



November 2014

ISIS: Portrait of a Jihadi Terrorist Organization¹



An ISIS operative holds a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile on the background of a black ISIS flag
(Picture sent by ISIS via Twitter)

Overview

Objectives

1. This study examines the nature of the **Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS)**, an **Islamic Salafist-jihadi terrorist organization** founded a decade ago as a **branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq**. It established itself during the fighting against the United States in the Sunni regions of western Iraq and spread to eastern and northern Syria during the Syrian civil war. In the summer of 2014 ISIS scored dramatic achievements, among them the occupation of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, and the declaration of the "**Islamic Caliphate**," headed by a charismatic Iraqi terrorist operative nicknamed **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**.

¹ This study has nine sections and an appendix.

2. This study is an **overall analysis** of ISIS. It examines the historical background and reasons for its founding and increase in strength, its ideological attraction, its tactical and strategic objectives and its military, governance and financial capabilities. The main objective of this study is to understand what lies behind its successes and how it became a threat not only to Syria and Iraq but to the Middle East and the international community as well. The study also deals with the campaign the United States declared against ISIS, examines the results so far and weighs the chances of its success in the future.

The Roots of ISIS

3. ISIS began as a branch of Al-Qaeda, founded in Iraq in 2004 after the American invasion and headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri. **It filled the security and governmental void created by the disintegration of the Iraqi army and Saddam Hussein's regime, accompanied by the increasing alienation of the Sunni Muslims from the central, Shi'ite-affiliated government** in Baghdad sponsored by the United States. The branch of Al-Qaeda gradually established itself in Iraq during the fighting against the United States and its allies, adopted the name the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), and became a central force among the anti-American insurgents.

4. Towards the end of the American presence in Iraq the ISI was weakened (as were other insurgents), the result of America's military successes combined with its wise policy of fostering the Sunni tribes in western Iraq (ISIS's principal domain). However, the Americans did not continue the policy, and later policies carried out by Shi'ite Adnan al-Maliki and the American withdrawal from Iraq **all contributed to strengthening the ISI**. That gave it a convenient starting point for its operations when the Americans eventually withdrew from Iraq.

5. The civil war that broke out in March 2011 made Syria fertile ground for **the spread of the ISI to Syria**. In January 2012 the **Al-Nusra Front** ("support front") was founded as the Syrian branch of the ISI. However, the two disagreed early on and the Al-Nusra Front split off from the Islamic State in Iraq, which then changed its name to **the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS)**. Al-Qaeda, under the leadership of Ayman al-Zawahiri, announced its support for the Al-Nusra Front and its dissociation from the ISI. After the split ISIS gained military successes, leading it to declare the **Islamic State (or the "Caliphate State")**, while the rival **Al-Nusra Front has weakened**.

ISIS Ideology

6. ISIS is an **Islamic Salafist-jihadi organization**. Salafism is an extremist Sunni political-religious movement within Islam that seeks **to restore the golden era of the dawn of Islam** (the time of the prophet Muhammad and the early Caliphs who followed him). That is to be done, according to Salafist jihadist ideology, by jihad (a holy war) against both internal and external enemies. Jihad, according to Salafist jihadism, is the personal duty of every Muslim. Al-Qaeda and the global jihad organizations (of which ISIS is one) sprang from Salafist jihadism.

7. According to the ISIS concept, Islam's golden era will be restored through the establishment of a **supranational Islamic Caliphate** modeled after the regimes of the first Caliphs after the death of Muhammad. It will be ruled by Islamic religious law (the sharia), according to its most extreme interpretation. The Caliphate will arise **on the ruins of the nation states established in the Middle East** after the First World War. Some of them, including Syria and Iraq, where ISIS operates, are in the process of disintegrating in the wake of the upheaval in the Middle East, creating favorable conditions for the vision of an Islamic Caliphate.

8. The territory of the Caliphate State, whose establishment was declared by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, lies in eastern Syria and western Iraq. ISIS seeks to expand the Caliphate throughout Syria and Iraq and finally take control of them. After that, **the states belonging to "greater Syria" will be annexed**, that is, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and **after them other countries in the Middle East and beyond**. According to the ISIS vision as it appears on its maps, the future Islamic Caliphate will include vast stretches of North Africa, Asia and the Caucasus, and parts of Europe that were once under Muslim rule, such as Spain and the Balkans.

The Main Characteristics of ISIS

9. The main characteristics of ISIS are the following:

- 1) **Military capabilities: ISIS has an estimated 25,000 operatives in Syria and Iraq**, and their number is growing.² **In ITIC assessment, as many as 12,000 are operatives from Syria and Iraq, and more than 13,000 are foreign fighters.** Most of the foreign fighters come from **the Arab-Muslim world**. An estimated

² According to a CIA report issued publicly, there are between 25,000 and 31,500 ISIS operatives. In the estimation of a Centcom commander, ISIS has between 9,000 and 17,000 operatives.

3,000 come from Western countries (about half from France and Britain). They usually arrive in Syria via Turkey, are given short military training by ISIS and engage in fighting. For the most part they return to their countries of origin. During their stay in Syria they gain military capabilities and receive Salafist-jihadi indoctrination, and pose a security threat to their countries of origin and to a certain extent to Israel (as illustrated by the attack on the Jewish museum in Brussels, which was carried out by a French national who fought in the ranks of ISIS).

2) **Possession of weapons:** ISIS has a large arsenal of weapons, **most of them plundered from the Syrian and Iraqi armies**. They include light arms, various types of rockets and mortars, and anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. In addition **ISIS possesses heavy arms and the advanced technologies usually found only in regular national armies:** artillery, tanks and armored vehicles, **shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles and drones**. It has used **mustard gas** a number of times in Syria and Iraq and **may have other types of chemical weapons, such as chlorine gas**. Chemical weapons were used to attack the Kurdish militias in Ayn al-Arab (Qobanê) in northern Syria and against the Iraqi security forces. ISIS also has at least one Scud missile (technically flawed, in ITIC assessment) and a number of planes (operating from an ISIS-controlled airport).

3) **Areas of control:** Today ISIS controls **an estimated third of the territory of Iraq and between a quarter and a third of Syria, from the outskirts of Baghdad to the outskirts of Aleppo**. The vast area, according to various estimates, is home to between five and six million people.³ Several important cities are in the ISIS-controlled region, among them **Mosul** (the second largest city in Iraq), **Fallujah** (symbol of the struggle against the United States) and **Al-Raqqah** (the ISIS "capital city" in northern Syria). It is noteworthy that a relatively small number of ISIS operatives control a broad swath of territory, which is one of ISIS's weak points. To overcome it, ISIS relies on local supporters and allies, and is making an effort to enlist operatives from Syria, Iraq and abroad.

4) **Establishment of alternative administration networks:** In the areas under its control **ISIS instituted alternative administrations to replace those of Syria and Iraq which collapsed. They include educational, judicial, policing**

³ British correspondent John Cantlie, who was abducted by ISIS, claimed in an ISIS propaganda video issued in October 2014 that eight million people lived in regions controlled by the organization. The number seems exaggerated.

and law enforcement networks. ISIS uses them to provide **vital services** and at the same time **to enforce its Salafist-jihadi ideology on the local population.** To that end it uses **brutal measures against its opponents and the minorities living under its control** (including mass executions). Nevertheless, so far the local populations seem to have come to terms with ISIS control and sometimes even support it. They do so **especially in view of its ability to provide basic services, restore daily life to the status quo ante, and fill the administrative void that was created.**

5) **High financial capabilities:** In Syria and Iraq ISIS **took control of the state infrastructure,** including **most of the oil fields in eastern Syria** and **several oil fields in Iraq.** The export of petroleum products is the main source of ISIS's income and **its profits are estimated at several million dollars a day.** However, profits fell in the wake of the aerial attacks carried out by the United States and its allies on its oil infrastructure. Other sources of ISIS income are **various types of criminal activity** (extortion, collecting ransom for abductees, trading in antiquities), **collecting donations and imposing local taxes.** Thus it is an exceptional example of **a terrorist organization which managed to acquire semi-national financial capabilities** to fund its military infrastructure and allow it to establish an alternative governmental system.

Military Measures Taken by ISIS in Syria and Iraq (Updated to mid-November 2014)

10. **In June 2014 ISIS began a military campaign in Iraq whose objective,** in ITIC assessment, **was to take over most of the territory of northern and western Iraq to launch an attack on Baghdad.** At the same time it waged campaigns for the control of various districts **in eastern and northern Syria** and to weaken its rivals and enemies (the Syrian regime, the Al-Nusra Front, the Kurdish militias and the other rebel organizations). Its military achievements so far have enabled it to create a **supranational territorial continuum** of the vast area under its control, where it is actively working to establish the rule of its self-declared Islamic Caliphate.

11. To date ISIS's military campaign in Iraq has had **three stages:**

1) **Dramatic success (June – August 2014):** ISIS captured the oil city of Mosul from the Iraqi army. The Iraqi army, in whose establishment and training the United States invested enormous resources for years, collapsed and fled. An ISIS force also captured the **Mosul Dam** with its hydroelectric plant (north of the city on the Tigris), driving out the Kurdish Peshmerga force defending it. (An ISIS

force also tried to capture the **Haditha Dam** on the Euphrates, the second largest dam in the country, but was met with resistance from the Iraqi army stationed there.) ISIS also took control of the city of **Tikrit**, Saddam Hussein's birthplace and a former stronghold of the Iraqi Ba'ath party.

2) **Containment and halt (second half of August – September 2014)**: During the second half of August and September 2014 (when the United States began its pinpointed aerial attacks) **ISIS's advance was halted**. The Kurdish Peshmerga forces, the Iraqi army and the Shi'ite militias **retook the Mosul Dam**. The Iraqi army drove ISIS forces **from the large Haditha Dam and the oil city of Baiji** (an important logistic passage besieged by ISIS). ISIS enemies saved the lives of minority groups considered "infidels" by ISIS and targeted for harassment, attack and slaughter: Yazidi refugees were rescued from **Mt. Sinjar** (in northern Iraq) and the siege of the predominantly Shi'ite-Turkmen **town of Amerli** (south of Kirkuk) was lifted.

3) **Establishment of control over the Al-Anbar province, possibly a step in a campaign against Baghdad** (end of September – mid-November 2014): ISIS forces cleared pockets of resistance in the Al-Anbar province (Iraq's largest Sunni district) and advanced towards the capital city of Baghdad. At the same time, ISIS carried out a series of suicide bombing attacks in Baghdad, mainly in Shi'ite neighborhoods. The news agencies reported ISIS forces located several dozen miles from the city and fighting in the city of **Abu Ghraib**, west of Baghdad. However, the Iraqi army, the Shi'ite militias and the Kurdish forces had several military achievements, the most prominent of which was relieving the siege of Baiji.

12. So far ISIS has not yet taken full control of the Sunni Al-Anbar province. In ITIC assessment, in the future ISIS is planning to take over Baghdad, but apparently **the campaign will be far more difficult than the easy conquest of Mosul**, because its operatives are liable to encounter fierce resistance from the Shi'ite militias and the Iraqi army, which will have Iranian support and aerial cover from the American-led coalition. It is also likely that ISIS's rivals will cooperate against it. It can be expected that ISIS will attempt to overcome resistance **by besieging Baghdad and disrupting life in the city** (by firing rockets and mortar shells, and detonating IEDs and car bombs). During October and to mid-November 2014 **hundreds of civilians were killed in Baghdad**, most of them Shi'ite, in suicide bombings and car bomb attacks, for at least some of which ISIS was responsible.

13. While launching military campaigns, ISIS has **firmly established its grip on extensive areas of eastern and northern Syria**. It has **expelled its rivals and enemies** (among them other rebel organizations, the Al-Nusra Front and the Syrian army), **and attempted to gain control of new key areas (as of this writing the campaign for the Kurdish region of Qobanê near the Turkish border has not yet ended)**. It established its control over Al-Raqqah, turning it into its "capital city" in Syria, and solidified its control over the local population. **Its accomplishments are funded by the enormous sums of money pouring in from its control of the country's infrastructure, especially the sale of petroleum products from the fields in eastern Syria** (although its profits have decreased since the Americans and their allies began aerial attacks).

The Significance and Main Implications of ISIS's Achievements in Syria and Iraq

14. The foothold gained by ISIS in Syria and Iraq has **far-reaching local, regional and international significance and implications:**

1) **Iraq:** ISIS conquests in the summer of 2014 **accelerated the disintegration of Iraq into religious and ethnic components**. It can be said that **Iraq no longer functions as a nation state**. Three quasi-entities arose: a Sunni district controlled by ISIS in western and northern Iraq; an autonomous Kurdish region in the north and a Shi'ite region in the center and south affiliated with the Shi'ite regime in Baghdad. The borders between them are blurred and unstable, and **ISIS, which is gaining strength, can be expected to continue its efforts to enlarge the areas under its control at the expense of the other entities, which are currently on the defensive**.

2) **Syria:** In Syria as well ISIS's increase in strength contributed to **deepening the country's de facto division**. ISIS secured its control over the northern and eastern parts of the country and weakened its various rivals (the Syrian regime, the Al-Nusra Front and the other rebel organizations). However, ISIS has not been able to break the Syrian regime's hold on Damascus and other core areas in the north and west, or of the rebel organizations on the southern part of the country (including most of the area of the Golan Heights along the border with Israel). The strengthening of ISIS and the American-led campaign against it **increased the existing complexity of the Syrian civil war and made the situation more volatile**, making it more difficult to resolve the Syrian crisis in the foreseeable future.

3) **The establishment of the global jihad in the Middle East:** ISIS's successes in Syria and Iraq turned them into **a new focus for the global jihad, inheriting the place of Afghanistan and Pakistan.** As opposed to the era of Osama bin Laden, today there are two principal hostile, rival jihadi organizations: one, ISIS, affiliated with the global jihad but at odds with the Al-Qaeda leadership of Ayman al-Zawahiri; and the other, **the Al-Nusra Front**, a branch of Al-Qaeda in Syria. Between the two are global jihad networks within the Middle East and beyond. Some of the jihadi networks in the Middle East, mainly the Egyptian-based Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, have already taken a stand and sworn allegiance to ISIS, which is gaining power against the Al-Qaeda leadership. In addition, **in the future ISIS's potential for subversion and terrorism is liable to destabilize countries in the Middle East and to export jihadi terrorism to Israel and the West.**

4) **Regional Middle East significance:** The foothold gained by ISIS and the global jihad in Syria and Iraq **reflects and may aggravate the regional upheaval in the Middle East:** the flashpoints include the tensions, schisms and hostility among the various ethnic, religious and tribal groups, **especially between the Sunnis and Shi'ites; the political weakness of the nation states** created and forced upon the region by the French and British after the First World War; **the loss by the key states in the Middle East of their ability to govern;** and the establishment of alternative ideologies and governance in the places where nation states collapsed. The establishment of the Salafist-jihadi organizations in Syria and Iraq are manifestations of **the power of radical Islamic ideology to attract followers and present itself as a magical solution for the ongoing distress and basic ills that have plagued the nation states since their inception.**

15. **Thus additional instability and volatility were injected into the already unstable situation in the Middle East by the establishment of ISIS and the global jihad organizations' power base in Syria and Iraq.** They are liable not only to accelerate the disintegration of Syria and Iraq but to filter into the entire region. In the foreseeable future ISIS can be expected **to continue its military occupation of Syria and Iraq, establish its control and oppose the campaign the United States is waging against it.** However, in the long run, as it establishes itself more firmly in Syria and Iraq, **its influence may gradually spread to other Arab states;** its growing cooperation with the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is proof thereof. Veterans of the fighting in Syria who return to their countries of origin in the Middle East are liable to

become "carriers" of terrorism and subversion, whether at ISIS instigation or on their own initiative, thereby contributing to political instability in their own countries (as has already happened in Darnah in eastern Libya, taken over by a jihadi network which expressed its support for ISIS).

The American Campaign against ISIS and the ISIS Response

16. ISIS's dramatic successes in the summer of 2014 were a strong blow to American foreign policy in Iraq. America's objective was to establish a democratic Iraqi regime that would fight terrorism and provide the country with a stable administration. **That proved to be completely unrealistic.** The Iraqi army, in whose establishment the United States invested enormous resources, was exposed as weak, as was the Shi'ite-affiliated central regime in Baghdad supported by America. Moreover, the Americans regarded the rapid establishment of ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front in Syria and Iraq **as threatening the stability of Middle Eastern countries** (among them Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and the Gulf States). In addition, there was a significant rise in the number of foreign fighters who fought in the ranks of ISIS and other jihadi organizations in Syria and Iraq and who might endanger the security of America and other Western countries when they returned to their countries of origin.

17. During the first three years of the Syrian civil war the United States did not attach great significance to ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front, and tended to regard them as part of the general chaos created in Syria and Iraq after the regimes in both countries disintegrated. **The change in American policy began in the summer of 2014** with the fall of Mosul, the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate and the significant increase in the number of foreign fighters. **The media-documented slaughter and executions carried out by ISIS horrified and enraged American and Western public opinion** and also contributed to the change in American policy.

18. The United States **altered its policy** from underestimating ISIS to demonizing it and representing it as a significant regional and international threat. The change in concept required an American response, which was given in two stages: **the first (June – August 2014)** consisted of "pinpointed" responses intended to support the local forces in Iraq in halting the momentum of ISIS attacks. The pinpointed responses mostly involved sporadic aerial attacks, the dispatch of a small number of

advisors and providing besieged minorities with humanitarian aid. However, **it quickly became clear that pinpointed responses were ineffective and did not provide a satisfactory answer to the challenges to American interests posed by the successes of ISIS.**

19. For that reason, **the second stage was formulated as a comprehensive strategy for a campaign against ISIS**, as noted in a speech given by President Obama on September 10, 2014. The objective of the new strategy was to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS in the following ways: **massive aerial bombings in Syria and Iraq; reinforcing the local forces in Syria and Iraq** (the Iraqi army, the Kurdish forces, the so-called moderate rebel organizations in Syria); **damaging the sources of ISIS's power** (especially its financial resources); **improving the United States' and the international community's deterrent capabilities against the foreign fighters and deepening international collaboration against them.** President Obama and spokesmen for the American administration repeatedly stressed that **the new strategy did not include sending a significant ground force to fight in Syria or Iraq, the so-called "boots on the ground."**

20. To implement the strategy, **in a relatively short period of time** the United States established an international coalition of Western and Arab countries. The Western allies (most importantly France and Britain) participated in the aerial attacks on Iraq while some of the Arab states (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan and Bahrain) joined the aerial attacks on Syria. By the end of October 2014 the United States and its allies had carried out **632 aerial attacks** against ISIS's military and economic infrastructure in Syria and Iraq (**286 in Syria and 346 in Iraq**). The attacks have continued into November.

21. **In ITIC assessment, the new American strategy suffers from a series of weaknesses**, which are detailed in this study. The main among them are that **its political objectives**, both declared and undeclared, **seem unrealistic; it is extremely difficult to destroy an organization with a Salafist-jihadi ideology** such as ISIS; **there are limits to what military force** can achieve against jihad organizations in general and ISIS in particular; the local forces in Syria and Iraq that America is counting on are weak; and the **coalition is heterogeneous**, composed of countries with different interests and internal constraints that are liable to make it difficult for them to provide the United States with effective support.

22. Beyond the inherent weaknesses in the American strategy, **societal and political situations in Syria and Iraq are complex and fluctuating. They cannot**

be fundamentally changed through military action, limited or even extensive. That is because ISIS and other Salafist-jihadi terrorist organizations arose from the chaos in security and the societal and political disintegration of Syria and Iraq, and because of the drastic changes caused by the regional upheaval. Iraq and Syria are a swamp in which ISIS and other jihadi organizations thrive. **Rooting out ISIS will be impossible until the swamp has been drained, and that is currently not on the horizon.**

23. However, **ISIS has its own inherent weaknesses**, which are examined in this study. If the United States learns to exploit them the campaign against ISIS **may have positive results, although perhaps less far-reaching than expected by President Obama.** The American-led military, economic and political campaign, if continued with determination, **may eventually weaken (although not destroy) ISIS; its spread throughout Syria and Iraq may be halted** (with the campaign of Baghdad still on the agenda); **and the Iraqi army and local organizations/militias within Syria and Iraq hostile to ISIS can be strengthened.** The campaign against ISIS may also **improve the way the United States and its allies deal with the foreign fighters who return to their countries of origin.**

24. As to ISIS's responses to the American campaign, ISIS has publicly beheaded five abductees, three American and two British. On September 21, 2014, ISIS called on its supporters around the globe to use a variety of methods to kill civilians in the United States and its allied countries. **It is possible that a number of terrorist attacks, including the vehicular and shooting attacks in Canada, the planned beheading of Australians and attacks in other countries were the first responses to the call.**

The Israeli Aspect

25. The establishment of ISIS is part of the larger picture of the establishment of global jihad organizations in Syria and Iraq, such as the Al-Nusra Front. **For Israel the situation holds several threats and dangers:**

- 1) **The Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula might be turned into active terrorist fronts:** As of today, the Golan Heights are controlled by rebel organizations, the most prominent of which is the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria.⁴ While ISIS does not currently have a significant presence there,

⁴ A senior IDF officer serving on the Golan Heights told correspondents that the with the exception of Mt. Hermon, 95% of the border between Israel and Syria was controlled by various

the dynamics can easily change **the Golan Heights from a relatively quiet area into an active terrorist front** where the Al-Nusra Front may be dominant. In the Sinai Peninsula ISIS-affiliated Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (which has become the Sinai province of the Islamic State) is expected to launch terrorist attacks against Israel, although its strategic priority is its campaign against the Egypt regime.

2) ISIS support for jihadi organizations and networks in the Middle East, especially the countries bordering on Israel: ISIS is a terrorist organization with semi-state capabilities: it has advanced weapons and technology captured from the Iraqi and Syrian armies; it earns enormous amounts of money from oil fields and other resources; it has supporters in the Middle East and worldwide who help it enlist foreign fighters; it has an advanced media network which brands ISIS and the global jihad. To date those capabilities are mainly exploited for internal purposes (fighting enemies in Iraq and Syria). However, they may filter into jihadi organizations and networks in the Middle East, including countries and entities bordering on Israel, and strengthen the operational capabilities of local jihadi organizations.

3) Terrorist attacks in Israel and against Israeli and Jewish targets abroad: In the foreseeable future ISIS strategy will continue focusing on gaining a firmer foothold in Syria and Iraq. However, in view of the American aerial attacks and the competition between the jihadi organizations, **ISIS may encourage or initiate attacks within Israel from inside the country or from its borders, or against Israeli and/or Jewish targets abroad.** They may receive help and support from the veterans of the fighting in Syria and Iraq who returned to their countries of origin and/or from local operatives and networks that support ISIS.

4) Cooperation between the United States-led coalition and Iran: Despite Iran's basic hostility towards the United States, and despite Iran's subversion of American interests in the Middle East, it might collaborate with the United States against ISIS and global jihad in Syria and Iraq, the common enemy. **Such collaboration might occur at Israel's expense and harm its vital interests** (for example, Iran's concessions on the nuclear issue). **In addition, collaborating against ISIS might increase Iranian influence in Syria and Iraq, and might also strengthen Hezbollah's status in Lebanon,** possibly strengthening the Iranian-led radical camp in the Middle East.

rebel groups. The dominant group is the Al-Nusra Front, which conquered the region of Quneitra two months ago (Haaretz.co.il, September 22, 2014).

26. There are potential dangers both to the West and **to Israel in regional politics** caused by the subversive potential of the increasing strength of Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Syria and Iraq. The influence of a strong Al-Qaeda and global jihad in those countries might **filter into the entire Arab world**, including pro-Western countries **such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which so far have shown themselves strong enough to survive the regional upheaval**. It might also give more power to the global jihad organizations and networks in countries peripheral to the heart of the Middle East which have failed regimes (such as **Libya and Yemen**) or weak regimes (such as **Tunisia**).

Methodology

27. ISIS (sometimes ISIL) is an acronym for **The Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria**.⁵ Once the Caliphate was declared ISIS began calling itself the "**Islamic State (IS)**" or the "**Caliphate State**." However, **this study refers to the organization as ISIS, the term usually used by the international community, the Arab and Western media, and even by "Islamic State" supporters.**

28. In preparing this study the ITIC dealt with a number of challenges:

1) **Turning a large amount of information into a comprehensive picture:**

When ISIS became a regional and international threat, individual bits of information became a daily flood. One of the challenges in preparing this study was turning them into a comprehensive research whole that examined the various aspects of ISIS's rise: its historical and causal background; its Islamic and Salafist-jihadi roots; its objectives; its military, political, administrative and financial capabilities; and the Iraqi, Syrian, Middle Eastern and international environments in which it operates

2) **Frequent changes in the situation on the ground in Iraq and Syria:** During the past half year dramatic developments occurred in Iraq and Syria, with the regional upheaval in the background. In addition, **ISIS is basically a dynamic organization, continually seeking to change the status quo both in the areas in which it operates against a large number of local enemies**, and against the international campaign currently being waged against it. That forced the ITIC staff to **update the study continually**, understand the significance of tactical developments and examine and reexamine the situation on the ground.

⁵ In Arabic Al-Dawlah al-Islamiyyah fi al-'Iraq wal-Sham. The English translation of "Al-Sham" is "greater Syria" and therefore we prefer it to "the Levant."

That situation is still in flux, so this study may be considered **an interim report, which will have to be updated in the future.**

3) **The need to integrate information from various disciplines and fields:** ISIS cannot be analyzed and examined only as a terrorist organization operating within a local national framework. A study of ISIS necessitates integrating various fields of knowledge, among them the history of Islam (including the Sunni-Shi'ite schism); the Salafist-jihadi movement from which ISIS sprang; the changes in Al-Qaeda and the global jihad; the developments in the civil wars in Syria and Iraq and the various aspects of the Middle Eastern upheaval. In preparing the study the ITIC used the existing literature and studies, and received support from experts in the various fields.

4) **Problematic sources of information:** In preparing the study we used primary sources from ISIS and other jihadi organizations. ISIS frequently posts information on the Internet about itself and its activities, but it is **self-glorifying propaganda** meant to sully the reputations of its rivals, threaten its enemies and deflect accusations. There is also **a vast amount of information posted by ISIS's many rivals**, which tend to defame the organization and sometimes manipulate the extent of its potential threat. In preparing this study we used investigative reports from correspondents (some of them Western) who had been allowed into areas under ISIS control. However the information to which they were exposed was sometimes directed and supervised by ISIS and intended to serve its political and propaganda objectives. **Because of the awareness of the problem and because of the lack of trustworthy sources of information, all sources were treated carefully and critically.**

29. Extremely valuable sources of information used in preparing this study were the continuing reports and basic research work published by **experts and think tanks working in various disciplines and following ISIS and the developments in Syria and Iraq** (primarily in the United States, Britain and Israel). Other important sources were reports from news agencies and the global media following ISIS and the developments in Syria and Iraq. We also used open source reports issued by intelligence services and governmental agencies in the Western and Arab countries struggling against ISIS (although such reports may have certain biases). For background information previous ITIC studies and bulletins were useful regarding the establishment of organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Syria (For a list of bulletins see the Appendix).

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Appendix: Studies and bulletins issued by the ITIC about the establishment of Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Syria and Iraq (September 2013 – July 2014)

Section One: The Historical Roots and Stages in the Development of ISIS

Historical background

1. ISIS took root in the new era created in Iraq after the Americans took control of the country in 2003. The Second Gulf War led to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, the dismantling of the Iraqi army and the destruction of the existing governmental structure. As a result, a security and governmental vacuum was created and the country's fragile social fabric (in the middle of which was the volatile Sunni-Shi'ite schism) was severely damaged.

2. During the almost nine years (2003 – 2011) the United States army was stationed in Iraq the Americans failed to establish effective Iraqi army and security forces to fill the newly-created security vacuum. While in Iraq, the Americans encouraged the establishment of what was supposed to be a **democratic national Shi'ite regime** headed by Nouri al-Maliki. However, the regime alienated the Sunni population, which had traditionally controlled the country, even though they were a minority (about 22% of the Iraqi population is Sunni Arabs – alongside the Kurds, who are also Sunnis – while about 60% of Iraqis are Shi'ites).

3. **The branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, established in 2004, entered the security vacuum and took advantage of the increasing political-societal Sunni alienation:** It became an important actor in the insurgent organizations fighting the American army, became stronger after the withdrawal of the American troops at the end of 2001, and spread to Syria after the civil war began in March 2011. The establishment of Al-Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq and Syria occurred in four stages:

1) **Stage One (2004-2006) – The establishment of the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and called "Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia:"** It waged a terrorist-guerilla war against the American and coalition forces and against the Shi'ite population. The first stage ended when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed in an American targeted attack in June 2006.

2) **Stage Two (2006-2011) – Establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI):** ISI served as an umbrella network for several jihadi organizations that continued waging a terrorist-guerilla campaign against the United States, its coalition allies and the Shi'ite population. ISI was weakened towards the end of the American

presence in Iraq following successful American military moves and a wise foreign policy that supported the Sunni population and knew how to win their hearts and minds.

3) **Stage Three (2012-June 2014) – The strengthening of ISI and the founding of ISIS:** After the American army withdrew from Iraq ISI became stronger. Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war ISI established a branch in Syria called the **Al-Nusra Front** ("support front"). Dissension broke out between ISI and its Syrian branch, leading to a rift between ISI and Al-Qaeda and **the establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS).**

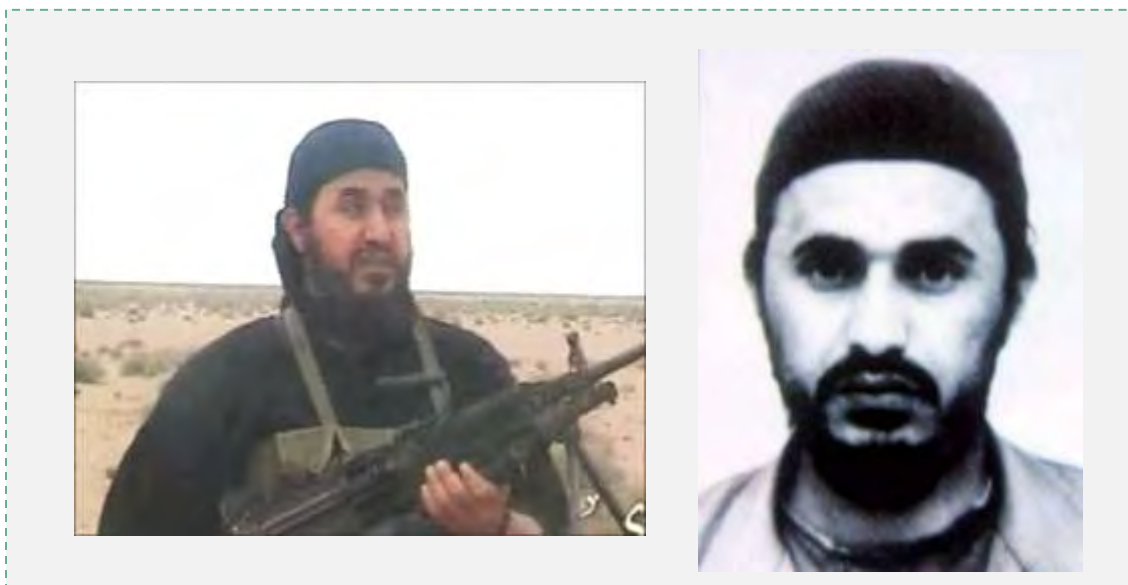
4) **Stage Four (as of June 2014) – Dramatic ISIS military achievements:** The most prominent was the takeover of Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq. At the same time ISIS established its control in eastern Syria where it set up a governmental center (its "capital city") in Al-Raqqah. In the wake of its success, ISIS declared the establishment of an **"Islamic State" (IS) (or "Islamic Caliphate")** headed by an ISIS leader named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In September 2014 the United States declared a comprehensive campaign against ISIS, which is currently waging a fierce struggle against its many enemies both at home and abroad.

4. In ITIC assessment, historically speaking **there are similarities between the results of the American invasion of Iraq, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.** In all three instances the invading country failed to establish a new political order or to stabilize an effective, supportive regime. **In effect all three invasions had a deleterious effect on the existing delicate political-social fabric: in Afghanistan and Iraq they caused changes that contributed to the establishment of radical Sunni jihadi terrorist organizations and in Lebanon to a radical Shi'ite terrorist organization following Iranian ideology and receiving Iranian support.** The terrorist organizations established in Iraq (the branch of Al-Qaeda), Afghanistan (Al-Qaeda) and Lebanon (Hezbollah) **exist to this day.** ISIS, which developed from a branch of Al-Qaeda, has become strong in Iraq and Syria and **today threatens the order and stability of the Middle East and the entire world.**

Establishment of Al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the beginning of the campaign against the United States and its allies

5. The establishment of Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Iraq began when **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian global jihad operative, went to Iraq in 2002 (before the entrance of the Americans)**. Al-Zarqawi (a nickname for Ahmad Fadil al-Nazal al-Khalayleh) was influenced by the Jordanian Salafist-jihadi movement headed by **Abdullah Azzam, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abu Qatada** (all three of whom are of Palestinian origin). While in Afghanistan in 1989 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi underwent ideological indoctrination and operational training conducted by Abdullah Azzam (Osama bin Laden's ideological mentor). Al-Zarqawi returned to Jordan in 1993 where he was detained and imprisoned in 1994 and released in 1999, at which point he went back to Afghanistan.

6. After September 11, 2001, al-Zarqawi fled from Afghanistan and **sought refuge in Iran**. In 2002, before the American entrance into Iraq, he went to the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. While there he collaborated with a Kurdish jihadi Islamist organization called **Ansar al-Islam**, established in September 2001 (which is still operative and belongs to the coalition in Iraq collaborating with ISIS). Al-Zarqawi later established his own Islamic jihadi organization, **Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad ("the oneness [of Allah] and jihad")**. After the Americans invaded Iraq in March 2003 **he joined the insurgents fighting the United States and became a prominent figure until he was killed in a targeted American attack**.



Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (Left, from Al-Jazeera, July 8, 2006; right, Inbaa.com)

7. In October 2004 al-Zarqawi's organization joined Al-Qaeda. He swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden and was declared the leader (*emir*) of Al-Qaeda in Iraq). (In Arabic *al-qaeda fi bilad al-rafidayn*, Al-Qaeda in the country of the two rivers, i.e., Mesopotamia). It was the first branch Al-Qaeda established beyond the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan. With its founding, al-Zarqawi was no longer the leader of a local Islamic jihadi organization but rather had become the official representative of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and later one of the prominent terrorists among the global jihad networks. The jihad network al-Zarqawi established in Iraq, initially composed of operatives who had been affiliated with it in Pakistan and Afghanistan, later enlisted operatives from Iraq, Syria and other Arab countries.

8. As the *emir* of Al-Qaeda in Iraq al-Zarqawi formulated a strategy for the campaign against the United States. He had the following objectives: **harm U.S. forces and its allies; discourage Iraqi collaboration** by targeting government infrastructure and personnel; **target reconstruction efforts in Iraq** with attacks on Iraqi civilian contractors and aid workers; and draw the U.S. military into **a sectarian Sunni-Shiite war by targeting Shiites**.⁶ The wave of terrorism he initiated against the Shi'ite population, the result of his strong anti-Shi'ite doctrine, was carried out by suicide bombers and the use of car bombs which caused many civilian casualties, sowed chaos throughout Iraq, made it difficult to stabilize the internal situation and **added a murderous gene to the ISIS DNA**.

9. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's strategy, which stressed broad attacks on the Shi'ite population (and sometimes on Sunni civilians as well), was **criticized by both Osama bin Laden and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri. They were concerned that the indiscriminate killing of innocent Muslim civilians would erode public support for Al-Qaeda throughout the entire region**. In July 2005 they criticized his strategy and instructed him to stop attacking Shi'ite religious and cultural sites. He refused, and **his relations with the Al-Qaeda leadership deteriorated**.⁷ The dispute held the seeds of the tensions and rivalry between the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the central Al-Qaeda leadership, as it was manifested through ISIS's independent actions and policy, and ISIS and the Al-Qaeda leadership headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri.

⁶ Zachary Laub and Jonathan Masters, Council on Foreign Relations: "Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria," June 12, 2014, updated August 8, 2014; <http://www.cfr.org/iraq/islamic-state-iraq-syria/p14811>.

⁷ Laub and Masters.

10. The terrorist-guerilla campaign of the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq was mainly carried out in and around Baghdad and in western Iraq. The local Sunni population in those regions became hostile to the central Iraqi government and to the United States, and today forms ISIS's societal and political power base. The most important city in the Sunni region was **Fallujah**. Fallujah is located in Al-Anbar, the largest province in the country, which became **al-Zarqawi's power base and symbolized the jihadi campaign against the American army**. Al-Zarqawi's main campaign was concentrated in Iraq, but he had made attempts to export jihadi terrorism to other Arab states, including Jordan, his country of origin (See below).

11. **Ideologically**, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi handed down to his heirs a **radical Islamic, uncompromising legacy whose traces are evident in ISIS's actions to this day**. Noteworthy is **its hostility toward Shi'ites in general and Iraqi Shi'ites in particular**, whom he referred to in strong terms ("human scum," "poisonous snakes," "deadly poison"). He regarded the Shi'ites as a fifth column who, along with pro-American Sunnis, were trying to institute a new Shi'ite regime in Iraq, anti-Sunni and pro-American. That anti-Shi'ite legacy, based on Arabic Islamic sources from the Middle Ages, **gave al-Zarqawi what he considered "Islamic legitimacy" to carry out mass-killing attacks on Shi'ites and the Shi'ite-affiliated central government**. His objective was to instigate a Shi'ite-Sunni civil war that would destabilize public order, prevent the establishment of a Shi'ite regime and support Al-Qaeda's takeover of Iraq. **ISIS has continued its brutality towards the Shi'ite population in Iraq and Syria**, implementing the legacy of al-Zarqawi who, after his death, became a revered figure and role model.⁸

⁸ For example, the ISIS training base in the Syrian city of Al-Raqqah is named after him. In Iraq and Syria, youth groups are nicknamed "al-Zarqawi's [lion] cubs."



Abu Musab al-Zarqawi turned into a role model: operatives in the Abu Musab al-Zarqawi camp. The banner reads, "ISIS – the camp named for the conqueror, the jihad fighter Abu Musab al-Zarqawi – may Allah receive him [as a shaheed in paradise]"

The establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) and expanding the campaign against the United States and its allies

12. On June 7, 2006, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was killed in an aerial targeted attack carried out by the American army on a house in the city of **Baqubah**, northeast of Baghdad. His position as head of the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq was inherited by **Abu Hamza al-Muhajir**, aka **Abu Ayyub al-Masri**.

13. **Abu Hamza al-Muhajir**, to this day considered by ISIS as one of its founding fathers, was an Al-Qaeda operative of Egyptian origin, born in 1968, and was close to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. In 1982 he joined the Egyptian jihadi organization headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri and was sentenced to death by Egypt in 1994 (apparently in absentia). Between 2001 and 2002 he underwent training in Afghanistan where he met Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He specialized in preparing IEDs used in Afghanistan and Iraq which caused the United States army many losses.

14. During the years Abu Hamza al-Muhajir headed the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (2006-2010), he maintained contact with Al-Qaeda operatives outside Iraq to receive support and to carry out terrorist attacks. He was involved in moving **Al-Qaeda operatives from Syria to Iraq and in sending suicide bombing terrorists and car bombs to Al-Qaeda networks beyond Iraq's borders**. His name is on the list of terrorists wanted in Iraq issued by the United States Central Command (Centcom) in February 2005 and a price of \$50,000 was put on his head.

15. On **October 15, 2006**, about four months after the death of al-Zarqawi, **an umbrella network called the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) was established for Sunni jihadi organizations**, dominated by the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq established by al-Zarqawi. The network was headed by **Abu Omar al-Baghdadi**, an Iraqi jihadist operative, whose real name was **Hamid Daoud Muhammad Khalil al-Zawi**. In 1987, during the Saddam Hussein era, he was expelled from Iraq and joined jihad operatives in Afghanistan who were fighting the Russians. Between 2004 and 2005 he participated in the battles for Fallujah and received a head wound. He later had a senior role in the Al-Qaeda in Iraq leadership, retaining it until he was appointed to head the new umbrella network.



Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (left), who inherited the leadership of the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq from al-Zarqawi, and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi (right), who was appointed leader of ISI. The pictures were made public by the Iraqi government after the two were killed in a targeted attack in April 2010.

16. The new umbrella network was composed of Sunni jihadi organizations which had fought the American army in Iraq. It was apparently established because of the blow Al-Qaeda suffered with the death of al-Zarqawi. To reestablish its power, the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq joined forces with other organizations with a similar ideology. However, Al-Qaeda in Iraq was the dominant factor in the umbrella network and has continued in that role to this day in ISIS. Among the jihad organizations that joined the network were Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen, Jaish al-Fatihin, Jund al-Sahaba and Katibat Ansar al-Tawhid wal-Sunnah.

17. The ISI took root **mainly in western Iraq**, which had a tribal Sunni society (especially in Al-Anbar province, which extends to the Syrian border). The guerilla and terrorist activities the organization carried out after the death of al-Zarqawi peaked in 2006-2007 with many attacks against the United States and the Shi'ite-

affiliated Iraqi government. At the same time it began establishing a civilian administration within the Sunni population in the area under its control, as an alternative to the central government.

18. **Between 2008 and 2011 ISI's power waned.** That was mainly because of the American army's extensive military campaign which began at the beginning of 2007, called the "**surge.**" The American forces were assisted by **Sunni tribesmen** in the campaign against the jihadi group, especially in Al-Anbar province, where the tribes despised the brutal practices of Al-Qaeda and the jihadi organizations. The tribesmen, who at the time received large financial incentives from the Americans, organized into groups called "**awakening councils**" or "**awakening groups.**"

19. However, as the date of the American withdrawal from Iraq approached, the amount of aid the councils received decreased and the security situation began to deteriorate. On the other hand, **the Shi'ite al-Maliki regime, which became more sectarian, was enforced on the Sunnis.** As a result the status of the awakening councils was eroded and the tribal heads, who had ruled under the aegis of the Iraqi administration, lost their status as well. **That prepared the ground for the Sunni tribes to join the ranks of ISIS in the campaign against the Iraqi regime when it began some years later.**

20. One of the more conspicuous successes of the American campaign against the jihadi networks in Iraq was **the elimination of two prominent ISI figures in April 2010.** The Iraqi security forces, in collaboration with the American forces, **killed both Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. The leadership of ISI was inherited from Abu Omar al-Baghdadi by a prominent Iraqi jihadist named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi,** who heads ISIS today.

21. While the military campaign in Iraq was being waged, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and after him ISI, constructed **a covert operational infrastructure in Syria.** Its objective was to provide logistic support for the armed jihad campaign in Iraq against the United States and the coalition; the Syrian regime turned a blind eye and did not take effective steps against it. According to the British Quilliam Foundation, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began constructing the jihadi infrastructure in Syria as early as 2000 by sending a number of jihadists veterans of his operations in Afghanistan, to Syria and

Lebanon. They established "guesthouses" in Syria from which they recruited operatives to fight in Iraq.⁹

22. Thus **during the campaign against the United States and the coalition in Iraq, Syria served as a way station for thousands of foreign Arab-Muslim jihadists en route to the fighting in Iraq.** The direction has been reversed and during the Syrian civil war thousands of jihadists from ISIS have gone from Iraq to Syria and joined the ranks of the rebels against the Assad regime.

Rebuilding the force of the ISI and the increase in its activities after the withdrawal of the American army

23. The withdrawal of the American forces from Iraq in December 2011 left a military-security vacuum, enabling ISI **to rebuild and gather strength to renew its terrorist campaign against the Shi'ite population and the central Iraqi government.** That was done to encourage a civil war between Sunnis and Shi'ites. In addition, the civil war that broke out in Syria in March 2011 weakened the Assad regime and provided ISI with an opportunity to dispatch operatives to Syria and export its jihadi influence and ideology, until it managed, within a few years, to take over between a quarter and a third of Syria's territory in the east and north.

24. In the three years since the withdrawal of the American forces from Iraq (2012-2014), ISI has waged **an increasingly powerful terrorist-guerilla campaign against the Shi'ite population and the central Iraqi government.** According to UN statistics, the total number of civilian casualties (including police) in **2013 was the highest since 2008, with 7,818 killed** (6,787 in 2008) and **17,981** (20,178 in 2008) **injured.**¹⁰

25. The highlight of the ISIS attack on Iraqi regime institutions in 2013 was **breaking into the Abu Ghraib prison, near Baghdad.** The prison, the largest and best guarded in Iraq, notorious even during the Saddam Hussein regime, housed the rebels who fought the American army when it was in Iraq. After the American

⁹ Noman Benotman and Roisin Blake "Jabhat al-Nusra, a Strategic Briefing." quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/jabhat-al-nusra-a-strategic-briefing.pdf. Also see the ITIC September 17, 2013 bulletin, "The Al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) is an Al-Qaeda Salafist-jihadi network, prominent in the rebel organizations in Syria."

¹⁰ http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1499:un-casualty-figures-for-december-2013-deadliest-since-2008-in-iraq&Itemid=633&lang=en

withdrawal it was used by the Iraqi government **to imprison hundreds of Al-Qaeda operatives.**

26. Abu Ghraib was broken into on **July 21, 2013, according to a plan devised by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.** It began with artillery fire to soften resistance, after which the walls were breached by two car bombs. Fifty ISIS operatives entered the prison armed with machine guns and grenades, **opened the cells and released about 500 Al-Qaeda operatives.** The operation, which lasted about an hour, met with no significant resistance from the Iraqi prison guards, most of whom fled when ISIS began firing artillery. The operatives who were released were taken from the prison by waiting ISIS vehicles and driven to nearby Syria (Lisireport.worldpress.com, Alsharqiya.com, YouTube, Time.com). **The released operatives had extensive terrorist experience and provided significant reinforcements for ISIS (Note: Some of them were detained by the American army before it withdrew from Iraq). That apparently contributed greatly to ISIS's later successes.**



Abu Ghraib prison (Alsharqiya.com)



Scene from a video showing the ISIS vehicles waiting for the prisoners who were broken out of Abu Ghraib (YouTube)

27. The year before the Abu Ghraib jailbreak ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi issued a audio cassette for his supporters reporting **his plans to release prisoners**. He called the campaign "Breaking Walls." During a 12-month period ISIS conducted 24 complex attacks using car bombs. Its operatives **broke into eight Iraqi prisons** in addition to Abu Ghraib, and released dozens of Al-Qaeda operatives (Time.com, December 16, 2013).



From the video of the Abu Ghraib jailbreak (YouTube)

Dispatching suicide bombers: the operational trademark (in its various forms) of the Al-Qaeda branch in Iraq

28. The use of suicide bombers in Iraq has been the trademark of Al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq and currently of ISIS. At the end of the American invasion of Iraq Osama bin Laden and his second-in-command called on Iraqi civilians to carry out suicide bombing attacks to hurt the American invaders: "Use bombs wisely, not in forests and on hills...**The enemy is scared primarily by fighting in the streets in cities...We emphasize the importance of suicide operations against the enemy**"¹¹ [ITIC emphasis].

29. Bin Laden's call did not fall on deaf ears. During the first two years of the American presence in Iraq, there were 18 suicide bombing attacks carried out by an estimated 270 suicide bombers. Some of the attacks were carried out by operatives belonging to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's organization, which had joined Al-Qaeda.¹² Others were carried out by operatives belonging to ISI, established after al-Zarqawi was killed. They targeted the forces of America and the coalition, the new central Iraqi administration established by the United States and Iraqi Shi'ites. In some instances the suicide bombers detonated the car bombs in military bases and government facilities (sometimes by men wearing Iraqi army uniforms as camouflage).

30. There were **98 suicide bombing attacks in Iraq** in 2013 as opposed to **50 in Syria**.¹³ ISIS did not claim responsibility for several of those that caused many Shi'ite

¹¹ Bin Laden tape: full text, www.bbc.com, February 12, 2003, as cited in Yoram Schweitzer and Sari Goldstein Ferber, *Al-Qaeda and the Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism*, Memorandum 78, Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, November 2005, p. 78.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See the article by Yotam Rosner, Einav Yogev and Yoram Schweitzer, "A Report on Suicide Bombings in 2013," INSS Insight No. 507, January 14, 2014. (<http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=6408>) According to the article, in 2013 there were 291 suicide bombing attacks carried out in 18 countries worldwide, causing the deaths of approximately 3,100 people. About 50% of the attacks (148 of the total) were carried out in the Middle East, **most of them (98) in Iraq**. The data thus indicate that **the number of suicide bombing attacks carried out in Iraq during that period was greater than the number carried out in Syria, although international attention focused less on Iraq than on Syria**.

civilian casualties.¹⁴ The mass-killing attacks undermined the al-Maliki regime (according to Time Magazine, in September-December 2013 more than 3,000 people were killed in Iraq by suicide bombing attacks). **Nevertheless, Iran and the Shi'ite militias fighting the American army until its withdrawal preferred to send 7,000-8,000 Shi'ite operatives to Syria to defend the Assad regime, rather than to cope with ISI in Iraq**, underestimating its potential threat.¹⁵

31. **During 2014 ISIS-instigated suicide bombing attacks in Iraq continued.** Prominent among them was a series of deadly attacks carried out throughout October 2014 in residential areas in Baghdad, mainly among the Shi'ite population. The attacks, which killed hundreds of people, can perhaps be considered as increased ISIS pressure on Baghdad in addition to the attacks on Al-Anbar province, possibly in preparation for a campaign against Baghdad (See below).

The expansion of ISI into Syrian territory, the establishment of ISIS and its growing strength

32. At the end of 2011 ISI sent **Syrian and Iraqi jihadists skilled in guerilla warfare to Syria to participate in the campaign against the Assad regime.** In January 2012 they covertly **established the Al-Nusra Front** ("support front"), a jihadi organization headed by **Abu Muhammad al-Julani**, thereby establishing an additional power base for ISI outside Iraq.¹⁶ Al-Julani was appointed "*emir*" of Syria, i.e., the commander of the organization's Syrian branch, and was initially subordinate to ISI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

33. The gradual formation of the Al-Nusra Front as an independent jihadi organization was accompanied by **a deepening rift with ISI**, its parent organization. In an attempt to halt the process, **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the unification of the two organizations under his leadership**, changing the name of ISI to a new

¹⁴ For example, on September 11, 2013, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the Shi'ite Tamimi Mosque in a Husseiniya (a Shi'ite social-religious institution). It was carried out in the Shi'ite neighborhood of Al-A'zamiya. Forty Shi'ites were killed and dozens wounded. Despite the fact that ISIS did not claim responsibility for the attack, in ITIC assessment the organization was responsible. On September 21, 2013, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a car bomb in the Shi'ite Baghdad neighborhood of Madinat al-Sadr, killing eight people. In that case as well, ISIS did not claim responsibility but apparently it was nevertheless responsible.

¹⁵ For further information see the March 18, 2014 bulletin "Shi'ite Foreign Fighters in Syria.)

¹⁶ For further information see the September 17, 2013 bulletin "The Al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) is an Al-Qaeda Salafist-jihadi network, prominent in the rebel organizations in Syria. It seeks to overthrow the Assad regime and establish an Islamic Caliphate in Greater Syria, a center for regional and international terrorism and subversion."

name that would express the unification, "**The Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria [al-Sham], or ISIS¹⁷ (April 9, 2013)**. However, Abu Muhammad al-Julani refused to subordinate himself to al-Baghdadi and quickly swore allegiance to Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. In the developing rivalry between the two, Al-Zawahiri took sides and on June 10, 2014, announced the unification had been annulled. On January 3, 2014, **al-Zawahiri announced he had severed all connections with ISIS and that ISIS was no longer a branch of Al-Qaeda.**

34. In response, in February 2014 ISIS issued a public statement attacking the Al-Qaeda leadership and the Al-Nusra Front. **Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, a senior ISIS figure and its spokesman, accused the Al-Qaeda leadership of "straying from the correct path."** He said Al-Qaeda was no longer the foundation for jihad and that **ISIS was the only jihadi organization operating according to the vision of Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi** (YouTube, April 17, 2014). Thus the split between the Al-Qaeda leadership and ISIS became open. As a result, disputes between ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front and other rebel organizations in Syria worsened, **leading to violent clashes between them.** Since then the Al-Nusra Front has been operating in Syria independently, **while ISIS also operates both in Syria and in Iraq, its home countries and power base** (giving it an advantage over the Al-Nusra Front).

35. Since the public split between ISIS and the Al-Qaeda leadership, **the jihad organizations have become polarized, each adopting its own modus operandi:** ISIS has a reputation for conducting its relations with the population and its rivals in a strictly brutal fashion **based on al-Zarqawi's legacy, using force to implement Islamic religious law here and now in every region over which it has control.** The Al-Nusra Front's **policies** towards the population and its rivals **are more pragmatic**, enabling it to gain the support of the local residents and to actively cooperate with the other rebel organizations operating in Syria.

¹⁷ It is sometimes called the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). "Greater Syria" seems to be the more correct translation of the term *al-sham*, which is why the ITIC prefers ISIS and not ISIL.

Documents dealing with the confrontation between ISIS and the Al-Qaeda leadership



Announcement from Ayman al-Zawahiri about Al-Qaeda's rejection of ISIS, issued on January 3, 2014 on Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic forums (Muslim.org).



ISIS announcement attacking Al-Qaeda and the Al-Nusra Front, February 4, 2014 (Alplatformmedia.com).

36. In retrospect, it can be said that **since the split ISIS has become stronger in Iraq and Syria and overshadowed the Al-Nusra Front**. In ITIC assessment that is because of **the attraction of its ideology** (which increased after the self-declaration of the Islamic Caliphate); **its brutality** (which frightens its enemies); **its military achievements** (resulting, among other factors, from its ability to move forces and weapons to and from eastern Syria and western Iraq); and its **many resources**

(weapons and money stockpiled during 2014). ISIS's strengthening over the past year is expressed in many ways: commanders and entire units of the Al-Nusra Front and other rebel organizations have joined it; parts of the Sunni opposition in Iraq collaborate with it; **foreign fighters, including those from Western countries, tend to join the ISIS's ranks rather than those of the Al-Nusra Front**; oaths of allegiance have been taken to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi by jihad organizations beyond the borders of Iraq and Syria (most notable so far was the Egyptian Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis).

Section Two – ISIS's ideology and vision, and their implementation

ISIS as an Islamic Salafist-jihadi organization

1. **ISIS** is a Salafist-jihadi Islamic organization, part of the Sunni Islamic extremist faction which seeks to restore early Islam's days of glory **through jihad**, a holy war directed against internal and external enemies. **The Salafist movement** perceives the time of the Prophet Muhammad as ideal and the first Caliphs who succeeded him as role models (the Arabic word **Salaf** means ancestor or first generation). The modern Salafist movement began in Egypt, a result of the desire to purify Islam of its flaws and return to what was perceived as the Golden Age of Islam.

2. Initially, the Salafist movement focused on religious studies and the winning of hearts and minds (*da'wah*) as a way of creating an Islamic society and a state ruled by Islamic law. However, within the Salafi movement **an extremist faction called Salafiyya Jihadiyya (i.e., jihadi Salafism) developed, from which Al-Qaeda and the global jihad organizations, including ISIS, have emerged.** An ideologically important contribution to the development of the movement was made by **Sayyid Qutb** (1906-1966), an Egyptian ideologue whose ideas inspired the establishment of Islamic organizations that supported **violent struggle** (including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's successor as leader of Al-Qaeda).

3. From a **Salafist-jihadi** perspective, Muslims must strive to disseminate and implement Islam in all areas of life by liberating the lands of Islam from other cultures (especially Western culture) **through jihad** (holy war), which is perceived as **the personal duty (fard 'ayn) of every Muslim.** Thus Muslim must fight the enemies of Islam through **violent and uncompromising military struggle.** Moreover, according to the Salafist-jihadi perception, the enemies of Islam are not only external (mainly the US and the West), but also Arab regimes that cooperate with the West or secular Arab regimes that are considered "infidel." Therefore, according to Salafist jihadists, Islamic religious law justifies overthrowing them.

The borders of the Islamic Caliphate established by ISIS: vision and reality

4. The return to the Golden Age of Islam, according to ISIS, takes place through the reestablishment of an **Islamic Caliphate, based on the Salafist-jihadi**

interpretation of Islamic religious law (the sharia). The Caliphate State, whose establishment was declared by ISIS, currently includes large parts of Iraq and Syria, from the outskirts of Baghdad to the outskirts of Aleppo. However, ISIS seeks to expand its self-declared Caliphate State to the rest of Iraq and Syria, topple the regimes in Baghdad and Damascus, and **subsequently spread from there to the rest of the region, most of it included in Greater Syria (*Bilad al-Sham*)** according to ISIS: Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, and even Kuwait (See map).

5. However, ISIS's ambitions **extend beyond the areas of Greater Syria**. According to its vision, the Caliphate in Greater Syria will be the core of an extensive **Islamic Caliphate**. It will include the countries of the Middle East; North Africa; parts of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan (Khorasan); European countries that were conquered from the Muslims in the past (Spain, the Balkans); and other Muslim countries (Turkey, the Caucasus).

6. **Following are three maps of the Caliphate State** posted on ISIS and jihadi forums:

- A. The Caliphate State with its present borders.
- B. The area of Greater Syria (*Bilad al-Sham*) to be controlled by ISIS in the future.
- C. The Caliphate State with its extensive borders, from West Africa to Central Asia (including some areas in Europe).



The ISIS self-declared (June 2014) Caliphate State ISIS in large areas of western Iraq and eastern and northern Syria. The map was posted on jihadi forums on August 18, 2014 (Alplatformmedia.com; Hanein.info).



The ISIS insignia superimposed on Greater Syria (Bilad al-Sham) (Albawabhnews.com).



Left: Map of the Islamic Caliphate in English with a picture of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the right (Hanein.info). Right: The Islamic Caliphate State with its extensive borders. Only Islamic names appear on the map, not the names of the modern nation states (Hanein.info).

The Caliphate in Islamic history¹⁸

7. Reestablishing the Islamic Caliphate is the vision of the Salafist-jihadi movement, which ISIS has begun to put into practice. Various Islamic factions, entities and activists (for example, Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Party of [Islamic] Liberation, founded in 1953) and Islamic thinkers championed the concept of reestablishing the Caliphate.

¹⁸ Based in part on Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Chapters in the History of the Arabs and Islam* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, Reshafim Publishing House, 1968), pp. 102-127.

Some of them (such as Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden's mentor) even attempted to chart a path to its establishment. For Salafist-jihadists, the establishment of the Caliphate means subjecting all **Muslims to a single accepted and agreed-on ruler, eliminating nation states** (the fruit of the "imperialist plot"), **eliminating the "infidel regimes" in Arab and Muslim countries and establishing a single Muslim theocracy. The theocracy will be governed in accordance with the model of the Islamic Caliphate in its Golden Age**, (i.e., the generations after the Prophet Muhammad) according to the radical Salafist-Jihadi interpretation of Islam, and will be headed by a single ruler, the Caliph.

8. The Caliphate vision is inspired by the period following the death of Muhammad (632 AD), when it was necessary to appoint his substitute (a successor was not appointed because no mortal could not succeed him). The Arabic title given to the rulers who came after Muhammad was **Khalifat Rasul Allah**, i.e., "substitute for the messenger of Allah" or, in its short form, Caliph ("substitute").

9. **The period of the first four Caliphs of Islam**, Abu Bakr (whose name was adopted by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi), Umar, Uthman and Ali (632-661), was the most politically cohesive period in the history of Islam and is **considered its Golden Age**. They were the four Caliphs who established the first Islamic state, conducted the major conquests beyond its borders and laid the economic and administrative foundations for the Muslim Empire. Within a few generations, Muslim Arabs, who were unknown in the history of the world until then, established a huge empire on which they imposed the Arabic language and the religion of Islam.

10. For those reasons the first four Caliphs have been greatly admired in Islam throughout the ages, and many Sunni Muslim movements perceive them as their spiritual fathers. The collective term for the first four Caliphs is **Rashidun**, i.e., those who follow the straight path as instructed by Muhammad. **The institution of the Caliphate has since become a foundation of Islam**, and Caliphs from the Quraysh tribe (Muhammad's tribe) ruled it in practice until the time of the Ottoman Turks (1517). They were replaced by Ottoman-Turkish Caliphs, who gave themselves the director title of Sultan. They ruled until 1924, when Turkey, which became a republic under the leadership of Atatürk, announced the abolition of the Caliphate.

11. **As to the justification for idealizing the Caliphate justified**, while the period of the first four Caliphs is considered by many Muslims as Islam's Golden Age, an examination **shows the idealization to be exaggerated**: three of the first Caliphs were murdered and during their reign the weakness of Islam was revealed, i.e., its

lack of unity and its inability to prevent civil war (*fitna*) and bloodshed. Shortly after the rise of the Abbasid rule (750 AD), the institution of the Caliphate began to gradually decline. When the Abbasid Empire began to disintegrate at the end of the ninth century AD, local rulers declared themselves Caliphs to legitimize their rule, and the institution of the Caliphate was gradually emptied of content.

Annuling the existence of the nation states in the Middle East

12. **Islam, from its inception until the end of the First World War, did not recognize national borders in the territorial areas that it ruled** under various dynasties (until the end of the Ottoman Dynasty). Nation states in the Middle East were created only from the beginning of the twentieth century after the First World War. **ISIS does not recognize nation-state legitimacy or the national borders of the Middle East** as outlined in the Sykes-Picot Agreement and formulated by the superpowers during and after the First World War.

13. For example, in a video distributed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in January 2014, he objected to the political boundaries of the regional nation-states and stressed that ISIS intended to establish an Islamic state with no national boundaries. He described the Islamic state based on regions occupied by ISIS as "A country **whose way was paved by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi** [who founded Al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq], and has absorbed the blood of our senior leaders **Abu Omar al-Baghdadi** [head of ISI until he was killed in a targeted attack] and **Abu Hamza al-Muhajir** [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's successor as the leader of Al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq, who was killed in a targeted attack together with Abu Omar al-Baghdad]."

14. On June 29, 2014, ISIS posted a pair of videos (in English and in Arabic), expressing its ambition to annul the Sykes-Picot Agreement and "shatter" the borders of the nation-states established in the Middle East following it. The English-language video is entitled "**The End of Sykes-Picot.**" It includes a map showing the Iraq-Syria border and states that a single Islamic state with no national borders has now been established. According to the video a **single supranational Muslim state will be established, to be headed by a single Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, who always says he breaks down barriers. The video adds that with the help of Allah, **they will break down the barriers in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and in all countries, until they reach Jerusalem, with the help of Allah** (Youtube.com).



Background slide of the audiotape posted on YouTube and elsewhere (June 29, 2014), entitled "The End of [the] Sykes-Picot [Agreement]"



From a ceremony marking the "shattering of the borders" between Iraq and Syria, in a video posted by ISIS on June 29, 2014 (MEMRI, July 2, 2014)

The roots of ISIS's hostility to the United States, the West and Western values

15. **ISIS is intensely hostile to the United States, other Western countries, Israel and the values of the modern liberal West** (democracy, pluralism, freedom of the individual, freedom of worship, equal rights for women, etc). Anti-Americanism and hostility to the West and its values are not unique to ISIS. **It is one of the salient characteristics of radical Islam, in both its Sunni (Al-Qaeda) and its Shi'ite formats** (Iran's Khomeinist regime). The Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, is no different from ISIS in that respect. The source of their hostility to the United States is not only political. **The depth of their hostility is reflected by a total**

rejection of American culture (the ultimate expression of modernity) and Western culture in general. This culture is perceived as a dangerous temptation threatening to poison the Islamic world. It is a temptation Muslims are liable to become addicted to and therefore is perceived as more dangerous.¹⁹

16. Like other organizations of its kind, **ISIS is hostile to the United States and the West and is committed to waging jihad against them.** ISIS has made that clear in many publications directed at the Western countries and through its actions, especially after the start of the American campaign against it (executing hostages and encouraging its supporters to carry out terrorist attacks against Western civilians worldwide). In practice, however, **ISIS's current top strategic priority is realizing the first stage of its vision, taking over Iraq and Syria and establishing the Caliphate State that has been set up in a significant portion of their territories.**

The concept of *takfir* (denouncing a person as an infidel thereby enabling his execution) and its implications

17. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah frequently refers to Salafist-jihadi Islamic organizations (the most prominent of which are ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front) as **"takfir groups"** (*jama'at takfiriyya*), i.e., groups that declare a Muslim or group of Muslims as infidels because they do not adopt the Sunni radical concept of Islam (as it is perceived by those who make the declaration). **The declaration means "infidels" may be executed**, so it is a **serious accusation** and permits the killing of individual people and groups. ISIS and similar Salafist-jihadi Islamist organizations translate the concept into **executions and harassment of Shi'ites, Christians, Yazidi and members of other ethnic and religious communities.**

18. The concept of *takfir* was previously used by Salafist-jihadi Islamist organizations such as **Al-Takfir wal-Hijra** in Egypt²⁰ and **Al-Qaeda**. However, the roots of ISIS's extreme intolerance of Iraqi Shi'ites and minority groups can also be seen as **the murderous legacy of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**, the founder of the Al-Qaeda branch in Iraq, from which ISIS emerged. Al-Zarqawi called for total war against the Shi'ites in Iraq and practiced on the ground. That is reflected by the indiscriminate, murderous

¹⁹ See Emmanuel Sivan, *The Clash within Islam* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, Am Oved / Ofakim Library, 2005), the chapter entitled: The Roots of anti-Americanism, pp. 57-65.

²⁰ Al-Takfir wal-Hijra carried out a wave of terrorist attacks in Egypt in the 1970s and early 1980s.

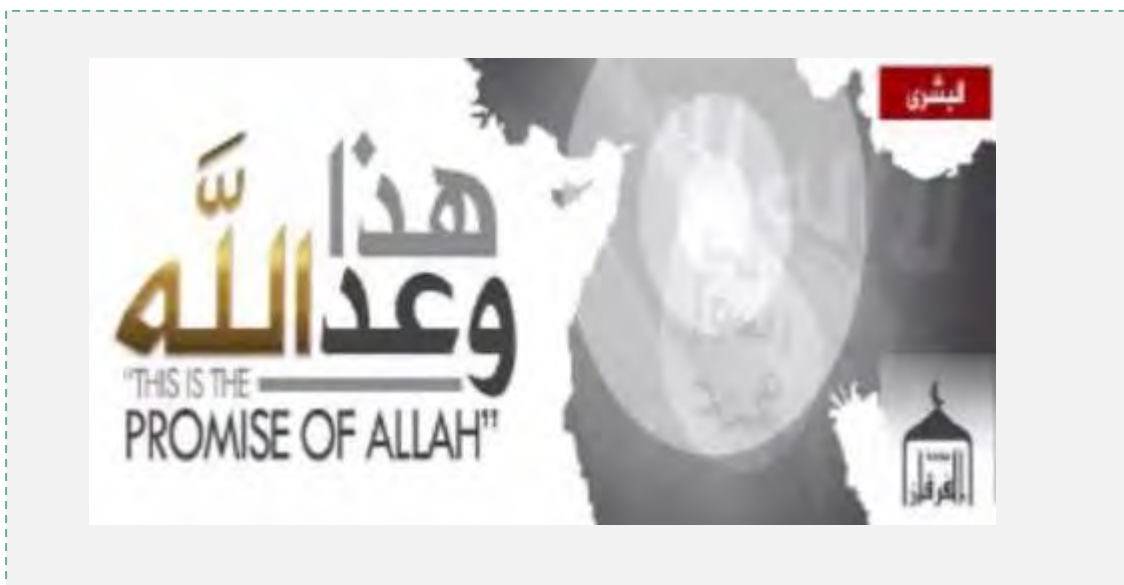
terrorist attacks that have been carried out by ISIS and its predecessors in Iraq against Shi'ites and against other ethnic and religious groups, while damaging the burial sites and holy sites of the various religions.



ISIS publication on behalf of the Nineveh province showing a Shi'ite mosque in the city of Mosul being blown up (Iraq.shafaqna.com)

Beginning the implementation of the vision: declaring the Islamic Caliphate

19. **On June 29, 2014**, ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani declared the establishment of the **Islamic Caliphate, headed by Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. The announcement was made by a spokesman for ISIS on an audiotape posted to YouTube and elsewhere. On the occasion of the establishment of the Caliphate, Caliph al-Baghdadi announced an amnesty for detainees held by ISIS.



Background slide of al-Adnani's audiotape entitled "This is the promise of Allah," declaring the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate (YouTube)

20. Following are the highlights of the declaration of the Caliphate:

A. Allah sent his messenger, the Prophet Muhammad, **and ordered him to carry out jihad to ultimately establish an Islamic Caliphate.** The nation is in a state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*, the period of ignorance that preceded Islam), and that is its situation is so deplorable. Allah has taken the Arab tribes and turned them into an Islamic nation and **the time has come to renew its glory.** There are signs of victory in battle and it is therefore essential to establish the Caliphate now.

B. Thus the **ISIS Shura Council** (the supreme organ of the organization) was convened. It discussed the issue and decided to establish **the Islamic Caliphate in the territories conquered by ISIS in Syria and Iraq ("from Aleppo to Diyala").** The Shura Council also decided to appoint **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as Caliph and Imam of Muslims everywhere.**²¹ It was decided **to change the organization's name from The Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) to The Islamic State (*al-dawla al-islamiyya*, IS).**

²¹ In the Caliphate created after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD, **the Muslim Caliph also bore the title of imam.** In Prof. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh's book, Prof. Moshe Sharon writes: "The role of the Caliph was therefore an entirely practical and secular role. He had no spiritual advantages or spiritual powers that ordinary Muslims did not have. Nevertheless, his position was cloaked in a religious aura, by its very creation. Thus, for example, he bore the title of **Imam** (a title that was later used for Caliph as well), i.e., the leader of public prayer, thus he could, if he wished, lead the prayer ceremony and deliver the Friday *khutbah* (sermon) ..." (Moshe Sharon, Chapter V: The Caliphate, in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh', p. 125).

C. Abu Muhammad al-Adnani called on all operatives of Islamic organizations **to swear allegiance (*al-bay'ah*) to al-Baghdadi and work together to aid the Islamic State. The current residents of the Islamic State** were the first called on to swear allegiance to al-Baghdadi. Al-Adnani warned Muslims **against adopting Western ideologies such as democracy and nationalism**, and called on all residents of the Islamic State to be united.



ISIS operatives in Al-Raqqqa, ISIS's "capital" in Syria, celebrating the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate (Al-Haq News Agency's Twitter page, July 2, 2014)

Al-Baghdadi's calls for jihad and his vision of the Islamic takeover of the world

21. ISIS emphasizes **jihad** as its chosen means to overthrow the regimes in Iraq and Syria, establish the Islamic Caliphate, and fight against its many internal and external enemies until the implementation of the vision, **an Islamic takeover of the entire world (and symbolically, "the occupation of Rome," the symbol of Christianity)**. That was reflected in the tape distributed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi shortly after the declaration of the Caliphate.

22. **On July 1, 2014**, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi posted an audiotape in Arabic on YouTube entitled **"Message to jihad fighters and the Islamic nation during Ramadan."** Al-Baghdadi took advantage of the Islamic religious month of Ramadan and the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate to **encourage Muslim operatives around the world to support the Caliphate, join the ranks of the jihad fighters in Syria and Iraq and wage a jihad that would lead to an Islamic takeover of the world** (according to MEMRI, translations of the audiotape were distributed in English,

German, Russian, Albanian and French through the Al-Hayat Center, the ISIS propaganda unit).

23. The main points made by al-Baghdadi:

A. **Call for jihad:** Al-Baghdadi called on Muslims to help the Islamic nation **through jihad for the sake of Allah**. He promised the jihad fighters that bliss awaited them in paradise and said, "Allah's religion is the victorious one." Al-Baghdadi added that **the Muslim masses around the world lived in suffering**, noting **al-Sham (Greater Syria), Egypt, Iraq, Palestine [which is part of Greater Syria], the Arabian Peninsula, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, China, India, Somalia, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Ahvaz (Khuzestan Province in Iran, with its Arab character)**. He said that the Muslims in those places were waiting for the Islamic State and jihad fighters to come and help them. He described the world **as split into two camps**: one included **Muslims and jihad fighters**; opposite it stood the camp of **the Jews, the "Crusaders" (i.e., Christians) and their allies** in all the "infidel countries," led by **the US and Russia**.

B. **Praise for the Islamic Caliphate:** Al-Baghdadi called on Muslims to **support the Islamic Caliphate to save themselves from enslavement to foreigners**. He noted that the Nation of Islam failed after the abolition of the Caliphate (1924) and was taken over by infidels. The infidels stole their resources, denied their rights, conquered their lands and appointed collaborators to rule over them by force. The collaborators waved false slogans of peace, democracy, pan-Arab nationalism, nation states and Ba'athism. In contrast, the Caliphate whose creation was declared **"united the Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, American, Arab, French, German and Australian, who became brothers**, defending each other in the same trench [...] under one flag, the flag of faith." **He said that the Muslims would erode the power of the nation-state model, destroy the model of democracy** and expose the "satanic nature" of those models.

C. **Defending ISIS's methods:** According to al-Baghdadi, what the Arab regimes call "terrorism" is actually resistance to their false slogans and implementation of Islamic religious law (sharia). He added "Is it not terrorism when Muslims are killed and their homes burned in **Burma**, when they are murdered and their limbs cut off in **the Philippines, Kashmir, Indonesia**, when they are deported in **the Caucasus** and buried in mass graves in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**? Is it not terrorism when the homes of Muslims in **Palestine** are

destroyed, their land is stolen and their rights are violated? Is it not terrorism when mosques are burned in **Egypt**, the homes of Muslims are destroyed, their women are raped and the **jihad fighters in Sinai** and elsewhere **are oppressed**? [...] Is what is happening in **Turkestan**²² not terrorism? Is it not terrorism when women are prevented from wearing the **hijab in France**? [...] All this is not terrorism, but freedom and democracy, he added sarcastically.

D. Call for Muslims to join the Caliphate which was established by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria: Al-Baghdadi rejected the concept of the modern nation states and called on Muslims to join the Islamic State he founded. He said, "There is no [need for slogans such as] Syria for the Syrians or Iraq for the Iraqis, since the earth is Allah's [...] The country belongs to the Muslims; Therefore Muslims, wherever they are, immigrated to the countries of Islam, since the immigration to the area (or region) of the Islamic State [Dar al-Islam] is obligatory." He called on Muslims who were able to do so to perform ***hijrah*** (i.e., migration, an important symbolic act in the history of Islam which, in his perspective, is related to the establishment of the Caliphate²³). He called on **Muslim clerics, led by sharia judges, people with military, administrative and academic capabilities, as well as Muslim doctors and engineers in all fields, to join his self-declared Islamic State, arguing that it was a necessity due to the sorry state of Muslims worldwide.**

E. The vision – the Islamic takeover of the entire world: Al-Baghdadi concluded by saying that if Muslims adhered to Islam **they would rule the entire world:** "If you cling to it [faith in Allah and the principles of Islam], **you will even conquer Rome [the symbol of Christianity], and the Earth will be owned by you, with the help of Allah.**"

²² **Turkestan** is the Sunni Muslim separatist name for the autonomous region of Xinjiang in western China where the Uighur people live. Uighur operatives have joined the ranks of jihadi organizations in Syria.

²³ ***Hijrah*** - The journey of the Prophet Muhammad and his first followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD, due to the persecution that they were subject to in the beginning. It has become a symbol of the isolation of loyal believers from the sinful and perverted society and as a model for the beginning of a proper Islamic society and the revival of Islam (Uriah Furman, **Islamiyun** [Hebrew]. Tel Aviv: IDF / Maarakhhot Publishing House, 2002, p. 322).

Al-Baghdadi's public appearance at the Great Mosque in Mosul (July 5, 2014)

24. On July 5, 2014, a video of a Friday sermon delivered by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the Great Mosque in Mosul on the previous day was posted on YouTube. The video shows armed militants, apparently al-Baghdadi's bodyguards, who were present in the mosque. **His public appearance and the publication of his picture are unusual** and are intended, in ITIC assessment, to dispel reports that appeared in the media at that time (from Iraqi government sources) about his having been injured in an air strike.

25. In the video, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is called by a number of Islamic titles: **Caliph, Imam, and Amir al-Mu'minin, which indicated that he headed the Islamic State.** His main points:

A. The importance of implementing Islamic law and the establishment of the Caliphate: "The religion of Allah will not exist, save through the implementation of sharia (Islamic law). Allah has a book which guides the Faithful [i.e., the Quran], and a victorious sword [for Islam]." He said that **jihād fighters established the Caliphate and appointed an Imam** (i.e., Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi himself) to rule over them. The establishment of the Caliphate, which was lost for centuries [although formally it was in existence until 1924], is the duty of the Muslims.

B. The importance of the path of jihād: Jihad should continue for the sake of Allah despite all the difficulties, in order to fight idol worshippers: "Allah has commanded [you] to perform jihad through your property and through your souls [...]" "He who performs jihad, Allah will forgive his sins and lead him through the gates of paradise." Al-Baghdadi finished his sermon by asking Allah to grant victory to the Muslims and the jihad fighters.



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi delivering a sermon at the Great Mosque in Mosul (YouTube, July 5, 2014)



Left: ISIS flag. Right: An armed security guard during al-Baghdadi's sermon at the Great Mosque in Mosul (YouTube, July 5, 2014)

26. The main purpose of al-Baghdadi's rare public appearance was to refute media reports of his injury in an air strike. However, there is no doubt that his public appearance, **where he was presented as a member of the Quraysh tribe**, the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, **also served to establish the concept of the Caliphate, glorify al-Baghdadi's status** and legitimize his rule in the Muslim world. That was noted by his arch rival, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, when asked why al-Baghdadi had appeared in the media (Al-Akhbar, Lebanon, August 15, 2014):

"It is not his policy to appear in the media, but I think he appeared in order to handle a problem of Islamic religious law. When **ISIS** presented its Caliphate, a dispute arose in the Islamic world between Sunni clerics, namely, **how can we swear allegiance to a man**

whose name we do not know, whose personality we do not know, about whom we have no information or data. For one cannot swear allegiance to an unknown person, we must swear allegiance to someone known. He had to appear in order to become known and pave the way for the swearing of allegiance. That was the consideration behind the move [...] Regarding his declaration that he is a member of the tribe of Quraysh - **the Caliph must be a member of the tribe of Quraysh**, while an Emir [ruler] of a country, like a king, prince or president, is not [considered] in the eyes [of his subjects] as a Caliph of the Muslims. **The Caliph of the Muslims must be a member of the tribe of Quraysh**. Because Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's project is the Caliphate, he must tell them that 'I [i.e., al-Baghdadi] am a member of the tribe of Quraysh' in order for their swearing of allegiance to be genuine" [ITIC emphasis].

Initial responses to the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate

27. The establishment of the Caliphate State evoked a significant positive reaction among Salafist-jihadi Islamist organizations and operatives and among population groups in the Arab-Muslim world. However, it also encountered resistance. In retrospect, **it can be said it served ISIS well, increased its ideological appeal, strengthened Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's position, and subsequently led to jihadi organizations and networks outside Iraq and Syria swearing allegiance to Al-Baghdadi.**

28. The declaration of the Caliphate met with complete rejection among ISIS's Sunni Muslim adversaries (mainly the Al-Nusra Front), Islamic rebel organizations in Syria, and Salafist-jihadi Islamist networks and individuals outside Iraq and Syria. For example:

A. **The Al-Nusra Front**, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, expressed its opposition to the declaration of the Caliphate and denied reports that it also planned to announce the establishment of an Islamic emirate. The organization issued an audiotape in which its leader, Abu Muhammad al-Julani, said he did not intend to establish an Islamic Caliphate at the present time, although his organization was striving for its establishment. In due time, Al-Julani noted, they would announce the establishment of an emirate, but it would be done with the consent of the jihad fighters and Muslim clerics (Longwarjournal.org, July 13, 2014).

B. According to a Tweet that appeared on the Twitter account of the **Islamic Front** (a coalition of Islamic rebel organizations in Syria) on July 1, 2014, the declaration of the Caliphate was null and void for the following reasons: the

conditions for the establishment of a Caliphate did not currently exist today, the message served an agenda that strived to divide Muslim countries into cantons at the expense of the Sunnis; regional and international entities would exploit the declaration to intervene directly in Muslim lands to thwart the revolutions in Syria and Iraq; and the Syrian regime might exploit the declaration to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the world to increase its activity against the "jihad fighters." The announcement called the declaration of the Caliphate a *fitna* (civil war, a highly negative term in Islam) and called on all factions of jihadi organizations in Syria and Iraq to achieve "unity of line and unity of word."

C. Criticism of the declaration also came from a prominent Salafist-jihadi figure, **Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi** (Isam Mohammad Tahir al-Barqawi), **leader of the Salafist-jihadi movement in Jordan**. Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, **who is hostile to ISIS and opposes its actions**, issued a statement on his Facebook page, stating that the declaration of the Caliphate threatened to divide the Muslims (Alghad.com, July 2, 2014). On another occasion, he said that he had been pressured to retract the statement he issued describing ISIS's position as "deviant," but he continued to adhere to his opinion (Al-Sabil, Jordan, July 1, 2014).

ISIS's flag and its Islamic significance

29. **The flag of Al-Qaeda and Salafist-jihadi Islamic organizations, including ISIS's flag, are black with a white inscription of the Testimony (*shahada*), the heart of the Islamic faith: "There is no god but Allah."** Below the inscription there is a white circle, the seal of the Prophet Muhammad, and with an inscription in black reading "Muhammad the Messenger of Allah" (**Muhammad Rasul Allah**, an inscription that has to be read **from the bottom up**; See below). In some cases, the flag (prior to the declaration of the Caliphate) also included the inscription "**The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham**" to distinguish it from other jihadi flags.



The inscription on the ISIS flag



The seal of the Prophet Muhammad



Operatives carrying ISIS flags (Aawsat.com)



Operatives carrying the ISIS flag, with an inscription on the bottom reading "The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham" (Assakina.com)

30. The flag used by ISIS is known by various names, among them "**the oneness flag**" (*rayat al-tawhid*)²⁴, "**the flag of the Caliphate**," and is sometimes mistakenly called "**the Flag of the Prophet**." In practice, the flags of the Salafist-jihadi organizations, including ISIS, **are not identical** to the flag of the Prophet. According to tradition, the flag of the Prophet is called "**the banner of the eagle**" (*rayat al-uqab*) and looks different: the *shahada* on it appears in full on a horizontal line, as can be seen on the flags of most Islamist organizations.

²⁴ The flag is called "the oneness flag" (Oneness of Allah), because it contains the **word of oneness** (*kalimat al-tawheed*): "There is no god but Allah; Muhammad [is] the Messenger of Allah."

31. The inscription "**Muhammad, Messenger of Allah**," which appears inside the white circle, is read **from the bottom up**. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad adopted a silver seal containing three lines, with one word on each line: Muhammad, Messenger [of] Allah. In most traditions, the words, "Muhammad the Messenger of Allah" were written in the usual order, that is from top to bottom; according to some traditions, the lines are read from the bottom up, as in a seal. Since 2006, the Prophet's seal has appeared on the flags of Salafist-jihadi Islamic organizations (affiliated with Al-Qaeda) **with the lines going from the bottom up**. The jihadi flag was adopted by ISI and later by ISIS.

32. **ISIS has turned its jihadi flag into a brand**, which it has marketed successfully around the world, including in the West. **Being aware of the importance of the battle for hearts and minds, ISIS has made extensive use of its flag** by its military forces and by the institutions of government it has established; the ISIS flag has been hoisted in central locations in the cities it controls and at the executions it has carried out. **Arab and Western media**, with their intensive coverage of ISIS, have made extensive use of the propaganda "raw materials" supplied to them by ISIS, **contributing to the branding of the flag. Use of the flag and insignia quickly became a means to express defiance and/or support of ISIS in the Arab and Muslim world, in the West and in Israel** (see below).



Hoisting the ISIS flag in the main square of the city of Al-Bab, in the Aleppo province, as a symbol of control and sovereignty (Sef.ps)

The Islamic roots of ISIS's desecration of gravesites and shattering of statues

33. In the past year, the Arab and global media have given prominence to the desecration of graves and shattering of Muslim and non-Muslim statues **by ISIS and Al-Nusra Front operatives in Syria and Iraq**. That behavior, which characterizes the conduct of some of the Salafist-jihadi organizations (including Al-Qaeda), **has historical Islamic roots** attributed to a statement by the Prophet Muhammad.

34. From the outset Islam split into the Sunni school of thought (the majority version) and the Shi'ite school of thought (the minority version). Throughout Muslim history, the opposing sides periodically desecrated each other's graves to highlight its own superiority. Acts of desecration were prominent at the beginning of the Sunni Abbasid Dynasty (in the 8th century) and the Safavid Shi'ite Dynasty (in the 16th century). **Ibn Taymiyyah** (died in 1328 AD) was a senior Sunni Muslim cleric who vehemently opposed the worshipping of graves of individuals considered holy. Ibn Taymiyyah, who possessed a Salafist Islamic worldview, forbade such worship because he saw it as an expression of polytheism, which Islam forbids, in view of the fundamental and uncompromising belief in the oneness of Allah (*tawhid*).

35. In the modern era, graves began to be desecrated with the rise of Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula during the 18th century AD. The founder of Wahhabism, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1691-1787), espoused highly conservative Sunni Islam (i.e., Salafism) and adopted Ibn Taymiyyah's view regarding a complete ban on worshipping holy gravesites (including those of prominent Sunnis). He initiated an extensive campaign to desecrate holy gravesites in the Arabian Peninsula. Towards the end of the 18th century the Wahhabi Emirate was destroyed following a punitive campaign conducted by the son of the ruler of Egypt at the time, Muhammad Ali, as ordered by the Ottoman central government.

36. However, it was reestablished in the early 20th century following the renewed alliance between the Wahhabis and Emir Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud (who ruled from 1926 to 1953). The emir, who adopted the Wahhabi Islamic world view, was the actual founder of Saudi Arabia. After occupying most of the Arabian Peninsula, Ibn Saud began a holy gravesite cleansing campaign, primarily in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. During the campaign the graves of family members and prominent friends of the Prophet Muhammad were also destroyed.

37. In the past two decades, following the rise of Al-Qaeda and additional Salafist-jihadi organizations, graves have been desecrated and statues shattered in various locations around the world. Thus, for example, a huge statue of Buddha was destroyed by the Taliban in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, in 2001 (it was restored only a decade later); in 2012, Muslim cultural institutions were destroyed by Ansar Dine in Timbuktu, the capital of Mali in West Africa; and holy gravesites (mainly of Sufis) were desecrated by Islamist extremists in Libya in 2012 (not far from the capital Tripoli and in Misrata).

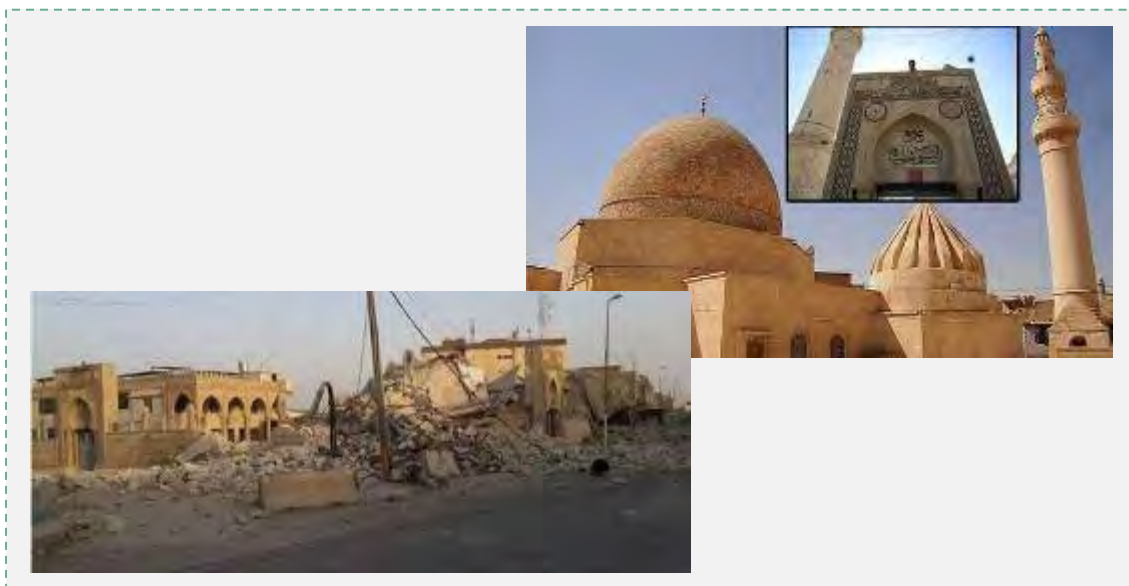
38. ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front continue the tradition of desecrating gravesites and shattering statues. That was evident in its recent conquests in Iraq in the summer of 2014. ISIS destroyed **the grave of the Prophet Jonah in Mosul, the grave of the Prophet Daniel in the area of Mosul, and the grave of the Sufi Sheikh Ibrahim** in the Nineveh province. In addition, ancient statues and cultural treasures in Iraq dating from the dawn of civilization were smashed: Here



The grave of the Prophet Jonah in Mosul before and after it was destroyed by ISIS (Alsumaria.tv; Allibad.net)



Left: The destruction of ancient statues in Iraq, cultural treasures dating from the dawn of civilization (Islamist-movements.com). Right: The grave of the Prophet Daniel in Mosul before it was blown up by ISIS (Youm7.com)



Left: The grave of the Prophet Seth after its desecration (Room-alghadeer.net). Right: The desecration of the grave of the Prophet Seth, the son of Adam, who is considered a prophet in Islam (abna.ir)

Section Three: ISIS's Military Achievements in Iraq in the Summer of 2014 and the Establishment of its Governmental Systems

Overview

1. In June 2014 ISIS launched a broad military campaign in northern and western Iraq. It had unprecedented achievements, **the most important of which was the occupation of the oil city of Mosul**, Iraq's second largest city, including the takeover of the Mosul dam, the largest in the country, located to its north. That made the force and extent of the ISIS threat clear to the United States and its coalition allies, and motivated the Americans' new strategy (See below).

2. ISIS's achievements in the summer of 2014 were made possible by **its takeover** (with the help of Sunni tribes) **of most of Al-Anbar province in western Iraq at the beginning of 2014**. At that point the important Sunni city of Fallujah was occupied, as was part of the city of **Ramadi**, the Al-Anbar provincial capital. **Since then most of Al-Anbar, the largest of the Iraqi provinces, has not been under the control of the central Iraqi administration**, although there are still pockets of anti-ISIS resistance.²⁵ ISIS also ramped up its attacks on administration targets and on the Shi'ite population in areas under Iraqi regime control, undermining the regime's authority and status.

3. The achievements provided ISIS with a **firm territorial base** from which, in the summer of 2014, it could launch a **broad attack throughout western and northern Iraq**. During the first stage (June-August) **ISIS scored dramatic successes, the most prominent, as noted above, was the occupation of Mosul and the dam to its north**. During the second half of August and September **ISIS forces were forced from the dam** and its attempts to take over **Samara** (a Shi'ite holy city) and the oil city of **Baiji**, north of Baghdad, have so far been unsuccessful.

4. During October 2014 ISIS renewed its **attacks in Al-Anbar province and in the north**. Its strategic is apparently the capital, Baghdad. The results of such a campaign would have far-reaching consequences for ISIS, Iraq and on the entire region.

²⁵ **Ramadi, Al-Anbar's capital city**, and the surrounding territories are still not fully under ISIS control. Clashes continue between ISIS and the Iraqi army for control of the city and its surroundings (updated to mid-November 2014).

Attacks in northern Iraq: successes (June – August)

5. On June 10, 2014, ISIS initiated a broad military campaign involving about 5,000 of its fighters. It was launched in two directions: **north towards Mosul and south towards three important cities north of Baghdad: Baiji, Tikrit and Samara**. Its victories were swift: the Iraqi army, established and trained by the United States, collapsed almost without firing a shot, **giving ISIS a rapid victory over Mosul**, the capital city of the Nineveh province. With 1.8 million inhabitants, most of them Sunni, Mosul is the second largest city in Iraq after Baghdad. It has oil fields, refineries and pipelines, and is an important crossroads to Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

6. During the occupation of Mosul ISIS freed an estimated 3,000 prisoners from Iraqi administration prisons and took over military facilities which in the past had been used by the American army. It also took control of Mosul's international airport and other governmental facilities (banks, oil facilities, etc.). It carried out mass slaughters, including the killing of hundreds of civilians and Iraqi army personnel who had been taken captive. ISIS released pictures of its acts of slaughter to frighten and deter its internal and external enemies (See below). ISIS also destroyed mosques and shrines, and damaged churches (including, on June 24, 2014, the shrine of Nabi Yunus, the Biblical Jonah, in Mosul).



ISIS forces stage a victory parade in the streets of Mosul after its occupation (Twitter account of ISIS in Baghdad, June 24, 2014).

7. After the takeover of Mosul **ISIS occupied the city of Tel Afar**, about 50 kilometers, or 30 miles, west of Mosul. Most of its 80,000 inhabitants were Sunnis,

with a Shi'ite minority. At the beginning of August 2014 ISIS forces took over the territory near the junction of the Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish borders. During the attack ISIS took control of the **hydroelectric dam on the Tigris, the largest in the country**, located about 50 kilometers north of Mosul. The dam regulates the flow of the river and provides electricity for vast areas of Iraq. Forces belonging to the Peshmerga, the autonomous Kurdish Iraqi army, which were defending the dam, retreated after a battle lasting 24 hours (CNN.com, August 4, 2014).



Left: The Mosul dam (Kitabat.com). Right: ISIS operative waves a flag near the dam (Aliraqnews.com)

8. At the same time as the attack on Mosul ISIS forces attacked **Baiji, Tikrit and Samara**, all north of Baghdad. On June 11, 2014, they took over the **oil city of Baiji**, located about 200 kilometers, or 125 miles, northwest of Baghdad, where the largest oil refinery in the country is located²⁶ (control of the city later passed to the Iraqi army, see below). On June 11, 2014, the **city of Tikrit** was also occupied; it is the capital of the Salah al-Din province and the birthplace of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi army tried to recapture it but failed (See below). ISIS also threatened the Shi'ite holy city of Samara, but it was halted by Shi'ite militias dispatched to defend it.

²⁶ The oil refinery compound is located halfway between Mosul and Baghdad. It can distill 310,000 barrels a day, supplying fuel for northern Iraq and 11 provinces, including Baghdad. The region is also home to a power plant that provides the electricity for most of northern Iraq (Nytimes.com, June 18, 2014). During the first half of 2014 the oil refinery produced 48% of the country's petroleum distillates (Gulfnews.com, September 14, 2014).



The oil facility in Baiji (Bousla.net)



Left: ISIS operatives hoist the organization's flag at an Iraqi army post in the Nineveh province.
 Right: "Nineveh Unit" forces are briefed before battle (Longwarjournal.org, June 24, 2014)

9. Although the Kurdish Peshmerga were supposed to be a defensive force, they took the initiative at the beginning of the ISIS attack directed against the Iraqi regime. On June 12, 2014, they took over Kirkuk, whose control was disputed by the Kurdish autonomous region and the Iraqi administration. Apparently it was not only a Kurdish preemptive strike but exploited the opportunity to take over an important city with large oil reserves.

Containment and halt (second half of August – September)

10. During August and September 2014 ISIS continued its momentum, attacking in the north and south, with two goals: **one**, to take control of or gain a foothold in the important cities north of Baghdad (Baiji, Tikrit and Samara); and **two**, to extend its control in the area of Mosul and northern Iraq. This time, however, **ISIS met with more determined resistance, especially from the Kurdish Peshmerga forces**, which had adopted a more offensive posture, as opposed to their defensive posture of June. At this stage the Peshmerga and Iraqi army forces enjoyed increasing **American aerial support**, which contributed to the halt of the ISIS forces and also made it possible for them to retake several locations previously occupied by ISIS.

11. At this stage the situation on the ground was the following:

1) **The Mosul dam**: On August 18, 2014, Peshmerga forces, with the support of the Iraqi army and the American air force, **retook control of the strategically important Mosul dam**. With American aerial support they also forced ISIS out of several villages to the north and east of Mosul.

2) **The oil city of Baiji**: The Iraqi army forced the ISIS forces out of Baiji and its oil refinery. Since then **ISIS forces have besieged the city**, which is a logistic junction in the center of the country. They also have control of the oil pipes leading from the city and prevent the refinery from operating. Three days after American President Obama declared the campaign against ISIS, ISIS forces attacked the refinery with mortar shell fire and caused heavy damage to the oil tanks, setting them on fire (**Note**: In November 2014 the Iraqi security forces announced they had lifted the siege of Baiji).

3) **The city of Tikrit**: After the Iraqi army tried twice, unsuccessfully, to take control of the city, on August 19, 2014, ISIS forces repelled another Iraqi army attempt at conquest. The Iraqi army was met with machine gun and mortar shell fire south of the city and with mines and sniper fire from the west. The Iraqi army declared it would make another attempt to capture the city.



Peshmerga forces take control of the Mosul dam (YouTube.com)

4) **The Haditha dam on the Euphrates (the Qadisiya dam):** The Haditha is a large dam on the Euphrates river in Al-Anbar province near the city of Haditha. It is the second largest dam in Iraq, and both regulates the flow of the Euphrates and produces electricity. In July 2014, ISIS's **Al-Anbar Unit** attacked the Iraqi army base in Haditha. Between then and the beginning of September 2014 battles were fought for control of the dam. On September 8, 2014 **Iraqi army forces supported by Sunni tribesmen and with American aerial support repelled the ISIS forces, driving them from the region around the dam.** The area is now under Iraqi army control.



The Haditha dam (Almustaqbal.com, July 21, 2014).



ISIS vehicles patrol near Haditha (Longwarjournal.org, July 19, 2014).

5) **Lifting the siege of the city of Amerli:** Amerli, south of Kirkuk, was besieged for more than two months, since June 18, 2014. It is home to an estimated 15,000-17,000 **Turkmen Shi'ites**. ISIS considers them infidels, making them candidates for slaughter once the city was occupied. At the end of August 2014 the siege of Amerli was lifted after a joint attack of Shi'ite militias and Kurdish forces with American aerial support. In addition, the city of Sulaiman Bek, near Amerli, which had served as an ISIS stronghold, was captured. In addition to aerial cover for the forces, American, Australian, French and British planes dropped humanitarian aid to the inhabitants of Amerli "at the request of the government of Iraq" (Reuters.com, August 31, 2014).



ISIS force besieges Amerli (Almustaqbalnews.net).

Renewal of military attacks (end of September – updated to mid-November 2014)

12. At the end of September 2014 ISIS renewed its military attacks in the Sunni province of Al-Anbar. Its objectives were to take control over the entire province and to eliminate pockets of Iraqi army resistance, supported by Sunni tribesmen. The attacks may be considered as ISIS's **preparations for a future campaign against Baghdad**. The main targets were the cities of Ramadi and Haditha, and the dam on the nearby Euphrates, all defended by Iraqi army forces with the support of Sunni tribesmen. ISIS also attacked the region north and northwest of Mosul, including Mt. Sinjar. The attacks are ongoing and clashes continue in various focal points.

13. In the attack on Al-Anbar province at the beginning of October ISIS attacked **the city of Hit**, located between Haditha and Ramadi. ISIS executed captured Iraqi army soldiers and dozens of Sunnis from the Albu Nimr tribe. At the beginning of October ISIS took control of a neighborhood in the southern part of Ramadi. At the end of October 2014 clashes were reported in the city of Abu Ghraib, west of Baghdad. In mid-November ISIS reported **fierce battles** in Ramadi, claiming that it controlled more than half the city.²⁷

14. On the other hand, Iraqi army and Kurdish forces exerted pressure on ISIS and initiated by initiating military attacks in the areas south of Baghdad and around Baiji, the Rabia border crossing on the Iraq-Syria border, the northern town of Zumar. According to a statement from the Iraqi security forces, their greatest success so far was on November 14, 2014, when they lifted the siege of Baiji. It was broken by the Iraqi army and Shi'ite militias near the refinery compound. Among the Shi'ite militias the Iranian-supported "League of the Righteous" (*asa'ib ahl al-haq*)²⁸ was prominent, whose operatives played an important role in lifting the siege. The American air force

²⁷ Ramadi is home to Sheikh **Ahmed Abu Risha**, the leader of a powerful tribe which was formerly an American ally. His and other Sunni tribes fought at the side of the Iraqi army in Ramadi, Fallujah and other cities in Al-Anbar province (Longwarjournal.org, November 16, 2014).

²⁸ "The League of the Righteous" is an Iraqi Shi'ite militia established in 2006 by the Iranian Qods Force and operating under its aegis. Its operatives are supported by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Before the Americans withdrew from Iraq the militia carried out a series of attacks against the United States and its allies, including abductions, rocket fire and detonating IEDs. The militia specialized in the use of explosively-formed projectiles (EFPs), placing them along routes used by the American army. Its operatives, who became unemployed with the Americans withdrew from Iraq, were sent to Syria to support the Syrian army, where they were directed and encouraged by Iran.

provided aerial support for the Iraqi army and the Shi'ite militias (Longwarjournal.org, November 14, 2014).

15. At the same time, **ISIS initiated a series of suicide bombing attacks in residential (especially Shi'ite) neighborhoods throughout Baghdad**, to undermine order and sabotage daily life. According to Iraq Body Count, an Iraqi project that monitors the death toll in Iraq, **during October 2014 590 people were killed in suicide bombing attacks**. Most of them were carried out in Shi'ite neighborhoods in Baghdad or at roadblocks manned by Shi'ite fighters (Iraqbodycount.org, November 2, 2014).

16. Some of the attacks were the following:

1) **October 16, 2014** – Two car bombs driven by suicide bombers blew up in Al-Hurriya, a Shi'ite suburb of Baghdad. Three buildings collapsed and dozens of people were killed. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack (Alnilin.com).

2) **October 17, 2014** – Three car bombs driven by suicide bombers blew up in busy areas in Baghdad. At least 25 people were killed (Aljazeera.net).

3) **October 19, 2014** – A suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt killed seventeen people at a Shi'ite mosque in the Al-Harithiyya neighborhood in western Baghdad.

4) **October 21, 2014** – A suicide bombing attack was one of three attacks carried out on the outskirts of the Kadhimiya neighborhood in northern Baghdad. At least 21 people were killed and 23 wounded. Among those killed were several policemen, including Ahmed al-Hafizi, commander of the Iraqi military police. ISIS claimed responsibility for two of the attacks (Alarabiya.net, October 14, 2014).

5) **October 27, 2014** – During the night a car bomb exploded in the center of Baghdad, killing at least 15 people. The area was home to Sunnis, Shi'ites and various ethnic minorities (Csmonitor.com, October 27, 2014).

6) **November 2, 2014** – A suicide bombing attack killed at least 14 Shi'ites during a march held for the Shi'ite holiday of Ashuraa. The suicide bomber blew himself up near a tent where Shi'ites had gathered (Dailystar.com, November 3, 2014).

17. ISIS efforts to establish control over Al-Anbar province have not yet ended. After it does take control, it **may try to occupy Baghdad, topple the Iraqi regime, take over the government institutions and possibly declare Baghdad the capital of**

the Islamic Caliphate. However, Baghdad, with its large Shi'ite population, is liable to present fierce resistance to an ISIS takeover, **including the Iraqi army and the Shi'ite militias with American and coalition aerial support** (as well as Iran, which supports the Shi'ite Iraqi regime and regards itself as sponsoring the Shi'ites in Iraq).

18. ISIS and its allies may not be able to take over Baghdad with a rapid military attack as they did Mosul. ISIS knows that, and therefore **its possible course of action may be to besiege the city and disrupt life to the point where it eventually surrenders.** It can do that by **cutting off the main roads leading to Baghdad, preventing supplies from reaching the local population and military reinforcements stationed in the city, damaging the infrastructure** (by blowing up bridges, for example), **firing rockets and mortar shells at the city and its suburbs, and detonating car bombs inside the city** (a modus operandi at which ISIS has shown itself skilled).

19. However, according to American news reports based on anonymous American sources, **the Iraqi army, with the support of the United States and the coalition countries, is planning a large-scale counterattack for the spring of 2015. Its objectives will be to liberate northern and western Iraq (including Mosul) from ISIS occupation** and to restore Iraqi government control over the main roads and the region of the Iraq-Syria border (Nytimes.com, November 2, 2014). Carrying out such an attack will require overcoming major obstacles, including rebuilding the Iraqi army and increasing its order of battle in a relatively short period of time, while at the same time finding solutions for the complex political problems making it difficult for the central Iraqi government to function.

Executions of prisoners and killing of ethnic and religious minorities

Execution on Mosul

20. **ISIS's military occupations have been accompanied by executions and other atrocities targeting the Iraqi army** (especially Shi'ite soldiers), **government officials and ethnic and religious minorities** ISIS regards as "infidels." The executions are widely publicized by the social networks **to frighten and deter ISIS's enemies at home and abroad.** They have in fact sown fear among population sectors targeted by ISIS, and have led to the mass exodus of residents and the increase of Iraq's problem of displaced persons. According to the UN, after the

occupation of Mosul about **half a million people** fled, most of them to the north towards Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region (Nytimes.com, June 14, 2014; Al-Jazeera, June 23, 2014).

21. On June 22, 2014, a CNN report in Arabic was posted on YouTube, **documenting the execution of Iraqi army soldiers who had been captured by ISIS**. The video showed truckloads of corpses. It was probably filmed in **Mosul**, where **hundreds of Iraqi soldiers** were captured by ISIS forces. Most of the people photographed were wearing civilian clothing but some of them were in uniform.



The execution of Shi'ite Iraqi army personnel captured by ISIS. The Arabic reads, "This is the fate of the Shi'ites whom Nouri [al-Maliki] sent into battle against Sunnis" (Alplatformmedia.com)



ISIS's "Salah al-Din unit" executes Iraqi prisoners (Alplatformmedia.com).



Iraqi soldiers who were captured by ISIS's "Salah al-Din unit" Alplatformmedia.com)

Attack and harassing Christians

22. **Attacks on the Christians in Mosul** began immediately after the city was occupied. One of those who fled the city was Mosul **Archbishop Nikodimos Daoud**. Interviewed in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish autonomous region, he said **ISIS was planning to commit the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Mosul's Christians**. He said the Christians had been given the alternatives of conversion, a head tax or execution (Russian Today TV, July 23, 2014, according to MEMRI, August 8, 2014).



A Mosul church vandalized after ISIS occupation the city in June 2014. The media claimed that it had been demolished by IEDs (Abnar.ir).

Executions of Iraqi soldiers in Tikrit

23. On September 2, 2014, Human Rights Watch exposed reports of mass executions carried out by ISIS in Tikrit after its forces occupied the city on June 11, 2014. According to the reports, between 560 and 770 people were executed in Tikrit, most of them Iraqi soldiers who had been captured by ISIS forces. Human Rights Watch examined the evidence, including videos and satellite pictures, and found a number of gravesites in addition to those exposed in the past (Hrw.org, September 2, 2014).

Aid for the Yazidi on Mt. Sinjar

24. At the end of July-beginning of August 2014 ISIS forces took control of **Sinjar**, a city west of Mosul, **the traditional stronghold of the Yazidi community**. The Yazidi are a minority group of Kurdish extraction who have a complex religion with mystical ideas and ritual elements taken from ancient faiths.²⁹ The Yazidi were persecuted by the Ottoman Empire, which accused them of paganism. They were also persecuted by Saddam Hussein's regime. ISIS regards them as "infidels" and gave them the choice given to all "infidels" in regions it occupies: convert or die. During its takeover of Sinjar ISIS murdered at least 500 Yazidi who refused to convert.

25. **The Yazidi were brutally harassed by ISIS**. A UN investigation dealing with the ISIS reign of terror in Syria and Iraq quoted **Dabiq**, an ISIS online magazine in English used for propaganda and recruitment, which reported what happened to Yazidi women captured by ISIS and divided among its operatives as "the spoils of war"³⁰ (Website of the UN Council for Human Rights, November 14, 2014).

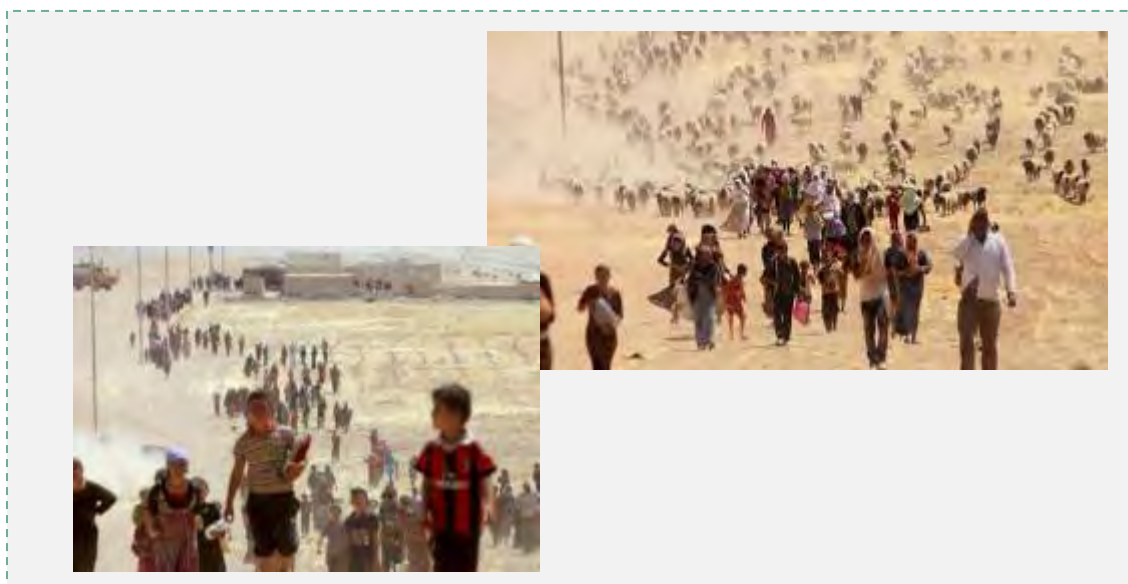
²⁹ There are close to a million Yazidi in the world today (maximum estimate). About two thirds of them live in northern Iraq, most of them in the Nineveh province. Most experts are of the opinion that the name Yazidi comes from the name of the second Umayyad Caliph, Yazid bin Muawiyah, whose army defeated the Shi'ite Imam Hussein bin Ali at the battle of Karbala. The Yazidi consider Yazid bin Muawiyah an incarnation of the Divinity. Yazidi culture is Kurdish and most Yazidi speak Kurmanji, a holy language unique to the community. The Yazidi religion is influenced by Islamic Sufism, but most of its beliefs are not related to Islam and to a great extent its cosmology is reminiscent of ancient Persian faiths.

³⁰ The concept of minority-group captives as spoils of war were explained by an ISIS operative to the Egyptian terrorist organization Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis on the ISIS forum on November 4, 2014 (See below). One of ISIS's suggestions was for jihadi fighters in Egypt to attack Christians and Shi'ites. The reason was "because they are sectarian groups that cannot be trusted and with whom no agreement can be reached. **They are nothing more than the spoils of war given to you by Allah.**"

After capture, the **Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the Shariah amongst the fighters...** who participated in the Sinjar operations, after one-fifth of the slaves were transferred to the IS's authority to be divided as khums [spoils of war].

DABIQ (ISIS publication)

26. Following the clear and present danger to their lives, between 3,000 and 4,500 Yazidi fled to Mt. Sinjar, near the Syrian border (according to other accounts, it was tens of thousands of refugees). They were without shelter, food or equipment. The United States air-dropped humanitarian aid and the Kurdish force from Syria (the YPG, the People's Protection Units) and possibly the Turkish PKK (the Kurdistan Workers Party) went to Mt Sinjar, clashed with ISIS operatives and **helped Yazidi escape to the al-Hasakah province in Syria, saving them from death.**



Yazidi refugees leave Mt. Sinjar for Syria (24.ae).

27. During the first half of October 2014 ISIS operatives again attacked Mt. Sinjar, from the north. According to reports they took control of a number of villages and threatened the local Yazidi fighters. During the second half of October 2014 there were reportedly 750 families on Mt. Sinjar, about 5,000 Yazidi fighters and hundreds of YPG fighters (Alquds.co.uk, October 20, 2014; Shafaaq.com, October 20, 2014)

The establishment of a governmental system in Mosul

28. In Mosul and the other areas it occupied, **ISIS set up a governmental network** to establish its control over the population and fill the void created after the Iraqi government institutions collapsed in the wake of the ISIS occupation. ISIS followed its brutal practice of forcing the occupied population to adopt its extremist Islamic code of behavior and severely punished anyone who violated it. However, in some instances, Islamic law (the sharia) was enforced on the local population gradually to prevent excessive alienation.

29. **ISIS's propaganda machine tries to show that it successfully filled the governmental void created.** Its information bureau in Mosul issued videos sending the message that daily life and commerce were conducted without disturbance. The ISIS information bureau in Kirkuk province issued pictures showing ISIS operatives cleaning and renovating streets, and doing maintenance work on electric lines and irrigation ditches (Al-Minbar Al-'Alami Al-Jihadi, October 26, 2014). However, the videos and pictures were clearly propaganda and did not give an objective picture of the situation on the ground in the areas occupied by ISIS.

30. After taking over Mosul, the ISIS office of information issued a document detailing the rules of behavior demanded of the residents of Nineveh province, most of whom welcomed the organization. The document was entitled "**the city charter**" (*wathiqat al-madinah*). It explained the vision of the Islamic Caliphate and called on the Caliphate residents to enjoy the pleasures of Islam. **It also demanded that they behave according to extremist Islamic codes.** For example, women had to dress modestly (i.e., wear the *niqab*, a garment that covers the entire body, leaving only a slit for the eyes), and **smoking was forbidden, as were alcohol and drugs.** In addition, **the shrines and graves of "polytheistic pagans" were to be destroyed,** and all five daily prayers had to be performed.³¹

31. The "city charter" (similar to a "charter" issued in Al-Raqqah in Syria) also **noted the release of prisoners from Iraqi government prisons** and allegedly enabled

³¹ For a full discussion of the "city charter" see "The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Has a Consumer Protection Office" by Aaron Zelin at

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/the-isis-guide-to-building-an-islamic-state/372769/>, June 13, 2014.

security and other personnel affiliated with the Iraqi administration to "repent."³² The charter instructed people to return money belonging to the Iraqi regime to the **Muslim Imam (i.e., Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi)**, who was responsible for funds. It warned against looting money and promised to bring to trial and punish "gangs of looters." It also made it clear that **ISIS would not stand for the existence of rival organizations and that it would not allow civilians to carry weapons or wave any flag other than the ISIS flag.** Anyone who broke the law would be severely punished either with **death or corporal punishment (i.e., thieves would have their hands cut off).**



The Mosul "city charter" issued by ISIS after the occupation of Nineveh province (Baqiya.blogspot.fr, June 12, 2014)

³² In reality, after the occupation of Mosul ISIS executed hundreds of captives without allowing them "to repent."



The title page of the Mosul "city charter"

The establishment of an educational system in Iraq

32. As in Syria, in Iraq ISIS established **educational institutions that taught its curriculum**, which replaced the national Iraqi governmental curriculum. It was presented to the residents of Mosul in a two-page bulletin posted in the mosques, markets and electricity poles. Dated September 5, 2014, it reported "good news of the establishment of the Islamic State Education Diwan by the caliph who seeks to eliminate ignorance, to spread religious sciences and to fight the decayed curriculum" (AP.org, September 15, 2014).³³

33. **Many residents of Mosul have reservations about the new curriculum because of its Salafist-jihadi nature.** According to the Associated Press, many pupils have not shown up for class because of their parents' concern for their safety. The AP's sources said families were keeping their children home out of mixed feelings of fear, resistance and uncertainty. A Mosul resident identified as "Abu Hassan" told the AP that "What's important to us now is that the children continue receiving knowledge correctly, even if they lose a whole academic year and an official certification." He and his wife, he said, opted for home schooling (AP.org, September 15, 2014).³⁴

³³ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/islamic-state-group-issues-new-curriculum-iraq>

³⁴ Ibid.

The establishment of judicial and enforcement systems in Iraq

34. ISIS has established **judicial and enforcement networks** in areas under its control in Iraq. After the occupation of Mosul it set up **eight Islamic courts** to try former Iraqi government officials (Almayadeen.net, June 20, 2014).

35. As in Syria, **ISIS set up an enforcement system called "the Islamic police"** (*al-shurta al-islamiyya*). It includes uniformed policemen equipped with cars and light and medium-weight arms allegedly to "protect Muslims" in the various provinces (Vrontatke social media account for ISIS in the Euphrates province, September 12, 2014). It can be assumed that as in Syria, in Iraq the morality police (*al-hisbah*) also operate alongside the regular local police to enforce religious Islamic law on the local residents.



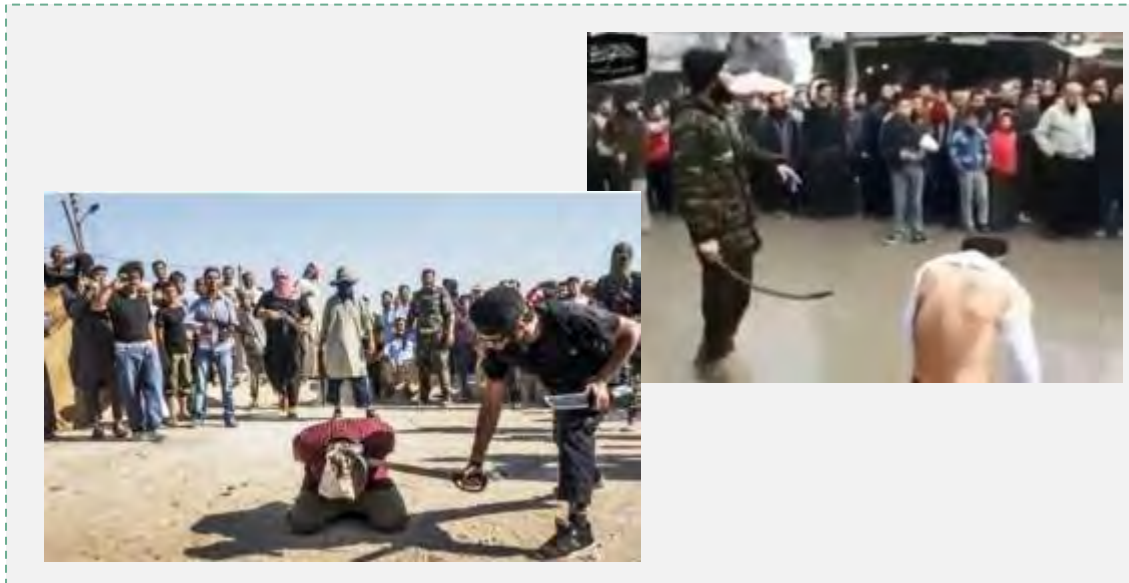
An Islamic court established in Mosul by ISIS (Qanon302.net)



Vehicles of the Islamic police established by ISIS in Nineveh province (Alalam.ir; new.elfagr.org)



Islamic police force policemen in Nineveh province (Alalam.ir)



Left: A beheading, the punishment meted out by a sharia court (Qanon302.net). Right: A public whipping, the punishment meted out by a sharia court (Qanon302.net).

Symbols of rule: issuing passports and the intention to mint coins

36. As part of the self-declared Islamic Caliphate's administration and rule, **ISIS issued official Islamic Caliphate passports** at the beginning of July 2014. According to reports, **11,000 passports were initially issued to civilians in the Iraqi regions under ISIS control**. To issue them ISIS used the Iraqi administration's identity card and passport center.



An ISIS "Islamic Caliphate" passport. The Arabic at the bottom reads, "The bearer of this passport has behind him our armies, if [any] damage befalls him." In the center, flanked by the wings of an eagle, is a mosque flying a flag emblazoned with the shahada (the Islamic testimony "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet"). Below the symbol is a sword (Sharkiapost.com)

37. On November 13, 2014, the Islamic State (IS) announced that following an order from "the Caliph Ibrahim" [i.e., Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi] IS would mint coins to replace the currency in use in Syria and Iraq. The new coins will be minted from gold, silver and copper. The coin-minting project will be discussed in ISIS's institutions, including the Shura Council Al-Minbar Al-'Ilami Al-Jihadi, November 13, 2014).

38. On November 12, 2014, the London-based Arabic newspaper **Al-Sharq Al-Awsat** reported that ISIS planned to **restore the use of gold and silver dinars**. Its objective is to strengthen its control over the regions of the Caliphate and as part of its struggle against the West. The gold and silver dinars ISIS wants to return to use were used during the early days of Islam. Every coin will be stamped with an Islamic quote on one side and the date of its minting and name of the governor on the other.

39. At the beginning of June 2014 it was reported that ISIS would soon begin issuing ID cards (Yenisafak.com.tr and Assabeel.net, July 5, 2014). So far it has not been ascertained whether ISIS has issued ID cards to civilians living in the areas under its control, but it may do so in the future.

Enlisting new operatives into the ranks of ISIS

40. ISIS's military achievements in Iraq, the self-declaration of the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in the summer of 2014 and the losses sustained by the organization in military campaigns **forced the organization to rapidly enlarge its order of battle and led it to make an effort to enlist and train new operatives in both Iraq and Syria**. Its financial capabilities enabled ISIS to tempt young Iraqis and Syrians to enlist by paying them higher salaries than those usual in their home countries. However, it was also reported that pressure was exerted on the local population to "convince" young men to enlist in its ranks.

41. ISIS recruited local operatives in the various provinces of Iraq. The new recruits underwent training in camps for several months and were integrated into ISIS's military force and administrative institutions. The number of new operatives entering the ranks of ISIS in Iraq and Syria in the summer of 2014 is **estimated at several thousand**. More than 6,300 fighters, most of them Syrian, joined the organization in July 2014 alone (Gulfnews.com, August 30, 2014).

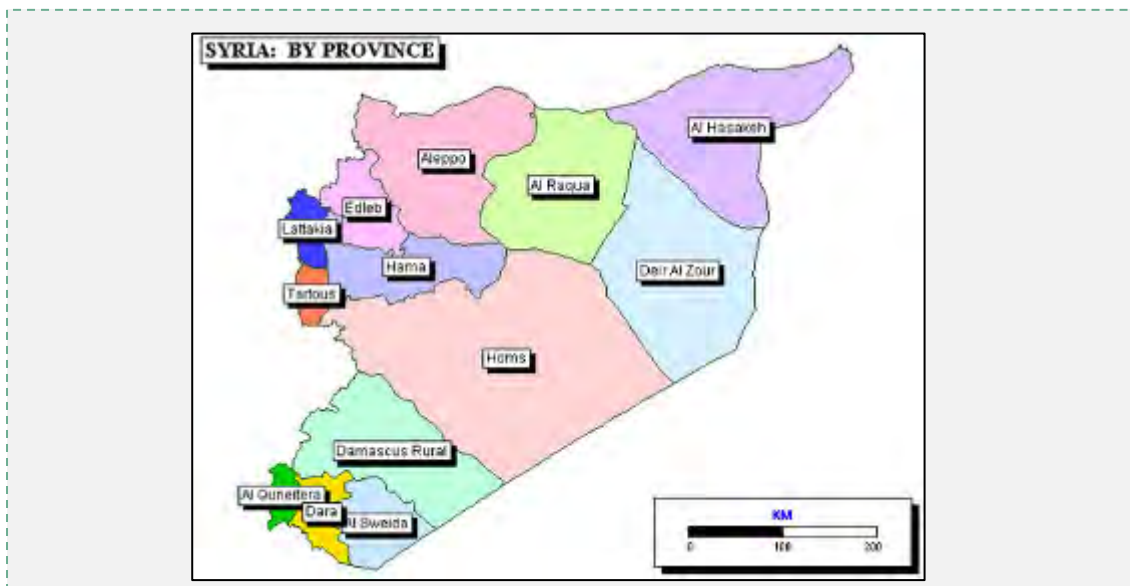
42. ISIS has 11 identified training camps in Iraq **out of 25**. They are located in the provinces Al-Anbar, Salah al-Din and Nineveh, and in the Kirkuk and Mosul areas (Longwarjournal.org, October 24 and November 22, 2014). ISIS occasionally posts

pictures of trainees and graduations exercises held in the training camps. For example, in October 2014 it posted pictures from **the graduation exercises of a training course held at a camp in the Kirkuk region** named for Sheikh Abu Omar al-Baghdadi (who headed ISI and was killed in a targeted American attack). Some of the pictures follow, all posted on the ISIS forum Hanein.info on October 3, 2014:





Section Four – ISIS establishes itself in eastern and northern Syria



Map of the provinces in Syria (Personal.mnich.ed)

Overview

1. ISIS is making an effort to establish itself in the provinces in eastern and northern Syria and to **expand its control at the expense of its many rivals**, among them the Syrian Army, rebel organizations, the Al-Nusra Front and the Kurdish militias (YPG). It captured the Al-Tabqa military airfield in Al-Raqqa province and is now waging a campaign to conquer the city of Ayn al-Arab (Kobanî in Kurdish) near the Turkish border. At the same time, ISIS is investing considerable effort in building the government institutions of the self-declared Caliphate State. ISIS's military achievements in Iraq in the summer of 2014 **strengthened its position in eastern and northern Syria**. In practice, they have **created a supranational control zone in the territory of the two countries, where ISIS has established its control at the expense of its rivals**.

2. Unlike the foothold it has gained in eastern and northern Syria, ISIS has **relatively little presence in the rural areas around Damascus**. It also has no **significant presence in southern Syria or the Golan Heights**. The dominant power in those areas is its rival, the Al-Nusra Front, which was ousted by ISIS from eastern and northern Syria **and has established a firm foothold in southern Syria, including the Syrian Golan Heights**. Unlike ISIS, in both locations the Al-Nusra Front cooperates with the other rebel organizations.

3. In the areas under its control where it established the Islamic State, **ISIS has established a governmental infrastructure and is brutally imposing Islamic religious law on the local population** (even at the expense of friction with the local population, the Al-Nusra Front and the other rebel organizations). ISIS also operates the parts of the **state infrastructure that fell into its hands**, including **oil fields**, which are an important source of income and help it meet the needs of the local population and establish its control. To operate the government infrastructure, ISIS utilizes existing personnel who served the Syrian regime. However, the shortage of skilled personnel has led ISIS to recruit qualified professionals from among the foreign fighters. In early July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi issued a call for scientists, judges, doctors and skilled military and administrative professionals to join the ranks of the Islamic State (Al-monitor.com).

4. So far, it seems that the Islamic State government mechanism in the Sunni areas of eastern Syria and western Iraq **is a success**. The local population recognizes the Islamic State as is capable of carrying out administrative and security functions, providing essential services, imposing law and order and **carrying out with the duties of the state authorities of Syria and Iraq**, perceived as corrupt and no longer functioning, **with relative success**.

Al-Raqqah: ISIS's "capital city" in Syria

Overview

5. Al-Raqqah is an important city in northern Syria, the sixth largest in the country, which had a population of about 220,000 until the civil war. It served as the summer capital of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur. Built in 722 AD, it was called Al-Rafiqah, and was located near the city of Al-Raqqah. The capital Al-Rafiqah soon became part of the city of Al-Raqqah, which kept expanding. Between 796 AD and 808 AD, it served as Abbasid Caliph Haroun al-Rashid's summer capital, and towards the end of his life resided there. **Thus the city has symbolic significance for the Islamic State**, although it is of lesser importance than Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and the symbol of its glory.

6. Since the ISIS occupation of Al-Raqqah tens of thousands of civilians have fled (including most of its Christian population), their numbers increasing significantly after the start of US air strikes on ISIS. In March 2013 the Syrian regime lost control of Al-Raqqah to the rebel. After the break with the Al-Nusra Front, ISIS invested great

efforts in taking control over the city, as part of its plan to consolidate its control over eastern and northern Syria. During the process, which took several months, **ISIS neutralized the power of the Al-Nusra Front and other rebel organizations and supporters of the Syrian regime. At the same time, it began to impose the rigid code of Islamic law on the local citizens.**

The city charter

7. ISIS attaches great importance to establishing its control over the city of Al-Raqqah, its “capital city” in Syria. **In September 2014, ISIS issued a document in Al-Raqqah called “The city charter” (*wathiqat al-madina*).** ISIS issued a similar document in Mosul, Iraq, immediately after it was occupied. The document is intended **to define the foundations of Islamic law (*Sharia*) that are binding for ISIS and the local population and to regulate the relationship between ISIS and the residents.** The governmental entities set up by ISIS in the city of Al-Raqqah are supposed to be conducted according to the principles of the charter.

8. Below are the main points of the document (Syriahr.com, September 13, 2014):

1) **ISIS operatives are defined as “soldiers of the Islamic State”** who took it upon themselves “to restore the glory of the Islamic Caliphate and eliminate the oppression and injustice of our fellow Muslims.”

2) **The attitude towards the residents will be determined by their behavior** (“the secrets of their hearts we leave to Allah”). The charter states that “a person who is a Muslim from the outside, and is not involved in even one thing that contradicts Islam, will be treated by us as a Muslim. We will not suspect a man and will not accuse him without decisive proof and an overwhelming allegation [...]”

3) **Residents living under the rule of the Islamic State will feel safe and secure** because the Islamic regime guarantees the rights of the people under its protection and takes care of the oppressed.

4) **All public funds which belonged to the Syrian regime will be returned to the “state coffers”** (i.e., the coffers of ISIS, which controls the Islamic State). **The Caliph of the Muslims** (i.e., Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) **is the one who will manage the funds** “according to the needs of the Muslims.” Anyone who steals that money will be tried before the Sharia legal system and his hand will be cut off.

5) **It is forbidden to trade in wine, drugs, cigarettes, and “other forbidden things” or to become addicted to them.**

6) **Residents are warned not to collaborate with the enemy, and in particular with the Syrian regime and “idol worshippers”** (Bashar al-Assad’s government is called by the derogatory nickname “the Safavid government,” after a Shiite dynasty in the 16th century). Anyone who repents will be forgiven (“the gate of repentance is open to those who wish to pass through it”), **but as for those “who insist and continue to withdraw from the religion of Islam, there is one sentence for them: death.”**

7) **Desecration of graves and statues:** “Our position regarding the holy graves [...] and places of pilgrimage of the idol worshippers is according to the correct words of the Prophet Muhammad [...]” **The document cites a tradition (*hadith*) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad whereby graves and statues perceived as idol worship must be destroyed.**

8) **Modesty of women:** The charter calls on “respectable women” to “**adhere to humility, scarves, and coverings.**” They are to **stay at home**, “shut themselves away in the women’s courtyard,” and not leave it unless necessary, because “this was the way of the mothers of the faithful friends of the Prophet [...]”

9. **The charter ends with a call to abandon the secular regime and adhere to the Islamic regime:** “O people, you have tried the secular regimes and have gone through the periods of the monarchy, the republic, the Ba’athists and the Safavid Dynasty [a derogatory nickname for the Assad regime] ... Now, “beginning in the era of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi [“Imam Abu Bakr al-Qurashi,” i.e. from the tribe of Quraysh, Muhammad’s tribe], you will see the power of Allah [...] and the size of the huge gap between the cowardly secular government [...] and the Caliphate of al-Baghdadi [...]”

The local government in Al-Raqqah

10. ISIS was able to establish a **governmental center in Al-Raqqah**, the so-called “**capital of the Islamic Caliphate.**” The ISIS leadership in Al-Raqqah is headed by a local emir assisted by foreigners who came from Iraq and other Arab countries, and others. **ISIS provides the Al-Raqqah population with most of the services that enable them to maintain the routine of daily life (water, electricity, fuel, education). It controls prices, regulates commercial activity and brutally enforces strict Islamic law (*sharia*).** In addition, it maintains a **communications bureau**, reminiscent of the media division of a multinational company (Financial Times Service, as quoted in Globes, September 22-23, 2014).



The execution of a boy in the Al-Raqqah city center on June 10, 2013, on the grounds that he expressed contempt for the Prophet Muhammad (youtube.com)

11. ISIS provides Al-Raqqah with electricity and distributes fuel to its residents.

It has also brought life in the city back to normal: American reporters who visited the city (under ISIS control) reported that traffic policemen supervised the intersections, crime in the city was rare, and ISIS tax collectors issued receipts for taxes they collected. In the other hand, ISIS has forced the population to follow strict Islamic law: women are forced to wear the veil; thieves' hands have been cut off in public; young men and women are forbidden to mingle in public; cigarette smoking has been banned; statues perceived as blasphemous by ISIS have been destroyed. Local residents who speak out against the draconian laws of ISIS are tried before Islamic courts and charged with heresy in Islam, or simply "vanish" (Time.com, December 20, 2013; Nytimes.com, July 26, 2013).

12. A New York Times correspondent who spent six days in Al-Raqqah said that ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi called on doctors and engineers to come to areas controlled by ISIS, such as Al-Raqqah, to help the organization establish control. He added that **signs of international mobilization to aid ISIS were already evident in the city:** the armed operatives manning the checkpoints were often Saudis, Egyptians, Tunisians or Libyans; the *emir* of Al-Raqqah in charge of the electricity supply was Sudanese and one of the hospitals was run by the Jordanian deputy of an Egyptian. He added that after the victories of ISIS in Iraq, the Jordanian director of the hospital had visited Mosul to organize a local hospital. He returned to Al-Raqqah full of enthusiasm, telling a subordinate that the Caliphate of the Islamic State which began in Al-Raqqah, would spread to the entire region (Nytimes.com, July 26, 2014)

13. The ISIS propaganda machine spreads the message to Syrian and external audiences that daily life in Al-Raqqah and in other places under ISIS control

continues as usual (even in the face of the fighting waged by ISIS and the air strikes by the US and its allies). The “hospitality” given to western correspondents in Al-Raqqah are part of ISIS’s effort to convey the message that life is returning to normal. On the other hand, there is a shortage of reliable information about the real situation in areas controlled by ISIS because the local population fears to speak freely to reporters.

Military parade in Al-Raqqah

14. **On June 30, 2014, ISIS held a military parade in Al-Raqqah.** It displayed weapons seized in the offensive in northern Iraq, including tanks and Humvees seized from the Iraqi Army. A Scud missile (inscribed “The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham”), which was seized in the June 2014 offensive in northern Iraq, was also displayed.

15. In ITIC assessment, the parade was meant as a **show of force to the population, the Syrian regime and the other rebel organizations, following the military achievements of ISIS and the declaration of the establishment of the Caliphate** (See below). During the parade a number of ISIS operatives spoke to local residents in one of the public squares, calling on them to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.



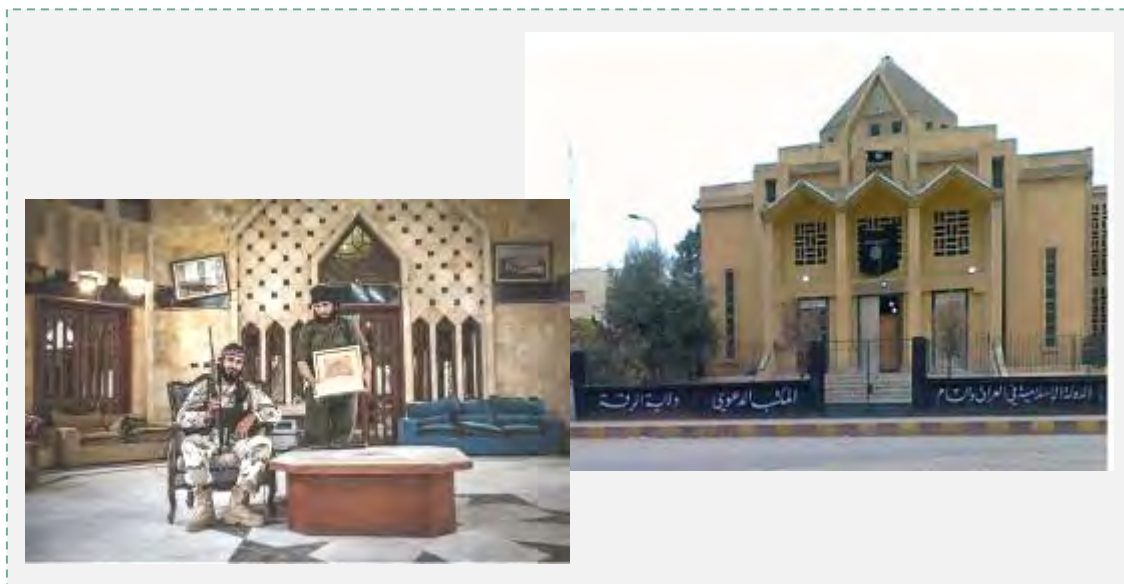
Scud missile displayed in Al-Raqqah bearing the inscription: “The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham” (YouTube, June 30, 2014) Scud missile displayed in Al-Raqqah (Alhadathnews.net)



Tank in one of the squares in Al-Raqqa (YouTube, June 30, 2014) Vehicles bearing ISIS flags in the victory parade in Al-Raqqa (Alarabiya.net)



ISIS operatives on a tank in Al-Raqqa (Dotmsr.com)



Left: ISIS operatives who took over the Governor's Palace in Al-Raqqah (www.vice.com September 23, 2013). Right: Armenian Church in Al-Raqqah, turned into a *da'wah* office by ISIS (All4syria.info).

ISIS takeover of the Al-Tabqa military airfield

16. Over the course of several weeks in August 2014 battles were waged between the Syrian Army and ISIS forces **near the Al-Tabqa airfield, the last stronghold of the Syrian Army in Al-Raqqah province**. Al-Tabqa has great military importance for both sides, in that it provided **the Syrian Army** with a base for air strikes against key ISIS targets near the “capital city” of Al-Raqqah. **For ISIS**, taking over the Al-Tabqa airfield would help it establish a firm foothold in the Al-Raqqah province as a whole and reduced the influence of the Syrian regime.

17. On August 26, 2014, ISIS announced that it had taken over the airfield, thus completing its takeover of the whole province. Dozens of Syrian soldiers were apparently killed in the fighting and hundreds were taken prisoner. ISIS distributed pictures of Syrian soldiers (including a pilot) who were taken prisoner during the attack. It also distributed pictures of weapons it seized, **including at least three MIGs, anti-aircraft missile systems and other weapons systems**. ISIS has also reported that its fighters used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to collect intelligence before taking over the airfield (MEMRI.org, September 13, 2014).

18. On September 6, 2014, the ISIS media outlet **Al-I'tisaam Media Foundation** issued a video showing ISIS operatives capturing more than 200 Syrian soldiers trying to escape from the Al-Tabqa airfield after it was taken over. The soldiers were marched to a site where they were shot at close range (Dailymail.co.uk, August 29, 2014; MEMRI.org, department 13, 2014).

The Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) campaign

Overview

19. **The Kurds, who are Sunni Muslims, are now the largest ethnic minority in Syria**, estimated at almost 10% of Syrian population. Most of them live in northern and eastern Syria, mainly in Al-Hasakah, Aleppo and Al-Raqqah provinces. The Kurds took advantage of the political and security void created by the disintegration of the Syrian government to strengthen themselves militarily and establish self-government in their population centers. To protect themselves, they set up their own military militia force called Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG, "People's Protection Units"), affiliated with the Turkish organization PKK. The YPG forces have established a foothold in Al-Hasakah province and in the northern part of Aleppo province, near the border with Syria.

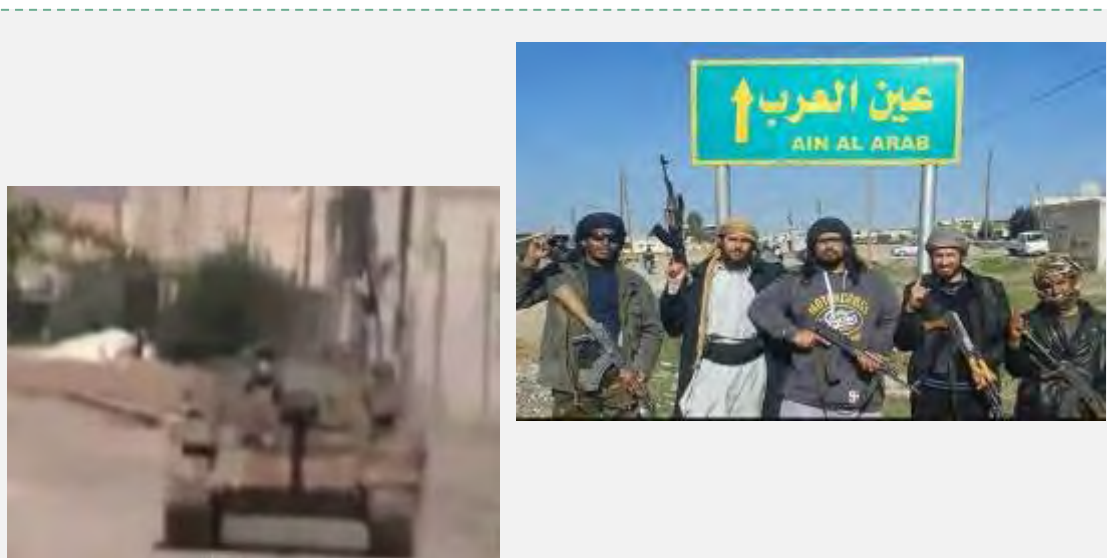
20. That brought the **Kurds into conflict with ISIS's** establishing its control in eastern and northern Syria, where it displays hostility towards minorities and ethnic groups and strives to impose its strict, radical version of Islamic law on the local population. ISIS particularly wants to take over the Kurdish regions near the border with Turkey to continue its uninterrupted flow of operatives and weapons and to make it more difficult for its enemies and rivals to communicate with their foreign supporters. Another possible motive could be taking over large wheat silos located in the Ayn al-Arab area.

21. The current ISIS-Kurdish militia conflict arena is **Ayn al-Arab (Kobani)** and the surrounding Kurdish region in the Aleppo province near the Syrian-Turkish border. At the end of July 2012 **the Kurdish YPG militias** took control of Ayn al-Arab (Kobani). The Kurds regard Kobani as part of Syrian Kurdistan, whereas ISIS strives to impose its control over the entire Kurdish region. Thus in the summer of 2014 ISIS was involved in clashes with Kurdish militias near the Tell Abyad and Ras al-Ayn border crossings adjacent to Ayn al-Arab (See map below).



The Ayn al-Arab area, near the Syrian-Turkish border, the scene of the ongoing battles between ISIS and the Kurdish militias (Google maps)

22. ISIS's campaign against n the Ayn al-Arab area began **in mid-September 2014**. It concentrated a force of an estimated **3,000** fighters (AP.com, November 4, 2014). In the offensive, ISIS forces used **tanks and artillery** to take over cities, towns and villages in the region surrounding the city and besieged the city of Ayn al-Arab. On October 7, 2014, after about three weeks of fighting, they entered the city, took control of its eastern and southern outskirts and waged street battles with the Kurdish militias. **With American air support, the Kurdish militias halted the ISIS advance. At this point, they apparently maintain their control over most of the city.** According to a Kurdish operative, ISIS now controls 30% of the area of Kobani (Alaraby.co.uk, November 12, 2014).



Left: Tank with the organization's flag in the Ayn al-Arab area (YouTube). Right: ISIS operatives at the entrance to Ayn al-Arab (Syriansnews.com).



ISIS Operatives in the streets of Ayn al-Arab (YouTube)

American support

23. **The United States supports the Kurdish militias fighting in Ayn al-Arab in two ways:** with its coalition allies, it carries out **intensive air strikes on ISIS targets** in Ayn al-Arab and its environs (diverting effort to Ayn al-Arab from other regions). In addition, 28 crates of supplies for the Kurdish militias have been air-dropped. They contained weapons, ammunition and medical equipment (Fox News, October 21, 2014). At least one fell into the hands of ISIS. **At the political level**, the US has put pressure on Turkey to allow aid for Ayn al-Arab to arrive from its territory (See below).



Hand grenades dropped from the air for the Kurdish militias and seized by ISIS (YouTube, October 20, 2014)

The Turkish aspect

24. During the conflict in Ayn al-Arab, Turkish army troops on the Turkish side of the border monitored the fighting and were ready to keep the fighting from infiltrating into their territory. In the first weeks of the fighting Turkey refused to allow Kurdish reinforcements to pass through Turkey on their way to Ayn al-Arab. That was due, first and foremost, to Turkey's fundamental desire to **prevent the Kurds in Syria from gaining strength**. Turkey regards the YPG as a terrorist organization and fears that strengthening the separatist aspirations of the Kurds in Syria will strengthen the PKK. Turkey also does not want military involvement in the civil war in Syria and wants the US and its allies to focus on the Assad regime (rather than against ISIS). Turkey apparently also fears it will become a target for ISIS and global jihad terrorist attacks.

25. **In the second half of October 2014, Turkish policy regarding aid to Ayn al-Arab changed**, possibly under pressure from the United States. For the first time since the beginning of the Ayn al-Arab campaign, **Turkey permitted the Peshmerga forces and Free Syrian Army soldiers to enter its territory and reinforce the YPG militias**. On October 28, 2014, reinforcements of **150 Peshmerga soldiers** departed from Erbil, capital of Iraq's Kurdish autonomy. Some traveled by airplane, landed in Turkey and from there made their way to Ayn al-Arab. Some left Erbil by land in a convoy of artillery and anti-tank weapons to Ayn al-Arab.

26. In addition, **the Turks allowed 150 Free Syrian Army reinforcements to travel to Ayn al-Arab via Turkish territory**. A Free Syrian Army force crossed the border on October 29, 2014, and joined the Kurdish militias (AFP.com, October 29, 2014).

27. It was the first time significant reinforcements had reached Kurdish militias since the fighting in Ayn al-Arab began. The effect is still unclear. The reinforcements might make it easier for the YPG to hold back the ISIS forces in the city of Ayn al-Arab and help them force the ISIS forces to withdraw from occupied several neighborhoods and regions.

Results of the battles to date (mid-November 2014)

28. On November 10, 2014, the London-based Syrian Human Rights Monitoring Centre reported that since the beginning of the attack on Ayn al-Arab, **1,013 people had been killed. Of them, 609 were ISIS operatives and 363 were combatants in YPG units**. According to Kurdish sources and an Al-Jazeera report, two local senior ISIS commanders were killed in Ayn al-Arab: **Abu Ali al-Askari** (or, according to another version, al-Ansari), who was the commander of ISIS in Ayn al-Arab, and his

assistant **Abu Muhammad al-Masri** (Al-Darar al-Shamiah, November 16, 2014; Al-Jazeera TV, November 17, 2014).

29. Most Ayn al-Arab's opinion fled. As a result of the fighting in the city and the surrounding region, **an estimated 160,000 Kurds have fled from their homes, most of them to Turkey**, which is already coping with a major wave of refugees from Syria. The media reported that a small number of refugees were still in Syria, near the Turkish-Syrian border.



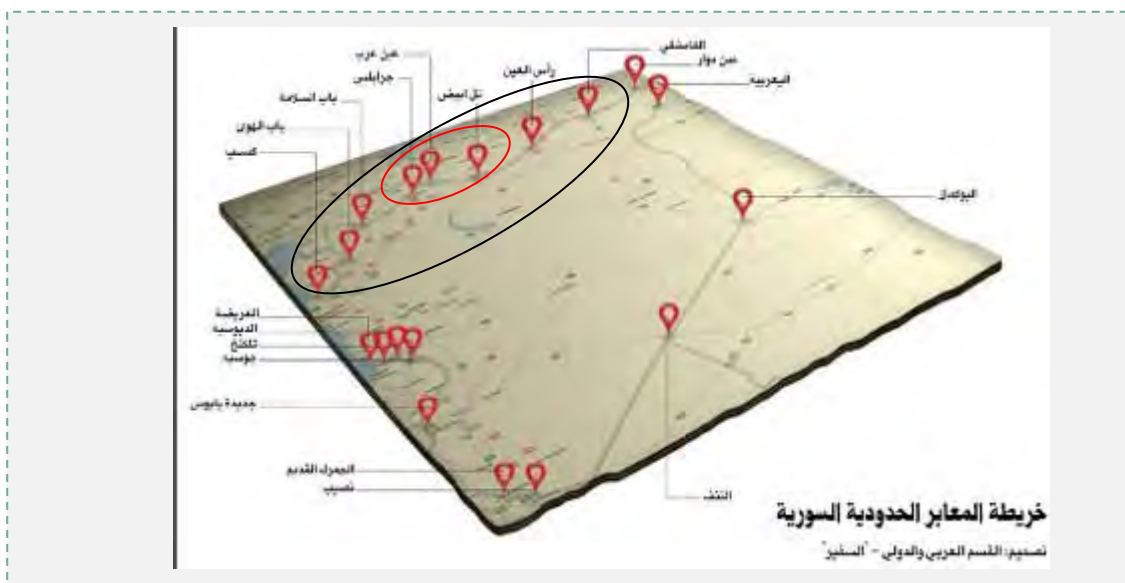
Kurdish refugees from the area of Ayn al-Arab arrive in Turkey (Assafir.com)

Implications

30. **At this stage, it is difficult to verify the results of the campaign for the city of Ayn al-Arab and its environs, which have great importance for all parties.** The possibility that the city and its environs may be occupied by ISIS has the following implications:

1) **The fall of the entire area** is liable to establish ISIS in northern Syria **giving it uninterrupted territorial control along the Syrian-Turkish border**, where there are **three international crossings: Tell Abyad, Ayn Arab, and Jarabulus**. That will make it easier for ISIS **to secure the vital logistic passage from Turkey**, through which operatives and supplies arrive, and will make it harder for its rivals and enemies to maintain contact with their supporters outside.³⁵

³⁵ It has been reported that in early November 2014, the rival jihadi organization, the Al-Nusra Front, made preparations to advance towards the **Bab al-Hawa crossing** in the west (the Idlib province) to take control of it. The crossing is controlled by the Free Syrian Army (Al-Arabiya, November 3, 2014). The crossings



International border crossings between Turkey and Syria (from east to west): Qamishli, Ras al-Ayn, Tell Abyad, Ayn al-Arab, Jarabulus, Bab al-Salama, Bab al-Hawa and Kessab (Assafir.com). The Tell Abyad and Jarabulus border crossings (controlled by ISIS) and the Ayn al-Arab border crossing (which is now being fought over) are marked in red.

2) **The fall of the area will harm the military and political power of the Kurdish militias in Syria.** From a Turkish political perspective, that may expose the Turkish regime to accusations failing to provide support for the Kurdish militias against ISIS. In turn, that **may endanger the ceasefire and the current peace process between Turkey and the Kurdish underground (PKK).** It may also increase tension between Turkey and the US regarding Turkey's role in the coalition against ISIS.

3) The fall of the area would be the most outstanding achievement of ISIS since President Obama's decision to undertake a campaign against the organization. It would be interpreted as an American failure, especially since the United States has invested a major effort in air strikes aimed at preventing the fall of the city. **On the other hand, a failure by ISIS in the Ayn al-Arab campaign would be a severe blow** after its series of successes in Syria and would strengthen its opponents, especially the Kurdish militias in Syria.

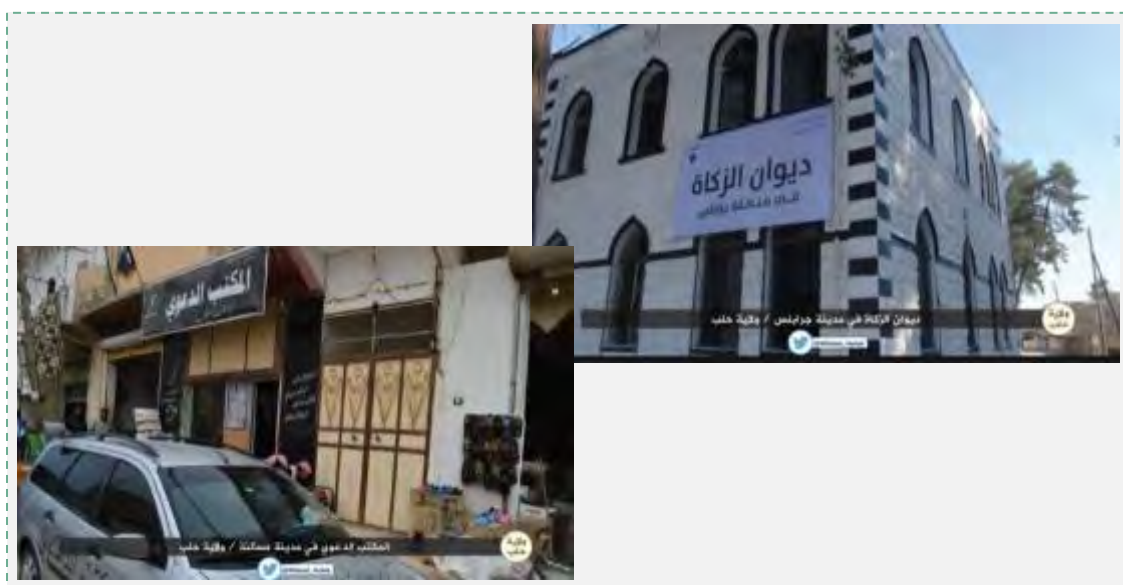
ISIS's efforts to establish itself in the rural areas around Aleppo and the border crossings

31. The battle to wrest the Ayn al-Arab area from the Kurdish militias **is part of ISIS's effort to establish itself in the rural areas around Aleppo**, from the outskirts of the city to the Syrian-Turkish border. In recent months ISIS has exerted military pressure

between Syria and Turkey will apparently continue as arenas of struggles for power and control between the various opposing forces.

designed to weaken the rebel organizations in the rural areas of Aleppo, including the Al-Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham and the Free Syrian Army. ISIS is also trying to win the hearts and minds of local residents by establishing an alternative governmental system that provides essential services (as it has done in other provinces) and financial inducements (promises that the money in its coffers, i.e., revenue derived from the sale of oil products, will be used to provide services to the local population).

Establishing an ISIS administration in the Aleppo province



Left: The ISIS Ministry of Da'wah (preaching, political-religious indoctrination) in the city of Maskana, Aleppo province (sef.ps). Right: The ISIS Bureau of Charity (*Diwan al-Zakat*³⁶) in Jarabulus, in Aleppo province (sef.ps).

³⁶ *Zakat* – Obligatory charity, one of the five pillars of Islam.



Left: Distribution of humanitarian aid by ISIS to the rural areas of Aleppo (Sef.ps). Right: The Bureau of Muslim (social) Services in the city of Al-Bab, in Aleppo province (Sef.ps).



Collecting bags of food for the distribution of charity in Jarabulus, in Aleppo province (Sef.ps)

Enlisting new operatives into the ranks of ISIS

32. As in Iraq, in the summer of 2014 ISIS made efforts in Syria to enlist new operatives from the local population. Its military achievements, the establishment of the Caliphate State and its increased financial resources motivated residents to join its ranks, swelling the number of recruits. Most of the jihadi training camps belong to ISIS.

33. ISIS enlistment is carried out in the various provinces by **local recruitment offices**. New recruits undergo several months of training before they join the ranks of the organization. There are recruitment offices and training camps in the various provinces in eastern and northern Syria controlled by ISIS, among them in Aleppo, Al-Raqqah, Dir al-Zor and Al-Hasakah. ISIS's information offices occasionally publish

photos when the training courses end. **ISIS has 25 training camps, 14 in Syria and 11 in Iraq.** Most of those in Syria are located in the provinces of Aleppo, Al-Raqqa and Dir al-Zor. In addition, there are several training camps in the provinces of Al-Hasakah, Latakia and Damascus. The camps have been the targets of US attacks since the beginning of August 2014 (Longwarjournal.org, November 22, 2014).



Photo distributed by ISIS's information office in the Aleppo province showing a new group of *mujahedin* (jihad fighters) who completed their training (Longwarjournal.org, July 26, 2014)



Recruitment office enlist new operatives in the ranks of ISIS, including teenage boys from the Aleppo province in the Al-Bab region (Alfetrn.com)



Recruits at the entrance of the ISIS recruitment office in the city of Al-Bab, northeast of Aleppo. The recruits in the photo are mainly boys and teenagers (Islahjo.com).



Ceremony marking the end of a training course for ISIS operatives at the al-Zarqawi camp in Al-Raqqa (Alarabiya.net). The photo was issued in March 2014.

Omar the Chechen, a prominent figure in the ranks of ISIS in northern and eastern Syria

34. In establishing its control in eastern Syria, ISIS availed itself of the military skills of a Chechen jihadist from Georgia, whose nickname is **Omar al-Shishani**, i.e., **Omar the Chechen**. Until the end of 2013 he headed an elite military framework called the Army of Emigrants, which was associated with the Al-Nusra Front. In early 2014, he defected to the ranks of ISIS and was appointed as its commander of the northern region of Syria. Initially, Omar the Chechen's activity was concentrated in **the Aleppo**

region, the source of his power. However, in the first half of 2014 he expanded his activity to the east as well, all the way to Dir al-Zor.

35. During the course of his activity in eastern Syria, serious disputes arose between ISIS and other Islamic organizations due to ISIS's brutal treatment of the population and its attempt to impose radical Islam. According to an unverified report, he currently serves as Chief of Staff of the Islamic State, which refers to him as its military commander (See Section Five).

Establishing enforcement networks in northern and eastern Syria

Islamic law enforcement networks

36. **ISIS brutally imposes its Salafist-jihadi Islamic ideology on the population in the areas under its control Syria and Iraq.** Its two main enforcement networks are the **Islamic Police**, which carries out routine policing duties, **and the Morality Police (*hisbah*), which deals with the enforcement of religious commandments and is separate from the regular police.**

37. ISIS has **an extensive network of prisons and detention facilities** in the areas under its control. Article 38 of a report published by a UN commission of inquiry examining the lives of the population under ISIS's reign of terror described the system of prisons and detention camps as follows (Ohchr.org, November 14, 2014):

"ISIS has set up detention centers in former government prisons, military bases, hospitals, schools and in private houses. Former detainees described being beaten, whipped, electrocuted and suspended by their arms from walls or the ceiling. Witnesses to public executions remarked that the victims often bore signs of prior beatings. Detainees are held in dirty and overcrowded cells. Many spent long periods of time in handcuffs. Detainees interviewed stated that neither they nor their cellmates received medical treatment. One detainee recalled a FSA fighter being left in his cell beaten, with his hands cuffed behind his back and an open fracture on his leg."



Left: Confiscation of cigarettes in the Idlib province (Theshamnews.wordpress.com) Right: ISIS's Islamic Police vehicle in the Idlib province (Enqazsyria.com).



Left: ISIS's Islamic Police station in the town of Manbij, in the rural areas of the Aleppo province (breakingnews.sy). Right: ISIS's Islamic Police station in the city of Maskana, Aleppo province (Sef.ps).



ISIS's Islamic Police station in the city of Aleppo (coptstoday.com)

The Morality Police (*Hisba*)

38. **Hisba** is an Islamic endorsed by the Qur'anic decree “Enjoining good and forbidding wrong,” which can be translated as “supervising the existence of justice.” The functionary in the historic Islamic State responsible for enforcing the decree is called the **muhtasib**, who played a supervisory role in the markets in the Middle Ages (at least since the days of the Abbasid Dynasty). He supervised weights and measurements in markets, the rules of construction, honesty in commercial negotiations and public and religious morality (including the rules of modesty).

39. In Islamic history, the **muhtasib** was considered a law enforcement officer, a type of police officer, and in cases where he deemed it necessary he arrested criminals and brought them before an Islamic judge (*qadi*). The **muhtasib** could also serve as a judge and impose punishment (a kind of on-site judgment) and arbitrate between adversaries. The many **hisba** books published over the centuries describe his role and conduct and are an important source of knowledge of the world of Islam in the Middle Ages. Today’s “modesty patrols” in Saudi Arabia and Iran operate according to a format similar to that of the **muhtasib** and under the same Qur'anic decree.

40. ISIS claims to have **ten Morality Police headquarters in Aleppo province and additional headquarters in Al-Raqqah province** (ISW, ISIS Governance in Syria, July 2014). Unlike regular policing, which deals with criminal matters, ISIS’s Morality Police enforces religious commandments. For example, they remind local residents to take part in Friday prayers, prohibiting them from conducting business during prayers;

they fight the sale and use of drugs and oversee the destruction of statues and sites of those who are considered “idol worshippers.”

41. Posters distributed by ISIS in **Al-Raqqah province** informed the population that **the electricity in Al-Raqqah would be disconnected during the religious Muslim month of Ramadan**, it is a month of worship rather than entertainment. The posters stated that in the time of the Prophet Muhammad there was no electricity. The organization also prevented local citizens from operating generators (except in essential facilities) to keep them from watching the World Cup soccer games which, in its opinion, was liable to distract the residents from the work of God (Assifir.com, June 16, 2014).



Morality Police headquarters in the city of Manbij in Aleppo province (Ynewsiq.com). The inscription on the car reads “Enjoining good and forbidding wrong;” it is the Qur'anic decree under which the Morality Police operates.



Morality Police car in Al-Raqqah (syrianews.com)

42. **Women also serve in the Morality Police**, enforcing the Islamic code of conduct, as interpreted by ISIS, on women. They supervise women's modest dress code and enforce the prohibition on women's walking or working in the company of men without a male escort (the wife's husband or patron) (Syrianews.com). The Syrian Institute for Human Rights reported that on November 12, 2014, "women supervisors" of ISIS were seen patrolling the open markets in the city of Al-Mayadeen, on the outskirts of Dir al-Zor. The women, who were carrying guns, arrested a female resident because she was not wearing proper attire ("sharia attire").



Morality Police car in Al-Raqqah with a woman member of the Morality Police (Alkhabar-ts.com)



Women in ISIS's Al-Khansaa Battalion in Al-Raqqah, who are members of the Morality Police (named after the poet Al-Khansaa, who lived in the time of Muhammad, lost four sons in the Battle of Qadisiyyah and became a symbol of sacrifice and martyrdom) (Onlinenews.cc)



Syrian girl named Fatoum Al-Jassem, just before she was stoned by ISIS operatives in Syria. The photo was posted to Syrian opposition websites. How reliable it is or where it was taken is not known (Hasa.com). ISIS carried out executions of women accused of adultery in the cities of Al-Tabqa and Al-Raqqah in July 2014.



ISIS document, issued in Syria, warning the population that those who curse the Prophet Muhammad will be sentenced to death in accordance with the laws of sharia (All4syria.info).



Show trial in which two apostates (*murtaddin*, i.e., those who abandoned or rejected Islam) were executed in the city of Al-Bab in Aleppo province (Sef.ps)

Execution of a woman charged with prostitution

43. On October 21, 2014, Al-Arabiya TV broadcast an ISIS propaganda film showing a woman accused of prostitution being led by her father to be stoned. An ISIS operative asked the father to forgive his daughter after she expressed regret, but he refused. The ISIS operative in the film appealed Muslims around the globe to protect their wives and act morally.



Left: The father binds his daughter before she is stoned. Right: ISIS operative (right) asks the father (left) to forgive his daughter for her actions. The father answers that he will not forgive her (the daughter has her back to the camera). The ISIS flag appears in the background on top.

44. In the London-based **Al-Sharq al-Awsat** Arabic-language daily newspaper, columnist **Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed** wrote about the execution of the woman and its exploitation for propaganda purposes by ISIS, as follows (October 24, 2014):

"Why does ISIS insist on spreading a video showing its fighters stoning a woman to death with the participation of her father? **This video will remain one of the vilest and most offensive to Muslims.** At the same time, it serves as evidence not only of the organization's barbarity, since that has already been established, but also of its **ability to remain on the front page, exploiting it for its needs and thereby gaining an important advantage.** The organization's abhorrent actions achieved its goals via the media.

"ISIS's objective is to show people the most extreme and cruel photos of beheadings, massacres of defenseless civilians, persecution and stoning of women. **Even Al-Qaeda, which made use of photographed violence, did not persist the way ISIS's fighters do.**

"Those acts of barbarism and violence aren't marketed to people as proof of ISIS's cruelty, **but at the same time the organization is working to convince people that it acts correctly according to Islam and constitutes an alternative government;** and that it is capable of recruiting many through provocations, changes and the dissemination of its perception of Islam. The offensive video shows how extremists convince an ignorant father that if he stones his daughter she will quickly reach paradise, cleansed of her sins, and so they manage to persuade the girl to agree to be stoned, because by doing so she will atone for her crimes.

This video was posted by ISIS operatives, but they were careful not to mention **what happened in the city of Al-Raqqah in Syria**, where residents gathered in the square near the municipal field to stone a girl but refused to participate, and ISIS fighters stoned her. The organization has not distributed that video because it knew that the residents were opposed to it and the condemnations they would voice would not constitute suitable propaganda material" (ITIC emphasis).

Attacks and harassment of Christians and other religious minorities

45. ISIS harasses Christians and other religious minorities in the areas under its control. A UN international commission of inquiry which examined ISIS's rule of terror of Syria published a report entitled, "**Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria.**"³⁷ The following three sections of the report pertain to the harassment of Christians (Ohchr.org, November 14, 2014):

"Where ISIS has occupied areas with diverse ethnic and religious communities, minorities have been forced either to assimilate or flee. The armed group has undertaken a policy of imposing discriminatory sanctions such as taxes or forced conversion – on the basis of ethnic or religious identity – destroying religious sites and systematically expelling minority communities. Evidence

³⁷ Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syria Arab Republic.

shows a manifest pattern of violent acts directed against certain groups with the intent to curtail and control their presence within ISIS areas.

Between September and October 2013, ISIS fighters attacked three Christian churches in Ar-Raqqa governorate, destroying the Greek Catholic church; occupying Al-Shuhada Armenian Orthodox church in Raqqah city and burning an American church in Tel Abyad. As ISIS spread throughout eastern Syria, Christians and their places of worship continued to be attacked. In September 2014, ISIS fighters destroyed an Armenian church in Dayr Az-Zawr.

On 23 February 2014, ISIS published a statement addressing Christians that had fled Ar-Raqqa establishing conversion to Islam and the payment of a jizya tax as conditions for their return. The forced conversion of several Assyrian Christians has been documented."

The ISIS educational system

Overview

46. In the wake of the civil war in Syria, the state education system in many areas collapsed and has ceased to function. ISIS has taken over the Syrian educational infrastructure in the areas under its control, setting up **alternative educational systems**.³⁸ ISIS has invested considerable resources in its educational systems. ISIS considers it important to educate the next generation in Syria according to its own ideology, since Syria is a country with a long tradition of secular education. It is **part of ISIS's strategy to foster a new generation of adolescents in Syria who support ISIS's radical Islamic ideology**. Control of education also strengthens ISIS's position within the local population as the organization providing it with essential services.

47. In the areas under its control, ISIS has established a **formal education** system at state schools that do not operate regularly. At the same time it is also setting new educational institutions of its own. ISIS maintains **an informal education system** consisting mainly of **military training camps for children and teenagers, where the**

³⁸ According to a March 2014 UNICEF report, about 2.8 million (more than half) of all Syrian school-age children cannot receive regular education because of the civil war. Most of them (around 2.3 million) are located within Syria. Most of the classrooms were bombed or turned into shelters or military posts. About 40% of all school-age children in Syria do not attend school. To this figure can be added more than 300,000 Syrian children in Lebanon, about 93,000 in Jordan, 78,000 in Turkey, 26,000 in Iraq and 4,000 in Egypt. UNICEF estimates that approximately 2 million children are in need of psychological support or counseling (Huffintonpost.com, March 11, 2014).

children undergo Islamic indoctrination according to ISIS ideology and hold various Islam-oriented events (such as Qur'an reading contests).

The formal education system



Left: Schoolbag of a girl in Aleppo with the ISIS insignia and name (MEMRI.org, September 9, 2013). Right: Syrian children attend an ISIS school, with the organization's flag visible in the background (the organization's Aleppo



Left: Schoolchildren waving an ISIS flag (Twitter.com, April 5, 2014) Right: Schoolchildren in Aleppo with an ISIS flag (MEMRI, September 9, 2013).

48. ISIS has imposed **gender separation** at the schools it operates. ISIS also requires girls from the age of kindergarten to wear Islamic dress as a condition for attending school. ISIS offers services designed to encourage children to attend school, for example, transportation (The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, Current Trends in Islamic Ideology, Vol. 16).

49. The first evidence of the ISIS educational system appeared in a video issued by Al-Furqan Media, one of ISIS's designated media bodies (September 6, 2013). The video shows a sheikh, who identified himself as **Abu Omar the Syrian**, teaching a Qur'an class in **Al-Raqqah**. **Approximately 50 children** were in attendance, all wearing ISIS headbands and reading the Quran. The writing on the blackboard reads: the reasons for prayer, how to pray, the importance of prayer. Photos distributed by ISIS in September 2013 showed a **school in Aleppo province** run by ISIS. The photos show schoolbags for students bearing the ISIS insignia (Charles C. Caris, Samuel Reynolds, Middle East Security Report, ISIS Governance in Syria, July 2014).

50. In April 2014, ISIS announced the **establishment of a new school in the city of Al-Raqqah** intended for high achievers. Earlier, in March 2014, ISIS searched for teachers of various subjects. The photos of the interiors and exteriors of the buildings suggest that many of ISIS's schools are **existing Syrian state schools** now being run by ISIS. The organization also provides students with textbooks. Classes are large, some with as many as 60 students (Charles C. Caris, Samuel Reynolds, Middle East Security Report, ISIS Governance in Syria, July 2014).

51. **ISIS's "educational" effort targeted at elementary schools**, at least during 2014. Due to the narrowness of ISIS's educational system, it has nothing to offer in the field of university-level education. In Al-Raqqah several *sharia* institutes have been used for Islamic preaching meetings (*da'wah*) for college students. ISIS also provides religious-educational settings in mosques in Al-Raqqah and other cities (The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, Current Trends in Islamic Ideology, Vol. 16).



Religious education: The sharia institute of the sources of religion for men in the town of Maskana in the Aleppo province (Sef.ps)



Left: The entrance to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi Institute for the Study of Islamic Law (*sharia*) in the city of Al-Bab in the Aleppo province (sef.ps). Right: The ISIS Ministry of Education and Culture building in Al-Raqqa (The organization's Twitter account).

Curriculum

52. **ISIS's curriculum** focuses on the study of Islam and the Quran **at the expense of secular subjects and the acquisition of technological skills.** The ISIS Ministry of Education has issued a series of orders **forbidding the teaching of subjects such as music, art, history, the social sciences, philosophy, psychology and Christianity.**

53. According to instructions from the Ministry of Education, **the term "the Syrian Arab Republic" in textbooks is to be erased and replaced with "the State of Islam."** Schools have also been ordered to remove any picture defined as

inappropriate from the standpoint of *sharia* law and to stop playing the Syrian national anthem. Students have been forbidden to cultivate Syrian nationalism because the state of every Muslim is any place where *sharia* law rules. Teaching Darwinism is also forbidden, since Allah created everything. In classes where the laws of chemistry and physics are taught, it is emphasized that they come from Allah. Teachers are required to undergo special training on *sharia* to be able to continue teaching (ibtimes.co.uk, September 1, 2014).



Religious training of children by the Islamic State in the Al-Raqqah province (Twitter, May 10, 2014).



ISIS first grade textbook entitled *Al-Tawhid* (The Oneness of Allah) (from the organization's Twitter account).



ISIS operative lecturing to students about the importance of knowledge of Islam (From the ISIS Twitter account, March 20, 2014)

Informal educational settings

54. In addition to its formal education system, ISIS operates **informal “educational” settings**. They are mainly training camps for children and teenagers where they **receive military training and radical Islamic indoctrination**. The camps are help ISIS train its next generation of fighters in Syria. To that end, a framework for children and teenagers called the **Al-Zarqawi Lion Cubs** has been established in areas controlled by ISIS in Syria. It is a continuation of the **Birds of Paradise** unit from Iraq, which is for the recruitment of children under the age of 15. The unit is designed to train children for military missions such as conveying explosives, collecting intelligence and carrying out suicide bombings.



Combat training for children at an ISIS training camp (Al-Raqqah Twitter account, January 2, 2014)

55. One of the videos documenting the activities at a training camp for children showed several dozen children in military uniforms carrying Kalashnikov assault rifles and undergoing military training ((MEMRI.org, February 7, 2014). Another video of the Al-Zarqawi Lion Cubs was posted to YouTube on May 25, 2013, and showed a youth camp in Abu Kamal in eastern Syria. The video shows masked children receiving arms and ammunition from the camp instructor, marching with a black jihadi flag, receiving religious indoctrination and undergoing weapons training ((MEMRI.org, February 7, 2014).



Left: Children at an Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi Lion Cubs camp during military training (ISIS's Twitter page, March 22, 2014) Right: ISIS training camp for children in the Damascus area (YouTube, January 2, 2014).

56. According to a report published by the UN Human Rights Council on August 13, 2014 (A/HRC/27/60), the Islamic State “systematically provides weapons training for children.” **The organization has set up training camps throughout the country, especially in Aleppo and Al-Raqqah provinces, for recruiting children and training them for combat.** According to the report, that constitutes **a war crime and a crime against humanity** which has to be referred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The report also mentions a training camp in Al-Bab in Aleppo province, which ISIS took over in the fall of 2013. According to the report, children aged 14-15 were recruited into the camp and received financial compensation for their services. The training at the camp included military training and religious education (Ohchr.org, August 13, 2014).



Photo uploaded to social networks showing children in Al-Raqqah gathering around the body of a civilian who was executed (Twitter, October 1, 2014)

The ISIS judicial system

57. **The establishment of an Islamic judicial system in all the areas is controls is of great importance for ISIS.** Adoption of Islamic law as the sole source of authority is an important element in ISIS's vision of the Caliphate. The legal system imposed by ISIS on the population includes severe penalties for whoever violates Islamic law, as perceived by ISIS.

58. When ISIS expanded its influence in northern Syria in the summer of 2013, **it set up *sharia* courts in several cities.** One of the first courts documented was in **Jarabulus, in the northern part of Aleppo province,** in early July 2013. In November 2013, ISIS extended its judicial system to **Idlib province.** On June 30, 2014, the ISIS information office in **Aleppo province** reported on its Twitter account that **five *sharia* courts** operated in the province. In the spring of 2014, courts were also set up in Al-Raqqah and Aleppo provinces where residents' complaints against ISIS operatives or against local *emirs* were investigated (Charles C. Caris, Samuel Reynolds, Middle East Security Report, ISIS Governance in Syria, July 2014).

59. In November 2013, an ISIS judge was interviewed in the Idlib province. The judge explained **how ISIS filled the void created in the region after the collapse of the Syrian regime's legal system.** He said that when ISIS arrived crime was a great problem in the area, but after the establishment of the ISIS courts there was a significant drop in crime. In an interview with civilians outside the courthouse, one of them said that he made a special trip from Aleppo province in order to be tried

(Charles C. Caris, Samuel Reynolds, Middle East Security Report, ISIS Governance in Syria, July 2014).

60. **In summary:** ISIS has set up a **judicial system in the areas under its control**. In ITIC assessment so far the ISIS legal system has been received **with resignation and perhaps even favorably by the local population, even though it does not share ISIS's Salafist-jihadi Islamic ideology**. Apparently the local residents **perceive the existence of the legal system as beneficial**. That is because it fills the governmental void created after the collapse of the Syrian regime and marks the return of law and order, and because the sharia are currently perceived as less corrupt than the Assad regime's old secular courts.

Section Five – ISIS'S Capabilities: the Number of its Operatives, Control System, Military Strength, Leadership, Allies and Financial Capabilities

Estimate of current number of ISIS operatives

1. **In the summer of 2014 there was a significant increase in the number of ISIS operatives**, which until June was estimated at **about 15,000**.³⁹ In recent months thousands of new operatives have enlisted in its ranks from Syria, Iraq and other countries. The rise in number is **a result of ISIS'S military successes and the self-declaration of the Islamic Caliphate, which made it more attractive**. The increase in its revenues after it took over the infrastructure, especially the oil fields (See below), **also made it easier to recruit new operatives by promising them high salaries**.

2. In ITIC assessment today ISIS has about **25,000** operatives in Iraq and Syria, although there are slightly higher Western estimates (See below). An estimated **12,000** are Syrian and Iraqi (their number and ration rose in the summer of 2014) and **more than 13,000 are foreign fighters from the Arab-Muslim world and Western countries** (See below).

3. Western estimates of ISIS operatives range from **between 20,000 and 30,000**:

a) On September 11, 2014, **a CIA spokesman said new information, based on intelligence reports from May to August 2014, estimated that the Islamic State group could muster between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters across Iraq and Syria**. The spokesman said "the new total reflects **stronger recruitment** by the extremist group since June following battlefield successes and the group's

³⁹ **Until June 2014, Western estimates made public in the media put the number of ISIS operatives at between 11,000 and 15,000**. For example, according to an investigative report published on June 12, 2014 in the French daily Libération, about 5,000 ISIS operatives participated in the June attack in Iraq, while it was estimated that there were 6,000-7,000 ISIS operatives in Syria. According to the British daily Financial Times on June 19, 2014, in June ISIS had about 15,000 fighters. According to the American political website The Hill on September 11, 2014, the CIA estimated ISIS's strength at 10,000. On the other hand, **Fuad Hussein**, Chief of Staff to Massoud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Regional Government, claimed that the CIA's estimate was incorrect and that in reality ISIS had at least 200,000 operatives (Independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-with-isis-islamic-militants-have-army-of-200000-claims-kurdish-leader-9863418.html, November 17, 2014). The ITIC is of the opinion that the number is vastly inflated.

declaration of a caliphate...[and that] the revised number also reflects greater battlefield activity, and additional intelligence" (AP.org, September 11, 2014).⁴⁰ The announcement of the new figures appeared immediately after President Obama declared the United States' new strategy against ISIS (See below).

b) A similar assessment was given by French Defense Minister **Jean-Yves Le Drian**, who estimated the number of **well-equipped ISIS fighters at between 20,000 and 30,000** (AFP.com, September 11, 2014).

c) **General Lloyd Austin**, commander of the head of the United States' Central Command (Centcom) had a lower estimate, placing the number of ISIS'S "committed fighters" at **between 9,000 and 17,000** (CNN.com, November 7, 2014). In ITIC assessment the figures are too low.

The top institutions of the Islamic State

4. The Islamic State is headed by **Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim Ali al-Baghdadi, aka Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. Since June 29, 2014, he has held the self-awarded titles of **Caliph and Imam**. He also holds the title **Mulana Emir al-Mu'minin** ("our master, the commander of the faithful"). It was originally the title of the **Muslim Caliphs** who ruled the Islamic state during the first centuries of Islam. Al-Baghdadi is also known as "**Emir al-Dawla al-Islamiyyah fi al-Iraq wa-al-Sham**" ("the ruler of the Islamic state in Iraq and greater Syria").⁴¹ He is also called the Imam **Abu Bakr al-Qurashi** (i.e., descendant of the prophet Muhammad from the Quraish tribe).

5. **The Islamic State has a centralized hierarchical structure directed by its leader who is its highest authority.** He appoints members to the organization's senior positions and they are personally responsible to him. The three highest institutions in the Islamic State are:

a) **The Shura (Advisory) Council (*majlis al-shura*)** is its highest institution. It has between nine and eleven members, all appointed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

⁴⁰ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/cia-islamic-state-group-has-31500-fighters>

⁴¹ In this context, the Islamic title *emir* is given to the head of an Islamic organization or state. The emir, according to the original Islamic concept, has exclusive authority over civilian, religious and military matters. An emir can also command military forces. The title Emir al-Mu'minin is important because **it gives whoever bears it Islamic legitimacy** (for example, the King of Morocco also bears the title). The heads of contemporary extremist Islamist organizations are also called emirs.

It is headed by **Abu Arkan al-A'miri** (Alalam.ir). The Shura Council is responsible for transmitting instructions from al-Baghdadi to the organization's chain of command and ensuring they are followed. It also passes laws, an area also dealt with by the Sharia Council. Theoretically, the Shura Council is supposed to confirm Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's nominations. It also has the authority to depose the Caliph if he fails to carry out his duties in accordance with Islamic religious law, according to which the organization operates. According to a comprehensive study of the Islamic State by Richard Barrett of the Soufan Group, an American international strategic consultancy firm, all the members of the Shura Council are Iraqi, and in the past many of them were affiliated with the Iraqi Ba'ath party.⁴²

b) **The Military Council (*al-majlis al-askari*)**⁴³ deals with planning military moves and **supervising** local commanders operating in territories under ISIS control. At the time (February 2014) it was reported that in the past the Military Council consisted of a chairman and three members who had been **officers in Saddam Hussein's army** (Al-Arabiya TV, February 15, 2014). Today it is headed by **Waleed Jassem al-Alwani**⁴⁴, aka **Abu Ahmed al-Alwani**, a Ba'athist and former officer in the Iraqi army (See below). According to unverified information the council is headed by **Tarkhan Batirashvili, aka Omar al-Shishani**,⁴⁵ a Chechen operative who served in Georgia's armed forces (See below).

c) **The Sharia [Islamic religious law] Council (*majlis al-sharia*)**, a powerful institutions directly subordinate to al-Baghdadi, composed of six members. Its duties include selecting a Caliph and ensuring the compliance of all other parts of the administration with sharia law, according to **ISIS's** own interpretation. It is responsible for ensuring party discipline, providing rules and deciding penalties for their infringement, supervising the sharia police and courts and overseeing

⁴² Richard Barrett, Senior Vice President, "The Islamic State," The Soufan Group, November 2014.

⁴³ Also called the General Military Council (*al-majlis al-askari al-'aam*).

⁴⁴ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/2014/02/13/Exclusive-Top-ISIS-leaders-revealed.html>

⁴⁵ english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/world/2014/10/13/ISIS-s-Chechens-pose-a-serious-threat-to-Russia.html

ideological preaching (the *da'wah*), both in areas under the State's control and beyond.⁴⁶

6. **The Islamic State's political leadership includes a kind of staff (or "cabinet"⁴⁷) of functionaries whose duties include responsibility for military activities, internal security and intelligence in the various provinces, apparently directly subordinate to al-Baghdadi (Alakhabarpress.com); weapons, financial matters and ISIS's financial body (*bayt al-mal*), communications, prisoners, "guesthouses" for arriving foreign fighters, plunder, etc.**

7. **ISIS considers its propaganda activities and battle for hearts and minds greatly important.** The most important individual in its information system is **Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami**, the organization's official spokesman, who often makes media appearances. ISIS's leadership has **an information department** that posts notices to the Internet, especially through designated groups and sites (See below concerning ISIS's information system). In the various provinces of Iraq and Syria there are also local information bureaus responsible for media issues.

The administrative division

8. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has two deputies responsible for running the various provinces in Iraq and Syria. They are **Fadhil Ahmed Abdallah al-Jabali**, aka **Abu Mu'taz or Abu Muslem al-Turkmeni**, who serves as "**coordinator for provincial matters in the Emirate of Iraq.**" The Arabic media claimed he was killed in an aerial attack on Mosul on November 7, 2014. The coordinator for Syria is **Abdallah al-Anbari, or Abu Ali al-Anbari**, who was an intelligence officer in the Iraqi army under Saddam Hussein.

⁴⁶ Barrett, "The Islamic State," p. 30.

⁴⁷ According to a September 2014 study by the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), al-Baghdadi has a kind of "cabinet" of experienced military personnel. He appoints them, they are subordinate to him and report directly to him. According to Barrett, "The Islamic State," there are councils with different areas of responsibility (security and intelligence, finances, provincial matters, etc.)



Fadhil Ahmed Abdallah al-Jabali (Almadapaper.net)

9. Both deputies are subordinate to the **provincial governors** in Syria and Iraq appointed by the Islamic State. **According to the TRAC study, there are 12 provincial governors in Syria and 12 in Iraq.** According to a CNN report there are councils under each governor responsible for various areas: financial management, law enforcement (i.e., prevention of crimes and punishment), military matters (defense of the province), support (insuring fighters receive fair compensation), internal security and intelligence (CNN quoted by Dailymail.co.uk, September 21, 2014).

10. For **administrative purposes** the Islamic State is divided into **provinces (wilayat)**⁴⁸ (See map). The provinces established by ISIS sometimes correspond to preexisting administrative divisions in Iraq and Syria and sometimes have different borders or different names:

a) **Iraq** – The **southern province (wilayat al-janub)** established by ISIS does not correspond to any previous Iraqi province. It includes the northern region of the Babil province and the center of the city of Fallujah (located in Al-Anbar province). At the end of August 2014 ISIS announced the establishment of the Euphrates province (*wilayat al-frat*), which will include the Syrian city of Abu Kamal and the Iraqi city of Al-Qaim with its surrounding villages. The establishment of the new province in Iraqi and Syrian territory was intended to symbolize the demolishing of the Sykes-Picot borders.

⁴⁸ **Wilayah** (province) was the usual term for province during Islam's first Caliphates. It was also used by the Ottomans. **Muhafaza** (governorate) is the modern term used by the nation states today. ISIS uses the Islamic-based term.



Sign reading, "The Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria, Al-Raqqah province"



Symbols of ISIS rule in Syria: the picture, uploaded to the social networks, shows a Syrian car with a license place reading "The Caliphate State – Damascus province" (Albawabhnews.com)

11. Offices of Islamic State institutions (such as the Sharia Council) were established in the various provinces and are run by what are essentially independent representatives. In Aleppo, for example, the governor (*wali*) is supported by a sharia commander, a military commander and a security commander.⁴⁹

12. **The local ISIS commanders in the various provinces and large cities are called emirs:** the emir of Fallujah (Iraq), the emir of the province of Diyala (Iraq), the emir of the city of Al-Raqqah (Syria), etc. Joining ISIS and recognizing the leadership

⁴⁹ Barrett, "The Islamic State," p. 34.

of al-Baghdadi involves **swearing allegiance** (*bay'ah*), as was customary at the dawn of Islam and is again customary today (in Saudi Arabia and among the extremist Islamist organizations). New operatives join ISIS at **local recruitment offices in the provinces** and are trained in camps located throughout them.

ISIS weapons and their sources

Overview

13. **Most of ISIS's weapons were apparently looted from the Iraqi and Syrian armies.** Large quantities of Iraqi army weapons fell into ISIS hands when Mosul was occupied in June 2014.⁵⁰ ISIS also received weapons from rebel organizations in Syria or captured them from rebel organizations. In addition, ISIS **purchased weapons in Iraq and Syria and abroad.** So far, the ITIC cannot map ISIS's weapons according to their distribution in the provinces controlled by the organization.

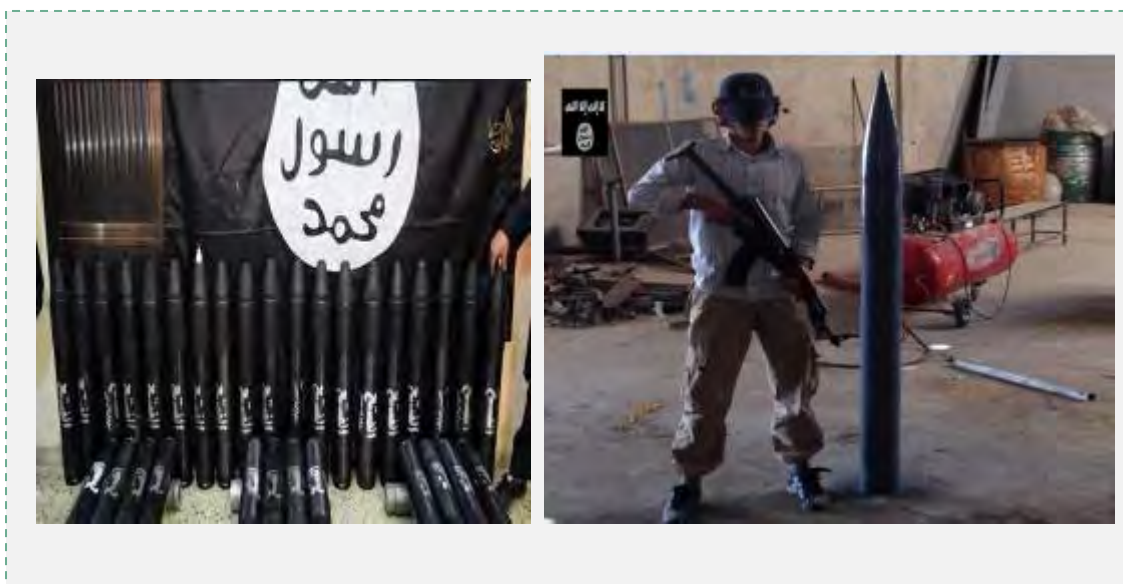
14. According to a study carried out by **Conflict Armament Research**⁵¹ the weapons captured by the Kurdish forces in Iraq and Syria indicated that **ISIS uses captured American army weapons and ammunition.** They had been given to the so-called "moderate" rebel organizations in Syria by Saudi Arabia. According to the study, ISIS operatives captured a significant quantity of light American arms including **M16 rifles stamped "Property of U.S. Govt.** (See pictures). The study also showed that anti-tank rockets used by the Syrian organizations were the same as the M79 90mm rockets delivered to the Free Syrian Army by Saudi Arabia in 2013. They were manufactured in the 1980s in the former Yugoslavia (Conflictarm.com, August-October 2014). According to the study, **ISIS also has ammunition manufactured in Iran** between 2006 and 2013 (possibly captured by ISIS from the Syrian army and its supporters, such as Hezbollah).

⁵⁰ According to Al-Arabiya TV (October 3, 2014), ISIS took possession in Mosul of 50 tanks, 150 APCs, hundreds of trucks 60,000 rifles and Scud surface-to-surface missile.

⁵¹ A British organization that identifies and tracks conventional weapons and ammunition in contemporary armed conflicts "Islamic State Weapons in Iraq and Syria," September 2014. http://www.conflictarm.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Dispatch_IS_Iraq_Syria_Weapons.pdf

15. **ISIS has light arms, various types of rockets (standard and locally produced), mortars, anti-tank missiles and launchers, and anti-aircraft weapons.** It also has **Humvees** captured from the Iraqi army during the occupation of Mosul, as well as Toyotas mounted with machine guns.

16. ISIS also has **heavy weapons and advanced technology** captured from the Iraqi and Syrian armies. According to media reports issued by ISIS (See below), the organization has **tanks, various types of artillery, various types of shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles, one or more Scud missiles, one or more MIG-21s, air-to-surface missiles and various types of armored vehicles.** It also has **mustard gas** and possibly other types of gasses it used against the Iraqi security forces and against the Kurds in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) (Syria). It has anti-tank missiles including, and according to media reports, **advanced Konkurs and Kornet missiles.**



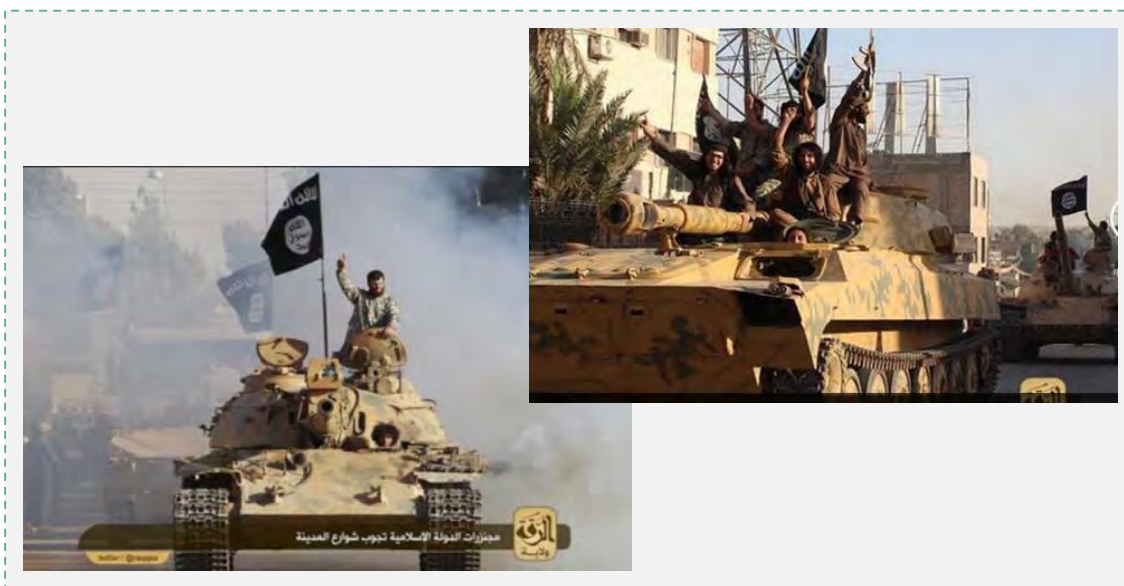
Left: Rockets manufactured by ISIS called "Al-Fatih" (Twitter.com). Right: a "Bin Laden" rocket manufactured by ISIS (Muslim.org)

Tanks and other heavy weapons

17. **ISIS has several dozen Soviet-manufactured tanks.** According to a Business Insider report by Jeremy Bender, the tanks ISIS captured from the Iraqi army include **30 Soviet T-55s and between five and ten T-72s** (See pictures).⁵² It also has **self-propelled artillery and BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicles.**

⁵² <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-military-equipment-breakdown-2014-7?op=1>

18. ISIS's tanks are spread between the various fighting arenas in Syria and Iraq and are targets for aerial attacks by the United States and its allies. Tanks were used in the fighting in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani).



ISIS fighters on Russian tanks in Al-Raqqah (Dotmsr.com).

Planes

19. At the end of October 2014 ISIS posted a video claiming that **an ISIS pilot had flown a MIG in the skies over Aleppo** (MEMRI.org, October 25, 2014). ISIS also posted a picture of one of its fighters standing in the cockpit of a MIG-21 (See below). A number of times local residents reported to the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) that they had seen a plane take off from the Al-Jarrah military airfield in the Aleppo province and fly at a low altitude (Syriahr.com, October 17, 2014).⁵³

20. SOHR and an Arabic news site reported that ISIS had taken control of the **Syrian air force base of Al-Jarrah, located in the rural region around Aleppo**. According to the news site, **six planes** had fallen into ISIS hands. It was also reported that ISIS was trying to locate professional pilots to fly them. In August 2014 pilots arrived in Al-Jarrah from Iraq and joined ISIS's ranks (Alaan.tv, October 19, 2014). According to SOHR, there are three air-worthy MIG-21s at the Al-Jarrah airport and one MIG-23. Former Iraqi army officers are reportedly training ISIS fighters to fly them (Syriahr.com,

⁵³ <http://syriahr.com/en/2014/10/warplanes-under-the-hands-of-the-islamic-state/>

October 22, 2014).⁵⁴ There was a media reports that ISIS had at least one Syrian pilot who defected to ISIS.

21. Centcom commander General Lloyd Austin, asked about ISIS's aerial capabilities, said "I don't think that's currently a significant threat. I know I have some fighter pilots who are hopeful that happens (CNN.com, November 7, 2014).



Left: Air to surface missiles seized by ISIS at Al-Tabaqa military airfield. Right: Syrian air force MIG-21 that fell into the hands of ISIS when it took over the airfield (ISIS video, August 26, 2014).

⁵⁴ <http://syriahr.com/en/2014/10/warplanes-under-the-hands-of-the-islamic-state/>

MANPADS (man-portable air-defense systems)



ISIS fighter holds an SA-7 (Strela or similar) anti-aircraft shoulder-launched missile. Behind him is the ISIS flag (Picture from the ISIS Twitter account).⁵⁵

22. At the beginning of October 2014 the Pentagon announced that as part of its aerial campaign against ISIS the United States would use Apache helicopters on missions to support the Iraqi army and Kurdish forces. Immediately afterwards ISIS used its Twitter account to instruct its fighters how to use anti-aircraft systems called MANPADS (man-portable air-defense systems) to intercept them. Previously in September 2014, **ISIS posted a video about an Iraqi helicopter in the region of Baiji intercepted by means of Chinese heat-guided MANPADS** (Chinese FN-6 MANPADS) (Washingtonpost.com, October 28, 2014; Nytimes.com, October 27, 2014). The missiles may have come from Qatar, Saudi Arabia or the Syrian rebels.

⁵⁵ The independent Iraqi TV news channel **Al-Sumaria** reported that ISIS fighters in Al-Anbar and Salah al-Din provinces had begun using **Strela shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles**. They were transferred from Syria to Iraq (Alsumaria.tv, October 8, 2014).



From an ISIS video posted to YouTube documenting an alleged strike on an Iraqi helicopter. Left: A helicopter about to crash. Right: ISIS fighter aims the missile (YouTube). In reality, the video shows an ISIS fighter holding a shoulder-held anti-tank missile launcher. It may have been used to intercept the helicopter.

23. At the end of October 2014 the German weekly newspaper Bild am Sonntag reported that ISIS had anti-aircraft MANPADS. According to the report, which was based on German intelligence sources, the missiles came from **a Syrian army arsenal captured by ISIS**. The New York Times reported that the Syrian rebels had had MANPADS since 2012, and that ISIS could acquire such systems (Nytimes.com, October 27, 2014).



ISIS fighter holding a MANPADS (Roayahnews.com)

24. **It is not known how many anti-aircraft missiles ISIS has in Iraq and Syria.** In any event, the fact that ISIS does have them not only endangers Iraqi and Syrian air force helicopters and airplanes, but **in the future may also make it difficult for the United States and its allies to use helicopters** on special missions. **They may also endanger civilian aircraft taking off and landing near Syrian and Iraqi airports.** Such weapons systems **may also find their way into the hands of jihadi organizations and networks outside Iraq and Syria.**

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)

25. On **August 25, 2014**, ISIS posted a video to YouTube showing its use of UAVs for monitoring and for gathering intelligence in combat zones in Iraq and Syria. The video, which documented the execution of American correspondent James Foley, also showed aerial photographs of a Syrian army base located in the northern part of the country near Al-Raqqah. A subtitle reads, **"Filmed from an Islamic State army UAV"** (Ibtimes.com, August 25, year).

26. On **October 27, 2014**, ISIS posted a video to YouTube showing captured British correspondent John Cantlie, who reported on the battles in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani). At the beginning of the video there were pictures allegedly photographed by an ISIS UAV. They were subtitled **"Islamic State army UAV"** (YouTube, October 27, 2014). **Rami Abd al-Rahman**, SOHR director, said that ISIS, along with the Al-Nusra Front, was making extensive use of UAVs in Al-Raqqah, the eastern outskirts of Aleppo and Deir al-Zor (Aawsat.net, October 29, 2014).



Photograph of a Syrian army base allegedly taken by an ISIS UAV in August 2014



ISIS video filmed by a UAV in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) (Dotmar.com)

27. The videos may indicate that **ISIS uses UAVs for monitoring and to collect intelligence**. In addition, it shows that ISIS has advanced weapons and technology, which in the past were possessed only by the regular armies of countries (other terrorist organization, such as Hezbollah, also use UAVs).

ISIS's use of chemical weapons

28. In October 2014 there were a number of reports in the Arabic and Western media stating that ISIS had **used chemical weapons against the Kurdish forces** in the fighting at Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) **on October 21 and 22, 2014**. It may have previously used them **in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani)**. According to the symptoms exhibited by victims, **chlorine gas, or possible another chemical weapon**, had been used. In the past it was reported that **ISIS had used chlorine gas in Iraq**. Chlorine gas has a long history of military use, first used by the Germans in the First World War.

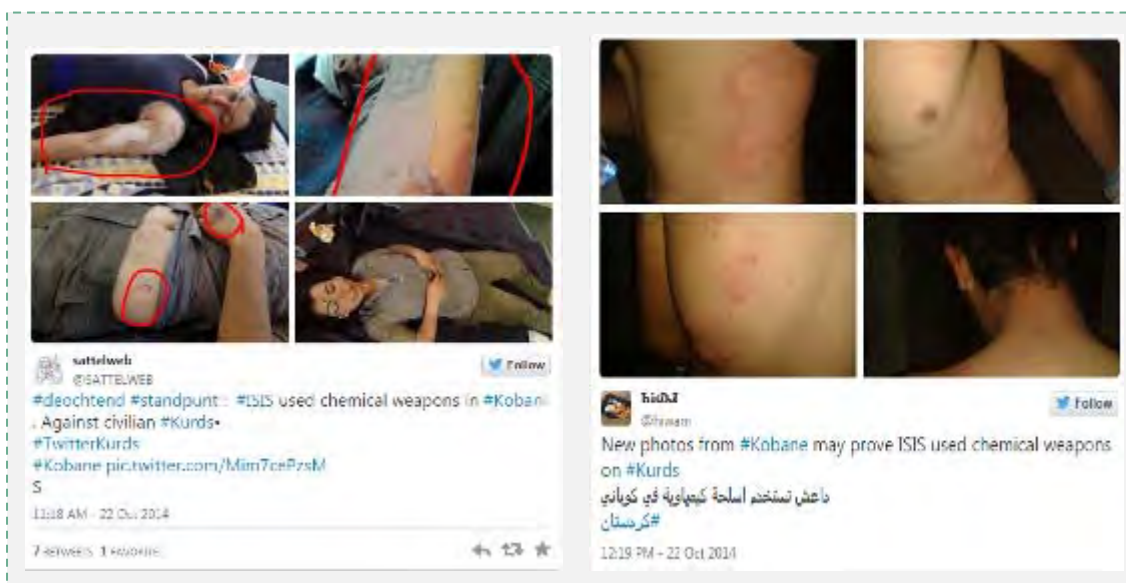
29. Reports of ISIS use of chemical weapons in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani):

On October 24, 2014 the British newspaper **The Guardian** reported that ISIS was suspected of using chemical weapons in Kobani. According to one doctor, he treated patients who exhibited burns on all parts of their bodies, burning eyes, respiratory problems, painful throats, vomiting, etc.

a) **Algerian media sources** reported that on October 21, 2014, there was a gas attack in the eastern part of Ayn al-Arab that caused residents to lose consciousness and experience difficulties breathing and/or seeing. In the opinion of one of the doctors, they had been the victims of a chlorine gas or phosphorous attack. One of the victims, who received medical treatment in Turkey, claimed the doctors who treated him diagnosed his wounds as having been caused by a chemical agent. However, doctors in the hospital in Kobani said they could not state with certainty that chemical weapons had been used (Shorouknews.com, October 22, 2014).

b) A Kurdish website called **Kurdish Question** reported that ISIS had used poison gas in the battles fought in the western part of Kobani on the night of October 21, 2014.

c) A local Kobani doctor tweeted that he had treated patients after ISIS used poison gas, and he documented his assertion with pictures.

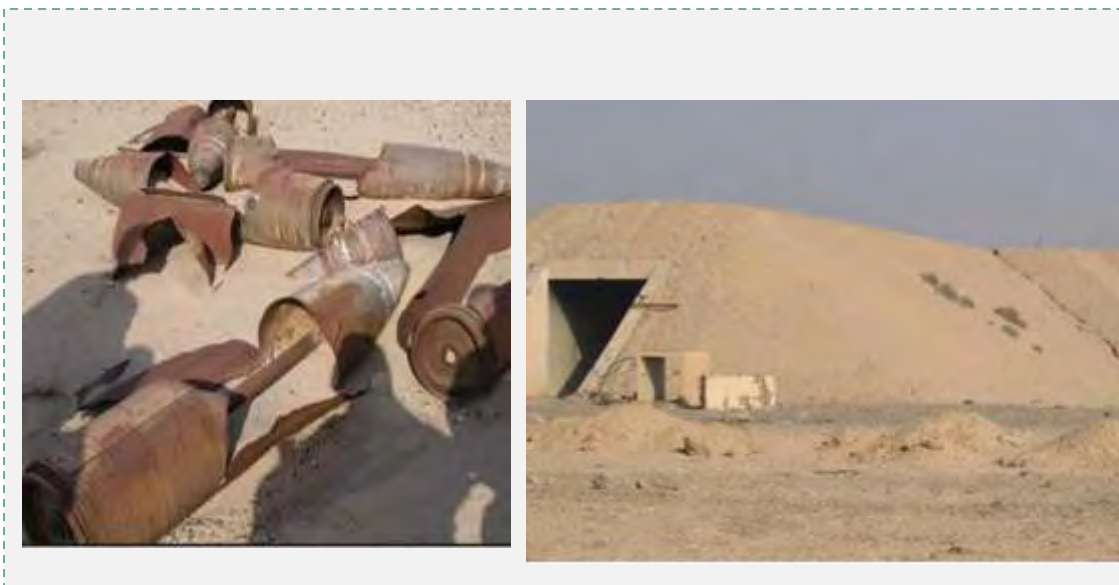


Pictures of wounds taken in Kobanî may indicate that ISIS used chemical weapons against the Kurds. The pictures were posted on the social networks by Kurdish activists (Twitter account of one of the Kurdish activists, October 22, 2014).

30. Previous information about ISIS's possession and use of chemical weapons:

a) In **June 2014** ISIS took control of **the weapons storage site at Al-Muthanna**, located near the Iraqi city of Samarra, northwest of Baghdad, where chemical weapons had been stored during the Saddam Hussein era. **Muhammad Ali al-Hakim**, the Iraqi ambassador to the UN, sent a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stating that 2,500 degraded chemical rockets filled decades ago with deadly nerve agent sarin or their remnants were stored along with other chemical warfare agents (Theguardian.com, July 9, 2014). **Note:** It is generally considered that the chemical substances at Al-Muthanna had deteriorated to the point where they would be useless, and that the rockets for delivering them were not usable. However, improvised pinpoint use could be made of the chemicals stored there.





The Al-Muthanna chemical weapons complex captured by ISIS and the weapons found there (lbtimes.com, CIA.gov, October 15, 2014). Most of the weapons are apparently old and useless.

b) In **September 2014** it was reported that the Americans were investigating reports that ISIS was using chemical weapons against the Iraqi army. The reports had arrived from the Iraqi army and hospital employees who had treated victims, claiming chlorine gas had been used (Israelnationalnews, October 24 2014).

31. **In conclusion**, it is possible that ISIS used chlorine gas at Ayn al-Arab (Kobani), and possibly another chemical weapon that causes burns, such as mustard gas. Chlorine gas is **manufactured** extensively and easy to procure. The chlorine gas used by ISIS most likely came from sites it occupied in Syria and Iraq. It is also possible that ISIS bought it on the open market. It was used in Syria and Iraq for **local tactical purposes**, since **it is not lethal and its effect is mainly psychological**. ISIS will probably attempt **to acquire additional chemical and possibly biological weapons capabilities**.

ISIS weapons



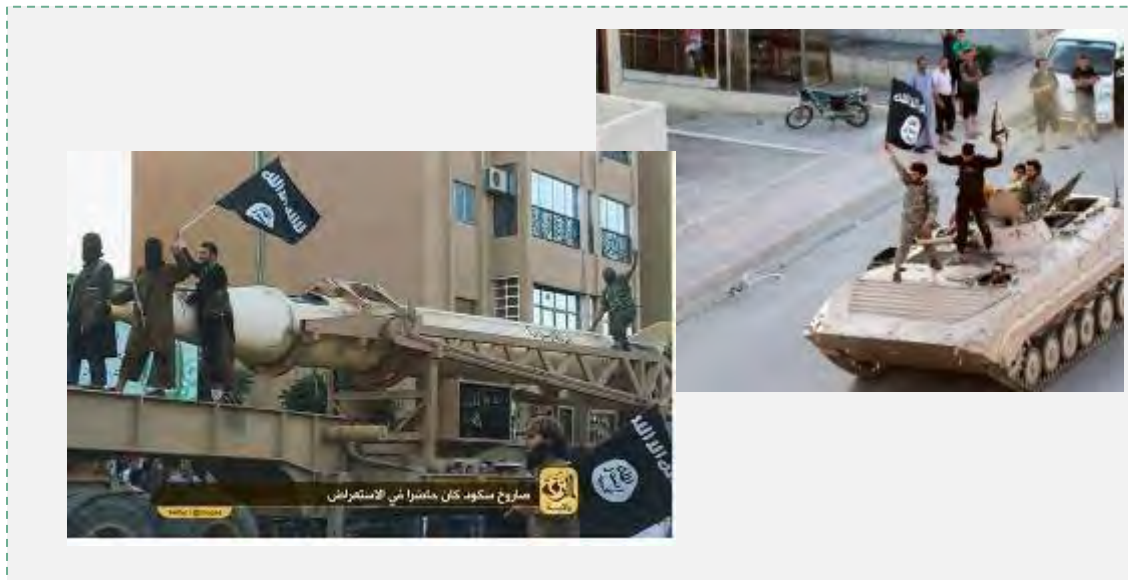
Left: Stamp on an M16 rifle taken from ISIS (Conflictarm.com). Right: M79 anti-tank missiles in ISIS possession (Conflictarm.com).



ISIS fighters launch rockets (possibly from Syria) at Brital in Lebanon's Beqa'a Valley (Twitter, February 2014).



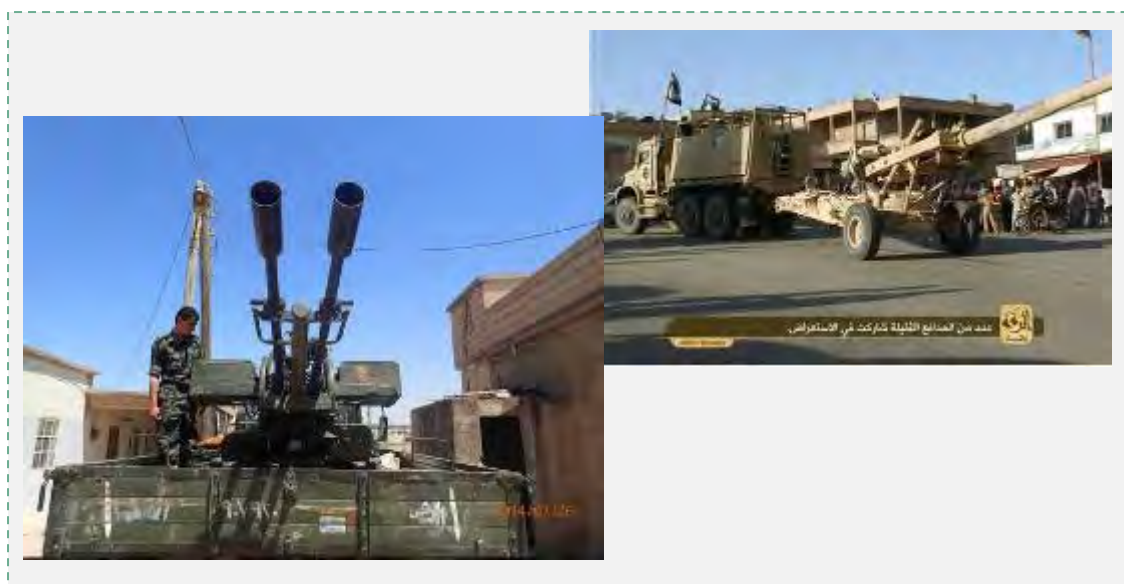
ISIS fighter stands in the cockpit of a MIG-21 (Eltira.com).



Left: A Scud missile, apparently a Scud D with a range of 700 kilometers (about 180 miles) (State of Al-Raqqah website, June 30, 2014). In ITIC assessment ISIS does not have the capability to launch the missile in the picture (the picture shows the missile's burned-out electronic and monitoring systems, probably indicating it was displayed in the parade for propaganda purposes only). Right: BMP-2 infantry fighting vehicle in a military display in Al-Raqqah (State of Al-Raqqah website, June 30, 2014).



ISIS victory parade in Mosul displaying weapons, armored vehicles and Humvees (Longwarjournal.org, June 24, 2014).



Left: Double-barreled 23mm anti-aircraft gun used by ISIS and captured by the Kurds at Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) (Conflictarm.com, July 25, 2014). Right: American-manufactured 155mm M198 howitzer in the military display in Al-Raqqah (State of Al-Raqqah website, June 30, 2014)

The leadership

ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

32. ISIS is headed by a charismatic Sunni Muslim jihadist named **Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim bin Ali al-Badri al-Qurashi al-Samarrai**, aka **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** or **Abu Du'aa**. He is most usually called **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, named after the Caliph who succeeded Muhammad and was the first of the four Caliphs who established the first Islamic Caliphate (considered Islam's Golden Age). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi comes from

the Albu Badri clan, the largest in the Samarra region.⁵⁶ Many of his relatives are **clerics affiliated with radical Salafist-Islam.**

33. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is motivated by his aspiration to take over Iraq and Syria and to reestablish the Caliphate state (the Islamic State), which he heads. He took an important step in that direction on June 29, 2014, when **he declared himself Caliph** of his self-declared Islamic State. On July 5, 2014, in the Great Mosque in Mosul, he was presented as "**Caliph Ibrahim, emir of the faithful in the Islamic State.**" **Al-Baghdadi and his clan regard themselves as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, members of the Quraish tribe.**



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi delivers a sermon in the Great Mosque in Mosul on July 4, 2014 (YouTube, July 5, 2014). The pictures are from a video posted partially to dispel rumors that he had been wounded in an aerial attack.

34. Al-Baghdadi was born in Samarra, Iraq, apparently in 1971. He majored in Islamic studies, apparently at the University of Baghdad, where he received a BA, MA and PhD.⁵⁷ Before Saddam Hussein was overthrown he was a young, devout Muslim, and often went to the mosque to pray (Liberation.fr, June 12, 2014). According to

⁵⁶ The Albu Badri is an Arab Iraqi clan, the largest in the region of Samarra. It has a number of branches, some of which live in Baghdad, southern Iraq and Diyala province. Among the Albu tribe in southern Iraq are those who adopted Shi'a. However, in the Samarra region they are Sunnis. When the American army was in Iraq, they suffered at the hands of the Jaish al-Mahdi Shi'ite militia headed by Moqtada al-Sadr. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi comes from the **al-Sada** branch of the clan, with households in Samarra, Baghdad, Amara and Aquba. The al-Sadas **are considered the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and therefore their religious status is high** (Samaracity.net).

⁵⁷ According to media reports, he studied at the Islamic University in Baghdad, apparently in the Islamic studies department. Alternately, he may have studied at the Saddam Hussein Islamic University.

information from the Iraqi administration, he taught Islamic studies at a university, apparently the University of Baghdad and was the Imam of a mosque in Samarra and after that in Fallujah (Alarabiya.net).

35. After the Americans entered Iraq in 2003, al-Baghdadi, who had collaborated with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, headed small jihadi networks. He became the leader of a jihadi organization called **Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen**. It was one of the organizations that fought the Americans in Iraq and joined ISI. In 2006, after the establishment of ISI, he joined the leadership and became its religious authority. After the killing of ISI's two leaders in April 2010 **he inherited the leadership**. Despite the fact that his expertise was in Islamic studies, **he acquired extensive military experience during his continuing activity against the American forces in Iraq**. In October 2011 the American State Department designated him a terrorist operative and **put a price of \$10 ten million on his head, dead or alive**.

36. The December 16, 2013 issue of Time Magazine had an article about Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi that included an interview with an ISIS fighter from Homs who was recuperating from a wound, staying in a safe house in Tripoli, Lebanon. He said he had known al-Baghdadi in 2004, when he was in a training camp in the Diyala province of Iraq. He was there, he said, with hundreds of the Syrian jihadi fighters who were streaming into Iraq at the time to fight the Americans. He said he remembered that al-Baghdadi spoke infrequently, made sure his men were safe and concerned himself not only with attacks but also with how to withdraw his men when necessary. He added that al-Baghdadi usually hid his face with a scarf and never revealed secrets.

37. **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was detained by the Americans in Fallujah in 2004**. He was taken to the **Bucca detention camp** on suspicion of supporting Al-Qaeda. In 2009 he was rendered to the Iraqi administration, which decided to release him, however. **In May 2010, shortly after his release, he was appointed ISI leader** (replacing Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who had been killed by the Americans in April 2010). Beginning on April 9, 2013, after the unification of ISI and the Al-Nusra Front (the Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda) was declared, al-Baghdadi became the leader of the united organization called ISIS and was therefore was expelled from Al-Qaeda, which was led by Ayman al-Zawahiri.



Pictures of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi disseminated by the Iraqi government (apparently taken when he was in prison).

38. The American media described al-Baghdadi as **a capable, talented leader**. The Washington Post, quoting an American intelligence official, called him "the true heir to Osama bin Laden, "saying he was "more violent, more virulent, more anti-American" than Ayman al-Zawahiri (Washingtonpost.com, June 10, 2014).⁵⁸ According to Time Magazine, one example of his ability to plan and command was the central role he played in breaking into the Abu Ghraib prison on July 21, 2013. At the time the Arab media reported that he was the one who had planned the Abu Ghraib operation and that it had not been the first operation he orchestrated to release Al-Qaeda prisoners from Iraqi jails.

39. On November 9, 2014, the Iraqi media reported that **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had been wounded in an American aerial attack on the city of Al-Qaim** in western Iraq near the Syrian border. Other senior figures were reported killed or wounded in the same attack. ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani admitted that al-Baghdadi had been wounded and asked that people pray for his speedy recovery. The extent of his injuries is not currently clear. However, to refute rumors of his death, on November 13, 2014, ISIS posted an audio recording of a 17-minute speech given by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Al-Minbar Al-'lami Al-Jihadi forum, November 13, 2014).

⁵⁸http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/david-ignatius-the-return-of-al-qaeda/2014/06/10/4a82eaaa-f0ea-11e3-bf76-447a5df6411f_story.html



Abu Muhammad al-Adnani tweet from November 9, 2014. The Arabic reads, "Do you think the Caliphate will end with the martyr's death of the Caliph? We comfort the [Islamic] nation with [the news that] its emir, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, feels well, thanks to Allah. Pray for his speedy recovery" (Twitter.com).

Other senior commanders

40. ISIS is secretive and compartmentalized regarding the full names of its commanders and their commands, especially those in senior roles. The turnover is rapid, whether because of organizational reasons or because commanders die or are wounded in battle. For that reason the copious amounts of information issued about ISIS commanders and their commands cannot be considered exact or current and should be examined carefully.

41. Some senior ISIS commanders, some of whom were killed in battle, are the following:

- a) **Tarkhan Tayumurazovich Batirashvili**, aka **Omar al-Shishani (the Chechen)** or **Abu Omar al-Shishani** – A Chechen operative from Georgia who served as a sergeant in the Georgian armed forces and was a **prominent ISIS military commander in northern Syria**. He is described by the Islamic State as **military commander**.⁵⁹ The ITIC cannot verify that information. He was born in 1986; his father was Christian and his mother was a Chechen Muslim. In 2012 he went to Syria where he joined the ranks of the Al-Nusra Front and commanded the "Emigrant Army" unit (composed of foreign fighters from Chechnya and other

⁵⁹ Barrett, "The Islamic State."

countries). At the end of 2013 he and some of his men defected from the Al-Nusra Front and joined the ranks of ISIS. He swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who appointed him commander of northern Syria.⁶⁰ On a number of occasions it was reported that he was killed, but that cannot be verified.⁶¹



Left: Abu Omar the Chechen as a sergeant in the Georgian army. Right: Abu Omar the Chechen (Voltarinet.org)

b) **Taha Sobhi Falaha** aka **Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami** – A senior ISIS operative of Syrian origin, he fought against the American army in the ranks of the Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen, a jihadi organization led by al-Baghdadi. He was detained by the Americans and imprisoned between 2005 and 2010. He is the ISIS spokesman and was reported to be in charge of all operations in Syria at the start of 2013, and is believed to be a member of the Shura Council.⁶² As a propagandist he is highly productive and exploits his closeness to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (often posts videos and speeches presenting the organization's positions). It was al-Adnani who on June 29, 2014, declared the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in the areas under ISIS control in Syria and Iraq. On

⁶⁰ For further information see the May 2014 bulletin "Foreign fighters from various countries and regions in Asia, fighting against the Syrian regime, most of them in organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad."

⁶¹ In 2014 he led ISIS an attack on rebels in Deir al-Zor. The media reported that he was killed in the clashes. According to a report from the Kurdish Peshmerga, he was killed in a Kurdish attack at the Mosul dam. On November 13, 2014, an Iraqi news website reported his death (Alsumaria.tv, November 13, 2014). Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov recently used his Instagram account to announce that Omar the Chechen had died (Arabic.rt.com). All the above information has not been verified.

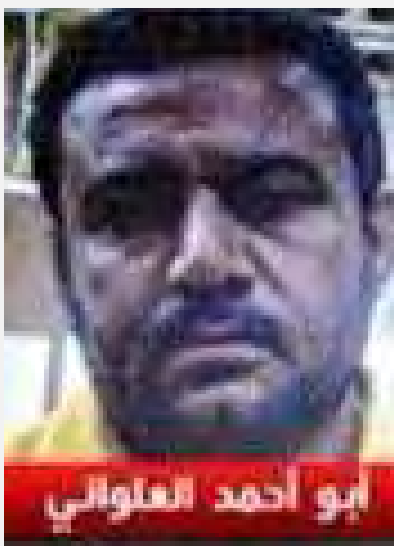
⁶² Barrett, "The Islamic State," p. 58

November 2, 2014, the media reported he had been wounded in an Iraqi air force aerial attack in the al-Qaim region of Al-Anbar province (All4syria.info, November 2, 2014).



Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami (Algharbiyanews.com)

c) **Waleed Jasem Mohammed al-Alwani**, aka **Abu Ahmed al-Alwani** – A former captain in Saddam Hussein's army, and also a Ba'athist. He was previously the Council's military commander and before that responsible for the Diyala province. **He is currently believed to head the Military Council.**⁶³ According to an unverified report (Vetogate.com), he was killed in Iraq's Salah al-Din province.



Abu Ahmed al-Alwani (Iraq4chat.com)

⁶³ Ibid., p. 36.

d) **Adnan Latif Hamid al-Sweidi (or al-Sweidani) aka Abu Muhanad al-Sweidi or Abu Ayman al-Iraqi** – A senior ISIS military operative in Syria and ISIS commander in Idlib, Aleppo and the Latakia mountains. He was formerly a Ba'athist and close associate of Izzat al-Douri, a senior figure in Saddam Hussein's regime. During the Saddam Hussein era he was a lieutenant colonel in aerial defense intelligence. He was detained by the Americans in 2007 and released in 2010. After his release he was made head of ISIS security. In 2011 he transferred to Syria where he was made responsible for operations in western Syria. While in Syria he reportedly recruited 1,000 fighters who swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Alarabiya.net). At some point he was the governor of Al-Anbar province. He has a wide reputation for almost pathological violence.⁶⁴



Abu Ayman al-Iraqi; photograph issued by the Iraqi ministry of the interior (Alarabiya.net)

e) **Adnan Ismail Najm al-Bilawi, aka Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi or Abu Usama** – Born in 1971, was a captain in the Iraqi army during the Saddam Hussein era. Like several other senior ISIS operatives he was detained in Camp Bucca, the American detention facility. He headed ISIS's Military Council and was a member of its Shura Council. He lived in Al-Khalidiya in Al-Anbar province (Alarabiya.net). He died in a raid on his home by Iraqi security forces on June 5, 2014. The campaign to take over Mosul, launched immediately after his death,

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

was named in his honor, and the detailed long-term planning for the operation was likely to have been his responsibility.⁶⁵



Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Bilawi; photograph issued by the Iraqi ministry of the interior (Alarabiya.net)

- f) **Alaa' Abd al-Wahhab al-Razouq al-Mashhadani** aka **Abu Bilal** or **Hajj Bakr** – A colonel in the army during the Saddam Hussein era. He is described as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's right-hand man. Commands Al-Anbar region for ISIS (Alarabiya.net).

ISIS's Sunni allies

Overview

42. **ISIS is not the only military organization fighting in the campaigns against the regimes in Iraq and Syria.** However, **its political situation is different in the two countries:**

- a) In **Iraq** ISIS is supported by a **coalition of Sunni Muslim organizations** that increased the number of its supporters within the Sunni population. **ISIS is the dominant military power within the coalition and spearheads the military campaign it began in the summer of 2014.**
- b) In **Syria** ISIS is **an important rebel organization**, one of many fighting the Assad regime. It usually does not collaborate with the other rebel organizations except on its own terms, and therefore its relations with them are tense. Some of them regard ISIS as potentially dangerous to themselves and as damaging to the

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 36

campaign against the Syrian regime, and feels they will have to deal with it sooner or later. There is particularly sharp rivalry between ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, manifested in the past by clashes between them. However, the rivalry was temporarily shelved when President Obama announced his anti-ISIS campaign.

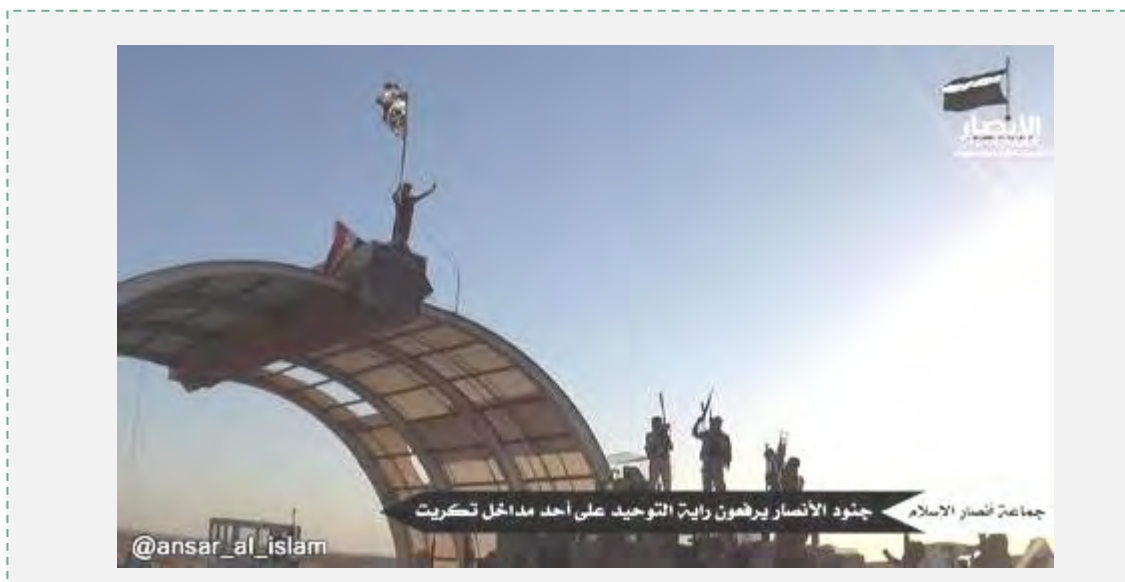
Iraq

43. The Sunni Muslim coalition in Iraq supporting ISIS includes organizations whose **ideologies and objectives are different from those of ISIS, but they are united in their hostility to the Shi'ite-affiliated Baghdad regime**. The organizations include **Sunni tribesmen** from northern and western Iraq, **Ba'ath activists and Iraqi army officers** who formerly supported Saddam Hussein, jihadi groups that do not belong to ISIS (such as **Ansar al-Islam**)⁶⁶ and members of a Sufi Islamic opposition organization called the **Naqshabandi Order**.⁶⁷

44. **Support for the coalition is manifested by the widespread hostility of the Sunni population to the Shi'ite-affiliated Baghdad regime**. The current regime represents **the structural change that began in Iraq's political system with the entrance of the Americans** (end of the rule of the Sunni minority, establishment of a Shi'ite regime supported by Iran, establishment of the Kurdish autonomous region). **The Sunni coalition, centering around ISIS, participated in the takeover of Fallujah in January 2014 and in the attack on Mosul and other regions in northern Iraq in June 2014.**

⁶⁶ A Kurdish jihadi organization where al-Zarqawi sought refuge when he arrived in Iraq. The organization is active in northern Iraq (Kirkuk and Tikrit) to this day. For further information see "Ansar al-Islam claims attacks against Iraqi military, police" (Longwarjournal.org, June 20, 2014).

⁶⁷ While Sufi orders are generally not involved in politics or warfare, this order did send operatives to fight in various locations, for example, the revolt of **the Imam Shamil** (1830-1859), a Chechen leader in Russia, who headed the order.



Ansar al-Islam fighters wave its flag ("The flag of the faith in the oneness of Allah") at one of Tikrit's gates (from an Ansar al-Islam tweet, according to Longwarjournal.org, June 23, 2014).

45. Important members of the Sunni coalition are the **tribes in western Iraq, whose support ISIS gained during the past year**. During the takeover of Fallujah at the beginning of 2014 a tribal network called "the revolutionaries of the tribes in Iraq" supported ISIS. In Al-Anbar province there were reports of a tribal network called "the revolutionary rebels of the Al-Anbar tribes" that collaborated with ISIS. In the past there were reports that the networks were headed by a former Iraqi army officer named **Husam al-Din al-Dulaimi** (YouTube). A tribal network called "the military council of the revolutionary tribes" was also mentioned.

46. **However, there are Sunni tribes, which cooperate with the Iraqi army and are opposed to ISIS**. ISIS makes an example of them by **treating them brutally**. For example, an ISIS forum (Alplatformmedia) posted a series of pictures on August 29, 2014, showing corpses lying on the ground in an urban setting. The explanation was that they were **46 "apostates" Sunni Muslims from the Albu Nimr tribes** from the Iraqi city of Hit, taken over by ISIS. According to the ISIS announcement, they were executed because they **had collaborated with the Iraqi army**. An ISIS supporter wrote on the forum that the pictures also included members of the Iraqi security forces.



The slaughter of 46 members of the Abu Nimr tribes (Alarabiya.net)

47. **Abu Nimr is one of the largest and most important tribes in Al-Anbar province**, the center of ISIS's power in Iraq. At least some of its members **collaborated in the past with the Americans and the Iraqi regime against Al-Qaeda forces operating in the province**. According to the Iraqi administration, the order for the slaughter was given by the ISIS governor of Al-Anbar. **An estimated 400 tribesmen in Al-Anbar province were murdered by ISIS**: 46 in Hit, 250 in Abu Asaf near Ramadi, 30 in the Bir Zawiya region, and 75 at Al-Tharthar lake (Alarabiya.net). A tribal head reported on November 2, 2014, that so far **500 of his tribesmen had been slaughtered by ISIS**. He claimed that the tribe did not receive assistance from the Iraqi government or any other agency to be able to cope with those who carried out the slaughter, whom he called terrorists (Arabic.rt.com).



Demonstration held by Sunni tribesmen in the Nineveh province in support of the declaration of the Islamic State (YouTube)

48. The support of the Sunni tribes is important because they are the basis for ISIS's popular support in Iraq, although at the same time their military forces and religious-ideological fervor are less than those of ISIS (which as noted is the main military factor in the Sunni coalition). The Sunni tribes support ISIS primarily because they are hostile to the Baghdad Shi'ite-affiliated regime and not because they share a jihadi ideology or have extensive mutual interests. When the circumstances change, for example, when a regime arises in Baghdad that meets their political demands and calms Sunni fears, the current coalition may disintegrate. In addition, ISIS's brutality, continued over time, may also alienate the tribesmen and the entire population.

Former Iraqi military personnel and Ba'ath activists

49. Officers who served in the Iraqi army during the Saddam Hussein era and Ba'ath activists are prominent within the leadership of the Islamic State. Their collaboration with ISIS began during the fighting against the American army when ISI emerged from the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Many of the organization's commanders with a Salafist-jihadi worldview found themselves in Camp Bucca, the American detention camp, along with army officers and Ba'ath activists. While imprisoned they formed personal relationships which helped both sides join forces in the years before the Americans withdrew from Iraq; they continue collaborating to this day.

50. The unholy alliance between Salafist-jihadi operatives and pan-Arab, secular, socialist Ba'ath activists is, in ITIC assessment, a marriage of convenience from

which both sides profit. The Islamic State makes use of the military and bureaucratic skills of the army and party members, in which it is severely lacking. On the other hand, the Ba'athists and former Iraqi army personnel found a safe and convenient framework from which to fight the central Shi'ite-affiliated administration in Baghdad, the United States and the West. The common denominators for the jihadists and Ba'athists are **their strong objection to the Shi'ite-controlled Iraqi nation state** and their desire to establish a supranational country in which Sunni Muslims would rule.

ISIS's Kurdish operatives

51. In the wake of ISIS's military successes, **in the first half of 2014 Kurdish fighters joined the organization, increasing ISIS's potential threat to the Kurdish regional autonomy (which is not Islamist) in northern Iraq.** According to the Kurdish authorities, **an estimated 150 young men**, about a third of them from the city of Halabja,⁶⁸ had joined ISIS during the first half of 2014. In addition, according to a Kurdish intelligence agent, **52 Kurds from Halabja joined the fighting in Syria, most of them enlisting in ISIS.** One of them reached a position of command in ISIS and served in its front line outside the city of Kirkuk (Washingtonpost.com, June 24, 2014). In addition, a Kurdish jihadi organization called **Ansar al-Islam**, is also a member of the coalition supporting ISIS. However, there are **few such expressions of support and there is great fundamental hostility between ISIS and the Kurdish autonomous region, and between ISIS and the Kurds in Syria. That is evidenced by the battles between ISIS and the Kurds in northern Iraq in the summer of 2014**, as well as the battles against the Kurdish forces in Kobanî, Syria.

52. After the battles in Al-Arab (Kobanî), **ISIS was supported by dozens of Kurdish fighters, most of them from Halabja.** An Iraqi correspondent, Ms. Dana Jalal, said there were **70 Kurds** fighting in the ranks of ISIS. One of the most prominent was a senior fighter nicknamed **Abu Khattab the Kurd, who came from Halabja** and who had served in Ansar al-Islam. **Shorsh Hassan**, YPG spokesman in Kobanî, said most of the jihadi Kurdish forces fighting in the ranks of ISIS came from Iraq, most of them from Halabja; some of them were from Syria (AP.org, November 4, 2014).

⁶⁸ Where in 1988 Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against the Kurdish civilian population.

Syria

53. ISIS strives to gain the support of the Sunni tribes in eastern Syria, although in ITIC assessment it apparently needs them less than those in Iraq. In Syria as in Iraq, the Sunni tribes collaborate with ISIS based on interests which are not particularly profound and may change in the future. Power struggles between ISIS and the tribes are evidenced by ISIS's executions and slaughters of **members of the al-Shu'aytat tribe** in the region around Deir al-Zor, carried out when the tribe attempted to restore its control over several villages (Al-Akhbar.com, August 12, 2014). In November 2014 there were reports that al-Shu'aytat tribesmen who had fled from ISIS had joined the Syrian regime and begun training in the Tadmor region (ancient Palmyra); other tribesmen fled to Turkey (zamanalwsl.net, November 8, 2014)

54. Following the declaration of the Caliphate ISIS wanted the tribal heads in Syria to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. At the beginning of July 2014 a **large meeting of provincial tribal dignitaries** was held at the Al-Farouk dam in the region of Manbaj, to the northeast of Aleppo. The meeting was addressed by the ISIS operative responsible for the tribes in the Aleppo province. He said that **it was a religious duty to swear allegiance to the Caliph**, required of every Muslim under the control of the Islamic State. He called on the tribal heads to motivate their tribesmen to wage jihad "for the sake of Allah" to topple the Syrian regime. He spoke of the Islamic State's military and economic achievements and the services it provided for the population. After he spoke the tribal heads swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "the emir of the faithful." Then dinner was served after which they practiced shooting weapons at the Syrian flag and dummies of Syrian president Bashar Assad (Twitter account of ISIS in the Aleppo **province**, July 10, 2014).

55. On September 7, 2014, ISIS's media bureau in Aleppo posted a video to YouTube showing **30 Kurdish villagers in the northern area of Aleppo swearing allegiance to ISIS**. An ISIS spokesman could be heard telling them that ISIS was the brother of Muslim Kurds and fighting for the sake of Muslims. He added that ISIS was not fighting the Peshmerga and PKK forces because they were Kurds but because they were "infidels" who wanted democracy and secularism

Financial capabilities

Overview

56. ISIS is the richest terrorist organization in the world. It **took over most of the oil and gas and fields (6-8 oilfields) in Syria** and several oilfields in Iraq. Its main source of revenue is the profit it makes from marketing petroleum products, **estimated at several million dollars a day**. Other sources of revenue include various **criminal activities, collecting taxes from local residents** or demanding protection money, demanding **head taxes from non-Muslims, donations from the rich and ransoming captives**. **Following the aerial attacks by the Americans and their allies which focused on ISIS's oil refineries, its oil profits declined to about \$1 million a day** (Theguardian.com, October 30, 2014)

57. Thus ISIS is an extraordinary example of a **terrorist organization that acquired quasi-national financial capabilities through military success**. The large sums of money flowing into its coffers every month **liberate it from dependence on Al-Qaeda and donors in the Arab-Muslim world**, and provide it with **financial independence**. That enables it to **increase the number of its fighters, feeds the momentum of its military successes, allows it to establish alternative governmental systems** in its self-declared Caliphate State and **to wage an intensive battle for hearts and minds throughout the world** to glorify its reputation and increases its capabilities.

Changes in ISIS's revenues: from donations to financial independence

58. In the past ISIS was based on financial aid from rich individuals in the Arab world who supported Al-Qaeda, especially donations from the Gulf States. Initially, when it was founded in Syria, the parent organization in Iraq gave financial aid to its Syrian branch, the Al-Nusra Front. Al-Nusra Front leader **Abu Muhammad al-Julani**, when swearing allegiance to al-Zawahiri, did not forget to thank Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for "giving us part of the money from the [Islamic] State [in Iraq] despite the difficult time it had experienced."

59. After ISIS was expelled from Al-Qaeda, a move that may have hurt the revenues, which came from external donors, the organization began **to find independent sources of revenue in the territories it took control of and to establish its**

influence in Syria and Iraq. Its sources of revenue came mainly from the oilfields under its control or influence. It has additional sources, **including criminal activity**, such as smuggling, bank robbery, the takeover of banks in Mosul, stealing antiquities and selling them on the black market, extorting businessmen, confiscating the property of its opponents and various other felonies.⁶⁹ Other sources include **levying taxes** on residents living in ISIS-controlled areas, **donations** from rich individuals among its Sunni allies and **ransom for captives** (usually \$2 million for Western captives).

60. Abducting captives to hold for ransom is a familiar terrorist organization tactic, also practiced by Al-Qaeda and the terrorist organizations operating in Yemen and North Africa. ISIS has received millions of dollars in ransoms. According to David S. Cohen, US Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, so far in 2014 ISIS has **received at least \$20 million in ransom**. According to the British newspaper The Guardian it has received **\$45 million in ransom** (Theguardian.com, October 30, 2014).

61. Thus today ISIS is financially independent and no longer finds it necessary to rely on donations. According to Richard Barrett, in mid-2014 its assets were **calculated at between \$1.3 and \$2 billion**. Documents seized from the house of Abdulrahman al Bilawi in June 2014 suggested that the Islamic State had around **\$875 million in cash and assets** before the fall of Mosul. It is widely reported that the group seized up to an additional **\$430 million from the Central Bank in Mosul** and other financial institutions.⁷⁰ **Its revenues and assets make it unique** among terrorist organizations (including its parent organization, Al-Qaeda) and **enable it to grow rapidly and develop its military, governmental and media infrastructures**.

ISIS takeover of oil and gas fields in Syria and Iraq

62. During its takeover of eastern Syria in 2013-2014 ISIS took control of most of the oil and gas fields. At the beginning of July 2014, the rebel organizations in eastern and northern Syria (See map) announced that ISIS had taken over the large oilfield of **Al-Omar**. During the attack in Iraq in the summer of 2014, other oilfields and facilities fell

⁶⁹ An ISIS video filmed on August 11, 2014, and uploaded on September 21, 2014 showed millions of dollars in cash and gold bars. ISIS claimed they had been seized in the house of the chairman of the Iraqi parliament, Osama al-Najafi (MEMRI.org, September 22, 2014).

⁷⁰ Barrett, "The Islamic State," pp. 50-51.

into ISIS hands. It took control of **the main refinery on the outskirts of Mosul**, the principal supplier of electricity for Baghdad (Almoslim.net). ISIS then tried to take over the oil city of Baiji (northeast of Baghdad), which **has Iraq's most important refinery and related facilities**, but so far its efforts have proved unsuccessful.



The oilfields in Syria and Iraq controlled by ISIS (Islamist-movements.com)

63. **Today ISIS controls most of the oilfields in Syria and others in Iraq.** The Financial Times quoted a recent report from the risk management firm of Maplecroft, stating that **ISIS now controlled six out of 10 of Syria's oilfields**, including the Al-Omar facility, and at least **four small fields in Iraq**, including those at Ajeel and Hamreen (Ft.com, September 21, 2014).⁷¹ According to "oil experts" quoted by the daily Al-Quds Al-Arabi on September 25, 2014, ISIS took control of **six oilfields in Syria and of seven oilfields and two refineries in Iraq**. Each of the two refineries in Mosul produces 16,000 barrels of oil a day.

64. ISIS controls a number of gas fields in Syria containing 45% of the country's gas reserves. At this point it cannot produce gas, and therefore the profits are insignificant. ISIS continues its attempts to take over other gas fields. On September 29, 2014, ISIS announced that large parts of the Shaer gas field, located about 110 kilometers, or about 70 miles, from the city of Homs, had fallen into its hands. It posted pictures of the gas field and weapons it seized there. However, on November 14, 2014 it was reported

⁷¹ <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/34e874ac-3dad-11e4-b782-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3KTI4Wfzl>

that clashes still continued at the Shaer gas field⁷² (Syriahr.com, November 14, 2014). At the beginning of November 2014 ISIS took over the **Jahar gas field**, located in the rural area around Homs. According to reports, the Syrian army restored its control of the gas field after clashes with ISIS (Rt.com, November 5, 2014). The situation on the ground in those areas is still unstable.

ISIS's estimated revenues

65. According to various estimates, **ISIS receives several million dollars a day from the sale of petroleum products, that is, close to \$100 million a month** (updated to September 2014). Its profits increased significantly in the summer of 2014 after it took control of Mosul and other areas of northern Iraq, and established itself in eastern Syria. However, the aerial attacks of the Americans and their allies on ISIS's oil refinery facilities in Syria hurt its ability to refine and market petroleum products and **decreased its oil revenues to about \$1 million a day**.

66. Estimates from various sources:

a) According to a senior **Israeli intelligence officer**, ISIS's revenues are between **\$3 and \$6 million a day** (Ynetnews.co.il, September 18, 2014).

b) According to an **American army estimate**, ISIS sold refined oil from the refineries attacked by the Americans at the end of September 2014 for **about \$2 million a day** (Centcom.mil, September 14 and 24, 2014). According to David S. Cohen, US Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, **ISIS earned close to \$1 million a day from selling petroleum products, as of mid-June 2014**.

c) According to the **Iraqi Energy Institute**, ISIS controls **the production of 30,000 barrels of crude oil a day in Iraq and 50,000 barrels in Syria**. It is sold

⁷² According to the November 13, 2014 edition of the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar, **the attack on the Shaer gas field was intended to paralyze it and damage the Syrian regime**. When the Syrian army retook the gas field it became apparent that it had in fact been paralyzed, causing a lack of gas and damaging its ability to produce electricity, whose production was based on both oil and gas. According to the newspaper, the Syrian political leadership was unprepared for the attack in view of the increased demand for electricity and fuel that would be felt in the coming winter. Talal al-Barazi, the governor of Homs, said that at the beginning of November the city received only 60% of the fuel it needed.

on the black market at the reduced **price of \$40 a barrel** (as opposed to \$90 a barrel on the free market). As a result, **ISIS earns \$3.2 million dollars a day** from the sales, or almost \$1.2 billion dollars a year.⁷³

d) According to **Masrour Barzani**, head of the intelligence apparatus in the Kurdish autonomous region of Iraq, **ISIS's daily revenues are estimated at \$6 million**. The money comes from the sale of oil and wheat, the levy of taxes in the occupied cities, ransom and donations (Shafaaq.com, September 22, 2014).

e) According to the British newspaper **The Guardian**, October 30, 2014, ISIS earns \$1 million a day from the sale of oil.

f) In "The Islamic State" Richard Barrett quotes estimates according to which oil production from facilities under ISIS control is **between 30,000 and 80,000 barrels a day**. He notes that even selling the oil at the heavily discounted price of **\$25-\$50 per barrel would provide daily revenues of \$2-\$4 million** (p. 52) [ITIC emphasis].

67. However, recently its revenues have been reduced and may be reduced further because of the aerial attacks on its refinery facilities and the pressures exerted on its customers.

ISIS's estimated expenses

68. ISIS pays monthly salaries to an estimated 25,00 operatives, costing the organization between **\$200 and \$600 per operative**, according to the operative's nationality and family size. ISIS also has to maintain the logistics of its military forces. Monthly salaries for administration personnel vary between **\$300 and up to \$2,000** for senior management positions.⁷⁴

69. In addition ISIS invests large sums of money in the civilian infrastructure of the local populations and in maintaining the governmental and organizational systems it

⁷³ Paul Rivlin, "Money makes the world go round," Iqtisadi: Vol.4, No. 9 (Sept. 28, 2014) The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. <http://dayan.org/iqtisadi-vol4-no-9-sept-28-2014>.

⁷⁴ Barrett, "The Islamic State," p. 50.

established in Syria and Iraq (its media and public relations systems, for example). However, in ITIC assessment, **its revenues**, even after the American attacks reduced it, **far exceed its expenses**.

ISIS's petroleum products

70. ISIS produces oil from the oilfields under its control using the existing refining infrastructure and at dozens of **improvised refineries**. Some of the petroleum distillates are used for internal purposes and some are "exported" to the local markets in Syria, Iraq and the Kurdish autonomous region. **The Arab media have reported several times on understandings reached between ISIS and the Syrian regime regarding the smuggling of oil from the areas under ISIS control to areas under Syrian regime control.**⁷⁵

71. According to expert estimates, **the oil-smuggling network ISIS currently uses has existed for decades**. It includes **northern Iraq, northeastern Syria, southern Turkey and parts of Iran**. It began in the 1990s when the Iraq regime tried to circumvent the energy sanctions imposed on it by the UN. Black market oil is often refined in Iraqi Kurdistan while the Kurdish autonomous administration looks the other way, the result of the tension between the Kurdish leadership and the Baghdad regime (Ft.com, September 21, 2014).

72. According to David S. Cohen, US Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, **ISIS sells its oil "at substantially discounted prices" to a variety of middlemen, including some from Turkey, who resell it to other customers**. Some of it is sold to Kurds in Iraq and from there it is **transported to Turkey**. The Syrian government has also made arrangements with ISIS to purchase oil.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said **France had proof that ISIS had transferred oil from areas under its control to the Assad regime** (Arabnews.com, July 1 2014).

⁷⁶ From a lecture given by David Cohen on September 23, 2014, "Attacking ISIL's Financial Foundation," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/10/23/remarks-by-u.s.-treasury-under-secretary-david-s.-cohen-on-attacking-isil-s-financial-foundation>



ISIS oil tanker bearing the inscription "The Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria"
(Alhadathnews.net)

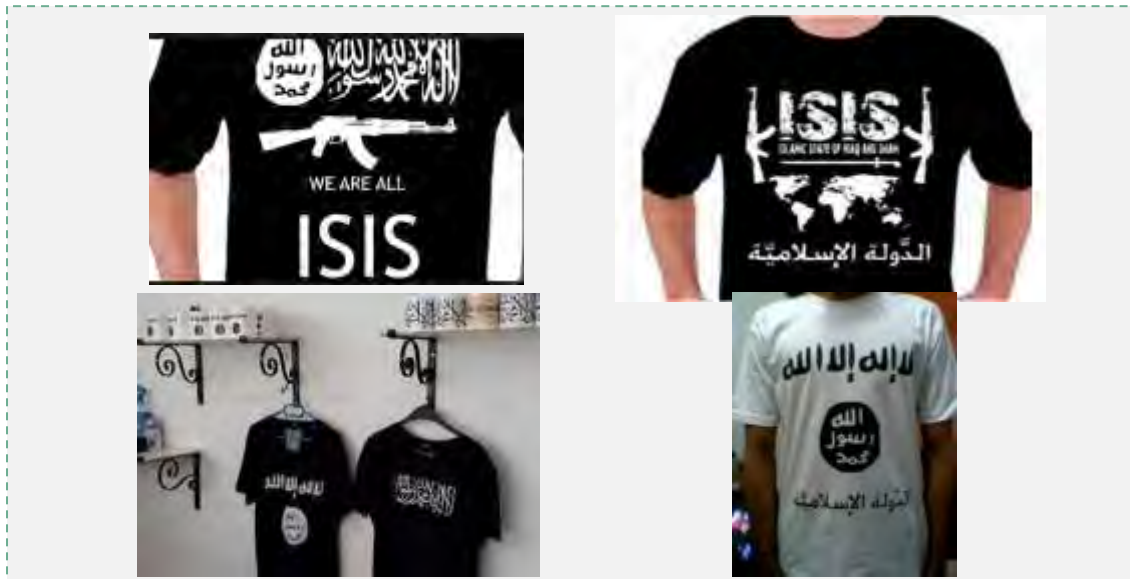
ISIS control of the national infrastructure

73. In addition to its control of oil and gas, it controls other facets of the national infrastructure:

- a) ISIS controls **three hydroelectric power plants and one thermal power plant in the regions of Aleppo and Al-Raqqah in northern Syria.**
- b) After ISIS took over Mosul, **it was reported that it took control of the city's Central Bank and the funds deposited in it** (estimated at \$420,000). Apparently ISIS also took over funds deposited in other banks in Mosul.

Sale of souvenirs

74. ISIS and its supporters also **sell souvenirs**, for both **propaganda purposes** (to brand ISIS in the West) and as a **source of revenue**. CNN reported that there were Facebook pages promoting the sale of ISIS shirts. Other sites were found selling or promoting the sales of ISIS souvenirs:



Upper left: "We are all ISIS" shirt (Facebook). Upper right: ISIS shirt showing the extent of its aspirations (Rialayoum.com). Lower left: ISIS shirts and mugs (Alarabalyawm.net). Lower right: Islamic State shirt (Tunisiatimes.tn)



Upper left: ISIS key chains (Alarabalyawm.net). Upper right: ISIS mugs (Alarabalyawm.net). Bottom: ISIS key chains distributed in Al-Raqqa (Minbar-alansar.blogspot)

Section Six – Exporting Terrorism and Subversion to the West and the Arab world

Overview

1. ISIS is working to extend its influence to other jihadi organizations and networks in the Middle East and around the globe by competing with Ayman al-Zawahiri's Al-Qaeda for leadership. Its principal success in the **Arab world** is its collaboration with the jihadi terrorist organization **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis**, which **operates in Egypt** and has sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. In addition, a jihadi networks operating in Darnah, in eastern Libya also swore allegiance to him. Al-Baghdadi claimed that jihadi organizations in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Algeria also joined its ranks.⁷⁷



Map from an ISIS video showing the provinces it claims have sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: Algeria, Libya, Yemen and Saudi Arabia (Reblop.com, November 17, 2014).

2. In **Lebanon** ISIS acquired operational capabilities and from its strongholds in Syria it initiates attacks against the Lebanese army and Hezbollah, collaborating with other jihadi organizations (the Al-Nusra Front among them). In other Arab countries, **Jordan** for example, ISIS is supported by local followers but so far they have not established contacts with it or sworn oaths of allegiance to its al-Baghdadi.

⁷⁷ In a recorded message Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi posted to YouTube on November 15, 2014, he announced the spread of the Islamic State to Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Algeria. He claimed the names of local jihadi organizations had been abolished and they were now affiliated with the new Islamic State provinces that has been established and to which provincial governors had been assigned. In Egypt and eastern Libya that occurred in actual practice.

3. The increase in ISIS's strength in the Arab countries, especially those surrounding Israel, has potential **threats for anti-Israeli terrorism** (although currently the jihadists direct their campaign against internal enemies). **The Egyptian Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is a concrete threat for Israel** and in the past has been involved in attacking it (including rocket fire targeting Eilat, Israel's southernmost city, and attacks along the Israel-Egypt border).

4. In the **West**, veterans of the conflict in Syria who fought in ISIS's ranks are liable to initiate terrorist attacks in their countries of origin, such as the terrorist attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. **ISIS may also inspire its supporters around the globe to carry out terrorist attacks without helping or directing them**, but they may result from ISIS's public incitement to kill Westerners (See below). Such attacks may be carried out by **veterans of the fighting in Syria who have returned to their countries of origin, at the initiative of local jihadists or local jihadi networks**. It is possible that the stabbing and vehicular attacks in **Canada**, the planned beheadings in **Australia** and the attacks and planned attacks in other Western countries were **ISIS-inspired**.

5. At this point **it does not seem that carrying terrorist attacks abroad is ISIS's top strategic priority**. That is because ISIS is currently waging a campaign to extend its influence and control in Iraq and Syria, and at the same time is under attack from America and its allies. However, **a continuation of the attacks may encourage ISIS to initiate sporadic terrorist attacks against Western and/or Israeli and Jewish targets beyond the borders of Iraq and Syria in retaliation for the aerial attacks or as a means of punishment and deterrence**.

Historical background: exporting terrorism from Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his heirs

6. The export of terrorism and subversion beyond Iraq's border began with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who joined Al-Qaeda in October 2004 and established the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Al-Zawahiri's concept was focusing his terrorist activity in Iraq, the new "land of jihad," as a replacement for his base in Afghanistan lost following the American attacks and the fall of the Taliban⁷⁸ **Nevertheless, al-Zarqawi carried out sporadic terrorist attacks beyond the borders of Iraq although their priority was secondary and involved the limited investment of resources**.

⁷⁸ Schweitzer and Goldstein-Ferber, p. 80

7. **7. The terrorist attacks al-Zarqawi carried out before and after the American invasion of Iraq included the following:** the assassination of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) official Lawrence Foley in Amman in October 2002; planning attacks for a network operating under the name al-Tawhid, thwarted in Germany in 2003; operating terrorist networks in Turkey and the Caucasus; the attempted suicide bombing attack in Jordan in April 2004;⁷⁹ and the three coordinated suicide bombing attacks on hotels in Amman, Jordan, on November 9, 2005, which killed 67 dead and wounded about 200.

8. **8. Under Al-Zarqawi's heir, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir,** the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq dispatched suicide bombing attacks and car bombs beyond the borders of Iraq. However, **even then suicide bombing attacks were not high on the organization's priorities because it was focusing on fighting the forces of the Americans and their allies in Iraq.**

Foreign fighters in the ranks of ISIS

Overview

9. ISIS and the other jihadi organizations **regard the foreign fighters who join their ranks as particularly important, a pattern of behavior which has deep Islamic roots.** That is because ISIS urgently needs to reinforce its ranks with fighters from other countries (an Al-Qaeda legacy) and because of ideological considerations. **Abu Muhammad al-Julani,** the leader of the jihadi Al-Nusra Front, recently described the ideological importance of foreign fighters by saying, "We are of the opinion that a jihadi group has to have an 'emigrant [i.e., foreign] fighter.'⁸⁰ He adds the dimension of the [Islamic] nation and distances the dimension of the [local] country or battle zone. That is an important principle, a Sunni principle, that must be preserved..." (Al-Manara al-Baydhaa', November 4, 2014).

10. **Foreign fighters are potentially dangerous to their countries of origin as "carriers" of terrorism and subversion.** If they survive the fighting in Syria and Iraq, they return with military experience and jihadi indoctrination. At least some of them aspire to continue jihad against their countries of origin, whether for ideological reasons or to support the jihadi organizations fighting the United States and the West.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

⁸⁰ **The "emigrants" (*muhajirin*)** – In Islam, the term Al-Muhajirin refers to the first Muslims, who emigrated with the Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, and were among his first core of supporters. The foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq are represented as being like the first Muslims who trail blazed the spread of Islam.



Encouraging foreign fighters to join the jihad. An ISIS propaganda video in Arabic and German called "Let us join the jihad." It was produced by ISIS's Al-Hayat Media Center (June 16, 2014).

11. The potential danger the veterans of the fighting in Syria and Iraq pose to their countries of origin was well illustrated **by the shooting attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels** in May 2014. It was carried out by a French terrorist operative who had fought in the ranks of ISIS in Syria. He did it apparently on his own initiative without external direction. It was also illustrated by the exposure of ISIS-affiliated operatives in Australia, who planned to randomly behead people on the street in Sydney (See below). Both cases, which have no relation to one another, **demonstrate the need to act more effectively against the terrorist dangers of Syrian and Iraqi veterans.**

12. The Western countries are aware of the dangers and have begun to **gather intelligence, prevent attacks and pass necessary legislation** to improve the oversight of foreign fighters who go to Syria and Iraq and of those who return. Efforts have also been made **to improve international cooperation** to overcome the difficulties involved in monitoring foreign fighters. Such activity was legitimized by the UN Security Council and can be expected to increase in view of the anti-ISIS campaign declared by the United States.

13. In the wake of the West's counterterrorism efforts, **ISIS instituted security measures regarding the recruitment of foreign fighters.** According to information from Islamic leaders in London, ISIS sent new instructions to Westerners wanting to join its ranks. They included the demand for a recommendation from at least one sheikh known to the ISIS leadership; instructions to go to Syria wearing [Western] clothing that would hide their Muslim identity and not to take books of a religious

nature; and not to tell their families they were joining the Islamic State until they were in Syria and had undergone basic training (Aawsat.net, November 9, 2014).

Estimated number of foreign fighters in the ranks of ISIS

14. Updated to November 2014, in **ITIC assessment there are an estimated 13,000 foreign fighter in the ranks of ISIS**, of a total of approximately 25,000.⁸¹ Of them, in ITIC assessment **about 10,000 fighters come from Arab-Muslim countries and about 3,000 from the West. In addition, several thousand have already returned to their countries of origin.**

15. **The number of foreign fighters in the ranks of ISIS has grown significantly in the second half of 2014**, since its military successes in Iraq and the declaration of the Caliphate. During the first half of 2014 ISIS had an estimated 7,000-8,000 foreign fighters, 5,000 of whom came from the Arab-Muslim world,⁸² and more than 2,000 from Western countries. **Thus during a relatively short period, the number almost doubled.**

16. In CIA assessment, **more than 15,000 foreign fighters from 80 countries went to Syria** to join the ranks of ISIS. At least 2,000 of them came from the West (@DenverNicks, September 12, 2014). According to the American State Department, **dozens of Americans are known to be fighting in the ranks of ISIS, of the more than 100 American citizens who wanted to join rebel organizations in Syria.** On September 24, 2014, President Obama gave a speech in which repeated the statistics, saying the American intelligence organizations estimated that **more than 15,000 foreign fighters from more than 86 countries** had been in Syria in recent years. Many of them, he said, had joined organizations such as the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS.

⁸¹ Al-Nusra Front leader **Abu Muhammad al-Julani** recently referred to the ratio of foreign to local fighters in his organization. He claimed that before the dispute between the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS about 70% of his operatives were foreign fighters (whom he referred to as "emigrants"). After the dispute their numbers fell. Today about 40% of the senior operatives in the Al-Nusra Front are foreign fighters. He said they made up between 30% and 35% of the rank and file (recorded interview with Abu Muhammad al-Julani produced by the Al-Nusra Front's information arm, Al-Manara al-Baydhaa', November 4, 2014).

⁸² For further information about foreign fighters from the Arab-Muslim world, see the May 13, 2014 bulletin "The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters from the Arab World in the Syrian Civil War." It is a continuation of the ITIC studies on foreign fighters from Asia (April 2014) and the Arab countries (January 2014).

17. The distribution of foreign fighters between ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front is unclear. In ITIC assessment, **during the past year ISIS has channeled most of the foreign fighters to itself and they have sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.** Some of them are new arrivals and some are operatives who defected from the Al-Nusra Front or other organizations and joined ISIS. Apparently they join because of **ISIS's military successes, its large financial and military resources, the ideological attraction of its extremist positions, the pull of the idea of establishing a new Islamic Caliphate State and the fact that it is the main jihadi organization confronting the United States, the West in general and the so-called "infidel" Arab regimes.**

France and Britain – largest Western countries of origin of foreign fighters

18. The number of Western foreign fighters is currently **estimated at 3,000, almost half of them from France and Britain,** which send ISIS and other global jihad organizations more foreign fighters than any other country.

19. **French Foreign Minister Bernard Cazeneuve** reported that approximately **930 French citizens were either fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq or planning to join the organization.** Among them were **60 women.** So far, 36 Frenchmen have been killed fighting in the ranks of ISIS. Following intelligence information, the French authorities prevented at least 70 citizens from potentially leaving France for ISIS (Le Journal de Dimanche, September 14, 2014). **British Prime Minister David Cameron** told the UN General Assembly that **500 foreign fighters had arrived in Syria and Iraq from Britain** (British Foreign Office website, September 24, 2014).

20. **Randy Blake,** a senior strategic advisor in the US Office of Director of National Intelligence, told a panel at the annual International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) in Orlando, Florida, that there were "about **16,000 foreign fighters** who have traveled to Syria from over 80 countries." He added that "roughly **2,000** of those fighters hail from Western countries – including "at least **500 from the U.K, 700 from France, 400 from Germany, and more than 100 Americans** [who] have traveled, or tried to travel into Syria" (Nbcnews.com, October 29, 2014).⁸³

⁸³ <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/foreign-fighters-pouring-syria-faster-ever-say-officials-n236546>

21. The number of foreign fighters from France and Britain who joined ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front is **significantly higher than their number at the beginning of 2014**. The numbers have grown because of ISIS's achievements and its increasing attractiveness, and may be an indication of the **support for ISIS and the global jihad within the local Muslim communities in France and Britain**. That poses dangers from terrorism and subversion to both countries, which are key partners in the American campaign against ISIS.

Foreign fighters in Iraq⁸⁴

22. According to researcher **Aaron Zelin**, who monitors foreign fighters, they have gone to Iraq in two main waves:

1) The **first wave** occurred following the entrance of the United States into Iraq (2003), when an estimated **4,000-5,000 foreign fighters** arrived (mostly Saudis, Libyans, and Syrians). **Many of them were killed in 2008** by American and Iraqi forces. Between 2008 and 2013 ISI underwent a process of "Iraqization," due to the fact that the organization felt the Iraqis regarded it as a "foreign entity" because many of its commanders had come from other countries. As a result the number of foreign fighters in ISI's ranks decreased greatly.

2) The **second wave** began in **2014** following ISIS's military successes and its establishing itself in Iraq and Syria. In addition, the border between Iraq and Syria gradually ceased to exist and **foreign fighters could pass easily between the two countries**. The rift between ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front **increased the scale of defection** of foreign fighters from the Al-Nusra Front to ISIS, the most prominent of whom was the above-mentioned **Abu Omar al-Shishani**. **In addition, the release of more than 500 prisoners from Abu Ghraib and other Iraqi regime detention facilities helped ISIS increase the number of its fighters, many of whom were foreign fighters experienced in guerilla and terrorist warfare.**

23. Aaron Zelin noted that since early March, the group had released 201 "martyrdom notices" for foreign fighters who died in Iraq. Most of them were from **Arab states** with significant representation from **Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria and Libya**. There were individual deaths from **the Balkans, the Caucasus,**

⁸⁴ This section is based on the analysis and data provided by Aaron Zelin (Washingtoninstitute.org, June 12, 2014). <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-return-of-sunni-foreign-fighters-in-iraq>.

Central Asia, the Horn of Africa, North America, and Western Europe. Among the **eight Westerners** represented, three were from **Denmark**, three from **France**, and one each from **Canada** and **Norway**. Based on the notices, the majority of foreign fighters killed in Iraq have fallen in the ISIS stronghold of Anbar (56 deaths), in parts of northern Baghdad province (51), and in Diyala province (41). The takeover of Mosul could increase the death toll in Nineveh province in the summer of 2014.

Using foreign fighters for suicide bombing attacks

24. ISIS customarily sends foreign fighters, both Arab-Muslims and Westerners, on suicide bombing missions in Syria and Iraq, a modus operandi ISIS specializes in. Foreign fighters are used because their **religious zeal** makes them suitable candidates for such attacks. However, ISIS also dispatches local Iraqis and Syrians to blow themselves up.

25. An example of ISIS's handling of Western foreign fighters in Syria for suicide bombing attacks appeared in ISN, an ISIS English-language news magazine (See below). On June 5, 2014, ISN published the pictures (as quoted by The Shi'a Post, June 4, 2014⁸⁵) of two suicide bombers who carried out attacks in Hama and Homs. They were a German suicide bomber nicknamed **Othman al-Almani** ("the German"), who blew himself up in Al-Kafaat, Hama; and a French suicide bomber nicknamed **Abdulrahman al-Faransi** ("the Frenchman"), who blew himself up in Al-'Amad, Homs. Abdulrahman al-Faransi was **Nicolas Bons**, who appeared in a video as "Abu Abdulrahman," in the company of his younger brother, who was killed in Syria in 2013 (MEMRI.org, June 21, 2014).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ <http://en.shiapost.com/2014/06/04/german-french-nationalists-execute-suicide-bombing-in-syria/>

⁸⁶ For further information about foreign fighters as suicide bombers in Syria, see the February 11, 2014 bulletin "Using suicide bombers as weapons: The leading modus operandi in the Al-Nusra Front and Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria's struggle against the Syrian regime and Hezbollah in Lebanon."



Two Frenchmen who converted to Islam. One of them died in a suicide bombing attack in Homs (MEMRI.org, June 21, 2014).

26. Suicide bombers who carried out attacks in **Iraq**:

1) On **March 6, 2014**, ISIS issued information about **thirty suicide bombers who carried out attacks in the region of Baghdad**. They were carried out between September 11, 2013 and March 6, 2014. Foreign fighters were also involved: seven suicide bombers were **Moroccans** (nicknamed "al-Maghrebi"), three were **Egyptians**, one was **Uzbekistani** and one was either **Pakistani or Afghani** (nicknamed "al-Khorasani").

2) On **April 12, 2014**, ISIS used its Twitter account to issue information about **26 suicide bombers, 24 of whom were foreign fighters, who carried out attacks in the Diyala province of Iraq**. They were carried out between September 2012 and March 2014. Ten of the suicide bombers were from **Tunis** (and bore the nickname "al-Tunisi") and others were from **Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iran, Tajikistan, Chechnya and Denmark**. The origin of two other was not known (Longwarjournal.org).

Suicide bombers who died in Iraq



Suicide bomber from Denmark nicknamed "the Danish Fateh," killed in Iraq (Hanein.info)



"The Danish Fateh," right, with two other ISIS fighters (Hanein.info)



Abd al-Rauf al-Saadawi, aka Abu Dajana al-Tunisi, carried out a suicide bombing attack in the Shi'ite Madinat al-Sadr neighborhood of Baghdad on March 7, 2012.



Abu Ibrahim al-Masri carried out a suicide bombing attack against the Iraqi army in Al-Hamidiyah in Al-Anbar province on May 4, 2014 (Longwarjournal.org)

27. **Apprehension of a French terrorist operative sent by ISIS to carry out a suicide bombing attack in Lebanon:** Fayez Yussuf Boushran, 24, a French operative, whose interrogation revealed he had contacted a jihadist on Facebook and after being recommended went to Germany and from there to Turkey and then Syria. In Syria he joined ISIS and underwent twenty days of military training and religious indoctrination. **ISIS sent him to Beirut where he was given an explosive belt** which he was supposed to use to blow himself up in the Shi'ite-dominated southern suburb of Beirut. While waiting at his hotel for instructions he was apprehended in a

raid carried out by the Lebanese Internal Security Forces' Information Branch (AFP.com, November 7, 2014; Zawya.com, November 8, 2014).

Illustration of the threats posed by foreign fighters: the terrorist attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels as a case study

28. On May 24, 2014, there was a shooting attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. The terrorist operative was a Frenchman who had **fought in Syria in the ranks of ISIS**; he shot four people to death in the attack. **It was the first illustration of the dangers inherent to Western countries in general and France in particular, posed by the return of the jihadist Syrian veterans.** The attack was apparently **an individual initiative**, possibly with the support of jihadi elements in Europe, but **without external direction from ISIS.**

29. The suspected terrorist, **Mehdi Nemmouche**, was a French Muslim from a family of Algerian origin. He grew up in Roubaix, an economically depressed industrial city in northeastern France. He had a criminal record. He joined ISIS in January 2013 (in the first wave of French foreign fighters who went to Syria) and after several months returned to France through Germany. Among the items found in his possession were the weapon he used to carry out the attack and a piece of cloth bearing the ISIS insignia.

30. **Mehdi Nemmouche fits the profile of European foreign fighters in general and the French foreign fighters in particular who join the ranks of jihad organizations Syria and Iraq.**⁸⁷ Nicolas Hénin, a French correspondent held captive by ISIS in Syria and later released, said that for a certain period of time he had been held with other Western captives, including two American correspondents, who had been executed. He said Mehdi Nemmouche was one of his captors and that he had tortured him (Telegraph.co.uk, September 7, 2014).⁸⁸

⁸⁷ For further information see the June 10, 2014 bulletin "The terrorist suspected of carrying out the shooting attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels has been identified as a French Muslim jihadist."

⁸⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/11080079/Brussels-museum-shooting-suspect-beheaded-baby.html>



Mehdi Nemmouche, a French Muslim who fought in Syria in the ranks of ISIS, suspected of the shooting in the Jewish Museum in Brussels (Twitter/@G_deLinares)

ISIS activity in Lebanon

Overview

31. **ISIS began establishing itself in Lebanon in 2013** within Sunni population centers hostile to Hezbollah and the Lebanese administration. Its main support base (and that of other global jihad organizations) is **the Sunni town of Arsal, north of Baalbek** on the Syrian border. Global jihad organizations and networks also receive support in the northern city of **Tripoli and in the Akkar province in northern Lebanon on the Syrian border.**

32. **Lebanon is an exceptional case in the Arab world**, because unlike in other Arab countries, in Lebanon ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front collaborate. They acquired operational capabilities that allow them to **attack Hezbollah with suicide bombing attacks.** In addition, ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front support local operatives **fighting a long-term campaign against the Lebanese army and Hezbollah in the Beqa'a Valley and recently in Tripoli as well.** Their operations in Lebanon are meant not only to strengthen the global jihad's penetration of the country but also **to weaken Hezbollah**, which (with support and direction from Iran) fights the global jihad organizations in Syria.

33. At this stage the jihad organizations in Syria are engaged in fighting Hezbollah and the Lebanese army. In the future, when they have gained a sufficient foothold, they may try to attack Israel from Lebanon, firing rockets and infiltrating terrorist squads into Israeli territory.

Fighting in the Beqa'a Valley

34. **Arsal** (northeast of Baalbek) is a **power base for the jihadi organizations in Lebanon**. It is a large Sunni Muslim town which had a population of 40,000 before the Syrian civil war. Since the war began almost four years ago it has taken in an estimated 80,000 Syrian refugees (Now.mmedia.me/lb, August 17, 2014). During the first half of August 2014 **Arsal became a battlefield, with the Lebanese army fighting hundreds of armed operatives who had crossed the border with Syria, mainly from the city of Homs, the Al-Qalamoun region and the camps of the displaced Syrians in Lebanon** (Aawsat.net, August 17, 2014). Among the armed operatives were fighters from ISIS and other jihadi organizations supported by organizations in Syria. After a week of fierce fighting the Lebanese army regained control of Arsal and some of the armed operatives returned to Syria.

35. Forty-four armed Syrian fighters and 15 local residents died in the battles in Arsal, and dozens of Lebanese army soldiers and members of the Gendarmerie were taken prisoner. ISIS operatives threatened to kill the captive soldiers unless the Lebanese government met their demands and released a large number of prisoners. In fact, during September 2014 ISIS did kill captive Lebanese soldiers and issued videos documenting the executions.

36. On November 5, 2014, sources with access to the Lebanese administration reported that **jihadi organizations were holding 24 captives**: 17 were held by the Al-Nusra Front and **seven by ISIS**. ISIS also had the bodies of two soldiers (Al-Akhbar.com, November 7, 2014). The jihadi organizations (led by the Al-Nusra Front) and the Lebanese government are negotiating for their release. ISIS demands the release of 22 jihadist prisoners imprisoned in Lebanon (MTV, Lebanon, November 6, 2014).

37. The battles which took place in Arsal caused a great deal of damage, and some of the local residents left for Beirut or other locations in the Beqa'a Valley. **The Lebanese army and government's control over the town is still shaky**. The hostility of the Sunni population to the Lebanese administration and Hezbollah, Arsal's physical proximity to Syria and the strong ties between the jihadists on both sides of the border **all make the city a security problem for Lebanon and a potential internal terrorist threat**.

38. In **October 2014 clashes were renewed in the Arsal region and in other locations in the Beqa'a Valley** between the Lebanese army and Hezbollah on the one hand and ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front and possibly other rebel organizations on the

other. In addition, at the end of October 2014 there were violent clashes between the Lebanese security forces and the jihadi organizations in the city of **Tripoli** and the **Sunni Akkar province**. Apparently the Lebanese army is finding it difficult to end the violence in the above regions.



ISIS fighters in the town of Arsal (YouTube, August 5, 2014)



ISIS and Al-Nusra Front fighters battling in the town of Arsal (YouTube, August 6, 2014)



Lebanese army forces en route to the town of Aرسال (YouTube, August 4, 2014)



ISIS rocket fire targeting the Beqa'a Valley

Suicide bombing attacks in Beirut

39. In 2014 ISIS carried out and claimed responsibility for two suicide bombing attacks in Beirut.⁸⁹ The first was carried out on January 2, 2014, in the Shi'ite southern suburb of Beirut near some of Hezbollah's central institutions. The second was a mass-killing attack that went wrong, carried out on June 25, 2014, at Le Duroy Hotel and wounded 11 people. The achievements of the Syrian army and Hezbollah in the Qalamoun mountains (including the takeover of the city of Yabrud on

⁸⁹ For further information about the suicide bombing attacks carried out by ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front in Lebanon see the February 11, 2014 bulletin "Using suicide bombers as weapons."

March 15 and 16, 2014) and Hezbollah's preventive activities against ISIS weakened ISIS's capabilities and apparently disrupted their intentions to carry out other terrorist attacks in Lebanon.⁹⁰ However, confrontations in the Qalamoun mountains have not yet ended and the region may still be a source of terrorist attacks in Lebanon.

The cooperation between ISIS and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in Egypt

Overview

40. During October and the beginning of November 2014 ISIS expressed support for the **Egyptian jihadi Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis**, which heads the terrorist campaign currently being waged against the Egyptian regime. Its most prominent attack was carried out on October 24, 2014, at the Karam al-Qawadis military base near Sheikh Zuweid in the northeastern Sinai Peninsula, killing 33 Egyptian soldiers. ISIS issued **strategic and operative "advice" for Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and jihadi operatives in Egypt, encouraging them to escalate their terrorist campaign against the Egyptian regime and to move it to the center of Cairo.**

41. On November 10, 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis said in an announcement that it had **sworn allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, and had joined his self-declared Islamic State.⁹¹ Three days later Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis announced it had turned the Sinai Peninsula into the Sinai province of the Islamic State.

42. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis' explicit support for ISIS and its swearing allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi mark **a new closeness in their collaboration.** In ITIC assessment, **both organizations expect to profit from it:**

- 1) For **ISIS**, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis' oath of allegiance is **an important regional precedent because it indicates its influence has gone beyond the Iraqi and Syrian borders and progressed to a central Middle Eastern state.** That may increase Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's prestige and improve his status vis-à-vis Al-Qaeda and his rivals in Iraq and Syria, the Al-Nusra Front among them. Collaboration with Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis **may also encourage other jihadi**

⁹⁰ For further information see the April 10, 2014 bulletin "Hezbollah's Involvement in the Civil War in Syria."

⁹¹ For further information see the November 12, 2014 bulletin "ISIS's public support for the Egyptian jihadi organization Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, encouraging it to escalate the campaign of terror against the Egyptian regime. In turn, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi."

organizations in the Middle East and beyond, such as Libya, to take a stand in the dispute between Al-Qaeda and ISIS, and to join ISIS.

2) For **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis**, collaboration with ISIS provides it with **strong external support** in the terrorist campaign it is waging against the Egyptian regime. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis prefers ISIS to Al-Qaeda apparently **because of its image as a victorious organization** with improved military and financial capabilities, and because of its appeal to jihadists as an organization standing in the front line in the fighting against the United States and the West.⁹²

Strategic and operational "advice" given by ISIS to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis

43. On November 4, 2014, an ISIS forum posted strategic and operational "advice" for the jihad fighters in Egypt about **how to wage their terrorist campaign against the Egyptian regime, mainly by following the model of Iraq**. Their basic position was that the jihadists should move the weight of their efforts from the Sinai Peninsula to Cairo and other large cities in Egypt to harm the Egyptian regime by damaging its economy (tourism, the Suez Canal and the gas pipelines). Emphasis was also placed on **absorbing foreign jihad fighters and integrating them by exploiting their motivation to carry out suicide bombing attacks**.

44. The main points of the "advice" given to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis by **Abu Musab al-Maqdisi**, who may be a liaison between it and ISIS, were the following (Alplatformmedia, November 4, 2014):

1) **Strike the "enemy" (the Egyptian regime) in Cairo and the large cities:** Move the battle to "central Cairo" and engage the regime there. **That will turn the Sinai Peninsula into an area that apostates ("deserters of religion") are not allowed to enter and a rear base for a continuing jihad** [against the Egyptian regime]. Remember that the Egyptian regime is less affected by Egyptians killed in the Sinai Peninsula than by the attacks on the capital Cairo "and the bodies of its dogs scattered in the city."

2) **Strike government institutions and officials:** Carry out operations using silencers, and "reap" the soldiers of the enemy (the Egyptian government). Strike

⁹² On November 13, 2014, the Arab news site Al-Watan.com reported that an ISIS operative nicknamed **Abu Omar al-Masri** claimed that the Al-Qaeda leadership had warned Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis it would stop providing it with money and weapons. Al-Masri claimed that in the near future, when Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis operated in Cairo, ISIS would provide the organization with everything it needed.

the provincial centers and security departments of the Ministry of the Interior, to **“weaken its security grip on the country.”** Use the example of the severe blows the Iraqi regime suffered in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq. Actions carried out against Iraqi government institutions kept Iraqi government officials from travelling in their official vehicles and wearing their uniforms.

3) **Absorb foreign fighters ("emigrants"):** Jihad fighters in Egypt must absorb foreign fighters ("emigrants"), **“because a jihadi arena cannot move forward without emigrants.”** Their presence will fuel the operations **“particularly since [the foreign fighters] want to carry out suicide bombings”** (*istishhad*, death as a martyr for the sake of Allah). Take advantage of the current situation, when it is easy to enter Egypt, and consider that entering Egypt in the future will require **“a tremendous effort.”** Jihad fighters in Egypt should absorb the foreign fighters, deploy them in all provinces and **send them on operations against Egyptian government institutions.**

4) **Fan the flames of sectarian religious war:** ISIS calls on jihad fighters in Egypt to **strike Christians and Shi'ites** (following the Iraq and Syria model). That is **“because they are [religious] communities that cannot be trusted and no agreement can be reached with them. They are nothing but plunder that Allah will give you...”**

5) **Strike Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip:** ISIS calls on jihad fighters in the Sinai Peninsula, in particular Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, to **attack trucks carrying weapons, missiles and explosives from the Sinai Peninsula to the Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip.** That is because **“those weapons hurt Muslims more than Jews, since Hamas and its government have stolen the weapons of your brethren, the jihad fighters in Gaza.”**⁹³ The Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip **“do not guarantee security for the lives of the residents in Gaza, their religion and their jihad, and the saga of their betrayals [...] is known to all.”**

6) **Attack judges: Attack Egyptian judges,** **“since a large percentage of the judges in Egypt are Christians.”** They have abandoned Islam, tried many young Islamists and sentenced them to death or life imprisonment. **“Killing judges is one means to serve our prisoners in the jails of the tyrants.”**

⁹³ A reference to the decisive measures taken by the Hamas government against Salafist-jihadi organizations in the Gaza Strip in light of their potential challenge to its control.

7) **Strike at the economy:** Strike at the Egyptian economy, “which allows the tyrannical and criminal government to fight Allah and his messenger.” In addition, “most of the Egyptian wealthy and decision-makers are also Christians.” Target **the tourism industry, the gas pipeline to Israel and “to the countries of the tyrants” [i.e., Jordan], the economic institutions of the [Egyptian] army and the commercial areas in the Suez Canal.** The revenue from the canal is used by El-Sisi “to move missiles and weapons to fight our brothers in Syria and to support tyrants like him.” In addition, “**the fire of jihad should reach Sharm el-Sheikh**” to end the prostitution and entertainment that Jewish and foreign tourists have enjoyed there.”

8) **Slaughter enemies and spies, do not shoot them:** Jihad fighters should **cut the throats of every spy and every one who has been proven to belong to the Egyptian state security forces** or to collaborate with the Egyptian military establishment.⁹⁴

The role of Israel

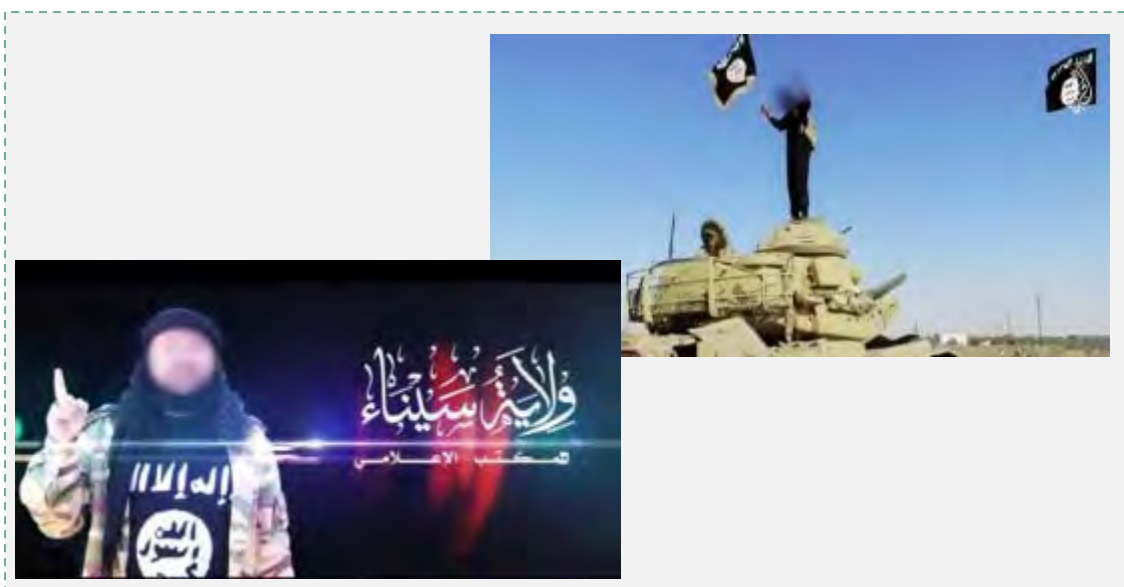
45. **Israel was not mentioned** in the "advice" ISIS had for Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, probably because it is more concerned with fighting its domestic enemies (in this case the Egyptian regime). However, in the oath Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis swore to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on November 10, 2014, **the "war against the Jews" was given prominence:** "After decades...Allah ordered the flag of jihad to be raised in our land and gave us the honor of being the soldiers [Allah] chose **to fight the nation's most bitter enemies...the Jews. We struck them hard with many raids, such as Umm Rashrash (i.e., Eilat) and others...Our swords will be extended against them until Allah is victorious.**" That seems to indicate Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis' **intention to include attacks on Israel in its campaign against the Egyptian regime, although Egypt is still its first priority.**

⁹⁴ **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis**, like ISIS, carries out public beheadings. On August 28, 2014, it posted a video documenting the beheading of four men who, according to the organization, collaborated with the Israeli Mossad. The operative who read the written announcement also executed the four men (Alarbiya.net).

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis changes its name to the Sinai province of the Islamic State

46. On November 13, 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis changed its name to the "**Sinai province of the Islamic State.**" According to ISIS's geographical divisions of the Islamic State, or Caliphate State, is divided onto various provinces (*wilayat*). Thus for ISIS the **Sinai Peninsula has formally become one of its provinces, the first beyond the borders of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.**

47. On November 14, 2014, the day after Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis' name change, the "Sinai province" issued a video in which **it claimed responsibility for the October 24, 2014 attack at Karam al-Qawadis near Sheikh Zuweid in which 33 Egyptian soldiers were killed** (the worst terrorist attack since the security situation in the Sinai Peninsula began to deteriorate).⁹⁵ The speaker wears an ISIS shirt and the Arabic in the background reads, "**Sinai province – Information bureau.**" There is also a picture of a fighter standing on an Egyptian tank during the attack and waving an ISIS flag. On November 13, 2014, two videos were posted to YouTube claiming responsibility for the November 12, 2014 attack on an Egyptian navy vessel. Responsibility was claimed in the name of the soldiers of the Islamic State in the Land of Egypt.



Video posted to YouTube claiming responsibility for the terrorist attack killing 33 Egyptian soldiers. Left: The speaker claims responsibility; the Arabic reads "Sinai province – Information bureau." Right: An operative from "the Sinai province of the Islamic State" (the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis' new name) stands on an Egyptian tank and waves an ISIS flag during the terrorist attack (YouTube)

⁹⁵ The speaker reads the following text: "...Here, in the proud land of Sinai, ranks were aligned, opinions were united and the path became clear – Jerusalem cannot be liberated until the land in Egypt is cleansed of collaborators: the soldiers of el-Sisi, the collaborators of the Jews."



Notices posted on the Islamic State website. Left: A soldier, perhaps Egyptian, shot by an attack helicopter. The Arabic reads, "Jihad cavalry, defenders of Sinai's honor: Allah aimed your fire, strengthened you and allowed you [to take hold of] the necks of the Jews and their tails [a veiled reference to the Sisi regime]. You are the heroes of jihad, the descendants of the sahaba (Muhammad's faithful comrades)." Right: ISIS fighters going into battle. The Arabic reads, "There are men in Sinai who are heroes, they are like lions, they do not fear any dictator [a reference to Sisi] or any Jew. Allah, help them and make [their victory] possible, strengthen them and enlist everything you have [for their sake]" (Alplatformmedia.com).



An Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis operative who blew himself up in the Security Directorate in the southern Sinai Peninsula on October 7, 2013.⁹⁶ The Arabic at the right reads, "Together [we will go] to support the heroes of Sinai – We will strive to support them and reinforce them, spread their announcements and every new thing [about them]. We pray a prayer of truth for the sake of those who are not with us today [i.e., those who died]" (Alplatformmedia.com; Dawshagya.org).

⁹⁶ A reference to the car bomb attack targeting the security administration in El-Tor in the southern Sinai Peninsula that killed three and wounded 62. The Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis claimed responsibility.

Support and solidarity with ISIS in other Arab states and entities

Jordan

48. **Support in Jordan for the Salafist-jihadi worldview is not new; it began in the 1990s.** Jordan was the birthplace of **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi**, founder of the branch of Al-Qaeda in Iraq which eventually became ISIS. Support in Jordan increased following the Syrian civil war and ISIS's military successes.

49. Most of Jordan's support for ISIS comes from **the outlying regions**. Most prominent is the southern Jordanian city of **Ma'an**, a site of traditional unrest and anti-Hashemite sentiment, but there are other cities as well, among them **Al-Salt, Irbid, Al-Rusaifa and Al-Zarqa'**. Support increased with the return of veterans from Syria (in ITIC assessment, more than 1,000 Jordanians went to fight in Syria) and in the wake of ISIS media campaigns aimed at its Jordanian target audience. Nevertheless, apparently **ISIS does not yet have an organized network of Jordanian fighters, although the potential for an increase in ISIS's presence in Jordan does exist.**

50. Support for ISIS was shown in **Amman** on June 20, 2014, after the Friday prayers when dozens of supporters held a pro-ISIS march. They carried signs and waved ISIS flags, and called for the Sykes-Picot borders of 1916 to be demolished – one of the main tenets of ISIS's ideology. On August 21, 2014, a demonstration was held in the northern Jordanian province of **Zarqa'**, where ISIS flags were waved and support for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was voiced.

51. On September 30, 2014, CNN aired a report about the increase of support for ISIS in Ma'an, showing graffiti on walls in the city. They read, "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is our leader" and "The Islamic State will prevail." A CNN correspondent said it was not hard to find ISIS supporters in the markets who voiced the opinion that the model of the Islamic State would solve all humanity's problems.



March held in support of ISIS in the city of Ma'an in southern Jordan on June 20, 2014 (YouTube, June 2014).



Banner supporting ISIS carried by demonstrators in Ma'an. The Arabic reads, "Friday [for the sake of] supporting ISIS. Ma'an is Jordan's Fallujah. The Islamic State will be victorious. June 20, 2014" (YouTube, June 2014).

52. **Issam al-Barqawi**, aka **Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi**, is a prominent Jordanian Salafist-jihadist who **supports the Al-Nusra Front and strongly opposes ISIS**. In June 2014 he was released from prison after serving a four-year sentence for involvement in terrorism. The Jordanians apparently released him to strengthen ISIS's Salafist-jihadi rivals to divide and conquer. In public statements after his release al-Maqdisi claimed that the [self-] declaration of the Caliphate State threatened to divide Muslims, and called ISIS's position an "aberration." He condemned the military attacks of the West ("Crusaders") on ISIS, but added that they were the result of ISIS's oppression of the Muslims in Syria and the distortion of the legacy of Muhammad. He also called for the release of the British captive ISIS

had threatened to put to death, claiming that those who entered Muslim lands had to be defended and could not be harmed (Al-Sabil, Jordan, September 19, 2014).

The preventive measures of Jordanian security

53. During ISIS's years of activity in Iraq and during the first two years of its establishing itself in Syria, the Jordanian regime apparently did not regard it as a serious security threat. Therefore its security services did not take effective steps to prevent the flow of Jordanian foreign fighters to Syria and their return to Jordan.

54. Jordan's attitude changed after ISIS's achievements in **the summer of 2014**. The authorities began taking steps against Salafist-jihadists in Jordan who supported ISIS and to a lesser degree, against those who supported the Al-Nusra Front:

1) On **September 4, 2014**, it was reported that more than 70 senior jihadists were detained in a number of cities and regions throughout the kingdom (Al-Salt, Irbid, Al-Zarqa', al-Rusaifa, Ma'an and the northern Jordan Valley).

2) On **September 21, 2014**, the Jordanian News Agency reported that the security services had detained 11 operatives affiliated with ISIS. According to the report, the operatives confessed they had connections with senior ISIS figures in Syria and that they had been planning to carry out terrorist attacks against "a number of vital interests" in Jordan. The house of one of the operatives, who lived in the northern part of the kingdom, blew up while explosives were being manufactured.

Solidarity and support for ISIS in the Gaza Strip⁹⁷



Armed, masked Salafist-jihadi operatives in the Gaza Strip express their loyalty to ISIS in a video posted to websites (Al-Quds, February 12, 2014)

55. **There is support for ISIS in the Gaza Strip from Salafist-jihadists** who were influenced by its achievements. They held a rally in Rafah and posted a video to YouTube. In addition, there are close to 40 Gazan operatives in Syria, some of them in a **separate unit** named for **Sheikh Abu Nur al-Maqdisi** (a Salafist-jihadi Gazan sheikh killed by Hamas in 2009 after he declared the establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Palestine).

56. During Operation Protective Edge Salafist-jihadi networks in the Gaza Strip **publicly affiliated with ISIS** launched rockets into Israel a number of times, and posted a video documenting the attacks where the ISIS flag could be seen. In addition, at least two Salafist-jihadists were killed during IDF attacks. However, put in perspective, the importance of Salafist-jihadi activity during Operation Protective Edge was marginal.

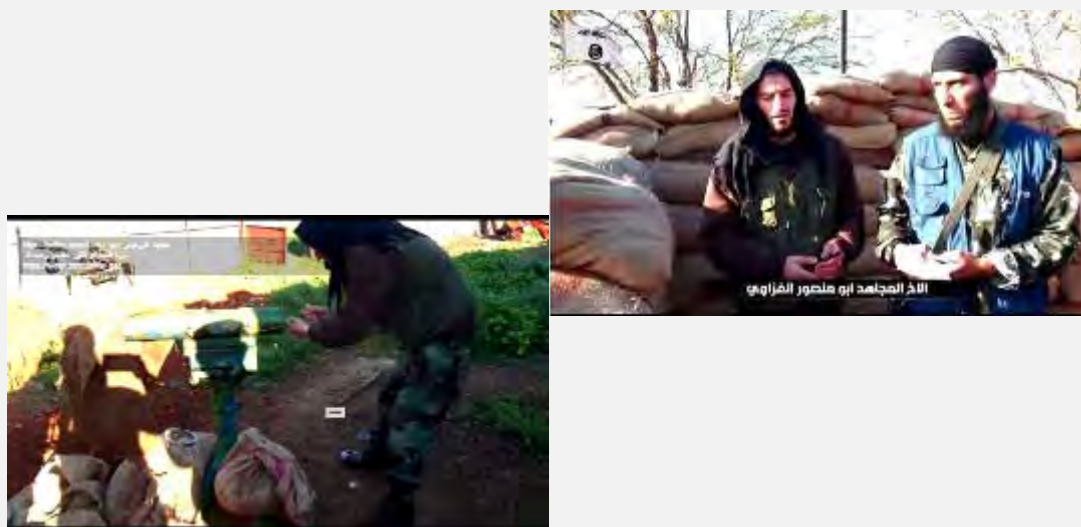
57. **Hamas considers Salafist-jihadi activity as potentially dangerous and a practical and ideological challenge to its control of the Gaza Strip.** So far, the Salafist-jihadi network in the Gaza Strip **does not present a significant threat to Hamas**, which can suppress any operational or propaganda activity that goes beyond the limits it has set down. Hamas has countered expressions of support for ISIS with

⁹⁷ For further information see the July 16, 2014 bulletin "Expressions of support in the Gaza Strip for the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS), which is affiliated with the global jihad."

strong measures, even if it has not engaged in a general confrontation with the Salafist-jihadists.⁹⁸



March in support of ISIS held by Salafist-jihadi operatives in Rafah; it was dispersed by the Hamas police force (YouTube, June 12, 2014).



Video documenting jihad operatives from the Gaza Strip in the ranks of ISIS firing 107 mm at Syrian army positions in Aleppo (YouTube, May 20, 2014).

⁹⁸ For further information see the July 16, 2014 bulletin "Expressions of support in the Gaza Strip for the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS), which is affiliated with the global jihad."



Jihad operatives from the Gaza Strip from the Sheikh Abu al-Nur al-Maqdisi company fight in the ranks of ISIS in Syria (Twitter account of the jihad fighters from Syria in the ranks of ISIS, March 24, 2014).⁹⁹

Libya

58. Many Arab foreign fighters who joined the ranks of ISIS came from Libya. Their number is estimated at between several hundred and close to a thousand. Some of the Libyan foreign fighters come from the eastern part of the country, especially from the coastal city of **Darnah**, which has a population of approximately 80,000. Qaddafi used to call it the "Islamic emirate" because it was a center for radical Islam during his regime.¹⁰⁰

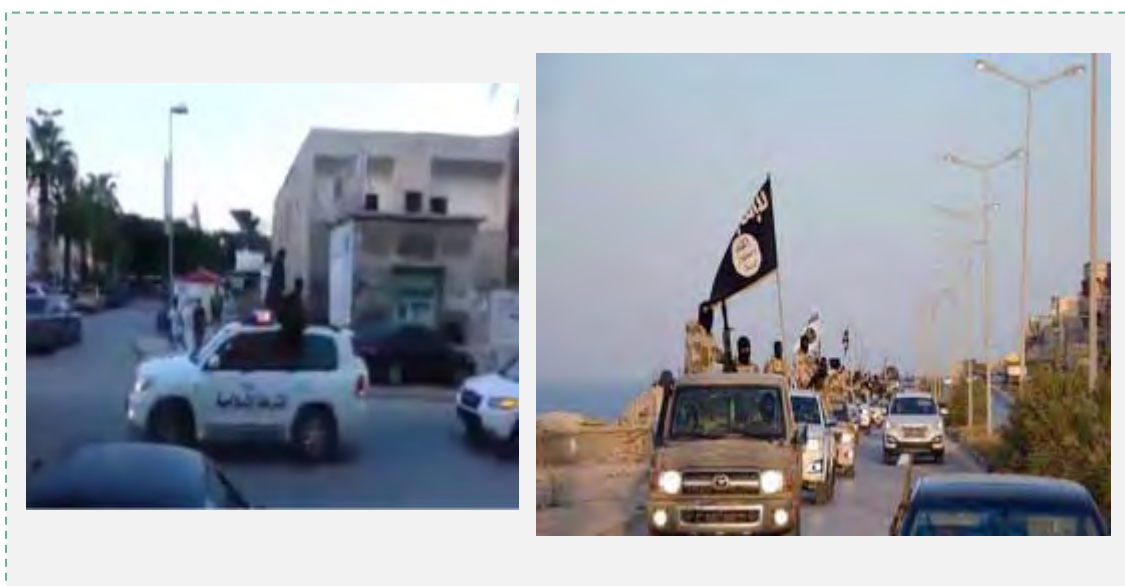
⁹⁹ **Sheikh Abd al-Latif Khaled Muhammad Musa**, aka **Abd al-Nur al-Maqdisi**, was a Salafist-jihadi sheikh who, until he was killed by Hamas, was the religious-ideological authority for the Salafist-jihadi operatives in the Gaza Strip. On August 14, 2014, he gave a sermon in the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque in Rafah in which **he declared the establishment of the Islamic Emirate in Palestine**. Hamas considered the sermon a provocation and challenging its control of Gaza. Its forces broke into the mosque and engaged in an exchange of fire with the jihadi operatives who had barricaded themselves inside. During the clash, Hamas killed jihadists including Sheikh Abd al-Nur al-Maqdisi, who became a symbol for the jihadists in the Gaza Strip.

¹⁰⁰ For further information see the May 13, 2014 bulletin "The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters from the Arab World in the Syrian Civil War."



The city of Darnah (circle) on the map of Libya (Mobtada.com)

59. Some of the jihadists who returned to Darnah from Syria and Iraq set up a local jihadi organization called **Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam**, headed by an *emir* named **Muhammad Abdallah**. They established courts which sentenced civilians accused of violating the precepts of sharia to be publicly executed. In June 2014 the organization announced its support for ISIS (Mobtada.com). At the beginning of November 2014 Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam held a meeting in Darnah where it announced **it was joining ISIS's Islamic Caliphate, and swore allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** (AP.org, November 9, 2014).



Left: From the video of a show of force held by the Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam held in the city of Darnah in Libya on October 6, 2014. In the video the cars can be heard honking and there are cries of "Allahu Akbar." On the side of the vehicle are the words "Islamic Police" (Alarabiya.net). Right: Majlis Shura Shabab al-Islam operatives in Darnah carry the ISIS flag (Mobtada.com).



Two more Islamic Police vehicles in the October 6, 2014, Darnah cavalcade. On the side of the vehicles is the term al-hisbah, i.e., the name of ISIS's modesty police (Alarabiya.net).

60. On November 12, 2014, Libyan airplanes of the military force of the secular government attacked the jihadi militia in Darnah. That came after a series of terrorist attacks carried out in Libyan cities controlled by the secular government.

61. Unlike those in Egypt, the Libyan jihadists who swore allegiance to ISIS belonged to a local, not national, jihadi network. The large Libyan jihadi organization **Ansar al-Sharia** and its allies fighting the secular Libyan government have so far not sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Tunisia

62. There are **many Tunisians** among the foreign fighters joining ISIS and other organizations in Syria, and their numbers are estimated at **more than 1,000**. Hundreds of them have already returned to Tunisia.¹⁰¹ One of the main organizations dispatching fighters to Syria has been a **Salafist-jihadi organization called Ansar al-Sharia**, affiliated with Al-Qaeda. It was established at the end of 2011 by a jihadist named **Seif Allah bin Hussein**, aka **Abu Iyad al-Tunisi**. Ansar al-Sharia operatives participated in protests held in Tunisia and were involved in riots and terrorist activities. In August 2013 the Tunisian government outlawed the organization.

63. On October 20, 2014, the Arabic media, relying on Tunisian intelligence sources, reported that an **Ansar al-Sharia** plan had been uncovered to **establish an emirate in the southern part of the country which would swear allegiance to ISIS**

¹⁰¹ For further information see the May 13, 2014 bulletin "The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters from the Arab World in the Syrian Civil War."

(Ar.webmanagercenter.com). **On July 5, 2014 the organization expressed support for ISIS and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.** According to information on an Arab Islamic website (which has not yet been verified), Ansar al-Sharia has already sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Islamic-movements.com, November 11, 2014).



From a video posted to YouTube; an Ansar al-Sharia spokesman in Tunisia expresses support for ISIS; there is an ISIS flag on the podium at the right (YouTube, July 5, 2014).

Saudi Arabia

64. Saudi Arabia is one of the Arab countries with many foreign fighters in the ranks of ISIS in Syria. An updated estimate puts their number at about 1,400.¹⁰²

65. On November 15, 2014 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi issued a recorded statement in which he claimed the jihadi organizations in Saudi Arabia and Yemen had joined the Islamic State, and that Islamic State provinces had been established in both. So far it is unclear to which organizations or networks Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was referring. In any event, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the branch of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, the most important jihadi organization operating in the Arabian Peninsula, has not yet announced it has joined the Islamic State.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Zelin, Jihadology

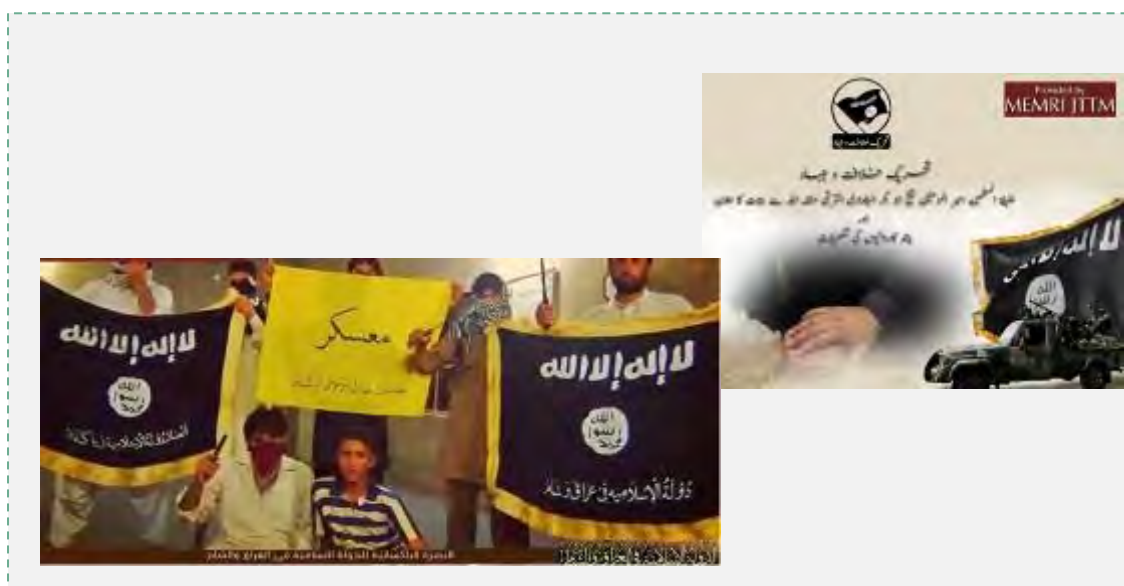
¹⁰³ According to a Syrian opposition website, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) posted a video attacking Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for causing a split in the ranks of the global jihad fighters (Al-Harar Al-Shamiya, November 21, 2014).

Support and solidarity with ISIS in Asian states¹⁰⁴

66. Following ISIS's impressive successes and the declaration of the Islamic State, jihadi groups in Asian countries such as **Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, the Philippines and Indonesia** gradually manifested solidarity and support. Within the Salafist-jihadi groups and networks there are **internal disputes** over whether to affiliate with Al-Qaeda headquarters or ISIS. ISIS considers support from the Asian countries important and it encourages their foreign fighters to join its ranks, as can be seen from the videos and recorded messages it produces in Urdu.

67. The following are examples of Asian support for and solidarity with ISIS (MEMRI.org, September 18 and 25, 2014)

1) **Pakistan** – A network called **Tahreek-e-Khilafat wal-Jihad**, which has been active in the Karachi region in recent years, became the first organization to bestow an oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*) on Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi after he declared the Islamic Caliphate. According to the oath, which was posted in Urdu on a Pakistani jihadi forum, as of now Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the Muslim Caliph and the men of Pakistan are one of the arrows on his bow. In addition, in October **six Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), including the organization's spokesman**, swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. However, **Mulana Fazlullah, the organization's leader, denied his organization belonged to ISIS.**



Left: Pakistani supporters of ISIS. Right: Swearing allegiance to ISIS (MEMRI.org, September 10, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ This section contains updated information. For further information see the April 15, 2014 bulletin "Foreign fighters from various countries and regions in Asia, fighting against the Syrian regime, most of them in organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad."

2) **Afghanistan** – On October 25, 2014, a video about Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and 5,000 of his fighters swearing allegiance to the Islamic State was posted on YouTube, a jihadi forum and the social networks. A masked operative speaking Arabic with an Afghan accent read a prepared statement to the effect that **following disagreements within the Taliban** he and his followers had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He called on the Americans and the other "Crusaders" to stop their aerial attacks on ISIS, otherwise the *mujahideen* (jihad fighters) in Afghanistan would retaliate.



Abu Bakr al-Afghani swears allegiance to the leader of ISIS (MEMRI.org, October 25, 2014).

3) **India** – Shortly after the Caliphate was declared **Moulana Syed Salman Husaini Nadwi**, an Indian Muslim cleric, sent an open letter congratulating Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, referring to him as "the emir of the faithful." In addition, **in at least two instances in July 2014 during Operation Protective Edge, young men in Kashmir were seen waving ISIS flags in an anti-Israeli demonstration during Operation Protective Edge.** The Indian media reported that during the first half of September 2014 the police had detained 15 engineering students from Hyderabad, one of them a young woman, who were en route to join ISIS (MEMRI.org, September 20, 2014).



Muslims in India wearing ISIS shirts at a mosque in India (MEMRI.org, September 10, 2014).

4) **Indonesia** – In May 2014 Al-Hayat, one of ISIS's information branches, posted a video of a group of eight foreign fighters from Indonesia who had arrived in Iraq. One of them, nicknamed "**Abu Ahmed the Indonesian**," urged other Indonesians to join ISIS and swear allegiance to al-Baghdadi.

5) **Philippines** – According to the President Aquino, **at least 100 young Filipino Muslims have gone to Iraq**. Some of them belonged to **Al-Jamaa' Al-Islamiyya**, a jihadi organization operating in the eastern part of the country. On August 14, 2014, according to a notice posted on a jihadi forum by the jihadi organization **Abu Sayyaf**, it had changed its name to the "Organization of the Supporters of the Caliphate in the Philippines," and had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Dozens of Israeli Arabs who joined ISIS and manifestations of support among Israeli Arabs

Overview

68. The Syrian civil war has been closely followed by Israeli Arabs. Some of them have expressed support for the Assad regime while other have demonstrated against "the crimes of the Syrian regime" and collected donations for the Syrian people. **Thus the call to wage jihad against the Assad regime fell on attentive ears, especially among those who adopted with Salafist-jihadi ideology**. In effect, most of the Israeli Arabs who go to Syria have a Salafist-jihadi background. Some are students who were exposed to Salafist-jihadi ideology during their studies in Jordan or Europe or by liaison operatives of the global jihad organizations operating in Syria. Finding a

religious-ideological arena in which to fight made it possible for them to fulfill their dreams of jihad, which was impossible in the local Israeli arena (Shabak.gov.il, November 9, 2014).

69. Israeli Arabs began joining the ranks of the Syrian rebels in November 2012. At the beginning of 2014 their numbers were estimated as at least 20.¹⁰⁵ Since then, as in Western countries, **their numbers have increased and today are estimated at 40**. Four are known to have been killed in battle. Some returned to Israel and have been prosecuted (Shabak.gov.il, November 9, 2014).

70. Compared with Western Europe and the Arab countries, only a **relatively small number of Israeli Arabs** have gone to Syria and Iraq and joined ISIS and the other Salafist-jihadi organizations. So far no network established and directed by ISIS has been exposed among Israeli Arabs. However, **the number of Israeli foreign fighters is gradually increasing and creates a potential security risk**. While in Syria they receive military training and experience, and are indoctrinated with Salafist-jihadi ideology. In addition, they meet Al-Qaeda and global jihad operatives who may attempt to convince them to carry out terrorist and intelligence-collecting missions once they return to Israel, and they may also spread Salafist-jihadi ideology among Israeli Arabs.

71. The Israeli Arab foreign fighters are **young, most of them in their twenties, and come from the Galilee, in central Israel and the south. The Internet plays an important role in recruiting and sending them to Syria**. They arrive there individually or in small groups. Before they went to Syria the majority had led devout Muslim lives. In most cases their going surprised their families.

72. **The Israeli Arab foreign fighters enter Syria through Turkey**, as do most of the other foreign fighters. They join the ranks of the rebel organizations, especially the jihadist organizations, while a few join the Syrian army (two cases are known). It is impossible to determine the distribution of Israeli Arab foreign fighters among the various factions, but **apparently during 2014 ISIS became the most attractive**.

¹⁰⁵ For further information see the January 19, 2014 bulletin "Israeli Arabs and Palestinians Join the Ranks of the Rebels in Syria, Mainly Organizations Affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad."

Legislation and enforcement

73. Israeli Arabs' joining ISIS and other jihadi organizations **potentially endangers Israel's security**. The dangers were evident in the indictment brought against **Ahmed Imad Shourbaji**, 23, an Israeli Arab from the city of Umm el-Fahm, who was found guilty of joining ISIS in mid-September 2014. According to the charges (ITIC translation and emphasis):

"There is a genuine danger posed by Israeli citizens or residents who go to Syria to join the rebels in fighting the Syrian regime. That is because in Syria they receive **ideological and military training which may be exploited for terrorist activity against Israel. It may also be exploited to spread an ideology that preaches extremist Salafist-jihadi activities in Israel...**[ISIS] operatives [in Syria] may also encourage them to carry out actions against the State of Israel. In addition, there is a genuine danger that jihadi operatives [in Syria] will extract strategic and tactical information about Israel from their contacts with Israeli [Arabs]... **Thus they present a genuine threat to the security of the State of Israel.**

74. To act more efficiently to prevent Israeli Arabs from going to Syria to join ISIS, on September 3, 2014, **Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Yaalon** signed an order **outlawing ISIS, having become convinced it was "necessary for the defense of the State of Israel and public safety and order..."** The order made it possible to **take legal action against networks, raising funds, and activities connected with ISIS, including against those who leave Israel to fight in its ranks.** On October 27, 2014, the Knesset Legislative Commission unanimously passed a proposal for a bill that would allow **Israelis who joined terrorist organizations operating in foreign countries, such as ISIS, to be prosecuted**, even if the organizations were not actively engaged in attacking Israel (Haaretz.co.il, October 27, 2014).

75. **According to Israeli Minister of Justice Tzipi Livni**, every country has the right to defend itself, and Israel is no exception. An Israeli citizen who joins a terrorist organization motivated by radical Islamic ideology will be prosecuted. Legislation is an internal activity, but it is important that it be accompanied by external processes that create a common alliance with Western and Arab states targeting fundamentalist Islamist terrorism (Haaretz.co.il, October 27, 2014).

Sporadic expressions of support for ISIS from Israeli Arabs

76. In recent months there have been **sporadic expressions of support for ISIS from Israeli Arabs, although there is apparently no proof that an organized, established network exists among them.** For example, Israel Channel 10 interviewed an Israeli Arab from Nazareth who said he supported ISIS, the ISIS flag was flown from a mosque in Umm el-Fahm and dozens of ISIS flags were found in a garbage dump near Nazareth. On October 25, 2014, "ISIS" was spray-painted on a wall of the soccer field in the Druze village of Daliat al-Carmel (south of Haifa), and on November 21, 2014, "ISIS" was spray painted on the town's memorial monument to the Druze soldiers who fell while serving in the IDF.



Graffiti found at a soccer field in the Druze village of Daliat al-Carmel (Israel Police Force spokesman, October 25, 2014). On November 23, 2014, graffiti were found in the village on the memorial monument of the Druze who fell while serving in the IDF.

77. On September 29, 2014, the Israeli security forces detained a 24 year-old teacher from **Kafr Qara** in central Israel on suspicion of supporting ISIS ideology. A search of his house revealed propaganda material, ISIS flags, videos and books about jihad. During interrogation he said he had brought the materials from Jordan (Facebook page of the Israel Police Force, September 29, 2014).



ISIS flags and other materials found in the possession of an Israeli Arab from Kafr Qara (Facebook page of the Israel Police Force, September 29, 2014).

78. Such expressions of support are met with **opposition and rejections** by the Islamic Movement, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood ideology. The **Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel held a rally in Umm el-Fahm**, where **Sheikh Ra'ed Salah**, the movement leader, said that ISIS's activity was inappropriate for Islam and its objective was to harm the image of Islam and Muslims. He noted the commitment of the Islamic Movement to the anti-ISIS position formulated by the International Union of Muslim Scholars. However, he also expressed opposition to the coalition formed by the United States for the war against ISIS, which was, he said, "a danger to the Arab world" (Ynetnews.co.il, September 12, 2014).

Updated reports of Israeli Arabs who joined ISIS and other jihadi organizations in Syria

Overview

79. In September and October 2014 the Israeli and Arab media reported on Israeli Arabs (some of whom died in Syria and Iraq) who joined the ranks of ISIS and other jihadi organizations. Some updated examples are the following:¹⁰⁶

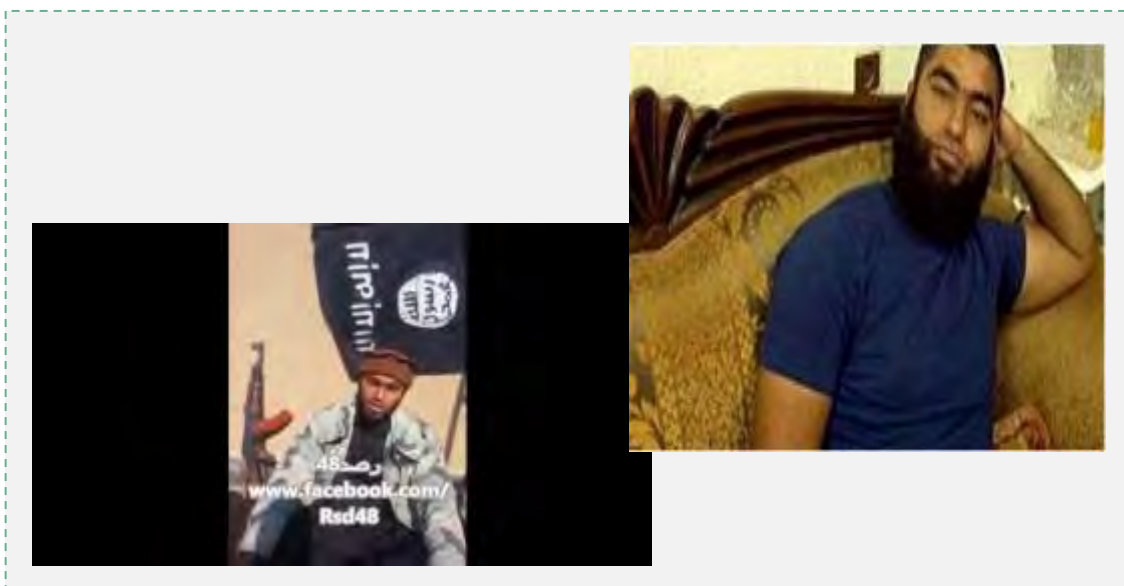
Rabi' Shahade from Nazareth

80. In September 2014 the London-based newspaper Al-Rai Al-Youm reported that at the beginning of 2014 **Rabi' Shahade**, an Israeli Arab from Nazareth, 25 years old and married, had left his family and job in Tel Aviv and gone to Syria to join the ranks

¹⁰⁶ For previous examples see the January 5, 2014 bulletin "Israeli Arabs and Palestinians Join the Ranks of the Rebels in Syria, Mainly Organizations Affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad."

of ISIS. He posted a video on YouTube using the nickname **Abu Musab al-Safuri** (his family came from the village of Safuria) in which he called for Arabs to join the jihad in Syria. In a different video, posted in May 2014, he said, "We are a people who love to die for the sake of Allah while you love life. We love to drink your blood." A friend standing next to him called him "the Palestinian slaughterer."

81. Interviewed in Syria by the Al-Arab website, he said that **for many years he had yearned to join the jihad in Syria**. He said ISIS was defending Muslims and members of other religions, and that its objective in Syria was not limited to overthrowing the Assad regime, but to establishing an Islamic State that would be ruled according to the laws of Islam (Raialyoum.com, September 12, 2014). He posted a picture of himself on his Facebook page, showing him with another ISIS fighter (Facebook page of Abu Musab al-Safuri, September 15, 2014).



Left: Rabi' Shahade from Nazareth issues a call from Syria for others to join him in jihad; behind him is the ISIS flag (YouTube, September 20, 2014). Right: Rabi' Shahade interviewed in Syria (Arabnet5.com, September 2014).



Rabi' Shahade aka Abu Musab al-Safuri at the right. He posted the picture on his Facebook page, September 15, 2014.

Indictment of Ahmed Shourbaji, who fought in the ranks of ISIS and returned to Israel

82. In mid-September 2014 a court in Haifa indicted **Ahmed Shourbaji for having joined ISIS**. He was 23 years old and lived in **Umm el-Fahm**. According to the indictment,

- 1) On January 14, 2014, Ahmed Shourbaji and three of his friends left for Syria via Turkey to join the rebel forces (the others were Rabi' Shahade, Ahmed Habashi and Muhammad Jabarin).
- 2) The four infiltrated into Syria with the help of smugglers and joined a rebel unit called **Jaish Muhammad**, where they underwent a week of training
- 3) **About a week later the four were recruited by ISIS**, where Shourbaji operated for about three months until he returned to Israel on April 20, 2014.
- 4) While in the ranks of ISIS he spend a week in a training camp and received religious instruction to "strengthen his fighting spirit." Most of his training involved the use of light arms (Kalashnikov assault rifles, RPG launchers, machine guns, hand grenades).
- 5) While in Syria he fought in several battles, firing his weapon. He was also posted at roadblocks and went on patrol.
- 6) On April 20, 2014, he returned to Israel, landed at Ben-Gurion international airport and was detained by the Israeli authorities. The friends he left with have

not yet returned. When he joined ISIS he gave the organization his Israeli passport, which was not returned.

83. In sentencing Ahmed Shourbaji, the court adopted the State's position that **joining ISIS was a serious security felony**. According to the court, leaving Israel for military training in an enemy country in general and Syria in particular and in the ranks of ISIS was **a security felony with great potential danger for Israel's security** (Haaretz.co.il, September 24, 2014). Ahmed Shourbaji was sentenced to 22 months in prison for illegal training in a terrorist organization operating in Iraq and Syria. According to the indictment, Israeli citizens or residents who go to fight in Syria in the ranks of the rebels under the aegis of jihadi organizations pose a **genuine threat** to the country. That is because the training they receive in Syria can be exploited for terrorist activity against the State of Israel, and presents a clear and present danger to the security of the country (Maariv.co.il, November 3, 2014).

Four young men from Yafia go to Syria to join the ranks of the rebels

84. The Israeli media and a local newspaper published in Nazareth reported that **four young men from Yafia, a town near Nazareth**, left the country during Eid al-Adha (the Feast of the Sacrifice) and went to Turkey **with the intention of joining the ranks of the rebels or the Islamic State** (i.e., ISIS). One of them changed his mind and returned home. The remaining three crossed the border into Syria and since then their families have not heard from them (Haaretz.co.il, October 13, 2014).

85. Friends of the three said that they had led devout Muslim lives. They had used the social networks to contact elements encouraging Muslims with suitable ideological motivation to enlist in jihadi organizations. On October 24, 2014, one of them, **Hamza Sami Sari Magamsa**, along with two friends, underwent training at an ISIS camp in Syria (News1.co.il, November 24, 2014).

The death of Ahmed Muhammad al-Habashi from the village of Iqsal while he fought in the ranks of ISIS in Iraq

86. The Arabic and Israeli media reported that **Ahmed Muhammad al-Habashi, a young Israeli Arab who had joined ISIS**, was killed in battle in Iraq during the first half of October 2014. His family is from the village of Iqsal near Nazareth. They said that at the beginning of 2014 he left Israel with four friends. They assumed he and his friends had crossed the border into Syria and joined ISIS. They were told he had

died, apparently killed in the region of Ramadi in Al-Anbar province in Western Iraq (Haaretz.co.il, October 12, 2014).



Ahmed Habashi, an Israeli Arab from the village of Iqsal (Facebook, October 21, 2014).

Israeli Bedouin join ISIS

87. **Othman Abu al-Kiyan**, 26 years old, from the Bedouin village of Houra in the Negev, left the country with a relative named **Shafiq Abd al-Kiyan** to join ISIS. Othman Abu al-Kiyan was killed in Syria at the beginning of September 2014 while fighting in the ranks of ISIS. He studied medicine at Irbid University in Jordan, graduated in May 2014 and was interning at the Barzilai Medical Center in Ashqelon in the south of Israel (Haaretz.co.il, September 20, 2014). According to the Israeli media, Othman Abu al-Kiyan was the second al-Kiyan family member killed in Syria. Another, who was a teacher, was also killed fighting in the ranks of ISIS (Nana10.co.il, November 4, 2014).



Othman Abu al-Kiyan (Photo courtesy of Barzilai Hospital, October 19, 2014).

88. **Idris Abd al-Kiyan**, brother of Othman Abu al-Kiyan, lives in Houra and is a Salafist-jihadist. He helped Othman and Shafiq finance and coordinate their trip to Syria. He was charged with conspiring to commit a felony and supporting an illegal departure from Israel (Shabak.gov.il, November 9, 2014). The Israeli media reported that during interrogation he confessed **he knew about Othman and Shafiq's intention to go to Syria and helped them coordinate their trip via Turkey**. He also gave them money to pay for the trip and provided them with information about local residents who could help them. According to his interrogation, he used the social networks to conduct most of his contacts with terrorist operatives (Israelnationalnews.com, May 27, 2014).

Section Seven – ISIS's propaganda machine

Overview

1. **ISIS regards the battle for hearts and minds as particularly important and invests enormous resources in it**, among them skilled manpower and large sums of money. ISIS has an **effective propaganda machine** that produces impressive amounts of **media materials**. It is run by skilled professionals from Iraq and Syria, as well as **media personnel from other Arab-Muslim countries and the West**. A prominent figure is an ISIS spokesman, a Syrian nicknamed **Abu Muhammad al-Adnani**. The Internet, especially the social networks, **is ISIS's main tool for spreading its ideology and political agenda. It is also used to recruit foreign fighters and raise funds.**

2. ISIS's military achievements, including the attack in Iraq in June 2014 and the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate, were accompanied by **an effective propaganda campaign which turned ISIS into an international brand**. It used psychological warfare to frighten its rivals and enemies and horrify world public opinion (by beheading Western captives, for example).

3. On the other hand, ISIS carefully controls the information reported about it. It deals harshly with foreign correspondents and local journalists who do not obey its guidelines and supervises the visits of representatives of Western and Arabic newspapers to territories under its control. According to the November 14, 2014 UN report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic entitled "Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria,"¹⁰⁷ paragraphs 39-42 (ITIC emphasis),

"ISIS has sought to control the flow of information in the areas it controls. Scores of Syrian journalists and human rights activists have been abducted, disappeared, tortured and executed. Their targeting largely failed to attract widespread media attention. As early as June 2013, ISIS began to abduct and torture Syrian journalists in Aleppo and Ar-Raqqah governorates. Former prisoners stated that the most brutal treatment inside ISIS detention centres was meted out to those suspected of being part of other armed groups, **local media workers, and fixers working with international journalists.**

¹⁰⁷http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/HRC_CRP_ISIS_14Nov2014.pdf

"One journalist, abducted in June 2013, was beaten in the ISIS detention centre in Jarablus (Aleppo) accused of being a spy. Another Syrian journalist, held in an ISIS detention centre in Ar-Raqqa governorate in January 2014, was beaten and, upon release, was threatened with death if he photographed or filmed any of the armed group's activities, with one fighter telling him "we will make sure you will never again be able to do anything on top of the earth.

"In October and November 2013, journalists working for international television channels were killed in Aleppo city. Since that time, media workers have disappeared in 8 ISIS-controlled areas; their fate and whereabouts remain unknown. On or about 19 August and 2 September 2014, ISIS executed two American journalists. On 13 September 2014, the group executed a British aid worker. All three had been abducted and detained inside Syria. The group filmed the executions, attempting to impact international policy and the anticipated aerial attacks on their positions.

"Journalists and activists working to document the violations and abuses suffered by their local communities under ISIS have been denied their special protection under international humanitarian law and have been disappeared, detained, tortured and killed".

4. **In the battle for hearts and minds ISIS has been very successful in a relatively short period of time.** ISIS, which in its various incarnations over the years did not gain much attention, almost overnight **broke onto the political-media stage** and **turned into a popular brand**. The leading Western and Arab media frequently quote its political messages and have given it a pulpit for its jihadi ideology. The campaign against ISIS declared by the United States (with support from public opinion, which was shocked and horrified by ISIS's atrocities), put ISIS in the forefront of global jihad organizations and increased its attraction for the many Muslim communities around the globe.

ISIS media

5. ISIS has media outlets which disseminate the organization's propaganda to its designated media branches, the most important of which are the **Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production, the Al-I'tisam Media Foundation, the Alhayat Media Center and the Ajnad Media Foundation:**

1) **The Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production** – The literal translation of *al-furqan* is "standard, criterion," for judging the difference between truth and lies. **It is also a name for the Qur'an.** It is ISIS's oldest media branch for producing propaganda, especially videos. The Al-Furqan Institute was established in 2006, along with the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). At the time it served ISI and today it serves ISIS. It is ISIS's official media bureau and receives its material from the

organization's leadership. A video of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi delivering a sermon in a mosque in Mosul was originally uploaded to YouTube by **Al-Furqan Media**.



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi delivers a sermon at a mosque in Mosul. The Al-Furqan logo is the upper left hand corner (YouTube)

The Al-Furqan logo. It reads, "The Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production."

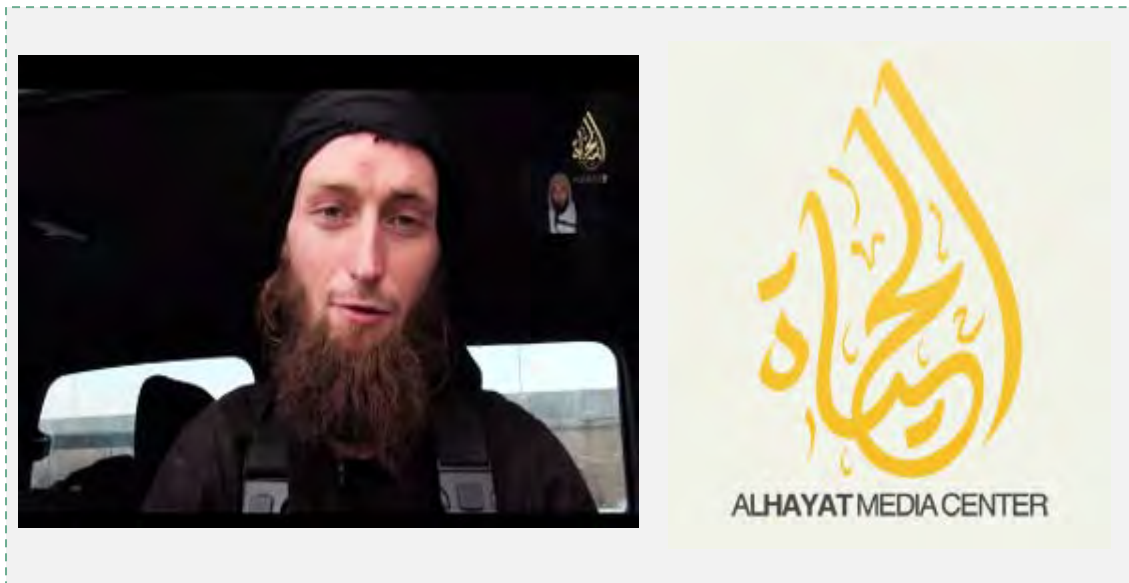
2) **The Al-I'tisam Media Foundation** – *Al-i'tisam* means "sit-in," or "request for protection" (in this case, from Allah). It is a production institution that has made and distributed propaganda videos for ISIS for the past two years.



Documentation of nighttime mortar shell fire in Diyala province in Iraq. The video was produced by the Al-I'tisam Media Foundation.

The Al-I'tisam logo

3) **The Alhayat Media Center** – The Alhayat Media Center is relatively new and **targets mainly Western audiences**. It produces and apparently also distributes a great deal of propaganda material, including videos. One of its objectives is to



An Alhayat Media Center production of a German-speaking ISIS spokesman praising Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's Islamic State (Plus.google.com)

The Alhayat Media Center logo, similar to Qatari Al-Jazeera's logo (Alplatformmedia.com)

4) **The Ajnad Media Foundation** – ISIS launched the Ajnad Media Foundation in January 2014. It specializes in broadcasting jihad songs and Islamic vocal music.

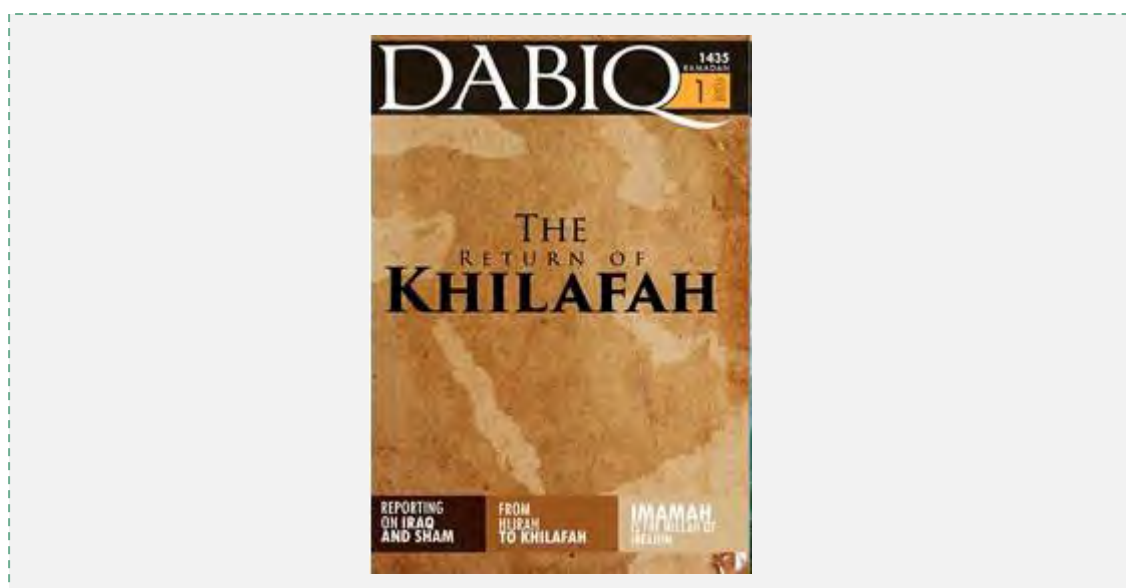


Logo of the Ajnad Media Foundation

ISIS online magazines

6. ISIS has several Internet magazines:

1) **Dabiq** – The Alhayat Center published the first issue of **Dabiq**,¹⁰⁸ an **English-language magazine**, on July 5, 2014, entitled "The Return of Khilafah." The second and third issues were published in September 2014, and the fourth on October 12, 2014. Some of **the articles in the fourth issue** were the following: quotes from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and other past and present senior ISIS figures; a discussion of the *hadith* (part of the oral tradition) explaining that it was legal to take booty from war because Allah authorized it; justification for enslaving the Yazidi with *hadiths* on slavery; information about military and administrative actions taken by the Islamic State; the so-called failures of the American campaign against the Islamic State; **a call to kill "Crusaders" (i.e., Western civilians) in every country that joined the alliance against the Islamic State, and to target "citizens of the Crusader countries" wherever they might be found**; justification for the execution of the American correspondent Steven Sotloff.



The first issue of Dabiq magazine

2) **Islamic State News (ISN)** – The Islamic State News is also an online magazine targeting audiences outside Syria and Iraq. It publishes Salafist-jihadi opinion pieces. It also gives updated reports in English and other languages

¹⁰⁸ According to a *hadith* attributed to Abu Harairah, one of the companions of Muhammad, a decisive battle is supposed to be held between the Muslim and Christian armies in the city of Dabiq in northern Syria, where the Muslims will be victorious. "...the reference is to a hadith often quoted by Abu Musab al Zaqawi [sic] that predicts Dabiq as the place where Islam will win a great victory over the infidels, so leading to world domination and the end of times" (Barrett, "The Islamic State," p.61).

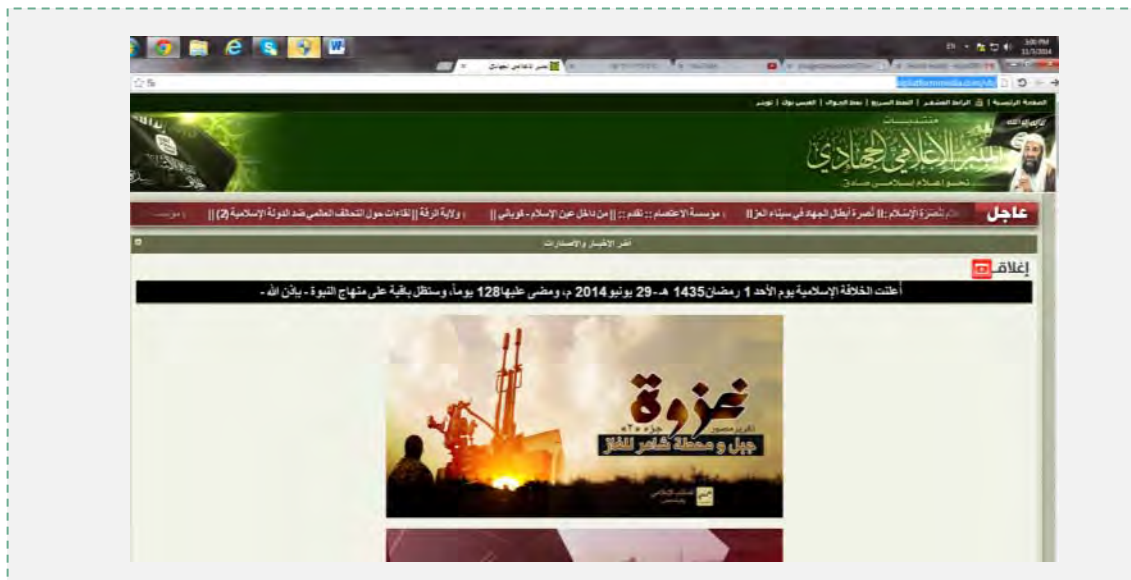
about the organization's activities. ISIS also posts the **Islamic State Report (ISR)**, which has articles about events and the organization's agenda.



An Islamic State News cover

Forums and Internet sites

7. ISIS recently launched an official Arabic-language forum called **Al-Minbar Al-'Ilami Al-Jihadi**.¹⁰⁹ It posts notices, videos, pictures and information about ISIS. ISIS also has the **Hanein.info forum** which posts pictures, articles and videos (at the beginning of November 2014 Hanein.info was inactive; it may be reactivated).



The Al-Minbar Al-'Ilami Al-Jihadi forum's homepage. A picture of Osama bin Laden is at the right and an ISIS flag is at the left. The lower inscription reads, "The Islamic State – The Caliphate of the straight path."

¹⁰⁹ Alplatformmedia.com/vb

8. **ISIS has a site for visual materials**, with a mirror site.¹¹⁰ It has videos dealing with ISIS's ideology, its founders (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir) and its current leader, **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. It also has videos commemorating ISIS operatives who were killed and various types of propaganda.



Website for Islamic State visual materials can be had at [Dwi-is-appspit.com](http://dwi-is.appspot.com). The site's founders assumed the site would have so much traffic they created a mirror site.

The West and Muslim communities in the West as important target audiences

9. **ISIS makes intelligent use of the Internet, especially the social networks, to send messages to specific target audiences.** Most important to ISIS are the **Western countries and their Muslim communities**. Intensive propaganda aimed at them is intended to **deter the West from attacking ISIS; increase the image of the organization's strength; frighten Western public opinion; spread ISIS's jihad ideology to the Muslim communities in the West and encourage foreign fighters in Western Muslim communities to enlist in the ranks of ISIS.** Its propaganda activities include posting notices, videos, audio messages and pictures. So far its strategy has been very successful and it has positioned itself as the West's number one enemy and gained support from the Arab-Muslim street, jihadi organizations and Muslim communities in the West.

¹¹⁰ dawi-is.appspot.com

10. The social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, play an important role in ISIS's propaganda activity in the West.¹¹¹ **ISIS exploits its military successes**, such as its victories in northern Iraq and the executions of its rivals and Western abductees, **for propaganda to frighten and deter the West** and to recruit foreign fighters. **Its propaganda demonized ISIS in Western public opinion** and played an important role in setting the stage for the campaign against ISIS initiated by the United States and its allies.

11. As a result of publicizing ISIS's violence and atrocities, its Facebook and Twitter accounts were closed, cutting it off from one of its main channels for spreading its propaganda. That forced it to look for new ways to disseminate its propaganda. It turned to less popular social networks, such as VK¹¹² and DIASPORA.¹¹³ Both of them are in competition with Facebook, and supervision of their contents is less strict. ISIS also uses other, less popular websites.

Examples of ISIS postings to Western audiences



Advertisement for an Islamic forum "archive" offering propaganda material, including material preaching jihad, translated into English by the Al-Hayat Media Center

¹¹¹ "New ISIS Media Company Addresses English, German And French-Speaking Westerners," (MEMRI.org, June 24, 2014).

¹¹² A social network launched in 2006. It is the largest in Europe and especially popular with Russian speakers. As of 2014, more than a hundred million people use it.

¹¹³ A social network launched in 2010, unique in its user protection. It allows the user to define a server for its material and also installs a private server, making inspection of the network's contents less strict.



Video preaching jihad, targeting Western audiences (MEMRI.org, June 24, 2014)



On June 17, 2014, Al-Hayat Media Center issued a vide with a song called "Let's wage jihad" (MEMRI.org, June 21, 2014)



The Islamic State News for July 1, 2014, glorifies ISIS's achievements. It is posted on Al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic forums (la902506.us.archive.org)

12. One example of encouraging members of Muslim communities in the West to join the jihad is an ISIS video posted on Islamic forums and YouTube in June 2014. An Australian who calls himself **Abu Yahya al-Shami** (apparently recently killed in Syria) appears in it. Abu Yahya al-Shami is apparently **Zakaria Ra'ed**, who was detained with three other extreme Islamists for beating a civilian in Sydney (claiming he used drugs and alcohol). In the video he called on Muslims to wake up to the humiliation the Muslims experienced in Palestine and Fallujah. When he finished speaking a masked operative called **Abu Nour al-Iraqi**, who according to the video was also an Australian, **called on the Muslims in Australia, Europe and America to join the jihad in Syria.**



Brother Abu Nour al-Iraqi (left) calls on Muslims in Australia, Europe and American to join the jihad in Syria.



An Australian nicknamed Brother Abu Yahya al-Shami records a message.

The campaign for the support of Muslims around the globe (2014): "A billion Muslims support the Islamic State"

13. Since ISIS's military achievements in the summer of 2014 and the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate ISIS had enjoyed support and solidarity in the Arab-Muslim world and the West. It is leveraging its achievements to increase its support in the Arab-Muslim world and in Muslim communities in the West with a media campaign to encourage enlistment in its ranks.

14. On **June 19, 2014**, ISIS began a campaign called "**A billion Muslims support the Islamic State.**" It called on its supporters around the globe to show their solidarity, suggesting they use Twitter accounts. Following the campaign ISIS posted a video to YouTube documenting the tweets sent from the West, the Arab world and Asia (Ukhuwa website, YouTube, June 21 and 23, 2014). Some of the tweets were the following:

The Middle East



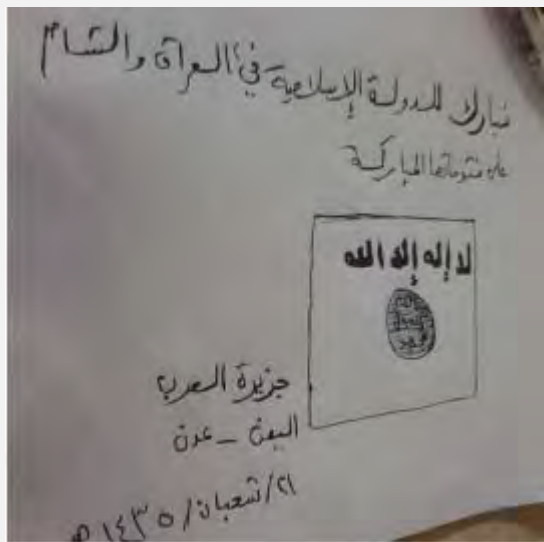
Support for ISIS on the Temple Mount
(YouTube, June 23, 2014)

The note reads, "The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham remains firm. Occupied al-Quds province (wilaya) (YouTube).



Support for ISIS in Morocco (YouTube, June 23, 2014)

Support for ISIS in Abu Dhabi (YouTube, June 23, 2014)



Support for ISIS in Aden, Yemen (Ukuwa website, June 21, 2014)

Support for ISIS in Tunisia (YouTube, June 23, 2014)



Support for ISIS at a rally held on June 20, 2014, in Ma'an, Jordan, (Ukhuwa website, June 21, 2014)

Support for ISIS in Benghazi, Libya (Twitter account of the "Billion Muslims for a Muslim state, June 22, 2014)

Europe



Note reading "The Islamic State remains firm, Rome," with the Colosseum in the background (YouTube)

Support for ISIS in Amsterdam (YouTube, June 23, 2014)



ISIS flag with Big Ben in the background (YouTube)



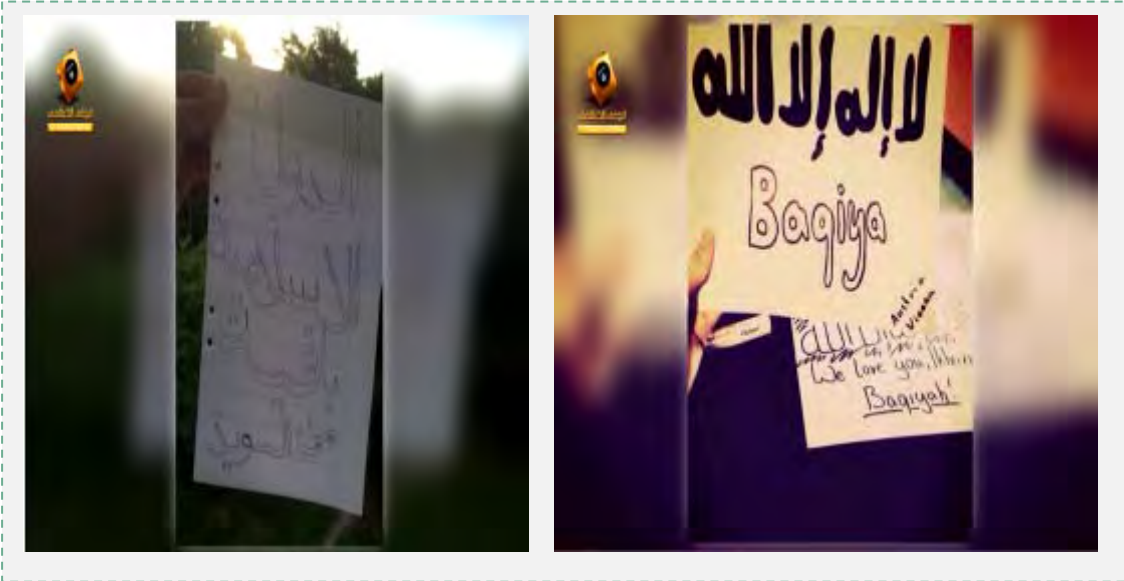
Note reading "The Islamic State remains firm...and expands" with the Eiffel Tower in the background (YouTube)



Support for ISIS in Germany (YouTube, June 23, 2014)



Support for ISIS in Switzerland (YouTube, June 23, 2014)



Support for ISIS in Sweden
(YouTube, June 23, 2014)

Support for ISIS in Vienna
(YouTube, June 23, 2014)



Support for ISIS in Belgium (Dotmar.com, June 22, 2014)

The United States



A note supporting ISIS with downtown Chicago in the background (MEMRI.org, June 30, 2014. The photo originated in a Twitter account, June 20, 2014).



Support for ISIS with the Lower Manhattan, skyline in the background (MEMRI.org, June 30, 2014. The photo originated in a Twitter account, June 20, 2014).

Asia



Pakistanis support ISIS with a notice about the establishment of the Islamic State, headed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (YouTube)



Support for ISIS in Afghanistan (YouTube, June 23, 2014)



Support for ISIS in Cambodia
(YouTube, June 23, 2014)

Support for ISIS in Turkey reading, "The
Islamic State remains firm and expands,
with the help of Allah – Operation A Billion
Muslims in Support of the Islamic State"
(YouTube)

Section Eight – The American campaign against ISIS

The United States' underestimation of ISIS

1. With the US military pullout from Iraq, the Americans believed that the Iraqi Army, in whose reestablishment the US invested considerable resources, would be able to respond to threats posed by the ISI (from which ISIS emerged). The consolidation of the global jihad in Syria and the establishment of ISIS were not perceived by the Americans as a particular threat. America related to ISIS in the internal Syrian context, as a potential but not immediate security threat, whose very existence complicated the Syrian civil war and made it difficult for the Americans to provide support for the rebel organizations.

2. **President Obama admitted after the fact that the Americans had underestimated ISIS's capabilities and danger**, and overestimated the Iraqi army's ability and motivation to fight the extremist organizations. President Obama said as much to a reporter on September 28, 2014. Asked whether he agreed with the statement by Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper about underestimating ISIS and overestimating the Iraqi army he answered, "That's absolutely true" (CBS News, September 28, 2014).

3. **During 2013, the threats of terrorism and subversion from operatives who joined the ranks of the global jihad in Syria** became apparent. Nevertheless, the American concept was still that the risk of "Syria veterans" **was relevant mainly to the countries of Europe**, where most of the Western fighters in Syria came from, and not to the United States, where relatively few came from. The American concept changed gradually, but in earnest when the number of foreign fighters grew and ISIS achieved significant military victories in Iraq, particularly the occupation of Mosul.

The change in the perception of the threat posed by ISIS and formulating an American response

4. **The American perception of the threat posed by ISIS changed after its military achievements in June 2014, mainly the capture of Mosul and the declaration of the Caliphate State.** The collapse of the Iraqi army in Mosul showed the United States and other Western countries that ISIS was a **dangerous jihadi organization and a threat to America's Middle East assets. It also showed that**

ISIS might to export terrorism and subversion. In addition, ISIS's dramatic successes in Iraq indicated that **a decade of US military presence in Iraq had failed**, and sparked internal American political disputes.

5. **ISIS's propaganda campaigns also contributed to the change in the American position. Videos of beheadings of Western hostages, massacres of ethnic and religious minorities and the mass exodus of residents from areas captured by ISIS in Iraq all magnified the image of ISIS as a threat to the United States and other Western countries and contributed to its demonization in the US and the West.** They also led American (and Western) public opinion to support the campaign against ISIS.

6. The American response to the threat of ISIS **since June 2014 has consisted of two stages:**

A. **In the first stage (June to mid-September 2014),** the American response was limited and pinpointed. It included aerial attacks, sending American advisors, increasing intelligence surveillance and providing humanitarian aid to communities in need. The limited response was intended primarily to help local forces (especially Kurdish forces and the Iraqi army) protect US assets in Iraq. During the first stage, the American response focused on aerial attacks in Iraq, without action in Syria.

B. **In the second stage (beginning in the second half of September 2014),** when it became clear that limited reactions were not a significant response to the threat posed by ISIS, President Obama outlined a **comprehensive strategy for a long-term campaign.** It was designed to degrade the power of ISIS until its destruction. The strategy was based on intensive aerial attacks, reinforcing local forces and damaging ISIS's centers of power **by means of an American-led international coalition. The United States still did not send American ground troops to fight in Iraq or Syria** ("boots on the ground"). With the new strategy in place, **the United States and its allies began an aerial campaign against ISIS in Syria and Iraq.**

The limited American response (June – mid-September 2014)

7. After ISIS captured Mosul, when it became apparent that the organization represented a threat to important interests of the US and its allies in the Middle East, **America began to confront it directly.** The first stage of American response consisted of cautious, limited reactions in Iraq, intended to **assist the local forces** (the Iraqi army and the Kurdish forces) and **prevent their collapse in the face of the momentum of the ISIS offensive.**

8. In late June 2014, in the wake of ISIS's military achievements, **the US sent American military advisors to Baghdad, members of the Special Forces,** to assist the Iraqi army. The United States also increased its intelligence collection in northern Iraq. However, **the Americans made it clear at this stage they did not intend to send ground troops to fight ISIS on Iraqi soil.**

9. The reports of ISIS's massacres of the Yazidi, and fear of destabilizing pro-Western countries in the Middle East such as Jordan and Lebanon, **impelled the United States to increase the intensity of the aerial attacks to address the emerging crisis in Iraq.** On August 8, 2014, the US began to attack ISIS positions in Iraq in several sites: the **Erbil region** (assisting in the defense of the Kurdish autonomy), the **Sinjar Mountains** (supporting the besieged Yazidis), and the **Mosul dam area** (helping the Kurds regain control). The US also provided **humanitarian aid in the city of Amerli** (where members of the Turkmen Shi'ite minority were besieged). At this stage, the American activity was limited and included sporadic aerial attacks on ISIS targets and humanitarian aid drops.

10. The targets attacked by the Americans until mid-September 2014 included ISIS positions, trucks, artillery batteries and armored vehicles. In his speech in the Senate (September 16, 2014), US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said that the US had carried out **more than 160 successful aerial attacks** causing the deaths of ISIS operatives, destroying weapons and equipment and enabling Iraqi security forces and Kurdish forces to regain control of occupied territory and key infrastructures, including the Mosul and Haditha dams.

Outlining a comprehensive strategy for the campaign against ISIS (US President Barack Obama's speech on September 10, 2014)



President Barack Obama outlining the American strategy in his speech (Whitehouse.gov, September 10, 2014)

11. The new American strategy was formulated in late August and the first half of September 2014. The new strategy was reflected in President Barack Obama's **speech to the nation on September 10, 2014**. He presented ISIS as a **brutal terrorist organization threatening the entire Middle East (including US assets), and said that if left unchecked, it would also directly threaten the United States**. He noted that so far no attempt by ISIS to carry out attacks in the US had been detected but there was concern that foreign operatives who fought in its ranks would return to their countries of origin and seek to carry out terrorist attacks.

12. Obama outlined a **comprehensive strategy for a multi-dimensional campaign against ISIS, carried out by an international coalition led by the United States which would take several years** (i.e., even during the next American administration). The objective of the campaign was to neutralize ISIS's threat to the West **until it could be destroyed** ("we will degrade and ultimately destroy ISIL"). However, the President reiterated that in contrast to wars waged by the US in Afghanistan and Iraq,

he would not send American ground troops to fight in Iraq or Syria.¹¹⁴ Obama's strategy was approved by Congress and **its implementation began in the second half of September 2014.**

13. **The following are the key elements** of the American campaign as expressed in President Obama's speech and other statements, as well as remarks made by senior officials, and American media reports:

A. A systematic and ongoing air campaign against ISIS: Aerial attacks will be carried out **in Iraq and Syria.** They will be directed against senior ISIS operatives and the organization's logistical and operational infrastructure, in cooperation and coordination with the Iraqi government implying that the Americans are reluctant to cooperate with the Syrian regime).

B. Military support for local forces fighting against ISIS in Iraq and Syria: They include **Iraqi security forces, Kurdish forces, and the so-called moderate Syrian opposition.** On September 26, 2014, **General Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,** told reporters that **between 12,000 and 15,000 fighters** would be necessary to take control of the area controlled by ISIS.¹¹⁵ American support for the rebels will be provided in the following ways:

1) **Sending American military personnel to Iraq on support missions:**

a) American military personnel will assist local forces with training, intelligence and operation of equipment and weapons, **but not in direct combat against ISIS.** President Obama made it clear, saying, "As I have said before, **American forces will not have a combat mission – we will not get dragged into another ground war in Iraq.**"

b) **A limited number of military personnel will be sent to Iraq:** President Obama said he would send **475 American troops** to Iraq to join the Americans already there. On September 16, 2014,

¹¹⁴ President Barack Obama said that extreme circumstances might arise in which the United States would deploy ground forces, for example, if ISIS were found to be in possession of nuclear weapons and a campaign was necessary to eliminate them. On the other hand, American Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel was more cautious. He said that the administration might consider the recommendation of the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to station ground troops in Iraq to aid local forces. However, he added: "[...] these would not be fighting forces [...] there will be no American combat troops in Iraq or Syria [...]" (CNN, November 16, 2014).

¹¹⁵ The ITIC finds this estimate too optimistic. Such an order of battle is not sufficient to take over extensive areas in Syria and Iraq, held by ISIS and its allies, and certainly not to control them over time.

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said that at the end of the process, when all the US troops had arrived, **an estimated 1,600 American soldiers would remain in Iraq** to serve as trainers and coordinators of operations and to assist the Iraqi Army and Kurdish forces. There were **1,414** American advisers in Iraq in early November 2014. They included **600 military personnel** in advisory roles at joint operations centers. They also operate in Baghdad and Erbil and at headquarters at the division level and above (The New York Times, November 2, 2014).

c) On November 9, 2014, President Obama announced that **1,500 additional soldiers were about to be sent to help train Iraqi soldiers and Kurdish militias** (CNN, November 9, 2014). That would **almost double** the initial number of military personnel that the United States was expected to send to Iraq.

d) **Assistance in training anti-ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq:**

1) The US intends to implement a program **to train 5,000 fighters from the so-called moderate rebel organizations in Syria for one year**. The training will take place in **Turkey and Saudi Arabia** (The New York Times, November 2, 2014).¹¹⁶

2) The Turkish media reported that America and Turkey had reached an agreement **to train 2,000 Syrian opposition fighters**. During the first phase they would use the Kirsehir army camp in the heart of Anatolia, where Turkey trains its Gendarmerie forces. The Syrian fighters will be trained under American-Turkish supervision (Aydinlik.gazete.com). However, according to the Turkish newspaper Hürriyet, Turkey will apparently refuse to allow the training of Kurdish militia fighters in Syria on its territory and they will be trained by the Americans in the Kurdish autonomy in Iraq (Hürriyet.com.tr, November 15, 2014).

¹¹⁶ According to an article in The Washington Post, the US administration is considering increasing the role of the CIA in training fighters in Syria, as part of the clandestine aid provided to moderate rebel organizations. According to officials, the CIA is currently testing and training about 400 combat soldiers each month. That is the number of combat soldiers that the Pentagon expects to train when its program peaks at the end of 2015 (The Washington Post, November 14, 2014).

3) According to American Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on November 16, 2014, the United States is in the process of setting up **four training centers for the Iraqi and Kurdish forces in Iraq**. He said that the government was expediting the processing of Iraqi requests for arms, equipment and supplies.

C. Financial aid:

1) The White House said that President Obama had approved the **immediate transfer of \$25 million in military aid to Baghdad and the Kurdish region**. At the same time, he urged Congress to approve his **\$500 million plan recommended by the Pentagon for training and arming the so-called moderate rebels in Syria**. However, he made it clear that in the fight against ISIS, “we cannot rely on an Assad regime that terrorizes its own people.”

2) According to the Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, the American army estimates that the amount will cover the annual cost of **training and equipping for more than 5,000 opposition operatives (in Syria)** for one year. The aid package provided by the United States to the so-called moderate rebels will include light weapons, vehicles, basic military equipment (i.e., communications equipment) and strategic and tactical training.

D. Harming ISIS's sources of power:

1) The United States will **harm ISIS's sources of funding, improve its intelligence** relating to the organization, **fight its radical Islamic ideology**, and improve American **defense capabilities** in dealing with it, including **the problem of foreign fighters** who join ISIS.

2) American Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence **David Cohen** set out the strategy for **harming ISIS's funding sources** (October 23, 2014), saying “**Our strategy involves three mutually supportive elements**. First, we are working to **disrupt ISIL's revenue streams in order to deny it money in the first place**. Second, we aim to **limit what ISIL can do with the funds it collects by restricting its access to the international financial system**. And finally, we continue to **impose sanctions on ISIL's senior leadership and**

financial facilitators to disrupt their ability to operate [...]” (ITIC emphasis).

E. Further humanitarian aid to civilians and population groups which were harmed by ISIS: American Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel noted the assistance from the United States, Iraq, Britain, Canada and France to the Yazidi in **the Sinjar mountains** and the Shi'ite Turkmen in **Amerli**, specifying the amount of aid provided by America. In addition, American aid to displaced Iraqis **amounted to over \$186 million in the 2014 fiscal year**. Hagel added that the United States provided the greatest amount of support to millions of Syrians affected by the civil war (Secretary of State Kerry announced **the addition of \$500 million in humanitarian aid to Syria**, which has amounted to over \$3 billion since the beginning of the civil war).

14. Interviewed by CNN on October 1, 2014, General (Ret.) John Allen, who served in senior positions in Afghanistan and Iraq as special presidential envoy to coordinate the activities of the coalition against ISIS, discussed the **political objectives** of the campaign against ISIS. Regarding the campaign **in Iraq**, he said that from a United States perspective, the ultimate objective was **the establishment of an Iraqi sovereign state led by a government in Baghdad, which would control the entire territory of Iraq** and not just a single ethnic community. **In Syria**, he said, the intention was **to help moderate members of the opposition** to enable them to defend themselves against the Assad regime and Al-Qaeda-affiliated organizations. He said the process of training them **might take years**. He did not go into detail about the nature of the final political solution to be reached in Syria, but noted that **President Assad would not be part of it**.



General John Allen, special US envoy to the coalition against the Islamic State
 (Photo credit: Chad J. McNeeley/US Navy/DoD)

15. The words of General John Allen apparently reflect a certain degree of American optimism regarding the prospects of the United States to impose a sovereign Iraqi government on all the territory of Iraq, including all its ethnic communities. Such optimism may also express an American intention to **invest most of its efforts and resources in the campaign against ISIS in the Iraqi arena. As for Syria, the American expectation is apparently much lower** and is limited to strengthening the “moderates” who oppose the Bashar Assad regime. General John Allen (and other Americans who have spoken on the subject) **did not explicitly state** that their goal was to overthrow the Assad regime and did not elaborate on the nature of the final political solution to be reached in Syria.

Establishing the international coalition

16. Following President Obama's speech the United States initiated intensive diplomatic activity, led by the President and Secretary of State Kerry with the intention of forming as broad an international coalition as possible. The coalition is intended to reinforce American legitimacy to act against ISIS at home and abroad and to provide the campaign against ISIS with practical assistance, even if limited (clearly the United States will lead the campaign and bear the brunt of the military, financial and political burden). The coalition was formed mainly in the first half of September 2014 during the NATO summit in Wales (September 4-5, 2014) and at an international conference in Paris attended by about 30 countries (September 15, 2014). At the conferences

American officials met with potential **key partners**, after which the outlines of the new coalition began to emerge.

17. Many dozens of countries (over 60, according to the American administration) have declared their participation in the coalition. However, particularly important are **countries playing an active role in the campaign against ISIS**, which can be divided into three groups:

A. Western countries – So far **France** (which was the first country to realize its commitment),¹¹⁷ **Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and Denmark** have actively participated in aerial attacks in Syria.

B. Arab countries – So far, **Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain** have actively participated in aerial attacks in Syria. **Qatar, Kuwait and Egypt** support the coalition but have not yet actively participated in aerial attacks. **Egypt**, which is fighting terrorism at home, refused to actively participate in attacks against ISIS but announced that it would support the campaign against ISIS in other ways (political support, exchange of information, harming funding sources, providing an ideological Islamic response to the jihadi worldview of ISIS).

C. Turkey – Turkey is an important country in the coalition which, in ITIC assessment, is a **category in itself**. That is because on the one hand, it is assisting the United States and trying to avoid a rift with it: Turkey has agreed to train fighters of the so-called moderate Syrian rebel organizations on Turkish territory together with the United States, to train the Peshmerga forces in northern Iraq and to aid the Iraqi army. It also allowed the Kurdish forces to move reinforcements to the Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) front through Turkish territory (after prolonged hesitation and stalling). On the other hand, it does not actively participate in aerial attacks, does not effectively supervise its long border with Syria (ISIS's main logistics artery), and has hesitated to aid the Kurdish forces in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani). **That is because its political agenda and interests differ from those of the US.**

18. The coalition does not include **Russia and China**, because of global considerations and Russia's fundamental support for the Assad regime. **Syria** is also

¹¹⁷ On September 19, 2014, French fighter planes hit an ISIS target in Iraq for the first time. French President François Hollande announced that the French aerial attacks would be carried out in Iraq and not in Syria, and that France would not send ground troops to the campaign against ISIS.

absent from the coalition, perceived by the United States as part of the problem rather than part of the solution; also absent is **Iran**, which continues to encourage terrorism, undermine American interests in the Middle East and expand its political influence in Iraq and Syria. Thus cooperation with Iran would be problematic, although not impossible.

19. **In summary**, the coalition formed by the US is **heterogeneous** and its members have **their own differing interests, capabilities and constraints**. Countries in the coalition willing to be actively involved carry out military tasks in the anti-ISIS campaign in different locations: **Western countries** provide air support in Iraq, **but have reservations** (at least at this stage) **about operating in Syria** (possibly due to political and legal difficulties related to violations of Syrian sovereignty); **the Arab countries, however, do operate in Syria** but have so far not attacked in Iraq (probably due to the Iraqi government's refusal to allow the Sunni Arab countries to carry out air operations in its territory). **The members of the coalition are united in their fear of being excessively drawn into the Syrian and Iraqi fray**, which is manifested by **limited aid in aerial attacks and an absolute refusal to involve significant ground forces in combat**.

Limitations raised by the UN regarding the legitimacy of the campaign

20. Following President Obama's speech, the United States worked intensively to have the UN legitimize the campaign against ISIS. One step in that direction was the hearing **in the Security Council attended by foreign ministers, headed by Secretary of State John Kerry** (September 19, 2014). The Security Council issued a statement calling on UN members to help the Iraqi government fight ISIS. It also called for the prosecution of those who violated international humanitarian law in Iraq and committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

21. **On September 24, 2014, President Obama led a hearing of heads of state at the UN Security Council**. He focused on the need "to confront the real and growing threat of foreign fighters." He also noted that American intelligence agencies estimated that **more than 15,000 foreign fighters from more than 80 countries** had gone to Syria in recent years. Many of them joined the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Nusra Front and ISIS, and constitute a threat to the residents of Syria and Iraq and to their own countries of origin. President Obama called on the Security Council to adopt

resolutions calling on all countries to prevent the recruitment, organization, passage and equipping of foreign fighters (Whitehouse.gov. September 24, 2014).

22. On September 24, 2014, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2178 (under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter¹¹⁸). It requires countries to take certain steps to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat.

23. Main points of the resolution:

A. Highlighting the threat posed to the international community by “foreign terrorist fighters” who join organizations such as ISIL,¹¹⁹ the Al-Nusra Front (ANF) and other organizations (in Syria and Iraq) affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

B. Calling on the various countries to take effective measures to "prevent and suppress recruiting, organizing, transporting, and equipping of foreign terrorist fighters, and the financing of foreign terrorist fighter travel and activities."

C. Appropriate preparation of the various countries in the area of legislation, which will ensure that their legal system and regulations allow the prosecution of foreign fighters, or the prosecution of those who help them, and their penalization in a manner consistent with the gravity of the offense.

D. Improving international cooperation in all matters related to preventing foreign fighters from leaving for Syria and Iraq and to preventing them from passing through the various countries.

E. Emphasizing the need for all countries of the world to cope with “violent extremism” among local communities and NGOs, which may find expression in terrorism (**Note: For reasons of political correctness, the terms “Islamic extremism” or “violent Islamic extremism” are not used**).

24. Hence the UN Security Council **resolution** granted legitimacy to international cooperation in **coping with foreign fighters**. However, **it does not deal with the civil war in Syria and Iraq**, the two morasses in which ISIS and the other jihadi organizations thrive, and the roots of jihadi Islamic terrorism. Thus, any resolution

¹¹⁸ According to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council is authorized, in the event of a “threat to peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression” to impose sanctions on a particular country and to allow the use of force against it.

¹¹⁹ The resolution used the term ISIL rather than ISIS.

focusing only on foreign fighters deals with one of the symptoms of the problem and not with the problem itself.

Aerial attacks in Syria and Iraq within the new strategy

25. **September 23, 2014**, two weeks after President Obama's speech, **marked the beginning of the air campaign against ISIS**, called "**Operation Inherent Resolve.**" In the early hours of the morning, the United States, with the help of some of its allies, carried out large-scale aerial attacks against ISIS targets in Syria. They focused on targets in the area of Al-Raqqah, ISIS's "capital city" in Syria, and also attacked other ISIS targets in eastern Syria (Al-Hasakah, Deir al-Zor, Abu Kamal) and targets of a terrorist organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda called Khorasan (See below). **It was the first time that the United States had attacked targets in Syria since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011.**

26. Between the end of September 2014 and the end of October 2014, the United States and its allies carried out **more than 632 aerial attacks in Iraq and Syria. Of the aerial attacks, 553 were carried out by the US and 79 by other members of the coalition. In Iraq**, 346 aerial attacks were carried out and **in 286 in Syria** (Al-Jazeera, October 24, 2014). The United States was joined by **aircraft of Arab countries in Syria, and by aircraft of Western countries in Iraq**. In ITIC assessment, despite America's basic preference for aerial attacks **in Iraq**, the attacks in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) have diverted part of the American air effort to Syria.

27. The main targets of for aerial attacks are ISIS's military infrastructure, including **operatives, bases, outposts, headquarters, weapons, and command and control facilities**. So far, it the most impressive success of the aerial attacks **was apparently in Ayn al-Arab**, where they helped curb the efforts to take over the city, giving a breathing space the Kurdish forces fighting against ISIS.

28. In addition, the US and its allies are devoting considerable attention to **attacking the ISIS oil infrastructure** (mainly refining facilities), which represents ISIS's most important source of funding. As early as the start of the air campaign, the American Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that **13 aerial attacks have been carried out against 12 ISIS refining facilities in Al-Mayadeen, Al-Hasakah and Abu Kamal**. The strikes were carried out by American aircraft with aircraft from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Americans reported that according to initial evidence the

strikes were successful (Centcom.mil, September 24, 2014). On November 3-5, 2014, ISIS oil production facilities in Iraq were also attacked.

29. In late October 2014 the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that aerial attacks by the US and its allies had killed **at least 521 people**. The dead included **464 ISIS operatives, 57 Al-Nusra Front operatives and 32 civilians** (including six children and five women). In ITIC assessment most of the ISIS operatives (a few hundred) were killed in and around the city of Ayn al-Arab. The number of terrorist operatives killed so far is high (relative to the number of civilians), an indication of good intelligence on the part of the Americans and their allies (although the quality of this intelligence is liable to deteriorate as the strikes continue). On October 25, 2014, the US announced **the first death of an American soldier fighting against ISIS**. The casualty was a 19 year-old Marine, one of the soldiers fighting in Iraq against ISIS. He was killed in Baghdad in unclear circumstances.

The Khorasan terrorist network: another target for American attacks

30. Most of the American aerial attacks have been **directed against ISIS targets**. However, in the first 24 hours of the massive air offensive (October 23, 2014), **attacks were also directed at targets of a terrorist organization called Khorasan**, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, and against targets of the Al-Nusra Front, where Khorasan operatives were located. **General Martin Dempsey, Head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the American army**, said the targets attacked west of Aleppo belonged to the Khorasan terrorist network, which he called a group with significant explosives capability that had hatched a plot to attack American and Western interests immediately (Haaretz.co.il, and Reuters.com, September 24, 2014). The Khorasan network continued as a target of aerial attacks in November.

31. **Khorasan is a geographical term** predating Islam. It refers to the area of **modern-day Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan**. The term was preserved in Persia under the Sasanian Empire, and it is still used in Iran (it is the name of provinces in the eastern part of Iran). ISIS also uses this term in the maps of the Islamic Caliphate it distributes.

32. The Khorasan network was established by **Al-Qaeda operatives who came to Syria from Afghanistan and Pakistan**, at least some of them via Iran. They were several dozen operatives with operational experience who joined the Al-Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria) and operated under its auspices for approximately two

years. It came to the attention of the public when the US Attorney General told an interviewer that the United States had has been monitoring the group for about two years, and that in the summer of 2014 aviation security measures had been intensified in fear of planned attacks by the network (News.yahoo.com, September 26, 2014; Reuters.com, September 28, 2014).

33. The Khorasan network's leader is Muhsin al-Fadhli (aka Abu Osama the Kuwaiti), assumed to be about 33 years old. He was one of Osama bin Laden's close advisors and fought in Afghanistan and Chechnya. He was among a group of veteran Al-Qaeda operatives who fled from Afghanistan to Iran following the American invasion in 2001. In 2013, he went to northern Syria, where he met a group of veteran Al-Qaeda operatives and headed a network called Khorasan. In Syria he recruited operatives for terrorist attacks, mainly holders of Western passports. In 2012, the American Department of State offered a reward of \$7 million for information leading to the location of Muhsin al-Fadhli (State.gov, October 18, 2012; Reuters.com, September 28, 2014; News.yahoo.com, September 26, 2014).

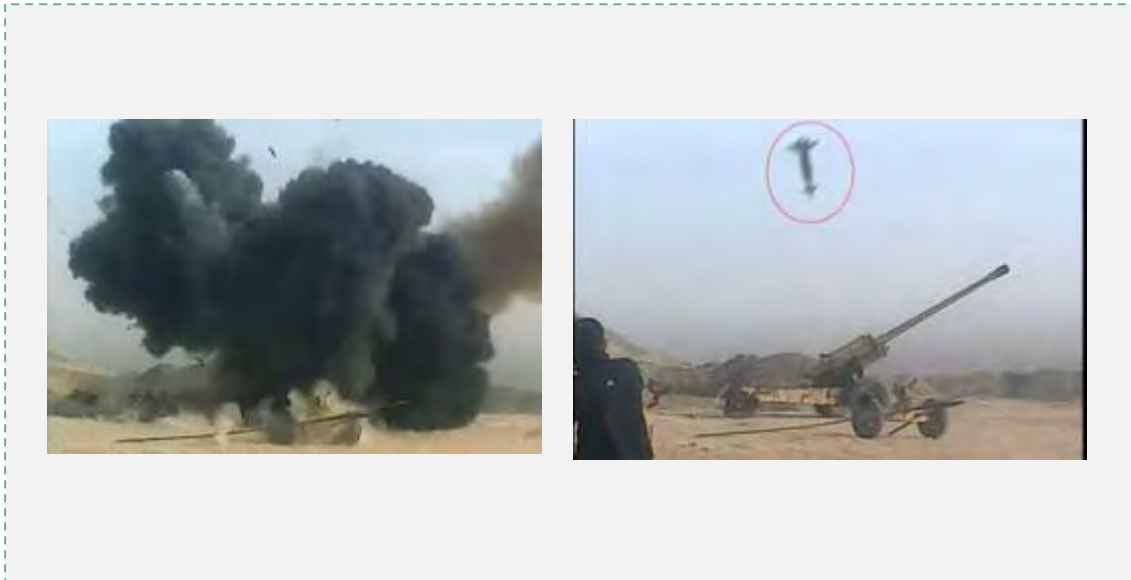


Muhsin al-Fadhli (State.gov)

Initial assessment of the aerial attacks' impact

34. It is too early to assess the impact of the aerial attacks on ISIS's military conduct or on its governmental and economic infrastructure. CENTCOM Commander General Lloyd Austin noted in a lecture that the coalition led by the US had the upper hand and had managed to reduce ISIS's ability (CNN.com, November 7, 2014). For example, he said that "They are afraid to congregate in any sizable formation. They know if we can see them, we're going to engage them and we're going to hit what we're aiming at."

He also said that the strikes had significantly **degraded the group's ability to communicate** and added that **the coalition was able to listen in on ISIS communications.**



ISIS's anti-aircraft weapon destroyed in an American aerial attack (YouTube, August 22, 2014)



US Air Force aerial attack in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani) (From a US Army video, October 23, 2014)

35. In a speech entitled “Attacking ISIL’s Financial Foundation”, American Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence **David Cohen addressed the first results of attacks on ISIS’s economic infrastructure** (October 23, 2014). He said, “There are good indications, however, that recent coalition **military have begun to impair ISIL’s ability to generate revenue from oil smuggling.** Airstrikes on ISIL oil refineries are threatening ISIL's supply networks are

depriving it of fuel to sell or use itself. Moreover, **our partners in the region, including Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government, are committed to preventing ISIL-derived oil from crossing their borders.** Last week, the International Energy Agency reported **that ISIL's ability to produce, refine and smuggle oil had been significantly hampered.**" (ITIC emphasis).

36. So far, in ITIC assessment **ISIS's military infrastructure has suffered blows as a result of the aerial attacks** (killing of operatives,¹²⁰ destruction of weapons, damage to headquarters and bases). ISIS's oil refining facilities in eastern Syria have also been damaged and as a result its revenues have dropped (although they are still much higher than those of other terrorist organizations). They also raised the morale of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and apparently of the Iraqi army. However, so far in ITIC assessment **the organization's military capabilities have not been significantly damaged and ISIS's ability to run the governmental infrastructure in the various districts has not been impaired.** ISIS's attractiveness to Sunni Muslims within and outside Syria and Iraq did not decrease following the aerial attacks; **it may even have increased.**

37. **The most significant result of the aerial attacks to date has apparently been curbing the ISIS onslaught in the city of Ayn al-Arab (Kobani).** Although the aerial attacks did not prevent the ISIS offensive in the city and the entire region, **they have helped the Kurdish forces stop ISIS from advancing and helped repel the forces from several places** (although it is too early to estimate the consequences of the attack on the city). **In Iraq** the aerial attacks helped the Iraqi army and Kurdish forces resist pressure by ISIS in centers of fighting in the province of Al-Anbar and in the north, but did not prevent ISIS from continuing its proactive military operation, or the organization's increasing pressure on Baghdad.

38. **ISIS is learning lessons from the losses and damage it has sustained in the aerial attacks.** According to a number of reports, ISIS is **gradually adapting to the new situation of continuous aerial attacks.** It is doing so by strictly enforcing security rules, making its military forces less visible, reducing the movement of its forces in open areas (moving in small groups using motorcycles and SUVs) and assimilating within the civilian population. That is liable to create future problems for the United States and its allies when updating the list of targets in Syria and Iraq prepared by intelligence services and to increase the risk of non-involved civilians

¹²⁰ According to the Syrian Monitoring Centre for Human Rights (November 22, 2014), 785 ISIS operatives and 72 Al-Nusra Front operatives were killed in the aerial attacks. A total of 52 civilians were also killed.

getting killed as the aerial attacks continue. In addition, ISIS's willingness to cooperate with other rebel groups, **including the rival the Al-Nusra Front**, has apparently increased to a certain degree.

The American campaign against ISIS: implications and chances of success

39. President Obama has set the US the **clear, but in ITIC assessment pretentious, goal of destroying ISIS with a comprehensive campaign of several years**. By setting the final goal as the destruction of ISIS, he has created **high expectations** for his and the next administration. Their ability to meet the expectations is of great importance. That is because the campaign extends beyond the narrow perspective of the war on terrorism, and its outcome will affect **the America's status the Middle East and around the globe for years to come**. Thus **not only is President Obama's foreign policy being tested, but the image of American regional and international power also faces a significant challenge**.

40. One question is whether the United States will succeed in the campaign against ISIS and realize the strategic goals set forth by President Obama. In ITIC assessment **it will be very difficult for America to achieve all the goals it set for itself, for the following reasons:**

A. **The political assumptions and goals, both declared and undeclared, which are at the root of the campaign against ISIS seem to be unrealistic:**

1) The intention to establish a **central democratic regime in Iraq**, which will impose its control over the whole country, failed even during the years the US maintained a large military force in Iraq. **The current goal is even more unrealistic**, after the US has withdrawn its troops from Iraq and the country is divided into its religious-sectarian components.¹²¹

2) **As for Syria**, it is impossible to rely on the so-called moderate rebel organizations to eradicate ISIS. That is because those organizations are

¹²¹ US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel pointed out in his speech that "Iraq's continued political progress toward a more inclusive and representative government - and its progress of reform and reconciliation - will be critical. We believe that Iraq's new Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, is committed to bringing all Iraqis together against ISIL [...]" (website of the Armed Forces Committee of the US Senate, September 16, 2014). In practice, however, the establishment of the Haider al-Abadi government (September 8, 2014) in place of the Nouri al-Maliki government did not increase the legitimacy of the Iraqi regime among the Sunnis.

fragmented, their military capabilities are limited and they lack effective leadership. Even if American aid strengthens the Western-oriented rebel groups to the point where they may be able to stand up to their enemies more successfully, it is still unlikely that they will be able to overcome the Assad regime and ISIS and other jihadi organizations.

B. The difficulty of uprooting an organization with a Salafist-jihadi ideology like ISIS: ISIS is not just an isolated terrorist organization whose influence is confined to a single territorial area. It is an organization with a radical Islamic ideology supported by Sunni population groups and drawing its strength from the disintegration of the social and governmental systems in Iraq, Syria and the Middle East as a whole. In Afghanistan and Pakistan the United States also failed to uproot the global jihad, although it did manage to weaken Al-Qaeda after it had invested considerable resources and a prolonged military presence (which is now coming to an end).¹²² Foreign fighters also join ISIS because of the political and social distress in the Arab-Muslim world and in Muslim communities in the West, and therefore it is not enough to streamline counterterrorist measures and strengthen international cooperation.

C. The limitations of military force in fighting against terrorist organizations: Aerial attacks against an organization such as ISIS, which has a well-formulated ideological worldview and enjoys the support of Sunni population groups, cannot lead to its elimination. In the Second Lebanon War and Operation Protective Edge, Israel learned the limits of military power in fighting Hezbollah and Hamas. Both are radical Islamist terrorist organizations, one Shi'ite and the other Sunni, which are firmly rooted within the local populations. Moreover, in ITIC assessment even the massive military involvement of American troops in Iraq and Syria (currently not on the agenda) **would not lead to the elimination of ISIS and the establishment of stable regimes** (during its stay in Iraq and Afghanistan, the American army learned first hand the limits of military force in imposing law and order and establishing an effective central government in societies divided both politically and socially).

¹²² On May 2, 2011, American forces carried out a targeted killing of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. In retrospect, it can be stated that killing bin Laden weakened Al-Qaeda but did not eradicate the global jihad organizations. Al-Qaeda's center in Afghanistan/Pakistan was indeed weakened, but in Iraq and Syria a new and more dangerous center was established. Approximately six months after bin Laden was killed, the ISI sent jihad operatives to Syria, where they established the Al-Nusra Front and initiated a process that subsequently created ISIS and helped change the balance of power in both Syria and Iraq.

D. The basic weakness of the local power centers that the United States relies on:

1) **The Iraqi Army**, in whose establishment the US has invested considerable resources and power, remains unmotivated and does not enjoy legitimacy among Sunni Muslims. The Iraqi Army may prove effective in protecting Baghdad and Shi'ite population centers, but not in occupying and controlling the Sunni areas where ISIS is based. It is doubtful whether additional American investments of money, military equipment and advisors to strengthen the Iraqi Army would change this basic situation.

2) **The Kurdish Peshmerga forces** may prove effective in protecting the Kurdish autonomous region, and possibly also in limited offensive operations. On the other hand, their effectiveness and motivation will be far lower in operations in Sunni and Shi'ite areas.

3) **The Iranian-supported Shi'ite militias in Iraq** may prove effective in protecting Baghdad and Shi'ite population centers. However, military aid to those militias will not provide them with offensive capabilities allowing them to occupy the Sunni areas that ISIS controlled. Moreover, strengthening the Shi'ite militias also come at the **price of increasing Iran's political influence in Iraq**.

4) **The so-called moderate Syrian rebel organizations:** The organizations are divided organizationally, differ from one another in ideology and are lacking effective (political and military) leadership. Aid from the United States and the West could strengthen their resistance against ISIS and the Syrian regime, but it is doubtful whether it would provide them with significant offensive capabilities against their enemies.

E. The weakness of the coalition supporting the US: It is a **heterogeneous coalition** with different political interests and constraints, limiting the scope of participation of the various countries. The coalition countries are expected to provide limited aid to the aerial attacks against ISIS. In addition, **Turkey**, which is of great importance, has interests and political constraints of its own and at least for the time being does not want to be deeply involved in the fight against ISIS. Moreover, in the future, if and when the coalition has to cope with difficulties, some of its members are liable to abandon

the campaign. The bottom line is that **the US bears the brunt of the fighting and will have to bear the consequences over the years.**

F. The major difficulty in effective cooperation with Bashar al-Assad's regime and with its supporter, Iran:

- 1) The Assad regime could have aided in fighting ISIS no less and maybe even more than most of the countries in the coalition and the so-called moderate rebel organizations supported by the United States. However, **America regards the Assad regime a factor in the process leading to the establishment of ISIS and the civil war in Syria, and not part of the solution.** Cooperation with it is liable to alienate the Americans from the Sunni Muslim population in Syria and undermine United States cooperation with the so-called moderate rebel organizations.
- 2) **Cooperation with Iran**, which has influence and presence in Syria and Iraq, is also **politically problematic.** Iran supports terrorism, strives for hegemony in the Middle East and to harm American influence in Syria and Iraq and to harm American allies (Israel, Saudi Arabia and Jordan). Although there may be future tactical collaborations against ISIS with Iran (and the Syrian regime as well), it is difficult to expect them to become key partners in the coalition.

41. Moreover, the American campaign, however long it lasts, is also **prone to entanglements, which are integral to the struggle against terrorism.** For example, it may increase the motivation of ISIS, global jihad organizations and supporters of ISIS around the world **to respond to the aerial attacks with terrorist attacks;** it may lead to **unintended casualties among the civilian population** as a result of the ongoing aerial attacks; **the US may be drawn into situations not included in the strategy announced by President Obama and his aides** (such as additional American troops getting more deeply sucked into the Iraqi morass and perhaps even the Syrian morass). All of the above are liable to **lead to domestic criticism and in Western countries if things go wrong** (and they are liable to go wrong), if only because of the very complex, fluid, volatile and changing nature of the civil wars in Syria and Iraq.

42. Beyond all those difficulties, **ISIS is a consequence of the disintegration of Syria and Iraq, a part of profound and powerful processes that have occurred in the Middle East in recent years.** The processes, known as the Middle East upheaval, **have changed the face of the regional political map as it was shaped after World War I and remained for nearly a century.** A new order has not yet emerged to replace nation states that have collapsed, and many opposing political and social forces are fighting for power. This is the nature of the morass from which ISIS and other jihadi organizations emerged, and until **the morass has been drained, a process that may take many years, it will be impossible to eradicate the weeds.**

Evaluation of ISIS's weaknesses

43. In recent months, ISIS has managed to brand itself in the Arab-Muslim world and in the West as a **powerful terrorist organization with exceptional capabilities.** Its military successes, its governmental consolidation and the fact that it has been joined by organizations and operatives, versus the weakness of its enemies and rivals, have fed this image, in some cases leading to **ISIS's enhancement beyond its actual power and capabilities.**

44. However, an analysis of ISIS's power and patterns of action indicates the organization's weaknesses and a certain vulnerability which the US might take advantage of. **Its main weaknesses are:**

A. **The large gap between ISIS's actual power and its pretensions:** ISIS has a **small core of operatives** (their number is estimated at between 25,000 to 31,000) through whom it controls **the millions of residents and significant parts of the territory of Iraq and Syria.** The small number of its operatives may make it difficult for ISIS to defend itself against massive military ground initiatives, if and when regular forces that are superior in terms of size and quality are deployed against it. Moreover, if ISIS's military power weakens significantly, **ISIS may find it hard to impose effective control** over the local population over time, **let alone realize its far-reaching ambitions** (taking over Iraq and Syria and other countries).

B. **The weakness of the coalition put together by ISIS in Iraq:** In ITIC assessment, it is a loose coalition composed of Salafist-jihadi organizations that have been joined by Sunni tribes and Ba'athist Iraqi military personnel and

officials from the time of Saddam Hussein. There is no ideological adhesive bonding them, and the cooperation between them is based on a convergence of interests, centering on hostility to Shi'ites and the central government in Baghdad (which is perceived as Shi'ite-affiliated). In addition, ISIS's excessively brutal methods and its attempts to enforce an extreme version of Islamic law **alienate it among its allies**, which may abandon it when circumstances change and the momentum of ISIS's military successes is brought to an end. The participation of tribes from the province of Al-Anbar in western Iraq in the fighting against ISIS alongside the Iraqi army, and disagreements that deteriorated into violent clashes between ISIS and a large tribe in the area of Deir al-Zor, illustrate the difficulty of preserving the coalition over time.

C. The large number of enemies versus the lack of significant allies in Syria: In the Syrian arena ISIS is forced to fight against the Syrian regime, while simultaneously having to cope with rebel organizations and the Al-Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria), both of which are hostile to it. Most of the Syrian population controlled by ISIS does not identify with its ideology and with the brutal coercion of its Islamic code of conduct. The Syrian regime, Iran and Hezbollah are hostile to ISIS and may try to harm it when circumstances permit. Moreover, the religious-sectarian schism in Syria may make it very difficult for ISIS to expand its control to other areas populated by those who are hostile to it (i.e., areas populated by Alawites, Kurds or Druze).

D. The centrality of ISIS's leader: ISIS has a **centralized hierarchical structure revolving around the charismatic character of its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. He is the head of the Islamic Caliphate and is the final arbiter on military, religious and governmental matters. He appoints ISIS's leadership and institutions him and their dependence on him is absolute (as far as the ITIC knows, there is no second in command who may inherit all of al-Baghdadi's powers in an organized fashion). Therefore, should **al-Baghdadi be out the picture, it could shake ISIS and weaken it significantly, even if it does not lead to its collapse**.

E. ISIS's economic vulnerability: ISIS's governmental and military capabilities rely heavily on **its high revenues from the infrastructure, mainly the oil infrastructure** (oil refining and smuggling oil products to areas not under ISIS's control). **An effective campaign against petroleum product smuggling and its production system may weaken ISIS at the military level**

and impair its ability **to provide the local population with a governmental alternative.** The United States is aware of that and from the start of the campaign has focused its aerial attack on the oil infrastructure held by ISIS. That, however, is insufficient. In the fight against the petroleum product smuggling networks, the United States will require the close cooperation of **Turkey** and the **Kurdish autonomous region** and, if possible, of **the Syrian regime** as well, **to block the smuggling ISIS uses.**

F. ISIS's ideology: ISIS represents a radical Salafist-jihadi interpretation of Islam dating back to the Middle Ages (the Hanbali school). Although it is **perceived as attractive by many young Muslims today, its school of thought is not accepted by most Muslims.** Many clerics in the Arab-Muslim world and in Muslim communities in Western countries object to both its radical interpretation of Islam and ISIS's acts of cruelty and brutality presented in the media. Most Muslims accept the moderate schools of thought. Therefore, military measures against ISIS **must be accompanied by a battle for hearts and minds** designed **to foster moderate Islam**, which finds expression in the Shafi'i and Maliki schools. **Egypt** (which is the target of a terrorist campaign) can play an important role and has indeed announced that it will support the fight against ISIS **by providing an ideological Islamic response to the worldview it represents.** In Western countries, the battle for hearts and minds must **cultivate the moderate streams in the local Muslim communities, coupled with further steps to reduce the sense of alienation and discrimination among them.**

45. In ITIC assessment ISIS's **main weakness is its limited power base within the Sunni population that either cooperates with it or surrenders to its authority.** Its collaborations with Sunni tribes and other Sunni power centers are a marriage of convenience based on temporary common interests, which may change as the political and military situations in Iraq and Syria change. Success in the military campaign against ISIS, coupled with an American policy of providing **massive assistance to influential figures and groups among the Sunni population in the areas under ISIS's control**, as the United States did in the past in Iraq, **may bear fruit in the campaign against ISIS.**

46. **If the US and its allies continue the campaign against ISIS**, investing a significant military effort in it over time, have the wisdom to take advantage of ISIS's weaknesses and not be deterred by serious side effects liable to accompany the campaign (casualties, terrorism, criticism from within and without), **then, in ITIC assessment, the campaign against ISIS may also have positive results. They will be more modest than the high expectations set by the United States, but they are more realistic.** In ITIC assessment, realistic expectations are the **weakening of ISIS** (as opposed to its destruction); **curbing the momentum of its expansion in Syria and Iraq** and possibly reducing its territorial assets; **improving the self-defense capabilities of local forces in Syria and Iraq and of the various countries in confronting ISIS's terrorism (in the West and the Middle East) and responding more effectively to the foreign fighters who travel to Syria and return to their countries of origin.**

Section Nine – ISIS response to the American campaign (updated to mid-November 2014)

Overview of ISIS's approach towards the United States and the West

1. Until the summer of 2014 ISIS focused its activities on expanding the territory under its control in Iraq and Syria. It paid relatively little attention to the United States and other Western countries, limiting itself mainly to attempts to frighten them through the media. The change in ISIS's policy occurred in the summer of 2014, when the United States identified ISIS as a serious political and security threat and initiated an international campaign against it.

2. **So far, ISIS's response has been in three stages:**

1) **Stage one**, which began at the end of June 2014, was a media campaign to sow fear and prevent the United States from intervening in Iraq to keep it from damaging ISIS. The campaign demonized ISIS in American and Western eyes, sometimes exaggeratedly so.

2) **Stage two** began on August 19, 2014, when ISIS publicly beheaded Western captives abducted in Syria and exposed the executions through the media. **So far five hostages (media correspondents and aid workers)** have been beheaded, **three American and two British**. The executioner was a black-clad ISIS operative with a British accent nicknamed "Jihadi John" (who was reportedly wounded in an aerial attack, which did not, however, prevent him from continuing to behead Western hostages). ISIS has other Western captives it may kill. The beheading of the captives demonized ISIS, shocked the world and contributed to America's change in tactics from pinpoint aerial attacks to a comprehensive campaign.

3) **Stage three** began in the second half of September, when **ISIS explicitly called on Muslims around the globe to physically attack Westerners in a variety of ways**. In ITIC assessment ISIS supporters have the capacity to answer the call sporadically, since **such methods do not necessitate external direction, particular operational skills or extended logistical preparations**. **The first signs of response from ISIS supporters were seen in Australia, Canada and possibly the United States and elsewhere.**

3. However, ISIS also sent signals to the United States and its coalition that **despite the massive aerial attacks it was determined to continue its military operations on the ground**. One manifestation is the still ongoing campaign to occupy Ayn al-Arab (Kobani). Another was the ISIS's military activity to establish its rule in Al-Anbar province as it moved towards Baghdad (apparently in preparation for the "campaign of Baghdad").

Psychological warfare (June 2014)

4. In June 2014 ISIS initiated a scare campaign against United States. It used the social networks to threaten the United States and warn it not to intervene in the events in Iraq:



ISIS threat against American citizens (Twitter)



ISIS threat against American citizens (Twitter)



ISIS threat against American citizens. The Arabic reads, "We have come to slaughter you." The blade of the knife has the Israeli flag, the American flag and the ISIS logo.



ISIS threat against American citizens (Twitter)

ISIS's Abduction of Western hostages

5. The terrorist organizations around the globe in general and Al-Qaeda in particular abduct Western hostages. In some instances the objective is ransom, and in others the hostages are executed either in revenge or to sow fear and deterrence. In Syria ISIS and the other organizations abduct hostages, although ISIS is choosy. It abducts **Westerners and Arabs** it considers high profile, such as correspondents, aid workers, human rights workers, Red Cross workers, etc.

6. **ISIS considers Western hostages, especially correspondents, important assets**, especially in view of the international campaign being waged against it.¹²³ In most instances it abducts Western hostages in planned attacks and in some cases appropriates hostages abducted by other organizations or is supported with information leading to abductions. Westerners are abducted for **ransom** (several million dollars per hostage) and to **sow fear in the West** (by beheading captives). ISIS also **uses the hostages to manipulate the media** (posting videos of captives making speeches dictated by ISIS).

7. According to an October 26, 2014 article in The New York Times, during the past year **at least 23 foreign nationals from 12 countries were abducted by organizations in Syria, especially ISIS**. Some of them were sold or transferred to ISIS and held for long periods in an underground prison in Al-Raqqah, ISIS's "capital city" in Syria. According to the article, in June 2014 seven hostages remained in Al-Raqqah, four Americans and three British subjects. According to former prisoners **15 European hostages were released between March and June 2014 after a ransom of \$2 million had been paid for each**.¹²⁴ According to the Daily Beast website, relying on information from senior members of the American administration, as of November 18, 2014, one hostage, a female American aid worker remained in ISIS captivity (Ynetnews.co.il, November 18, 2014).

8. The Western countries have two approaches to responding ISIS's demands: the tough American and British position of refusing to pay ransoms for the hostages **because that would encourage more abductions and turn them into desirable**

¹²³ **The FBI sent a bulletin warning of ISIS's to abduct correspondents**. The FBI received credible information that ISIS was planning to abduct correspondents, who were considered "desirable targets." The FBI also based its assessment on open source statements and international postings stating that American media personnel were legitimate targets for abduction in retribution for the American-led aerial attacks in Iraq and Syria (Washingtonpost.com, October 23, 2014).

¹²⁴ A jihadi forum posted an announcement from abducted British correspondent John Cantlie (See below). In it he said that **16 prisoners from six countries had been released after negotiations with the Islamic State**. He mentioned Germany, France, Denmark and Spain. However, he added, the United States and Britain refused to negotiate with the Islamic State. He said ISIS demanded the United States and Britain release Muslim prisoners and transfer them to the Islamic Caliphate in return for the Western prisoners (Al-Furqan Institute, October 25, 2014). The announcement was apparently intended to exert pressure on the United States and Britain to negotiate the terms of the hostages' release with ISIS.

targets,¹²⁵ and the position of the European and other countries that are prepared to negotiate and pay a ransom for the release of the hostages, either ignoring or downplaying other considerations.

Exploiting abducted correspondents for propaganda: John Cantlie

9. **John Cantlie** is a British correspondent and photographer abducted on July 1, 2012. With the aid of the Free Syrian Army he managed to escape and returned to Syria in November 2012, where he was again abducted. Since then he has been displayed in at least six propaganda videos (Bbd.com, October 27, 2014; Mashable.com, October 28, 2014).

10. In October 2014 ISIS exploited John Cantlie for propaganda purposes to signal the West about the campaign against it and to respond to the information published in the West about the fighting in Ayn al-Arab (Kobani). On October 13, 2014, ISIS issued a video in which Cantlie "reported" from the battlefield of Kobani. He said that the jihadists had dug in in preparation for the struggle. He also said that the West had been dragged into a war it could not win against thousands of armed men.

11. On October 27, 2014, ISIS issued another propaganda video, again of John Cantlie reporting from the battlefield of Kobani (BBC.com, October 27, 2014). He read a prepared four-minute statement. He said that since the area was closed to the media, the world received information about events in the region from the local Kurdish commanders or from news updates edited by the White House. None of them, he said, told the truth about what was really happening on the ground.

12. **According to Cantlie, ISIS had the upper hand over the Kurds despite the continuing American aerial attacks.** He added that the attacks prevented ISIS from using heavy armored vehicles as it would like, and its operatives were forced to use lighter arms in house-to-house fighting. He said ISIS had seized ammunition air-dropped by the United States for the Kurdish forces (Mashable.com, October 28,

¹²⁵ It was recently reported that President Obama asked for a reexamination of American policy regarding negotiations for the release of American hostages held by terrorist organizations. His request was made after criticism of how the administration functioned in dealing the issue of with hostages held by ISIS. The families of the hostages who were murdered complained that the White House had warned them not to pay the ransom demanded by ISIS, and that if they did they would be charged with committing a crime. Other families complained that the administration did not monitor information they provided about where the hostages might be held. It was also reported that there were differences of opinion between the White House/State Department and the FBI, which was in favor of paying ransoms (Haaretz.co.il, November 19, 2014, quoting the Daily Beast).

2014). It is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty whether or not John Cantlie was actually in Kobani. According to the spokesman for US Headquarters, which coordinates the aerial attacks in the region, there was no way to verify his presence.



John Cantlie reports from Ayn al-Arab (Kobani)
(from an ISIS media outlet video, October 27, 2014).

Carrying out threats: beheading abducted Western nationals

The roots of beheading in Islam

13. In the wake of the American aerial attacks, **ISIS began beheading Western hostages held in Syria**. So far five Western hostages, journalists and aid workers, have been beheaded. Three were American and two were British. Their executions **were accompanied by a media campaign to sow fear in the West and deter the United States and the Western countries from continuing their attacks on ISIS** (and at the same time to exert pressure on them to negotiate with ISIS either for ransom or the release of terrorists in return for the release of other hostages who appeared in the videos of the beheadings). ISIS also beheaded Syrian and Lebanese soldiers who fell into their hands.

14. Beheading is an ancient form of execution and not reserved to Islam. Since the earliest times it is known to have a negative psychological influence on the enemy's fighting spirit while various countries regarded it as a symbol of victory and a means of enforcing law and order.

15. However, **beheading also has deep Islamic roots**. The Qur'an calls for the execution of infidels and those who have strayed from the path of Islam with "a strike of the sword on their necks" as the desirable way of killing and also of sowing fear. It is customary to see an Islamic justification for beheading anyone considered an enemy of Islam or an infidel in the interpretation of the first lines of Sura 47 (Muhammad), Verse 4, which states "When you meet the disbelievers in battle, strike them in the neck." A similar interpretation is given to Sura 8 (Al-Anfal), Verse 12, which states, "I shall put terror into the hearts of the disbelievers – strike about their necks."¹²⁶

16. According to the Islamic sources, Abu Jahl, one of Muhammad's enemies, was beheaded in the Battle of Badr (624 AD). The sources state that Muhammad ordered men sent to kill his rivals. One of those murdered was Ka'b al-Ashraf, a poet who criticized Muhammad, whose severed head was brought to Muhammad. In addition, Muhammad was exclusively responsible for the sentences of death by beheading of 700 Jews from the Bani Qurayza tribe who had been accused of treason.¹²⁷

17. In addition, ISIS's use of beheading has "Iraqi" roots, in that it is part of **Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's personal legacy**. After the United States entered Iraq he concentrated most of his efforts on suicide bombing attacks in Iraq and on **abducting and beheading hostages of various nationalities in front of the camera for propaganda and to induce fear**.

¹²⁶ The Qur'an, translated by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, Oxford World's Classics, 2005.

¹²⁷ Reuven Berko, "The History of Violence," Israelhayom.com, September 5, 2014.



The legacy of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: American Nicholas Evan Berg, in Iraq on business, before ISIS beheaded him on May 7, 2014. The masked man in the center is apparently Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Shorouknews.com). Berg's was the first media-covered beheading, followed by others.

Beheading Syrian soldiers (from a video documenting the beheading of American aid worker Peter Kassig, November 2014)



Left: Knives distributed to ISIS operatives for beheading Syrian soldiers. Right: Leading Syrian soldiers to their death. Some of them may have been pilots. Unknown date.



Left: "Jihadi John" threatens President Obama while preparing to behead Syrian soldiers. According to media reports, two French citizens, two British subjects and two German citizens were identified among the executioners. According to French intelligence sources, a French citizen nicknamed "Abu Abdallah al-Faransi" was identified. A British student named Nasser Muthana was also identified (Ynetnews.co.il, November 18, 2014). According to AP a French citizen named Maxime Hauchard, who had converted to Islam, was identified in the picture. He went to fight in Syria in 2013, and claimed to have participated in the occupation of Mosul, Iraq (AP.org, November 17, 2014). Other ISIS operatives who were identified were Mickael Dos Santos, aka Abu Uthman, a French citizen from a Paris suburb who went to fight in Syria in the fall of 2013; and Abdel Majid Gharmaoui a jihad operative tried in Belgium in absentia (AFP.com, November 19, 2014). Right: ISIS operatives prepare to behead hostages. "Jihadi John" is the masked operative standing fifth from the right.

The beheading of American correspondent James Foley

18. On August 19, 2014, ISIS's Al-Furqan Institute issued a video called "A message for America." It documented the beheading of American correspondent **James Foley**. Foley, 40, was a freelance correspondent who worked for GlobalPost and Agence France-Presse. He was abducted in Syria on November 22, 2012. The ISIS operative who beheaded him had **British citizenship**. He claimed the beheading was **a response to the American aerial attacks in Iraq**. At the end of the video **Steven Sotloff** was presented as the next candidate for beheading; he would be killed if the Americans did not end their attacks in northern Iraq.



Documenting the beheading of James Foley (ISIS video, August 14, 2014)

19. After James Foley was executed a spokesman for the American State Department said that the United States had used air and ground forces in an attempt to extract the hostages in Syria. He said that during the attempt a firefight had developed between American Special Forces and ISIS operatives, killing a number of ISIS operatives and wounding an American soldier. He added that although the Americans had been certain they had sufficient intelligence information, the attempt failed because the hostages were not at the location of the operation. The United States said ISIS was holding at least three more American hostages (Websites of the State Department and the White House, and AP.org, August 22, 2014).

The beheading of American correspondent Steven Joel Sotloff

20. On **September 2, 2014**, ISIS issued a video entitled "**Another message for America,**" which documented the beheading of American correspondent **Steven Sotloff**. The video warned President Obama that as long as the American aerial attacks continued, it was "only right that we continue to strike the necks of your people " (Nytimes.com, October 3, 2014). Steven Sotloff, 31, from Florida, freelanced for Time Magazine, Foreign Policy and other media. He was fluent in Arabic and had covered the Middle East for a long time. He and a companion were apparently abducted when they crossed the border from Turkey into Syria on August 4, 2014 (Website of the American State Department, September 3, 2014). British **David Cawthorne Haines** was presented in the video as the next hostage to be beheaded.



Documenting the beheading of Steven Sotloff (ISIS video, September 2, 2014)

The beheading of British aid worker David Cawthorne Haines

21. On **September 13, 2014**, ISIS issued the third video documenting the beheading of a Western hostage, **David Cawthorne Haines**. The video opened with British Prime Minister David Cameron declaring that Britain would do what was required to support the Kurdish Peshmerga forces in their war against ISIS. It segued to a masked ISIS operative and British aid worker David Cawthorne Haines, who was dressed in an orange prison uniform.

22. David Cawthorne Haines, 44, was married and had two children. He was born in East Yorkshire and raised in Perthshire, Scotland. Since 1999 he had worked with humanitarian aid agencies around the world, including in Croatia, Libya and South Sudan. He was in Libya during the civil war of 2011. In Syria he worked for a French humanitarian aid organization and was taken hostage in March 2013, along with an Italian companion (Mirror.co.uk, September 13, 2014)

23. Like the victims in the videos before him, Haines read a political statement written by ISIS. He appealed to Prime Minister Cameron, saying Cameron was responsible for his execution because he had joined the American coalition against the Islamic State. The ISIS operative who had carried out the previous beheadings and spoke fluent English addressed Prime Minister Cameron, telling him Haines had to pay for Cameron's decision to help the Kurdish forces. At the end of the video **Alan Henning** was presented as the next hostage who would be killed unless Britain left the anti-Islamic State coalition.



Documenting the beheading of David Cawthorne Haines (YouTube, September 13, 2014)

The beheading of British aid worker Alan Henning

24. On October 24, 2014, ISIS issued its fourth video, 11 minutes long, documenting the beheading of British aid worker Alan Henning. He said he was paying the price for the decision to attack ISIS.

25. Alan Henning was 47, a taxi driver from Manchester, Britain. He took time off from his job to go to Syria to drive trucks transporting humanitarian aid. According to his friends he had never been involved in politics or religious issues. At the end of 2013 he joined an aid delegation in northern Syria. He was abducted in December 2013 about half an hour after he crossed the border from Turkey into Syria. During his last weeks leaders of the Muslim community in Britain called for his release (Telegraph.co.uk, October 3, 2014). The video also presented American aid worker **Peter Kassig** as the next victim.



Documenting the beheading of Alan Henning (ISIS video, October 2, 2014)

The beheading of American aid worker Peter Kassig

26. On November 16, 2014, ISIS issued a 15-minute video documenting the beheading of **Peter Kassig**. It boasted of ISIS's jihadi capabilities and accused Kassig of serving as a soldier against Muslims in Iraq. According to the video it was being filmed in the northern Syrian city of Dabiq, which according to Islamic tradition is supposed to be the site of a decisive battle between Muslims and Christians, which the Muslims will win.

27. **Peter Edward Kassig**, 26, from Indiana, converted to Islam and changed his name to **Abd al-Rahman**. He went to Turkey in September 2013 as part of a medical team helping Syrian civilians who had fled the Syrian civil war, providing them with humanitarian aid. He was based in Lebanon during the months before he was captured. He was abducted by ISIS operatives a year ago when he was en route to Syria.



Peter Kassig before he is beheaded (From an Al-Furqan¹²⁸ video, Shorouknews.com)

ISIS's call to kill Westerners and the initial response (updated to the end of October 2014)

Overview

28. On September 21, 2014, an ISIS spokesman called on the organization's sympathizers around the globe to kill Western citizens. **In ITIC assessment, various terrorist attacks carried out or prevented since then were motivated by the desire of jihadists to show solidarity with ISIS and support it** (including those who did not belong to it or publicly sympathize).

29. The attacks and attempted attacks were apparently not planned or directed by ISIS or another global jihad network. **They were spontaneous local initiatives carried out mainly by "lone wolf" jihadists from Western countries belonging to the anti-ISIS coalition**, primarily the United States. Some of them were **Muslims who had become radicalized and others were converts**. In some cases the lone wolf terrorists may have been supported by local global jihad sympathizers. **As the campaign of the Americans and their allies against ISIS continues, more attacks may be attempted.**

¹²⁸ An ISIS media outlet.

ISIS's call to kill Westerners

30. On September 21, 2014, the Al-Furqan Institute issued a 42-minute recording of **ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani. He called on ISIS's supporters all over the world to kill Western citizens, especially Frenchmen and Americans** in retaliation for the campaign against ISIS. He emphasized that every ISIS supporter had to act, each according to his ability. Every Muslim, he said, could choose his own method as long as he attacked "the infidels" and helped ISIS defend itself against the campaign being waged by the "Crusader" Western countries and their Arab "agents."

31. He listed ways that could be used to attack American and French infidels, saying, "The best thing to do would be to kill any French or American infidel or any of their allies. If you cannot [detonate] a bomb or [fire] a bullet, arrange to meet alone with a French or an American infidel and **bash his skull in with a rock, slaughter him with a knife, run him over with our car, throw him off a cliff, strangle him or inject him with poison.** Don't stand by, helpless and abject... If you are incapable of this, burn down his house, his car, his business or his field. And if you are incapable even of this – then spit in his face. And if you refuse [to do] this while your bothers are being bombed and killed and their lives and property are under attack everywhere, then examine your faith..." (MEMRI.org, September 22, 2014).

32. In a video called "**Message from the jihad fighter (mujahid)**," uploaded in October 2014, the British ISIS operative called "**the British Sayid**" appears. He says to all the "brothers in the United Kingdom who cannot join the jihad in Syria, you are living in the west... **You are blessed that you can cause terror in the hearts of the infidels, right in the center of all that heresy and of all that polytheism. You can cause terror right from within...**" (MEMRI.org, October 6, 2014).

Australia: Preventing beheadings in Sydney

33. Australia is one of the countries that declared it would join the coalition supporting the American campaign against ISIS. The Australian air force reportedly deployed in the Middle East and its planes began flying in the skies over Iraq on October 1, 2014. **Thus Australia became a potential terrorist target for jihadists who supported or were affiliated with ISIS.**

34. On October 1, 2014, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott told Parliament there were **at least 60 Australians fighting in the ranks of the terrorist organizations and at least 100 Australians had supported them with funds** and the logistics necessary to recruit fighters and send them to the Middle East (Website of the

Australian government, October 1, 2014). The Australian authorities are aware of the dangers of terrorism posed by the return of the veterans of the fighting in Syria and Iraq.¹²⁹



Left: Picture posted by Australian ISIS operative Khaled Sharrouf, taken with his three children. They all hold weapons; the ISIS flag is in the background (Twitter, August 12, 2014). Right: Khaled Sharrouf's seven year-old son holds the head of a Syrian soldier (blacked out). The picture was taken in Al-Raqqa and posted by his father (Twitter, August 12, 2014)

35. On September 18, 2014, the Australian security forces detained 15 jihadist operatives in Sydney following intelligence that ISIS was planning terrorist attacks in Australia. According to the indictment of Omarjan Azari, 22, he was involved in a plan to randomly kill people to scare the Australian population. According to Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott the detainees planned to publicly and randomly behead people on the streets of Sydney (AP.org, September 18, 2014).

Canada: Vehicular and shooting attacks

Vehicular attack

36. On September 20, 2014, a Canadian soldier in Quebec was run over and killed and another soldier was wounded. The attacker was Martin Couture-Rouleau, 25, who had converted to Islam the previous year. He aimed his car directly at the two soldiers. He was shot and killed by police after a chase of several kilometers. According to one of his friends, he dreamed of dying as a shaheed.

¹²⁹ For further information see the February 2, 2014 bulletin "Foreign fighters from Western countries in the ranks of the rebel organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Syria."

37. Martin Couture-Rouleau was on a list of **90 radical Muslims who were being monitored by the Canadian security forces**, preventing them from leaving the country and joining jihadi organizations (in Syria). The Canadian media reported that on Couture-Rouleau's Facebook page were an ISIS flag and expressions of solidarity with it. The Canadian prime minister described him as a terrorist inspired by ISIS.

Shooting attack

38. On September 22, 2014, a Canadian soldier who stood guard at Canada's War Memorial (near the Parliament building in Ottawa) was shot to death. The shooter then entered the building and fired dozens of bullets. He was shot and killed by the head of Parliament security (whose resourcefulness turned him into a national hero).



The Canadian Parliament (Wikipedia)

39. The shooter was **Michael Zehaf-Bibeau**, 32, born in Montreal, who had a criminal record. His father was Libyan and his mother, an official in the Canadian administration, was of European extraction. In recent years he converted to Islam and became a religious extremist. He apparently planned to fly to Syria, but his passport was confiscated by the Canadian authorities because he had been designated as a high-level security risk.



Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, who killed the Canadian soldier and carried out the shooting attack in the Canadian Parliament (Facebook page opened in his memory).

40. Postings on the social networks from ISIS sympathizers praised the shooting attack in Ottawa and expressed satisfaction. One tweeter claimed that **"the attack was a response to the call from ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani to ISIS supporters to carry out attacks in Western countries"** (MEMRI.org, October 23, 2014).

The United States: Policeman attacked with a hatchet in Queens, New York

41. **On the afternoon of October 23, 2014, a man armed with a hatchet attacked a group of four policemen on a busy street in Jamaica, Queens.** He brought the hatchet down on the head of one, critically wounding him. Another policeman was wounded in the arm. A 29 year-old woman was hit by a stray police bullet.¹³⁰

42. The attacker, **Zale Thompson**, 32, was shot to death by police (Dailymail.co.uk). **He had converted to Islam two years previously and became an extremist.** He reportedly hated policemen and white people. His Facebook page had a picture of a man wearing Middle Eastern clothes with writing in Arabic. He also posted his loathing for the West on the social networks and visited websites affiliated with extremist Islamist groups. According to the police, **he was working alone. The police are investigating whether the attack was carried out as a response to ISIS's call to attack American citizens** (Dailymail.co.uk, October 23, 2014).

¹³⁰ <http://nypost.com/2014/10/23/man-shot-dead-after-striking-cop-in-the-head-with-ax/>



Left: Surveillance footage of the attack in Queens, released by the police department (Twitter account of CBS-TV reporter Tony Aiello). Right: Picture of the Queens attacker, released by the police department (Twitter account of CBS-TV reporter Aiello).

Austria: Bombs in busy train station in Vienna

43. On October 30, 2014, a 14 year-old boy was detained on suspicion of planning to place IEDs in crowded locations in Vienna. **ISIS reportedly offered the boy \$25,000 to carry out the attacks.** According to the Austrian media the boy was Mertkan G., the son of a Turkish immigrant. Other young men were recruited to carry out similar attacks (according to a different account, the boy acted alone) (Telegraph.co.uk, October 30, 2014).

44. Among the locations in Vienna where the IEDs were to be placed was Vienna's Westbahnhof Station, one of city's busiest train stations, through which an estimated 40,000 people pass every day. According to the Austrian media, the boy planned to use websites to learn how to manufacture an IED and where to purchase the necessary materials. According to one report, he said he planned to go to Syria to fight in the ranks of the jihadists, and carrying out the attack in Vienna would be a kind of "ticket" to join.

Appendix

Studies and bulletins issued by the ITIC about the establishment of Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Syria and Iraq (September 2013 – July 2014)

1. Expressions of support in the Gaza Strip for the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS), which is affiliated with the global jihad (July 16, 2014)
2. American Citizen of Jordanian/Palestinian Extraction Exposed as a Suicide Bomber in the Ranks of the Al-Nusra Front, the Al-Qaeda Branch in Syria (June 11, 2014)
3. The terrorist suspected of carrying out the shooting attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels has been identified as a French Muslim jihadist. (June 10, 2014)
4. The Deputy Commander of the Army of Immigrants and Supporters Called on Muslims in Ukraine and Crimea to Wage Jihad against Russia (May 22, 2014)
5. The Phenomenon of Foreign Fighters from the Arab World in the Syrian Civil War (May 13, 2014)
6. Involvement of Operatives Who Returned from Syria in the Terrorist Campaign against the Egyptian Regime (May 5, 2014)
7. Foreign fighters from various countries and regions in Asia, fighting against the Syrian regime, most of them in organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad (April 15, 2014)
8. Sheikh Sami al-Uraydi: Portrait of a Jordanian cleric who serves as a senior religious authority for the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's Syrian branch (February 24, 2014)
9. The Al-Nusra Front recently carried out a suicide bombing attack in Aleppo, using a British foreign fighter. (February 19, 2014)
10. Al-Qaeda's Repudiation of the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria – Overview and Implications (February 17, 2014)
11. Using suicide bombers as weapons: The leading modus operandi in the Al-Nusra Front and Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria's struggle against the Syrian regime and Hezbollah in Lebanon (February 11, 2014)

12. Foreign fighters from Western countries in the ranks of the rebel organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the global jihad in Syria (February 3, 2014)
13. Israeli Arabs and Palestinians Join the Ranks of the Rebels in Syria, Mainly Organizations Affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad (January 19, 2014)
14. Israeli Arabs and Palestinians Join the Ranks of the Rebels in Syria, Mainly Organizations Affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Global Jihad (January 5, 2014)
15. Foreign Fighters in Syria (January 1, 2014)
16. The rebels in Syria include a few dozen operatives from the Salafist-jihadi organizations in the Gaza Strip. (December 8, 2013)
17. Operatives from the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, together with other rebel organizations, have taken over the large oil field in Deir ez-Zor (December 3, 2013)
18. Mass-casualty double suicide bombing attack carried out at the Iranian embassy in Beirut. (November 27, 2014)
19. The Al-Nusra Front played a major role in the rebel takeover of a large Syrian army arsenal southeast of Homs. (November 14, 2013)
20. Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of Al-Qaeda, urges jihadist forces fighting the Assad regime in Syria to unite in a common struggle to establish an Islamic Caliphate. (October 16, 2013)
21. The Al-Nusra Front (Jabhat al-Nusra) is an Al-Qaeda Salafist-jihadi network, prominent in the rebel organizations in Syria. It seeks to overthrow the Assad regime and establish an Islamic Caliphate in Greater Syria, a center for regional and international terrorism and subversion. (September 17, 2013).