



Analysis of ISIS's Claims of Responsibility for Terrorist Attacks Carried Out Abroad

August 15, 2017

Overview¹

This study examines the forms of ISIS's claims of responsibility for terrorist attacks **it carried out abroad** (i.e., not in Iraq and Syria, its "core countries"). It covers **22 claims of responsibility for attacks carried out between June 2016 and June 2017**. The study shows a close correlation between the form of the various claims and the types and locations of the attacks. The ITIC is of the opinion that the **insights gained from the study can be used as a methodological tool to examine ISIS claims of responsibility and assess their significance**.

- ▶ Most of the attacks examined for this study **were carried out by ISIS in Western countries** (the United States and western Europe), **some in Arab-Muslim countries** (Egypt, Turkey Iran) and **some in others** (Israel, Russia, Kenya). **In ITIC assessment, most of the attacks in the West were ISIS-inspired**, that is, inspired by but not directed by ISIS, without its logistic support or the involvement of its external operational headquarters in choosing a target or reaching it. Some of the attacks (especially in Arab-Muslim countries) were planned by ISIS, and preceded by the methodical collection of intelligence, procuring weapons and training the operative or operatives who carried them out.
- ▶ A comparison of the various claims of responsibility indicates that **three different patterns** are used:
 - ◆ **The "short form:"** The most frequently used type of claim of responsibility. It uses phrases and terms that repeat themselves in most of the announcements. In ITIC assessment **the short form is relevant mostly for ISIS-inspired attacks carried out in the West**. The announcements are composed after the attack and disseminated within a short time (usually the **day after the attack**). Apparently whoever composes the announcements prefers not to include unnecessary details because the full picture

¹ The full English version of this bulletin will appear on the ITIC website. The full Hebrew version can be accessed on the ITIC website.

is not yet sufficiently clear and in order not to reveal the fact that the announcements were written after the attack and the terrorists who carried out the attack do not have an organizational link to ISIS.² Short-form announcements are **similar to one another but not identical** (with small, insignificant differences in terminology and style).

- ◆ **The "long form:"** Such claims of responsibility are long and detailed, and include information about the attack and explicit reasons for their having been carried out. **They are issued mainly for attacks which were planned in advance and for which ISIS paid attention to the aspect of propaganda.** They are most commonly used for attacks carried out in Arab-Muslim countries. They are regularly issued in Syria, Iran and other countries where there are branches of ISIS (e.g., the Sinai Peninsula). The attacks examined for this study revealed four such claims of responsibility: for the suicide bombing attack in the Coptic cathedral in Cairo (December 12, 2016); the shooting attack in the nightclub in the heart of Istanbul (January 1, 2017), and the combined suicide bombing and shooting attack in Tehran (June 7, 2017). The announcement issued after the suicide bombing attack in Manchester (May 22, 2017) also belongs to that category.³

- ◆ **Claims of responsibility including videos:** About one third of the short-form announcements issued after ISIS-inspired attacks **included videos**, in most cases published after the attack. **In each instance the video was filmed at the initiative of the terrorists who carried out the attack.** They photographed themselves before the attack and sent the pictures to ISIS, which were published by its **Amaq news agency** (or by other media). There were also **several instances of attacks photographed and the pictures published in real time.** The videos included threats against Western countries and oaths of allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. **The inclusion of videos increases the propaganda impact of the attacks.** The attack in Tehran, which was well-planned, was photographed in real time as part of the overall the plan. In Syria and Iraq, and other Arab-Muslim countries where provinces of ISIS operate. It is

² In the past ISIS did not customarily issue claims of responsibility for ISIS-inspired attacks. Apparently, during 2016, when they became a significant modus operandi in the West, a general announcement was composed that was relevant for ISIS-inspired attacks.

³ Other examples of attacks carried out in Europe, after which a long-form claim of responsibility was issued, were the attacks at the airport in Brussels and the attack near the headquarters of the EU (both on March 22, 2016). It was a **well-planned attack** and considerable attention was paid to the aspect of propaganda.

very common for long-form claims of responsibility to be accompanied by videos prepared in advance (especially when suicide bombing attacks are carried out).



Larossi Abballa, who stabbed a French police officer and his partner to death in the residential commune of Magnanville, north-west of Paris. He photographed himself with his cell phone. As part of the video he recorded himself swearing allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Amaq, June 14, 2016).

► During the period studied, one instance of an ISIS-inspired attack was found for which **ISIS did not claim responsibility**. On June 8, 2016, two terrorist operatives carried out a shooting attack in the Sarona commercial and entertainment complex in the heart of Tel Aviv (four killed, seven wounded). **The two attackers were inspired by ISIS**; one of them had been **influenced by ISIS ideology while studying in Jordan**. They were assisted by a third operative, who provided them with weapons. ISIS did not claim responsibility for the attack despite the media capital it could have made from inspiring an attack in Tel Aviv. ISIS's motives for not claiming responsibility are unclear. It is possible that ISIS did not have sufficient information about the attack while it was being carried out to indicate the terrorists had been inspired by the organization.

► **How reliable are ISIS's claims of responsibility?** In ITIC assessment, **most of the attacks for which ISIS claims responsibility were in fact carried out by its operatives** (planned attacks), or by **terrorists who were inspired by the organization** (inspired attacks). However, those are **exceptional cases**. For example, through its Amaq news agency, ISIS claimed responsibility for the combined shooting and stabbing attack carried out near the Nablus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem (June 16, 2017). According to the announcement, the attack was carried out by the "lions of the caliphate in the Palestine Province [of ISIS]." In ITIC assessment, **the announcement was false, and reflected ISIS's desire to boast of a**

success in a symbolic location such as "Palestine," given the severe pressure exerted on the organization in Syria and Iraq.

In conclusion, an examination of the claims of responsibility revealed a connection between the pattern of announcement and the nature and location of the attack. Short-form announcements seem to indicate an **ISIS-inspired attack, usually carried out in a Western country**, primarily by Muslims or people who have converted to Islam, been radicalized, and identify with ISIS's ideology. **Long-form announcements, on the other hand, seem to indicate a previously-planned ISIS attack.** They are usually carried out in **Syria, Iraq and Arab-Muslim countries**, where ISIS has high operational capabilities.⁴ **Videos are included in claims of responsibility for both ISIS-inspired attacks and planned attacks.** The difference between them is that in ISIS-inspired attacks the inclusion of a video is improvised and inserted **on the initiative of the terrorists who carry them out**, and then disseminated by ISIS's propaganda machine. In planned attacks, publishing videos is **part of preparations for the attack and attention is given to the aspect of propaganda.** ISIS uses many languages in its announcements, depending on the target audience (**Arabic and English are popular languages for the videos**).

Composition and style of ISIS's claims of responsibility

Short-form announcements

► The following are the various **linguistic and content characteristics** of claims of responsibility issued as short-form announcements:

- ◆ **Headline:** The headline includes the source of the announcement (usually ISIS's Amaq news agency), the date and the degree of urgency.
- ◆ **Body of the announcement:** The announcement is usually written in modern Arabic, short and succinct. In most cases the language is grammatically correct.
- ◆ **Source:** Information is often attributed to "**a security source.**" In ITIC assessment, that creates the impression (not always accurate) that ISIS has access to "security sources" with knowledge about the attack in whatever country it occurred. Sometimes only a "**source**" is mentioned.

⁴ Attacks carried out by ISIS operatives in Syria and Iraq were not examined in this study.

- ◆ **Timing of releasing the announcement:** In most instances, the announcement is issued the day after the attack. In exceptional instances, it is issued on the same day or two days later.
- ◆ **Language:** ISIS issues the announcements in **Arabic**, but obviously makes the attempt to issue them in the language of the country where the attack took place. For ISIS-inspired attacks, **some of the announcements are also presented in English, to increase the impact of ISIS's message on Western audiences.** The claim of responsibility for the attack at the night club in Istanbul also appeared in **Turkish**.
- ◆ **Publisher:** Most of the claims of responsibility for attacks in the West are issued **by ISIS's Amaq news agency.** It also issues claims of responsibility for attacks carried out in Syria, Lebanon and the Arab-Muslim world. Most of the announcements in the Middle East are issued by **Haq**, another ISIS news agency. In one instance (the attack in Manchester) Amaq issued a short announcement in Arabic and Haq issued two longer announcements, one in Arabic and one in English.
- ◆ **Names of the operatives:** Generally speaking, **the names and pictures of the operatives who carried out attacks do not appear.** On exceptional occasions the aka of the terrorist, which relates to his country of origin, does appear. The aka is not necessarily accurate: in one instance a terrorist was reported as "Abu Yusuf the Belgian," when in fact he came from Algeria.
- ◆ **Description of the attack:** Attacks are described as "**attacks**" or "**operational actions**". On rare occasions the term is "**an armed attack**". In ITIC assessment, there is no real difference between the terms. Another term used is "**an act of self-sacrifice**," which describes a suicide bombing attack (which are fundamentally different from other types of attacks).
- ◆ **Number of victims:** Often the number of victims is not mentioned (possibly because of the lack of precise information). **Sometimes the number is a combination of those killed and wounded.** That is done **to magnify the attack** and make it seem like a greater "achievement."
- ◆ **Terms for the coalition attacking ISIS:** In most instances, the forces of the coalition attacking ISIS are referred to as "**Crusaders**." Sometimes the coalition is referred to as "**international**." However, the word "Christian" appears more than "Crusaders" to describe the people who are the targets of ISIS attacks. In ISIS's

perception **a religious war is being fought, Muslims against Christians, in which Muslims indiscriminately attack Christians.**

◆ **Reason for the attack:** The most common reason for an attack comes in answer to ISIS's call to attack the countries of the coalition fighting ISIS in Syria and Iraq. The objective is to exert pressure on the citizens of the coalition countries, creating public opinion to stop the attacks on the Islamic State.

Structure of a short-form claim of responsibility for an ISIS-inspired attack



Analysis of long-form announcements

► Long-form announcements have **several unique features:**

◆ **Pattern and language:** The long-form announcements **are written in classic literary Arabic, are clearly Islamic in style, and use religious terminology.** For example, *mushrikin* (polytheist), *fitna* (civil war), *amir al-mu'minin* (ruler of the faithful), *Salibiyin* (Crusaders), and *khilafa* (caliphate). Alongside such terms there are also words from modern Arabic.

◆ **Description, location and manner of the attack:** The attack is described at length and has details which do not appear in short-form announcements. For example, a suicide bomber with an explosive belt blew himself up in a suicide bombing attack targeting a gathering of local Christians [i.e., Copts] in the central cathedral in Cairo. The location of the attack is mentioned to stress the size of the attack and because it

was centrally located and crowded. Other long-form announcements were issued for the attacks on the nightclub in Istanbul and the Manchester Arena to illustrate that they were carried out in crowded sites.

◆ **Detailed description of the target using Islamic terminology:** Long-form announcements include details about the targets. In Egypt, the **Copts** were called Crusaders (*Saliby*) or "Christians in Egypt." The announcement also referred to Muslims who had allegedly abandoned Islam, calling them "infidels" and "abandoners of Islam." The announcement about the attack in the nightclub in Istanbul accused Turkey of being an Islamic country that had abandoned Islam, calling it "the defender of the cross" (i.e., as having left Islam).

Justification for the attacks

► The announcements chosen for examination indicate that the **justification for carrying out terrorist attacks**, including indiscriminate attacks, **is based on religious arguments, at the center of which is the struggle of Muslims against Christians and "infidels," that is, people of other religions holding different beliefs.** The terrorist who carries out the attack is called a **"soldier" in the ranks of the Islamic State, who fights against its enemies under the direction of the "emir of the faithful,"** that is, the caliph (ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi). Another justification for the attacks appearing in many announcements is **revenge against the coalition countries and other enemies** fighting ISIS, which it represents as enemies of Islam and Muslims. ISIS exerts pressure on their citizens by terrifying them (the announcements use the term *irhab*, which means to frighten or sow fear among people, and does not mean to carry out a terrorist attack).

The main message sent by the claims of responsibility and ISIS's primary objective as reflected in them is the following: ISIS continues to wage a holy war (jihad) against its many enemies, including **Christians** ("Crusaders"), **Shi'ites** (rejecters of Islam), **Muslims who abandoned Islam**, and anyone who is not monotheistic, according to ISIS's interpretation. ISIS's primary objective is to spread its version of Islam around the globe following its victory over the various "infidels." **That is an overall goal when has no genuine chance of being achieved, but it turned a large number of states and population groups into enemies, which ISIS feels it has religious justification to kill.**



Representing terrorism as a religious war between Muslims and Christians. The cover of the July 2017 issue of ISIS's English-language magazine, Dabiq. In the picture an Islamic State "soldier" tears down a cross atop a church. The cover of the magazine reads, "Break the Cross" (Dabiq, issue #15, July 2016).

Appendix

Claiming Responsibility for Terrorist Attacks Carried Out by ISIS Abroad

Overview

► This appendix analyzes 22 claims of responsibility for **ISIS attacks carried out abroad between June 12, 2016, and June 7, 2017**. Each includes a short description of the attack, a translation of the claim of responsibility and a short description of the announcement. The attacks analyzed are the following:

- ◆ Shooting attack at an LGBTQ nightclub in Orlando, Florida, USA (June 13, 2016).
- ◆ Murder of a French police officer and his partner, stabbed to death in the residential commune of Magnanville, north-west of Paris, France (June 13, 2016).
- ◆ Vehicular attack on the promenade in Nice on the French Riviera (July 14, 2016).
- ◆ Stabbing attack using an axe on train passengers on train south east of Würzburg, Germany (July 18, 2016).
- ◆ Suicide bombing attack in Ansbach, south Germany (July 25, 2016).
- ◆ Throat of priest slit in a church in France (July 27, 2016).
- ◆ Stabbing attack in Charleroi, Belgium (August 6, 2016).
- ◆ Detonation of IED prevented by Canadian security forces (August 10, 2016).
- ◆ Shooting and stabbing attack using an axe in Balashikha, Russia, about 20 kilometers east of Moscow (August 17, 2016).
- ◆ Shooting attack in Copenhagen, Denmark (August 31, 2016).
- ◆ Stabbing attack in a shopping mall in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA (September 17, 2016).
- ◆ Suicide bombing attack in a Coptic cathedral in Cairo, Egypt (September 12, 2016).
- ◆ Stabbing and incendiary bomb attack in Mombasa, Kenya (September 13, 2016).
- ◆ Vehicular attack in Berlin, Germany (December 16, 2016).
- ◆ Shooting attack in a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey (January 1, 2017).
- ◆ Vehicular and stabbing attack in London, England (March 22, 2017).
- ◆ Rocket fire from the Sinai Peninsula targeting the eastern Negev, Israel (April 10, 2017).
- ◆ Shooting attack in Paris, France (April 20, 2017).

- ◆ Shooting attack in Khabarovsk in eastern Russia (April 21, 2017).
- ◆ Suicide bombing attack in Manchester, England (May 22, 2017).
- ◆ Vehicular and stabbing attack in London, England (June 3, 2017).
- ◆ Suicide bombing attack and shooting attack in Tehran, Iran (June 7, 2017).

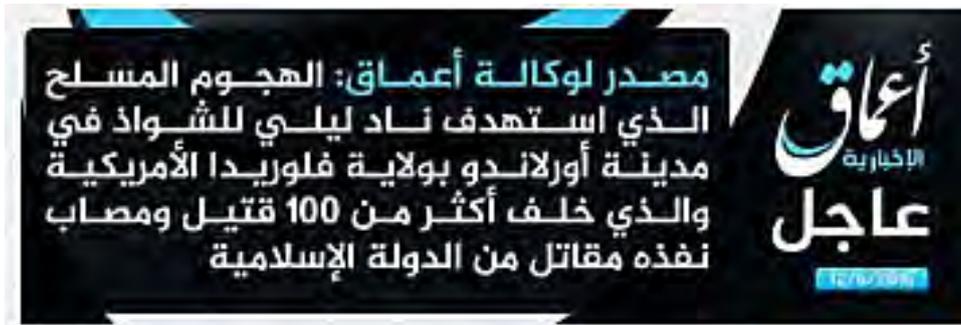
Shooting attack at an LGBTQ nightclub in Orlando, Florida

► **Description of the attack:** On June 12, 2016, a mass killing attack was carried out at Pulse, an LGBT nightclub in Orlando, Florida, USA. Forty-nine people were killed and several dozen wounded. At around 02:00 a terrorist armed with **an assault rifle, a hand gun and explosives** broke into the nightclub. There was a shoot out between the terrorist and the security guard, after which the terrorist entered the nightclub. He barricaded himself inside and took hostages. After a standoff of about three hours police forces rescued about 30 hostages, and shot and killed the terrorist. He was **Omar Sadiqi Matin**, 29, an American citizen of Afghan origin born in New York. He did not have a criminal record. The FBI investigated the attack and reported that Omar Matin had been **interrogated by the agency in 2013 and 2014 after expressing solidarity with extremist Islamic groups**. He was released at the time for lack of unequivocal evidence connecting him to terrorist activity.



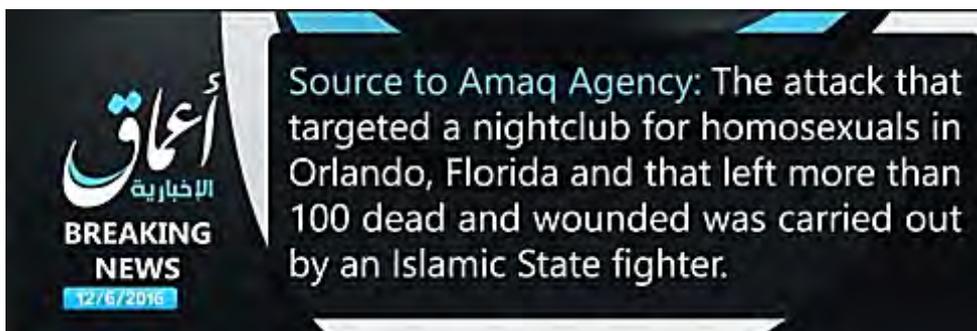
Omar Sadiqi Matin, who carried out the shooting attack in Orlando (al-Arabiya, June 12, 2016).

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Source [report] to Amaq news agency, urgent, June 12, 2016. Amaq agency source [reports]: armed attack targeting an LGBTQ nightclub in the city of Orlando in the state of Florida in the United States, which left behind more than a hundred dead and wounded, was carried out by a fighter of the Islamic State." [Note: The claim of responsibility was issued by Amaq several hours after the attack.]



The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, June 12, 2017).

- At the same time as the Arabic version of the claim of responsibility, ISIS issued an announcement in English to magnify the impact of the announcement among Americans (and in the West).



The English version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, June 12, 2017).

- On June 13, 2016, the day after the announcement was published, the Amaq news agency issued an Islamic State **video praising Omar Matin and his actions**. It said, "He rushed in to assault the American Crusaders, cut them down one by one and made their blood flow... Allah, through his favor, brought solace to the hearts of jihad fighters everywhere..."
- **Short description of the announcement:** The claim of responsibility was issued as a succinct, short-form announcement. The attack was described as an "armed attack." The terrorist was called a "warrior (*muqatin*) of the Islamic State." One number was given, the total of dead and wounded, to magnify the extent of the casualties caused (often the case in ISIS claims of responsibility).

The stabbing of a French police officer and his partner in the town of Magnanville, France

- On **June 13, 2016**, a man stabbed a French police officer and his partner to death in Magnanville, a small town about 55 kilometers northwest of Paris. The terrorist lay in wait for the officer (who was the deputy commander of a regional police station), and when he came

home from work he stabbed him a number of times. He then abducted his partner and son and held them hostage. After unsuccessful negotiations, police forces broke into the house and killed the terrorist. His partner was also killed and the boy was rescued. The French media reported that the terrorist was **Larossi Abballa**, 25, of Moroccan origin, born in France, living in a Paris suburb. On his Facebook page he called himself "**Muhammad Ali**." In 2013 he was sentenced to three years in prison for **belonging to a network of terrorist operatives that helped jihad fighters go to Pakistan and Afghanistan**.

► **Claim of responsibility:** ISIS's Amaq news agency published a **video taken by Larossi Abballa with his cellphone, documenting the attack**. The video also shows him **swearing allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and quoting Islamic traditions in praise of jihad**. He calls on the Islamic nations to "struggle against tyrants" and on Muslim prisoners in France to be patient (Amaq, June 14, 2017). **He spoke in French mixed with sentences in Arabic**.



Larossi Abballa, who stabbed a French police officer and his partner to death in the residential commune of Magnanville, north-west of Paris. He photographed himself with his cell phone. He can be heard swearing allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Amaq, June 14, 2016).

► **Short description of the announcement:** The form of the announcement was exceptional. **It was based on the cellphone video of the attack as it took place**. In ITIC assessment, the terrorist photographed the video on his own initiative. It documents the attack, during which he swears allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The video had significant media impact.

Vehicular attack in Nice on the French Riviera

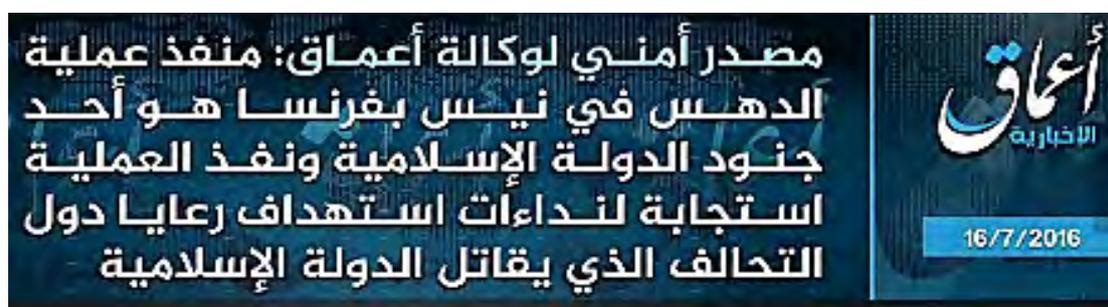
► **Description of the attack:** On July 14, 2016, a terrorist carried out a vehicular attack in Nice, on the French Riviera, **driving a refrigerator truck into a crowd of people celebrating**

Bastille Day. He plowed through two kilometers of people, running over everyone in his path. He also fired shots at three policemen. They returned fire and chased him for 300 meters before they managed to kill him. **The attack killed 80 people and wounded 202** (20 of them critically). The terrorist rented the truck two days before the attack and parked it on the street about nine hours before he started driving it into the crowd. He was identified as **Mohamed Suliman Lahouaiej-Bouhlel**, a 31-year-old Tunisian with a French residency permit and living in Nice, father of three small children. He worked as a messenger-driver and was known to the police as a criminal.



Left: Bodies of the victims lie covered on Nice promenade (YouTube). Right: The refrigerator truck used by the terrorist who carried out the vehicular attack (Twitter).

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Security source [message] to Amaq news agency, urgent, June 16, 2016. Amaq agency security source [report]: the [fighter] who carried out the vehicular operation in Nice, France. He was one of the soldiers of the Islamic State. He carried out the operation in response to calls to regard citizens of the countries participating in the coalition of countries fighting the Islamic State as targets for operations."



The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, July 16, 2016).

► **Short description of the announcement:** The claim of responsibility was issued as a succinct, short-form announcement, despite the large number of casualties caused by the

attack and its great media impact. The terrorist was called a "soldier" of the Islamic State who carried out the attack as revenge against the coalition fighting ISIS.

Stabbing attack using an axe on train passengers in Germany

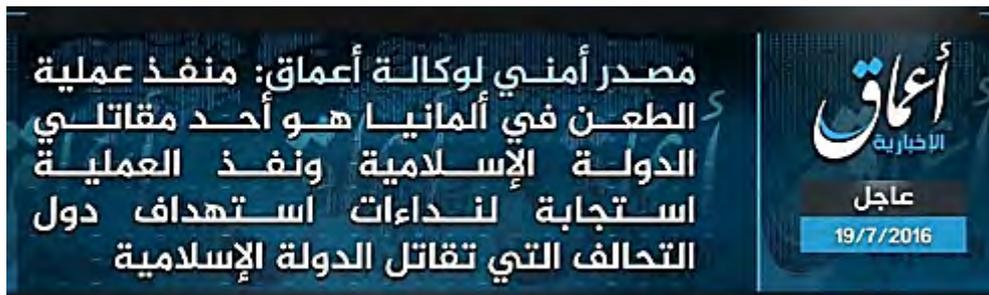
► **Description of the attack: On the night of July 18, 2016**, a young man carried out a **stabbing attack using an axe** (he was also found to be carrying a knife). He attacked passengers on a train about 16 kilometers southeast of Würzburg, in Bavaria, Germany. Local policemen shot and killed him after he fled the train following the attack. He wounded five passengers, two of them critically. Eye witnesses reported that during the attack he shouted "Allahu akbar." According to the German authorities, he was **Riza Khan Ahmadzai**, aka **Muhammad Riyad** by ISIS, 17 years old. He represented himself as an asylum-seeker from Afghanistan, but according to the German authorities he was apparently from Pakistan. He moved to Germany two years before the attack and lived on a farm with adoptive parents. An ISIS flag was found in his room, as well as a farewell letter he left for his father. Among the documents found were the instructions given him about where to go in Germany to increase his chances of being allowed by the authorities to remain in the country. On his Facebook page he wrote, in English, "Life is too short to learn German."



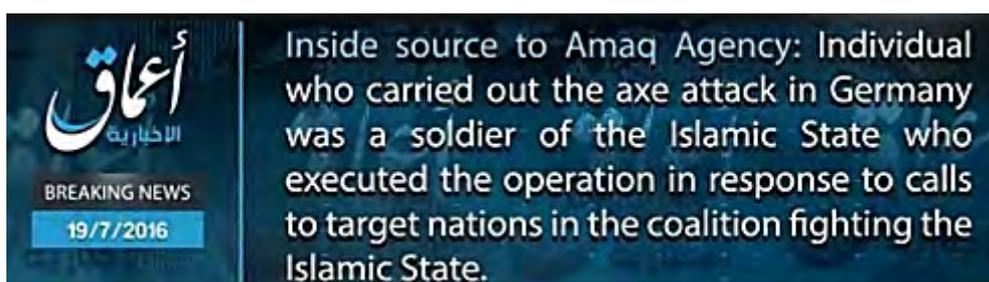
Right: The terrorist holding an axe, photographed by a security camera. Left: The scene of the attack (al-Akhbariya al-Tunisia, July 18, 2016).

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Inside source [report] to Amaq news agency, urgent, June 19, 2016. Amaq agency security source [report]: the man who carried out the stabbing attack using an axe in Germany was one of the fighters of the Islamic State, who executed the operation in response to calls to regard citizens of the countries [participating] in the coalition of countries fighting the Islamic State as targets for

operations." The Arabic and English versions are similar and but there are a few differences between them.

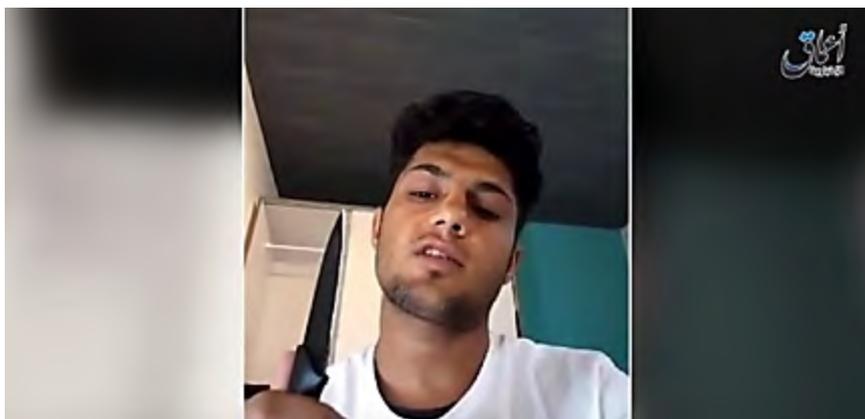


The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, July 19, 2016).



The English version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, July 19, 2016).

► In addition to the announcements, **the Amaq news agency issued a video (July 19, 2016) taken before the attack by the terrorist, who identified himself as Muhammad Riyadh.** In the video he says, "I want to carry out an operation of self-sacrifice in Germany for the sake of Allah. Oh infidels, if Allah wishes, your time is over. The time you come to our countries and kill our men, women and children, is over... The soldiers of the caliphate will come to you, [they] will slaughter you in your homes and conquer your houses and your bases. **I will slaughter you in your homes and on your streets, and make you forget the operation in France** [i.e., the vehicular attack in Nice]. **I will cut your throats with this knife** [waving a knife] and **slit your throats with an axe...**" He called on Muslims to rouse themselves and swear allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He ends the video by saying, **Fight the infidels in your countries**" (Amaq, July 19, 2016).



Picture from the video taken by the terrorist calling himself Muhammad Riyad (Amaq, July 19, 2016).

► **Short description of the announcement:** Short-form claims of responsibility in both Arabic and English which included **the video taken with the terrorist's cellphone before the attack**. The video is **full of threats against people of the West and mentions the vehicular attack in Nice**. The claim of responsibility and video had considerable media impact.

Suicide bombing attack in Ansbach, Germany

► **Description of the attack:** On the evening of July 25, 2016, a suicide bombing attack was carried out in **the city of Ansbach in southern Germany**. A Syrian refugee **blew himself up by detonating an explosive device** hidden in a backpack. The attack was carried out at the entrance to a restaurant after the terrorist tried unsuccessfully to gain entrance to a music festival held nearby. Fifteen people were injured, three of them critically. The terrorist was **Muhammad Dahlil**, 27, who had arrived in Germany two years previously and requested asylum. His request was denied by the German authorities. He remained in Germany temporarily and was about to be deported to Bulgaria.



Muhammad Dahlil, who carried out the suicide bombing attack in Ansbach (Amaq, July 26, 2016).

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, urgent, July 25, 2016. Security source confirms to the Amaq news agency that the executor of the suicide bombing attack in the city of Ansbach, Germany was one of the soldiers of the Islamic State. He carried out the operation [i.e., the attack] in response to calls to regard the countries [participating] in the coalition of countries fighting the Islamic State as targets for operations."



The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, July 25, 2016).

► **In this instance as well, the short-form claim of responsibility contained an video taken with a cellphone.** On July 26, 2016, ISIS's Amaq news agency issued a video in which Muhammad Dahlil documents himself before the attack, apparently using a cellphone that belonged to him (similar to the documentation of the attack on the train in Würzburg, Germany). The phone was one of the cellphones found in his apartment after the attack. It shows Dahlil, wearing a mask and **swearing allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He also says he intends to carry out a "[self-]sacrifice attack" in the city of Ansbach for the sake of Allah.** He claims he intends to carry out an operation in response to the "crimes" carried out by the coalition countries, one of which is Germany. **To the Germans he says, "...You will not enjoy life as long as you fight the Islamic State...We will blow up your homes...This is an IED operation...There will be more IEDs..."** He then calls on Muslims to **continue strikes against Germans** (Amaq, July 26, 2016).

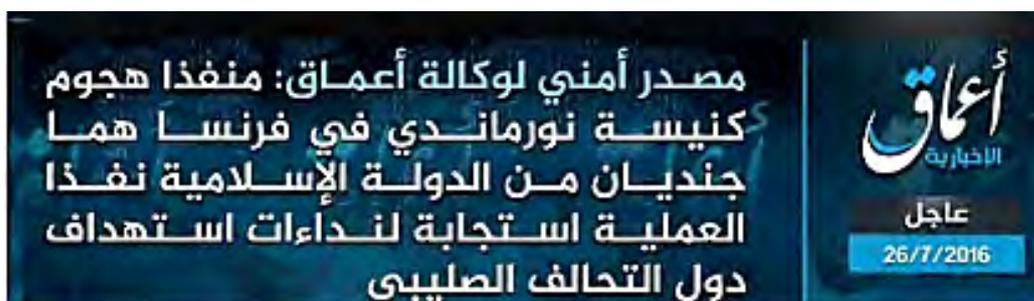
► **Short description of the announcement:** The claim of responsibility was succinct, short-form announcement. The information came from a "security source." There was no name or picture of the terrorist who carried out the attack. He was described as "one of the soldiers of the Islamic State." No mention is made of the number of casualties. The reason given for the attack was a response to the call to attack coalition countries. The term "Crusader," which in other claims of responsibility refers to coalition, does not appear here. After the initial claim of responsibility the video was issued; it had been photographed before the attack, probably

on the initiative of the terrorist. **The video is full of threats against Germans** and also includes an oath of allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The video had a great media impact

Slitting the throat of a priest in a French church

► **Description of the attack:** On July 27, 2016, at around 09:00 in the morning, two men armed with knives murdered an 86 year-old priest in a church in a suburb of St. Etienne de Rouvray in Normandy, northern France. The two, who identified themselves as ISIS supporters, broke into the church through the back door during prayers, forced the priest to kneel **and slit this throat, filming themselves all the while**. They also took hostages, including two nuns, one of whom managed to escape. One of the attackers was **'Adel Kermiche**, 19, born in France. The other was **Abdel Malik Petitjean**, 19, also born in France, who had converted to Islam. French intelligence began monitoring him about a year before the attack (Oment and al-Diyar, July 28, 2017).

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, urgent, July 26, 2016. Amaq agency security source [report]: the two men who carried out the attack at the church in Normandy, France, were two soldiers of the Islamic State. They executed the operation [i.e., the attack] in response to calls to regard the countries [participating] in the coalition of Crusader countries as targets for operations."



The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, July 26 12, 2016).

► On July 28, 2016, the Amaq news agency issued a video in French with Arabic subtitles. It was photographed before the attack by **Abdel Malik Petitjean (Abu Omar)**, one of the terrorists who carried out the attack, apparently with his cellphone. In it he calls on Muslims to strike in France and in other countries of the international coalition (Amaq, July 28, 2017). Another video was issued at the same time, also photographed before the attack, featuring the two terrorists, Kermiche and Petitjean. One of them holds an ISIS flag, and the other

swears allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (ISIS blog removed from the web, July 28, 2016; al-Arabiya in English, July 27, 2017).



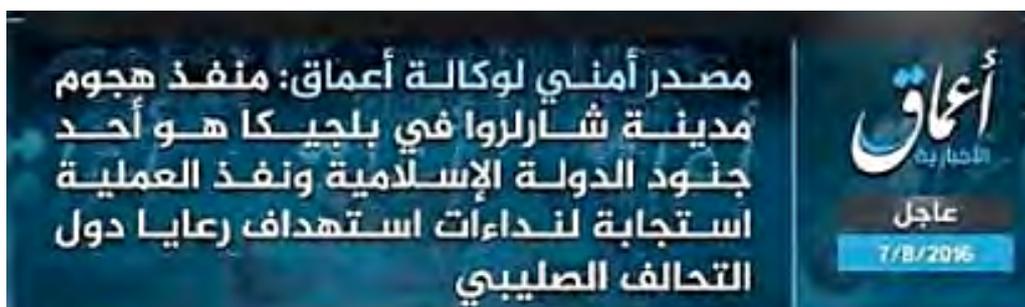
Right: Abdel Malik Petitjean in a video photographed before the attack, calls on Muslims to strike in France and other coalition countries (Amaq, July 28, 2017). Left: the two terrorists who murdered the priest swear allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (ISIS blog removed from the Internet, July 28, 2017; al-Arabiya in English, July 27, 2017).

► **Short description of the announcement:** The claim of responsibility was a succinct, short-form announcement. The information came from a "security source." The two terrorists are described as "two soldiers of the Islamic State." No mention is made of the number of casualties. The attack is described as "an attack." The reason for the attack was that it was a response to ISIS's calls to attack "Crusader" coalition countries. Videos were added to the announcement, photographed by one of the terrorists who carried out the attack, **to intensify the media impact.**

Stabbing attack in Belgium

► **Description of the attack:** On August 6, 2016, a machete was used in a stabbing attack near the police station in Charleroi, Belgium. Two police officers were wounded. The terrorist was shot by police and died in the hospital. He was **Khaled Babbouri**, 33, of Algerian origin, who had been in Belgium illegally since 2012. He was known to the authorities and had a criminal record.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, urgent, August 7, 2016. Amaq agency security source [report]: the man who carried out the attack in Charleroi, Belgium was one of the soldiers of the Islamic State. He executed the operation in response to calls to regard citizens of the countries [participating] in the Crusader coalition of countries as targets for operations."

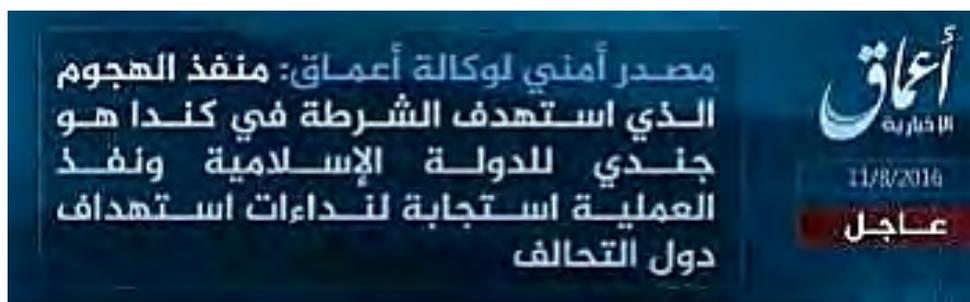


The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, August 7, 2016).

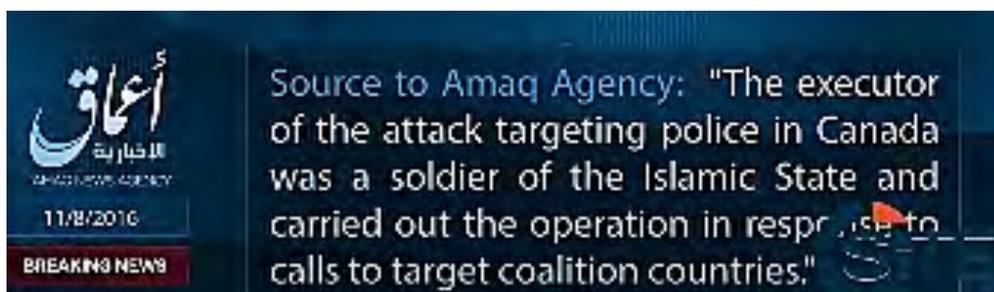
- **Short description of the announcement:** The information came from "a security source." There was no name or picture of the terrorist, who was described as "one of the soldiers of the Islamic State." The attack was called both "an attack" (*hujum*) and "an operational activity (*amaliya*).¹" The coalition was described as "Crusader." The reason for the attack was in answer to calls to attack countries participating in the "Crusader" coalition.

Canadian security forces prevent detonation of explosive device

- **Description of the attack:** On August 10, 2016, Aaron Driver, 25, a Canadian, was killed in a clash with Canadian security forces in Ontario. According to reports, on the night of the planned attack the terrorist got into his car, which was packed with explosives. Canadian security forces waiting for him shot and killed him (Globalnews, August 11, 2016). He was found to have another explosive device which he apparently planned to detonate. Aaron Driver was Canadian and a Christian who converted to Islam and had already been under Canadian police suspicion in 2014. ISIS claims of responsibility in Arabic and English.
- **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, August 11, 2016, urgent. Security source [report] to Amaq news agency: the man who carried out the attack, whose target was the Canadian police, was one of the soldiers of the Islamic State. He executed the operation [i.e., the attack] in response to calls to regard the countries [participating] in the coalition as targets for attack."



The Arabic version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, August 11, 2016).



The English version of ISIS's claim of responsibility (Amaq, August 11, 2016).

► **The video in English:** On August 11, 2016, the Amaq news agency issued a video in English which the terrorist had uploaded to the social networks before the attack. Aaron Driver appears masked. He begins in Arabic and continues in English, saying, "Oh Canada, you received many warnings. You were told many times what will become of those who fight against the Islamic State. You watched as your allies in Europe and America had their bullets and bombs returned back to them...You saw that each member of the coalition of crusaders was being punished for their aggression against the Muslims. Then, perhaps, you found yourself safe from retaliation because you ran away from the battlefield. No, no by Allah you still have much to pay for. You still have a heavy debt which has to be paid. You still have Muslim blood on your hands, and for this we are thirsty for your blood. There's a fire burning in the chest of every Muslim, and this fire can be cooled only by the spilling of your blood. Your war on Islam is not the kind of crime we allow ourselves to dismiss, to forgive or to forget, insha'Allah. You will pay for everything you ever brought against us. Whether you drop a bomb or fire a single bullet, we will hold you accountable for this, insha'Allah. Whether you spend millions in the war against Islam or you spend a single cent, we will hold you accountable, insha'Allah. When you creep an inch towards the lands of Islam or you set foot over its boundaries, we will hold you accountable, insha'Allah. You call yourselves peacekeepers on this Earth, but (Allah) has already warned us against you. You're nothing but mischief-makers, and all you do is spread oppression and corruption. So today is the day you

experience what it's like to be targeted for your belief, insha'Allah. I give my pledge of allegiance to (ISIS leader) Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi ... who's called for jihad in the lands of crusaders, and I respond to this call."



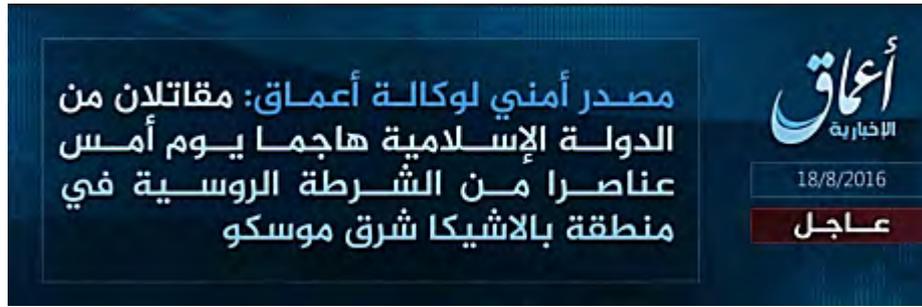
Picture of the terrorist as he appeared in the video (globalnews.ca, August 11, 2016).

► **Short description of the announcement:** The claim of responsibility was issued in Arabic and English. It was a succinct, short-form announcement. The information came from a "security source." The attack is called both "an attack" (*hujum*) and "an operational activity" (*amaliya*). He was described as one of the soldiers of the Islamic State. There is no mention of the number of casualties. The reason for the attack was given as a response to the call to attack the coalition countries fighting ISIS. The threat against Canada was magnified by the video, photographed on the terrorist's initiative.

Shooting and stabbing attack by axes in Russia

► **Description of the attack:** On August 17, 2016, two Russian traffic policemen were attacked in the Balashikha region, about 20 kilometers east of Moscow. The two policemen were wounded, one of them seriously. Two gunmen, who were also armed with axes, shot and wounded the policemen. They were shot and killed by the security forces. The two terrorists were reportedly Chechens.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, August 18, 2016, urgent. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: Yesterday, two soldiers of the Islamic State attacked two Russian policemen in the Balashikha region, east of Moscow."



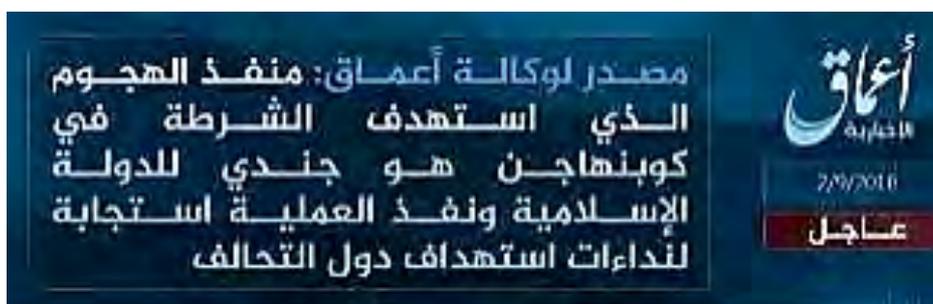
The claim of responsibility (Amaq, August 18, 2016)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The wording of the message is succinct. The information comes from a “security source.” The terrorist attack is described as an “attack” (*hujum*). The two perpetrators are described as “two fighters” (*muqatilan*). The usual declaration regarding the reason for the attack, response to the calls for attacking the coalition countries, does not appear, probably because the country involved is Russia. The message has a grammatical error (*anaseran* instead of *unsurayn* with reference to the two policemen who were attacked).

Shooting attack in Denmark

► **Description of the attack:** On August 31, 2016, **two policemen and a civilian were shot in Copenhagen’s Christiania quarter. One policeman was seriously wounded after being shot in the head.** A policeman and a civilian were shot in the legs. A man suspected of being the terrorist was caught by the police on the morning of September 1, 2016, after a shootout. According to reports, the terrorist who carried out the shooting, **Mesa Hodzic**, 25, died of his wounds. According to media reports, Mesa Hodzic was born in Bosnia and moved to Denmark at the age of four. Danish police said that he apparently had ties to an Islamist militant group and was an ISIS supporter.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, September 2, 2016, urgent. A "source" [reported to] Amaq news agency: The executor of the attack which targeted the Copenhagen police is one of the soldiers of the Islamic State. He carried out the attack in response to the calls for targeting the coalition countries."



The claim of responsibility (Amaq, September 2, 2016)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The message was published in Arabic. Its wording is succinct. The information comes from a “source” (unclear which source). The terrorist attack is described once as an “attack” (*hujum*) and once as an “operation” (*amaliya*). The terrorist is described as “one of the soldiers of the Islamic State.” The number of casualties is not mentioned. The reason for the attack was a response to the calls for targeting the coalition countries.

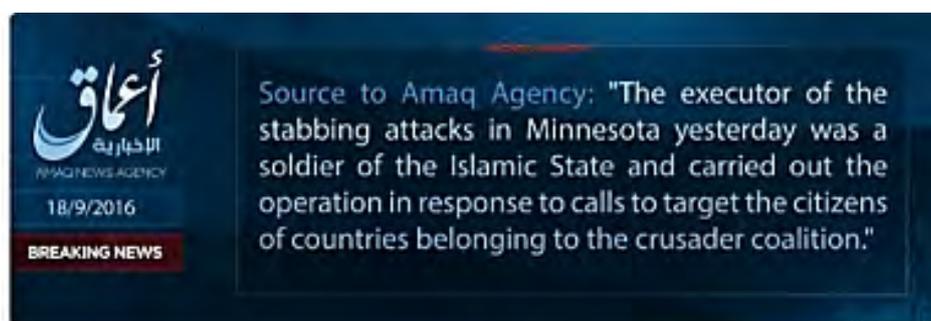
Stabbing attack in a US shopping mall

► **Description of the attack:** On September 17, 2016, ten people were wounded in a stabbing attack in a shopping mall in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The terrorist, who wore a security guard uniform, was killed by an off-duty police officer. The terrorist was **Dahir Adan**, 22, a Somali student who worked as a security guard in a private company. Amaq news agency published a claim of responsibility both in Arabic and English.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, September 18, 2016, urgent. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: The executor of the stabbing attacks in Minnesota yesterday was one of the soldiers of the Islamic State and carried out the operation in response to calls to target the citizens of countries of the Crusader coalition."



The Arabic claim of responsibility (Amaq, September 18, 2016)



The English claim of responsibility (Amaq, September 18, 2016)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The message was published in Arabic and in English. Its wording is succinct (for instance, it refers to Minnesota but the United States is not mentioned). The information (only in the Arabic version) comes from a “security source”. The perpetrator is described as “one of the soldiers of the Islamic State.” The attack is described as an “operation” (*amaliya*). The reason for the attack was a response to the calls for targeting the Crusader coalition countries acting against ISIS in Syria and Iraq. There is no mention of the number of casualties.

Stabbing attack and throwing an incendiary bomb in Kenya

► **Description of the attack:** On September 13, 2016, three women entered a police station in Mombasa, Kenya, ostensibly to report a theft. Upon entering the station, they shouted “Allahu akbar,” stabbed two policemen and threw an incendiary bomb. The three were killed by policemen. Police searched the house where the three women were staying and reportedly found a handwritten oath of allegiance to ISIS. According to the police, two of the women were Kenyan. One of them was wearing an explosive vest that did not explode.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** “Amaq news agency, September 13, 2016, urgent. A source [reported to] Amaq news agency: The executors of the attack on the Kenyan police in the city of Mombasa are supporters [*munaserat*] of the Islamic State. They carried out the operation in response to the calls to target the [coalition] Crusader countries.”



The claim of responsibility (Amaq, September 13, 2016)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The message was published in Arabic. Its wording is succinct. The place of the attack is mentioned (Mombasa, Kenya). The information comes from a “source”. The attack is described once as an “attack” (*hujum*) and once as an “operation” (*amaliya*). There are no names or pictures of the terrorists, who are described as “supporters” (*munaserat*; describing them as “supporters” is unusual). The reason for the attack was a response to the calls for targeting the [coalition] Crusader countries.

Suicide bombing attack in a Coptic cathedral in Cairo, Egypt

► **Description of the attack:** On December 12, 2016, an explosion (caused by a suicide bombing attack) occurred in a Coptic cathedral in Cairo’s neighborhood of al-Abbasiyah. At least 25 people were killed and 38 were wounded. According to Egyptian security sources, ISIS’s branch in Sinai was behind the terrorist attack. The suicide bomber was probably **Mahmud Shafiq Mohammad Mostafa**, aka **Abu Dajanah al-Kanani**, 22, who had joined ISIS’s Sinai Province about two years before and took part in several terrorist attacks.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Urgent, Egypt, 13 Rabi’ al-Awwal 1438 [December 13, 2016]. Killing and wounding about eighty Crusaders in a suicide bombing attack in the heart of Cairo. With Allah’s assistance and mercy, the brother who carried out the suicide bombing attack, **Abu Abdallah al-Masri** – may Allah welcome him to paradise – went to a church of the Christians [i.e., Copts] in the central structure of the Cathedral in the neighborhood of al-Abbasiyah, in central Cairo, where crowds of the Crusaders were gathered. He detonated his explosive belt, killing and wounding eighty of them. Let every infidel or Muslim who abandons Islam (*murtadd*) – both in Egypt and everywhere – know that our war against polytheism (*shirk*) continues, and that the Islamic State continues – with Allah’s help, may he be exalted – to spill their blood and burn their bodies, to prevent a civil war (*fitna*) until the entire religion (*din*) belongs to Allah. And all praises due to Allah, lord of creation."



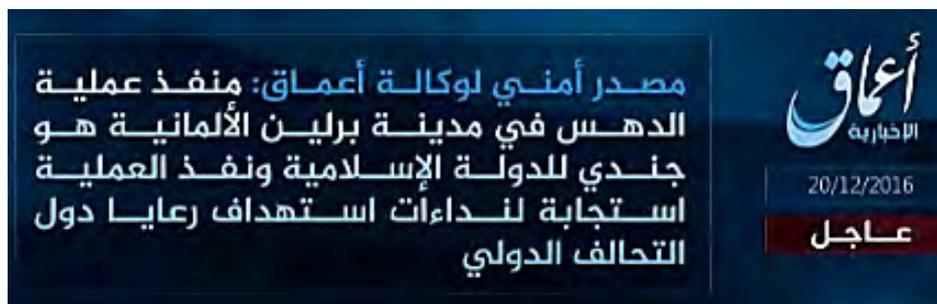
The claim of responsibility (Amaq, December 13, 2016)

- ▶ **Short description of the announcement:** The message is unusual, both in style and length (the messages are usually short, succinct and similar). The style is classical literary Arabic, a clear Islamic style, with Islamic religious terms (*shirk*, *fitna*). The only date given was the Hijri one. The message was released by the Haq news agency, and not by Amaq. The description of the attack is much more detailed than in the short messages. The message states that a suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt blew himself up in a crowd of local Christians (Copts) in a cathedral in central Cairo. The message mentions eighty killed and wounded, and even states the nom de guerre of the suicide bomber (Abu Abdallah al-Masri).
- ▶ **The main message conveyed in the claim of responsibility:** ISIS continues to fight against polytheism, the “Crusaders,” “infidels” and Muslims who abandon Islam, to bring about the supremacy and complete victory of Allah’s religion, including by spilling their blood and burning their bodies. The targets of these attacks are “Christians in Egypt” (i.e., Copts) or “Crusaders” (Christians), but the message actually also refers to Muslims who strayed from the righteous path (“infidels,” “those who abandoned Islam”).

Vehicular attack in Germany

- ▶ **Description of the attack:** On December 19, 2016, at around 20:00, a speeding Scania truck drove onto the sidewalk ramming into a large crowd of shoppers in the Christmas market in downtown Berlin. Twelve people were killed, and 48 were wounded. The terrorist was **Anis Amri**, a Tunisian who arrived in Germany in 2015 and had been residing in Berlin since 2016. He managed to escape to Italy through France in a stolen truck. He was killed in a shootout with Italian police.
- ▶ **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, December 20, 2016, urgent. A security source [report to] Amaq news agency: The vehicular attack in the city

of Berlin, Germany, was carried out by one of the soldiers of the Islamic State and carried out the operation in response to calls to target the citizens of the international coalition countries."



The claim of responsibility (Amaq, December 20, 2016)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The wording is succinct. The information comes from a “security source.” The terrorist is described "one of the soldiers of the Islamic State." The attack is described as an “operation” (*amaliya*). The reason for the attack was a response to the calls for targeting the countries of the international coalition operating against ISIS in Syria and Iraq (the word “Crusader” does not appear). Casualties are not mentioned, despite the large number.

Shooting attack at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey

► **Description of the attack:** In the early morning of January 1, 2017, a terrorist took a taxi to Reina, a famous nightclub in the heart of Istanbul frequented by foreign tourists. He shot and killed a policeman and a civilian at the front door. He entered the club, where around 600 people were celebrating, and opened fire in all directions. The shooter spent around seven minutes in the club and managed to reload his automatic weapon twice. He then took advantage of the commotion and fled the scene. **A total of 39 people were shot to death, mainly foreign nationals and 40 people were wounded.** After the attack the Turkish media reported that Turkish security forces had detained the terrorist, an Uzbek named **Abdulkadir Masharipov**, aka **Abu Muhammed Horasani**. He was detained in the home of a Kyrgyz friend in the Esenyurt district of Istanbul. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. The claim of responsibility **was first published on Twitter and Telegram, and subsequently by Haq news agency**, which also published the announcement **in Turkish**.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "The Islamic Haq news agency, The Islamic State. Urgent, Turkey, 3 Rabi Al-Akhir 1438 [January 2, 2017]: around 150 people were

killed and wounded during a polytheistic celebration (*ihlifal shirki*) of Christians in a place of entertainment (i.e., a nightclub) in Istanbul. Following the blessed operations [i.e., the terrorist attacks] involving the Islamic State against Turkey, the [country] defending the Cross, one of the heroic soldiers of the Islamic State crushed one of the most famous places of entertainment [i.e., nightclubs] where the Christians were celebrating their polytheistic holiday [New Year's Eve, 2017]. He attacked them with hand grenades and his weapon, a machine gun, and turned their happiness into agony, eliminating around 150 of them, dead and wounded. [This operation was carried out] in retaliation on behalf of the religion of Allah, may his name be praised, and in response to the order of the Emir of the Faithful [*Amir Al-Mu'minin*, i.e., the Caliph, ISIS leader Al-Baghdadi] to see a [country] that supports the Cross, Turkey, as the target of an attack."

► Praise be to Allah for the success [of the operational action], for He is the source of the grace to support him [i.e., the perpetrator of the terrorist attack]. The Turkish government, which is abandoning the religion of Islam, should know that the blood of the Muslims, which flows due to the bombardment by its planes and its artillery, will ignite a fire in its very heart, Allah willing. After all, Allah is the victor although most people are not aware of this. Praise be to Allah, Master of the World.



Left: The Turkish claim of responsibility (Haq, January 1, 2017). Right: The Arabic claim of responsibility (Haq, January 2, 2017)

► **Short description of the announcement:**

- ◆ **Style:** The message is in classical, literary Arabic-Islamic style, including clear Islamic religious terms (*shirk*, *khilafah*, *amir al-mu'minin*), even though the text also includes modern Arabic words. It should be noted that the term *malha* (plural: *malahi*, place of entertainment) with reference to the nightclub where the terrorist attack took place **has negative connotations in Arabic**, suggesting sexual promiscuity. Also “(the

country) protecting the cross” and “abandoning Islam” are expressions with negative denotations. This style may have been chosen because the attack was carried out in a Muslim country and Muslims were among the fatalities.⁵ **A similar wording was used in the description of the terrorist attack in the Coptic cathedral in Egypt.**

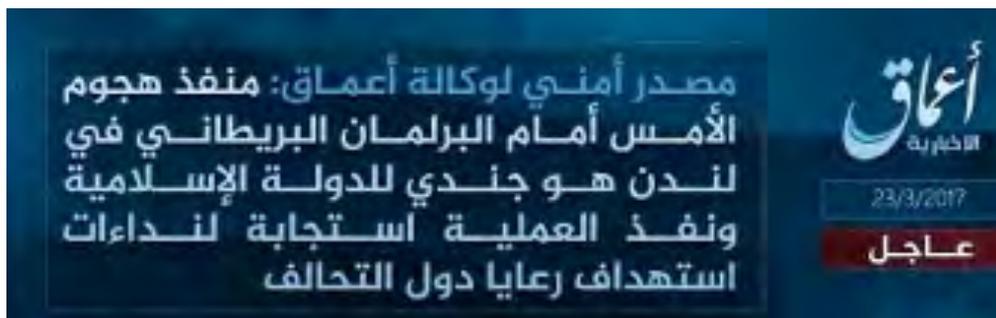
- ◆ **Languages:** The message was published in **both Arabic and Turkish**. This enhanced its impact on the Turkish target audience.
- ◆ **Contents:** The terrorist is described as a “soldier of the Caliphate” (rather than the Islamic State). His nom de guerre and picture do not appear in the message. Hand grenades and a machine gun are mentioned in the message. This was probably intended to explain the reason for the large number of casualties. The message threatens **Turkey that attacks on its territory will continue in revenge for spilling Muslim blood.**
- ◆ **The number of casualties:** As in other instances, the message does not distinguish between killed and wounded. The overall (exaggerated) number appears to emphasize the success of the attack.

Vehicular and stabbing attack in London

- ▶ **Description of the attack:** On March 22, 2017, a terrorist ran down passersby on the Westminster Bridge in London. He got out of his car, stabbed a policeman to death at the entrance to the Parliament building, and was killed by police fire. Four civilians were killed in the attack. Forty people were wounded, seven of them seriously. According to London police, the terrorist was **Khalid Masood**, 52, born in Kent, southeast England, a resident of Birmingham. He had previous convictions for assault, including GBH, weapons possession, and public disorder offenses. He was interrogated in the past by MI5 because of his violent extremism.
- ▶ **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, urgent, March 23, 2017. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: The executor of the attack [*hujum*, i.e., the terrorist attack] in front of the British Parliament yesterday is one of the soldiers of

⁵ Following the terrorist attack, ISIS’s Al-Nabā’ weekly published an **apologetic article to justify the killing of Muslims**. The article, which quotes Muslim sources, asserts that **randomly harming Muslims is permitted when the main target is the “infidels,” whose crimes justify killing**. The article also claims that the Muslims who were hit brought it upon themselves because they were celebrating the holiday of the “infidels” (New Year’s Eve) and stayed near them despite recurring warnings not to do so.

the Islamic State. He carried out the operation [*amaliya*, i.e., the terrorist attack] in response to calls to target the citizens of the coalition countries."



The claim of responsibility (Amaq, March 23, 2017)



The English claim of responsibility (Amaq, March 23, 2017)

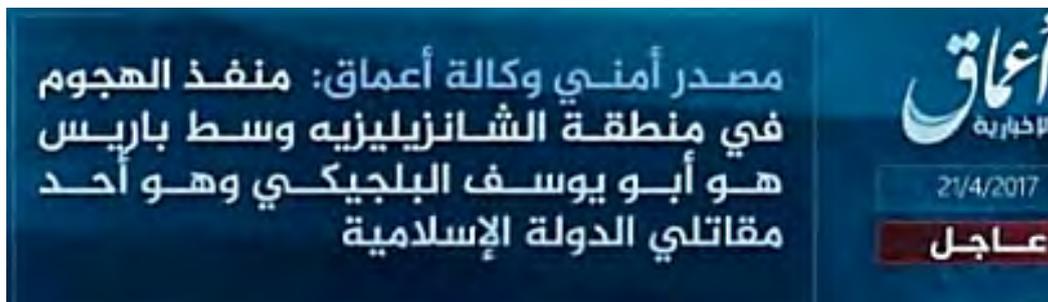
► **Short description of the announcement:** The wording is succinct. The information comes from a “security source”. The perpetrator is described as a “soldier of the Islamic State.” The attack is described once as an “attack” (*hujum*) and once as an “operation” (*amaliya*). The number of casualties is not mentioned. The reason for the attack was a response to the calls for targeting the countries of the coalition operating against ISIS (the adjectives “international” and “Crusader” are not mentioned). Publishing the message in both Arabic and English increased its impact in Britain in particular and in the West in general.

Shooting attack in Paris

► **Description of the attack:** On April 20, 2017, at around 21:00, a shooting attack was carried out targeting a police van on the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris. A terrorist opened fire at a police van from his car. A police officer was killed and two other police officers were wounded. The terrorist was shot and killed in an exchange of fire with police. A note expressing support for ISIS was found next to the body of the terrorist at the scene. The French police identified him as **Karim Cheurfi**, 39, a French native of Algerian descent, from a

suburb in the eastern part of Paris. Cheurfi was known to the French authorities. In 2003 he was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison for the attempted murder of two French policemen. He was released in 2015 after his sentence was shortened.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, April 21, 2017, urgent. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: The executor of the attack in the area of Champs-Élysées in central Paris is Abu Yusuf al-Baljiki [i.e., the Belgian], one of the fighters of the Islamic State."



The claim of responsibility (Amaq, April 21, 2017)

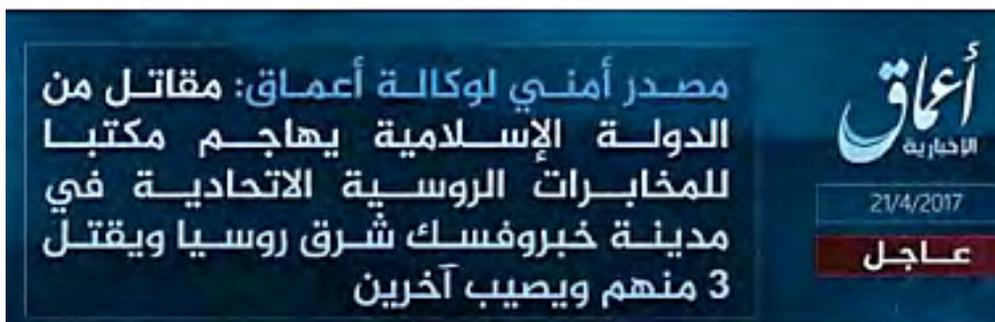
► **Short description of the announcement:** The message was published in Arabic. The wording is succinct. The information comes from a “security source”. The perpetrator is described as “one of the fighters of the Islamic State.” The attack is described as an “attack” (*hujum*). **Unlike the usual practice, the perpetrator’s code name appears in the message: Abu Yusuf al-Baljiki** (the name “the Belgian” was given by mistake for lack of knowledge, or maybe was intended **for deception**). The perpetrator of the attack is a French native **of Algerian descent**). The number of casualties is not mentioned. The message does not mention the reason for the attack (i.e., a response to the calls for targeting the countries of the coalition).

Shooting attack in Khabarovsk, eastern Russia

► **Description of the attack:** On April 21, 2017, a shooting attack was carried out at the headquarters of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) in the eastern Russian city of Khabarovsk (about 30 kilometers from the Chinese border). The shooting took place in the reception room before the security check. Two people were killed in the attack, one an FSB employee and the other a visitor. Before carrying out the attack, the terrorist, a resident of the city of Khabarovsk by the name of **Anton Konev**, went to a shooting club in the city, shot an employee and stole a hunting rifle and two handguns that he later used to carry out the

attack. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, but the FSB reported there was a connection between the terrorist and neo-Nazi groups.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, April 21, 2017, urgent. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: A fighter of the Islamic State is attacking the intelligence office in the city of Khabarovsk, killing three of them and wounding others."



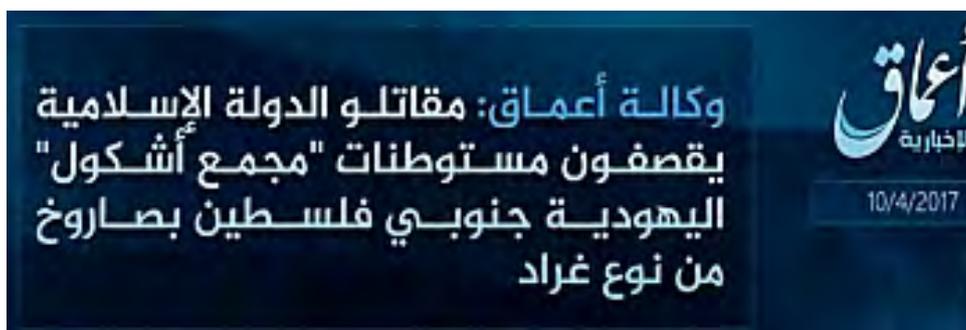
The claim of responsibility (Amaq, April 21, 2017)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The wording is succinct. The information comes from a “security source.” The perpetrator is described as a “fighter of the Islamic State.” Unusually, the message distinguishes between the number of dead and wounded. There is no mention of the reason for the attack (i.e., a response to the calls for targeting the countries of the coalition). The video, which was shot before the attack and released immediately after it by Amaq news agency, magnified the importance of the message and included a call to avenge the death of ISIS operatives in Syria and Iraq.

Firing a rocket from Sinai at southern Israel

► **Description of the attack:** On April 10, 2017, a rocket was fired from the Sinai Peninsula at the Eshkol Regional Council in southern Israel. It fell in a greenhouse and caused damage.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, April 10, 2017 [unusually, the word “urgent” does not appear. Furthermore, the word “source” (or “security source”) does not appear as well]: The fighters of the Islamic State are bombarding the settlement of the Jewish Eshkol Compound in southern Palestine with a Grad rocket."



The claim of responsibility (Amaq, April 10, 2017)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The message was published in Arabic. The wording is succinct. The information does not come from a “security source.” The perpetrators are described as “fighters of the Islamic State.” The Jewish communities are referred to as “Jewish settlements” situated in “southern Palestine.” The reference indicates ISIS’s Islamic worldview and conveys the absolute refusal to recognize Israel and indicates ISIS regards its confrontation with it as a religious one (similar references can be found with Hamas). There is an unusual mention of the type of weapon used in the attack (a Grad rocket) since mentioning the type of weapon is necessary to explain the incident.

Suicide bombing in Manchester, Britain

► **Description of the attack:** On the night of May 22, 2017, at the end of a performance by American pop singer Ariana Grande, a deadly terrorist attack was carried out as the audience was leaving the Manchester Arena. A total of 22 people were killed in the attack, many of them teenagers, and 59 were wounded. A Greater Manchester Police Chief Constable said at a press conference (May 23, 2017) that the terrorist, who was killed in the attack, was **Salman Ramadan Abedi**. He was born in Manchester in 1994 to parents who had fled Libya during the Qaddafi regime. He was known to the British security services. About three weeks before the attack, he visited Libya, returning a few days before he carried out the attack. He may have also visited Syria. Security sources believe he was trained in Libya. In the period before the attack, he underwent religious radicalization.

► ISIS claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack. On May 23, 2017, Amaq news agency issued a brief claim of responsibility in Arabic. A day after, May 24, 2017, it published a **detailed claim of responsibility in Arabic and in English.**

► **Translation of the brief (preliminary) Arabic claim of responsibility:** "(Amaq, May 23, 2017) A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: A fighter from the Islamic State carried out the attack on the city of Manchester in Britain."



The brief version of the claim of responsibility for the attack in Manchester, published in Amaq (Ana Muslim, May 23, 2017)

- **Translation of the detailed version:** "The Islamic State, urgent, Britain, 27 Sha'aban 1438 [May 24, 2017]: the killing and wounding of about 100 Crusaders in a bomb blast in the British city of Manchester. With Allah's grace and support, in revenge for Allah's religion, in an endeavor to terrorize the *mushrikin* [polytheists], and in response to their transgressions against the lands of the Muslims, one of the soldiers of the Caliphate managed to place explosive devices in the midst of the gatherings of the Crusaders in the British city of Manchester. The devices were detonated in the shameless concert arena, resulting in 30 Crusaders being killed and 70 others being wounded. And what comes next will be more severe for the worshipers of the Cross and their allies, by Allah's permission. And all praises to Allah, lord of creation."



Right: The detailed version of the claim of responsibility in Arabic. Left: The detailed version of the claim of responsibility in English (Amaq, May 24, 2017)

- **Short description of the announcement:** The release of a brief (preliminary) version and subsequently a detailed one is unusual. The publication of the message in English was intended **to enhance the threat** for the British target audience. **The style of the message** is radical Islamic, including the use of the terms "Crusaders," "immoral parties," "*khilafah*," "polytheists" etc. The terrorist who carried out the attack is described as a "soldier of the Caliphate." Unusually, the numbers of the dead and the wounded appear separately.

► **The reason for the attack** in the claim of responsibility is **taking revenge on a country operating against Muslims, which was intended to terrorize** (the Arabic word *irhab* is used in the meaning of terrorizing rather than carrying out a terrorist attack). The situation is war between the parties, and the terrorist is described as a soldier. The overall objective is to spread Islam globally by the victory of Allah’s religion over the various kinds of infidels (“Crusaders,” “polytheists”). The message is, if the Crusaders’ activity against the Muslims doesn’t stop, **the continuation of Muslim terror against the Crusaders will be “more severe.”**

Combined vehicular and stabbing attack in London, Britain

► **Description of the attack:** On the evening of June 3, 2017, a commercial vehicle carrying three terrorists crossed London Bridge, drove onto the sidewalk and rammed into pedestrians. The vehicle then stopped in the nearby entertainment area of Borough Market. The terrorists got out of the vehicle and began to stab passersby with knives. Eight policemen who arrived on the scene killed the three terrorists. **Seven people were killed and 48 others were wounded** (21 of them seriously or critically). Some of the casualties are foreign nationals. The wounded include four policemen.

► **On June 5, 2017,** British Police reported that investigators had identified the three terrorists and issued details about them: **Khuram Shazad Butt**, 27, a British citizen born in Pakistan and married with two children. He lived in the East London Borough of Barking. He was known to the British police and intelligence services because he had previously participated in videos bearing jihadi messages. The second was **Rachid Redouane**, 30, the son of immigrants from Morocco and Libya. He was married to a Scottish woman. According to the identity card found on his body, he lived for some time in Dublin, Ireland. He used another identity, **Rachid Elkhdar**. The third terrorist was **Youssef Zaghba**, 22, an Italian citizen with an Italian mother and a Moroccan father.

► **Translation of the Arabic claim of responsibility:** "Amaq news agency, June 4, 2017, urgent. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: A unit (*mafraza*) of the fighters of the Islamic State carried out yesterday the attacks in London."

► **In addition, a poster was published in three languages,** French, Arabic and English, showing London Bridge on fire with the text in the three languages, reading: “Revenge, no compromise in the security of Muslims.”



Right: The claim of responsibility (Amaq, June 4, 2017). Left: ISIS poster published in English, French and Arabic following the combined attack in London: “Revenge, no compromise in the security of Muslims” (Haq, June 5, 2017)



The English claim of responsibility (Amaq, March 23, 2017)

► **Short description of the announcement:** The claim was released in both Arabic and English. The wording is succinct. The information comes from a “security source.” The perpetrators of the attack are described as “fighters of the Islamic State.” The terrorist attacks are referred to as “attacks.” The three terrorists are described as a unit in its military meaning (*mafraza*). Unusually, there is no mention of the number of casualties. The poster which was published after the attack enhanced ISIS’s threats of revenge.

Combined suicide bombing and shooting attack in Tehran, Iran

► **Description of the attack:** On June 7, 2017, five ISIS terrorists carried out a **combined terrorist attack** in Tehran: **In the Majlis** (Iranian parliament), a shooting attack was carried out, apparently by three terrorists. In the **Mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini**, the founder of the Iranian Revolution, which is a tourist site, two terrorists carried out a **shooting attack. They were supposed to blow themselves up with explosive belts.** The Iranian interior ministry announced that 17 people had been killed and 52 wounded in the terrorist attack in Tehran. Apparently, most of the victims were in the Majlis building. According to several reports, the attacks were carried out by Iranians of Kurdish descent.



The five squad operatives of ISIS who carried out the combined attack in the Majles building and at the Khomeini Mausoleum (Haq, June 9, 2017)

- **Claim of responsibility:** During the attack, ISIS released a brief preliminary version: "Amaq news agency, June 7, 2017, urgent. A security source [reported to] Amaq news agency: Fighters (*muqatilun*) of the Islamic State are attacking the Tomb of Khomeini and the Iranian Majlis building in the heart of Tehran.'



The brief version of the claim of responsibility (Amaq, June 7, 2017)

- Subsequently, ISIS released a **detailed version**. The detailed version states that after a long period in which many Shi'ites in various countries in the world sustained losses, ISIS decided to carry out an attack **on Iranian soil**. According to the message, the perpetrators were **armed with automatic weapons and hand grenades, and were wearing explosive belts**. ISIS also **released a video**, taken during the attack by one of the squad operatives in the Iranian Majlis building (Twitter, June 7, 2017).



Right: Armed ISIS operative walking around in the Iranian Majlis building. Left: Bodies of two of the victims in the attack in the Iranian Majlis building (from a video disseminated by Amaq news agency; the video also appeared on Twitter, June 7, 2017)

- ▶ **Short description of the announcement:** It is evident that **much attention had been invested in media coverage for the terrorist attack** to enhance the image of ISIS's ability to hit sensitive targets of the Iranian regime in the heart of Tehran. The media preparation included a short message and a detailed one, which was composed during preparations for the attack. A **video taken during the attack** was included in the claim of responsibility. The attack is portrayed as part of the Sunni-Shi'ite confrontation, emphasizing that **the attack was carried out on the soil of Iran, the leader of the Shi'ite camp.**