



ISIS's Media Network in the Era after the Fall of the Islamic State

January 25, 2018

Overview

This study analyzes **ISIS's media network in view of rise and the fall of the Islamic State and to an essential change in ISIS's nature** (the transition from the Islamic State to a terrorist organization). The **loss of territories and resources, which accelerated in 2017, struck a hard blow to ISIS's media network**. At the same time, **there have been signs of a recovery in recent months**, at the beginning of the new era after the fall of the Islamic State.

- ▶ The signs of **the blow dealt to ISIS's media network** include the hiatus in the activities of its media platforms or their irregular appearance; a significant reduction in the volume of publications produced; the inferior quality and reduced quantity of publications and the changes in their contents. The changes included shorter reports; a defensive tone; late reporting and late claims of responsibility; inaccuracies and exaggerations; problems with the translation of titles and headlines from Arabic to English and in the quality and quantity of videos and pictures. However, there was also an **increase in the number of calls to ISIS operatives around to globe to carry out attacks** and calls to operatives in Syria and Iraq **to be patient and persevere in the struggle, in view of the difficulties** facing ISIS.
- ▶ **The height of ISIS's media activities was in 2014 and 2015**. During that era, **which began when ISIS was established and split from al-Qaeda**, the organization's morale rose and its military and financial situation improved, peaking with the conquest of the city of Mosul in Iraq and the establishment of the Islamic State (June 2014). At that time ISIS established **a media network that was of high quality, effective and centralized, operated by the Islamic State's "Central Media Department."** It employed skilled professionals, some of whom came to Syria from Western countries. At the time they produced very high-quality videos that resounded greatly around the globe.
- ▶ **At its height, the media network went from local to global**. Traditional channels were increased to include extensive media activity that **sought to reach target audiences around the globe. They also used languages other than Arabic, primarily English**. European languages were complemented with languages spoken by Muslims countries and

communities, such as Turkish, Indonesian, the Turkic language spoken by the Uyghur minority in China and Pashto, spoken in Afghanistan. Extensive activity was also conducted on the social networks, particularly Twitter, used as a platform to disseminate ISIS media materials. At ISIS's height its media products dealt with **boasting about the Islamic State's governance and its conduct as a living, functioning body** that dealt with civilian life as well as fighting. **It also encouraged operatives from around the globe to enlist in the ranks of the Islamic State and represented the "new Caliphate" as the embodiment of pure, utopian Islam.**

► In 2016 and 2017, as the Islamic State suffered blow after blow, **there was a gradual, significant decline in the quantity and quality of ISIS's publications.** Some of the reasons were the following: the killing of some of its senior media figures; the general lack of financial resources, which influenced the resources allotted for its media; and the Islamic State's loss of territory and population centers (especially the fall of al-Raqqa and Mosul, where the media network's main centers were located). In addition, even at the height of its activity, **ISIS was forced to deal with intensive activity conducted against it by the managements of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, and with cyber attacks that toppled sites.**

► **Only towards the end of 2017, at the beginning of the post-Islamic State era, did ISIS's media network begin showing significant signs of recovery.** ISIS reconstructed most of its websites and its affiliated propaganda institutions, and began issuing more updated and better quality products. **Its recovery is noticeable both in its central media outlets** (which continue to be dominant) and in **the local media materials disseminated by its provinces in Syria, Iraq, and abroad.** It is evident in the provinces in Syria and Iraq where, after the fall of Islamic State, it again conducts guerrilla and terrorist activities. **Most prominent are its media activities in the Sinai and Khorasan** (Afghanistan/Pakistan) **Provinces**, in full adaption with its intensive attacks in those provinces. However, **the extent and quality of ISIS's current media have not yet returned to the status quo ante.**

► Below are ISIS's propaganda platforms operating today (updated to the middle of January 2018). Some of them officially belong to ISIS. **Most of them do not** but their contents are clearly affiliated with ISIS.

- ◆ **ISIS's news agencies:** the most important is the **A'maq News Agency.** Others include Moata, the provinces' news network (WNN) and al-Qarar.

- ◆ **Institutions for the production and distribution of propaganda material:** the most important institution is **al-Hayat**, the production wing of the Central Media Department. Others include al-Furqan Media Foundation, al-Ajnad Foundation for Media Production and the Rimah Foundation.
 - ◆ **ISIS-affiliated websites:** the most important is **Akhbar al-Muslimin**. Another is al-Sawarim.
 - ◆ **Internet magazines:** ISIS's main internet magazine is the **weekly al-Nabā'**. A less important one is al-Anfāl.
 - ◆ **ISIS's internet radio station:** Radio al-Bayan.
 - ◆ **Local media offices in the various provinces:** In the past such offices were responsible for the dissemination of most of ISIS's media material. At least some of them continue to operate.
- ▶ **In addition, there are media platforms, some of them important, which ceased their operations.** They include the **Haqq website**, the monthly magazine **Rumiyah**, the magazine **Dabiq**, the **al-I'tisam Media Foundation** and the **al-Ansar site**. **Some of the platforms will return to operations** as ISIS reconstructs its operational and propaganda capabilities.
 - ▶ Even at the height of its power **ISIS's media network was forced to reduce and later completely end its presence on popular social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube**. That was mainly the result of activity taken against them by the networks' managements. As a result **ISIS and its supporters often use the encrypted Telegram application**, which enables groups of ISIS operatives to **communicate anonymously**. That provides a certain solution for communication with ISIS operatives and provinces around the globe, but **at the price of the difficulty of disseminating propaganda to a larger audience and spreading its messages through general discussions on the social networks**.
 - ▶ The materials produced by ISIS's media network **indicate that even after the fall of the Islamic State**, ISIS remains, in its own eyes and those of its provinces, **a global jihadist organization whose activity is not limited to Iraq and Syria** (still its core states). ISIS regards its local and global media network as **very important** for the following reasons: it enables ISIS to remain relevant as one an important jihadist organization; it enables ISIS **to maintain ties with operatives and provinces abroad, to continue issuing information about its operational activity, to send ideological messages to its supporters and to Muslim communities around the globe and to wage a campaign of incitement** whose

objective is to motivate Muslim supporters **to carry out local terrorist attacks** (ISIS-inspired attacks).

The threat of ISIS's global terrorism did not end with the fall of the Islamic State, and it is possible that it will grow in the future. That is because **ISIS is not currently staggering under the load of the routine management of the Islamic State**, defending its borders and providing for the needs of the inhabitants. Moreover, now that the Islamic State has fallen, ISIS and its provinces will be **motivated to prove they are still relevant**. ISIS's recovering media network is **a vital branch** in the structure of the provinces in Syria, Iraq and abroad. **ISIS can use it to call on its supporters in the Muslim countries around the globe to carry out independent terrorist attacks. That incitement, to which ISIS gives an important place in its publications for foreign audiences, has proven itself as fruitful and fueled the ISIS-inspired attacks around the globe, especially in the West.**¹

Sources

► The study is based mainly on an examination of the various media platforms that compose ISIS's media network and an analysis of the material appearing there. The platforms include ISIS-affiliated websites, foundations for the production of media material, internet magazines and activity on the social networks. Use was also made of former ITIC documents dealing with ISIS and, among other issues, the development of its media network, beginning in 2014. In addition, use was made of studies published by experts and institutions monitoring the issue.

Structure

- This study has **four parts**:
- ◆ **Part One – ISIS's media network at the height of the organization's power and subsequent changes.**
 - ISIS's media network at its height (2014-2015).
 - Changes that occurred in ISIS's media network during the campaign against the Islamic State.
 - The influence of the deaths of senior figures in the media network.
 - ◆ **Part Two – Features of ISIS's current media network.**

¹ Two examples of ISIS-inspired attacks are the vehicular attack in New York on October 31, 2017, and the detonation of an IED in New York on December 11, 2017, both carried out by ISIS supporters.

- Overview
 - News agencies
 - Foundations for production and dissemination
 - Websites
 - Internet magazines
 - Internet radio station
 - Defunct media platforms
- ◆ **Part Three – Local ISIS media activity in the various provinces of Syria, Iraq and abroad.**
- Overview
 - Provinces in Syria and Iraq that are prominent for their media activity
- ◆ **Part Four – Media and communications on the social networks**
- The transition to the Telegram application
 - Anonymous web surfing
 - Establishing a pool of Facebook pages and Twitter accounts for ISIS operatives ("the bank of supporters").

Part One – ISIS's Media Network at the Height of the Organization's Power and Subsequent Changes

ISIS's media network at its height (2014-2015)

ISIS is fully aware of the importance of the battle for hearts and minds, and since the organization's inception has invested many resources in it. At the height of its power it made intensive use of the internet and social networks such as Twitter and Facebook; of video file-sharing sites, especially YouTube; of file-sharing sites such as justpaste.it and dump.to; of blogs, internet forums and various other sites. In addition, it produced propaganda materials and videos, including Hollywood-quality productions that **resonated around the globe**. ISIS propaganda was disseminated in Syria, Iraq and around the globe through the internet, social networks and on CDs, **and made a considerable contribution to the momentum of ISIS's expansion and achievements at the time, also making the international community aware of the organization's existence.**



Video documenting the live immolation of a Jordanian prisoner captured by ISIS. Right: The pilot before being put into a cage and set on fire. Left: The pilot watches as the flames approach (al-Minbar al-A'lami al-Jihadi).



Video documenting the execution of 21 Egyptian immigrant Coptic workers by operatives of the ISIS province in Libya. It was produced by ISIS's al-Hayat Foundation and uploaded to the social networks on February 15, 2015.

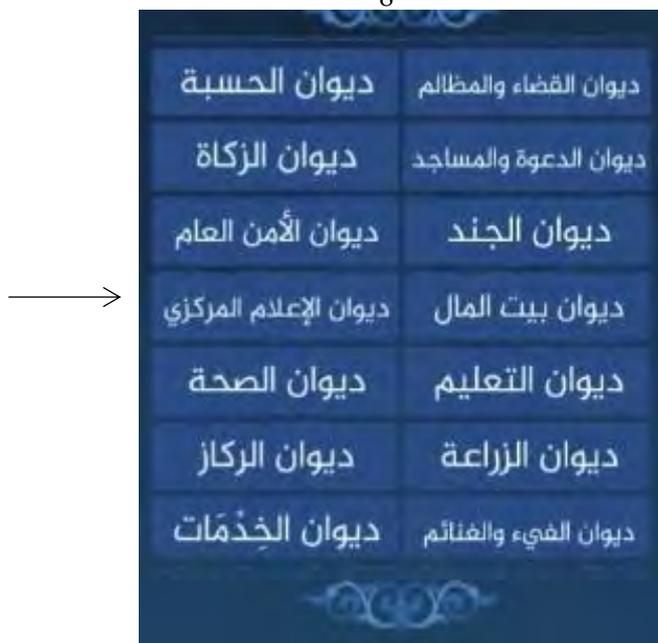


Video productions of executions. Right: Two Japanese captives decapitated by the notorious British terrorist known as "Jihadi John" on January 25 and 30, 2015. Left: "Jihadi John" in a video a few minutes before he decapitated American news photographer James Foley, August 19, 2014 (Twitter account of curdistani@curdistani, September 27, 2014).



Video of ISIS operatives decapitating Syrian soldiers captured in Palmyra. The video is of high technical quality, with visual and audio effects (Photo from al-Arabiya, November 16, 2014).

► **At its height ISIS had a central media network operated by the Central Media Department of the Islamic State (*diwan al-illam al-markazi*).** It functioned well and supervised the production of media messages and materials and their dissemination on various media platforms and through the "information bureaus" in the various Islamic State provinces. Apparently the Central Media Department was also responsible for acquiring the substantial financial resources necessary for the existence of ISIS's media network and for paying media personnel of the various institutions in Syria, Iraq and abroad.



The offices ("ministries") of the Islamic State, including the department Central Media Department.

- One method used for the immediate, monitored transmission of information to local residents of the Islamic State was **the establishment of "information points."** They presented the general audience with ISIS's local information channels. Two pictures of such points are the following:



Right: ISIS "Information point" in the city of Jarabulus, photographed on September 1, 2016. The notice features the logos of ISIS media (left to right): the al-Ajnad Foundation for Media Production, the al-Hayat Foundation, the *al-I'tisam* Media Foundation, the al-Furqan Media Foundation (Smart News, October 11, 2016). Left: "Information point," apparently in Iraq, where the same information channels are represented (Rudaw, May 14, 2015).

- Media material disseminated in 2014 and 2015 featured the slogan, **"The Islamic State remains unchanged."** Later, after foreign fighters from abroad joined the organization, and the Islamic State's various provinces were established, the slogan was changed to **"The Islamic State remains unchanged and expands."** That referred not only to territorial expansion, but to its **aspiration to international influence.** At the time the media network was seen as increasing ISIS's influence and its ability to enlist foreign fighters to its ranks.



The Arabic reads, "The Islamic State remains unchanged and expands," "in spite of every infidel and apostate Muslim"
(Twitter account of @nizaraboahmade, March 30, 2014).

► As part of its media campaign, at its height ISIS published propaganda materials praising the conduct of the Islamic State, **representing it as utopian and as realizing the laws of Allah on earth**. At the same time, ISIS made a consistent effort to enlist both supporters and fighters from around the globe and gain financial and media support. ISIS's media network worked to legitimize the organization in order to enlist supporters from the Sunni Muslim populations in Syria and Iraq., exploiting the rivalry between Shi'ites and Sunnis. ISIS competed with other Islamic-jihadist organizations, especially al-Qaeda, praising its own jihad, and representing its doctrine as realizing "genuine," more pure Islam.²

Changes that occurred in ISIS's media network during the campaign against the Islamic State

- **In 2016 and 2017, especially during the era after the fall of Mosul, ISIS's media network was weakened. Reasons include the following:**
 - ◆ After defeats in combat the territory of the Islamic State shrank and **it was necessary to lower Islamic State's profile and change its propaganda messages** in accordance with changes on the ground.
 - ◆ **Many commanders** who filled key positions in the media network, especially **Abu Muhammad al-Adnani** (see below), **were killed, either in targeted attacks or in combat, and high-quality replacements were not found** (the arrival of experts from abroad through the Syrian-Turkish border became much more difficult, and the great wave of volunteers, which included media experts, shrank considerably).
 - ◆ **There were financial difficulties which also affected the media network**, after the Islamic State's economic assets (especially the production and sale of petroleum products) were destroyed or severely damaged by aerial attacks.

²The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy, March 2016, ICCT, The Hague.

- ◆ **The effective measures carried out by the managements of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, as well as cyber-attacks**, significantly limited ISIS's use of the social networks.
- ▶ **Media operatives who survived the fighting were forced to flee, frequently change their locations and hide in isolated places where there was no cable or Wi-Fi connection.** Previously they had enjoyed permanent working accommodations and modern equipment, including computers, permanent internet connections and communications with photographers on the ground. They were not forced to improvise, which weakened the network.
- ▶ The weakening of ISIS's media network **significantly lowered the quantity and quality** of its publications.³ Its reports became **short and defensive**. On the other hand, **the volume of propaganda sent to populations** abroad grew in an effort to ease the pressure on ISIS operatives in Syria and Iraq (see below). Signs of its weakening also included lack of precision in reporting, exaggeration, delays in publication and publications without pictures.
- ▶ **ISIS's media strategy changed significantly during the period of Islamic State's shrinking:**
 - ◆ Instead of the former calls for a mass migration (*hejira*) to the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, during the two years since its fall ISIS's media network has **concentrated on calling for its supporters to carry out attacks (ISIS-inspired attacks), especially in the West**. In ITIC assessment, ISIS expected its supporters abroad to carry out local ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks which would ease the pressure on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In retrospect it can be said that **ISIS's hopes were unfulfilled and that the many terrorist attacks carried out at the time did not improve ISIS's situation or slow the fall of the Islamic State**.

³According to **Charlie Winton**, a research fellow at the The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), **during September 2017 ISIS media produced about a third of what had been produced in August 2015** (quoted by Gilad Shiloh, "ISIS's defeat in Syria and Iraq is also the end of ISIS's media as we know it," Dayan Center.



Right: Demonstrating how to kill with a knife. Left: Instructions for making IEDs (Haqq, November 26, 2016).



Infograph calling for ISIS operatives to carry out vehicular attacks abroad (Rumiyah, May 4, 2017).

- ◆ ISIS represented itself at the time as **waging a defensive jihad**. On various occasions ISIS's media network represented the Muslims as victims and ISIS as rescuing them.

The influence of the killing of senior figures in the media network.

During the campaign against ISIS a number of senior media network figures were killed, both in coalition targeted attacks and in combat. In ITIC assessment **their deaths were a strong blow to the media network**, which added to its other difficulties.

- ▶ The most prominent figures killed were:
 - ◆ **Taha Subhi Falaha, aka Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami – al-Adnani was an ISIS spokesman** and also dealt with **planning terrorist attacks abroad**. He was considered **ISIS's second in command and the person closest to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. It was al-Adnani who, on June 29, 2014, announced the establishment of the Islamic State. **He was prominent for his calls to Muslims in the West to kill civilians in their countries of residence**. He was killed on August 30, 2016,

According to the American version, he was killed in a coalition aerial attack. According to ISIS, he was killed fighting in one of the battles in Aleppo.



Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami (Twitter account of Watan_USA@, November 30, 2016)

- ◆ **Wa'el Adel Hassan Salman al-Fayadh, aka Abu Muhammad al-Furqan** ("Dr. Wa'el") – **head of ISIS's Central Media Department** and very close to the ISIS leadership (al-Jazeera, October 10, 2016). He was in charge of the Hollywood-quality productions documenting ISIS's executions. He was killed on September 7, 2016, in a coalition aerial attack in the region of al-Raqqah (Twitter account of almehwar_news@, October 10, 2016).
- ◆ **Ahmed Abu Samra, aka Abu Suleiman al-Shami** – born in Paris in 1981. He grew up in a suburb of Boston, and held American and Syrian citizenship (al-Ra'i al-Youm, October 18, 2014). He studied computer engineering in the United States (Twitter account of alhbar@, April 24, 2017). Initially he joined al-Qaeda and went to Iraq in 2004. Eventually he swore allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (al-Ra'i al-Youm, October 18, 2014). He was on the FBI's wanted list following his attempts to undergo military training in Yemen and Pakistan (Akhbar al-A'an, April 24, 2017). **He was responsible for documenting and directing ISIS's Hollywood-quality videos, and for ISIS's activity on the social networks.** He exploited his technical expertise and experience in the social networks (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) to promote ISIS's ideology. He was killed in Syria at the beginning of January 2017. On April 5, 2017, ISIS's magazine Rumiya published the news of his death, reporting he had been killed in an aerial attack in January 2017 (Twitter account of alhbar@, April 24, 2017).



Abu Samra (Shaykh Abu Suleiman al-Shami), apparently holding his own infant, on the front page of Issue 8 of the ISIS magazine Rumiya, which reported his death (Twitter account of akhbar@, April 24, 2017)

Part Two – Features of ISIS's Current Media Network

Overview

► In recent months, after the fall of the Islamic State, ISIS's media network has shown **signs of recovering**. That can be seen by the renewed activity of internet sites that were inactive for a number of months; **an improvement in the quality of its media products, both verbally and visually; and more frequent reports**. However, **the quality of the media network has still not returned to the status quo ante of 2014 and 2015**. The Central Media Department, which supervised and handled the Islamic State's media network, **is still active and functioning**. In ITIC assessment, **propaganda is still centralized**, despite the fact that the ISIS leadership and infrastructure in Mosul and al-Raqqa collapsed.



The most recent issue of the weekly al-Nabā' (January 12, 2018). At the upper right the Arabic reads, "Published by the Central Media Department."

Today, ISIS's four most important media platforms are the **Akhbar al-Muslimin** website, the **A'maq News Agency**, the **al-Hayat Foundation** for production and distribution, and the weekly **al-Nabā'**. There are also local media bureaus in ISIS's provinces in Syria, Iraq and abroad, which distribute materials mostly from the **A'maq News Agency** and **Akhbar al-Muslimin**. Some of the platforms active in the past have **ceased operations**. However, they may renew their activities as the various provinces and ISIS's media network rehabilitate themselves.

- The following are the **six types of ISIS media platforms**:
 - ◆ **News agencies**: A'maq, Mu'tah, WNN (the provinces' news network), al-Qarar.

- ◆ **Foundations for the production and distribution of media material:** al-Furqan, al-Hayat, al-Ajnad, Rimah.
- ◆ **ISIS-affiliated websites:** Akhbar al-Muslimin, al-Sawarim.
- ◆ **Internet magazines:** the weekly al-Nabā' and al-Anfāl, published every ten days.
- ◆ **Internet radio station:** al-Bayan.
- ◆ **Platforms no longer active at this time:** the Haqq website, the monthly magazines Rumiya and Dabiq, the al-I'tisam Media Foundation and the al-Ansar website.

Some of the platforms **formally belong to ISIS**, including the weekly **al-Nabā'**, **Radio al-Bayan**, **the al-Furqan, al-Hayat and al-Ajnad Foundations**. Al-Nabā' specifically states it is published by ISIS's Central Media Department. Radio al-Bayan also defines itself as a media arm of the Islamic State. The other platforms **do not formally belong to ISIS** but their products make it clear that they are affiliated with ISIS disseminate its materials, primarily recycled materials. For example, the **Akhbar al-Muslimin website**, the most important ISIS website, refers to itself as "an independent website dealing with Muslim news," but **its contents clearly show its ISIS affiliation**.

News Agencies

► **A'maq, ISIS's central news agency:**

- ◆ A'maq belongs to ISIS, although that is not specifically stated. It was established in 2014 by a Syrian journalist who joined ISIS, and seven other media figures from the region of Aleppo (Wikipedia). It is ISIS's **main media platform** and serves its leadership and the various provinces.
- ◆ A'maq publishes the organization's claims of responsibility for terrorist attacks and information about attacks carried out by its operatives. In addition, it issues news flashes, pictures, infographics and videos. It broadcasts exclusive material from combat zones and is quick to claim responsibility for ISIS attacks (usually before ISIS's other media). Most of its publications are **in Arabic**, but when attacks are carried out beyond the Arabic-speaking arena, the language of the target audience is used (English, German, French, Russian, Italian).
- ◆ Recently (December 2017 to January 2018) there has been an improvement in **A'maq** which had been manifested by the increased volume of its announcements. The agency has a website that has often disappeared and reappeared during the past two

years, and changed its internet addresses. It customarily issues its announcements on the **Akhbar al-Muslimin website, the Haqq website (when it is operating) and YouTube**. On the other hand, it has had difficulties in posting its material to **Facebook and Twitter**.



**A'maq video issued on December 30, 2017
(Akhbar al-Muslimin, December 30, 2017).**

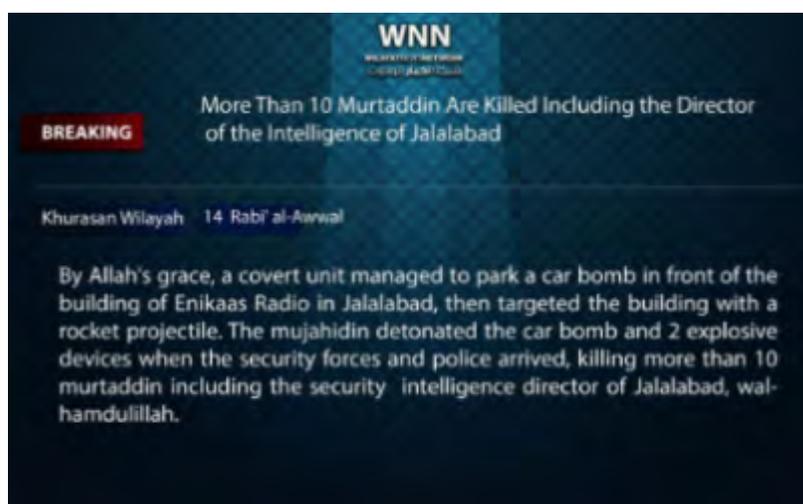
► **Mu'tah⁴ is another unofficially ISIS-affiliated news agency:** it began operations more than a year ago. It produces videos, infographics and claims of responsibility. Its publications appear on the Haqq, Akhbar al-Muslimin and al-Sawarim websites. They also appear in Telegram groups and occasionally on Facebook and Twitter. In December 2016 the Iraqi army raided the Mu'tah media center in the Harari region in the outskirts of Mosul, confiscating media material and equipment. The material gathered **linked the agency to ISIS** (Facebook page of the Badr News Agency, December 15, 2016). **The Mu'tah News Agency is still active.**

⁴The agency is named for the **Battle of Mu'tah**, fought between the army of Muhammad and the Byzantine army in the village east of the Jordan River called Mu'tah in 629 A.D. There was much bloodshed and in the end the Muslim forces retreated. However, the battle **became a symbol of Muslim sacrifice**. Many Muslims did not consider it a defeat, but rather a successful strategic battle that enabled Muslims to win prestige among the Bedouin tribes in the region and later to conquer the area and establish a large empire that included the Byzantine Empire, which collapsed.



Right: Announcement issued by the Mu'tah news agency about the killing of a Syrian officer and an operative of a militia supporting the Assad regime in the Deir al-Zor region (Twitter account of @keimrcullpq, December 15, 2017). Left: The Iraqi army in the Mu'tah center in December 2016 (Facebook page of the Badr News Agency, December 15, 2016).

► **The Wilayat News Network (WNN), the news network of the provinces: a relatively new ISIS news agency that has been in existence since the end of October 2017.** It publishes ISIS claims of responsibility in **English** (none in Arabic was located). Apparently it only publishes through Telegram groups, from which its material is disseminated to the global media (updated to December 2017).



ISIS's English claim of responsibility for the explosion of a car bomb and two IEDs in front of the Enikaas ("reflection") radio station in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, December 2, 2017 (Twitter account of SHAHROZPK@Shahroz H Rajput (Pakistan), December 2, 2017).

► **Al-Qarar:** a local news agency which apparently began operations in June 2017, **affiliated with ISIS supporters in Kashmir.** On December 11, 2017, it issued a notice in English showing an ISIS operative armed with a machine gun with an Islamic State headband and the inscription claiming the mission had only just begun, and calling for fighters to join the convoy of the Caliphate at the gate of India (Twitter account of SHAHROZPK@Shahroz H Rajput (Pakistan), December 11, 2017). Towards the end of

December 2017 the agency also began issuing videos, including an ISIS announcement of the establishment of its Kashmir Province in India (the first new province established since the fall of the Islamic State).



Right: ISIS operative aka "Abu al-Baraa" from Kashmir" in front of the ISIS flag, which is inscribed "Kashmir Province." Left: The al-Qarar logo (Haq, December 25, 2017).

Foundations for production and distribution of media material

► **al-Furqan Foundation, i.e., the al-Furqan Foundation for Media Production** (*Mu'asasat al-Furqan lil-Intaj al-'lami*)⁵ – al-Furqan is a long-time media arm **producing media materials, mainly videos. It is the oldest foundation serving the ISIS leadership. It began operations in 2006** under the aegis of the Islamic State in Iraq (before the establishment of ISIS) **and was later adopted by ISIS.**

► The al-Furqan foundation published the video of ISIS's declaration of the Caliphate. **It is still active. On September 28, 2017, it released a recording attributed to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, in which al-Baghdadi referred to ISIS's severe situation and called on its supporters abroad to increase their attacks.⁶ The al-Furqan foundation is considered the most prestigious **because it is closely connected to ISIS's leadership. Since late September 2017** no publication of al-Furqan has been found. However, it serves ISIS's leadership, which does not issue many publications. Therefore, al-Furqan can be considered as still active (as at late December 2017).

⁵The literal meaning of the word "al-Furqan" is "the separation" (in Islamic connotation, the separation of the truth of Islam from the lying of the infidels). In addition, al-Furqan is one of the names of the Qur'an.

⁶Al-Baghdadi's previous audiotape, published in November 2016, was also produced by the al-Furqan foundation.



Logo of the al-Furqan foundation



ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declaring the Caliphate in June 2014. This important video was produced by the al-Furqan foundation (YouTube, July 5, 2014)

► **Al-Hayat Foundation**, i.e., the **al-Hayat Media Center** – ISIS’s main media foundation, although that has not been stated explicitly. It produces and probably also disseminates many media products, including videos and magazines, some of them unique. The al-Hayat center produced and disseminated the monthly Rumiya and Dabiq (see below). The media products of the al-Hayat foundation were intended **to enlist the support of Muslims in the West** and help recruit foreign fighters into the ranks of ISIS, and therefore **some of its products are produced in English**. The al-Hayat foundation **is still active**.



Logo of the al-Hayat Media Center

► The following are examples of video clips **produced by the al-Hayat foundation** in the second half of 2017:

- ◆ **On September 23, 2017**, the foundation released a video in English of an ISIS operative codenamed Abu ‘Uqayl from Singapore. He calls on jihad fighters in East Asia to stand firm and choose between victory and death as a martyr. He calls on Muslims to migrate to the Islamic State and notes that migration and jihad will not stop until Judgment Day (al-Sawarim, September 23, 2017).



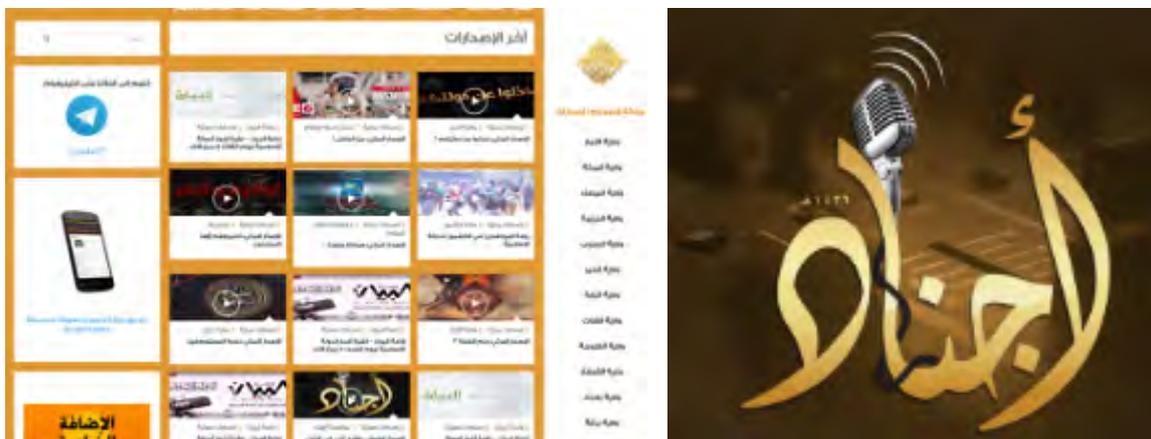
Abu ‘Uqayl from Singapore (al-Sawarim, September 23, 2017)

- ◆ **“Flames of War 2 – until Judgment Day”** – Video offering encouragement to the remaining ISIS operatives **and calling for other supporters to enlist, especially in the West**. The video was published in English (there is also an Arabic version with Arabic subtitles). It attacks the Trump administration for brutally attacking Muslims. At the end of the video an ISIS operative, apparently American, says, “They [Trump and his people] said that they would fight fire with fire and that’s how they would defeat the Islamic Caliphate.” However, “they failed. We are the victors, and thus it will be, Allah willing, until Judgment Day” (Akhbar al-Muslimin, November 30, 2017).



Part of a video in English produced by the al-Hayat foundation, entitled “Flames of War 2 – until Judgment Day”, including messages of incitement against the Crusader West (Akhbar al-Muslimin, November 30, 2017)

► **Ajnad Media Foundation**⁷ – an ISIS foundation for production and dissemination established in August 2013. It specializes in the production and dissemination of **verses instigating jihad** (*anashid*) and **short recorded messages containing Islamic preaching** (*da'wah*). They are uploaded to the al-Sawarim website, YouTube, and social networks. **This foundation is still active** (as at late December 2017).



Right: Logo of the Ajnad foundation. Left: al-Sawarim website, where verses produced by the Ajnad foundation appeared (December 30, 2017)



One of the verses of the Ajnad foundation, uploaded to YouTube. A jihad fighter is seen riding into battle, with other fighters behind him (YouTube, June 15, 2017)

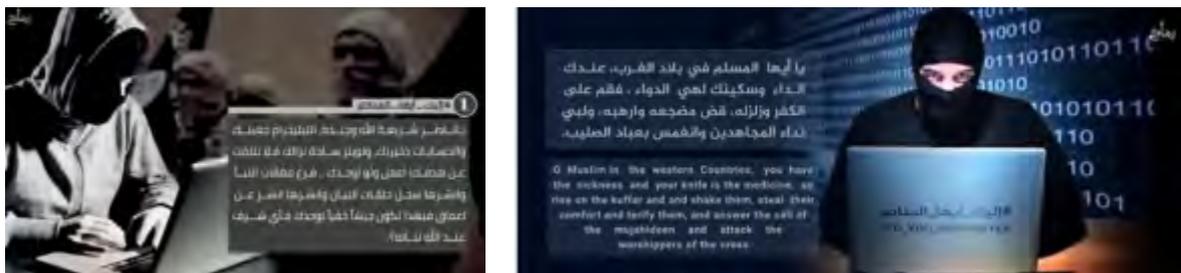
► **Rimah** ("spears") **Foundation** -- Media foundation of secondary importance which **started operating in December 2017**, apparently as part of the attempts of ISIS's media network to rehabilitate itself. The foundation releases media materials in Arabic and English. On December 27, 2017, it published, through Telegram, **posters calling on Muslims in the West to carry out stabbing attacks against the Christians in the West. They also called on them to disseminate ISIS's media materials** (information found on Telegram by the website **Beit al-Massader**, which monitors ISIS media materials, December 27, 2017).

⁷"Ajnad" means armies; soldiers; military territories.

On December 30, 2017, a video was released on the Rimah Foundation’s YouTube channel with the title “**Slaughter the Jews**” (YouTube, December 29, 2017; The video has been removed by YouTube).



“Your knife is the medicine” (poster found on Telegram by Beit al-Massader, which monitors ISIS’s media materials, December 27, 2017)



Poster saying, “Oh Muslim in the Western countries, you have the sickness and your knife is the medicine. So rise on the infidels [kuffar] and shake them [...] Disseminate on Telegram the al-Nabā’ magazine, Radio al-Bayan broadcasts and the publications of ISIS’s A’maq News Agency (posters found on Telegram by Beit al-Massader, which monitors ISIS’s media materials, December 27, 2017)



Poster that reads, “Media is the main base of the campaign, and you [play the role of] a real soldier when you disseminate the publications of the [Islamic] State...” (a poster found on Telegram by Beit al-Massader, which monitors ISIS’s media materials, December 27, 2017)

Websites

- **Akhbar al-Muslimin (News of the Muslims)** – a long-standing ISIS website active since 2016. It call itself “an independent website engaged in news of the Muslims.” In the middle

of 2017 it stopped operations, **but resumed in November 2017 with a new address.** Recently, **the site has been updated on a daily basis (as in the past) and increased the volume of its publications.** The website releases reports, claims of responsibility, videos and photos of terrorist attacks and military attacks carried out by ISIS operatives. In November 2017, the site began raising funds through Bitcoin, the Internet currency allowing anonymity, but its fundraising channel has been blocked.⁸



The homepage of Akhbar al-Muslimin (updated to December 31, 2017)



Part of the campaign to raise funds in Bitcoin. The text under the title reads, “Click here to donate to the website in Bitcoin. Donation from Zakat (i.e., from the funds intended to fulfill the religious duty of charity) is forbidden” (Akhbar al-Muslimin, November 27, 2017)

► **al-Sawarim** ("the swords"), i.e., **al-Sawarim Media Agency – Isdarat** [i.e., publications] – an ISIS-affiliated website, although that has not been stated explicitly. The site mainly releases **videos and broadcasts of Radio al-Bayan** (see below). The site, which was

⁸In late January 2018, the site stopped its activity. However, on February 1, 2018, it appeared again with a new address.

launched in 2016, has been down and up again several times. **It is still active** (as at late December 2017).



al-Sawarim website (updated to January 1, 2018)

Internet magazines

► **Al-Nabā' weekly:** An official ISIS weekly, magazine which publishes **articles inciting terrorist attacks in the West, technical guidance on how to carry out terrorist attacks,** and interviews with ISIS operatives who have arrived in the territories of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. It is published **in Arabic**. However, sometimes al-Nabā' functions as a news agency and disseminates bulletins and one-time publications in Arabic and English. **The weekly is still active.** During the past year the graphic format of Al-Nabā' has become simpler, yet another manifestation of the damage sustained by ISIS's media network.



The main article of the al-Nabā' weekly issued on December 29, 2017. The article is about the attacks of ISIS's province in Afghanistan against Afghan intelligence personnel (al-Nabā', December 29, 2017)

- **al-Anfal** ("seized items")⁹ -- an informal ISIS magazine in Arabic **launched in November 2017**. The magazine is issued by an organization called **al-Dara' al-Sunni** ("the Sunni shield") once every ten days. It is published on the Internet, file-sharing websites, and social networks, mainly Telegram. So far, there have been **five editions** (archive.org, November 19, 2017).
- The magazine, published in the era after the fall of the Islamic State, is **elaborate and printed in color**. It contains articles covering ISIS's operational activity, infographics, interviews with ISIS senior figures, Islamic Salafist-jihadi thought, and incitement for attacks (archive.org, November 19, 2017; al-Bawaba, November 20, 2017). **At this stage, its dissemination is rather limited**; however it is a new magazine.



Right: The first issue of al-Anfal. The cover page article is about the fighting of ISIS's Caliphate army against the Syrian army. Left: Example of an infographic in the first issue of al-Anfal (archive.org, November 19, 2017)

⁹The Qur'an has a chapter (surah) called Surat al-Anfal, which is about jihad and the distribution of loot seized as part of jihad among Muslims.



Right: Call to carry out attacks in the West in the first issue of al-Anfal. The title reads, “Do that, you who adhere to the unity of Allah, and only dedicate it to Allah.” Left: The second edition of al-Anfal: Call to carry out deadly stabbing attacks hitting sensitive areas in the body (archive.org, November 19, 2017)



Encrypted call on the al-Anfal magazine, apparently intended to instigate terrorist attacks in France (up.top4top.net, December 31, 2017)

Internet radio station

► **Radio al-Bayan** ("the statement, announcement") – Radio station which began operations in August 2014 and broadcast daily from the city of Mosul in Iraq (al-Jazeera, August 9, 2014). It also broadcast until late 2017 also from al-Raqqah, Syria. On December

13, 2017, ISIS's **Haqq website reported** the station would continue its broadcasts from the territories of the Islamic State (which collapsed and fell into the hands of ISIS's enemies). **Since November 2017, Radio al-Bayan has switched its platform to the Internet channels of Haqq and al-Sawarim.**



Right: Radio al-Bayan. Under the name al-Bayan Broadcasts the Arabic reads, "Issued by the Islamic State " (Ayn al-Madina, March 9, 2017). Left: Radio al-Bayan broadcast on the al-Sawarim website (al-Sawarim, December 26, 2017)



Radio al-Bayan's daily news broadcast on Haqq (Haqq, December 13, 2017)

Defunct media platforms

► **The Islamic Haqq News Agency** – an ISIS website in Arabic, although it claims to be an independent website unaffiliated with any group or organization. The site included many ISIS themes, such as claims of responsibility, reports on attacks, news of the world, photos and videos, articles and opinion pieces. Recently it has been down several times, probably because of cyber-attacks. However, **the site continued to function almost continuously** until late December 2017. **Since early January 2018 it has not been updated, and since January 15, 2018, it has been inactive** (as of January 18, 2018).



Homepage of the Islamic Haqq News Agency (Haqq, December 17, 2017)

► **The Rumiya monthly¹⁰** – an important, official ISIS Internet monthly, **first issued in September 2016**. It was **ISIS's leading monthly for the organization's target audiences abroad**. It was usually issued in the first week of every month by ISIS's official media foundation al-Hayat. It was intended for various target audiences abroad and published **in nine languages: English, Arabic, Russian, French, Turkish, German, Indonesian, Uyghur** (language of the Chinese Muslim minority), **and Pashto** (Afghanistan). Rumiya replaced other ISIS organs which were issued until mid-2016, including **Dabiq** (which started operating in July 2014).¹¹ The last edition of Rumiya was issued in September 2017, and it has not been active since.

¹⁰The meaning of Rumiya in Arabic is "Rome," which is perceived as the capital and symbol of Christianity.

¹¹**The origin of the name Dabiq** is an Islamic tradition, according to which the battles of Armageddon will be waged in the area of Dabiq, in northwestern Syria, near the border between Syria and Turkey. The battles will be waged between Muslims and Christians (the tradition refers to the Byzantines).



Right: Call by ISIS to its supporters abroad to carry out stabbing attacks (cover page of Rumiya's issue No. 2, October 4, 2016). Left: Inciting vehicular attacks as part of the series "Tactics of Justified Terrorism" (Rumiya, November 11, 2016)

- **al-I'tisam for media production** (*al-I'tisam lil-Intaj al-I'lami*)¹² – a media foundation for producing ISIS videos, active between 2014 and 2016. It produced ISIS video clips, mainly on operations, and probably also disseminated them. **It stopped operating in 2016.**



Logo of al-I'tisam for media production

- **al-Ansar website** – an ISIS website launched in 2016 **but stopped operating in mid-2017.**



Internet user complains that the websites of al-Sawarim and al-Ansar are down. At that time the al-Sawarim website was also down (Haqq, November 14, 2017)

¹²The word *I'tisam* means seeking refuge (i.e., in the shadow of Allah).

Part Three: Local ISIS media activity in the various provinces of Syria, Iraq and abroad

Overview

The damage to ISIS's central media institutions did not skip the various provinces, which had difficulty publishing reports whose quantity and quality were on a par with the reports published the past. However, since the fall of the Islamic State (November 2017), **there has been a marked recovery in ISIS's media activity in the provinces. There is a clear correlation between the provinces in Syria and Iraq and the provinces abroad, where intensive operational activity is carried out**, and the extensive media activity accompanying the activity in those provinces.

- ▶ **In Syria**, the most prominent provinces in terms of media activity are al-Barakah, al-Furat and Idlib. **In Iraq**, the most prominent province is al-Diyala, while the most prominent provinces **abroad** are the Sinai Province and Khorasan (Afghanistan/Pakistan). On the other hand, other provinces are still encountering media-related difficulties. For example – the **Baghdad Province in Iraq**, which only issued a claim of responsibility for a mass-casualty attack two days after the attack (a relatively long time compared to the customary modus operandi in the past).
- ▶ In ITIC assessment the various provinces that continue to function have local media professionals who maintain constant contact with the various central media platforms. The most important media platform disseminating announcements made by the various provinces is the **A'maq News Agency, which usually publishes the initial information about ISIS's operations**. The **Akhbar al-Muslimin website** is also of major importance. It maintains close contact with the **A'maq News Agency** and is used for disseminating media material.
- ▶ In ITIC assessment, ISIS's media system **continues to be central**: raw materials are obtained at the field level in the various provinces. However, the information is processed, subtitles are added and the videos are edited by a central media office or by the various media platforms, mainly the most prominent of the platforms (the A'maq News Agency and the Akhbar al-Muslimin website).

Provinces in Syria and Iraq that are prominent in their media activity

► After the fall of the Islamic State, some of the provinces resumed their operational activity accompanied by media activity. Following are the most prominent provinces in Syria and Iraq in terms of media activity:

- ◆ **Al-Barakah Province** (eastern and northeastern Syria) -- The province has resumed reporting on ISIS's guerrilla activities. The province reported clashes between ISIS operatives and SDF forces north of Albukamal and southeast of Deir al-Zor. In addition, it reported (January 2018) on ISIS's use of car bombs driven by its operatives, and that was reflected in the return of the familiar format: a photo of the suicide bomber, the trip to the target, and the attack. **The announcements are disseminated mainly via the A'maq News Agency.**

- ◆ **Al-Furat Province (southeastern Syria/western Iraq)** -- a resumption of media activity in the province is also evident, with the main topic being ISIS's activity in Syria, principally in the area between Deir al-Zor and Albukamal, where ISIS is conducting guerrilla warfare against the Syrian and Kurdish forces (SDF). In some cases **ISIS apparently used photos taken by a drone to document a car bomb attack.**



Right: The area where an SDF force was deployed, the target of ISIS's attack. The photo was apparently taken by a drone (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 17, 2018) Left: Explosion of a car bomb on January 16, 2018, targeting a gathering of SDF forces in a town northwest of Albukamal. The photo was apparently taken by a drone (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 17, 2018)



Photo which was probably taken by a drone in an SDF staging area, before a suicide bombing attack by a car bomb. A white van which was apparently used as a car bomb is seen in the upper part of the photo (A'maq News Agency via Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 21, 2018).



Operatives of ISIS's al-Furat Province traveling in a self-manufactured armored off-road vehicle toward SDF positions north of Albukamal on January 13, 2018 (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 13, 2018)

◆ **Idlib Province:** The Idlib Province, dominated by the Headquarters for the Liberation of al-Sham, is now facing a campaign against the Syrian forces with Russian air support. ISIS has a presence in the eastern part of the Idlib Province. ISIS releases videos documenting the organization's activities, mainly following its successes, via the **A'maq News Agency**. The videos are produced by a local video photographer who apparently accompanies the fighters' operational activity. The province recently (December 2017 – January 2018) published reports and photos of its activity against the Syrian army and against the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham. The province also documented serious destruction, which was common practice in the past in the areas controlled by the Islamic State (the activity was carried out by the *hisba*, i.e., the Islamic morality police).



Right: Syrian army four-barrel, 23 mm anti-aircraft gun seized from the Syrian army by ISIS operatives in Idlib (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 13, 2018). Left: Syrian forces' fighter taken prisoner by ISIS near the Abu ad-Duhur military airbase southeast of Idlib (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 12, 2018).



Two ISIS operatives smashing a grave in the Idlib Province (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 15, 2018)

- ◆ **Diyala Province in Iraq** (northeast of Baghdad) -- The most active province in terms of operational and media activity. That is despite the fact that ISIS operatives in the province are facing intensive and sometimes successful activity by the Iraqi security forces. In December 2017, the Diyala Province released a video documenting clashes between ISIS operatives and the Iraqi security forces, prisoners being taken, and executions. The province's video photography and editing are of high quality.
- ◆ **Al-Anbar Province in Iraq:** Until recently, the province was absent from ISIS's media arena following the intensive activity of the Iraqi security forces. **The province has recently resumed its media activity.** For example, on January 19, 2018, it issued a detailed announcement that ISIS operatives had broken into the homes of senior Iraqi police officers northwest of Ramadi (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 21, 2018).
- ▶ **Two provinces outside Iraq and Syria have been prominent since the fall of the Islamic State in terms of their operational and media activities:**
 - ◆ **The Sinai Province:** Its media is the most efficient of all the organization's provinces. The province **regularly posts claims of responsibility, sometimes with a**

detailed description of the incidents. Many announcements are published **via the A'maq News Agency.** In ITIC assessment the reports are sent to the agency more smoothly than in any other province. The province **regularly publishes high-quality photos of attacks against the Egyptian security forces and of executions carried out by the organization.** Notable was a 22-minute video released in January 2018, documenting the execution of an operative convicted of transferring weapons to the military wing of Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Both the footage and the voice recording of the speaker in the video are very high quality. The video includes sound effects, and the graphic capabilities of a professional video editor are evident. This province's public media material is disseminated through the A'maq News Agency, which uses the Akhbar al-Muslimin website as its media platform.



Sinai Province operative Mohammad al-Dajani aiming a gun at the head of the operative convicted of transferring weapons to Hamas a moment before executing him. From a video disseminated by ISIS's Sinai Province (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 3, 2018)



Right: Operative of ISIS's Sinai Province shooting a soldier to death. The soldier had survived an IED explosion that destroyed an Egyptian army armored vehicle west of el-Arish (Akhbar al-Muslimin, December 30, 2017). Left: Alleged Egyptian military intelligence agent Hussein Jamal Iskandar who was beheaded by an operative of ISIS's Sinai Province (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 10, 2018).

◆ ISIS's **Khorasan Province** (Afghanistan/Pakistan) **is second to the Sinai Province in terms of the scope of its media activity**. The province regularly publishes **high-quality** photos of armed suicide bombers, often wearing explosive belts or vests. Sometimes the organization's operatives appear alongside weapons that will be used to attack the Afghan security forces. The photos are taken on the background of the ISIS flag. The claim of responsibility made by the Khorasan Province is detailed and includes a description of the target of the attack (whether it was soldiers, intelligence personnel, or policemen) and the location of the target. **The province's media material is disseminated through the A'maq News Agency, which uses the Akhbar al-Muslimin website as its media platform.**



Right: ISIS operatives who carried out the attack on the training camp of the Afghan National Security Directorate in Kabul (Twitter, December 19, 2017). Left: Suicide bomber from ISIS's Khorasan Province who detonated his explosive vest at the headquarters of the Afghan National Security Directorate in Kabul (Haqq, December 25, 2017).

► **Kashmir Province** is the first new province established after the fall of the Islamic State. The province set up a **media organization called al-Qarar**, which began operating at the end of 2017. A video released by al-Qarar shows an ISIS operative on the background of the organization's flag, with the name "Kashmir Province" in Arabic. **The quality of the media material was inferior:** it was filmed with a camera without a tripod, and therefore the picture shook and moved; the sound quality was very low because a microphone was not used, and the lighting was poor.



Abu al-Baraa al-Kashmiri on the background of an ISIS flag bearing the inscription Kashmir Province, stating that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is their Caliph (Haqq and file-sharing website, December 25, 2017)

Part Four: Media and communications on the social networks

The transition to the Telegram application

During the peak of its activity (2014-2015), **ISIS tried to exploit social media (Twitter and Facebook) to disseminate its media material.** However, as early as 2014, there was a significant decline in the presence of ISIS on Facebook, **due to Facebook's activity taken against it. A similar process occurred on Twitter** in 2015-2016.¹³ As a result, the accounts of ISIS operatives on these networks were closed, **and ISIS and its supporters began to use the Telegram app.** From the beginning, ISIS encountered difficulties¹⁴ on YouTube, leading it to switch to other **file-sharing platforms such as the Archive.org website.**

- ▶ While the main content of ISIS is produced and disseminated through dedicated websites, social networks serve mainly as a tool for disseminating content, recruiting operatives, support and apparently financial activity as well. It is also used for various operational purposes. **Telegram has become a more operational platform because it is encrypted and secure.** In addition to propaganda, this platform includes discussions about terrorist targets, methods of carrying out attacks (stabbing, vehicular attack, shooting, explosive belts, IEDs, etc.), ways to evade the security forces, ways to obtain weapons, etc.¹⁵
- ▶ As a result of the difficulties that the main social networks have made for ISIS's operatives and supporters, **ISIS recently established a new social network revealed to the security forces operating against ISIS.** Speaking at a security conference in London in early May 2017, **Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol** (the European Union's law enforcement agency, which serves as a hub for information on criminal activities,

¹³In early 2016, Twitter reported **the suspension of 125,000 accounts**, most of which were affiliated with ISIS, beginning in the second half of 2015. In the six months that have passed since early 2016, **no fewer than 235,000 additional accounts were suspended.** In other words, between July 2015 and July 2016, Twitter suspended **no fewer than 360,000 accounts** (PC Magazine website, August 1, 2016; The Cipher Brief, September 28, 2017).

¹⁴On July 20, 2017, YouTube announced that it had begun using the technology of Jigsaw, which works against online extremism and violence, online harassment, attacks against freedom of speech, and more. This company's technology is called the Redirect Method. In effect, anyone looking for videos with extreme content is directed to videos that confront the extremists and have a counter-message. When someone searches on YouTube for certain keywords, YouTube directs the user to a list of videos with content that opposes extremism (YouTube's official blog, July 20, 2017).

¹⁵Lina Khatib, *The Islamic State's Strategy: Lasting and Expanding*. Beirut, Lebanon: Carnegie Middle East Center, June 29, 2015, pp.1-23.

coordinating the intelligence activity of the police forces in the EU), **said that a recent intelligence operation had revealed that ISIS had developed a new online social network.** He said that for all intents and purposes it was a social network that could be used to send messages and make contact with a wide range of friends, and was used by ISIS operatives. He also said **the network was exposed in the course of an operation against terrorist activity on the Internet, which focused on ISIS and al-Qaeda.** The operation also revealed that jihadi operatives **made extensive use of the Telegram app, whose content is encrypted.** The development of the new network by ISIS operatives is designed to prevent security agencies from disrupting communication within ISIS. **It was developed by ISIS to disseminate its content, circumventing the difficulties posed by online social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter.**

Anonymous web surfing

- ▶ **Use of the Tails operating system** -- a smartphone operating system that enables anonymous surfing. Some of the organization's operatives and supporters use it **and it works well in the interface with the Telegram app,** effectively providing the operatives with dual security that protects their anonymity.
- ▶ **The Akhbar al-Muslimin** website posted a link for downloading a browser enabling anonymous surfing on **Android-based devices that use the Orbot operating system.** It also posted a **link to another browser by the name of Orfox.** Orfox can be installed after Orbot has been installed, for use on Apple devices. (Akhbar al-Muslimin, December 25, 2017).



On the left side of the screen on the Akhbar al-Muslimin website there was a link for downloading a browser enabling anonymous surfing on Android-based devices that use the Orbot operating system (Akhbar al-Muslimin, December 25, 2017)

► **Use of the TOR application:** ISIS operatives, including members of the organization’s media network, **often use the TOR app for security purposes.** The app **allows anonymous surfing on the Internet**, thereby enabling ISIS’s media system to continue to function. There are two obvious advantages to using this service: first, **the user’s IP address remains confidential, thereby protecting the users’ identity**; second, the app **allows anonymity**, making it difficult for law enforcement personnel to locate the users. Thus, ISIS operatives can continue to disseminate media materials among themselves and disseminate them on the Internet more easily.

Establishing a pool of Facebook pages and Twitter accounts for ISIS operatives (“The Bank of Supporters”)

► **The establishment of a pool of available accounts for ISIS operatives** -- in light of the massive closure of Facebook and Twitter accounts of the organization’s operatives and supporters, over the past year and a half ISIS has created a pool of available Facebook and Twitter accounts for its operatives, so that the moment one account is closed, another account becomes available. **ISIS calls the pool “Bank Al-Ansar,”** i.e., the Bank of Supporters. **The pool is on Twitter and Telegram, under the name Bank Al-Ansar,** and provides Twitter and Facebook accounts to operatives and supporters of ISIS.

► Furthermore, this information bank allows users to circumvent the registration process required for opening new accounts, **thereby enabling jihadists to easily hop from one account to another whenever their accounts are shut down**. Most important is that there is no need to give personal information to open the account, so the operatives maintain their anonymity (MEMRI, July 6, 2016).



Bank al-Ansar on the Telegram app