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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.



Call for aid to Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis on the ISIS forum. Photo: Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis operative who blew himself up in the security directorate building in the southern Sinai Peninsula on October 7, 2013. The inscription reads: "Together assisting the heroes of Sinai - we will make the effort to help them, to strengthen their hands, to publish their publications and anything new [about them]; [We] will pray genuine prayers for the sake of those who are not with us [i.e., those who are far from us]" (alplatformmedia.com).

Overview

1. ISIS recently expressed explicit support for the **Egyptian jihadi organization Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis** (the supporters of Jerusalem), which heads the terrorist campaign being waged against the Egyptian regime. ISIS published a series of strategic and operational "tips" for jihadi operatives in Egypt, encouraging them to **escalate the terrorist attack against the Egyptian regime and bring it into the heart of Cairo**. This should be done with an emphasis on **harming the Egyptian economy**, Egyptian security forces, and Egyptian government institutions and officials. ISIS also called Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis to **harm Christians and inflame sectarian religious war in Egypt**, relying on practices rooted in the conduct of ISIS (and its predecessors) in Iraq.

2. In turn, on November 10, 2014, the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis organization published an announcement **pledging its allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** and announcing that it was joining the Islamic State that he heads.

3. ISIS's staunch public support of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis's pledge of allegiance to the leader of ISIS **indicate the start of a new phase of strengthening the ties and cooperation between them.** In the ITIC's assessment, the background for this is **the expectation of both terrorist organizations to benefit from increased cooperation:**

A. From ISIS's perspective, the pledge of allegiance by Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is an **impressive success, symbolizing the expansion of its influence beyond the borders of Iraq and Syria to a central country in the Middle East.** In this context, it was reported recently that global jihad organizations from the Middle East and elsewhere have pledged their allegiance to the leader of ISIS (islamist-movement.com). This increases the prestige of ISIS's leader Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and strengthens his status vis-à-vis the leadership of Al-Qaeda (which expelled him from its ranks) and vis-à-vis his adversaries in Iraq and Syria, including the Al-Nusra Front (the Al-Qaeda branch in Syria).

B. From Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis's perspective, cooperation with ISIS may guarantee it **external support** in the terror campaign that it is waging against the Egyptian regime. In the ITIC's assessment, the preference for ISIS rather than the leadership of Al-Qaeda on the part of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (and other jihadi organizations) is rooted in **ISIS's image as a winning organization with enhanced financial and military capabilities,** which is highly attractive to jihadi organizations and operatives and is at the forefront of the fight against the US and the West.

ISIS has expressed support for Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and is instructing it and other jihadi organizations on how to harm the Egyptian regime

4. The Salafist-jihadi organization **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis** and other jihadi organizations are waging a campaign of terror against the Egyptian army and the Egyptian regime in the Sinai Peninsula and elsewhere in Egypt. This campaign culminated in an attack in the Sinai Peninsula, killing 31 Egyptian soldiers (October 24, 2014). In recent months, ISIS embarked on a media campaign, **officially and openly promoting the campaign of terror against the Egyptian regime, praising**

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, and calling on jihadis around the world to support it.

Here are some examples:

5. **In September 2014, ISIS began to encourage Egyptian jihad operatives to attack the Egyptian military.** ISIS spokesman **Abu Muhammad al-Adnani** said in a recording uploaded to the Internet that "We praise our brothers in the proud Sinai Peninsula. Continue along your path because it is the true path. **Lay mines on their roads, attack their strongholds, assault their houses and behead them [...]** take them wherever they are. **Make their lives a horror and a hell, blow up their houses**" (alarabiya.net, September 22, 2014).

6. **On October 31, 2014,** ISIS supporters on Twitter launched a hashtag called "Sinai lions' den of believers in the unity of Allah." **ISIS supporters called on all jihad supporters to help Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in its war against the Egyptian army in the Sinai Peninsula.** Members of the Muslim Brotherhood were also called on to bear arms and to engage in active protest against the Egyptian regime. In addition, the ISIS Twitter account posted a video showing residents of the Sinai Peninsula calling for help after their homes were destroyed and cursing the Egyptian Army and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.

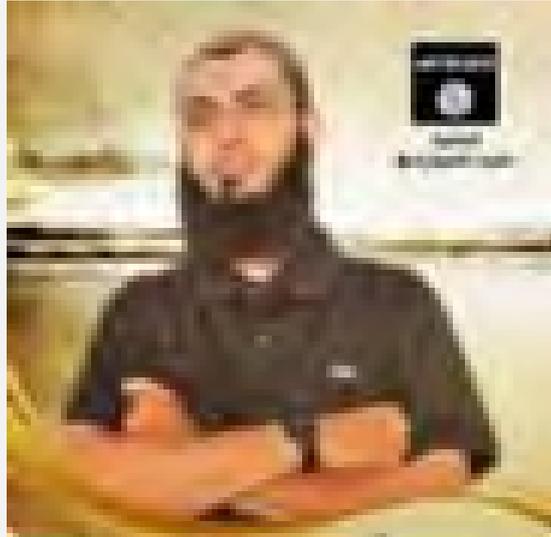
7. **At the beginning of November 2014, the official ISIS forum (*Al-Minbar al-lami al-Jihadi*)** launched a special section to deal with the Sinai Peninsula. The section posted a number of notices calling on jihad fighters around the globe **to support Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis** in the Sinai Peninsula to enable it to fight against the Egyptian security forces.



Left: Graphic design showing a soldier (apparently Egyptian) falling. Above him is a helicopter, and below him the inscription reads “Jihad cavalry, defenders of the honor of the Sinai Peninsula: Allah directs your fire, strengthens you and enables you [to hold] the Jews’ necks and their tails [a hint at the Egyptian regime]. You are the heroes of the jihad, the descendants of the *sahaba* [the Prophet Muhammad’s loyal followers].” (alplatformmedia.com). Right: Poster on the ISIS forum showing operatives late at night, above an inscription that reads: “In Sinai there are men who are heroes, heroes like lions, who are not afraid of any dictator [a hint at the Egyptian president] or any Jew. Allah, help them and let them [have victory], give them reinforcements and enlist what is yours [i.e., enlist faithful Muslims for them]” (alplatformmedia.com).

8. On November 4, 2014, the ISIS forum posted strategic and operational “tips” for jihad fighters in Egypt on **how to conduct a campaign of terror against the Egyptian regime, based primarily on the model of Iraq**. The line of reasoning that guided these tips is that jihadi organizations should **move the center of gravity of the terrorist campaign from the Sinai Peninsula to “central Cairo” and other large cities in order to hurt the Egyptian regime**, inter alia by harming the Egyptian economy (the tips refer to tourism, the Suez Canal, and gas pipelines). Considerable emphasis is also placed on **absorbing jihadi foreign fighters and having them carry out terror attacks, exploiting their motivation to carry out suicide bombing attacks**.

9. Following are the principal “tips” given by ISIS operative **Abu Musab al-Maqdisi**, who may be a liaison between ISIS and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (alplatformmedia.com, November 4, 2014):



Abu Musab al-Maqdisi (twitter.com)

A. Harming the “enemy” (the Egyptian regime) in Cairo and large cities: move the battle to “**central Cairo**” and engage the regime there. Doing so will turn the **Sinai Peninsula into an area that infidels** (“deserters of religion”) **are not allowed to enter and a rear base for continued jihad** (against the Egyptian regime). The statement says that one must 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.”

B. Harming government institutions and officials: carry out operations using silencers, and “cut down” the soldiers of the enemy (the Egyptian government). Hit the hearts of the various governorates and security departments of the Ministry of the Interior, with the goal of “**weakening the security grip on the country**”. Emulate the example of the severe blows that the Iraqi regime suffered in Baghdad and the other governorates in Iraq. As a result of actions carried out against Iraqi government institutions, Iraqi government officials were prohibited from travelling in their official vehicles and wearing their official attire.

C. Absorption of foreign fighters (“immigrants”): jihad fighters in Egypt must **absorb foreign fighters** (“immigrants”), “**since a jihadi arena cannot move forward without immigrants**”. Their presence will fuel the operations “**particularly since they [the foreign fighters] are characterized by a desire to carry out suicide bombings**” (*istishhad*, which means **dying the death of a Muslim martyr for the sake of Allah through self-sacrifice on the battlefield against an enemy**). Take advantage of the current timing, **when it’s easy to enter Egypt**, and consider the fact that entering Egypt in the future will

require “a tremendous effort”. Jihad fighters in Egypt should absorb the foreign fighters, deploy them in all governorates and **send them on operations against Egyptian government institutions.**

D. Fanning the flames of a sectarian religious war: ISIS calls on jihad fighters in Egypt **to harm Christians and Shiites** (clearly relying on the Iraq and Syria model). This is “because they are [religious] communities that cannot be trusted and it is impossible to reach any agreement with them. **They are nothing but booty that Allah will give you...**”

E. Harming Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip: ISIS calls on jihad fighters in the Sinai Peninsula, and in particular Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, **to harm trucks carrying weapons, missiles and explosives from the Sinai Palestinian to the Palestinian organizations in the Gaza Strip.** This is because “these weapons hurt Muslims more than Jews, **since the Hamas movement and the Hamas government have stolen the weapons of your brethren, the jihad fighters in Gaza**”.¹ 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.”

F. Harming judges: the jihad fighters **are called on to harm Egyptian judges,** “not to mention the fact that a large percentage of the judges in Egypt **are Christians.**” These judges have abandoned Islam, tried many young Islamists and sentenced them to death or life imprisonment. **“Killing judges is one of the means to serve our prisoners in the jails of the tyrants.”**

G. Harming the economy: the jihad fighters **are called on to harm the Egyptian economy,** “which allows the tyrannical and criminal government to fight against Allah and his messenger.” In addition, “most of the wealthy and decision-makers in the Egyptian economy are also Christians.” According to the announcement, the targets are **the tourism industry, the gas pipes 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 announcement **emphasizes harming the Suez Canal** since the monies that the regime charges at the crossing are used by El-Sisi “to move missiles and weapons in order to fight our brothers in Syria and to support their tyrant like him.” In addition, **“the fire of jihad should reach Sharm el-Sheikh,”** and

¹ The message refers to the decisive measures taken by the Hamas government against Salafist-jihadi organizations in the Gaza Strip in light of the challenge they may pose to its control.

enough with the prostitution and entertainment that Jewish and foreign tourists have enjoyed in this area.”

H. The killing of enemies and spies should be carried out by slaughtering (i.e., beheading) and not shooting. The announcement calls on jihad fighters to **slaughter every spy and every representative, if it has been proven that he is part of the Egyptian state security forces** or is collaborating with the Egyptian military establishment.²

10. **Israel is not mentioned in ISIS’s strategic and operative “tips” for Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.** The ITIC believes that this reflects the strategic priorities of ISIS, with its emphasis on fighting against the enemies from within. However, in the wording of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis’s pledge of allegiance to the leader of ISIS on November 10, 2014 (see below), **the war against “the Jews” appears in the beginning of the announcement:** “After decades... Allah instructed the banner of jihad to be raised in our country, and granted us the honor of being his [Allah’s] chosen soldiers **for the war against the most bitter foes of the nation - the Jews.** Indeed, we hurt them greatly in many raids, **such as Umm al-Rashrash (i.e., Eilat, Israel’s southernmost city)** and other [raids] [...] **Our swords are still drawn against them, until Allah prevails.**” In the ITIC’s assessment, this wording indicates **Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis’s intention to include attacks against Israel in its campaign against the Egyptian regime.**

Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis’s pledge of allegiance to the leader of ISIS

11. **On November 10, 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis announced on its official Twitter account that it had pledged its allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and was joining the Islamic State that he heads.** The announcement was preceded by reports on jihadi and Egyptian websites, including a website affiliated with ISIS, whereby the Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis had pledged its allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State (ISIS).

12. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis’s announcement begins with a description of the current situation of the organization and the Muslim nation in general, and words of praise for the establishment of the Caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Its operative part reads:

² Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis carries out public beheading like the one carried out by ISIS. On August 28, 2014, the organization distributed a video documenting the beheading of four men who, according to the organization, collaborated with the Israeli Mossad. The operative who read out the written announcement was also the one who executed the four men (alarbiya.net).

"... We **declare our pledge of allegiance to the Caliph Ibrahim bin Awwad bin Ibrahim al-Qurayshi al-Husseini** [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's names and titles], **to hear and obey**, in hardship and ease, and in love and hatred; We are honored to do so and we will not dispute the matter, unless we see among us clear heresy of which we have proof from Allah. **We call on Muslims everywhere to pledge allegiance to the Caliph and to help him**, as a response to Allah and as the implementation of the "lost obligation" (i.e., the obligation of the current generation)..."

13. The announcement then calls on jihad fighters on all fronts to assist the Caliph and the Islamic State:

"... After a state for Islam and the Muslims has been established, and a Caliph and Commander of the Faithful has been appointed to rule over that state, you refrain from helping them and do not stand under the flag, at a time when the whole world is attacking it. What is your excuse, O audience of jihad fighters? ... So make a decision on a matter concerning you, **gather together and help your country**, for you are part of it and it is part of you..."



Twitter page of ISIS operative Abu Musab al-Maqdisi, who provided a series of strategic and operational "tips" for Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis. The bottom line in blue reads: "Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis pledges allegiance to the Caliph" (twitter.com, November 10, 2014)