



Hostile references by ISIS and Al-Qaeda to the FIFA World Cup games in Qatar

November 28, 2022

Highlights

- ▶ Official media channels of ISIS and Al-Qaeda show a hostile attitude towards the FIFA World Cup games which are currently being held in Qatar (November 20 - December 18, 2022). An editorial published in Al-Naba, ISIS's official weekly, called to act according to the recommendation of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad and to remove the polytheists, Jews, and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula. Al-Qaeda called on Muslims to boycott the event because it promotes obscenity and homosexuality in the Arabian Peninsula and warned Muslims not to watch it, attend it or promote it.
- ▶ About two weeks before the start of the games, messages encouraging terrorist activity during the World Cup games were posted on various accounts affiliated with ISIS on the Telegram channel. Among the messages that stood out were those calling for various types of attacks, including biological attacks, against citizens of countries of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS as revenge for their attacks against the organization.
- ▶ It should be noted that the main articles on behalf of ISIS and Al-Qaeda do not explicitly call for carrying out terrorist attacks during the World Cup. But there is a fear that operatives of these organizations and their supporters may interpret the content of the publications as a call to carry out attacks "in the name of Islam."
- ▶ Even before the previous World Cup, held in Russia in 2018, similar and even more serious threats were made by ISIS and its supporters to carry out attacks, which ultimately did not materialize.



Poster released on the eve of the World Cup in Russia, showing the heads of soccer players Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo being chopped off by ISIS operatives on the grass of a crowded soccer stadium (Site, May 17, 2018)

Details

ISIS

► ISIS's Al-Naba weekly dedicated its editorial on November 24, 2022, to the World Cup games in Qatar. The article, entitled "Action on the Recommendation of your Prophet," includes harsh inflammatory statements against Christians and Jews. The author refers to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the Emirates as countries that promote infidels, obscenity, and homosexuality in the Arabian Peninsula. According to the article, during the event, Jews and Christians defame Qatar with their infidel presence and spread infidel actions and obscenity in the Arabian Peninsula with the support of the rulers of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the "renegade" Emirates. The author points out that Qatar is a tyranny that was the enemy of Islam even when it became a British protectorate. It served the West and presented itself as a supporter of Islam by supporting deviant movements (referring mainly to the Muslim Brotherhood movement). The infidel world gave Qatar the role of hosting the World Cup as a reward for alienating Islam and its laws and serving the "Crusader West," especially the USA and the Jews. The article ends with a call on Muslims to act on the advice of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad and remove the polytheists, Jews, and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula until only Muslims remain there (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, November 24, 2022). It should be noted that the article does not explicitly call for terrorist attacks.



The article entitled “Action on the Recommendation of your Prophet” (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, November 24, 2022)

- On November 7, 2022, about two weeks before the opening of the games, several posts calling on ISIS’s supporters to carry out attacks during the World Cup were posted on a Telegram channel affiliated with ISIS. Among other things, it was written that the organization’s supporters should “take advantage of the extraordinary opportunity” in which people from around the world gather, to carry out attacks, including biological attacks, against the citizens of the countries of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, as revenge for their activities (MEMRI, September 7, 2022)¹.
- In another post, after the opening of the games, a call was directed to ISIS’s supporters traveling to the World Cup to perform “Hijra” (i.e., migration) for the sake of Allah and, by implication, to join ISIS and carry out an attack on its behalf (The Long War Journal, November 22, 2022).

¹ <https://www.memri.org/jttm/pro-isis-telegram-channel-threatens-attacks-fifa-world-cup-qatar-2022-encourages-biological>



Post calling on ISIS’s supporters traveling to the World Cup to carry out “hijra” for the sake of Allah (The Long War Journal, November 22, 2022)

Al-Qaeda

► Al-Malahim, the media arm of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), published on November 19, 2022, a call to boycott the World Cup. According to Al-Qaeda, the World Cup promotes immoral activity that is contrary to the spirit of Islam, including division (since fans support different groups, which are often not Muslim), obscenity, drinking alcohol, and homosexuality. All of these take place in the Arabian Peninsula, an especially sacred territory for Muslims, where Islam grew and where the prophet of Islam, Muhammad, worked. According to the notice, the “Crusader West” wants to divide the Islamic nation through the World Cup. Referring to the Qatari government, it notes that Qatar could have used the funds that were wasted hosting infidels in the Arabian Peninsula to help Muslims in the world. The notice ends with a warning to Muslims not to watch or attend the games, and not to be proud of the existence of the World Cup or the achievements of the teams. It should be noted that Al-Qaeda’s general command issued a statement in a similar vein (MEMRI, November 19, 2022; The Long War Journal, November 24, 2022)²



Right: Notice by Al-Qaeda’s general command. Left: Notice by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (The Long War Journal, November 22, 2022)

²<https://www.memri.org/jttm/al-qaeda-affiliate-yemen-calls-muslims-boycott-world-cup-it-promotes-homosexuality-and-alcohol>, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2022/11/jihadis-issue-vague-threats-against-world-cup.php>