

## Chapter 8

### ROUTINIZATION AND MOBILIZATION OF INJUSTICE: HOW TO LIVE IN A REGIME OF SURVEILLANCE

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'And also a warm welcome to the people of the AIVD who are listening in.'

—AH

The above quote is taken from a speech made in 2012 at a meeting of a network of militant activists who called themselves *BehindBars*. While the remark is clearly made in jest, it illustrates the activists' suspicion that they were being monitored by the Dutch security and intelligence service, the AIVD. This particular activist network emerged around 2010 and presented the authorities with a problem: although clearly flirting with sympathy for al-Qaeda, they had not resorted to violence – although several had tried to go to Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and Chechnya to join the violent struggles in 2005 and 2008. Most of them failed, however. But should they be seen as a threat to the state and society or were they simply a 'bunch of idiots' as one public servant claimed?

All this changed in 2012 and 2013 when it became apparent that many of the activists had left for Syria to join the fight against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. As a result, they became the focus of media attention and the topic of questions in parliament. Additionally, the terrorism threat level was raised, and the activists became even more closely monitored by the intelligence and security services. The attraction this group held for young Muslims was a key consideration in governmental anti-radicalization policies. Our study of these militant activists focused on the nature and type of activism they employed and how this activism interacted with the media and state.<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws upon the empirical study I conducted in the Netherlands with Team Free Saddik/BehindBars/StreetDawah activists. And more specifically upon the ways in which these activists anticipated that they were being monitored by Dutch intelligence and the AIVD, and the extent to which the police interfered with their private lives. But it wasn't only the state institutions that the activists felt scrutinized by, it was also the debates taking place about Islam and Muslims in general. On the one hand they felt that, as Muslims, they were marked out as a problem and, on the other, they noticed how particular themes from the public debates trickled down into the everyday

conversations that they had with people, most noticeably after shocking events such as the violent attacks of 9/11 and the murder of Theo van Gogh, but also throughout the rise of Islamic State (IS). At the same time, counter-radicalization policies resulted in Muslims being monitored as potential security threats by police and security services.

The circle of people who worked together between 2010 and 2014 under the names Team Free Saddik/BehindBars/StreetDawah can best be described as a changing circle of friends and acquaintances who shared similar ideological references and gathered together from time to time to organize political campaigns and support rallies for prisoners (Muslims whom they regarded as political prisoners) through which they demonstrated their sympathy and support for al-Qaeda and IS (also known as ISIS). They frequently criticized Dutch politics in provocative and sometimes aggressive ways.

In this chapter I explore how militant activists experience the public and political debates about Islam and radicalization and the monitoring by police and intelligence services as forms of soft and hard surveillance. I focus in particular on two overlapping but also contradictory patterns of responses that I encountered most frequently: routinization and mobilization. Routinization and mobilization are both driven by a sense of injustice but relate to different types of reactions: the first is invoked by the desire to resist by not allowing the surveillance to affect one's daily life and the second by the need to speak out. First I explain how the radicalization discourse has its roots in the racialization of danger, which objectifies Muslims as a potential threat to security and social cohesion. I then argue that the workings of this security gaze in the media, politics and in the monitoring by police and security services, can be described as a regime of surveillance. This triggers the question: how does one live in a situation where one is categorized as a (potential) danger and a problem? I look particularly closely at how the activists managed to routinize the surveillance in their daily lives and how they used it to mobilize people by first analysing their responses to the soft surveillance, then the hard surveillance. Finally, I describe a particular event that marked the collapse of this regime of surveillance – a football game – and the police response.

### *The racialization of danger in the Netherlands*

The idea of Muslims constituting a danger to society is not new. In this section I will address how Muslims are racialized as potential threats through the nexus of race, religion and security. Although the connection between (radical) Islam and threat is often seen as a result of the 9/11 attacks, the securitization of Islam and Muslims was already emerging in the Netherlands in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>2</sup> The belief that migrants and their culture posed a danger to society was present from the earliest days of the Dutch minority policies and stemmed from the worry that migrant cultures were a potential threat to the Dutch rule of law.<sup>3</sup> Policymakers and government advisors were motivated by the belief that the Dutch rule of law was the result of the codification of 'cultural achievements'; something that had to

be protected. It was, in particular, the 'compatibility of Islam and the rule of law' that was challenged, and it was believed that a 'conflict of values and norms' could emerge.<sup>4</sup>

Later, during the 1990s, political parties across a broad political spectrum questioned whether an increase in 'cultural diversity' would threaten social cohesion.<sup>5</sup> By the 1990s, developments had already taken place that involved migrants being categorized primarily on the basis of their culture and/or religion. After the Rushdie Affair, the Dutch security service presented a report making clear that it had shifted its focus from the 'communist threat' to migration and Islam, stating that one of the possible side effects of migration from South European and North African countries could be a 'progressive radicalization or fundamentalization of Muslim communities in foreign parts'. Concerns were raised that conflicts from the countries of origin could be transferred to the Netherlands with 'bloodshed, obstruction of the freedom of speech or other constitutional rights [and] severe disturbances of the public order' as a possible consequence (see Chapter 2 by Fadil and De Koning in this volume).<sup>6</sup> In debates and policies in the 1990s, Dutch values with regard to secular and sexual freedoms became the standard for measuring integration: the so-called culturalization of citizenship.<sup>7</sup> Both the culturalization of citizenship and the securitization of Islam have had profound impacts on Dutch integration policies, evidenced by the stronger emphasis placed on the value of assimilation.<sup>8</sup>

A second strand in the racialization of Muslims pertains to the distinction made in Dutch integration policies and debates between so-called autochthonous and allochthonous people. It has been difficult to determine the precise definition of these terms and to decide who is placed in the category of allochthonous. In general, this category refers to people who are considered to be non-native and a distinction is made between Westerners and non-Westerners. However, neither of these distinctions is applied in a consistent manner. As Yanow and Van der Haar show, people who are seen as having a large cultural distance from the autochthonized Dutch people, based upon ideas about birthplace and kinship, are categorized as non-Western allochthonous, as are children who have at least one parent born outside the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup> The opposition, therefore, not only pertains to birthplace but also to kinship, while the link with culture connects both birthplace and kinship to stereotypical explanations of perceived collective differences in attitudes and practices.

Although the process of allochthonization does not necessarily, or exclusively, refer to Muslims, they have nevertheless become exemplary 'allochthones'.<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that Christian migrants, by definition, become part of the Dutch moral community, as the quintessential autochthonized Dutch person is white and many allochthonized people (for example, Moroccan-Dutch) are referred to as having a little colour.<sup>11</sup>

A third strand of racialization occurred through what Tebble identified as the discourse of 'identity liberalism' which emerged in opposition to multiculturalism and is characterized by a strong focus placed on advocating a national culture based upon shared values, underpinned by appeals to the state to protect this national

culture against allegedly intolerant forces so as to safeguard liberal democracy.<sup>12</sup> The emphasis in the pleas made by a few Dutch politicians was not only on having a people with a shared culture (which for them was liberal and secular) but also on building a strong defence of liberal principles in the face of an illiberal force that was increasingly exemplified by Islam. In particular, the visible presence of Islam, such as women wearing headscarves or face veils, the various mosques, plus the audible presence of the public call to prayer, were seen as actively opposing the so-called secular and/or Judeo-Christian tradition of the Netherlands.<sup>13</sup>

### *The regime of surveillance*

The events of 9/11, the murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, and the rise of anti-Islam politicians such as Wilders, have resulted in the growing securitization of Islam in the Netherlands; a process which has placed the focus in media, politics and integration policies almost entirely on Muslims and Islam and the alleged threat they present to democracy and social cohesion.<sup>14</sup> The debates about (radical) Islam and the counter-radicalization policies have influenced Muslims' lives severely, as Croft has shown to particular effect in the UK.<sup>15</sup> In his research Croft examines the performance of different identity formations and the categories of Otherness that are produced by securitization. He focuses in particular on the Radical Other (while acknowledging the existence of other categories as well, such as the Abject Other, the Oriental Other, and so on).<sup>16</sup> Elaborating on Croft's work, Eroukhmanoff argues that the securitization of Muslims produces a different category of Otherness as well: the *Remote Other*.<sup>17</sup> The Remote Other may be distant in a spatial or temporal sense but is even more so in an ontological sense: an Other who can be observed, defined and analysed from a distance in order to determine signals, indicators and triggers of radicalization which can then be responded to with the imposition of certain measures. Eroukhmanoff makes a plea for a more relational approach to the Remote Other who she describes as being unconnected and independent from radicalization. This chapter builds on that stance by analysing the regime of surveillance: how militant activists (often labelled as 'radicals') respond to the nexus of securitization, radicalization and racialization.

In the context of the securitization of Islam (conceptualized as the reduction of Islam to a topic of security and the reduction of security to Islam), Edmunds makes a distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' modes of regulation and surveillance.<sup>18</sup> The hard surveillance only targets and affects a small number of people (those who are suspected of potentially supporting foreign fighters, for example, or who plan to go to Syria themselves). This type of regime includes practices such as 24/7 monitoring, wiretapping, disturbing all kinds of activities, for example, but also includes the sharper focus that the intelligence services and the Dutch National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) now have by identifying 'Salafism' as the main security threat in general and the main Islamic security threat in particular. The soft surveillance involves what Edmunds has called 'the

"hyper-legalization" of perceived cultural threats, which can range, for example, from the banning of particular Islamic clothing such as the headscarf or face veil to the outlawing of minarets, because they are all deemed to be a security risk.<sup>19</sup>

Taking the hard and soft surveillance together we are able to see that surveillance is often racialized, that racialization frequently invokes ideas about danger and threats and that this racial surveillance is part of modern society.<sup>20</sup> The racial surveillance of Muslim militant activists that I focus on therefore involves a much wider notion of surveillance than is usually deployed in surveillance studies.<sup>21</sup> I use it more specifically in relation to the answers that Muslim militant activists in my research gave to the question, 'how should I live while being categorized and scrutinized as a security problem?' Beliefs that people have about how to behave in particular situations go beyond mere imagery, they also relate to concepts determining what a good life or proper conduct is and the particular moral reasoning supporting these convictions. Following Lakoff and Collier, I treat such ideas as specific ethical formations which emerge in uncertain circumstances.<sup>22</sup> These formations or 'regimes of living' are to be seen

as congeries of moral reasoning and practice that emerge in situations that present ethical problems – that is, situations in which the question of how to live is at stake. Methodologically, the regime of living is abstract: a given regime of living can identify common ethical configurations in diverse situations, and, thus, takes diverse actual forms.<sup>23</sup>

Lakoff and Collier use the concept to bring together different ethical configurations ranging from ethical regulation in Canada, to development and urbanism in Brazil, garrison-entrepôt in the Chad Basin and organ trade in India. The concept of 'regimes of living' is well suited for analysing the responses given by militant activists when asked how they live in a situation of securitization and racialization.<sup>24</sup> The regime of surveillance resembles Pantazis and Pemberton's<sup>25</sup> argument (based on Hillyard's original thesis about the Irish in the UK)<sup>26</sup> that Muslims in Britain have replaced the Irish as the 'suspect community' through the political discourses on counterterrorism that produced and reproduced the idea that Muslims were a problem simply because of their presumed membership to a particular group. Unlike Pantazis and Pemberton, I employ the notion of a 'regime of surveillance' to take into account and emphasize the experiences of the subjects themselves. Using this concept, I explore the different ethical formations constructed by Muslim militant activists in the Netherlands and investigate how they carve out their lives within the context of Dutch society.

### *Soft surveillance: The experience of being marked as a problem*

One of the more well-known militant activists, Abu Muhammad, regarded the debate surrounding Islam as providing him with an important lesson, one that helped him in his efforts to be a good Muslim. Consequently, he no longer mourned

the fact that politicians such as the anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders have made the perceived division between Islam and the West the core of their political message:

In retrospect, I'm glad about it. I have been confronted with the facts since I was a child. We Muslims need someone like Wilders, and the unrest he creates in society. Muslims have to realize that this society doesn't want us. They are waking us up with a good, strong jolt.

Regimes of living are 'configurations of normative, technical, and political elements' providing the means 'for organizing, reasoning about, and "living" ethically.'<sup>27</sup> The excerpt of the conversation I had with Abu Muhammad illustrates the way that he interpreted the Dutch debate on Islam and the role of Freedom Party leader Wilders as a call upon him and the wider Muslim community to wake up. The question of 'how to live' emerges throughout the lives of the militant activists, not only because their behaviour is affected by the hard surveillance (which I will discuss in the next section) but also because the soft surveillance that comes about through the debates and policies regarding Islam, integration and radicalization has an impact as well.

What matters here is that debates, policies and concrete intelligence and monitoring actions are a form of governmentality through regulatory interventions and surveillance: people adjust their attitudes and behaviour towards the state and others based upon the experience of being scrutinized and the idea that there is a world of those being watched (in this case Muslims) and others who watch them. Their experiences of the debates on Islam and integration, with topics ranging from how Muslims take a shower after sports, to national security issues, to the treatment of women, trickle down to the work floor or the school classroom. Muslims feel questioned and interrogated for what other Muslims do in the name of Islam. Following Brubaker, by identifying themselves as Muslims, people are not only responding to being stigmatized and excluded, but also to 'being cast, categorized, queried and held accountable as Muslims in public discourse and private interaction ... for what others say or do as Muslims'.<sup>28</sup> The racialization of danger produces a situation in which policies and debates, as well as concrete intelligence measures, make a distinction between people who are potentially acceptable (safe and not – yet – radical) and potentially unacceptable (a risk or dangerous and – probably – radical). The phenomenon of Salafism is the tie that binds 'the root causes approach' in radicalization together with the ideology (see Fadil and De Koning, Chapter 2 in this volume) and serves as one of the indicators of risk. Note that, the notion of risk implies an uncertainty and, whether acceptable or unacceptable, a system has to be in place to determine whether those considered at risk / a risk are dangerous or not.

The stories recounted by militant activists relating to hard and soft surveillance show how they reason about ethical issues, the good life, how guides for moral action are created, and how moral subjects are formed.<sup>29</sup> Particular events heighten the anticipation of being scrutinized and held accountable. There are also particular

events that stand out as so-called 'truth events', in particular 9/11, the murder of Theo van Gogh and the Paris attacks of 2015. In my conversations with militant activists, it was their experiences in schools that stood out in a striking fashion. As AA (twenty-seven, Pakistani-Dutch) told me:

It was the day after 9/11. We talked about it in class and our teacher showed the video with George W. Bush saying: 'You are either with us or against us'. Then the teacher stood up, pointed at me and asked 'And AA, where do you stand?' I didn't know. But I knew I wasn't with the Americans.

It appears that for many people, such as AA's teacher, events like 9/11 are examples of 'truth events': events that have challenged what is regarded as a consensus on diversity, Islam and multiculturalism and have steered the discourse in a more disciplining and confrontational direction.<sup>30</sup> For AA, this is also a 'truth event'. In his own words, the search for identity began when he increasingly focused on Islam, global political issues (such as the *War on Terror*) and the Dutch debate on Islam. Of course, one might argue that AA does not know what the teacher meant by asking this question. And indeed, a person who feels that he or she is being scrutinized, for example, by a colleague, co-student or teacher, does not always know what the other person is thinking or means when asking a particular question or making a remark. That explains why in discussions among my interlocutors there is not only a recounting of the experience of being scrutinized but also questions such as: 'Are you sure you understood it well? Are you sure it was not just an innocent question?' These questions are ways to not only divert the negative experience, but they also show a degree of doubt and uncertainty in assessing how outsiders perceive them.<sup>31</sup> AA's reasoning about 9/11 above shows the 'the dynamic process through which a situated form of moral reasoning – a regime of living – is invoked and reworked in a problematic situation to provide a possible guide to action'.<sup>32</sup> He did not know how to answer initially and it made him rethink his own positions as he did not know where he stood but he knew he was not with the Americans. It is in difficult, uncertain situations in which there is a 'perceived gap between the real and the ideal' where regimes of living provide people with possible answers to their questions and struggles.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the event in AA's classroom can be seen as an example of producing a 'truth event' for AA as he felt that he was being put on the spot because of his religion for the first time in his life.

*Routinization: "That's just how it is"*

Many people among the militant activist groups refer to stories like the one recounted by AA as examples of intolerance, describing them as unfair and 'yet another example' of the double standards applied to Muslims (compared to others). But the most dominant reaction is one of resignation: 'That's just how it is'. In dealing with these interruptions in their daily routines, the militant activists demonstrate similar coping strategies to those Siebers found in his research on migrant hostility in work settings.<sup>34</sup> Some of Siebers's informants reported that

they responded to intolerant remarks as if they referred to others rather than themselves, adding that trying to explain things was pointless. Thus, they attempt to immunize themselves by avoiding these conversations. The phrase: 'That's just how it is', is not necessarily the same as submitting to the racist intolerance or being defeated by it. It is a conscious attempt to protect what matters to them in daily life (having an education or a job) from interactions that distract them from it in multiple ways (from diverting their focus to prompting the feeling that they have to continuously defend themselves). In her article on how Palestinians live under Israeli occupation, Allen focuses on the *normalization of violence* and how people are 'getting by' as a way to describe and analyse one of the agentic options people have in that particular sociopolitical field.<sup>35</sup> Her analysis of 'getting by' and my analysis of routinization point to a *form of agency that is neither open resistance, nor surrender or apathy*, but that is available to people within the structures that determine everyday life and shows the different interests and loyalties they have to negotiate.<sup>36</sup> For many men in my research, including the militant activists, their reasoning about how to respond was not only determined by their ambitions to be a pious Muslim but also about how to behave as a husband, father and member of a family.<sup>37</sup> Many feared that publicly resisting the racialization and securitization could endanger their families and would therefore interfere with the roles, responsibilities and loyalties they had towards their families and children.<sup>38</sup>

The activists were keen to protect their private lives, and in particular their families, from undesirable influences that would lead them astray from the right path. Their private domain did not include just the home but extended beyond it too, as they walked together down the street, played sports together and attended lectures. It was also a domain in which, ideally, spirituality and the worshipping of Allah were more important than material gain, wealth and status based on matters that, according to them, had nothing to do with Islam or went against its principles. Some of the activists told me that they preferred not to have a paid job, but to devote their time (together with their wives and families) to reading the Qur'an and studying Islam.

The activists claim that they were distracted from their focus on their faith because of the debate on Islam, by (as they saw it) unnecessary apprehensions by police in the street, identity checks, accusatory questions from colleagues and fellow students about Islam, the arrests of 'innocent brothers', and unbelievers' insults relating to Islam and the Prophet. This was a reference to an important effect of the surveillance of Muslims, namely the idea that someone was always harassing them, holding them accountable, calling them to order and looking over their shoulders. This besieging of their private lives, as they experienced it, led them to withdraw into their own circle of family and friends. Here they found the support, friendship, spirituality and brotherhood that they did not find anywhere else (especially since other Muslims did not want to be associated with them). They claimed that family and friends protected them from intrusive comments, policy measures and debates. This led them to maintain a stronger boundary between their private lives and the influence of outsiders but subsequently this withdrawal presented them with a dilemma. While the withdrawal may well offer

protection from a hostile world it also meant, in their own view, that they were adopting a submissive attitude towards the enemy that was not fitting behaviour for a good Muslim. It was necessary to stand up for Allah and his Prophet, and for the Muslim community – many of the activists stated. But this increased the risk of coming under even closer scrutiny, which would threaten their private lives even more.

#### *Mobilization: 'Yes, we are radical'*

On the one hand, the routinization of surveillance in daily life and the attempts to avoid confrontation provide a sharp contrast with the public actions the militant activists took, but also fed the activism in multiple ways. The same mechanisms that the state used to control the conduct of individuals, such as the categorization of people as 'radical' (see Chapter 11 by Lechkar in this volume), also created a space for forms of resistance to develop which enable dissidents to behave in a 'deviant' way and claim the 'right to be different'.<sup>39</sup> The phrase 'That's just how it is' in the context of mobilization also serves. I suggest, as a 'truth phrase': when people utter this statement they express the idea that this injustice is part of daily life and, moreover, that this is the 'true face' of Dutch society. This is the message they disseminated in their 2011 demonstration 'The war has begun' against a possible ban on wearing the face veil in the Netherlands. They criticized Dutch politicians for having double standards and claiming to promote freedom while imposing a ban on wearing the face veil. They did not believe that their protests would be effective (in the sense of stopping the ban), but they wanted to make a statement anyway. By being vocal they were also able to criticize those Muslim organizations that did not speak out and expose them as having sold out to the Dutch government. In this way, their protest becomes a means to an end in itself: it is about showing readiness to act on behalf of Muslims and refusing to submit to what they deemed as the unjust regulation of Muslims by the Dutch state. Not acting would be the same as submitting themselves to the Dutch state, or, as they saw it, to a false religion called democracy. Such an attitude would be contrary to their idea as to how a Muslim should behave: steadfast in the face of oppression.

A peculiar mix of politics and anti-politics characterized the militant activists' mode of resistance. It was political because it was part of the 'continuous criticism and politicization' of the policies and debates in the Netherlands concerning the regulation of Muslims and Islam, Islamophobia and the 'War on Terror'.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, it also affected the ways in which governmental power was implemented: their presence at public rallies with the Islamic seal flag (dubbed the 'ISIS flag'), their provocative and sometimes aggressive behaviour and the departure of various activists for Syria all increased the sense of urgency of, and justification for, anti-radicalization policy among politicians, policymakers and opinion leaders.

Their activism was also anti-political. Parvez describes the anti-political (in the case of the face veil) as the 'rejection of state engagement in favor of the valorization of private life, as a substitute for democratic political participation'.<sup>41</sup> The protests against, and disturbance of, debates about Islam and the protest against the

proposed ban on the face veil in 2011 were all, partly, framed as acts of resistance and stimulated by the desire 'to be left alone'. At the same time the activists connected their personal impressions with the larger political sphere. During the protest against the film *Innocence of Muslims* in 2012, for example, they responded with the slogan: 'You took our countries, you took our women, but you are not going to take our Prophet'. The activists felt that proposals such as the ban on the face veil were yet another example of how the state was infringing on their private lives. By acting in this manner, the Muslim activists attempted to withdraw from the regulation and politicization of Muslim life but also used the occasion to propagate their idealized version of Islam. The goal was, therefore, not only to resist regulation by the Dutch state but also to strive for a different form of regulation.<sup>42</sup>

The ways the militant activists expressed their grievances were usually considered by many opponents as rude, harsh, aggressive and un-Islamic. A lot of the Muslims we encountered in our research who were outside the militant circles and were often keen to emphasize that they were trying to be pious Muslims, also made clear (often sooner rather than later) that they were not 'radical', 'extreme' and certainly not a 'terrorist'. This reveals how deeply people worry about being categorized as potentially dangerous; something that was expressed when they modified their appearance. One of the women in earlier research stated: 'I do not wear a niqab nor do I wear black. I don't want people to be scared because of the way I look even though I do admire my sisters who are steadfast enough to wear the niqab.' Such a 'performance of safety'<sup>43</sup> is heavily criticized by the militant activists in my research. Although they do adjust their attire in daily life so they do not stand out (for example, when shopping for groceries) they regard such an attitude as evidence of submission to the *kufar* (infidel) and defeat in the war against Islam. In general, this kind of criticism is never levelled against 'ordinary' Muslims, as the activists do not want to appear unreasonable and claim that they understand the reasoning behind it. However, when it comes to other Muslims, who are visible in the public debate, their criticism becomes fierce and harsh. Borrowing from Malcolm X's exposé on the 'house negro' versus the 'field negro', the Muslims who publicly oppose 'radicalism', condemn terrorist attacks in Europe and cooperate with the government, are accused of being 'house Muslims': domesticated Muslims who dilute (or even leave) Islam in order to guarantee a government subsidy, or social standing and acceptance. Furthermore, after the publication of research results by Koopmans<sup>44</sup> on fundamentalism among Muslims triggered a media outcry, the activists responded with a new article on their website called: 'It's true, we are radical'. They explained that, according to them, radicalism meant holding on to the fundamentals of Islam and not giving in to the idea that Muslims have to dilute Islam in order to be accepted as citizens (which according to them would not work anyway as Muslims would still be regarded as second-class citizens at best). In so doing they embraced, redefined and re-appropriated the label 'radical' to present themselves as steadfast Muslims. And here a paradox of militant activism emerges: by making clear that they wanted to be left alone in a harsh and provocative way, they draw more attention to themselves and their

daily lives as so-called 'radical Muslims'. They used the debates and the labels in the debates to draw attention to their messages, but through their provocative and sometimes aggressive stands, the security gaze only became stronger. In the end their performance of steadfastness resulted in an intensification of counter-radicalization policy.

### *Hard surveillance: 'We are being watched'*

The militant activists I worked with were troubled not only by the debates and policies regarding Islam influencing their private lives, but also by being watched and monitored by the security services. Here routinization, much more than mobilization, was the most common reaction. Here, for example, is an excerpt of a phone conversation:

- OA: Martijn, before we continue, you do realize this phone is being tapped, right?  
 MdK: Most likely, yes.  
 OA: OK, I just thought I should mention it; we have to be careful, although I have nothing to hide.  
 MdK: No problem, I understand.

This conversation took place at the beginning of a phone call I had with a friend of a militant activist who had been convicted for incitement and for being a member of a criminal organization with a terrorist intent. This shows a clear awareness, or anticipation, that police or security services were monitoring the call, and is followed by an explicit statement that the person had nothing to hide anyway. As Ali explains, hard surveillance is not only about the practice itself but also about the expectation that it is being done at that specific moment.<sup>45</sup> My interlocutor's behaviour is attuned to that expectation even though, or perhaps especially because, he cannot know what the person who is listening in (if at all) is looking for. He does so, not to stop the conversation, but to be able to continue it. My interlocutors often made statements like this, which, in the same way as it does with soft surveillance, points to the routinization of being monitored by the police and security services. Most of the people I talked to have reasons for thinking they are being monitored. Many activists were monitored almost continuously by police officers and the intelligence services, and police officers were present during demonstrations as well as leisure activities. Some officers of the security services and police were also known by the activists as the individuals who were monitoring them. Although this form of surveillance led to some hilarity among the activists, it also appeared to give them a certain status ('It proves we matter', one of them told me).

While this chapter focuses on the hard surveillance of militant activists, it is important to note that this surveillance tactic is not restricted to this group only. Other Muslims (or people who may 'look Muslim') can also be targeted if they are in the 'wrong' places – places that are deemed a risk. Many activist networks

(mostly Salafi but not all) have shared their stories about sudden visits by the police or other institutions (this is not always clear to them). This would often occur right after they established an organization with a political orientation that was unclear to outsiders. As Ali shows in his research with Muslim students in the United States, the surveillance of Muslims 'is enacted upon individuals and communities deemed suspicious by the state rather than simply as a response to a specific act'.<sup>46</sup> In the autumn of 2016, the police at Schiphol airport approached a young man. According to his own account, on Facebook, he was interrogated and then released. After his lawyer asked the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (who are responsible for airport security) for information; he got an official letter stating that the man had been arrested and investigated because 'he fitted a profile that matches jihadism'.<sup>47</sup> For obvious reasons the Marechaussee refused to disclose the content of such a profile although behaviour and outward appearances were probably part of it.<sup>48</sup> The letter also stated that no further investigations against the man were being conducted and that he was not a suspect. As the person in question was not working as an activist in any way, and opposed ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra on his Facebook pages, the declaration that he had 'a profile that matches jihadism' opened the door to the widest speculation. In this way the system does not only try to expose those racialized as Muslims who may indeed be a potential threat, it also stigmatizes those who are at risk (but not considered a risk anymore). The example also shows how hard surveillance, which is meant to increase safety, can transform a space into one which is potentially unsafe for particular individuals; something which many Muslims in my research (militant activists and others) were keenly aware of.

The main reaction among the militant activists to hard surveillance is similar to their responses to soft surveillance: 'That's just how it is.' This response to hard surveillance can be seen as a mode of attuning oneself to living in a situation in which one knows one is being monitored or one expects to be. It is a form of 'inattention' as Larkin explains in relation to how people in Nigeria engage with the disruptions in daily life that are caused by all kinds of attention-seeking technologies (such as the public call to prayer).<sup>49</sup> In particular, because of the reoccurring politico-religious conflicts, **one has to cultivate 'inattention' to be able to live and work in the urban areas. People do pay attention to the violent messages but develop the skill to not openly display attention: 'it is a conscious, wilful act and not simply an inability to attend.'**<sup>50</sup> With a little twist we can argue the same for the militant activists. Through their construction and protection of a space where everything conforms to their own rules (instead of the government's), they try not to be affected by the surveillance and to create a condition that enables them to continue with their activism and to develop the necessary skills to do so.

Sometimes, however, this **deliberate inattention** does not work. Take, for example, my conversations with AZ, one of the militant activists who was under surveillance by the police and security services. During a conversation we were having in a restaurant in The Hague, after a few minutes, he suggested moving seats because: 'I have to have a clear view of what is going on here and I want to be able to leave as quickly as possible if necessary'. A few days later when we met in the

Public Library of The Hague, he grew visibly nervous during our conversation, looking around, staring at people passing by and losing focus on the topic of the conversation. 'Those three guys, with similar rucksacks and those shoes, they're walking around but always stay close to us. They are watching us.' Changing places and monitoring one's environment for people who seem out of place become ways of maintaining a certain degree of control but it also converts the space into one full of danger and suspicion, often expressed through statements like: 'But maybe we are just getting paranoid'.

This explicit, and frequently made, reference to paranoia is an expression of a desire to be unaffected by the hard surveillance without challenging it publicly. In this particular case the routinization failed and gave way to surveillance paranoia: changing places or changing the venue is then a way to restore the routinization. Another method of routinization is to make jokes about the surveillance. Sometimes this happens right in front of known officers of the police and security services but also often among themselves. For example, at the start of a meeting I attended, one of the speakers not only welcomed the visitors, the press and the researcher, but also 'the security services, those poor guys who are now going to listen to one of the most inciting, sorry, boring lectures ever'.

Humour such as this functioned as a way of bonding and instilled in those present that they were among like-minded people who had to deal with similar circumstances, challenges and questions. At the same time, being among each other also appeared to be a way to continue the routinization of the regime of surveillance: being less vulnerable and more shielded against any disturbance of their daily lives by the hard surveillance. Furthermore, even tougher measures such as the arrests of a few militants some years prior to the Syria conflict was explained as part and parcel of being a 'true' Muslim. Abu Muhammad, for example, then explained:<sup>51</sup>

This is all a political game, but the more Islam is attacked the stronger your *imaan* (inner faith) becomes since the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, predicted this, that Islam will start as something strange and will end as something strange. And then yes, we are the strangers or *ghuraba*.

The narrative of the *ghuraba* is based upon two Hadiths, which are believed to represent the true Muslim as a travelling stranger in this world who acquiesces to his fate. Abu Muhammad like several of his friends believe that persecution and living in isolation is a consequence of being steadfast believers just as it was for Prophet Muhammad. As a consequence, they live on the margins of a godless society; reliving the idea that Islam began as something strange, or at odds with the status quo of that time, and will end as such.<sup>52</sup> This example also shows that being under surveillance helps to form the self-understanding of these militant activists and supports their internal construction of a 'true' Muslim, a committed, steadfast activist. Furthermore, both the hard and soft surveillance contributed to them seeing the state as their enemy. They presented themselves as hardliners who were going against the oppressive tactics of the state. For instance, they once released a video in which they

allegedly disclosed how the police monitored and traced them while they were driving through The Hague in a car. Yet, they were often accommodating and very friendly to the police during demonstrations. Furthermore, several of the activists also depended on the state for welfare benefits. As such, being the subject of soft and hard surveillance resulted in the individual having a very complicated and ambivalent relationship with the state.

### *The Hondius case: How mobilization and routinization interfere*

In the former sections, I showed how strategies of routinization and mobilization are often deployed by activists in dealing with the dominant context. Yet the use of these tactics also created its own problems and challenges. To illustrate this, I want to focus on what has come to be known as 'the Hondius case'. This affair describes a confrontation that took place in September 2013 between the police and the activists during a friendly football match after an incident occurred during another friendly match a week earlier; an incident which had attracted a lot of media attention.

The weekend football games first started in 2011 as an opportunity to be with like-minded people, brothers and friends who combined their love for football with their love for Islam (there are always lectures as well). These gatherings can be seen as attempts to create a space of their own, one in which they can conduct themselves in the way they want to. It is a space for them in which they are not, or rather were not, bothered by the authorities and the media.

In September 2013, during a football game, they posted a photo of one of the men walking with the flag of the seal of the Prophet Muhammad, which had come to be known as the 'ISIS flag' since this movement rose to power. The following day the photo appeared on the twitter account of ISIS stating that Dutch Muslims supported the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria. The photo was quickly discovered by Dutch journalists and Belgian 'jihad watchers' and caused a controversy; people were incensed by this statement of support and the blatant flag flying. The event also became politicized because of the meanings that were imposed upon the flag (and subsequently also upon the young men) such as the 'al-Qaeda flag' and 'terrorist flag'. The Freedom Party asked questions about it in the Dutch Parliament and called the mayor of The Hague 'a coward' after he stated he disliked the flag but could not do anything about it because it was a matter of the freedom of speech.

Although this controversy was exactly what some activists feared, i.e. their space being threatened by public attention expressed in terms of terrorism and al-Qaeda, others sought to respond to this commotion by organizing a new, larger football gathering with a barbecue the following weekend at the Hondius playground in The Hague. The controversy had prompted the activists to make a political statement, on the one hand, by organizing a larger event and, on the other hand, to ridicule the responses by saying it was 'only football and a barbecue'. According to AM the gathering was just friends playing football and 'there is nothing wrong with that. Obviously, we're not going to do anything crazy, we know

the AIVD is monitoring us. It is just a family and friends get together'. This quote is interesting because AM clearly shows that he knows he and his friends are under surveillance and that they take that into account. We see, furthermore, that he expects the public debate about them (the soft surveillance) will lead to police presence (hard surveillance).

The activists expected the police to arrive, and they were right, but in a way they did not anticipate: the police cracked down on the meeting. After holding the activists for several hours at the playground, the police arrested five people for incitement and refusing to show their ID cards.<sup>33</sup> Later that night several activists took a photo of the Islamic seal flag flying over another playing field and sent it to *De Volkskrant* newspaper which published it the very next day. This was a clear demonstration of how the crackdown enabled the activists to construct a counter-subjectivity. In the article and the photo, they presented themselves not as moderate or liberal Muslims who complied with the wishes of the Dutch authorities, but as Muslims who defied and challenged these authorities by going on a field at night with the flag, posting a photo online and announcing more 'football actions'. The Hondius event did not only have a political value for the militant activists, it also had an ethical one since it provided them with a sense of being prosecuted as Muslims and of having proudly and steadfastly stood up against it: exactly the way 'true' Muslims should conduct themselves. This made their resistance, in their eyes, an action, a choice, not just a reaction against the state's policies and media attention. Their subjectivity was enabled by the publicity and police actions but it also escaped it because it did not submit (in the fullest sense) to the governmentalities of the state. Furthermore, the event and their reaction to it established a particular kind of reputation for them among other Muslims who saw them as intimidating or even threatening. Many of the Salafi Muslims from mainstream Salafi networks who were present at 'Hondius' did not agree with the way the BehindBars network handled the confrontation and did not want their studies or professional careers jeopardized by confronting the police (something they stated afterwards, not during the event itself). The event therefore created a greater division between the BehindBars network and other (Salafi) Muslims.

The debate about the flag could not have emerged without the ongoing racialization of danger (itself exacerbated because of the rise of ISIS and its relentless actions). This subsequently produced a situation in which the soft surveillance and hard surveillance endured by these militant activists came together in the crackdown on this event. In turn, the event (which they called the 'Battle of Hondius') enabled a 'performance of radicalism' (instead of a performance of safety) by the militant activists. At the same time, however, the authorities and the media labelled them as 'radical Muslims', their football gathering as a political manifestation and, in the later indictments, as 'a meeting of jihadists who were recruiting'. In 2015, during the trial of ten activists and foreign fighters (most of whom were present at Hondius), it became clear that the 'Hondius meeting' triggered the start of the inquiry into the militants' activities initiated by the public prosecutor and represented the beginning of the collapse of both the routinization and mobilization.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

The securitization of Islam and the racialization of danger create an exclusive security gaze on Muslims within a specific arrangement of the Dutch nation-state, race and religion. Drawing on different ways of constructing Muslims as a danger through policies and debates concerning Islam, integration and counter-radicalization, Muslims, or people who 'look like' Muslims and, in particular, look like 'radical Muslims', have become more visible and potentially dangerous and suspect. In this chapter I have analysed how a network of friends and acquaintances operating under names such as BehindBars, who were labelled as a potential threat to security, responded to modes of hard and soft surveillance. These forms of surveillance had direct and indirect consequences for these individuals' lives and work. The practices of routinization and mobilization are part of the regime of surveillance, a regime of living that offers a possible answer to the question, 'How should I live when I am a security problem?' In analysing this regime of surveillance this study adds to the existing critical studies on the apparatus of security – by highlighting and interpreting the perspectives and experiences of those who are directly targeted by the security state.

For the militant activists, the soft and hard surveillance produced a situation in which they were continually checking themselves and asking themselves how they should live. As Lakoff and Collier point out, regimes of living may provide answers to an uncertain situation but they can also raise new ethical problems.<sup>55</sup> The tension that arose between the desire to live one's life without interference, and the desire not to submit, was an important feature of how a very small and specific group of militant activists behaved in a context of the monitoring and surveillance carried out by the security services and police.

Although the militant activists state that they get used to these tactics and that dealing with them becomes a routine, in some cases, when their personal sphere (not necessarily private sphere) is invaded and the routinization hindered, they have to devise new responses to the question, 'how do we live (or act) now?' This question also emerges from their deliberations about what kind of protest they want to stage. At the same time, they also want to be 'left alone' and have their own free space, a space in which they can live according to an alternative type of self-regulation than what is proposed by the state: an Islamic one. The phrase 'That's just how it is' is an attempt to avoid confronting the situation, but the same statement also reveals an alienation from a society that treats Muslims with double standards and is, at the same time, a critique of Dutch society.

Analysing the regime of surveillance of the militants provides us with insight into the ways that people understand themselves in relation to other members of Dutch society (including other Muslims) and in relation to the counter-radicalization practices of the state. For militant activists it was important to be able to continue their lives as they saw fit: on the one hand being inconspicuous and on the other not submitting to the practices of the state. As Yuval-Davis reminds us, challenging what the state regards as public and private is a political act.<sup>56</sup> Liberal states intervene differently in matters that are regarded as private

than they do in public matters. The racialization of danger and the threat that may come from the militant activists, in particular, has legitimized and enabled the state to monitor the private lives of these people, especially after they were categorized as a potential terrorist threat. The fact that the investigation and intelligence agencies focused on the activists' private lives means that this sphere also became politicized – a public domain – whether the activists wanted this or not. As long as they did not break the law, the authorities had only limited control over them, but the militant activists couldn't manage to elude their grasp entirely. For the activists, the boundaries between politics and religion and between public and private thus become completely blurred.

The regime of surveillance for militant activists links and mediates their formation of ethics with the debates and policies regarding ('radical' and 'radicalizing') Muslims. It reinforces their views on what it means to be steadfast Muslims and activists, underlines their daily responsibilities as husbands, fathers and family members and clarifies their tactical and strategic thinking as activists. Routinization and mobilization do, therefore, point to a series of related questions, uncertainties and ambiguities pertaining to the ethical and practical problem of how to live and how to be an activist, a Muslim, a father and a husband. These ambiguities are partly linked to the issue of uncertainty: one does not always know how to interpret a particular question from a colleague or if one is monitored or not. In this sense, counter-radicalization can be seen as a way to manage the uncertainty of knowing who is a risk and who is at risk through racializing danger. Yet, those at risk may also be targeted as a risk when they meet the criteria of 'a profile that matches with jihadism'. In the case of the militant activists in my research, they construct regimes of living to deal with the uncertainties and ambiguities that come with being the object of the racialized security gaze but they also use the racialized security to construct themselves as steadfast Muslims and activists.

At the same time, as the Hondius case in 2013 shows, the process of combining routinization and mobilization is, at least for the activists, self-defeating. They struggled to keep up the routinization and became more careless when it came to mobilization, which led to several of them being arrested almost a year later. The idea that one should be steadfast, and the desire to be regulated in an alternative manner, may give the activists' regime of living a certain coherent and stable appearance but did not achieve any level of institutional stability while it faces growing pressures from outside.

### Notes

- 1 De Koning, Roex, Becker and Aarns, *Eilanden in een zee van ongelof*. The project also included networks in Belgium and Germany. This chapter will focus on the Dutch network. The project was funded by the University of Amsterdam, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Ministry of Security and Justice and by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for the project 'Forces That Bind and/or Divide' of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam.

- 2 This section summarizes and builds on Martijn de Koning, 'You Need to Present a Counter-Message' – The Racialisation of Dutch Muslims and Anti-Islamophobia Initiatives, *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 5, no. 2 (2016): 170–89.
- 3 Scholten, *Framing Immigrant Integration*.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Fermin, *Nederlandse politieke partijen*.
- 6 *Verslag van de vaste Commissie voor de inlichtingen en veiligheidsdiensten over haar werkzaamheden (juli 1990–juli 1991)*, Tweede Kamer, vergaderjaar 1991–2, 22463, nr. 3.
- 7 Paul Mepschen, Jan-Willem Duyvendak and Evelien Tonkens, 'Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands', *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 962–79.
- 8 Ellie Vasta, 'From Ethnic Minorities to Ethnic Majority Policy: Multiculturalism and the Shift to Assimilationism in the Netherlands', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 5 (2007): 713–40.
- 9 Dvora Yanow and Marleen van der Haar, 'People Out of Place: Allochthony and Autochthony in the Netherlands' Identity Discourse—Metaphors and Categories in Action', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 16, no. 2 (2015): 227–61.
- 10 Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- 11 Dieke Hondius, 'Black Dutch Voices: Reports from a Country that Leaves Racism Unchallenged', in *Dutch Racism*, eds. Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014).
- 12 Adam James Tebble, 'Exclusion for Democracy', *Political Theory* 34, no. 4 (2006): 463–87.
- 13 De Koning, 'You Need to Present a Counter-Message'.
- 14 Rens Vliegthart, *Framing Immigration and Integration: Facts, Parliament, Media and Anti-Immigrant Party Support in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 2007); and De Graaf, 'Religion Bites'.
- 15 Stuart Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- 16 Ibid., 91.
- 17 Clara Eroukhanoff, 'The Remote Securitisation of Islam in the US Post-9/11: Euphemisation, Metaphors and the "Logic of Expected Consequences" in Counter-Radicalization Discourse', *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8, no. 2 (2015): 246–65.
- 18 Edmunds, 'The "New" Barbarians'.
- 19 Ibid., p. 73.
- 20 Seda Gürses, Arun Kundnani and Joris van Hoboken, 'Crypto and Empire: The Contradictions of Counter-Surveillance Advocacy', *Media Culture & Society* 38, no. 4 (2016): 579. See also David Theo Goldberg, 'Militaryizing Race', *Social Text* 34, no. 4 (2016): 19–40; Sanjay Sharma and Nijjar Jasbinder, 'The Racialized Surveillant Assemblage: Islam and the Fear of Terrorism', *Popular Communication* 16, no. 1 (2018): 72–85; David Moffette and Vadasaria Shaira, 'Uninhibited Violence: Race and the Securitization of Immigration', *Critical Studies on Security* 4, no. 3 (2016): 291–305; Junaid Rana, 'The Racial Infrastructure of the Terror-Industrial Complex', *Social Text* 34, no. 4 (2016): 111–38.
- 21 These studies often draw upon Foucault's ideas of the panopticon and focus on the techno-social realities of surveillance and the institutions which perform it. For example, see Nicola Green and Nils Zurawski, 'Surveillance and Ethnography:

- Researching Surveillance as Everyday Life', *Surveillance & Society* 13, no. 1 (2015): 27–43.
- 22 Andrew Lakoff and Stephen J. Collier, 'Ethics and the Anthropology of Modern Reason', *Anthropological Theory* 4, no. 4 (2004): 419–34.
- 23 Ibid., p. 420.
- 24 I have explained the idea of regimes of living in more in detail in Martijn de Koning, 'How Should I Live as a "True" Muslim? Regimes of Living among Dutch Muslims in the Salafi Movement', *Etnofoor* 25, no. 2 (2013): 53–72.
- 25 Pantazis and Pemberton, 'From the "Old" to the "New" Suspect Community'.
- 26 Paddy Hillyard, *Suspect Community* (London: Pluto Press, 1993).
- 27 Stephen J. Collier and Andrew Lakoff, 'On Regimes of Living', in *Global Assemblages*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008).
- 28 Rogers Brubaker, 'Categories of Analysis and Categories of Practice: A Note on the Study of Muslims in European Countries of Immigration', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 1 (2013): 3. The quote is from Werner Schifflauer, 'Vom Exil-zum Diaspora-Islam: Muslimische Identitäten in Europa', *Soziale Welt* 55, no. 4 (2004): 348.
- 29 Collier and Lakoff, 'On Regimes of Living', p. 29.
- 30 Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (London: Zed Books, 2011), p. 134.
- 31 In discussing the Danish asylum procedure, Whyte explores how uncertainty is an important part of the security gaze and how the objects of this gaze respond to it. See Zachary Whyte, 'Enter the Myopticon: Uncertain Surveillance in the Danish Asylum System', *Anthropology Today* 27, no. 3 (2013): 18–21.
- 32 Lakoff and Collier, 'Ethics and the Anthropology of Modern Reason', pp. 422–23.
- 33 Collier and Lakoff, 'On Regimes of Living', p. 32.
- 34 Hans Siebers, 'The Impact of Migrant-Hostile Discourse in the Media and Politics on Racioethnic Closure in Career Development in the Netherlands', *International Sociology* 25, no. 4 (2010): 475–500.
- 35 Lori Allen, 'Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Palestinian Intifada', *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 3 (2008): 453–87.
- 36 Allen, 'Getting by the Occupation', p. 457.
- 37 Of course an attempt to be a good father can also be part of the effort to be a pious Muslim, and vice versa.
- 38 De Koning, Roex, Becker and Aarns, *Eilanden in een zee van ongelooft*.
- 39 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 194–95; Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (1982): 781.
- 40 Carl Death, 'Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest', *Social Movement Studies* 9, no. 3 (2010): 248.
- 41 Fareen Z. Parvez, 'Debating the Burqa in France: The Antipolitics of Islamic Revival', *Qualitative Sociology* 34, no. 2 (2011): 289.
- 42 De Koning, Becker, Roex and Aarns, *Eilanden in een zee van ongelooft*.
- 43 Gabe Mythen, Sandra Walklate and Fatima Khan, 'I'm a Muslim, but I'm Not a Terrorist': Victimization, Risky Identities and the Performance of Safety', *British Journal of Criminology* 49, no. 6 (2009): 736–54.
- 44 Ruud Koopmans, 'Religious Fundamentalism and Hostility against Out-Groups: A Comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 33–57.
- 45 Arshad Imitaz Ali, 'Citizens under Suspicion: Responsive Research with Community under Surveillance', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2016): 86.

- 46 Ibid., p. 80.
- 47 My translation. Original: '... daar hij voldeed aan het profiel dat past bij jihadisme.'
- 48 Based upon an informal conversation with an employee of the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee (RNM). In a formal reply by the press agents of the RNM, it was stated that a profile consists of several aspects based upon information from different police and intelligence services and is checked for validity. Someone who fits the profile is not immediately a suspect, but will be investigated. According to the RNM 'profiles assist the Marechaussee agents in executing their task' (Email, 16 September 2016).
- 49 Brian Larkin, 'Techniques of Inattention: The Mediality of Loudspeakers in Nigeria,' *Anthropological Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2014): 989–1015.
- 50 Ibid., p. 1006.
- 51 Also published in De Koning, 'How Should I Live as a "True" Muslim?', p. 65.
- 52 Carmen Becker, *Learning to Be Authentic: Religious Practices of German and Dutch Muslims following the Salafiyya in Forums and Chat Rooms* (Nijmegen: Radboud University, 2013).
- 53 I stayed with the activists and like most of them was free to go after showing my ID and allowing it to be copied.
- 54 On this court case, see De Graaf (Chapter 4 in this volume).
- 55 Lakoff and Collier, 'Ethics and the Anthropology of Modern Reason,' p. 430.
- 56 Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 83.

## Chapter 9

### CAN THE 'MUHAJIR' SPEAK? EUROPEAN SYRIA FIGHTERS AND THE DIGITAL UN/MAKING OF HOME

Jaafar Alloul

In May 2014, a man calling himself Abu Fulaan from Antwerp<sup>1</sup> posted a video on YouTube explicitly addressing his audience as *drari*, Maghrebi Arabic vernacular (*Darija*) for 'brothers'. In his talk, Abu Fulaan is clearly concerned with presenting life after emigration as good, if not *better* than (staying put at home) in Europe. Driving his car somewhere in northern Syria, and filming himself with his dash camera, he claims repeatedly in Dutch that 'life is *very* normal here', adding that 'in some cases we're even better off than you guys in Belgium.'<sup>2</sup> Fulaan's aversion for the institutional order of things in Europe comes to the fore when he refers to Belgian political parties, which are usually deemed sympathetic to minority concerns, but by whom he seems to feel betrayed, as follows:

*Sp.A* [socialist party] and *Groen* [green party], it's all bullshit! It's all the same. *Vlaams Blok!* [far-right party] They are the least troublesome of all those democrats over there [Belgium]. Why? Because they say it out loud: All *makkakken!* out. Muslims shouldn't be here.<sup>3</sup>

Fulaan then even urges *his* social group, that is, Belgian-Moroccans, to reconsider their supposedly docile voting habits: 'There are many people who say that if we don't vote the extreme right will win the elections and we will be the victims of that, and therefore we should all vote left-wing parties. ... Those politicians for whom most Moroccans ... most Muslims, vote – they do vote indeed – have never solved anything for us Muslims.'<sup>4</sup> To outside observers, it is striking that although Abu Fulaan is based in war-torn Syria, he focuses primarily on Belgium, fulminating, 'I have followed the [Flemish] news,' and 'in a few days there will be elections, so people are urging each other to go vote.'<sup>5</sup> These utterings clearly indicate an ongoing emotional investment in the home country, as well as a desire to politicize life there. For instance, in another of several YouTube episodes, he and his Dutch co-driver, referring to Sharia law, urge youngsters *not* to go vote and to stage protests simultaneously: 'Go and hold up pamphlets and distribute flyers in order to raise political awareness.'<sup>6</sup>