Main developments in 2018

The year 2018 was a significant year for ISIS’s media network. During this year, the organization’s media network became more decentralized, following the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Syria and Iraq remained ISIS’s core countries, but the importance of the semi-autonomous provinces outside Iraq and Syria gradually increased. ISIS’s media network continues to be of a global nature, conducted mainly in cyberspace. This network survived the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate, and in 2018 it displayed resilience and recoverability despite the considerable pressure exerted on ISIS in Syria. This was due, to a great degree, to the transition to a more decentralized network in which the organization’s supporters, who are not directly subordinate to the organization’s main media apparatus, began to fill the vacuum that was created.

An examination of ISIS’s media network in 2018 compared to previous years shows that the weakening of the media network that began in 2016 also continued in 2017 and in the first half of 2018. However, in the second half of 2018, the network began a process of recovery, which is still ongoing (early 2019). This is primarily due to ISIS’s awareness of the importance of public relations and, as a direct result, the high priority given by ISIS’s leadership to the allocation of the necessary resources in terms of money and skilled personnel.
ISIS poster emphasizing the importance of the media campaign. The poster reads: “O media man, you are indeed a jihad fighter. The media campaign is no less important than the battle being waged on the battlefield. Each of you [media professionals] must be vigilant and take every opportunity to renew the intention [to act on behalf of the Islamic State of ISIS]” (archive.org, April 6, 2016)

►ISIS’s official media network includes **many foundations specializing in the production and dissemination of media materials of many kinds**: regular announcements about military activity, videos, photos, speeches and verses encouraging Muslims to join jihad and bolstering the morale of the operatives. These media materials are **distributed mainly in the same formats in cyberspace**: websites, social media, file-sharing websites, and an Internet radio station. Most of ISIS’s publications are distributed in **Arabic**. Sometimes, some of the publications are also distributed in other languages (English, French, Russian, etc.).

►In 2018, changes and adjustments were made in ISIS’s media network in terms of **both the volume of media products and their content**. Following are the main developments in the past year:

◆ Some of the publications on issues pertaining to control and governance over the population have been greatly reduced, and the emphasis has been placed on **documentation of military activity and publication of claims of responsibility for the operational activities of the provinces** (in the core countries and in the provinces around the world). **Apart from the claims of responsibility, a number of contents were prominent in the past year**: bolstering the morale of the operatives; calling for enlistment in the ranks of ISIS; preaching jihad against the organization’s enemies, with an emphasis on the countries of the West (as well as the Arab regimes, Russia, Turkey, Iran, the Shiites, the Kurds, etc.).
Special attention has been attached to media products encouraging **various types** of ISIS-inspired attacks around the world, with an emphasis on the West (stabbing and ramming attacks, shooting and detonating IEDs, detonating explosive belts, etc.). The ideological content and calls to carry out ISIS-inspired attacks disseminated by ISIS’s media network have a proven effect on the motivation of ISIS supporters to carry out terrorist attacks around the world.

**Promoting ISIS-inspired attacks abroad, with an emphasis on Western countries**

Right: Poster disseminated as part of ISIS's campaign in advance of Christmas, reading: “Your holidays are approaching... and your funerals are drawing near” (Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, December 24, 2018). Left: Poster disseminated on Telegram by ISIS supporters, reading: “Just terror – Your holidays are approaching, and so are [the dates of] your funerals” (Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, December 24, 2018)

During 2018, there was a significant drop in the volume of propaganda items distributed by ISIS’s official media network, although there was somewhat of a recovery in the second half of the year. The drop stemmed mainly from the collapse of the Islamic State, which led to the loss of financial resources, damage to the human infrastructure of skilled media professionals (who were either killed or returned to their home countries), in addition to actions taken by countries and companies (Facebook and Twitter) against ISIS’s media network. The **quantitative impact was felt mainly in the core countries, while the volume of media products of the provinces outside Syria and Iraq rose sharply.** This situation stems from severe pressure exerted on ISIS
in the core countries as opposed to further fighting by the foreign provinces, whose importance increased after the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate in the core countries. In the ITIC’s assessment, the most important provinces after Syria and Iraq are the Khorasan Province (Afghanistan/Pakistan/Iran), the West Africa Province, and the Sinai Province (this was reflected in the proliferation of media products from these provinces).

♦ ISIS’s veteran media foundations (Al-Furqan, Amaq, Al-Hayat) or those affiliated with it (Mu’ta) continue to exist, but the volume of content that they produce is small compared to 2017. ISIS’s main websites (including Akhbar al-Muslimeen, Haqq and Sawarim) have ceased to operate. This year (2018) they were replaced by a central website called Al-Ghurabaa (literally: the foreigners), but it also ceased operating shortly before the end of the year. The Al-Abd al-Faqir Foundation, which specializes in producing videos and posters threatening Western countries, is a new media platform that began operating in the second half of 2018.

♦ During the past year, the Telegram app continued to be the main platform used for distributing messages and publications by ISIS supporters around the world. From ISIS’s perspective, the Telegram app is of great importance because it enables ISIS and its supporters to enjoy anonymity and compensate themselves for the reduction of their sphere of activity on Facebook and Twitter. However, in July 2018, ISIS called on its supporters not to limit their propaganda to the Telegram platform alone, but to also try to expand it to other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram (although there actually was no significant change in the presence of ISIS on these platforms). ISIS and its supporters also developed messaging apps (such as Conversation). It should be noted that of late, there has been a decline in ISIS’s use of Telegram, apparently due to the cancellation of the accounts of ISIS operatives and supporters by Telegram’s management. Nevertheless, ISIS is still extremely active on this platform.

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1See terrorism analyst Rita Katz’s article in The Washington Post (January 28, 2019): “The Islamic State may have a new propaganda haven” (hereinafter: terrorism analyst Rita Katz).
ISIS poster calling for jihad against idol worshipers (“polytheists”). This is to be accomplished “with your money, with your hands [i.e., carrying out attacks] and with your tongues.” The poster shows the logos of Twitter, YouTube and Facebook and a picture of hands typing on a computer. The text on the upper left hand side of the poster reads: “Increased motivation – the Supporters of the Islamic State are returning and they are more aggressive and stronger” (Al-Ghurabaa, March 25, 2018).

◆ In contrast to the decrease in the volume of official media products, **this year there was an increase in the amount of media products produced and distributed not by ISIS’s official network but by the organization’s supporters around the world, especially in the West.** These products are sometimes characterized by inaccuracy and their quality is inferior to that of the official media products. Most of the informal media products of ISIS supporters **appear in foreign languages** such as English, French, Russian, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, etc. They are not directed at ISIS’s “immediate enemies” in Syria and Iraq but mainly at ISIS’s “remote enemies” such as the West, Russia, and Iran. These products are not subject to monitoring by ISIS’s official media network, but they serve its ultimate purpose: **to enhance the ISIS brand and preserve it among the wider Muslim public and around the world, at a time of distress and heavy pressure.**

◆ **Recycling old products:** As compensation for the drop in the volume of media products in the past year and for the cessation of ISIS’s “huge productions,” **there is a clear tendency on the part of the media network to recycle old content and distribute it via Telegram and the organization’s websites.** In recent months, the media campaign has begun to redistribute media products that were distributed in the past, including videos from various operations, pledges of allegiance to Al-Baghdadi, pamphlets about the Caliphate, and more. Most of these products are designed to
encourage steadfastness, which may indicate that ISIS is suffering from a shortage of fighters, financial problems, a lack of experts (due to the deaths of former operatives) and a decline in the morale of the remaining operatives (Asharq Al-Awsat, December 17, 2018). The recycled publications are an attempt to inspire hope for a return to ISIS’s heyday, when the Islamic Caliphate was at the peak of its expansion (from June 2014 to the end of 2015).

Recycling of an old video produced by ISIS in Libya: Coptic Christians who were taken prisoner by the organization in Libya and brutally executed on the beach of the city of Sirte (Al-Ghurabaa, November 15, 2018)

Evaluation of the technical quality of ISIS’s media products
► Despite the weakening of ISIS’s media network compared with its peak years, the network continued to produce videos and posters of relatively high quality from a technical standpoint. This was reflected in both the quality of the photography and the level of editing (including graphic editing, video editing and sound editing). It is clearly evident that highly professional editors were involved. It is possible that all the media products that are sent to the central media network from all the provinces are edited by a small number of editors who collaborate with each other. This is because the design style and formats are virtually identical.
► The images from the ground in all the arenas are filmed with high quality cameras, including extreme Go-Pro cameras attached to various parts of the body (such as the head or arm) or to equipment carried or worn by ISIS operatives (such as rifles or helmets). This makes it possible to take sharp pictures while moving quickly. These cameras can be obtained on the open market, including online. It should be noted that ISIS made use of these cameras back in 2016 or possibly even before. They were connected to drones and were used...
for producing propaganda videos demonstrating ISIS’s high level operational capabilities (there is no evidence that drones were used for propaganda purposes over the past year).

Right: ISIS operative with an extreme camera on his head holding a wounded Kurdish prisoner in the Albukamal area. Left: ISIS operative shooting in the Albukamal area with a camera on his head (ISIS’s Syria – Al-Furat Province, March 1, 2018).

ISIS operative Abu Salam al-Hamdi in the Al-Hasakah area, carrying a camera (Al-Ghurabaa, November 27, 2018)

ISIS operatives in Iraq, and possibly in Syria as well, also use sophisticated optical equipment. This includes high-quality US-made thermal cameras, which help locate enemy forces under conditions of total darkness. In addition, rifles equipped with optical equipment are used. ISIS uses night-vision cameras and thermal cameras.

ISIS’s sophisticated optical equipment is used primarily for operational purposes. However, ISIS makes good use of its sophisticated optical equipment for propaganda purposes. Photos taken by the sophisticated equipment are used in the organization’s videos, and no attempt is made to conceal it for security reasons. These media products help convey the message that ISIS is an advanced and sophisticated organization, which is not inferior to the regular armies against which it fights.
Right: Video showing an ISIS operative using a US-made FLIR BHM thermal camera in the southern part of ISIS’s Iraq Province. ISIS operative holding a camera is shown locating two Iraqi intelligence personnel and then signaling to an ISIS sniper to fire. The sniper shot and killed them using a rifle equipped with a telescopic sight. This incident was documented and used by ISIS’s media network. Left: Night-vision camera in a video produced in the southern part of ISIS’s Iraq Province. The video documents sniper fire at a vehicle of the Iraqi security forces (ISIS’s Iraq – Southern Area Province, June 13, 2018).

Central guidance vis-à-vis the media offices in the provinces

Even after the collapse of the Islamic State, ISIS’s media network continued to operate hierarchically. Centralized control is carried out by a supreme media headquarters subordinate to ISIS’s leadership, known as the Central Media Office (Diwan al-I’lam al-Markazi). The ITIC does not know where the Central Media Office is located and it is unclear whether all the media infrastructure is located in one area. It is possible that at least part of it is located in the Euphrates Valley, in the area north of Albukamal (against which the Kurdish SDF forces have been carrying out an ongoing campaign in recent months, with Coalition air support).

Logo of the Central Media Office: It reads Islamic State in both Arabic and English. This logo did not exist in the heyday of the Islamic Caliphate (2014-2015) and is probably a product of recent years (or the past year)

ISIS’s various provinces in Syria, Iraq, and around the world operate local media offices, which are subordinate to the organization’s Central Media Office. The media products in the provinces are sent to ISIS’s Central Media Office and disseminated through its media
platforms. ISIS’s media products include the logo of the province and the logo of the Central Media Office (and in many cases the ISIS logo as well). This method makes it possible to preserve the hierarchical structure and maintain a uniform media strategy with which all the provinces comply.

Right: Logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office, which appears in a video of the Sinai Province. Left: Logo of the Sinai Province, which appears in the video, after the slide with the logo of the Central Media Office (Shabakat Shumukh, November 15, 2018)

Replacement of logos when videos are edited by the Central Media Office. Right: Video showing the logo of the Kirkuk Province. Left: Switch to the ISIS logo during the video (Shabakat Shumukh, September 25, 2018).
A few of ISIS’s official propaganda platforms, as shown in an ISIS poster (Telegram, July 27, 2018). The poster includes: Radio Al-Bayan, Al-Naba’ Weekly, Al-Ajnadi Foundation, Amaq News Agency, Al-Furqan Foundation, Al-Hayat Foundation and Maktabat Al-Himmah (literally, the Library of Determination/Intensity, a foundation that produces material on Islamic law issues). Most of these platforms, and possibly all of them, are subject to and supervised by ISIS’s media leadership. These official media platforms are still operating.

Along with the central control over the important media platforms of the various provinces, there are also media platforms of ISIS supporters that operate independently or semi-independently. The media foundations that operate without central control include: Al-Abd al-Faqir; Remah; Al-Wafa wal-Dhakhair (see details below). In principle, ISIS does not fully support the media products of its supporters and prefers to publish products that undergo supervision and screening. In an audiotape (August 22, 2018), ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi called on members of the media network to beware of media information that did not originate in the Central Media Office. Nevertheless, unofficial media platforms of ISIS supporters continue to exist. These platforms differ in form and sometimes in content from the products of the Central Media Office, but their existence ultimately serves the supreme media goals of ISIS’s leadership.

It appears that ISIS Spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir is now the central figure in the organization’s media network. He is an Arab operative who was appointed to the position in late 2016, replacing the previous spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani who had been killed on August 30, 2016 (apparently in a Syrian airstrike in northeastern Syria). Al-Muhajir previously held a number of positions in Al-Qaeda’s media network in Iraq, as well as in the Al-Furqan Media Foundation (a foundation that originally belonged to Al-Qaeda’s branch in Iraq, prior to the establishment of ISIS). He released several audiotapes, including one in which he claimed responsibility for an attack in the Iranian parliament. In other audiotapes he called for attacks in Europe, Russia, the US and Australia. Al-Muhajir releases fewer publications and makes fewer public appearances than his predecessor Al-Adnani. This
may be due to his personality traits or may reflect the heavy pressure facing ISIS’s leadership in Syria.

Poster containing a segment from Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir’s first audiotape. Most of the tape was devoted to encouraging ISIS operatives in Iraq and Syria and calling on the organization’s supporters around the world to carry out terrorist attacks (Al-Furqan, December 10, 2016)

It appears that until recently, ISIS’s central media network was headed by an Australian national **codenamed Abu Abdallah al-Australi (i.e., the Australian)**. According to Islamic Movement researcher Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, Abu Abdallah is one of the first Australians to join ISIS between 2013 and 2015. He was appointed head of ISIS’s media network in 2018, after serving as deputy head (www.aymennjawad.org, December 25, 2018). According to a tweet on Twitter on December 26, 2018 (whose content requires verification), **Abu Abdallah al-Australi was killed in a US airstrike** (Nidalgazaui@Nidalgazaui Twitter account, December 26, 2018). The tweet doesn’t specify where the airstrike was carried out, but it was probably **the city of Hajin**, ISIS’s stronghold in the Euphrates Valley, which was the target of intensive airstrikes by US and Coalition aircraft.

Tweet in English and Arabic about the death of Abu Abdullah al-Australi in a US airstrike (Nidalgazaui@Nidalgazaui Twitter account, December 26, 2018)
The structure of the study

Introduction:

◆ Main developments in 2018
◆ Evaluation of the technical quality of ISIS’s media products
◆ Central guidance vis-à-vis the media offices in the provinces

Chapter One: Platforms that produce and sometimes also distribute media products

◆ The Al-Furqan Foundation (literally: separation, i.e., separation between truth and lies)
◆ The Al-Hayat Foundation (literally: life)
◆ The Amaq Agency (literally: the depths)
◆ The Mu’ta Agency (the name of the place where one of the first battles in Islam took place)
◆ The Al-Furat Foundation (literally: the Euphrates)
◆ The Al-Abd al-Faqir Foundation (literally: the destitute slave)
◆ The Muharir al-Ansar Foundation (literally: the editor of the supporters, i.e., the supporters of Muhammad)
◆ The Ahl al-Tawhid Foundation (literally: the people who believe in the oneness of Allah)
◆ The Al-Battar Foundation (literally: the cutting edge)
◆ The Al-Yaqin Foundation (literally: firm faith)
◆ The Al-Ajnad Foundation (literally: soldiers)
◆ The Remah Foundation (literally: spears)
◆ The Al-Wafa Foundation (literally: loyalty)
◆ The Maktabat al-Himmah Foundation (literally: the library of determination / intensity / ambition)
◆ The Al-Dhakhair Foundation (literally: ammunition)
◆ Radio Al-Bayan (literally: the statement / clarification / announcement)
◆ The Furat Media Foundation (literally: the media foundation of the Euphrates)
◆ The Al-Dar’ Al-Sunni Foundation (literally: the Sunni shield)
◆ Turjuman al-Asawirti Media Production (apparently the codename of an operative)
◆ Muntasir Media (literally: the media of the victor)

Chapter Two: Platforms used for the dissemination of media products
◆ The Al-Ghurabaa website (literally: the foreigners)
◆ The Shabakat Shumukh Al-Ikhbariya website (literally: the Shumukh news network) The term “shumukh” means giants or exalted people
◆ The Akhbar al-Muslimeen website (literally: Muslim news)
◆ Nasher News Agency (literally: the agency of the distributor of the information)
◆ The Al-Saqri lil-Ulum al-Askariya Foundation (literally: the Al-Saqri Military Science Foundation)
◆ Ashhad Foundation (literally: the foundation of the eyewitnesses)

Chapter Three: The use of social media and Telegram by ISIS’s media network
◆ Overview
◆ The Telegram messaging system
◆ Other social media

Chapter Four: Magazines produced by ISIS’s media network:
◆ Al-Naba’ (literally: the news item)
◆ Shabab al-Khilafah (literally: Youth of the Caliphate)
◆ Al-Anfal (literally: the Spoils of War)

Chapter Five: The media products of the various provinces:
◆ Local media networks of the provinces of the core countries:
  • Iraq
  • Syria
◆ Local media networks of the provinces outside the core countries:
  • Afghanistan/Pakistan/Iran (Khorasan Province)
  • Sinai
  • West Africa
  • Somalia
  • Libya
  • Yemen
  • East Asia (the Philippines)
  • The Caucasus
Chapter One: Platforms that produce (and sometimes also distribute) media products

Overview

ISIS continues to operate dozens of platforms and sometimes also produce media materials. Some of them are long-standing recognized foundations. The leading foundations are Al-Furqan, Al-Hayat, Amaq and Al-Mu’ta. In addition to the old foundations, there are also new media foundations, which rise and fall from time to time. Some of the platforms are operated by ISIS’s Central Media Office and some are operated as personal initiatives by ISIS supporters outside the core countries.

The Al-Furqan Media Foundation

The Al-Furqan Media Foundation, or to use its full name, The Al-Furqan Foundation for Media Production, is ISIS’s long-standing media arm, which produces media materials, mainly videos. This media platform is of great importance to ISIS in light of its responsibility for disseminating speeches and statements by ISIS’s leadership. It was established in 2006 by the Islamic State in Iraq (even before the establishment of ISIS) and was later adopted by ISIS. It was the Al-Furqan Media Foundation that released the video in which ISIS’s leader declared the establishment of the Caliphate.

During the course of 2018, the Al-Furqan Media Foundation produced the organization’s main media content, the most prominent of which was the audiotape by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, released on August 22, 2018. This year, the Al-Furqan Media Foundation also produced an audiotape of the organization’s spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir, which was released on April 23, 2018. In the audiotape, Al-Muhajir calls on the organization’s operatives to continue to follow the path of jihad, stressing that as far as the organization is concerned, there is no difference between the fighting against the Arab regimes and fighting against other elements (i.e., the West) and both must be fought against simultaneously.

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2Al-Baghdadi’s previous audiotape was released by this foundation about a year earlier.
The Al-Hayat Foundation

The Al-Hayat Foundation, or to use its full name, The Al-Hayat Media Foundation, is a central ISIS foundation that mainly produces videos. In the past, it produced many media products, including magazines and posters. The Al-Hayat Foundation produced the magazines Rumiyah and Dabiq, ISIS’s principal organs which are no longer published (Dabiq ceased publication in 2016 and Rumiyah in late 2017). The videos produced by the foundation focus on eliciting support from Muslims in the West and from the Muslim community in East Asia. Therefore, quite a few of the Al-Hayat Foundation’s products are produced not only in Arabic but also in other languages: English, Russian, German, French, Turkish, Urdu and Pashto. The Al-Hayat Foundation also translates speeches by ISIS’s senior figures. In August 2018, Al-Hayat began releasing propaganda videos called “The Harvest of the Fighters.” These videos present (exaggeratedly) the results of ISIS’s military activity (killed and wounded among its enemies) in the core countries and in the various provinces.
Video produced by the Al-Hayat Foundation encouraging the organization’s operatives to continue to follow the path of jihad (Al-Ghurabaa, October 30, 2018)

As part of ISIS’s battle for hearts and minds, whose goal is to glorify the organization’s strength and achievements, during the past six months ISIS began publishing a weekly summary called “The Harvest of the Fighters.” This publication, distributed through the Al-Hayat Foundation, includes (tendentious and biased) statistics of the number of fatalities, injuries, and losses of property that ISIS inflicted on its enemies in the previous week. The media is distributed by provinces, with secondary division into regions. The information is distributed in the form of videos comprising slides, with each video containing “data” and statistics for the week in question.

Right: Summary of data for the period from December 20 to 26, 2018: The number of enemies killed by ISIS in the Iraq Province by region (ISIS’s Al-Hayat Foundation, December 27, 2018).

Left: Overall summary of the number of enemies killed and wounded by ISIS in the organization’s various provinces around the world between December 20 and 26, 2018 (ISIS’s Al-Hayat Foundation, December 27, 2018)

The Amaq News Agency

Amaq is ISIS’s official news agency. This agency publishes claims of responsibility for ISIS terrorist attacks, as well as announcements pertaining to attacks carried out by its operatives. The agency apparently maintains contact with field personnel in the various combat zones, from whom updated reports about events are obtained. In addition, the
agency releases news flashes, infographics and videos. The Amaq News Agency’s publications are in Arabic. However, in cases of attacks outside the Arab region, when there is a need to address a target audience which does not speak Arabic, the agency sometimes publishes translations into other languages (such as English, German, French). Today, the content produced by the Amaq Agency is disseminated mainly through the Telegram app.

Amaq News Agency video showing an ISIS operative who carried out the attack on an Iranian military parade in the city of Ahwaz (Amaq News Agency, September 23, 2018)

The Mu’ta Agency

Mu’ta is an ISIS-affiliated news agency, but it is not an official agency of the organization. Most of its publications are ISIS’s claims of responsibility in Arabic and English. The agency’s publications are released mainly via the Telegram app.

Right: Announcement issued by the Mu’ta News Agency about the killing of an SDF officer in the Deir ez-Zor area (Mu’ta News Agency, October 18, 2018). Left: Statement published by the agency about the killing of two Hezbollah commanders in the area of As-Suwayda (Mu’ta News Agency, October 22, 2018)
The Al-Abd al-Faqir Foundation

Al-Abd al-Faqir is a relatively new media foundation, which began operating in early 2018. In the ITIC’s assessment, it is an ISIS-affiliated foundation and not an official media foundation. The foundation produces videos and posters, mainly about promoting terrorist attacks in the West. In addition to producing videos and posters, in October 2018, the foundation began to produce the magazine Shabab al-Khilafah (literally, “the youth of the Caliphate”). The foundation also produces a youth magazine by the name of Ashbal Al-Ummah (the lion cubs of the [Islamic] nation). It has recently been reported that the foundation produces animated films for children (Al-Arab, October 24, 2018). Note: The ITIC has not yet obtained copies of the magazine Ashbal Al-Ummah and the animated films. Only one issue of Shabab al-Khilafah has been published to date.

Right: The logo of the Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation. The logo is composed of the two letters in English, AF, which are the initials of the foundation’s name, and the word Media (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2018). Left: Poster for the Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation’s video showing the White House in flames under the inscription: “The Conquest of Washington – We’ll See It Soon” (Al-Bawaba, January 20, 2018)

Right: Poster produced by the Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, which appeared in the first issue of the magazine Shabab al-Khilafah, encouraging attacks in Australia, below the inscription “Australia – the time has come for the harvest season in your territory” (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2018). Left: Video produced by the Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, entitled “The Harvest of the Lone Lions,” i.e., the achievements of the lone wolf attacks (Al-Ghurabaa, September 17, 2018)
Poster produced by the Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation and distributed by ISIS supporters on Christmas Eve via the Telegram app, with the inscription: “Just terror – Your holidays are approaching, and so are [the dates of] your funerals” (Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, December 24, 2018)

**Muharir Al-Ansar**

*Muharir al-Ansar* is an ISIS-affiliated media foundation *specializing in the production of posters threatening the West*. This media tool published threats to Western countries in February 2018. One of the posters shows the front of a truck and the inscription in English and Arabic: “Hit them with a truck” and “Kill them all” (Al-Bawaba, February 27, 2018).

Right: Poster issued by the Muharir Al-Ansar Media Foundation calling for ramming attacks carried out with trucks (Al-Bawaba, February 27, 2018). Left: Threat to topple the Eiffel Tower in Paris with a drone, under the inscription: “Await for our surprises” (Telegram, October 17, 2018)

**The Ahl al-Tawhid Foundation**

*Ahl al-Tawhid* is a less well-known ISIS-affiliated foundation. It may be operated by one person or a small team of ISIS supporters who produce content for it. The foundation produces an online magazine in English called “From Dabiq to Rome” (see further details about the magazine below).
The Al-Battar Foundation

The Al-Battar Foundation is an ISIS-affiliated media outlet (but not one of ISIS’s official media outlets). The foundation produces media products. It operates in various ISIS provinces: Syria, Sinai, Khorasan and West Africa. The agency also operates in Libya and possibly in Yemen as well (SITE, November 28, 2018; Jihadology, February 23, 2017).

Right: The logo of the Al-Battar Foundation (Al-Ghurabaa, October 22, 2018) Left: From the video, “The Road to Glory” (or “The Glorious Way”) produced by the Al-Battar Foundation, which praises the jihad of ISIS’s Sinai Province against the “enemies of Islam” (Al-Ghurabaa, October 22, 2018)

The Al-Yaqin Foundation

The Al-Yaqin Media Foundation is a foundation for the production of videos promoting ISIS’s ideology. It is an ISIS-affiliated foundation but is not one of its official media foundations. On October 8, 2018, it produced a video called Al-Ta’ifa al-Mansurah (literally: the victorious group / community). The video is based on an Islamic tradition whereby a small and high-quality group of devout Muslims will adhere to their faith until Judgment Day, while others will stray from the righteous path. In the video, which has English subtitles, Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi, the founding father of ISIS in Iraq, praises those who belong to the “victorious group /community” (Al-Ghurabaa, October 8, 2018).
Right: The logo of the Al-Yaqin Foundation (Al-Ghurabaa, October 8, 2018). Left: From a video with English subtitles in which Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi praises those who belong to the “victorious group/community” (Al-Ghurabaa, October 8, 2018)

The Al-Ajnad Foundation

The Al-Ajnad Foundation began operating in 2014. It is an official media foundation specializing in the production and distribution of verses that encourage jihad (anashid) and audiotapes, including Islamic preaching (da’wa). This content is uploaded mainly to Telegram and file-sharing websites (primarily archive.org).

The logo of the Al-Ajnad Foundation

The Remah Foundation

Remah is an ISIS-affiliated foundation but is not one of its official media foundations. It began operating in December 2017, as part of ISIS’s media network’s efforts to rehabilitate itself. The foundation publishes media material in Arabic and English, including videos (Beit al-Massader, December 27, 2017; Al-Ghurabaa, August 29, 2018).
The Al-Wafa Foundation

Al-Wafa is an unofficial foundation that supports ISIS. The foundation publishes media materials and posters about lone wolf attacks. It also produces and publishes books of Islamic thought in order to clarify the organization’s fundamental concepts and to ward off divergent opinions of elements within the organization, arising from religious and practical disputes (Diyaruna, June 11, 2018).

In April 2018, the Al-Wafa Foundation published a poster in Russian calling for attacks during the World Cup, which was held in Russia (as opposed to media outlets and ISIS supporters who published similar posters mainly in English, Arabic and French). This may indicate that the Al-Wafa Foundation employs Russian-speaking operatives, possibly from the Caucasus.
Poster with an inscription in Arabic and Russian (“Wait for us”) distributed by the Al-Wafa Foundation on social media in advance of the 2018 World Cup in Russia and calling for attacks during the events (Al-Wafa Foundation, April 12, 2018)

The Maktabat Al-Himmah Foundation

Maktabat Al-Himmah is a foundation that produces booklets and digital texts on issues in Islamic law (Sharia) according to its Salafist-jihadi interpretation.

Booklet produced by Maktabat Al-Himmah on the issue of “the laws related to the pledge of allegiance to the caliph” (Al-Ghurabaa, October 31, 2018)

The Al-Dhakhair Foundation

Al-Dhakhair (literally: ammunition) is an unofficial foundation that produces relatively little content. In June 2018, it published a poster threatening the United States and President Donald Trump (Bawabat al-Harakat al-Islamiyya, June 8, 2018).

ISIS’s online radio station: Radio Al-Bayan

Radio Al-Bayan began operating in August 2014 from the city of Mosul, Iraq (Al-Jazeera, August 9, 2014). By the end of 2017, it was also broadcasting from Al-Raqqah, Syria. Beginning in November 2017, Radio Al-Bayan began broadcasting on the Internet through the
organization’s Haqq and Al-Sawarim websites which, as stated, are no longer active. It currently broadcasts via the Al-Ghurabaa website.

The Furat Media Foundation

▶ A media foundation established in ISIS’s Caucasus Province in July 2015. The foundation produced videos showing Russian-speaking operatives in the Caucasus and Iraq. This foundation is also active in Khorasan Province (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) and in East Asia: India (apparently Kashmir), Bangladesh and the Philippines. The foundation also produced inflammatory verses encouraging jihad in various languages, including Arabic, English and Pashto spoken in Afghanistan (Aram News, July 13, 2015; Jihadology, September 18, 2018). This foundation was virtually inactive in 2018.

The logo of the Furat Media Foundation
(Jihadology, September 18, 2018)

The Al-Dar’ Al-Sunni Foundation

▶ The Al-Dar’ Al-Sunni Foundation (literally: the Sunni Shield) is a foundation that produces media materials offering Islamic and ideological guidance. The foundation publishes a magazine called Al-Anfal (see below). On March 23, 2018, the foundation published an online booklet about democracy’s infidel elements (Al-Ghurabaa, March 23, 2018).

Online booklet produced by the Al-Dar’ Al-Sunni Foundation about democracy’s infidel elements
(Al-Ghurabaa, March 23, 2018)
The Turjuman al-Asawirti Media Production Foundation

A veteran media foundation. This is apparently an operative or supporter of ISIS (or a group of operatives and supporters) capable of producing propaganda videos and posters. The contents of the videos are usually taken from media materials produced by local media offices in ISIS’s various provinces. The quality of editing of the products is quite good. The posters produced by the foundation are in Arabic and English and may be produced in the West. The foundation’s media products are disseminated on ISIS’s Al-Ghurabaa website. The foundation also has a very basic website that publishes its media products (https://asawrti.wordpress.com/). In addition, the foundation’s content is disseminated on social media and on Telegram.

The homepage of the Turjuman al-Asawirti Foundation’s website
(The Turjuman al-Asawirti Foundation’s website, December 23, 2018)

Right: Poster of the Turjuman al-Asawirti Media Foundation threatening the United States and President Trump. The inscription in English: “Remember. Coming soon” (Telegram, December 22, 2018). Left: Photo from a video produced by the foundation criticizing the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham for “abandoning jihad” and the struggle against the “jihad fighters” (i.e., ISIS operatives) (Al-Ghurabaa, December 10, 2018)
Muntasir Media

ISIS posters and videos were recently published under the name of Muntasir Media. This is apparently a supporter or supporters of the organization who may be located in the West, since its publications include content in European languages, especially Spanish. Toward the end of 2018, Muntasir Media released a video calling for attacks in Western countries on the occasion of Christmas. The Spanish-language video includes English and Arabic subtitles. Part of it is in French. The multiplicity of languages is intended to reach the majority of target audiences in Western countries (Al-Ghurabaa, December 23, 2018).

Poster in Spanish calling on the “Soldiers of Allah” to “get ready,” with Christmas celebrations in the background (ISIS’s Muntasir Foundation, December 24, 2018)

Right: Photo from a video distributed as part of a Christmas threat campaign calling for ramming attacks. Left: Call (in the video) to kill the infidels: “Prepare yourself, O soldier of Allah” (Al-Ghurabaa, December 23, 2018).
Chapter Two: Platforms used for the dissemination of media products

The Al-Ghurabaa website

- Al-Ghurabaa is a main website affiliated with ISIS. However, it is probably not an official ISIS website. The website was used by ISIS during 2018, but at the end of the year it stopped operating (maybe temporarily). “Al-Ghurabaa” means “the strangers” or “the foreigners.” In Islamic jargon, it is used to refer to a small group of believers who adhere to Islam, being a minority among those who are not Muslims or are not Muslim enough. According to Islamic tradition, Islam was initiated by a small group of people who were different from the people around them. ISIS considers its fighters as the ideal manifestation of the original “Ghurabaa.”

- The website has been active over the past year, but not consistently – sometimes it was shut down. After it was down, it reemerged under various links. The website contains ISIS videos, announcements and posters. In addition, it publishes articles and links for downloading ISIS’s Al-Naba’ weekly. The website disseminates content produced by a media foundation named Al-Ghurabaa lil-I’lam (i.e., “Al-Ghurabaa Media”), and one can assume that it is part of this media platform.
The Shabakat Shumukh Al-Ikhbariya website

Shabakat Shumukh Al-Ikhbariya is a website which started operating in July 2018. It is affiliated with ISIS although it declares that it is affiliated with no one. It publishes ISIS claims of responsibility and various news items produced by the organization’s media network.

Homepage of Shabakat Shumukh Al-Ikhbariya. It features claims of responsibility by ISIS and news items produced by ISIS’s media network (Shabakat Shumukh, November 7, 2018)

The Akhbar Al-Muslimeen website

This is also an ISIS main website which includes news items, claims of responsibility and videos. During the recent 2-3 years, this was ISIS’s main website. In the last months of 2018, the website stopped operating. It resumed operation in early 2019 and was active for about a month. However, it was less up-to-date than before and operated on a lesser scale. Since then, the website stopped operating (maybe temporarily).

Homepage of Akhbar Al-Muslimeen (updated to January 24, 2019): The most up-to-date news items are from January 18, 2019 (Akhbar Al-Muslimeen website, January 24, 2019)
The Nasher News Agency

Nasher News is apparently a group of ISIS operatives who operate Telegram and social media channels and disseminate media material produced by ISIS’s media network. The group does not produce its own content but engages in dissemination only. Nasher News is particularly related to ISIS’s Amaq News Agency.

Coordination between Amaq and the Nasher agency for the dissemination of ISIS content on social media (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook). The poster reads, “This is your battleground, O supporters of the Caliphate” (www.manshar.com, April 3, 2017)

Dissemination of the Amaq News Agency’s claim of responsibility for a terrorist attack perpetrated in Strasbourg, France, by the Nasher agency through social networks (rcalimachi@Twitter account, December 13, 2018)

The Al-Saqri lil-Ulum al-Askariya Foundation

The Al-Saqri lil-Ulum al-Askariya (i.e., the Al-Saqri Foundation for Military Sciences) started operating recently, disseminating brochures, posters and videos calling on the target audience to carry out terrorist attacks on behalf of ISIS (Al-Marja’, August 30, 2018).

Poster instigating ISIS supporters to kill by drugging the infidels, i.e., by biological terrorism. This is part of a series of posters instructing how to produce poison from animals and use it against the infidels (Telegram, September 14, 2018)

Ashhad Foundation

▶A veteran foundation affiliated with ISIS, it is not an official ISIS foundation. It publishes propaganda videos, posters and media brochures for ISIS’s propaganda requirements.

Logo of the Ashhad foundation
Right: Poster with the slogan “The Islamic State is still standing, Allah willing” (Ashhad Foundation, April 12, 2018). Left: Poster with the inscription “America has sunk with no one to save it and it became a prey to the soldiers of the Caliphate all over.” This is a quote from ISIS Spokesman Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir (Ashhad Foundation, March 23, 2018)
Chapter Three: The use of social media and Telegram by ISIS’s media network

Overview

The bulk of the publications produced by ISIS’s media network were disseminated by the Telegram app, as ISIS supporters’ accounts were blocked on Twitter and Facebook. While ISIS’s main content is produced and disseminated by designated websites, the social networks and the Telegram app are used as a tool to achieve various objectives: increasing ISIS operatives’ motivation to carry out terrorist attacks; recruiting operatives and maintaining contact with them; expressing support; raising money, and more. The Telegram messaging system is highly popular among ISIS operatives because it has an encryption key which is difficult to crack and enables holding secret chats where content is erased after a predefined time.

The Telegram messaging system

In 2018, ISIS continued its extensive activity on social media despite its weakening. Of late, the Telegram messaging system is ISIS’s preferred platform and enjoys tremendous popularity among its operatives as it allows ISIS’s operatives to enjoy anonymity and compensate themselves for the reduction of their activity space on Facebook and Twitter. The extensive use made by ISIS of encrypted anonymous applications provides ISIS with a certain solution for maintaining contact with its operatives and provinces around the world and at the same time poses a challenge for the security services of various countries. ISIS operatives hold discussions on the Telegram app about targets of terrorist attacks, modus operandi of the attacks, how to avoid state security services, ways to obtain weapons, and more.³

In July 2018, ISIS opened a hashtag on Telegram with the title “to my supporting brother.” It was about mobilizing its supporters to take part in the organization's propaganda efforts through social media. It called on its supporters not to limit the propaganda to the Telegram app only, but to expand it to other platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and more. In spite of that, so far no change has been found in ISIS’s use of the other platforms, and most of the propaganda efforts still continue through Telegram. In addition, it was recommended as part of the hashtag to plant messages in public accounts of government figures, journalists, clergymen and others. So far, no such attempts were found (it is possible that these platforms know how to detect and prevent such attempts).

Recently there was a drop in ISIS’s use of Telegram, probably due to the Telegram management’s efforts to remove accounts of ISIS operatives and supporters. In spite of the fact that hundreds to thousands of accounts are being deleted every day by the Telegram management, ISIS’s media network and its supporters are opening new accounts to compensate for the missing ones (BBC Monitoring, December 7, 2018). According to terrorism analyst Rita Katz, the Telegram management has recently launched an unprecedented campaign to block groups and chats on Telegram (Rita Katz’s article, The Washington Post, January 28, 2019), and despite that, ISIS is still active on Telegram.

Other social media

Recently, it was reported that ISIS has penetrated into other social networks. Among other things, ISIS has made use of an American social network established in 2015 by the name of Baaz. It enables the publication of information and at the same time collects news.
items from other networks and websites according to the subscriber’s subjects of interest. The network disseminates ISIS’s propaganda material produced by the organization’s institutions. The Nasher News agency, affiliated with ISIS (see above), operates groups on this social network (BBC in Arabic, June 19, 2017; onlinejihad.net, March 15, 2018).

This platform has indeed been used by ISIS for the past two years, but it was recently shut down. In December 2018, it was reported that ISIS had tried to make use of this platform once again (BBC Monitoring, December 21, 2018). Upon checking (updated to early 2019), it is evident that this platform keeps blocking accounts of elements suspected of affiliation with ISIS.

Recently it was reported that ISIS had penetrated into the ZeroNet platform. This platform was developed in Budapest and was established in 2015. It operates in a way that makes it difficult to trace the server from which the website is operating, in order to allow the user to evade any censorship or surveillance. This platform operates using a large variety of servers on decentralized computers. Users of this platform who are affiliated with ISIS often use the TOR encryption software, thereby enjoying a higher level of anonymity. ISIS operatives made use of this platform in 2016. Recently, it was reported that ISIS’s activity on this platform was expanded (MEMRI, January 23, 2019; BBC Monitoring, January 17, 2019). According to terrorism analyst Rita Katz, this platform is recently very attractive for ISIS operatives (Rita Katz’s article, The Washington Post, January 28, 2019).

Amaq News account on ZeroNet (ZeroNet, January 22, 2019)
Chapter Four: Magazines produced by ISIS’s media network

Al-Naba’

Al-Naba’ (literally: the news item) is ISIS’s main magazine issued by the organization’s Central Media Office (as noted on the title of the magazine, under its logo). The magazine is issued in Arabic on a weekly basis. It contains articles which include information on the battlegrounds of the Islamic State, while giving prominence to victories; instigation to carry out terrorist attacks in the West; technical guidance on how to carry out attacks; posters and statistical data on ISIS’s activity; articles of a religious nature, and interviews with ISIS operatives and leaders. It is evident that during the recent two years, the graphic design of the magazine has become simpler, maybe yet another expression of the damage sustained by ISIS’s media network. However, the magazine continues to appear on a regular basis.

Al-Naba’ weekly issued on November 1, 2018. According to the text under the logo, it is a weekly issued on behalf of the Central Information Ministry (Al-Ghurabaa, November 1, 2018)

Recently, the number of the pages dropped from 16 to 12 and graphic changes are also noticeable in the weekly. In the heyday of the Islamic Caliphate, hard copies of the weekly were distributed to the citizens of the Caliphate under ISIS’s control. However, with the fall of the Caliphate and the loss of control over its citizens, Al-Naba’ remained an Internet magazine only. In 2018, it was also distributed in hard copies in ISIS’s various provinces, in parallel to its distribution on the web. It is unclear whether it is still distributed in hard copies at the present time (early 2019).
**Shabab al-Khilafah**

On October 10, 2018, a new magazine affiliated with ISIS made its debut – **Shabab al-Khilafah** (“Youth of the Caliphate”). This is not an official ISIS magazine. So far (updated to early December 2018), only one issue was published. It is intended to serve as a platform for ISIS supporters. According to its name, it can be assumed that the magazine’s target audience is young Muslims affiliated with ISIS and it was designed to encourage them to take part in the organization’s activity. However, its cover page states that it is a “platform for all supporters [of the Islamic State]” (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2018).

According to the magazine’s cover page, it publishes material received from parties supporting ISIS, **under the supervision of the Abd al-Faqir Foundation**. The magazine includes opinion pieces, articles of support for ISIS, posters promoting ISIS videos, and preaching for terrorist attacks. **The first issue featured a poster calling for lone wolf attacks in Australia** (archive.org file-sharing website, October 10, 2018).

From Dabiq to Rome – an English online magazine

**From Dabiq to Rome** is an English-language Internet magazine affiliated with ISIS. It is not an official publication of the organization. It includes news items, radical Islamic thought, details on ISIS activity, and information bulletins (infographics). In the past year, the
The Al-Anfal magazine

The Al-Anfal magazine (literally: the Spoils of War; named after the Al-Anfal Surah, the eighth chapter of the Quran) was first issued in late 2017 and is published every ten days. It is produced by the Al-Dar’ Al-Sunni Foundation (literally: the Sunni shield). Among other things, this magazine instigates lone wolf attacks. The last time a reference to one of its issues was found was in June 2018 (Bawabat al-Harakat al-Islamiyah, June 8, 2018). Since then, the magazine has probably inactive.
Chapter Five: The media products of the various provinces

Overview

Following the fall of the Islamic Caliphate, the importance of the various provinces around the world outside of the core provinces increased. During a period of intense pressure on ISIS’s core provinces (Syria and Iraq) and other provinces, some of these provinces are displaying offensive initiatives against their enemies and keeping the ISIS brand in the public eye.

An examination of the media products originating in ISIS’s provinces around the world reveals that there is a close connection between the local media offices and ISIS’s central media network. This connection is expressed both in content and form. The media products written in the provinces are sent to the center and disseminated through ISIS’s main media platforms. It is unclear how closely the Central Media Office supervises ISIS’s local media products. However, the impression is that the media content in the provinces that is sent to the center is in line with the policy of ISIS’s leadership. The media products of the various provinces include the logos of the various provinces along with the logo of the Central Media Office.

Video released by the Amaq News Agency about the execution of two collaborators with the Egyptian authorities by operatives of ISIS’s Sinai Province (Shabakat Shumukh, December 15, 2018). The video was produced by the Central Media Office of the Sinai Province but was edited and distributed by the Amaq and Shabakat Shumukh agencies.
The local media networks of the core provinces (Syria and Iraq)

Iraq Province

In Iraq, ISIS united the various provinces into one super-province, uniting all provinces (which are referred to as regions). The Iraq Province comprises the following regions: Dijla (the Tigris River), Al-Anbar, Diyala, Baghdad, North Baghdad, Salah al-Din, Nineveh, Jazeera and the Southern Province. In 2018, most of these areas engaged in extensive military activity against the Iraqi army, the Popular Mobilization forces (Shiite militias, some of them Iraqi-backed), the Tribal Mobilization forces (militias originating from Sunni tribes that collaborate with the regime), “agents” suspected of collaborating with the regime, and population groups to which ISIS is hostile (mainly members of the Shiite community). On the other hand, the Iraqi security forces carried out continuous security activities against ISIS networks in the various provinces, but failed to significantly curb their activity.

ISIS suicide bomber codenamed Sayf al-Islam al-Ansari, who detonated a car bomb in the area of Al-Riyadh, south of Kirkuk (Iraq – Kirkuk Province, January 27, 2019). The logo of the Kirkuk Region appears at the bottom.

Trucks and a tractor set on fire by ISIS operatives (Iraqi – Diyala Province, December 9, 2018). The logo of the Diyala Region appears at the bottom.
Local media offices operate in most of the regions comprising the Iraq Province. These offices are directly subordinate to ISIS’s central media network (apparently without mediation by the leadership of the Iraq Province). Most of these media offices engaged in intense activity throughout 2018. The videos produced by the media offices in the various regions include two slides: the first slide with the logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office, and the second slide with the logo of the province itself. The media platforms that are directly subordinate to the ISIS leadership, mainly the Amaq News Agency, disseminate the media products of the Iraq Province.

Video produced by the Kirkuk Region. Right: Logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office. Left: logo of the Kirkuk Region (Shabakat Shumukh, September 25, 2018)

Claim of responsibility by the Diyala Province in Iraq: the logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office appears in the center on top (Al-Ansar, December 9, 2018)

Replacement of logos when videos are edited by the Central Media Office. Top right: Video showing the logo of the Kirkuk Province. Top left: Switch to the ISIS logo during the video (Shabakat Shumukh, September 25, 2018)
Claims of responsibility issued by the Amaq and Shabakat Shumukh agencies for the killing of four Iraqi policemen by detonating an IED (Shabakat Shumukh, January 27, 2019)

**Syria Province**

In Syria, ISIS united the various provinces into one super-province (as it did in Iraq). It includes the following regions: Al-Barakah, Al-Khayr (i.e., Deir ez-Zor), Al-Raqqa, Al-Hasakah and Aleppo (Shabakat Shumukh, November 29, 2018). In the course of 2018, ISIS lost its territorial control area in the southern Syrian Golan Heights and most of its territorial control area northeast of As-Suwayda (Al-Safa). Its activity currently focuses on the Lower Euphrates Valley north of Albukamal, where it is facing a campaign against it by the Kurdish forces (SDF), with support from the USA and the International Coalition countries.

ISIS’s various regions in the Syria Province operate local media offices, which are subordinate to the ISIS’s Central Media Office. These offices continued to operate during 2018, despite the heavy pressure exerted on ISIS in the Syrian arena. Videos released by the regional media offices include a slide with the logo of the Central Media Office followed by a slide with the regional logo. ISIS’s claims of responsibility in the various regions are produced and disseminated through the central platforms that are directly subordinate to ISIS’s media leadership (such as Shumukh, Amaq and Al-Mu’ta).

Wording of the claim of responsibility issued by the Syrian Province – Al-Barakah. The logo of the Central Media Office appears in the middle.
Information about the military activity of the Al-Barakah Region, distributed by ISIS’s Shumukh Agency. Right: ISIS operatives en route to attack positions of the SDF forces (distributed by Shumukh, November 24, 2018). Left: Report by the Al-Barakah Region: ISIS operative firing a machine gun mounted on a motorcycle (distributed by Shumukh, November 24, 2018)

Media offices of the provinces around the world

Overview

In light of the heavy pressure exerted on the Syria and Iraq provinces (ISIS’s two core provinces), the importance of the various provinces around the world increased during 2018. These provinces are subordinate to ISIS’s leadership in Syria by means of an entity called the “Directorate of the Remote Provinces,” which is directly subordinate to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (Haqq, July 7, 2016). The various provinces operate local media offices which are subordinate to ISIS’s Central Media Office and use its logo. The local media offices use the central media platforms of the organization’s leadership to disseminate their media products. This enables ISIS’s “remote provinces” to operate within the framework of a unified media strategy determined by the organization’s leadership, despite the geographical distance between them.

ISIS’s provinces around the world are: Khorasan (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran), Sinai, Libya, West Africa, East Asia (the Philippines), Yemen, Somalia and the Caucasus. These provinces operate mainly against local security and government forces, rival organizations, individuals and entities with ties to the West. The provinces also operated against branches of Al-Qaeda in the various countries or organizations affiliated with Al-Qaeda (for example, Al-Shabaab in Somalia or Al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen (known as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP)).
The scope of the media products of the provinces around the world was largely a function of the degree of intensity of their military activity and the resources at their disposal. In the past year, some of the provinces around the world displayed intensive activity, such as the Khorasan and West Africa provinces, which was also reflected in the extensive scope of the media products they had produced.

**Khorasan Province**

The Khorasan Province (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) is the third most important province after Iraq and Syria, ISIS’s core provinces. In the province, which was established in 2014, there has been a steady increase in the number of attacks over the years. In 2018, the province engaged in intensive activity, carrying out attacks against a number of targets, mainly in Afghanistan. Prominent targets: institutions affiliated with the Afghan regime; the Afghan army and the Afghan intelligence and security apparatuses; the Taliban; individuals and institutions affiliated with the West and with the Taliban. In 2018, the Khorasan Province became increasingly prominent due to the prevailing instability in Afghanistan and the spread of Taliban control in additional areas throughout the country in a manner that threatened the Khorasan Province. The Khorasan Province specialized in showcase attacks by suicide bombers in the capital Kabul and elsewhere, claiming the lives of a large number of victims and receiving considerable media attention.

A central media office operates in ISIS’s Khorasan Province, which also uses the logo of the Central Media Office of ISIS’s leadership. The Amaq News Agency (which is subordinate to the organization’s media leadership) plays a key role in disseminating the province’s media products. This agency (and other media platforms) disseminates the media content of the Khorasan Province and sometimes also produces it.

The videos produced by the Khorasan Province begin with the logo of the Central Media Office (right). Then comes the logo of Khorasan Province (left) (from videos produced on August 11 and November 15, 2018)
Wording of a claim of responsibility issued by the Central Media Office of the Khorasan Province. Its logo appears in the center (pastethis.to, September 18, 2019)

Claim of responsibility for a suicide bombing attack carried out by the Khorasan Province, distributed by the Amaq News Agency (Amaq, February 24, 2018)

Suicide bomber in the suicide bombing attack for which Amaq distributed a claim of responsibility. The logo of the Khorasan Province appears on the lower right (pastethis.to, February 24, 2018)
The Sinai Province

In 2018, the Sinai Province contended with the heavy pressure exerted on it by the Egyptian security forces during Operation Sinai 2018. However, the province managed to survive and even maintain a continuous, albeit low, level of offensive initiatives against the Egyptian security forces, mainly in northern Sinai. The province also engaged in activity in Egypt proper. The province accompanied its military activity with media products produced by the media office of the Sinai Province and distributed by ISIS’s central media network. Recently, there has been an increase in the volume of media products of the Sinai Province, indicating that the province is gradually recovering.

The Sinai Province operates its own media office. According to Egyptian media reports, the office includes photographers, editors and graphic designers. It was also reported that the media products produced by the media office are sent to ISIS’s central media network, which decides which materials are ready to be published. ISIS’s official media platforms, including Amaq and Al-Naba’, distribute the media products that are approved, apparently after further editing. In addition, the information office of the Sinai Province sees to the distribution of the media products among the operatives of the province (Al-Naba’, Egypt, March 5, 2018, relying on ISIS documents found in Sinai and Syria).

Right: The logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office, which appears in a video of the Sinai Province. Left: The logo of the Sinai Province, which appears after the logo of the Central Media Office (Shabakat Shumukh, November 15, 2018).
Right: Video produced by the media office of the Sinai Province showing an officer who defected from the Egyptian army and joined ISIS’s Sinai Province. The video was distributed by the Al-Ghurabaa website (Al-Ghurabaa, November 16, 2018). Left: Egyptian army “agent” being led by two ISIS operatives to the site of his execution. The video was distributed by Shabakat Shumukh (Shabakat Shumukh, November 26, 2018)

**West Africa Province**

During the course of 2018, the activity of the West Africa Province was noteworthy. This province is based on the Boko Haram organization. The focus of its military activity is Nigeria, but its activity also spills over into the neighboring countries (Chad and Niger). In the second half of 2018, the West Africa Province increased its activity against the armies of Nigeria, Chad and Niger, and the number of claims of responsibility and the distribution of the province’s media products increased accordingly. A local media office operates in the province, which is affiliated with ISIS’s Central Media Office. The connection between them improved during 2018, enabling an increase in the volume of media products produced by the West Africa Province.

The province videos are usually edited in a manner similar to that of the videos produced by ISIS’s Central media network in Syria and Iraq. The various media products of this province were reported mainly by ISIS’s Amaq News Agency.
The logo of the ISIS media office in the West Africa Province, from a video of the province (ISIS’s West Africa Province, January 15, 2019). The logo appeared after a slide with the logo of the Central Media Office.

Right: Operative calling on Muslims to join the Islamic State, in this case the Muslims in Somalia. The ISIS logo appears on the upper right (ISIS’s West Africa Province, January 15, 2019).

Left: Operatives of ISIS’s West Africa Province during an exchange of fire in Nigeria. The logo of the West Africa Province appears on the bottom right (ISIS’s West Africa Province, August 12, 2018)

Claim of responsibility for activity against the Nigerian army, issued by the Amaq News Agency (Amaq, December 18, 2018)

**Somalia Province**

The Somalia Province is a new ISIS province which has displayed considerable activity in recent months. This activity was manifested in carrying out attacks against Somali security forces and the Somali regime (intelligence personnel, police officers, officials) and against operatives of the Al-Shabab organization (which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda). Like the other provinces, the Somalia Province operates a local media office that distributes its media products through ISIS’s central media network (Amaq, Shabakat Shumukh).
Beginning in September 2018, claims of responsibility appeared under the name of the **Somalia Province** (in Arabic: Wilayat al-Sumal). At the same time, the **Amaq News Agency** began to issue claims of responsibility for ISIS's activity in Somalia (Shabakat Shumukh, December 18, 2018). Making Somalia a province indicates that **ISIS has deepened its hold on this country and expanded its activity there.**

Top: Claim of responsibility under the name of the Somalia Province for the killing of a Somali Finance Ministry official in the open market in the city of Mogadishu on December 18, 2018 (the logo of ISIS's Central Media Office appears in the middle); Bottom: Claim of responsibility for the same incident, issued by the Amaq News Agency (Shabakat Shumukh, December 18, 2018)

On January 23, 2019, a video was released by the Somalia Province, apparently the first video produced by the local media office of the Somalia Province. The video, which is about 15 minutes long, is in Arabic and another language (Somali, Swahili or another local dialect) and has Arabic subtitles. The video shows a number of masked ISIS operatives in Somalia, one of whom is apparently their commander, praising the martyrs of the Caliphate for their devotion to Islam and to the cause of victory or martyrdom. The video continues with photos of the organization's fatalities from the Somalia Province. One of these fatalities was a doctor named Yusuf al-Majratini, who emigrated from Canada to the Islamic State. The video calls on Muslims “who are still outside the Islamic State” of ISIS, and especially doctors and medical personnel, to join the Islamic State “because we need you desperately” (Shabakat Shumukh, January 23, 2019).
Right: Logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office, which appears in the beginning of the video. Left: Logo of the Somalia Province, which appears after the logo of ISIS’s Central Media Office (Shabakat Shumukh, January 23, 2019)

Right: The organization’s operatives in Somalia, one of whom is apparently their commander, praising the fatalities of the Caliphate and their devotion to Islam. The ISIS flag appears on the top right. Left: The doctor Yusuf al-Majratini, who immigrated from Canada to ISIS’s Islamic State and was killed, talking about the medical needs of the province. The ISIS flag appears on the top right (Shabakat Shumukh, January 23, 2019)

Libya

In the two years that have passed since the fall of the ISIS control area in Sirte (December 6, 2016), there has been a significant decline in the scope of ISIS’s activity in Libya. During 2018, ISIS in Libya claimed responsibility for several attacks against the Libyan army and the Libyan security forces. On December 24, 2018, the province claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing attack against the Foreign Ministry in Tripoli in which 31 people were killed and wounded (this was the organization’s biggest terrorist attack in Libya that year).

Local ISIS media offices operate in Libya. Their media products are distributed by the Al-Battar Agency (which also distributes the media products of the ISIS’s provinces in other countries). The local media offices of ISIS’s various regions in Libya have shown media activity this year, but during the course of 2018 they produced only small quantity of media products due to ISIS’s weakness in Libya. The videos were produced in the formats used in Syria and Iraq, and therefore one can assume that the local media network is subject to the organization’s central media network.

Top right: ISIS flag in a video produced by the Barqa Province. Top left: Logo of the Barqa Province (Al-Ghurabaa, July 7, 2018)

Yemen Province

During the course of 2018, ISIS’s branch in Yemen continued to operate against several targets: the Iranian-backed Shiite-Zaidi Houthi rebels, Al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula – AQAP), the Yemeni regime and the Yemeni army. In 2016, six provinces operated in Yemen: Sana’a, Aden-Abyan, Shabwah, Al-Bayda, Hadhramaut and the Green Brigade, which include the areas of Taiz and Bab (Haqq, July 7, 2016). Since that time, there has apparently been an organizational change: the entire country of Yemen operates as a single province (Wilayat al-Yemen), which is divided into sub-regions. In 2018, the province’s activity focused on the sub-regions of Al-Bayda and Aden-Abyan, which could indicate a reduction in the scope of ISIS’s military activity in Yemen (along with a corresponding decline in its media activity).

Like the other provinces, Yemen also operates a central media office whose logo appears on its claims of responsibility. As is the case in other provinces, its media products also display the logos of the various regions included in the Yemen Province. ISIS’s main media platforms
(Akhbar al-Muslimeen, for example) disseminated the claims of responsibility of the Yemen Province.

Claim of responsibility by the Yemen Province – Al-Bayda for an attack against a gathering of Houthi operatives in the area of Qifah (some 120 km southeast of Sana’a) The logo of the Central Media Office appears in the middle (pasteth.is.to file-sharing website, January 1, 2019)

Right: Logo of the Al-Bayda region. Left: Operative of the Al-Bayda region standing in front of the vehicle commandeered by the organization’s operatives. The logo of the region appears on the top right (Akhbar al-Muslimeen, January 1, 2019)

Right: Logo of the Aden-Abyan sub-region. Left: Suicide bomber in a video produced by the Aden-Abyan sub-region. The sub-region’s logo appears in the upper right-hand corner (Akhbar al-Muslimeen, September 11, 2018)
**East Asia Province**

ISIS’s activity in East Asia is based on the Abu Sayyaf Organization, which joined the Islamic State around four and a half years ago. The center of its activity is the southern Philippines. The main targets for attacks are the army and the Philippine security forces, against which ISIS operatives carry out ongoing terror and guerrilla activity. A central media office operates in the province, and its media products are disseminated by the platforms of ISIS’s central leadership.

Claim of responsibility for an attack, issued by the central media office of the East Asia Province. The logo of the central media office appears in the middle (pastethis.to, September 18, 2018).

Distribution of a claim of responsibility by the Amaq News Agency, which is subordinate to the organization’s media leadership (pastethis.to, September 18, 2018)
Caucasus Province

ISIS is active in the **North Caucasus** (Dagestan, Ingushetia, Chechnya and Kabardino-Balkaria). It appears that the media network of the Caucasus Province produced very few publications in 2018, which may indicate **ISIS’s weakness** in the province and a significant reduction of its media materials.