



ISIS calls for attacking Christians around the world, especially in Europe

February 2, 2023

Overview

- ▶ **In the last few days, ISIS's media elements launched an incitement campaign calling for terrorist attacks against Christians around the world.** The announcement of the campaign followed the burning of a Quran in Sweden by Rasmus Paludan, a Danish-Swedish politician and leader of a far-right party, in protest against Turkey and Islam.
- ▶ As part of the campaign, which is intended to encourage ISIS operatives to carry out attacks, videos and posts calling on the operatives to carry out attacks around the world, especially in Europe, were distributed on social media. It should be noted that there has been a significant decrease in ISIS's activity in Europe in recent years. In 2022, ISIS operatives did not carry out attacks in Western countries and there were not even attacks inspired by ISIS. In 2021, only two ISIS-inspired attacks were carried out.
- ▶ Furthermore, in view of the campaign, it can be seen that the activity of ISIS's media network is becoming more decentralized than before and that unofficial media arms of the organization's supporters around the world are playing a more central role at the expense of the organization's official media network.

Campaign to encourage attacks against the West

Overview

- ▶ On January 21, 2023, demonstrations against Turkey took place in Stockholm, Sweden, in view of Turkey's blocking of Sweden's inclusion in NATO. In one of the demonstrations, in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm, the lawyer Rasmus Paludan, a Danish-Swedish politician leading the far-right party Stram Kurs (Hard Line) in Denmark, set fire to a Quran. The burning of the Quran caused outrage in Turkey and other Muslim countries. ISIS also joined the protests and launched a campaign on social media designed to encourage its operatives to carry out attacks around the world, especially in Europe.

Posts on Telegram calling for attacks against Christians

► Following the burning of the Quran, an ISIS-affiliated Telegram channel published posts calling for attacks against Christians around the world. The following are the main issues raised:

- ◆ Muslims around the world are called upon to see the act of burning the Quran as an insult to the religion of Islam and to **“shed the blood of the perpetrator.”** It was emphasized that all Muslims must protect their religion if they want to go to heaven.
- ◆ **Muslims in Europe, and Sweden in particular**, are encouraged to act according to the principle of “measure for measure” and set fire, in city centers, to the rainbow flag identified with the LGBT community.
- ◆ Muslims around the world are called upon not to be content with condemnations, demonstrations, boycotts of products made in Sweden, and hashtags on social media.
- ◆ According to one of the posts, the killing of over 20 Christian citizens in a pub in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo on January 23, 2023, and several attacks in which Mozambican army soldiers were killed recently were in fact reprisals for the burning of the Quran in Sweden, as “Christians everywhere are considered Paludan’s brothers” (MEMRI, January 26, 2023).¹

Videos posted by elements affiliated with ISIS calling for carrying out attacks in Europe

► On February 1, 2023, the ISIS-affiliated Mathani Foundation published a video entitled **“Kill them wherever you meet them,” calling for carrying out terrorist attacks in Western countries.** According to the video, which includes clips documenting the incident of burning the Quran, the politician who burned the Quran harmed all Muslims but received protection from the Swedish authorities, who provided him with security (Telegram, February 1, 2023). In the ITIC’s assessment, the presentation of the case in this way is intended not only to fan the hostility towards the politician but also towards the Swedish authorities.

¹ It seems that the claim that the attacks in Congo and Mozambique were carried out in revenge for the act of burning the Quran in Sweden is baseless since ISIS has been carrying out attacks against Christians in these countries for a long period of time.



The slide that accompanies the video (Telegram, February 1, 2023)

► Later in the video, an ISIS operative appears who speaks fluent English (probably British), who is apparently in Syria, calls to harm the “infidels” in any possible way (implicitly, in Europe), listing work tools and trucks as weapons and any other tool in the hands of the would-be attackers: **“Kill them wherever you meet them. If you are a tradesman, use a nail gun to nail the heads and crucify them on woodwork. If you are a truck driver, run over them until their streets are washed with their filthy blood or pour oil on their houses, while they are sleeping, and set them on fire, so that the message [not to harm Muslims and Islam] will be burned into their heads.”**

► Later in the video, an old recording is played in the voice of Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the organization’s spokesman in 2014-2016, who focused his propaganda on calling on Muslims in the West to kill “infidels” in their countries. In the recording, Al-Adnani says that all “infidels” are fair game and that they should be attacked without distinction between civilians and security personnel. The video also includes video clips documenting terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS operatives or inspired by it on European soil. In the end, a jihadi poem (Nashid) is heard in French, encouraging attacks against the “infidels” as part of jihad (the video may have been produced in France or Belgium).



Right: The Danish-Swedish politician setting fire to a Quran. Left: The speaker on the video calls on tradesmen to use a nail gun to nail the heads of the “infidels” (Telegram, February 1, 2023).



The speaker continues: “If you are a truck driver, run over them until their streets are washed with their filthy blood or pour oil on their houses, while they are sleeping, and set them on fire, so the message [not to harm Muslims and Islam] will be burned into their heads.”

► On January 31, 2023, Sarh al-Khilafah Media Foundation, which is affiliated with ISIS, published a short video (about two minutes long), entitled “A message from jihad fighters to polytheists in Europe.” It includes a recording of Osama bin Laden, the former leader of Al-Qaeda, who is a “role model” also for ISIS operatives, in which he threatens European countries with retaliatory actions in view of the publication of offensive cartoons against Muhammad (a threat bin Laden made in 2006, following the publication of 12 offensive cartoons against Muhammad in a Danish satirical newspaper). Bin Laden says in the recording that the publication of the offensive cartoons constitutes an extremely serious offense and that the retribution will be even harsher. The video was published with subtitles in English and Arabic and photos from the scenes of attacks carried out by ISIS in Europe over the years (Telegram, January 31, 2023). Choosing Bin Laden’s words in the current context is intended to encourage attacks against European residents and to call on ISIS supporters to carry out attacks in Europe in response to the burning of the Quran, similar to the attacks carried out following the publication of the offensive cartoons in 2006 and the attack carried out following the publication of similar cartoons by the French satirical newspaper “Charlie Hebdo” in 2015 (A shooting attack on January 7, 2015, at the newspaper’s office, in which 12 people were killed).²

² For further details on the Charlie Hebdo shooting, see Wikipedia entry “Charlie Hebdo shooting.”



Right: The beginning of the video. Left: Documentation of one of the ISIS-inspired attacks carried out in Europe, which appeared in the video (Telegram, January 31, 2023)³

³ A shooting attack in Vienna carried out on November 2, 2020, in which four people were murdered and 20 others were wounded.