



ISIS announces appointment of new leader in place of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

November 4, 2019

Overview

On October 31, 2019, four days after the killing of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, **ISIS's spokesman officially announced the appointment of a new leader (Caliph) for the organization, codenamed Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi**. ISIS has refrained from revealing the real name and identity of the new leader, but in the ITIC's assessment, he is an Iraqi senior ISIS operative. According to the spokesman, **the decision on the appointment of the new leader was made the Shura Council**, ISIS's supreme institution which is authorized to make such significant decisions. In addition, ISIS has appointed a new spokesman, codenamed **Abu Hamza al-Muhajir**, in place of the previous spokesman who also died in a targeted killing (a few hours after Al-Baghdadi was killed).



Operatives of ISIS's Sinai Province pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader (Telegram, November 2, 2019)

► An audiotape released by ISIS's new spokesman calls on Muslims around the world to pledge allegiance to ISIS's new leader and to rally around him. **ISIS operatives in all the provinces are also called on to avenge Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death while expressly threatening the US**. The spokesman calls for the implementation of Al-Baghdadi's "will," in which he called for **the release of ISIS prisoners from prisons** (in the ITIC's assessment, this is a reference to Al-Baghdadi's call in the last audiotape released by him on September 16,

2019). He also calls on ISIS's operatives and supporters **to devote a great effort to the battle for hearts and minds** (i.e., preaching ISIS's jihadi ideology).

► **In the ITIC's assessment, ISIS preferred not to reveal the new leader's real name for security reasons**, releasing only his codename, **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi**. The titles that form part of his name are **the same titles that form part of Al-Baghdadi's name**, and include **Al-Hashimi**, i.e., a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's family; and **Al-Qurashi**, i.e., a descendent of the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad. The titles of **Caliph** and **Emir of the Faithful are also used**¹. The use of the same titles is intended **to glorify the new leader, legitimize him and create continuity within ISIS**. Attention should also be paid to the new spokesman's statement that **the new leader has extensive experience in fighting against the Americans**. In the ITIC's assessment, the new leader, like his predecessor, may also be Iraqi, and may also have taken part in the fighting against the US after its invasion of Iraq.

► Following the announcement of the appointment of the new leader, ISIS's various provinces began to issue pledges of allegiance to him. The first province was the **Sinai Province**, which may be an indication of its importance. Subsequently, pledges of allegiance by other provinces and by individual operatives and supporters were published. More provinces and individuals are expected to publish pledges of allegiance to the new leader in the near future.

The key messages in ISIS's announcement

► On October 31, 2019, Al-Furqan, ISIS's official media foundation, **released an audiotape of Abu Hamza al-Qurashi**, the organization's new spokesman. The duration of the tape, which was released on Telegram, is about seven minutes. The tape begins with a slide, which reads as follows: **"This is the first audiotape of the official spokesman of the Islamic State, the Sheikh al-Muhajir Abu Hamza al-Qurashi"**². The new spokesman speaks fluently and clearly and conveys the impression he is well-versed in matters of religion. The use of the codename "Al-Muhajir" (literally, the immigrant) may imply that the new spokesman (like his predecessor who was killed) is not Syrian or Iraqi but an operative who came from outside Syria or Iraq (the new spokesman uses literary Arabic, with no local dialect, and therefore his origins cannot be determined based on his speech).

¹Emir of the Faithful (*Amir al-Mu'minin*) was originally the name used for the Islamic Caliph who headed the Islamic leadership in the early centuries of Islam.

² A full transcript of the tape was published in issue number 206 of ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly.



Slide from the first audiotape released by ISIS's new spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurashi (Telegram, October 31, 2019)

► Following are the highlights of the audiotape released by the new spokesman, Abu Hamza al-Qurashi:

- ◆ **Confirmation of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death:** The spokesman confirmed his death in the following words: “We mourn the death of the **Imam of Renewal**³, the cleric, the man of action, the slave of Allah, the Emir of the Faithful and the Muslim Caliph, Sheikh [i.e.,: the leader], the jihad fighter, **Ibrahim bin Awad al-Badri al-Husaini al-Qurashi**, [codenamed] **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, may Allah receive him [as a shahid in Paradise].”
- ◆ **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's activity:** In his review of Al-Baghdadi's activity, the spokesman says, among other things, that Allah helped Al-Baghdadi revive the jihad in Iraq, support the Muslims in Syria, conquer extensive territories, establish the [Islamic] Caliphate, enforce Sharia (Islamic law), bring jihad fighters from every corner of the earth to the Islamic State, fight against the “infidels” and against those who abandoned Islam, and remain steadfast in the face of the enemies who took control [over the territories of the Islamic State].
- ◆ **The activity of the previous spokesman, Abu Hassan Al-Muhajir:** The previous spokesman came to Iraq from the Arabian Peninsula (in the ITIC's assessment, from Saudi Arabia) and was one of the veteran jihadists in Iraq. He replaced ISIS's spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani and was Al-Baghdadi's minister of information and close aide until the day he died.
- ◆ **The appointment of ISIS's new leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi:** The Shura Council of the Islamic State [the supreme institution of the Islamic State, whose members were appointed by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi] convened immediately after Abu

³ **The Imam of Renewal:** *Al-Imam al-Mujaddid* in Arabic. This is not the title imam in the widely used sense of the word, i.e., person who heads the worshipers of the mosque, but rather in the broad sense, i.e., the head of the religious school of renewal, a term that pertains to all Muslims.

Bakr al-Baghdadi's death was verified. After consultation and in accordance with Al-Baghdadi's will, it was agreed to pledge allegiance to **the Sheikh, the jihad fighter, the cleric, the man of action, the slave of Allah, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, as the Muslim Emir and Caliph.**

◆ **Call on Muslims to pledge allegiance to the new leader: The spokesman calls on Muslims around the world to pledge allegiance to the new caliph and to rally around him.** This is because, according to him, the new leader is one of the symbols of jihad and one of the clerics with a jihadi worldview. The new leader is also one of ISIS's military commanders (in Arabic: *Umara' al-Harb*).

◆ **Threat against the US:** The new leader **possesses extensive combat experience, fought against the US and dealt it severe blows⁴.** The spokesman **threatens the US, saying:** “[...] America, do not rejoice over the death of Sheikh Al-Baghdadi and do not forget the cups of poison that he fed you [...] The Islamic State is currently **on the doorstep of Europe and Central Africa** and it is expanding intact [i.e., surviving and not disappearing] **in every corner of the earth** [...] I advise you not to rejoice [...] For something [so bad] will come to you that will make you forget what you suffered [at the hands of the fighters of the Islamic State] [...]”

◆ **Call on ISIS operatives in all the provinces to avenge Al-Baghdadi's death:** The spokesman calls on operatives **to take revenge on the “infidels”** and those who abandoned the religion of Islam for the death of their leaders. The spokesman also calls for efforts **to carry out Al-Baghdadi's “will,”** as it appears on his audiotape⁵, **calling for the release of [ISIS's] prisoners** and for investing considerable effort **in the battle for hearts and minds** (preaching for Islam, *da'wa* in Arabic).

⁴ The new spokesman is apparently referring to the campaign against the US following its invasion of Iraq, in 2004-2011.

⁵ This is the last audiotape released by Al-Baghdadi (September 16, 2019), in which he calls for the release of ISIS prisoners and their wives. In the ITIC's assessment, this call, which may have become a “will,” is likely to lead to **efforts by ISIS operatives to release detainees from prisons, especially operatives held in detention facilities in areas under Kurdish control.**

Implementing the call to pledge allegiance to ISIS's new leader

Beginning on November 2, 2019, in the wake of Al-Baghdadi's death and the new spokesman's call to pledge allegiance to ISIS's new leader, pledges of allegiance from the various provinces and individual operatives and supporters began to appear. It is to be expected that additional pledges of allegiance will be published in the near future.

► The first province to issue a pledge of allegiance was **the Sinai Province**. Operatives of the province posted two photos on Telegram documenting a group of operatives pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader (November 2, 2019). A few hours later, a photo was posted documenting another pledge of allegiance from **the Bangladesh Province**. On November 4, 2019, a photo was published documenting operatives of **the Somalia Province** pledging allegiance to the new leader. At the same time, **pledges of allegiance of individual operatives and supporters of the organization began to be posted on Telegram.**



Operatives of ISIS's Sinai Province pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader
(Telegram, November 2, 2019)



Pledge of allegiance to ISIS's new leader in Somalia
(Telegram, November 4, 2019)

