



## Drive for donations using Bitcoin on an ISIS-affiliated website

February 12, 2019

### Overview

On January 15, 2019, **the ISIS-affiliated website Akhbar al-Musulimin (which recently renewed its activity) began a drive for donations using Bitcoin.** The site posted a link to its virtual wallet. The link forwards the potential donor to **the website of a digital currency exchange located in Vienna.** The posting claims the donations go to maintaining the site, but in ITIC assessment they may **serve the needs of ISIS** (which lost most of its economic assets when the Islamic Caliphate collapsed). **ISIS held a similar drive on Akhbar al-Musulimin in November 2017** but it came to an end after the exposure of the system of contributions.<sup>1</sup>

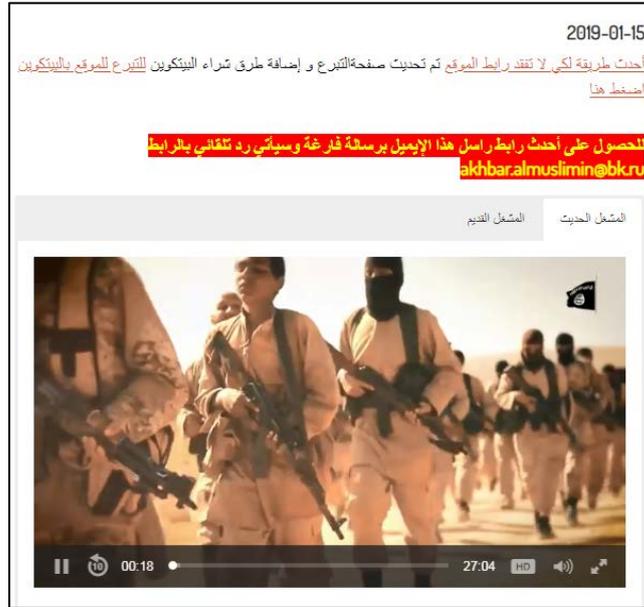
► The drive for donations is another example of the use ISIS makes of Bitcoin. **The anonymity of trading in Bitcoin, its availability as a virtual currency and the fact that it can easily be traded world-wide without exposure allow ISIS (and other terrorist organizations) to use it extensively.** Using Bitcoin makes it possible to transfer funds (including donations to terrorist organizations) without organized bank regulations, making it possible to circumvent the regulations against money laundering.

#### Method for raising donations

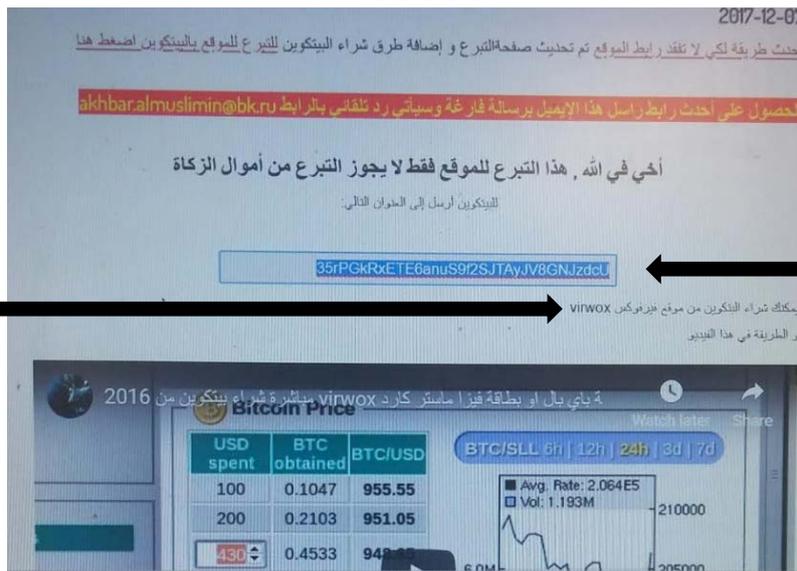
► The Bitcoin link appears on Akhbar al-Musulimin web pages. It reads, "To donate to the website using Bitcoin click here." **A click brings up a page with a link to VirWoX, a platform based in Austria** for digital currency exchange (See below). There is also a link to a YouTube video with information on how to buy and sell Bitcoins.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information, see the December 6, 2018 bulletin, "Drive for Bitcoin donations on an ISIS-affiliated website."



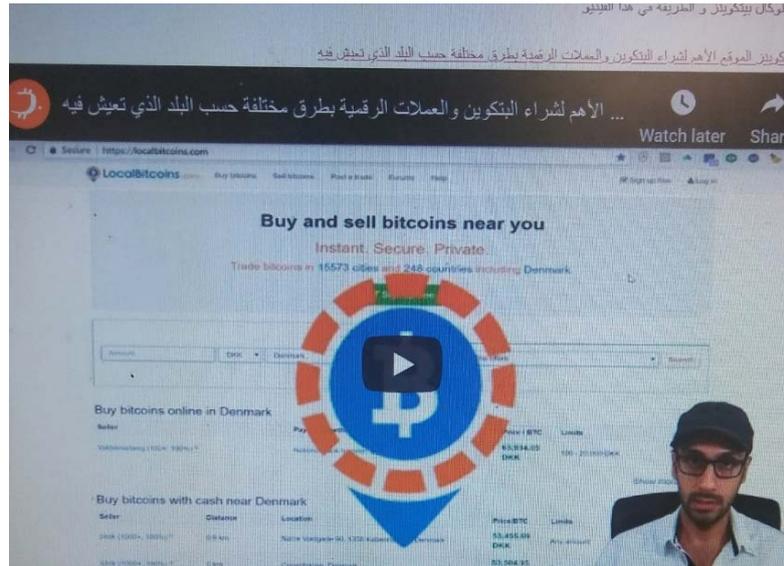
The caption and a link reading, "To donate to the site using Bitcoin, click here" (Akhbar al-Muslimin, January 15, 2019).



The link to the VirWoX site. The Arabic reads, "Bitcoin can be bought on the VirWoX website." A linked video explains how.

Link to Akhbar al-Muslimin's virtual wallet.

Screenshot of the web page with the links. The caption reads, "My brothers in faith, this is a donation exclusively to the website. Do not donate zakat funds" [zakat is charity, one of the five pillars of Islam].



The YouTube video that explains how to trade Bitcoins.

## VirWoX (The Virtual World Exchange)

► **VirWoX is an Austrian digital currency exchange located in Vienna and legally registered.** It was founded in 2007 as a virtual currency trading company for computer games. Unlike other companies, at VirWoX PayPal<sup>2</sup> can be used to buy Bitcoins (coinIQ.com, April 21, 2018). According to its website it is owned by Virtual World Service GmbH. Before 2008 the company was called euroSLEX. When it decided to expand its activities it changed its name and moved to Vienna (it was formerly located in Graz, Austria's second-largest city). For the past ten years its CEO/managing director has been Iliana Baron, who was formerly in charge of the company's files (VirWoX website; coinIQ and other websites surveying companies trading in virtual currencies).

<sup>2</sup> PayPal is an American company operating a worldwide online payments system owned by Ebay. In the past, according to reports ISIS used the company to sell Islamic State coins and to transfer funds. For further information, see the November 11, 2018 bulletin "In view of its financial problems, ISIS is selling coins that it minted at the time of the Islamic State. Payment for the coins is made via an international clearing system."