



**In a public statement by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the first in a year, he calls on his supporters to carry out terrorist attacks worldwide, mainly in Western countries. He mentions shooting, stabbing and ramming attacks as well as detonation of IEDs.**

August 26, 2018

## Overview

- ▶ On August 22, 2018, ISIS's Al-Furqan Media Foundation<sup>1</sup> released a 55-minute audiotape of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. This is Al-Baghdadi's **first statement since the previous audiotape, which was released in September 2017**, in which Al-Baghdadi called on ISIS's supporters to carry out terrorist attacks against the West and continue fighting in Iraq, Syria and other provinces (see Appendix). The title of the current audiotape, which consists of **motifs similar to its previous one**, is **"Give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere,"** which is taken from a Quranic verse.<sup>2</sup>



**The title of the audiotape, "Give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere," with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's speech (Vimeo, a website similar to YouTube for sharing videos and soundtracks, August 22, 2018)**

- ▶ Al-Baghdadi's public statement, which includes many Quranic verses as well as verses from Hadith (traditions attributed to the Prophet Mohammad), **was intended, in the ITIC's assessment, to encourage ISIS operatives and supporters in Syria, Iraq and the various provinces around the world.** The statement was made in the context of **the serious defeats suffered by ISIS in the past year. Mainly outstanding in his statement are the defeats**

<sup>1</sup> Al-Furqan Media Foundation is a long-time ISIS media arm producing propaganda materials and serving ISIS's leaders. On September 28, 2017, the Al-Furqan Media Foundation released an audiotape of 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.

<sup>2</sup> The video's title was taken from the two last words in verse 155 of the Surah of Al-Baqarah, which continues in the next verse, 156: "Give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when afflicted with calamity: To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return."

**suffered by ISIS in Syria:** The Islamic State as a territorial entity no longer exists; the ISIS enclaves south of Damascus and in the Yarmouk Basin were eliminated (and soon it is to be expected that the enclave northeast of As-Suwayda will be taken over by the Syrian army); in the Idlib area, ISIS operatives are persecuted by the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham; and in eastern Syria (in the Euphrates Valley and the deserts) ISIS operatives are struggling for their survival.

This is the background for Al-Baghdadi's call on his supporters in Syria, Iraq and all over the world **to stick to their faith, continue jihad, and be ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allah.** As in his previous speech about a year ago, **he prompts his operatives and supporters abroad to step up their attacks mainly against Western countries ("Crusader countries").** Al-Baghdadi finishes by stressing that attacks abroad constitute support for the operatives fighting in Syria and Iraq (i.e., ISIS's "core countries" which are at the center of Al-Baghdadi's statement): "A bullet fired, stabbing, detonation of an IED in your country, are tantamount to a thousand attacks here [in Syria and Iraq], and don't neglect [also] the ramming attacks on the roads."

### Assessment of the authenticity of the tape

**In the ITIC's assessment, the tape is authentic and up-to-date. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's voice sounds identical to the voice heard in his audiotape from September 2017.** Events that he mentions on the current tape, such as fighting in the Yarmouk Basin and the As-Suwayda area and various events in the international arena, **did indeed occur recently,** and this indicates that **that the tape has been produced recently and that it is up-to-date.** Furthermore, by releasing an audiotape in his voice, Al-Baghdadi conveys **a message to ISIS's operatives and supporters in Syria, Iraq and abroad that he is alive and that the many rumors occasionally spread on his death are incorrect.**

## Main motifs of the tape

► Following are the tape's main motifs:<sup>3</sup>

- ◆ **Strengthening faith and sacrifice in times of distress:** In the first part of the tape, Al-Baghdadi greets Muslim believers and jihad fighters on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. **He quotes verses on faith in Allah during times of distress.** Al-Baghdadi praises sacrifice for the sake of Allah: **“Allah loves those who worship Him to become shaheeds, whose blood is spilled out of love for Him.”** He quotes verses on **jihad against the enemies, whose end will be victory with the help of Allah, even if this takes a while.**
- ◆ **The weakness of the United States:** Al-Baghdadi points out that **the United State, the “defender of the cross,” is going through its worst year in history after years of struggle against the Muslims.** In spite of the huge amounts of money that it has invested in fighting against Muslims, **the United States finds itself losing and exhausted,** and its allies turn their backs on it. In this context, he mentions the sanctions imposed by the United States on its allies, the differences of opinion between the US and Turkey, the non-compliance by Russia and Iran regarding the sanctions imposed on them, and he even mentions North Korea, which does not comply with the United States. **Al-Baghdadi claims that the victory of the US in driving out ISIS from the cities and the rural areas in Iraq and Syria is an imaginary one.** This is so because the jihad fighters thwarted the United States' dream to rule Syria and Iraq, and even the “Crusader” Russia has started to compete with it in the region.
- ◆ **Inciting the operatives of the rebel organizations in Syria against their commanders:** Al-Baghdadi turns directly to an (imaginary) figure of an operative who belongs to the rebels in Syria, saying that **his commanders have deceived him regarding the victory of Sunni Islam.** Eventually, **they reconciled with the Alawi regime** and they are standing beside him against the Caliphate State, as happened in the Yarmouk Basin and the As-Suwayda Desert. He also attacks the rebel forces for not applying Islamic religious law (Sharia) in a territory which they describe as “liberated”

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<sup>3</sup> The original version is taken from Vimeo, a website for sharing videos and soundtracks, August 22, 2018.

(i.e., the Idlib area). Al-Baghdadi calls on that operative to wake up and finishes with the rhetorical question, “What are you fighting for?”

◆ **Attacking the rebel forces for handing over territory and weapons to the Syrian regime:** Al-Baghdadi attacks the rebel forces for delivering their territories and weapons to the hands of the Syrian regime, Iran, and Syria, without fighting, adding that this is a mark of disgrace for them. By handing over territories which were held by the Sunnis, the rebel organizations helped the “Crusaders” (i.e., the Coalition) and the Alawites (i.e., the Syrian regime) to unite their efforts in the war against the Caliphate State in Iraq and Syria. In contrast, he praises the steadfastness of the ISIS operatives in southern Damascus, who fought against their enemies in spite of the shortage in weapons and equipment.

◆ **Calling on Sunni Muslims in Syria and abroad to join the fighting against their enemies:** Al-Baghdadi notes that **the Caliphate State has persisted thanks to Allah and because of its adherence to the Quran.** He addresses Muslims in Syria and calls on them to join the jihad fighters **because they have no alternative:** “You have no alternative, and if you wish to live in honor, **then this can be accomplished only by returning to your religion to religion and to jihad against your enemies.**” Al-Baghdadi claims that **there is a war of mass destruction against the various Muslims and not only against ISIS, in all the organization provinces [around the world]. Therefore, it is imperative to fight “and not to let the Crusaders [i.e., Christians] sleep quietly.”**

◆ **Calling on various Muslims in Jordan to act in order to overthrow the monarchy:** Al-Baghdadi turns to the Sunni Muslims in Jordan asking **why they don’t oust the tyrants** (i.e., King Abdullah of Jordan). He praises the “champions of Salt and Fuheis” (i.e., the jihadists who recently carried out a terrorist attack against the Jordanian security forces and then barricaded themselves in Salt). He also praises the “lions of Karak” (i.e., ISIS operatives who carried out a showcase terrorist attack in Karak on December 19, 2016) and mentions the cities of Zarqa, Irbid, and Maan. He also addresses **Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula** and calls on them to wake up from their sleep in view of the predicament of Sunni Muslims.

◆ **Calling on operatives in the various ISIS provinces around the world to concentrate in the faith in Allah and carry out attacks:**

- At the end of his speech, Al-Baghdadi addresses **ISIS operatives in the various provinces**: Iraq, Syria, Khorasan (Afghanistan/Pakistan), Yemen, East Asia, West and East Africa, Somalia, Libya, Sinai, Najd and Hejaz (i.e., Saudi Arabia), Tunisia, Algeria, Caucasus and Kashmir. Al-Baghdadi praises **death for the sake of Allah** and calls on the operatives **to be patient and follow the path of jihad**. He addresses supporters of the Caliphate around the world, saying that **“the Caliphate is in excellent shape”** and calling on them **to ignore the smear campaign against ISIS**.
- Al-Baghdadi places special emphasis on **Syria and Iraq**. He explicitly mentions the operations of the “Crusaders” (i.e., the International Coalition), the Alawites (the Syrian regime) and the Kurds (the SDF forces) **against the city of Hajin and its environs** (the ISIS stronghold on the Euphrates River, north of Albukamal, which is now under pressure by the SDF and the Coalition forces). However, he points out that the Caliphate State is not limited to the territory of Hajin, and eventually the Alawites, the “Crusaders,” and the Kurds will not receive an inch of Syrian territory, for the Sunnis will not accept humiliation. **Al-Baghdadi calls on ISIS operatives in Iraq to carry out intensive activity** (“one attack after another”), saying that the prisoners in Iraqi prisons were not forgotten.
- ◆ **Call for terrorist attacks in Western countries**: Al-Baghdadi finishes by addressing the “devouring lions” (i.e., perpetrators of terrorist attacks) in the “Crusader countries” (i.e., Western countries), mentioning Canada and Europe. **He calls [on his supporters and operatives] to carry out terrorist attacks** because this means supporting their brethren [in Syria and Iraq]: **“A bullet fired, stabbing, detonation of an IED in your countries, are tantamount to a thousand of attacks here [in Syria and Iraq], and don’t neglect the ramming attacks on the roads.”**

## Appendix

### The audiotape released by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi about a year ago (September 2017)

On September 28, 2017, **ISIS's Al-Furqan Media Foundation released an audiotape attributed to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**. In his speech, **which is about 46 minutes long**, Al-Baghdadi discusses ISIS's situation and calls on its supporters abroad **to increase their attacks**. Al-Baghdadi's previous tape was released in **November 2016**. Based on the statements made by Al-Baghdadi, it is evident that the tape was **authentic and up-to-date**.

- ▶ Releasing the tape served **three purposes**:
  - ◆ To convey a message to ISIS's supporters that **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is alive and that the rumors that were spread about his death are incorrect** (in June 2017, the Russian army announced that Al-Baghdadi had apparently been killed in an airstrike in the Al-Raqqa area).
  - ◆ To encourage ISIS operatives in Syria and Iraq **to adhere to jihad, to continue fighting resolutely against the coalitions fighting against them, and to refuse any agreement or settlement** in view of ISIS's defeats on the ground.
  - ◆ **To prompt ISIS's operatives and its supporters abroad to intensify their attacks against the various enemies, especially against the West**, in support of the campaign waged by ISIS in Syria and Iraq.
- ▶ Following are the main points made by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi:
  - ◆ **Victory will belong to the "true believers"**: Al-Baghdadi begins his speech with quotes from the Quran about man's purpose in the world. His purpose, according to Al-Baghdadi, is Islam and its implementation through jihad. Al-Baghdadi makes a distinction between Muslim "men of truth," who are destined for Paradise, and the others, "the men of lies," "the infidels," who are destined for Hell. He returns to the days of the Prophet Muhammad and notes that victory will belong to the true believers, those who did not stop fighting for Islam despite the difficulties.
  - ◆ **The weakness of the United States and the Coalition countries**: Al-Baghdadi notes that there is now frustration among the "infidels" who are uniting forces against the Islamic State. He adds that there are those who exploit the situation to gain control of Muslim lands (a veiled reference to the US, Russia, and Iran). He says: "**America** [i.e.,

the United States], which presents itself as the only superpower, **is losing its status as the world's top leader and is becoming an exhausted country** with huge debts. **This is preparing the ground for its collapse and the fall of other countries into the abyss.** **Russia** is exploiting the American weakness in order to show that it is the alternative superpower to America, and as the Astana Agreement shows, it is trying to take control of Syria and transfer territories to the Alawites. The situation has reached the point where **“North Korea is threatening the United States and Japan with nuclear weapons”** (a clear indication **of the tape's current timing**). He adds that the Russians, Americans and Europeans have begun to live in fear of the blows being dealt by the jihad fighters.

◆ **Calling on ISIS fighters to be patient, to adhere to their faith, and to continue fighting to the last drop of their blood, since victory will eventually come:** According to him, ISIS operatives have inflicted “painful blows” on the “infidel nations” around the world. He calls on ISIS's fighters to be patient and steadfast. **He notes that victory is measured not by the balance of power, but rather by adherence to faith.** Al-Baghdadi notes that the Prophet Muhammad was outnumbered in one battle but adherence to faith led him and his supporters to victory. He says that this is how the fighters of the Caliphate of the Islamic State are fighting, **and the fighting in Mosul is an example of this.** In this fighting, ISIS fighters demonstrated steadfastness when they were unwilling to hand over the city's soil save after a large quantity of blood was sacrificed, proud of their religion and adhering to their faith. They did not give up and they handed over the city only after they sacrificed their lives. He calls on the organization's operatives to continue on their way.

◆ **Calling on the Sunnis in the Arab countries to rise up and ordering ISIS operatives not to agree to settlements:** Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi calls on the Sunnis in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen and everywhere **to rise up and shake off the “dust of humiliation.”** He adds: “Know that the Shiites and the Alawite (Syrian) regime do not accept half-solutions after they robbed the countries and desecrated the honor.” Al-Baghdadi orders the **organization's operatives not to reach a settlement, not to surrender and not to lay down their arms, but to adhere to their religion and show steadfastness.** He details the reward earned by a shaheed and praises the “true jihad fighters” who adhere to their path and fulfill the commands of Allah.

**Calling on ISIS operatives and supporters around the world to continue to carry out attacks against the enemies and to “ignite the flame of war” against them:**

“Fight them and ambush them everywhere, increase the attacks against them. Target the infidels’ information and media centers and their psychological warfare centers [...] Continue your actions [...] **Ensure that the Crusaders [i.e., Westerners] and those who have abandoned Islam do not enjoy a peaceful life in their homes** while your brothers are suffering from bombing, killing, and destruction.”