resolution may link interim FY2013 spending to FY2012 levels set through consultation between the executive branch and Congress rather than specified in legislation. As such, established inter-branch consultation mechanisms would likely remain the primary venue for determining U.S. funding for several countries where protests and violent incidents have taken place.

## **Extremist Reactions and Counterterrorism Concerns<sup>8</sup>**

Like the cartoon and Quran desecration controversies before it, the current unrest that many observers link to the inflammatory film has implications for the image of the United States among Muslims and for U.S. efforts to undermine advocates of violent extremism as part of worldwide counterterrorism programs. Al Qaeda affiliates in Yemen and the Sahel have sought to capitalize on the film and incidents of violence against diplomatic facilities and personnel. Statements released by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) have encouraged further demonstrations and attacks on U.S. and other diplomatic targets, characterizing them as a religious duty.<sup>9</sup>

- The AQAP statement said, in part,

various efforts should collaborate in order to aim to expel the embassies of the United States from Muslim countries, to continue the demonstrations and protests as happened in some Muslim countries, and to set fire to these embassies as our zealous people did in Egypt and Yemen. Whoever, from among our Muslim brothers, captures U.S. ambassadors or envoys, he may follow in the footsteps of the grandsons of Umar al-Mukhtar in Libya who set the best example by killing the U.S. ambassador, may God reward them for their adherence to Islam. The step of expelling the [US] embassies and consulates is a step toward liberating Muslim lands from U.S. hegemony and arrogance.

- The AQLIM statement said, in part,

The United States has now condemned itself and exposed its claims with its deeds when it encroached on the honor of our prophet, prayers and peace be upon him, after having lied to the Muslims for longer than 10 years about its war being against terrorism and not Islam; that it was not an enemy of the Muslims and that its enmity was confined to a band of terrorist, as it likes to describe the mujahidin.... We incite Muslims to continue and escalate the protest and we urge the youth of Islam to follow the example of Benghazi by pulling down the U.S. flag in its embassies in all our capital cities and burn them after trampling on them, and to kill its ambassadors and representatives or expel them and cleanse our land from their filth in vengeance for the honor of best of cultivators, prayers and peace be upon him.

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<sup>8</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>9</sup> OSC Report GMP20120915150001, "QAP Statement No 56 Condemns Film, Urges Muslims To Kill U.S. Ambassadors, Envoys," September 15, 2012; and, OSC Report GMP20120918836001, "Al Fajr Releases AQIM's Statement Praising Attack on U.S. Consulate in Benghazi," September 18, 2012.

- Egyptian Salafist-jihadist<sup>10</sup> cleric Ahmad Ashush has issued a ruling (*fatwa*) “calling for killing everyone who participated in making this movie and their blood deems permissible, including the producer, director, and actors.”<sup>11</sup> The statement says that, “It is the duty of each Muslim able to kill them if one can, and killing those abovementioned people is the decisive ruling of Islam that has been agreed upon regarding them and their ilk.” Ashush had been imprisoned prior to the Egyptian revolution and has criticized Egyptian Salafists for participating in post-2011 elections. While in prison in 2007, he rejected ideological revisions accepted by other violent Egyptian extremists imprisoned by the Mubarak regime, saying “We support all jihad movements in the world and see in them the hope of the nation and its frontlines toward its bright future.”<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, official clerics in conservative Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia have denounced the film but urged peaceful responses and avoidance of violence. In Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt, the crisis has widened fissures between Islamist groups calling for protests but refraining from calls for violence and others, including some Salafist movements and militia groups that have supported calls for targeting U.S. and other Westerners in response to the film. As elected Islamist authorities affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood or other independent groups move to improve security conditions, they may find themselves in direct confrontation with Salafist groups that share their disdain for the film but may be committed to resisting state authority on the issue. According to news reports, Tunisian security forces attempted on September 17 to arrest the leader of the Salafist militant group Ansar al Sharia in Tunisia, Seif Allah ben Hassine (aka Abu Iyadh). He reportedly escaped after a stand-off at a mosque in Tunis. Ben Hassine is a former member of the Tunisian Combatant Group, an organization currently thought to be inactive but previously designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. As of September 18, similar confrontations appeared imminent involving Ansar al Sharia Brigade in the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi. The Brigade warned an “inferno” would await any foreigners intervening militarily in Libya.

Shiite extremists also have denounced the film and have stressed their shared antipathy with Sunni Muslims of the film’s depiction of the prophet Mohammed. In just his fifth public appearance since 2006, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah addressed a reported crowd of tens of thousands in southern Beirut on September 17 and called the video “the worst attack ever on Islam.” He also said, “The United States must realize that broadcasting the entire film will have very dangerous repercussions in the world,” and threatened “Those who insult the Prophet Mohammed will suffer a holy punishment.”<sup>13</sup> Hezbollah has called for a week of protests in response to the film. Hezbollah’s reaction to the controversy may be an attempt to overcome

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<sup>10</sup> The term Salafist refers to conservative Sunni Islamic schools of thought that advocate for a return to the practices of Mohammed and the first three generations of Muslims (*al salaf al saalih*). Overall, *jihad* remains a contested concept among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. In this context, the term “jihadist” refers to individuals whose statements indicate that they view jihad as a religious call to arms and advocate violence against the United States or in support of transnational extremism.

<sup>11</sup> OSC Report GMP20120917495003, “EG Cleric's Fatwa Calls For 'Killing' Anti-Islam Film Director, Producer, Actors,” September 16, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> OSC Report GMP20080124342005, “Jihad Leaders in Egyptian Prisons Reject Sayyid Imam's Ideological Revisions,” January 4, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> OSC Report GMP20120917966104, “Naharnet: Nasrallah at Anti-Islam Film Rally: Showing Entire Movie Will Have Very Dangerous Repercussions,” September 17, 2012.

setbacks the group has suffered as a result of sectarian divisions and its unpopular policy toward the conflict in Syria.

## **Attack in Benghazi: Mode of Attack, Intelligence, and Policy Implications<sup>14</sup>**

Some might suggest that the inherently vulnerable nature of U.S. diplomatic facilities in a country experiencing significant political and security uncertainty should have led to the national security community being more aware and better prepared for the possibility of an attack—whether resulting from a pre-planned effort, opportunistic actors, or a combination of the two. In making the argument that the attack appears to have been pre-planned, some security observers have suggested that the United States intelligence community may have missed possible signals of a growing threat. On September 19, National Counterterrorism Center Director Matthew Olsen said in Senate testimony that, to date, the Administration did not have “specific intelligence that there was significant advanced planning or coordination for this attack,” but analysts were “still developing facts and still looking for any indications of substantial advanced planning.”<sup>15</sup>

It remains unclear whether State Department security officials requested additional assistance from the host government to assess emerging risks or how the U.S. intelligence community has prioritized collection and counterintelligence activities related to Libya. If the attack was opportunistic, as Administration officials have stated and some observers have suggested, Members of Congress may wish to explore whether a lack of appreciation of the threat environment and prospective intentions and capabilities of anti-U.S. entities in the immediate area of U.S. facilities may have led to policy or intelligence gaps. On September 18, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton noted that “the Federal Bureau of Investigation has joined the investigation on the ground in Libya and we will not rest until the people who orchestrated this attack are found and punished.”<sup>16</sup>

## **Diplomatic Security<sup>17</sup>**

Security for the more than 285 U.S. diplomatic facilities around the world is, by international treaty, primarily the responsibility of host nations,<sup>18</sup> although the local capacity to provide this protection varies. The additional, U.S.-provided security posture of each facility varies based on assessments of local conditions and is not made public. U.S. facilities typically rely on a combination of an outer layer of host nation-provided and/or contract guard forces, physical perimeter security, and State Department officials or contractors, as coordinated by a Regional

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<sup>14</sup> Prepared by John Rollins, Specialist in Terrorism and National Security, ext. 7-5529.

<sup>15</sup> NCTC Director Olsen, Testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, September 19, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Anne Gearan, “FBI Arrives in Libya to Probe Deaths of Four Americans,” *Washington Post*, September 18, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/fbi-arrives-in-libya-to-probe-deaths-of-four-americans/2012/09/18/5f404560-01d0-11e2-9367-4e1bafb958db\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/fbi-arrives-in-libya-to-probe-deaths-of-four-americans/2012/09/18/5f404560-01d0-11e2-9367-4e1bafb958db_story.html).

<sup>17</sup> Prepared by Alex Tiersky, Analyst in Foreign Affairs, ext. 7-7673. For more information, request from CRS the congressional distribution memorandum, “Diplomatic Security Considerations Following Benghazi Attacks and Ongoing Protests,” by Alex Tiersky.

<sup>18</sup> Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963, Article 31 (3); Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961, Article 29.

Security Officer. Under normal conditions, the U.S. Marine Security Guard posts detachments to many, but not all, such facilities; their primary mission is providing internal security services and preventing the compromise of classified U.S. government information and equipment. In the wake of an attack on U.S. diplomatic facilities or personnel, the Secretary of State is required by the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 to convene an Accountability and Review Board within 60 days.<sup>19</sup> A series of violent incidents involving U.S. diplomatic personnel and/or facilities in recent decades has inspired repeated action by Congress to improve security conditions and exercise oversight over U.S. government operations.

S. 3551, introduced by Senators DeMint and Corker, would require the President within 30 days of enactment to

submit to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the September 11, 2012, attack on the United States Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, the attacks on the United States Embassy in Cairo, Egypt, that began on September 11, 2012, the September 13, 2012, attack on the United States Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen, and the state of security at United States diplomatic missions globally.

## **War Powers Considerations<sup>20</sup>**

The War Powers Resolution (P.L. 93-148) requires the President to notify Congress of the introduction of “combat-equipped” personnel into a foreign country. Section 2(c) of the resolution recognized the constitutional powers of the President as Commander-in-Chief to introduce forces into hostilities or imminent hostilities as “exercised only pursuant to (1) a declaration of war, (2) specific statutory authorization, or (3) a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces.” The executive branch has contended that the President has much broader authority to use forces, including for such purposes as to protect U.S. embassies, personnel, and citizens. Presidents have used U.S. military forces for diplomatic or U.S. civilian protection purposes periodically since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including since the start of the recent uprisings in the Arab world in 2011.<sup>21</sup> Historically, such deployments generally have not been a subject of controversy between Congress and the President.

Section 4(a)(2) of the War Powers Resolution requires the President to notify Congress when forces are introduced into foreign territory “while equipped for combat.”<sup>22</sup> On September 14, President Obama reported to Congress, “consistent with the War Powers Resolution,” that he had authorized the deployment of security forces from U.S. Africa Command to Libya and “additional security forces” to Yemen “for the purpose of protecting American citizens and property.”<sup>23</sup> The notification states, “These security forces will remain in Libya and in Yemen until the security

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<sup>19</sup> 22 U.S.C. § 4831. The Act states that a board shall be convened “in any case of serious injury, loss of life, or significant destruction of property at, or related to, a United States Government mission abroad.” The Act as amended provides exemptions for Department of Defense facilities, or in relation to events in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<sup>20</sup> Prepared by Matthew Weed, Analyst in Foreign Policy Legislation, ext. 7-4589, and Christopher Blanchard.

<sup>21</sup> For an overview see CRS Report R42699, *The War Powers Resolution: After Thirty-Eight Years*, by Richard F. Grimmett.

<sup>22</sup> 50 U.S.C. 1541(a)(2).

<sup>23</sup> U.S. President (Obama), “Letter from the President regarding the War Powers Resolution Report for Libya,” September 14, 2012, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/14/letter-president-regarding-war-powers-resolution-report-libya>.

situation becomes such that they are no longer needed.” The President might make further notifications concerning additional deployments or military operations in Libya, Yemen, or other countries if such deployments represent the beginning or an escalation of hostilities or increase the number of combat-equipped troops in such countries. A combat-equipped security force of about “40 U.S. military personnel from the U.S. Central Command” was deployed to Cairo, Egypt, on January 31, 2011, for the sole purpose of “protecting American citizens and property.” That force is no longer present in Cairo. A force of 16 personnel was deployed to Tripoli, Libya, to assist in establishing the U.S. Embassy in the wake of the 2011 civil war. That force had been withdrawn and was not present at the time of the September 11, 2012, attack.

Some editorial commentary in Arabic language press has warned about the potential political and security implications of the United States or other countries introducing new military forces or using force to respond to recent violent incidents in predominantly Muslim countries. One London-based author argued that “such presence would undermine the sovereignty of these countries and may be tantamount to occupation. This could provoke national and religious sentiments and justify acts of resistance by some people as is happening in Afghanistan and as had happened in Iraq prior to the withdrawal of the U.S. forces.”<sup>24</sup> As noted above, a member of the Benghazi-based Ansar al Sharia Brigade being linked by some to the attack on U.S. offices reportedly said, “If one U.S. soldier arrives, not for the purpose of defending the embassy, but to repeat what happened in Iraq or Afghanistan be sure that all battalions in Libya and all Libyans will put aside all their differences and rally behind one goal of hitting America and Americans.... Libyans will wage jihad.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Role of the United Nations<sup>26</sup>**

Members of Congress may wish to consider how, and to what extent, the recent protests and attacks on U.S. and other diplomatic premises are addressed in United Nations (U.N.) fora. For example, on September 14, the U.N. Security Council issued a press statement that “condemned, in the strongest terms the series of violent attacks against embassies and consular premises of Member States in multiple locations on 13 and 14 of September.”<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that the Secretary-General was “deeply disturbed by the recent violence in Libya and elsewhere in the Middle East,” and noted that “nothing justifies such killings and attacks.”<sup>28</sup> The protests, and any number of related issues, may be raised by U.N. Member States during the general debate portion of the U.N. General Assembly’s 67<sup>th</sup> session at U.N. Headquarters in New York City. The 67<sup>th</sup> session convened on September 18, with the general debate starting on September 25.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> OSC Report GMP20120917825010, “The United States Does Not Understand Us; These are the Reasons,” *Al Quds Al Arabi Online* (London), September 17, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Yousef Jehani quoted in George Grant and Hadi Fornaji, “Abushagur vows to do “whatever it takes” to put a stop to Ansar Al-Sharia “inferno” threat,” *Libya Herald*, September 19, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Prepared by Luisa Blanchfield, Specialist in International Relations, ext. 7-0856.

<sup>27</sup> U.N. Press Release SC/10764, “Security Council Press Statement on Attacks Against Diplomatic Premises,” September 14, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> U.N. Office of the Secretary-General, “Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on violence in Libya and the Middle East,” September 13, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> The Assembly’s general debate occurs annually at the start of each Assembly session. Participants generally include heads of state or government, ministers for foreign affairs, and other high level officials.

## **Defamation of Religion and Freedom of Speech Debates<sup>30</sup>**

During 2011, the United States and other governments reached an interim agreement on some controversial issues related to the protection of freedom of expression and what the 57 member governments of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) had long referred to as “defamation of religion.” Since 1999, the OIC and its members have been acting through various U.N. entities to raise international attention and encourage international responses to what they perceive to be a global trend of increased discrimination and hatred directed toward Islam and Muslims. From the late 1990s through 2010, members of the OIC repeatedly sponsored resolutions before the U.N. General Assembly and U.N. Human Rights Council seeking to require states to legally restrict defamation of religion.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. government and other governments opposed these measures out of concern for limiting freedom of speech and other rights.

During 2011, the United States and OIC member states jointly supported the adoption of two resolutions in the U.N. Human Rights Council and the U.N. General Assembly encouraging states to act domestically and internationally to create an atmosphere of religious tolerance and to combat religious profiling and discrimination by state authorities.<sup>32</sup> Among what some policymakers consider the more controversial provisions of the resolutions are those noting and endorsing a prior OIC call for states to adopt “measures to criminalize the incitement to imminent violence based on religion or belief.” In the adopted resolutions, “incitement to imminent violence” remains undefined. This ambiguity has been the subject of discussion among key states in subsequent months, including in consultative meetings under the OIC-sponsored “Istanbul Process for Combating Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.” In June 2012, OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu said, “Whatever may be the Western perception, we strongly believe that this right [of free expression] should be exercised responsibly and not misused or abused to incite violence by contemptuous or malicious expression in written, verbal or visual depictions.”<sup>33</sup>

The reactions of governments and religious authorities in several OIC member states to the recent video controversy suggest that they view the controversial film as inflammatory and as having directly incited recent violent protests. OIC Secretary General Ehsanoglu condemned violent attacks against U.S. facilities and personnel while attributing the violence to “emotions aroused by a production of a film” that “hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims.” He also said, “the two incidents [in Cairo and Benghazi] demonstrated serious repercussions of abuse of freedom of expression,”<sup>34</sup> and called for a return to “structured international engagement.” It remains to be seen if or how the OIC as a group or individual governments might seek to use U.N. bodies to pursue the matter further in light of the adoption of the related resolutions in 2011. Based on

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<sup>30</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>31</sup> The Human Rights Council is the primary intergovernmental body within the U.N. system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights and addressing human rights violations. The United States is currently a Council member.

<sup>32</sup> See U.N. Document A/HRC/RES/16/18, U.N. Human Rights Council Resolution 16/18, “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief,” adopted March 24, 2011; and, U.N. Document A/RES/66/167, U.N. General Assembly Resolution 66/167, “Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief,” adopted December 19, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> *Arab News* (Jedda), Interview for H.E. the Secretary General of OIC, June 19, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> OIC, “The OIC Condemns Violent Acts at American Missions in Cairo and Benghazi,” September 13, 2012.

some officials' recent statements on the issue, it may be reasonable to expect the OIC to renew its calls for the adoption of a binding international instrument to address its members' concerns.<sup>35</sup>

For a discussion of domestic freedom of speech issues raised by the controversy surrounding the film, see CRS Report WSLG229, *Is Freedom to Incite An International Incident Permitted Under the First Amendment?*, by Kathleen Ann Ruane.

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<sup>35</sup> An OIC spokesperson said on September 18 that the dissemination of the film online was “deliberate act of incitement,” reiterating the OIC’s view on the importance of limits to freedom of expression and saying that the “position of the OIC is very well entrenched in international legal instruments.” Rizwan Sheikh, quoted in Jassim Abuzaid, “OIC: It Was Deliberate Incitement,” *Arab News* (Jedda), September 18, 2012.

**Figure 1. Map of Select Protests and Violent Incidents Involving Diplomatic Facilities and Personnel as of September 17**



Source: *New York Times*, "Spread of Protests Sparked by Anti-Muslim Video," September 17, 2012. Adapted by CRS.

## Appendix. Select Incidents and International Responses as of September 20, 2012<sup>36</sup>

**Morocco:**<sup>37</sup> Hundreds of Salafist demonstrators reportedly gathered outside the U.S. consulate in Morocco's commercial capital, Casablanca, on September 12, chanting slogans against the United States and burning a U.S. flag. The protests do not appear to have involved a direct attack on the U.S. facilities or any injuries of U.S. citizens. A heavy police presence was reported. News reports indicate that protests again occurred in the city of Tangiers and other urban centers on September 17, with total turnout estimated in the thousands. King Mohammed VI of Morocco publicly offered condolences to the American people and government following the attack in Benghazi, and also condemned "unacceptable provocations undermining the sacred values of Islam" in a phone call with Secretary of State Clinton.<sup>38</sup> On September 13, in a public appearance in Washington, DC, marking the opening of a new U.S.-Morocco "Bilateral Strategic Dialogue," Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Eddine al Othmani likewise expressed condolences and condemned the violence, stating that U.S. diplomats "should be protected."

**Algeria:**<sup>39</sup> Algerian security forces broke up a protest march of hundreds in the capital, Algiers, on September 14, and reportedly deployed preemptively throughout the city to deter such movements. On September 12, the U.S. Embassy in Algiers had warned of efforts by unspecified groups to organize demonstrations against "a range of issues" and instructed Americans to avoid large gatherings and non-essential travel in and around official buildings. Among those arrested in connection with the demonstration was Ali Belhadj, the former deputy leader of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party. On September 16, the speaker of the Libyan parliament accused Algerian nationals of being among those responsible for the killing of the U.S. Ambassador to Libya.

**Tunisia:**<sup>40</sup> Security forces dispersed protests outside the U.S. Embassy in Tunis on September 13. The following day, protesters breached the outer walls of the embassy compound, reportedly hanging a black flag associated with Islamist extremists and setting fire to cars in the compound parking lot. Unidentified assailants also sacked an American school facility located near the embassy. Tunisia's President Moncef Marzouki condemned the attacks and reportedly dispatched members of the presidential guard to protect the embassy following a phone call from Secretary of State Clinton;<sup>41</sup> Marzouki also called for the international prosecution of those who made the offending video. Tunisia's Interior Minister, Ali Laraydh, a senior member of the ruling Islamist party Al Nahda, apologized to the United States on national television the same day for failing to protect the embassy; on September 15, the ruling party also released a written statement condemning both the violence and the video.<sup>42</sup> Tunisia's National Assembly subsequently held a

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<sup>36</sup> For more information on individual cases, please contact the credited regional analysts directly. CRS Research Associate Ted Wynne provided research support.

<sup>37</sup> Prepared by Alexis Arieff, Analyst in African Affairs, ext. 7-2459.

<sup>38</sup> Maghreb Arab Press (MAP), "Attack Against US Consulate in Benghazi: HM the King Offers Condolences to American People, Administration," September 16, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Prepared by Alexis Arieff, Analyst in African Affairs, ext. 7-2459.

<sup>40</sup> Prepared by Alexis Arieff, Analyst in African Affairs, ext. 7-2459.

<sup>41</sup> Vivienne Walt, "Political battles in Tunisia Shade Attacks on U.S. Embassy," *Time*, September 16, 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Associated Press, "Tunisia's Ruling Party Condemns U.S. Embassy Attack," September 15, 2012.

hearing on the incidents, at which members expressed a range of opinions as to who was responsible for the violence; some called for Laraydh's resignation while others contended the U.S. government was at fault.<sup>43</sup> The State Department has warned U.S. citizens against all travel to Tunisia and urged Americans to leave the country via the airport, noting that it has ordered the departure of all non-emergency U.S. government personnel.<sup>44</sup>

**Libya:**<sup>45</sup> U.S. Ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens and three other U.S. personnel were killed on September 11, 2012, during an assault by armed terrorists on two U.S. interim diplomatic office sites in Benghazi, Libya. U.S. officials have provided a preliminary account of the events that the ambassador and another officer died as a result of a fire started during an initial armed assault by several dozen attackers on the main office compound.<sup>46</sup> A larger number of attackers subsequently assaulted a separate U.S. annex compound to which U.S. personnel had been evacuated, killing two more U.S. personnel and wounding several others. Ambassador Stevens' body was retrieved from a local hospital and remaining U.S. personnel were evacuated from the Benghazi airport.<sup>47</sup> According to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "American and Libyan security personnel battled the attackers together."<sup>48</sup> Additional U.S. personnel have been deployed to Libya to secure U.S. facilities.<sup>49</sup> Joint Libyan and U.S. investigations are ongoing.

**Sudan:**<sup>50</sup> Protesters set fire to the German Embassy in Khartoum, and at least two protesters were killed by police during demonstrations on September 14 outside the U.S. Embassy.<sup>51</sup> Reports suggest several thousand people were involved in the protests, which occurred after Friday prayers. On the same day, the Foreign Ministry reportedly summoned U.S. and German diplomats to convey an official protest against the video.<sup>52</sup> The Foreign Ministry also denounced German Chancellor Angela Merkel for giving a press freedom award in 2010 to the Danish cartoonist whose work had prompted protests in 2006. Vice President Joseph Biden called his counterpart to reaffirm the Sudanese government's responsibility to protect diplomatic facilities and ensure the protection of diplomats. The government deployed additional police to provide security near the embassies, but rejected a U.S. plan to deploy Marines for increased security of the embassy facilities and personnel. Non-emergency U.S. diplomatic personnel and family members have been evacuated from Khartoum, given damage done to the outside of the embassy building, and the State Department is evaluating the security posture of the Sudanese security forces. Sudan blocked access to YouTube's website in the country after unsuccessfully requesting that Google remove the film.

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<sup>43</sup> *Tunisia Live*, "Constituent Assembly Questions Interior Minister Over Handling of Security," September 20, 2012.

<sup>44</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, "Tunisia," September 15, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>46</sup> State Department Briefing to Update on Recent Events in Libya, September 12, 2012. Available at: [<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2012/09/20120912135895.html>]

<sup>47</sup> Injured U.S. personnel have been evacuated and are being treated at U.S. military facilities in Germany.

<sup>48</sup> Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Remarks on the Deaths of American Personnel in Benghazi, Libya, Washington, DC, September 12, 2012.

<sup>49</sup> CNN.com, U.S. Increases Embassy Security Worldwide After Libya Attack, September 12, 2012.

<sup>50</sup> Prepared by Lauren Ploch Blanchard, Specialist in African Affairs, ext. 7-7640.

<sup>51</sup> Protestors reportedly targeted the Germany Embassy in response to a demonstration held in August by German right-wing group in front of Berlin mosques. A Berlin court had rejected an injunction to prevent the group from showing caricatures of Mohammed, and the demonstrations prompted violent protests by Muslim radicals in two German cities. Spiegel Online, "German Far-Right May Have Sparked Sudan Attack," September 17, 2012.

<sup>52</sup> *Sudan Tribune*, "Sudan Summons U.S., German Ambassadors to Protest Against 'Anti-Islamic' Film," September 14, 2012.

**Egypt:**<sup>53</sup> The “Innocence of Muslims” film appears to have first gained international attention in the Egyptian media, where it was debated by Coptic Christian and Salafist Muslim outlets. On September 11 thousands of predominantly Salafist Egyptians protested at the U.S. Embassy in downtown Cairo, scaling the walls and replacing the U.S. flag with a black one inscribed with the Islamic creed, “There is no God but God and Mohammed is the prophet of God.”<sup>54</sup> Embassy officials reportedly directed non-essential personnel to avoid the embassy in anticipation of the protest and no U.S. injuries were reported in Cairo nor during subsequent demonstrations by several hundred protestors at the consulate in Alexandria.<sup>55</sup>

On September 12, President Mohammad Morsi asked the U.S. government to take legal action against the makers of the film that sparked the protests, drawing criticism from some U.S. observers. Comments by State Department officials suggest that a September 13 conversation between Presidents Obama and Morsi likely influenced a dramatic improvement in police and military efforts to secure the U.S. Embassy. President Obama’s efforts and critiques by other U.S. officials also may have motivated the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists to alter a planned demonstration outside the embassy on September 14 and instead symbolically stage a rally of several thousand people in nearby Tahrir Square.<sup>56</sup> Robust security operations cleared the area of most protestors over the weekend of September 15 and 16.

On September 13, President Morsi condemned the violent attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel during a meeting with the European Commission.<sup>57</sup> In a separate series of short statements published by the Deputy Chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood Khairat al Shater, the Brotherhood stated the following:

Our condolences to the American people for the tragic loss of Ambassador Stevens, and three Embassy staff in Libya. Breach of the U.S. Embassy in Cairo is illegal under international law, and police failure to protect embassy has to be investigated. We are relieved none of the U.S. Embassy Cairo staff were harmed and hope US-Egypt relations will sustain turbulence of Tuesday's events.<sup>58</sup>

Militants in the Sinai, who were already engaged with Egyptian military forces attempting to pacify the area, may have used the protests as an opportunity to launch new attacks against foreign peacekeepers stationed there. On September 14, press reports indicate that militants attacked a Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) facility in the Al Gura area of north Sinai, injuring four MFO staff.<sup>59</sup> The MFO mission monitors the implementation of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty.

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<sup>53</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard and Jeremy Sharp, Specialists in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>54</sup> Al Jazeera Wire Services, “Egypt protesters tear down US embassy flag,” September 11, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Hosenball and Tabassum Zakaria, “Intel agencies warned U.S. Embassy in Egypt of possible violence,” Reuters, September 17, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. State Department Press Briefing, Spokesperson Victoria Nuland, Washington, DC, September 17, 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Ingy Hassieb, “Morsi remarks on Mideast violence,” *Washington Post*, September 13, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Nancy Messieh, “Morsi and Brotherhood Responses to the Anti-Muhammad Film and Subsequent Protests,” Atlantic Council – Egypt Source, September 13, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Jack Khoury and Gili Cohen, “Dozens of militants attack peacekeeper headquarters in Sinai, three wounded,” Haaretz (Israel) and DPA, September 14, 2012.

**Israel/West Bank-Gaza:**<sup>60</sup> Generally nonviolent protests have taken place since September 11 in various parts of Israel among Arabs, particularly in northern cities such as Nazareth. These protests have reached the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv. On September 14, hundreds of Arab Jerusalemites and Israeli Arabs marched from East Jerusalem following noontime prayers at the Al Aqsa Mosque and threw stones at Israeli riot police, in an unsuccessful probable attempt to approach the U.S. consulate. A smaller group assembled on September 15, presumably en route to the U.S. consulate, and Israeli police quickly dispersed the protest and arrested the organizer. Israeli reports indicated that most of the rallies have been called by the Israeli Arab Islamic movement. Reportedly, thousands of Palestinians protested in Gaza on September 14, and Palestinians in the West Bank have protested in Ramallah.

**Lebanon:**<sup>61</sup> Violent protests by several hundred Sunni Arab extremists in the northern city of Tripoli resulted in property damage to two U.S. chain restaurants on Friday, September 14. Lebanese leaders have condemned the film and the resulting violence and have committed to protecting U.S. diplomatic facilities and personnel. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah appeared in public to address thousands of supporters and denounce the film. Hezbollah has called for a week of protests. The group's reaction to the controversy may be an attempt to overcome setbacks the group has suffered as a result of sectarian divisions and its unpopular policy toward the conflict in Syria.

**Turkey:**<sup>62</sup> Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, seen by U.S. leaders as a potentially important influence on regional opinion, responded to the violence against U.S. installations on September 14 by saying, "Insulting the Prophet cannot be justified as freedom of expression. It cannot be a reason for innocent people to be attacked or harmed.... No one can, in the name of Islam, carry out actions of the kind that happened in Libya with the attack on the U.S. mission [in Benghazi]." Small protests involving an Islamist organization and workers' party outside the U.S. Embassy in Ankara led to the burning of an American flag on September 16.

**Yemen:**<sup>63</sup> On September 13 hundreds of mostly young men stormed the compound of the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, one of the most secure buildings in Yemen, causing destruction, looting, and setting fires.<sup>64</sup> Up to 4 protestors were killed and 15 wounded in clashes with Yemeni security forces, 24 of whom were injured.<sup>65</sup> President Abed Rabbo Mansour al Hadi apologized the same day and called for a swift investigation; on September 16 the Ministry of Interior announced it had made 13 arrests. Some videos of the incidents allegedly show security forces embracing fleeing protestors, possibly indicating collusion stemming from their allegiance to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.<sup>66</sup> Hadi had dismissed several pro-Saleh officials the night before the attack, and the government had announced the killing of a senior al Qaeda figure on September 11. Negotiations between U.S. and Yemeni officials resulted in the deployment of a platoon (50) of U.S. Marines to Yemen on September 14. On September 15, Yemen-based Al

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<sup>60</sup> Prepared by Jim Zanotti, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-1441.

<sup>61</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>62</sup> Prepared by Jim Zanotti, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-1441.

<sup>63</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>64</sup> Casey Coombs, "The *Innocence* Protests Expose Deeper Tensions in Yemen," *Time.com*, September 16, 2012.

<sup>65</sup> *CNN.com*, "4 killed as Yemeni police, demonstrators clash at U.S. Embassy," September 13, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* See also Adam Baron, "Yemen embassy breach lays bare anti-US sentiment, military weakness," September 13, 2012.

Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) called for more attacks, describing the video and related confrontations as “a new chapter in the crusades against Islam.”<sup>67</sup>

**Qatar:**<sup>68</sup> An estimated 2,000 Qatari citizens and residents demonstrated in a peaceful gathering at the U.S. Embassy in Doha. In his September 14 sermon, Qatar-based cleric Yusuf al Qaradawi condemned the film and said, “It’s unfair to accuse all the U.S. community of wrongdoing.”<sup>69</sup> He added, “Expressing loyalty to the prophet does not mean that we should head out to foreign embassies to pelt them with stones or burn them, kill the ambassador and people accompanying him. We should not react this way.”

**Bahrain:**<sup>70</sup> After Friday prayers on September 14, about 2,000 protesters in a Shiite district outside the capital of Manama burned American and Israeli flags to protest the video. The government, which has been attempting to suppress a Shiite uprising since February 2011, did not deploy security forces against the protest. However, the Interior Ministry reportedly ordered media regulators to attempt to block access to the video in Bahrain.

**Kuwait:**<sup>71</sup> On September 13, hundreds of Kuwaitis, including several Islamist members of its elected National Assembly, demonstrated opposite the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City. The Islamist lawmakers had earlier called for the peaceful protest, but they reportedly left the demonstration when some protesters called for the storming of the embassy. Forewarned by the lawmakers’ call for the protest, Kuwaiti security forces were deployed to push protesters away from the embassy security perimeter, and they successfully prevented any breaching of the facility.

**Iraq:**<sup>72</sup> Hundreds of Iraqis protested against the United States and the video on September 13, 2012, calling the video inflammatory and anti-Islamic. In Baghdad, the protests took place mainly in the Shiite Muslim district called “Sadr City,” home to many followers of hardline Shiite cleric Moqtada al Sadr. Similar protests took place in pro-Sadr neighborhoods of the predominantly Shiite cities of Najaf and Karbala. Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki strongly condemned the video but also called on demonstrators not to commit violence in expressing their anger at the video.

**Iran:**<sup>73</sup> On September 13, 2012, about 500 people conducted a peaceful protest near the Embassy of Switzerland, which is the protecting power for U.S. interests in Iran. The Iranian government deployed hundreds of security people to prevent the crowd from approaching the compound. Subsequently, several leading Iranian political figures, officials, parliamentarians, and security organizations (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) issued statements denouncing the video as an example of what they asserted is U.S. anti-Islam bias and U.S. efforts to sow discord among major religions, operating in the guise of protecting free speech.

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<sup>67</sup> Fares Anam, “Al Qaeda urges Muslims to kill U.S. diplomats in Yemen,” *Yemen Observer*, September 18, 2012.

<sup>68</sup> Prepared by Christopher Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-0428.

<sup>69</sup> OSC Report GMP20120917116002, “Qatar: Top Cleric Decries Anti-Prophet Film, Urges Raising Global Islam Awareness,” YouTube, September 14, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Prepared by Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-7612.

<sup>71</sup> Prepared by Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-7612.

<sup>72</sup> Prepared by Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-7612.

<sup>73</sup> Prepared by Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-7612.

**Afghanistan:**<sup>74</sup> Following several days in which the Afghan government attempted to block distribution of the “Innocence of Muslims” video, on September 17, 2012, several hundred to several thousand Afghans demonstrated outside a U.S. training facility for the Afghan security forces (Camp Phoenix), just east of central Kabul. Afghan police were deployed to prevent the demonstrators from entering that and nearby facilities, leaving 40 Afghan police injured. A few days before the demonstration, the office of President Hamid Karzai released a statement denouncing the video as a “desecrating act,” but also saying that video’s producer represents a “small radical minority,” whose work should not be distributed in Afghanistan. Afghan clerics reportedly denounced the video but called for nonviolent responses in sermons on Friday, September 14. On September 18, a young female suicide bomber targeted a vehicle in Kabul, killing 10 foreign workers in an attack claimed by Hezb-i-Islami “in response to the film insulting the Prophet Mohammed and Islam.”<sup>75</sup>

**Pakistan:**<sup>76</sup> In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan—home to about 170 million Muslims—early public demonstrations were unexpectedly muted, given large-scale rioting that had occurred in response to previous perceived offenses against Islam. Police there have taken robust action to block violent protesters and to protect American diplomatic facilities. The country’s legislative and executive branches both issued formal condemnations of the video clip. Yet many analysts see Islamabad’s acute interest in preventing the further deterioration of ties with Washington keeping it from stirring the pot or acceding to demands from Islamist leaders that the top U.S. diplomat be ejected from the country. However, beginning on September 16, some protests in major Pakistani cities involved arson and rock-throwing. One person was killed in protests outside the U.S. consulate in Karachi, and police in Lahore pushed back rioters near the U.S. consulate in that city. The next day, as the turbulence continued, the prime minister ordered a suspension of access to YouTube to prevent further dissemination of “blasphemous material.”

Evidence of public anger in Pakistan grew steadily in the week following the first protests. On September 19, a group of lawyers broke through the gate outside Islamabad’s diplomatic enclave, where they burned American flags and held a brief sit-in. On the same day, personnel at the U.S. consulate in Lahore were moved to a secure location as a precautionary measure. In a reflection of widespread and possibly growing anger, the government took the unusual step of declaring Friday, September 21 as an official “day of peaceful protest.”

**India:**<sup>77</sup> A very small percentage of India’s roughly 180 million Muslims displayed public opposition and anger to the video; notable protests were found in only three cities and have involved only minor violence. Police there have effectively protected American diplomatic facilities. An Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesman called the clip “offensive material.” In Jammu and Kashmir—the country’s only Muslim-majority state—Islamist leaders called for a general strike and organized street protests comprised of thousands of angry Muslims chanting anti-American slogans. A smaller-scale protest in the city of Chennai included rocks being thrown at the U.S. consulate there. Peaceful protests were also seen in Hyderabad.

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<sup>74</sup> Prepared by Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, ext. 7-7612.

<sup>75</sup> Rod Nordland, Sangar Rahimi, and Matthew Rosenberg, “Suicide Bomber Strikes Vehicle Carrying Foreigners in Kabul,” *New York Times*, September 18, 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Prepared by K. Alan Kronstadt, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-5415.

<sup>77</sup> Prepared by K. Alan Kronstadt, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-5415.

**Bangladesh:**<sup>78</sup> Approximately 10,000 demonstrated on Friday, September 14 in Dhaka after prayers but were blocked from approaching the U.S. Embassy by elements of the Rapid Reaction Battalion with armored personnel carriers and water cannons. The demonstrators chanted anti-U.S. slogans, threatened to besiege the embassy, burned the U.S. flag, and demanded an apology from the United States. Bangladesh police and security forces had reportedly tightened security around the embassy in anticipation of the protests. The Bangladesh government condemned the film and reportedly blocked YouTube after the film was not taken off the website. Bangladesh, with a population of 153 million, is approximately 90% Muslim.<sup>79</sup>

**Sri Lanka:**<sup>80</sup> About 300 demonstrators gathered in Colombo to denounce the film near the U.S. Embassy. Some of the protestors called for those who created the film to be hanged.<sup>81</sup> Sri Lanka, with a population of 21 million, is largely Buddhist (69%) with Muslim (8%), Hindu (7%), and Christian (6%) minorities.

**Indonesia:**<sup>82</sup> Police reportedly fired tear gas and used water cannons after hundreds of protesters marched to the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta on September 16, burning American flags, hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails, and setting tires alight. Protests against the film began on September 13, and have been led by a number of groups, including Hizbat Tharir Indonesia, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), and the Islamic People's Forum (FUI). The situation could serve as a test of influence for both hardline and moderate Islamic groups in Indonesia. Moderate religious leaders, including the head of the country's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama, have urged members not to react violently to the film. On September 16, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who has condemned both the film and the Benghazi attack, urged the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to issue edicts against religious defamation. Imprisoned extremist cleric Abu Bakar al Ba'asyir reportedly said in an interview from his cell that "What happened in Libya can be imitated. If it is defaming God and the Prophet [Muhammad], the punishment should be death. [There are] no other considerations."

**Malaysia:**<sup>83</sup> Around 30 protesters gathered at the U.S. Embassy on September 13, and local groups have promised further protests this week. The events could affect the outcome of nationwide parliamentary elections that must be held by March 2013. Officials from both the United Malays National Organization (UNMO), the largest party in the ruling coalition, and the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), Malaysia's largest opposition party, have condemned the video.

**Australia:**<sup>84</sup> Australia, with a population of approximately 23 million, has a Muslim population of about half a million that represents 2.2% of the population.<sup>85</sup> On September 15, about 400

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<sup>78</sup> Prepared by Bruce Vaughn, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-3144.

<sup>79</sup> "Bangladesh Muslims Protest, Blocked From March on U.S. Embassy," Reuters, September 13, 2012. "Bangladesh Blocks YouTube Over Anti-Islam Video," Agence France Presse, September 18, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Prepared by Bruce Vaughn, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-3144.

<sup>81</sup> "Film Protests," *The Guardian*, September 20, 2012. Rory Mulholland, "Fresh protests as Prophet Cartoons Fuel Muslim Fury," Agence France Presse, September 19, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Prepared by Ben Dolven, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-7626.

<sup>83</sup> Prepared by Ben Dolven, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-7626.

<sup>84</sup> Prepared by Bruce Vaughn, Specialist in Asian Affairs, ext. 7-3144.

<sup>85</sup> Steven Lillebuen, "Muslim Rally Off as Police Brace for Mob Violence," *The Courier Mail*, September 21, 2012. "Film Protests Were Extremism Says Australian PM," Agence France Presse, September 20, 2012. Jill Galow, "Protestors Clash with Australia Police Over Film," Reuters, September 15, 2012.

demonstrators carrying placards reading “Behead all those who insult the Prophet” gathered outside the U.S. consulate in Sydney before clashing with police. The police used dogs and chemical sprays to disperse the protestors. Six police officers were injured and eight protestors were arrested in the incident. Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, a self-described atheist, called on immigrants to leave old hatreds behind, learn English, and respect women while condemning the protests as extremism. A demonstration against the film had been called for September 23 in Melbourne, and some observers expressed concern that such a gathering could become violent. Organizers subsequently cancelled the protest, and the Islamic Council of Victoria welcomed the move. Despite this, police remain concerned that a protest may occur and become violent.

### Reactions and Protests in Europe<sup>86</sup>

Most European governments and many of Europe’s largest Muslim organizations have publicly condemned both the violence against U.S. and other foreign embassies and the film widely reported as having provoked the demonstrations. Protests against the film and, more broadly, against the United States and perceived American insults of Islam, have also been held in several European cities, including Amsterdam, Antwerp, Copenhagen, London, and Paris. On September 19, the French satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* published a series of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that were also strongly condemned by French government officials and Muslim groups. As of September 20, there had been no public demonstrations against the cartoons, but French officials had ordered additional security at French facilities abroad, including the temporary closure of embassies and schools in 20 countries.

Most of the demonstrations in Europe against the “Innocence of Muslims” film have been relatively small—all reportedly involving under 1,000 demonstrators, and most, fewer than 300—and have taken place near U.S. embassies or consulates. Protests outside the U.S. Embassy in Paris on September 15 and in central Antwerp on September 16 had not been previously authorized by local officials, resulting in the detainment of between 100 and 150 demonstrators in each city. In both cases, demonstrators reportedly denounced the video and perceived U.S. intolerance of Islam, with small numbers of demonstrators reportedly clashing with police. On September 16, up to 1,000 people demonstrated outside the U.S. Embassy in London, and between 500 and 1,000 demonstrators gathered near the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen.

The largely peaceful protests in London and Copenhagen were reportedly organized by the group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which advocates for the establishment of a global caliphate to politically unite Muslims, and had been previously authorized by local authorities. In Copenhagen, a Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman reportedly condemned what was characterized as an “intolerant and Islamophobic atmosphere that has been created by current and past U.S. administrations.”<sup>87</sup> The leader of one of France’s largest Muslim organizations, the French Council of the Muslim Faith, denounced the protests in Paris, stating that “one should not associate all of France’s Muslims with marginal events like this.”<sup>88</sup>

The film’s dissemination and the subsequent protests in some European cities have rekindled a longer-standing debate in European societies regarding the appropriate balance between upholding fundamental values such as freedom of speech and protecting religious groups from persecution. While European governments have almost uniformly condemned the “Innocence of Muslims” film and its content, there has not been a unified effort to curtail its distribution.<sup>89</sup> In France, government officials and Muslim groups have criticized *Charlie Hebdo* for publishing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, but have underscored the importance of upholding the republic’s commitment to freedom of expression. Some analysts assert that the current protests should be viewed in the broader context of the status of Muslims in European societies. Various observers question whether European governments have done enough to integrate their Muslim communities, pointing, in particular, to the economic and social disparities between Muslims and native Europeans in many countries. Many ethnic and religious minorities in Europe, including Muslims, also feel a sense of cultural alienation and discrimination because of their religion.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Prepared by Paul Belkin and Kristin Archick, Analyst and Specialist in European Affairs, ext. 7-0220 and 7-2668.

<sup>87</sup> “Anger over Mohammed film reached Copenhagen,” *The Copenhagen Post*, September 17, 2012.

<sup>88</sup> “Paris policy detain 100 at U.S. embassy protest,” AFP, September 16, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> In what appears to be the closest policy response in this direction thus far, the German government is reportedly seeking to ban a far-right organization from organizing a public screening of the film, on the grounds that it would disturb public order and violate laws protecting religious freedom. The government reportedly has also banned the (continued...)

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(...continued)

American evangelist preacher, Terry Jones, from entering the country, based on similar legal grounds. “Germany mulls ban on showing hate film,” *Spiegelonline*, September 18, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> For background on Muslims in Europe, see CRS Report RL33166, *Muslims in Europe: Promoting Integration and Countering Extremism*, coordinated by Kristin Archick.