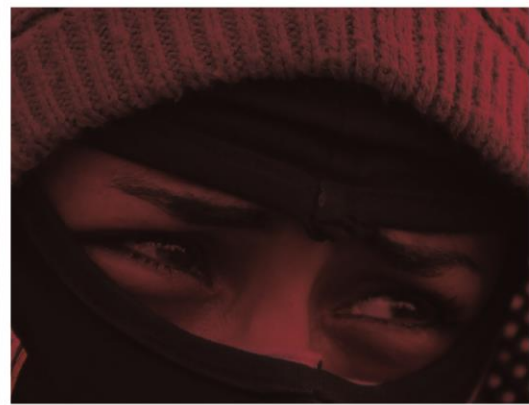


FACT SHEET

THE ISLAMIC STATE (ISIS, ISIL)



THE ISLAMIC STATE (ISIS) FACT SHEET

Founded in 2006, Clarion Project is a non-profit, educational organization providing a platform for human rights activists and for challenging Islamic extremism through facts. Clarion Project is a registered 501 (c) (3).

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September 2014

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THE ISLAMIC STATE (ISIS) FACT SHEET

WHAT IS THE 'ISLAMIC STATE'

"We declare Fallujah as an Islamic state, and we call on you to be on our side! We are here to defend you from the army of Maliki and the Iranian Safavids!" – Islamic State fighter (then Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) on the podium at the declaration of statehood in Fallujah, January 3rd 2014.¹

The Islamic State is not only a terrorist group. It is a political and military organization that holds a radical interpretation of Islam as a political philosophy and seeks to impose that worldview by force on Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Expelled from al-Qaeda for being too extreme, the Islamic State claims to be the legitimate ruler of all Sunni Muslims worldwide. They have established what they regard as a state which includes large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq, governed from Raqqa in Syria.²

It advances a number of theological opinions to support its claims. Its adherents hold that they are merely practicing Islam fully, pronouncing those who disagree with them *takfir* (heretics). This designation is used as religious justification for killing the Islamic State's opponents, typically slaughtering them wholesale.³

Originally founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), what is now the Islamic State participated in the Iraq War fighting against American forces after the fall of Saddam Hussein. In 2013 they joined the Syrian Civil War, but rather than focus on defeating the regime of Bashar al-Assad, they focused on building their Islamic state.



On June 29, 2014, the Islamic State declared the establishment of an Islamic caliphate with its leader being Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the caliph.

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/world/middleeast/fighting-in-falluja-and-ramadi.html>

² <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144>

³ <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/06/the-massacre-strategy-107954.html>

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TRACING ITS ORIGINS



Still from an Islamic State recruitment video

What is now the Islamic State began as a group called *Jamaat al-Tahwid wa-i-Jihad* (JTWJ), founded in 1999 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Initially it focused on attempting to effect regime change in Jordan, although Zarqawi first gained experience as a jihadi in Afghanistan. He met Osama Bin Laden in 1999 and the two always had a fractious

relationship, partly based on personal differences and partly on class differences. Zarqawi was brash, abrasive and from a poor background, whereas Bin Laden was from a wealthy background and did not feel the need to always be on the front lines.⁴

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States, Zarqawi became noted in the insurgency in Iraq against American forces. In particular he was known for his ferocity and personal brutality as well as for his battlefield successes. His personal hatred for Shiites is well documented and remains an integral part of Islamic State ideology. He called them "a sect of treachery and betrayal ... the lurking snake, the crafty and malicious scorpion"⁵

Among JTWJ's high profile terrorist attacks were an August 2003 attack on the UN compound in Baghdad that killed 22, including UN Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello, then considered the most likely successor to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.⁶ In February 2004 the group killed 150 people in simultaneous attacks in Baghdad and the Shiite holy city of Karbala during the Ashura festival.⁷ Zarqawi was also known for personally carrying out beheadings, such as those of hostages Eugene Armstrong (American), Jack Hensley (American) and Kenneth Bigley (British) in September 2004.⁸

In 2004 JTWJ formally became an Al-Qaeda affiliate when Zarqawi performed *bay'ah*, the oath of fealty, to Bin Laden.⁹

⁴ http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf

⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jun/09/guardianobituaries.alqaida>

⁶ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carolina-larriera/remembering-sergio-vieira_b_3779106.html

⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/03/02/international/middleeast/02CND-IRAQ.html>

⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1473811/Ken-Bigley-escaped-and-was-recaptured-by-Zarqawis-gang-before-he-was-executed.html>

⁹ http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf

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The group changed its name to Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (the Tigris and the Euphrates). It was more commonly known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI.¹⁰

Al-Qaeda in Iraq built up its own network of supporters and fighters during the Iraq insurgency. Although it was technically subordinate to Al-Qaeda central, in practice it was autonomous and able to develop its own ultraviolent brand of jihad. This created a generational difference between jihadists more aligned with Osama Bin Laden who fought in Afghanistan and those who fought with Zarqawi in Iraq, such as current Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

In 2006, Zarqawi subsumed several smaller Iraqi jihadi factions under AQI leadership under the banner of *Majlis Shura al-Mujahedin* (MSM). Under the guidance of Al-Qaeda's central leadership he focused on developing the infrastructure necessary to enforce sharia law as a state.¹¹

Zarqawi was killed by a United States airstrike in 2006.¹²

After the death of Zarqawi, AQI was led by Abu Ayyub Al-Masri and then by Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. The two were killed by a tank shell in 2010.¹³

In 2006, the group changed its name to the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), signaling its intention to focus on conquering Iraqi territory as a means of creating a sharia-based state there. The group concentrated its efforts on gaining territory in the desert region of Anbar province, where discontent among the Sunni population was rife.



However their brutal attempts to enforce sharia law turned the local population against them.

Supported by American forces, tribal militias called *Sahwat al-Anbar* (*Anbar Awakening*), or alternatively *Abna al-Iraq* (*Sons of Iraq*), pushed ISI out of Fallujah and the rest of Anbar in

¹⁰ <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/the-links-between-al-qaeda-in-iraq-and-al-qaedas-senior-leadership/>

¹¹ http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf

¹² <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/jun/09/guardianobituaries.alqaida>

¹³ <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/04/al-qaeda-in-iraqs-to.php>

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bloody fighting.¹⁴ Founded in 2005, *Sahwat al-Anbar* supported the American troop surge of 2007 and were able to all but defeat ISI.¹⁵ Following victory, they were not integrated into the Iraqi military by the Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, instead being targeted as a potential threat to Shiite majority rule.¹⁶

Many of them have now joined the Islamic State.¹⁷

In 2010, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over ISI after the deaths of Al-Masri and the previous al-Baghdadi. He was able to rebuild some of the popular support that had been lost under the groups two earlier leaders, but also began to develop the organization's strength and stage a comeback with his expansion into the Syrian Civil War in 2013, renaming the organization the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (or



Members of the Sahwa militia groups 'repent' in arranged ceremony

the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant – ISIL). Baghdadi's decision to move into Syria provoked friction with Al-Qaeda's official affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al Nusra. Baghdadi attempted to take over Jabhat al-Nusra, prompting rebuke from Nusra's leader and Al-Qaeda central command. After multiple failed attempts at mediation by various leading sheikhs in the global jihadist community, the two groups split permanently when the leader of Al-Qaeda central formally repudiated ISIS.¹⁸

Apart from the power struggle between the leaders of ISIS and Nusra, the groups differ in their methodology. Nusra favors a more gradualist approach that is willing to work with other factions

¹⁴ <https://www.understandingwar.org/report/anbar-awakening-displacing-al-qaeda-its-stronghold-western-iraq>

¹⁵ http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/11/why_the_violence_has.php

¹⁶ <http://online.wsj.com/articles/philip-dermer-the-sons-of-iraq-abandoned-by-their-american-allies-1404253303>

¹⁷ <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119395/isiss-three-types-fighters>

¹⁸ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/03/al-qaeda-denounces-syrian-jihadist-group-isis.html>

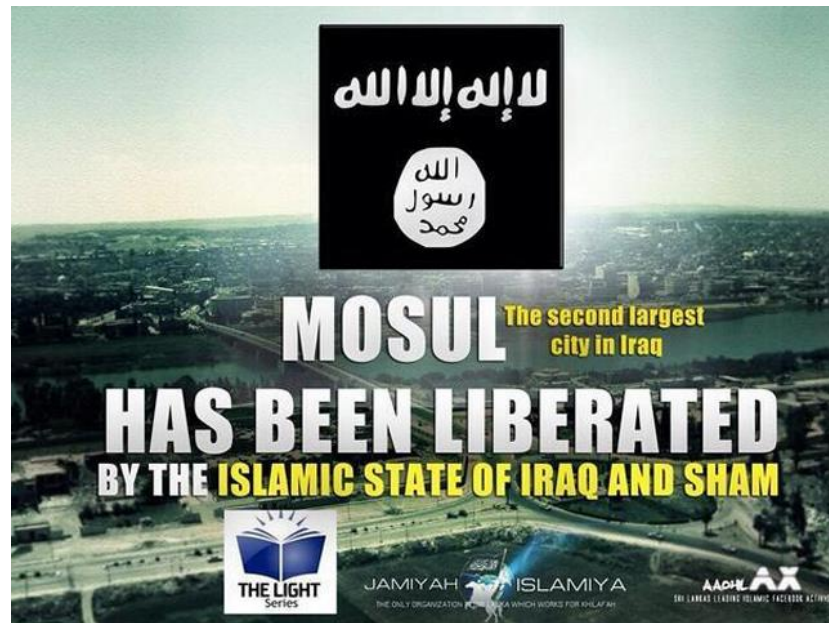
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and attempt to build an Islamic state later, whereas ISIS favors a more direct approach, seeking to seize territory, build a state and enforce sharia immediately.¹⁹

Throughout late 2013 and early 2014, ISIS built its power base in Syria, establishing its stronghold in Raqqa, which it was able to take total control over after ousting all other rebel groups. Despite a counterattack by other factions sparked by its brutal tactics, ISIS was able to hold its positions and consolidate its power base. They effectively imposed control over areas by empowering their allies and crushing their enemies. Policies of divide and rule in fractious tribal areas helped them to sustain their hold on territory.²⁰

But ISIS never forgot about Iraq. In January 2014, they took parts of Fallujah and Ramadi in Anbar province. In early June, ISIS shocked the world, storming across northern Iraq and capturing Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, with the help of an uneasy alliance of ex-Baathists, tribesmen and other Sunni rebel forces.²¹

On June 29, 2014, the first day of Ramadan, ISIS declared itself a caliphate and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as Caliph Ibrahim, calling for the immediate loyalty of all Muslims throughout the world.²²



Graphic released by ISIS on social media to celebrate the capture of Mosul

¹⁹ <http://www.aymennjawad.org/14363/the-dawn-of-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-ash-sham>

²⁰ <http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/ISIS%27s%20Colonial%20Strategy%20in%20Syria%20-%20Legrant%20-%20June%202014%20VF.pdf>

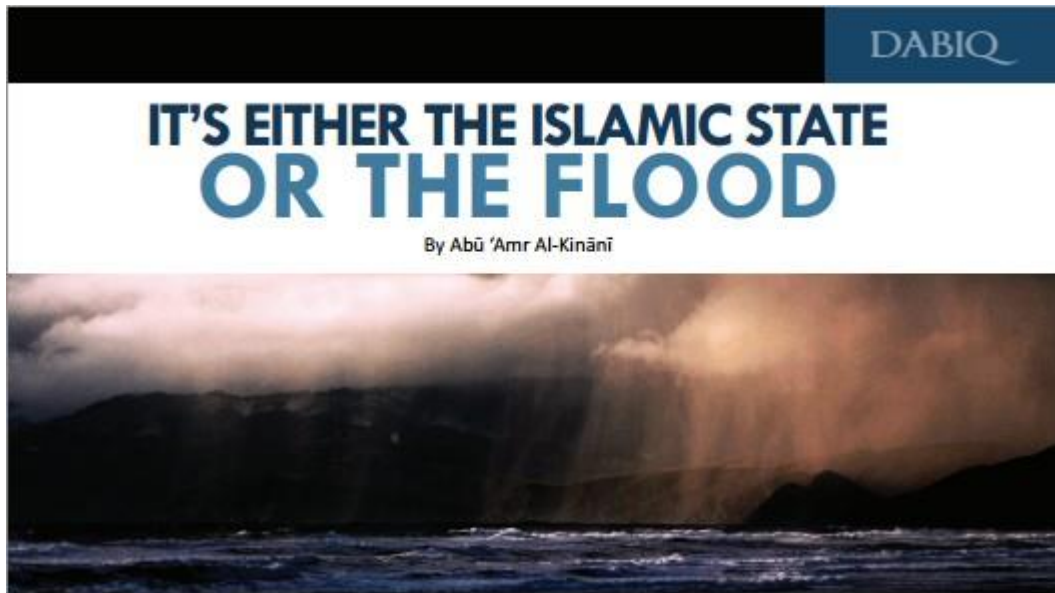
²¹ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-iraq-and-syria-controls-one-third-iraq>

²² <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2014/06/29/the-islamic-state-restores-the-caliphate/>

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IDEOLOGY

The ideology of the Islamic State is that of Salafist-jihadism.²³ It is important to remember that for them there is no distinction between religion and state. All decisions are based on a hardline interpretation of sharia (Islamic law), which is brutally enforced in the areas controlled by the Islamic State.



Imagery from the group's magazine

The ideology is almost exactly the same as that of other groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. It differs in its approach to the proper timing and the conditions necessary to establish a caliphate. Groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Qaeda's official affiliate in the Syrian Civil War) believe that although the long term goal is to establish an Islamic caliphate, the time is not yet right for such a move.²⁴

Salafist thought is based on the idea of returning to the supposedly pure form of Islam practiced by the successors to the founder of Islam, Mohammed, and the earliest Muslims.²⁵ They reject any later additions as *bid'ah* (innovation) and un-Islamic. Their doctrine allows them to proclaim as *takfir* (heretics) Muslims who deviate from their strictly defined interpretation of Islam. The penalty for heresy is death. There is an ideological split within the Salafist community based on engagement in the political process and the acceptability of the use of violence.²⁶

²³ <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss3-Art5.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/islamic-state-fighting-hamas-priority-before-israel.html>

²⁵ <http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wicktorovitz.2005.Geneology-of-Radical-Islam.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/constructing-takfir-from-abdullah-azzam-to-djamel-zitouni>

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Salafism as a movement began in Egypt. Its ideological forefathers are the same as those of the Muslim Brotherhood. It developed concurrently with Wahhabism, the doctrine of Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (died 1792), the cleric whose austere and violent interpretation of Islam became the state doctrine of Saudi Arabia.

Salafism and Wahhabism are very closely connected, partly because of the movement of Salafist, Muslim Brotherhood-linked clerics to Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and 1970s. The



terms are often used interchangeably, but strictly speaking Wahhabism is a subset of Salafism, a broader movement to emulate the earliest Muslims. Wahhabis call themselves *Muwahideen* (monotheists), a term used often in Islamic State literature.²⁷ Both movements draw extensively from the writing and thought of Ibn Taymiyya the 14th century Islamic jurist.

Sayyid Qutb, the Muslim Brotherhood ideologue hanged by Egyptian President Nasser in 1966, is also a major influence on all jihadist groups, the Islamic State being no exception. Qutb's contribution to jihadism was to take the idea of *jahiliyya*, the concept that Arabs were in a state of ignorance prior to the appearance of Mohammed and his Islamic teachings, and he turned it into a concept of political philosophy. Qutb termed anything other than strict adherence to sharia law and Islam *jahiliyya*, including all contemporary Muslim regimes. He then advocated the violent overthrow of all such regimes in order to replace them with an Islamic state. In developing this concept, Sayyid Qutb built on the earlier work of Ibn Taymiyya and the early 20th century Indian Islamist Abu Ala Maududi.²⁸

These ideas were further developed by the thinkers and jihadists that would go on to form Al-Qaeda: Abdullah Azzam (the father of global jihadism) and Osama bin Laden.²⁹

²⁷ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq>

²⁸ http://www.academia.edu/3222569/Sayyid_Qutbs_Concept_of_Jahiliyya_as_Metaphor_for_Modern_Society

²⁹ <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/jcs/article/view/219/377>

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GOALS

The Islamic State has short, medium and long term goals.

Its short term goal is to consolidate the areas it already controls and capture more territory in Syria and Iraq.

One of its central tactics it has used to advance its goals has been to precipitate all out sectarian war in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites, which it tries to achieve by massacring civilian populations of Shiites whenever and wherever it can. This methodology is used partly due to their view of Shiites as heretics deserving of death and it is also a tactic aimed at causing reprisal attacks from Shiite militia groups and thus driving Sunnis into the arms of the Islamic State.

The Islamic State's medium term goal is to consolidate and expand its control of territory in Iraq and Syria and in the next stage to advance into neighboring Sunni countries. Speculation is rife as to future targets, which the Islamic State has tried to encourage by making vague threats on social media.³⁰

It seems that Saudi Arabia and Jordan will be the next targets.³¹

Both countries have large populations of discontented young men and both are authoritarian monarchies that emerged from the Arab Spring relatively unscathed.



Graphic shared on social media by the Islamic State with arrows suggesting that Saudi Arabia & Jordan are their next targets

³⁰ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/world/2014/09/08/Russia-will-stand-its-ground-despite-ISIS-threats.html>

³¹ <http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/isis-next-targets-jordan-and-saudi-arabia>

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Advancing in this way is in keeping with the Islamic State's current practical approach of consolidating power in a contiguous territory in order to build a manageable and defensible state.³²

Ultimately the group aims at nothing short of total world domination.



Scene from Islamic State magazine, *Dabiq*, boasting of mass murders

³² <http://www.syriadeeply.org/articles/2014/08/6012/tabqa-victory-consolidates-isis-control-raqqqa-urban-showdown/>

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ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the leader of the Islamic State and has declared himself the caliph. Due to security concerns he rarely appears in public. Soon after the declaration of the caliphate on the first Friday of Ramadan, he gave a speech in Mosul's historic Al-Nouri mosque exhorting all Muslims to obey him.³³

Baghdadi has appointed a cadre of advisors, minister and military commanders to run the caliphate. The Islamic State is run by a sophisticated hierarchy of commanders, each with specific areas of responsibility. A flash drive seized from a house of a member of the Islamic State in a raid by the Iraqi military revealed the organizational structure of the group.³⁴



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi giving his first public appearance

Immediately under Baghdadi are two deputies, one for the territory in Syria and another for Iraq. He is also advised by a cabinet staffed with ministers, each with a clearly demarcated role, a salary and delegated powers. Treasury, transport, security and prisoners all have their own ministry and there is also a minister in charge of

looking after the needs of foreign jihadi fighters. A specialized 'War Office' manages the logistics and technicalities of war. Baghdadi has shown himself to be willing to delegate responsibility and to rely on the skills of his subordinates. Many of his cabinet and other higher level commanders served as high-ranking officers in Saddam Hussein's military and many others have high level technical expertise. This military expertise is reflected at all levels of the Islamic State's war machine. There are approximately 1,000 medium to top level field commanders in the Islamic State. Their salaries range between \$300-\$2000/month, depending on the job they are doing.

Further down the hierarchy, each province has its own governor responsible for the administration of the region.

³³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/islamic-state-caliph-lauds-iraq-rebellion-20147512574517772.html>

³⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10956280/Inside-the-leadership-of-Islamic-State-how-the-new-caliphate-is-run.html>

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The Islamic State spends considerable energies on building the institutions and infrastructure of statehood in addition to their military campaigns. They intend to govern the territory they control and therefore must provide services for the population. Over the past year, since it conquered the north-eastern Syrian city of Raqqa, the Islamic State has established it as a de facto capital.³⁵ It runs healthcare, education and keeps public order. Everywhere the Islamic State operates it establishes these services, but it is most entrenched in Raqqa. It is well aware that in order to build a state it has to gain the acquiescence of the governed, at least to a certain extent.³⁶ It also operates courts, based on sharia law. Gender segregation is enforced and women must wear the burqa in public.

The morality police, the *Hisbah*, patrol the streets to ensure that sharia law is being followed.³⁷ Alcohol, tobacco and drugs are banned. Punishments for various transgressions of sharia law include flogging, amputation and death.

In Raqqa the Islamic State has been known to publicly crucify transgressors in the town square.³⁸ This is part of their intimidation strategy aimed at pacifying the areas they control. By showing extreme violence to their enemies they utilize the propaganda value of fear.

This tactic is included in their propaganda arm. The Islamic State is well known for releasing extremely gruesome videos of it carrying out mass and individual killings, such as those of American journalists James Foley and Stephen Sotloff and British aid worker David Haines.³⁹ This tactic is replicated in their online strategy, tweeting out messages across several different platforms to ensure maximum visibility and utilizing social media effectively, such as the use of the hashtag #AllEyesOnISIS, immediately following the capture of Mosul by the Islamic State's forces. This sophisticated messaging is an integral part of the Islamic State's operations and is quite obvious in its glossy English magazine, *Dabiq*. The name of the magazine is taken from a location in Muslim eschatology, highlighting the Islamic State's millenarian appeal.⁴⁰

All of these activities cost money, but the Islamic State is now the richest terror organization in the world.⁴¹ Its income (estimated to be at least \$1 million/day from oil alone) is primarily from the smuggling of oil, supplemented by extortion, kidnapping, and taxes on the area it controls.⁴²

³⁵ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20421>

³⁶ <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/09/12/347748371/islamic-state-rule-municipal-services-and-public-beheadings>

³⁷ <https://news.vice.com/video/the-islamic-state-part-3>

³⁸ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/30/islamic-extremists-now-crucifying-people-in-syria-and-tweeting-out-the-pictures.html>

³⁹ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/isis-fulfills-promise-beheads-uk-aid-worker-david-haines>

⁴⁰ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq>

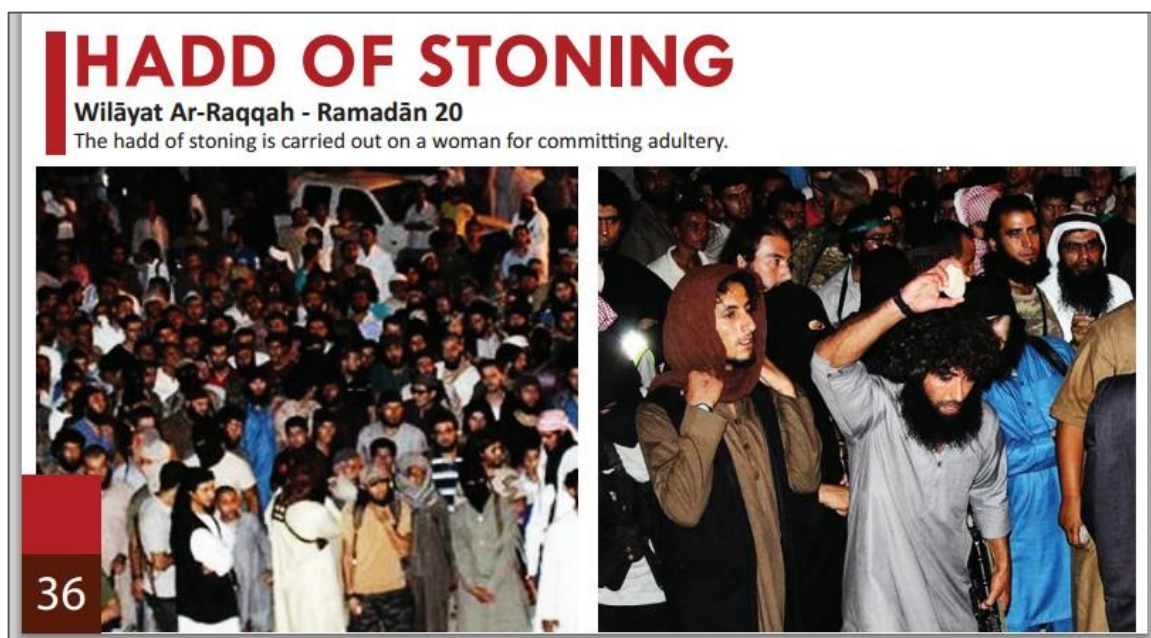
⁴¹ <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-worlds-richest-terrorist-group-2014-8>

⁴² <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/11/uk-iraq-crisis-militants-funding-insight-idUKKBN0H60AM20140911>

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The group is largely self-financing, with donations making up a tiny percentage of its income.⁴³

Sunni Muslims living in Fallujah have expressed to reporters that whatever the Islamic State's other flaws, their ability to deliver services on the ground and regular paychecks for professionals such as doctors make them a better option than the Iraqi government in the eyes of some.⁴⁴



A women accused of adultery is stoned to death, the sharia-prescribed punishment, showcased in the Islamic State's magazine, Dabiq (Issue 2)

⁴³ <http://online.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-fills-coffers-from-illicit-economy-in-syria-iraq-1409175458>

⁴⁴ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/09/12/the_blood_brothers_of_anbar_sunni_arabs_in_aq_islamic_state

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CALIPHATE

*"We took it forcibly at the point of a blade.
We brought it back conquered and compelled.
We established it in defiance of many.
And the people's necks were violently struck,
With bombings, explosions, and destruction,
And soldiers that do not see hardship as being difficult,
And lions that are thirsty in battle,
Having greedily drunk the blood of kufr [infidel].
Our khilāfah has indeed returned with certainty"*

– From the declaration of the caliphate entitled "This is the Promise of Allah" delivered by the Islamic State's spokesman al-Adnani.⁴⁵



Celebrations following declaration of the caliphate taken from the Islamic State's magazine

The Islamic State, declared by the Islamist group formerly known as ISIS or ISIL, is the first and so far only attempt to resurrect the governmental system of the early Muslims in the modern era. A caliphate as a system of government is considered by believers to be a divinely sanctioned religious monarchy that invests power in the hands of the caliph, who has the sole authority to declare jihad and to interpret Islamic texts.

⁴⁵ Text from the announcement of the establishment of a Caliphate by the Islamic State
<http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2014/06/29/the-islamic-state-restores-the-caliphate/>

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In theory, the caliphate has sole religious and political jurisdiction over the entire Muslim *Ummah* (nation). The last caliphate, ruled by the Ottoman Empire, was abolished by the secular Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk in 1924.

The caliph is an incredibly important symbolic figure in Islamist terms and the reestablishment of the caliphate has been a longstanding goal of all Islamist and jihadist groups, from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to Jamaah Islamiyah in India.⁴⁶ Spiritually speaking, the caliph is the

successor to the founder of Islam, Mohammed. In order to increase his legitimacy on that score, the leader of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, claims descent from Mohammed using the additional name 'al-Qurayshi'.⁴⁷

The caliphate was the original form of government used by the successors of Mohammed to govern the countries under Islamic rule. The first four caliphs, called the *Rashidun* (rightly guided)



Map of the Rashidun Caliphate in 750C.E.

caliphs, oversaw the rapid expansion of Muslim dominions from its starting point in Saudi Arabia to one of the historically largest empires in the world.^{48,49}

⁴⁶ <http://www.onislam.net/english/ask-about-islam/islam-and-the-world/politics-and-economics/166232-the-relevance-of-the-caliphate-in-islam.html?Economics=>

⁴⁷ The Quraysh were the tribe of Muhammed. By adopting this name Baghdadi claimed direct descent from Muhammed. <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-a-short-biography-of-the-isis-sheikh/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/491710/Rashidun>

⁴⁹ The map: Unknown. (Sep 05, 2006). The Expansion of the Muslim Empire under Muhammad and the Four Rashidun Caliphs. Retrieved Sep 15, 2014, from Notre Dame OpenCourseWare Web site: <http://ocw.nd.edu/arabic-and-middle-east-studies/islamic-societies-of-the-middle-east-and-north-africa-religion-history-and-culture/Images/the-expansion-of-the-muslim-empire-under-muhammad>.

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The caliphate is therefore highly romanticized by jihadis, as it hearkens back to an era where the Muslim empire was a rapidly expanding and powerful force.

Just as the Salafist-jihadists attempt to replicate the companions and successors of Mohammed religiously and spiritually, rejecting anything they regard as a later innovation (Arabic: *bid'ah*), so too they seek to emulate the early Islamic form of political rule.⁵⁰

Many Muslim leaders around the world, including prominent Islamists and even leaders of other terrorist groups, have rejected the Islamic State's caliphate, claiming that it does not meet the religious preconditions required to be a valid caliphate.

⁵⁰ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/baghdadi-vision-new-caliphate-20147184858247981.html>

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HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

“The Islamic State is carrying out despicable crimes and has transformed rural areas of Sinjar into blood-soaked killing fields in its brutal campaign to obliterate all trace of non-Arabs and non-Sunni Muslims.”

– Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International's Senior Crisis Response Adviser



Still from a video of Islamic State militants executing prisoners

The Islamic State's reputation for brutality is well founded. It has shown no compunction about immediately killing anyone who disagrees with it, who is of the wrong religious sect or who is perceived to be an opponent. Apart from enemies in battle, first and foremost they target those they deem *takfir* (heretics) which includes all Shiites, Alawites and other 'deviant' sects of Islam and Sunnis that they have decided are not following Islam correctly.

Soon after Mosul fell and the Islamic State's army stormed south towards Baghdad, videos were released by the Islamic State's media department boasting of massacres they had perpetrated. Human Rights Watch said that at least 560-770 people were massacred in Tikrit over a three day period, but the Islamic State boasts of 1,700. The soldiers they executed were Shiites who had been freshly recruited into the Iraqi army and who had barely finished training. *The New York Times* interviewed the only known survivor, Ali Hussein Kadhimi.⁵¹

⁵¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/world/middleeast/surviving-isis-massacre-iraq-video.html>

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Soon afterwards, other minority groups were targeted. All the Christians, descendants of the indigenous Assyrian population that has inhabited Iraq for at least 3,000 years, were driven from Mosul. Their homes were marked with the Arabic letter *nun*, an abbreviation for *Nazarene*, referring to Christians. Cars driving through the streets of Mosul announced over loudspeakers three choices for Christians. Either pay the *jizya*, a special tax for Christians that most could not afford (\$470), convert to Islam, or die. It is believed that the entire community fled.⁵²



Yazidis rescued in a helicopter from Mt. Sinjar

⁵² <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/last-christians-expelled-mosul-after-2000-years>

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In August 2014, the Yazidis, an ancient minority indigenous to northern Iraq, were slaughtered by the advancing fighters of the Islamic state. Tens of thousands were driven from their homes and were trapped on Mount Sinjar with no food or water. All sides of the mountain were sealed off by the jihadist militants leaving no escape.⁵³

Eventually Kurdish forces backed by US airstrikes were able to rescue most of those trapped, but not before hundreds had died of exposure, thirst and the bullets of the Islamic State.

Donatella Rovera, Amnesty International's Senior Crisis Response Adviser, who has visited northern Iraq, said, "The massacres and abductions being carried out by the Islamic State provide harrowing new evidence that a wave of ethnic cleansing against minorities is sweeping across northern Iraq,"



Yazidis in Iraq protest against the Islamic State and weep for their loved ones killed or captured by the Islamist group. (Photo: © Reuters)

Amnesty International released a full report on the atrocities committed by the Islamic State at the beginning of September 2014.⁵⁵

Those who find themselves subjects of the nascent Islamic state have to obey sharia law or face fierce penalties. Beatings and lashes are common. In Mosul, the group shot a female doctor for refusing to wear a headscarf.

Around two weeks later they shot two more female doctors, this time for refusing to treat Islamic State fighters in a purge of suspected collaborators.⁵⁶

⁵³ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/20000-yazidis-rescued-kurds-islamic-state-advances>

⁵⁴ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/iraq-yezidi-minority-flee-their-lives-islamic-state>

⁵⁵ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/amnesty-isis-ethnic-cleansing-blood-soaked-killing-fields>

⁵⁶ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-executes-women-doctors-collaborators-purge>

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Rape is routinely practiced as both a weapon of war and as a means of humiliating and subjugating conquered populations. It is also used to 'reward' fighters for services rendered. Women as young as 14 are being given as 'gifts' to ISIS commanders, while others are sold as slaves in the marketplace.⁵⁷ It is unknown how many women have been captured by the Islamic State, but it is in the thousands. They are being beaten, tortured and raped, often multiple times a day.

Yazidi or Assyrian men that are captured are typically simply shot.

Haleh Esfandiari, the Director of the Middle East program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars told the *Huffington Post*:

"They usually take the older women to a makeshift slave market and try and sell them. The younger girls, basically they ... are raped or married off to fighters. It's based on temporary marriages, and once these fighters have had sex with these young girls, they just pass them on to other fighters."⁵⁸

Girls who have been captured are often forced to call their parents and recount over the phone what is being done to them as a form of torture. Many girls are held in a secret prison in Mosul which was used to massacre Shiites when the Islamic State first arrived. Those who convert to Islam are sold to jihadist fighters as 'brides' for as little as \$25. Beauticians are brought in to put make-up on them and make the girls look pretty as well as to instruct them to be submissive and please their new 'husbands'.⁵⁹

Those who refuse to convert are raped and beaten, eventually to death.

⁵⁷ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/10/i-am-a-14-year-old-yazidi-girl-given-as-a-gift-to-an-isis-commander-heres-how-i-escaped/>

⁵⁸ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/08/isis-attacks-on-women_n_5775106.html

⁵⁹ <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/isis-captive-women-endless-nightmare-rape-and-beatings>

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OTHER RESOURCES

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<http://insct.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wicktorowicz.2005.Geneology-of-Radical-Islam.pdf>

Biography of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi released by the Islamic State, translated by Pieter van Ostaeyen

<http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-a-short-biography-of-the-isis-sheikh/>

Ethnic Cleansing on a Horrific Scale: Islamic State's Systematic Targeting of Minorities in Northern Iraq – Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE14/011/2014/en/63f30ccd-eeb-43f6-bb5b-1032f813307b/mde140112014en.pdf>

The Colonial Strategy of ISIS in Syria – Arab Reform Initiative, Felix Legrande

<http://www.arab-reform.net/sites/default/files/ISIS%27s%20Colonial%20Strategy%20in%20Syria%20-%20Legrand%20-%20June%202014%20VF.pdf>

The Islamic State – Vice News (Documentary Film):

<https://news.vice.com/video/the-islamic-state-full-length>

The Islamic State's Propaganda Magazine – Dabiq

<http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq>

The War Between ISIS and Al-Qaeda for Supremacy in the Global jihadist Movement – Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Aaron Zelin

http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote_20_Zelin.pdf

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