



ICT
International Institute
for Counter-Terrorism
With the Support of Keren Daniel

ICT Jihadi Monitoring Group **PERIODIC REVIEW**

Bimonthly Report

Summary of Information on Jihadist Websites

The First Half of March 2016

Highlights

This report summarizes notable events discussed on jihadist Web forums during the first half of March 2016. Following are the main points covered in the report:

- **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb** claims responsibility for a terrorist attack that three of its members carried out at the Grand Bassam tourist resort in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. According to the organization, the attack was carried out in response to the “Crusaders” attacks on Muslims, and was intended to send a message to Ivory Coast not to cooperate with France and to the countries involved in the French invasion of Mali to retreat.
- **Al-Nusra Front**, Al-Qaeda’s branch in Syria, calls to settle the armed conflict that erupted between its members and the “Division 30” group, a unit within the Free Syrian Army, in Idlib Province, by establishing a shari’a court to resolve the conflict. According to Al-Nusra Front, the sides must show restraint and tolerance since the only one that benefits from the conflict is the Alawite regime.
- **Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent** increases its PR activities by launching a new series of publications titled, “Al-Hadid”. In the framework of the series, the organization publishes propaganda materials regarding its members’ activities and criticizing the Pakistani regime, which it accuses of slaughtering its citizens and persecuting them.
- Jihadist media institutions that support **the Islamic State** and writers who identify with the organization publish several articles against the backdrop of the organization’s attack on the Tunisian city of Bin Kardan. Although the organization failed in its attempt to seize control of the city, the attack earns praise and encouragement to carry out more terrorist attacks on Tunisian soil.
- **The Islamic State** calls on the Sunni population in Lebanon to join its ranks, calls on the Christian population to convert to Islam, and calls on Lebanese soldiers to defect from the army. In addition, the Islamic State threatens to strike the Shi’ite Hezbollah organization and the Alawite Syrian regime.
- **The Islamic State in Caucasus Province** calls on Muslims in Russia to join its ranks. According to the organization, if one is unable to do so then he should get a weapon and attack the “infidels” throughout Russia, even using a knife.

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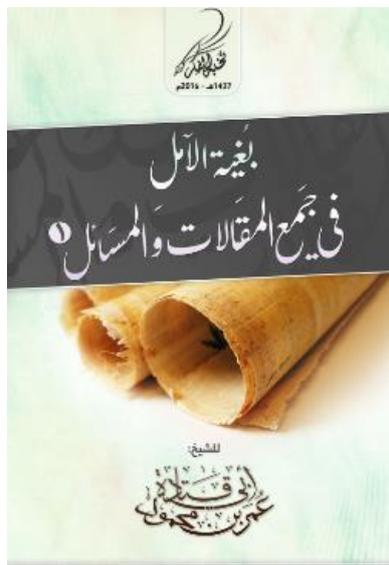
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New Publications

Ideology

- The Bushriyyat jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published a series of transcribed lectures titled, “The Muslim Reality, Crisis and Origin” (123 pp.) by Sheikh Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri, a senior strategist in Al-Qaeda. The foreword to the series stated that it was the transcript of an audio clip by al-Suri that was recorded in February 1999 in Afghanistan. The prominent themes of the lecture series were that the Muslim Nation is in a state of crisis due to the physical and mental Western invasion of Muslim lands and that the only solution lies with the sword and jihad.¹
- The Nukhbat al-Fitr jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published a collection of articles by Sheikh ‘Umar Mahmud Abu Qatada, a senior Salafi-jihadist philosopher located in Jordan. According to the group, the collection included 98 articles that Abu Qatada posted to his personal Twitter account that have not yet been released. In light of this, the author’s articles and passing thoughts were gathered together into the current collection.²



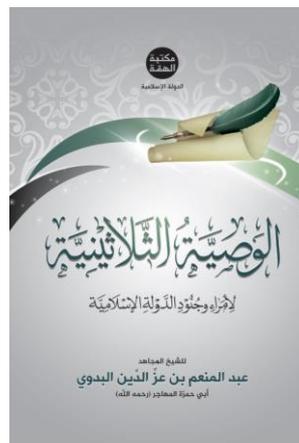
The banner page of Abu Qatada’s collection of articles

¹ <https://justpaste.it/rxij>

² <https://justpaste.it/ry0v>

- The jihadist media institution of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Malahim, published a video titled, “Standing Firm in Captivity” in the framework of the video series, “Understandings”, by Sheikh Sa’id al-Shiri, a senior member of the organization who was killed in 2013 in a US drone strike.³
- Al-Nusra Front published a book by Sheikh Abu ‘Abdallah al-Shami, a senior member of the Shura Council of Al-Nusra Front in Syria titled, “Some of the Spoils of War” (184 pp.).⁴
- Al-Himma publishing house, which belongs to the Islamic State (IS) and is involved with the publication of pamphlets and flyers concerning Islamic law, published a pamphlet titled, “30 Instructions for Islamic State Commanders and Soldiers”. The pamphlet served as a kind of guidebook for ethical behaviour and conduct in a war zone.⁵

In addition, the above-mentioned publishing house published a pocket brochure containing the fourth edition of an essay titled, “Obligations and Duties”, which is based on the sayings of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi movement. The essay detailed the principles of the Salafist Islam creed that “every Muslim must be familiar with”.⁶



The banner of the “30 Instructions for Islamic State Commanders and Soldiers” publication

³ <https://justpaste.it/mafahem-12>

⁴ <https://ia801505.us.archive.org/9/items/ghanaemdp>

⁵ <http://up.top4top.net/downloadf-60h0ap1-rar.html>

⁵ <https://goo.gl/4JKozE>

⁶ <https://goo.gl/4JKozE>

- A writer known as Gharib al-Sururiyya published an article in which he spoke out against the Sururi movement in Islam. This movement was founded by Muhammad Surur bin Zayn al-'Abedin, and combines the political outlook of the Muslim Brotherhood with the theology of Salafist Islam. In the framework of the article, the writer described the efforts made to establish the Caliphate and called on Muslims to renounce the Sururi movement that decries it. The writer ridiculed the sheikhs of the Sururi movement and claimed that they are focused on life in this world, fraternizing with the infidel leaders and speaking out against the mujahideen.⁷
- The Asawirti Media jihadist media institution, which is involved in publicity for the IS, published a video addressed to the Saudi Nation. In the video, various Saudi clerics – including Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, who served as the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia – explained that anyone who collaborates with the infidels against the Muslims is himself considered an infidel. The video also included statements made by senior Saudi government officials who expressed a willingness to fight alongside coalition forces against the IS in Syria and Iraq. The end of the video presented the conclusion according to which the Saudi army's battle alongside the United States against the Islamic State is turning it into an “infidel army”.⁸



“Takfir” of the Saudi army because of its collaboration with the United States

The Rift between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

- Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a senior leader of the Salafi-jihadist movement in Jordan, published an article in which he discussed if Islamic State fighters, nicknamed Khawarij (an early

⁷ <http://salyasayf.allahmuntada.com/t2245-topic>

⁸ <http://goo.gl/8572pc>

Muslim sect committed violence against anyone who did not accept its interpretation of Islamic holy texts) by their opponents, are infidels deserving of death and if it is permitted to help non-Muslim infidels in order to attack the Khawarij. Discussion of this issue included a comparison to the rulings of Sheikh Ibn Taymiyyah, a well-known Salafist from the 13th century AD who served as an authority for many Salafi jihadists. In al-Maqdisi's opinion, it is absolutely forbidden to help the infidels in order to strike the Khawarij since the latter are still considered Muslims and such an attack would be considered an attack on Islam. According to him, a clear distinction must be made between the ancient Khawarij and the modern-day Khawarij. In other words, the description of Khawarij in modern times requires a different interpretation. According to him, certain Muslim groups described today as Khawarij are not actually infidels, and those who describe them as such are authority figures who are doing so out of narrow self-interest and utilitarian political considerations. According to him, the Khawarij should be viewed today as those who exaggerate in their interpretations of Islamic sacred sources. Of course, this is not to say that they are blameless or are not behaving in a nefarious manner towards other Muslims. However, IS fighters described as Khawarij oppose tyrannical regimes, Shi'ites, Crusaders, have respect for previous generations of Islam (Sahaba/Companion of the Prophet) and the first four Caliphs, and "therefore, it is forbidden to compare the [Islamic] State to the first Khawarij".⁹ According to al-Maqdisi, there seems to be a significant intention to pave a bridge between Al-Qaeda and IS fighters that will lead to reconciliation between the two movements. In fact, al-Maqdisi did not slander IS fighters; he claimed that they were behaving like Muslims loyal to their religion but that their interpretation of Islamic sacred sources was exaggerated and leading to acts of violence against other Muslims.

Strategy

- Hussein bin Mahmud, a prominent writer in the jihadist discourse, published an article titled, "The Downfall of the Islamic State".¹⁰ In the framework of the article, the writer explained that, in his opinion, the IS changed its strategy following the attacks against it by coalition forces and

⁹ <https://justpaste.it/estesal>

¹⁰ <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic).

Kurdish militias in Kobane. Among the changes in strategy made by the organization, bin Mahmud included the following:

1. Avoid being in open areas during heavy bombardment
2. Open unexpected fronts to create a surprise effect
3. Open fronts that are far from one another in order to reduce the effectiveness of bombings
4. Go out to fight in small groups
5. Gain the loyalty of the tribes in Al-Anbar and Deir Ezzor Provinces
6. Operate fronts outside of Iraq and Syria (such as Egypt, Lybia, Yemen and Nigeria) in order to divert the enemy from the organization's power center
7. Carry out operations to penetrate essential infrastructure and attack high-ranking field commanders
8. Attack and retreat (*karr wa farr*) from targets with the goal of confusing the enemy
9. Lay bare, so to speak, other jihadist groups and encourage their members to swear allegiance to the Caliph

Further in the article, bin Mahmud reviewed the possible options for the IS in Syria and Iraq, discussed the interests of its various enemies, and explained why the IS poses a threat to them. In addition, bin Mahmud called on Al-Qaeda to join forces with the IS and renounce the allies who are keeping ties with the Shi'ites and Christians. Bin Mahmud concluded his article by stating that even if the IS has suffered a military loss or lost territory, it has not been defeated since it managed to revive the concept of the Caliphate and spread it among Muslims throughout the worlds.

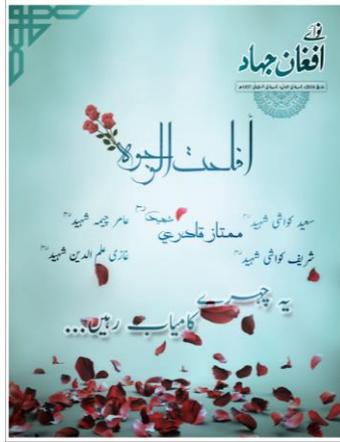
Promoting the Myth of the Martyr

- Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen published a video titled, "From Memory – Part 18", which documented a suicide attack that was carried out by one of its field commanders named Abu Salim, who praised the martyr's death and the commandment for jihad before embarking on his mission.¹¹

¹¹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

Magazines

- The Taliban in Afghanistan published the March 2016 issue of its Urdu-language magazine, *Al-Nawai*.¹²



The issue banner

- The Islamic State published issues no. 20-22 of the periodical, *Al-Naba*, which reviewed the organization’s operations in the various provinces under its control.¹³



From left to right: A review of the outcomes of the battle at the Kwayrs Air Base; The banner of issue no.22

¹² <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹³ <https://ia601501.us.archive.org/3/items/naba20/>

- Issues no. 6-7 of the Palestinian jihadist magazine, *Al-Masra*, were published. The issues included a review of the jihad arenas in which Al-Qaeda operates, articles about senior Al-Qaeda officials and its branches, and more.¹⁴



Banners of issues 6-7

Reports from the Field

Afghanistan-Pakistan

The month of March 2016 opened with the refusal of the Taliban in Afghanistan to take part in peace talks with the Kabul government until the withdrawal of foreign forces and the release of Taliban fighters held in prison.¹⁵ Meanwhile, clashes continued between Taliban fighters and security forces in Afghanistan, mainly in Helmand Province.¹⁶ In addition, Taliban fighters seized control of an army base in Paktia Province after security forces retreated from there. This was the third base that the organization managed to takeover in the last month¹⁷. Meanwhile, on March 6, the President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, claimed that Afghan security forces had defeated IS

¹⁴ <https://ia601509.us.archive.org/34/items>

¹⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/afghan-talks-taliban-refuses-participate-160305135801134.html> (English).

¹⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/deaths-taliban-hit-government-offices-afghanistan-160309135629668.html> (English).

¹⁷ <http://goo.gl/ECZDQo>

supporters in Nangarhar Province, in eastern Afghanistan, following 21 days of fighting.¹⁸ Meanwhile, in Pakistan, a Taliban in Pakistan faction claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in the northwest part of the country.¹⁹

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan published the following:
 - An announcement regarding the non-participation by an IS delegation in the upcoming meetings of the four countries that compose the QCG (quadrilateral coordinating group – United States, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan – which met in order to bring about reconciliation talks in Afghanistan), contrary to the rumors being spread about it in the media. The announcement also stated that, as the Islamic Emirate explained in the Pugwash Council, until the US withdraws from Afghanistan, the blacklist against members of the organization are cancelled, and IS prisoners are released from jail, the negotiations will remain fruitless. At the end of the announcement, the organization called on the media to stop publishing false articles and to refer to it as the Islamic Emirate.²⁰
 - An announcement by a spokesman on behalf of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, Qari Muhammad Yousuf Ahmadi, regarding the organization’s clashes in Shindand, in Herat Province. The announcement stated that, contrary to what is being published by the media, the clashes between IS and local fighters backed by the Kabul government lasted only one day, and that the latter suffered heavy losses and fled the battleground. The announcement also stated that the Shindand region was now under the control of the mujahideen and that only three mujahideen had been killed, in contrast to what the media reported.²¹

¹⁸<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/isis-ashraf-ghani-defeated-eastern-afghanistan-160306093417163.html> (English).

¹⁹<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/deadly-suicide-attack-pakistan-160307071035486.html> (English).

²⁰<http://shahamat-english.com/statement-concerning-the-non-participation-by-islamic-emirate-in-upcoming-qcg-meetings> (English).

²¹<http://shahamat-english.com/remarks-by-spokesman-of-islamic-emirate-concerning-shindand-clashes/> (English).

The Arabian Peninsula

Against the backdrop of the success of the Arab coalition, led by Saudi Arabia, in attacking the power base of Houthi militias recently in Ta'iz,²² there are those among the coalition members who called for turning their weapons against AQAP fighters due to the group's increased power as a result of the civil war in Yemen. On March 13, for example, 17 AQAP fighters were killed in an air strike by coalition forces in the city of Al-Mansoura in southern Yemen. In addition, fierce battles erupted between AQAP fighters and coalition forces in the city of Aden in southern Yemen.²³

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

- Ansar al-Sharia, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), published the following:
 - Ansar al-Sharia's news agency, Al-Athir, published a video about the assistance provided by the organization's fighters to Ibn Sina Hospital in Al-Mukala.²⁴
 - Photos showing the various activities carried out by members of the organization, such as the distribution of gifts to contractor workers at hospitals in Hadramawt, the burning of music cassettes in the city of Al-Mukala, road repair,²⁵ a conference on the topic of liberating Al-Aqsa Mosque under the title, "Al-Aqsa, We Are Coming",²⁶ and more.



Ansar al-Sharia members giving monetary gifts to a hospital contractor worker

²² <http://www.addiyar.com/article/1140893-اليمن--17-قتيلا-من-القاعدة-في-عدن-ومعارك-طاحنة-في-مدينة-تعز>

²³ <http://www.alarab.co.uk/?id=75372>

²⁴ <https://justpaste.it/AidSinaHos>

²⁵ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

²⁶ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

- A video showing Houthi prisoners who were taken captive by the organization confessing to committing acts against the Sunni residents of Yemen.²⁷
- A denial of involvement in an attack at a guest house and the murder of Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-'Adnani in Aden Province.²⁸
- A denial of involvement in the plundering of a car or apartment from the Hail Sa'id family home in Ta'iz Province.²⁹

Iraq

During the first half of March, clashes continued between the Iraqi army and Shi'ite militias, and the Islamic State in Al-Anbar Province, mainly near the city of Al-Ramadi. The IS continued to carry out attacks against army and security forces positions near Al-Ramadi while the army continued its efforts to purge the area of IS fighters.³⁰ In addition, battles continued between the IS and the Iraqi army in Al-Fallujah, which is located in Al-Anbar Province, in the framework of the army's efforts to surround the city in order to free it from the IS.³¹ Moreover, IS attacks continued against security forces and the Shi'ite population in and around Baghdad. In this framework, a car bomb exploded at a checkpoint in the city of Hilla, south of Baghdad, and killed at least 60 people.³² Meanwhile, the Iraqi army planned to liberate the city of Mosul from IS control.³³ There are those who claim that the series of IS attacks in Baghdad requiring an army presence is delaying the assault on the city of Mosul.³⁴

The Islamic State

²⁷ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

²⁸ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

²⁹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

³⁰ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/isis-attack-kills-22-iraqi-army-soldiers-ramadi-160314082417532.html> (English).

³¹ <http://goo.gl/2m6pdR>

³² <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/60-killed-iraqi-suicide-bombing-160306132812862.html> (English).

³³ <http://goo.gl/QPPFXC>

³⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/iraqi-assault-retake-mosul-isil-months-160306095542481.html> (English).

- The media departments of the various provinces of the Islamic State in Iraq published a wide range of videos and filmed reviews, which dealt with the following issues:

A. Battles and Military Deployment:

- Nineveh Province: A review on the topic of the province’s “Air Defense” Battalion. The photos showed battalion fighters trying to strike coalition forces and Iraqi army aircraft.³⁵



The Islamic State’s Air Defense Battalion in Nineveh Province

- Fallujah Province: A review about the battles in Al-Subayhat³⁶ and Al-Abbadi,³⁷ north of Fallujah.
- Saladdin Province: A review about three suicide terrorists who carried out suicide attacks against the Iraqi army on the Haditha-Baiji Road.³⁸
- Kirkuk Province: A review about the firing of SPG9 rockets towards Iraqi army outposts in the Allas oil field.³⁹

B. Executions:

- Al-Furat Province: A video regarding the execution of three people who were accused of collaborating with the Iraqi government. The three were

³⁵ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24386>

³⁶ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25752>

³⁷ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24243>

³⁸ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24805>

³⁹ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24486>

executed by beheading while bound to horses on which the executioners were riding. The video ended with a call on all spies “to repent”.⁴⁰



Using horses in the framework of an execution

- *Dijla Province*: A video regarding the execution of several people accused of committing acts against the Islamic State, including gathering information and spying or setting alight the organization’s information stands.⁴¹
- *Diyala Province*: Reviews regarding the execution of people accused of spying for the Iraqi government, one of whom was even accused of “witchcraft”.⁴²

C. Civil Matters:

- *Nineveh Province*: A review regarding activities of the traffic police, which included not only directing traffic but issuing license plates and registering vehicles as well.⁴³ Another review dealt with the topic of strengthening the children of Mosul;⁴⁴ a video about two orphanages run by the Zakat and Alma Office. A representative of the office explained that the office staff was not only taking care of providing food and clothing for the orphans but was also holding lectures on religion and

⁴⁰ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25713>

⁴¹ <https://issdarat.wordpress.com/2016/03/09/qatelloo/>

⁴² <http://dabiqnews.gq/24388>; <http://dabiqnews.gq/25664>

⁴³ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25750>

⁴⁴ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24900>

shari'a. In addition, the end of the video showed the orphans dressed in army uniforms conducting physical training.⁴⁵



Training at an orphanage in Nineveh Province

- *Dijla Province*: Reviews regarding the destruction of cigarettes and expired goods by members of the Hisbah (an Islamic body responsible for maintaining morality and public order).⁴⁶

Al-Sham [The Levant]

The month of March marked the fifth year since the civil war erupted in Syria, an event that was noted by Syrian exiles around the world.⁴⁷ Despite the passage of years, even this month did not see a decrease in the level of violence in the country, and battles between the various factions took place in several areas of the country: regime forces attacked opposition forces in northwest Syria, the Free Syrian Army seized control of the border crossing between Syria and Iraq following heavy battles against the IS, and Al-Nusra Front carried out a surprise attack against Division 13 of the Free Syrian Army in Idlib Province.⁴⁸

A prominent news item was published by the Syrian SOHR organization regarding reports of the injury or death of Abu Umar al-Shishani, the Islamic State's "Minister of War", in a recent US air

⁴⁵ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24686>

⁴⁶ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25333>; <http://dabiqnews.gq/25334>

⁴⁷ <http://goo.gl/ohK7gi>

⁴⁸ <http://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARAKCNOW41AS>;
<http://goo.gl/7NsEod>; <http://www.enabbaladi.org/archives/69117>

strike.⁴⁹ If the news item was, in fact, accurate then it constitutes another loss for the organization in the month of March, as there were reports that 20 fighters were killed in Tadmor in a Syrian and Russian bombardment, as well as the killing of the organization's leader in Homs Province.⁵⁰

The first half of the month concluded with the start of Russian forces' withdrawal from Syria, against the backdrop of the surprising declaration by Russian President Vladimir Putin. According to the message from the Kremlin, it was decided to withdraw the majority of the Russian Air Force from Syria following a discussion held between the presidents of the two countries.⁵¹

Syria

Al-Nusra Front

- Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria, published the following:
 - An announcement regarding the attack carried out by the "Farqa 30" group against the bases and homes of Al-Nusra Front fighters in the city of Maarrat Al-Nu'man in Idlib Province. The announcement stated that Al-Nusra Front did not know the reason for the attack and called on fighters to turn their weapons against the alliance of the Alawite regime, Shi'ites and Russians.⁵²
 - An announcement regarding the organization's conflict with the "Farqa 30" group, which belongs to the Free Syrian Army, in Idlib Province. In the announcement, the organization called for the establishment of an independent shari'a court to settle the conflict between the two sides. In addition, the organization declared its commitment to abide by whatever judgement the court decides and suggested three of its members to take part in its establishment: Sheikh 'Abd al-Razaq Mahdi, Sheikh Abu al-Harith al-Masri and Sheikh Abdullah al-Muhaysini.⁵³
 - A call to bring to trial in a shari'a court those who incited the conflict between "Farqa 30" and Al-Nusra Front in Idlib Province. The announcement also stated that the

⁴⁹ <https://goo.gl/JysKzz>

⁵⁰ <http://goo.gl/zA7MRj>; <http://goo.gl/KIUz67>

⁵¹ http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2016/03/160314_russia_putin_syria_forces;
<http://goo.gl/ibMQoS>

⁵² <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CdXgkoFW8AA88Do.jpg>

⁵³ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CddEgE4WAAA3Rx.jpg>

organization called on its members to show restraint and tolerance, and added that the only one to gain from the conflict is the Alawite regime. At the end of the announcement, the organization called to continue the goal of jihad in Syria as it constitutes the implementation of shari'a.⁵⁴ In this context, the Association of Scholars in Sham –Rabitat Ahl al-Ilm Fi al-Sham published an announcement in which it called for a solution to the conflict between Al-Nusra Front and “Farqa 30”, and added that the shari'a court that was established represents the association's position on the matter.⁵⁵

- Al-Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham and Fajr al-Umma declared the establishment of a new umbrella organization called Al-Fusat Army in eastern Al-Ghawta. The announcement stated that the umbrella organization was establishment with the goal to free Damascus from the Alawites.⁵⁶



The logo of Al-Fustat Army

- Sheikh Dr. Abdallah al-Muhasayni, a Salafi-jihadist philosopher who supports Al-Nusra Front, posted to his Twitter account a dream that he had dreamt about Russian involvement in Syria. It should be noted that many Muslims attribute great importance to dreams and their interpretation. Al-Muhasayni wrote that in his dream he saw himself swimming in a river in Syria when he suddenly encountered a huge crocodile. According to him, the crocodile was killed in the end after being shot in his tail and was removed from the river. According to al-Muhasayni's interpretation, the crocodile in the dream represented the Russians who withdrew from Syria as a result of divine intervention.⁵⁷ In other tweets posted by al-Muhasayni to his

⁵⁴ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CdhvGUOUkAA9xoY.jpg>

⁵⁵ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CdnMVqNUAATuiX.jpg>

⁵⁶ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁵⁷ <https://twitter.com/muslmmuohd1/status/709452046718640128>

Twitter account, he called on Palestinians in Israel to continue the wave of stabbings against Jews and praised them for it.⁵⁸ In addition, he published a collection of tweets to mark five years since the national uprising in Syria and called to continue the armed struggle against the Syrian Alawite regime.⁵⁹

Ahrar al-Sham

- Ahrar al-Sham published an announcement regarding the demonstration held by activists and media professionals against the regime in Idlib. According to the announcement, it was another Syrian faction and not Ahrar al-Sham that took part in suppressing the demonstration, and the organization even called for the release of the protesters who were arrested. At the end of the announcement, the organization called on all factions to show restraint and to turn their weapons against the Alawite regime.⁶⁰

The Islamic State

- The media departments of the various provinces of the Islamic State in Iraq published a wide range of videos and filmed reviews, which dealt with the following issues:
 - D. Battles and Military Deployment:
 - *Al-Khayr Province*: A video regarding the battles in Al-Bughayliyya and the Ayyash warehouses against Syrian army forces and Russian Air Force planes. In summarizing the operation, it was reported that Syrian army forces and militias had registered approximately 400 dead or wounded and 100 prisoners. The bounty that was plundered included four tanks, ten BMP armored vehicles, 7,000 shells and missiles (some anti-tank) and a great deal of ammunition.⁶¹

⁵⁸ See the collection of tweets on this topic: <https://justpaste.it/mhesny106>

⁵⁹ <https://justpaste.it/Renewalofthecovenant>

⁶⁰ <https://twitter.com/knaan77r/status/706963072041279488>

⁶¹ <http://dabiqnews.gq/26120>

- *Aleppo Province*: A review regarding the battles that took place in Kweiris Airbase, which included machine gun fire and mortar bomb fire.⁶² The province also published a review of the weapons and ammunition that was plundered following battles south of Khanaser;⁶³ a review regarding Ribat (defense of Muslim land) by IS fighters in northern Aleppo near the border with Turkey.⁶⁴
- *Raqqaqah Province*: A claim of responsibility for a suicide attack against PKK forces west of Jabal Abd al-Aziz.⁶⁵
- *Damascus Province*: A video regarding battles against the Syrian army in the province, which included the dispatching of suicide terrorists and an attack on the Syrian army headquarters in the town of Hawarin.⁶⁶

B. Executions:

- *Al-Khayr Province*: A video titled, “Flight will not avail you”. The video showed two people who were accused of passing information about the IS to agents with whom they communicated via the Internet. According to the confessions of the accused, the agents were especially interested in the organization’s channels of financing, its treatment of the population, and the integration between residents and migrants working nearby. The two men were executed in the explosion of the building in which they were confined using a large amount of explosive material.⁶⁷
- *Aleppo Province*: A filmed review regarding the execution of two people accused of supporting the Syrian regime and fighting against the IS.⁶⁸

C. Oaths of Allegiance:

⁶² <http://dabiqnews.gq/25998>

⁶³ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24168>

⁶⁴ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24245>

⁶⁵ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25189>

⁶⁶ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25560>

⁶⁷ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25417>

⁶⁸ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25335>

- Aleppo Province: Filmed reviews regarding the oath of allegiance to the IS Caliph taken by residents of the Al-Bukhar and Al-Shakhir villages.⁶⁹

D. Civilian Issues:

- Raqqaqah Province: A review regarding the activities of the Parks Department, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Services in Raqqaqah. The review showed that the department is responsible for cultivating the public gardens in the city and for the periodic maintenance of children’s playgrounds in the parks;⁷⁰ a review regarding the center for dairy production and a factory for the production of household goods in the province.⁷¹
- Homs Province: A video regarding the activities of the Zakat Department in the province, which deals with registering the money and assets of wealthy persons and making sure that some of it is allocated to the needy.⁷²

E. Propaganda and Publicity:

- Raqqaqah Province: A video titled, “Oh Descendants of Friends of the Prophet in Lebanon”, which incited against the Shi’ite Hezbollah and the Alawite Syrian regime. Following a historical introduction about the Sunni-Shi’ite split in Lebanon, two militants (one of them Lebanese in origin) appeared in the video and addressed the Sunni population in Lebanon, and called on them to join the ranks of the IS. Other messages included threats against the Lebanese leadership, a call on Christians in Lebanon to convert to Islam, and encouragement for Lebanese army soldiers to defect.⁷³

⁶⁹ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24317>; <http://dabiqnews.gq/24675>

⁷⁰ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24488>

⁷¹ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25796>; <http://dabiqnews.gq/25118>

⁷² <http://dabiqnews.gq/24172>

⁷³ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25568>



The Islamic State appeals to the Sunni population in Lebanon

- Raqqa Province: A review regarding the opening of IS informational stands in the province, including the installation of seats and a roof.⁷⁴
- Damascus Province: A review regarding the distribution of dawah pamphlets in Al-Yarmuk camp.⁷⁵

Other Jihadist Organizations

- The Shura Council of the Army of Muhammad published the unanimous decision made by its members to appoint Sheikh Abu 'Ubaydha al-Muhajir as the leader of the organization. In the framework of his role, he will be responsible for the military, administrative and financial areas of the organization, and all members of the organization must obey him.⁷⁶
- The Ansar al-Din Front conducted an interview with Dr. 'Abdallah al-Shami, the leader of the Islamic Fajr al-Sham movement, regarding negotiations between the Syrian regime and the Syrian opposition, which began on January 25, 2016 under the auspices of the United Nations. According to al-Shami, the proposed wording on the negotiating table is wrong because it seeks the reinstatement of the Syrian regime and the rehabilitation of its institutions, especially its army and security forces. He added that, since the international system has blatantly intervened in Syria's internal affairs for the last five years, "it is clear to us that we are facing dictates imposed on the Syrian people and its jihadist vanguard by the international system". In light of this, the Syrian people must be patient and maintain unity of the ranks until Syria is released from the control of the Alawites and their supporters. He emphasized that strengthening the

⁷⁴ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25755>

⁷⁵ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25119>

⁷⁶ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

regime in any way will lead to another massacre of Syria’s Sunni residents as occurred in the 1982 massacre in Aleppo. Therefore, the only guaranteed way to free Syria is through unity of the ranks and continued battle until victory.⁷⁷

- The Turkestan Islamic Party in Al-Sham published a video titled, “A Call from the Frontlines of Jihad – Part 11”.⁷⁸
- Ansar al-Islam in Al-Sham published a video titled, “The Abu al-Darda Military Camp”.⁷⁹



From left to right: the video banner; a clip from the video

- Al-Muhajirun, a Salafi-jihadist organization, published a collection of answers to questions in English about migration, jihad, living conditions in Syria, and more. For example, the organization responded that it receives fighters who join its ranks from Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Egypt. According to the organization, there is also a large number of migrants from East Turkestan, Turkey and Uzbekistan as well as migrants from Europe and other countries such as the Maldives. In response to another question, the organization responded that it recommends to volunteers in Europe to migrate to the ranks of the organization together with their wives so as not to leave them under the damaging influence of non-Muslims. Nevertheless, female volunteers must take into account the difficulties they will be forced to cope with by moving to Syria. To another question, the organization responded that, practically speaking, it is preferable for migrants to come with a cash supply since reality proves that every individual needs to support himself and his personal needs: “Therefore, we advise single people to bring with them enough money to last for a period of six months to a year. In general, \$50

⁷⁷ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb/> (Arabic).

⁷⁸ <http://ia801506.us.archive.org/33/items/sadaa-11/>

⁷⁹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb/> (Arabic).

provides for a mujahid for a period of one month. It is best for a mujahid to purchase a weapon so as not to place a burden on his comrades, and to contribute his life and his property to jihad. The average sum is estimated at \$1,000". According to the organization, a married mujahid who migrates together with his family will need to make sure to provide for them and then he will receive a monthly sum to help with his expenses. Therefore, it is recommended that married mujahideen who migrate with their family members bring an amount of approximately \$200 per month, plus another \$1500 to enable him to purchase a weapon, a house and a motorcycle. It is preferable that he bring enough money with him to last for two years.⁸⁰



The publication banner

The Sinai Peninsula

The Egyptian army continued its efforts to eliminate terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula, and to locate and dismantle terror cells in Egypt during the first half of March 2016. For example, the Egyptian army killed three members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in northern Sinai as they were trying to plant a roadside bomb.⁸¹ In addition, Egyptian security forces agencies reported that they captured two members of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis in Al-Manūfiyya. During interrogation, the two men noted that they had fled from Sinai to Al-Manūfiyya due to army operations in the area.⁸²

In addition to the military aspect of the war on terror in Sinai, the Egyptian regime allocated an enormous amount of money to develop the infrastructure and economy of the Sinai Peninsula in

⁸⁰ <https://almuhajirunblog.wordpress.com>

⁸¹ <http://akhbarelyom.com/article/56ddece99e7873322971b13c/-/تصفية-3-من-أنصار-بيت-المقدس-بوسط-سيناء->
1457384681

⁸² <http://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/1015237>

order to improve the socio-economic situation of its residents and reduce antagonism towards the regime.⁸³

Africa

The Maghreb

The battle against the Islamic State in Libya continued. After over two years of intense battles between the IS and Libyan army forces with the goal of taking control of Benghazi, the latter managed to restore stability in the city in eastern Libya.⁸⁴ On the other hand, the annual report of the UN Security Council reported the Islamic State's expansion in Libya, with new fighters joining the organization, especially from Sudan, Turkey and Tunisia.⁸⁵

Despite, or perhaps because of, the tightening ring around the IS in Libya, the organization tried to carry out a large-scale attack in the city of Ben Gardane in Tunisia near the Libyan border. The attempt to take control of the city failed but the scale and timing of the attack raised questions regarding Tunisia's readiness to face the threat posed by its eastern neighbor.⁸⁶ As a result of the attack, Tunisia announced that it was imposing a curfew in the city, immediately closing the border with Libya and firing the Deputy Governor of the province.⁸⁷

In light of the unstable security situation in Tunisia and Libya, Morocco continued its counterterrorism efforts. Among other things, close security cooperation was reported between Morocco, France, Belgium and Germany,⁸⁸ and local authorities were reported to have dismantles a terror cell composed of five terrorists who planned to join the IS in Libya and even planned terrorist attacks in Morocco.⁸⁹

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) claimed responsibility for a terrorist attack that three of its members carried out at the Grand Bassam tourist resort in Abidjan in Ivory Coast. The

⁸³ <http://www2.el-balad.com/2046337>

⁸⁴ <http://arabic.cnn.com/world/2016/03/05/end-isis-libya> (English).

⁸⁵ <https://goo.gl/J7YPeD>

⁸⁶ <http://goo.gl/drVwLq>

⁸⁷ <http://goo.gl/Uc6NaJ>; <http://goo.gl/PIMWcA>; <http://goo.gl/WrKO2D>

⁸⁸ <http://www.elhadas.com/arabic/86308.html>; <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=492468>; <http://goo.gl/kWWSXL>

⁸⁹ <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=219727>

announcement included the names of the three terrorists and detailed the goals of the attack: a response against “Crusader” attacks on Muslims, a warning to Ivory Coast not to cooperate with France, a call on countries involved in the French invasion of Mali to retreat, and revenge on behalf of the mujahideen recently killed by France as well as those who were extradited by Ivory Coast to Mali. The announcement ended with a call on Muslims to distance themselves from the “dens of espionage and conspiracies”, lest any harm come to them.⁹⁰

Libya

Ansar al-Sharia in Libya

- Ansar al-Sharia in Libya published the following:
 - A collection of graphic-designed posters, including claims of reports about the organization’s various operations against the Libyan National Army, such as: the destruction of a BMP armored vehicle and tank, artillery fire from a 155 mm. cannon, and sniper fire aimed at Haftar’s soldiers. The announcement included a summary of the losses and damage suffered by Haftar’s forces at the end of February.⁹¹



⁹⁰ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁹¹ <https://twitter.com/athirmadina2/status/705106442521604096>;
https://twitter.com/Hm_alraya10/status/705120602269597696;
<https://twitter.com/athirmadina2/status/707636383180005377>;
https://twitter.com/Hm_alraya10/status/708996713911029760;
<https://twitter.com/athirmadina2/status/704781407688769536>

Ansar al-Sharia in Libya – report of operations using designed posters

- An announcement regarding an attack on a gathering of Libyan army soldiers in Talhiyya, in Benghazi, using mortar fire. It should be noted that the attack was preceded by the gathering of intelligence using a skimmer drone.⁹²
- A claim of responsibility for an attack against the Libyan army in western Benghazi.⁹³

The Islamic State – Tripoli

- The IS in Tripoli published the following:
 - A video titled, “Messages to Benghazi” regarding the execution of two Libyan National Army soldiers under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. Throughout most of the video, an IS fighter made threats against Haftar’s soldiers and allies.⁹⁴
 - A filmed review regarding a dawah meeting in the city of Sirte attended by both adults and children.⁹⁵

The Islamic State – Barqa Province

- The IS in Barqa Province published the following:
 - A filmed review regarding battles with the Libyan army and Sahawat in the city of Benghazi. The battles were focused in Al-Harawi area and included exchanges of fire, the launching of mortar bombs and the dispatching of a suicide terrorist to a gathering of Libyan army soldiers.⁹⁶
 - A filmed review regarding Ribat by the “Caliphate soldiers” in the area of Al-Sidra. The photos showed the fighters conducting surveillance over Libyan army forces.⁹⁷

⁹² <https://twitter.com/athirmadina2/status/708327685433520128>

⁹³ https://twitter.com/Hm_alraya10/status/708758990113644544

⁹⁴ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25993>

⁹⁵ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24247>

⁹⁶ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24228>

⁹⁷ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24873>



A skimmer drone photograph of the battles in the area of Benghazi

The Islamic State – Fezzan Province

- The IS in Fezzan Province published a claim of responsibility for an ambush of a Libyan National Army (Haftar’s forces) portal on the road connecting Mezda and Al-Garyat. The announcement stated that several soldiers were killed in the attack and one commander was taken captive, while weapons, ammunition and vehicles were taken as plunder.⁹⁸

Tunisia

- Several IS supporters published articles regarding the organization’s operations in Tunisia, which were gathered on Twitter under the hashtag “Cast Terror on the Tyrants of Tunisia”. The articles included encouragement for jihad activities in Tunisia against the authorities alongside calls “to behead every Crusader or Jew” as they are currently considered enemies and not *dhimmis*. Other articles included words of encouragement and praise for the organization’s incursion into the coastal city of Ben Gardane, which is located next to the Libyan border. This attempted incursion also ended in failure since the organization did not manage to conquer the city.⁹⁹ It should be noted that the organization did not claim responsibility for the attack on its official media institutions but semi-official media institutions, such as Al-Battar, attributed the attack to the organization¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ <http://dabiqnews.gq/25855>

⁹⁹ <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).



A series of articles praising jihad in Tunisia

Mali

Al-Murabitun

- A video titled, “The Scholars are the Heirs to the Prophets” in the framework of a series of lectures titled, “The Path to the Islamic Revolution to Impose Islamic Shari’a 1” by Abu ‘Umar al-Muhajir al-Misri (Hisahm ak-‘Ashmawi), the leader of the organization. According to al-Misri, clerics bear the responsibility for guiding Muslims and it is their duty to awaken Muslims to the injustices perpetrated by tyrant regimes operating contrary to shari’a, such as the Egyptian regime. According to al-Misri, clerics must assist in publicity for the mujahideen and not fear the regime.¹⁰¹

Ansar al-Din

- The jihadist media institution of Ansar al-Din, Al-Ramah, published the following:
 - A claim of responsibility for four military operations that members of the organization carried out against international forces in northern Mali using a car bomb and mortar fire, as well as against the Mali army. According to the organization, it is an ongoing war against the Crusaders and their supporters.¹⁰²
 - A claim of responsibility for a rocket attack on a convoy of French vehicles on March 8, 60 kilometers east of the city of Kidal.¹⁰³
 - A translation to Tuareg of an audio clip titled, “The Word of God” by Sheikh Harith bin Ghazi al-Nadhari, a senior leader of AQAP who was killed in January 2015 in an American

¹⁰¹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰² <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰³ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

drone strike. The audio clip was translated by Sheikh Abu al-Fasal Iyad Ag Ghaly, the leader of Ansar al-Din.¹⁰⁴



The publication banner, from left: Sheikh Abu al-Fasal Iyad Ag Ghaly, Sheikh Harith bin Ghazi al-Nadhari

Somalia

During the first half of March, clashes continued between Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen, and security forces and African Union forces operating in Somalia. On the one hand, Al-Shabab fighters seized control of Garad port in Puntland Province, in northeast Somalia.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the organization claimed responsibility for a car bomb explosion at a police station in the capital of Somalia, Mogadishu.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, the United States bombarded an Al-Shabab training camp in Somalia in the beginning of the month and killed at least 150 Al-Shabab fighters.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, a court in Somalia sentenced to death an Al-Shabab fighter who took part in the assassination of journalists over the last nine years.¹⁰⁸

Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen

- A spokesman for Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen, Abd al-Aziz Abu Mus'ab, claimed that the United States had exaggerated its report of the number of Al-Shabab terrorists killed in its bombing of the organization's training camp. In addition, he claimed that the organization never assembles

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰⁵ <http://goo.gl/wH5UaS>

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/somalia-mogadishu-car-bombing-160309051433825.html> (English).

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/drone-strike-somalia-kills-150-fighters-160307170607675.html> (English).

¹⁰⁸ <http://goo.gl/V2Svup>

more than 100 fighters in one place for security reasons. He confirmed that the attack by the US did take place where the report said it did, but claimed that the number of casualties that was reported was a lie.¹⁰⁹

- The governor of Al-Shabab in the Hiiraan region in southern Somalia, Mohammad Mir, denied that he was killed in a US attack on the organization’s training base.¹¹⁰

The Caucasus

- The Islamic State in the Caucasus Province published a video about a suicide attack that the organization carried out against a police barrier in the city of Derbent in southern Dagestan in February 2016. The video showed a terrorist named Abu Yaser who was presented as the deputy head of the province, and a terrorist named Abu Abdullah who was presented as Emir of the region. Abu Yaser called on Muslims in Russia to join the ranks of its fighters and, if that is not possible, to get a weapon and attack “infidels” throughout Russia, even using a knife or rope. The end of the video presented the will of the suicide terrorist who carried out the attack as well as the recording of the execution of a man described as “a Russian intelligence agent”.¹¹¹



The IS deputy head of the Caucasus Province

The Indian Subcontinent

- Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent published the following:

¹⁰⁹ <http://goo.gl/QQoRdI>

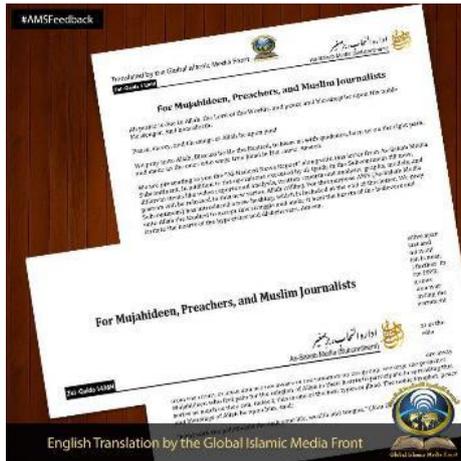
¹¹⁰ <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1089389.html>; <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/al-shabab-denies-top-leaders-killed-air-strikes-160310165209732.html>

¹¹¹ <http://dabiqnews.gq/24891>

- A video titled, “The Call to Faith: The Struggle of Sheikh Osama” The video dealt with the “crimes” of the Pakistani regime against its people, especially in the Waziristan region, and called on Muslims to embrace jihad against the incumbent regime.¹¹²
- An announcement about the launch of new series of publications titled, “Al-Hadeed News Report”, to include various items, such as videos, analyses, reports, graphs, posters and more, that will deal with news related to the organization’s fighters and their battle against their enemies. According to the organization, a new hashtag (#AMS_AIHadeed) was launched for this purpose. In addition to this announcement, the organization published a letter addressed to the mujahideen, preachers and Muslim journalists about the difficult reality in which Muslims are living under the Pakistani regime. According to the organization, victory is guaranteed for all lovers of shari’a and the banner of the oneness of god will be waved in the end over Islamabad, Delhi, Dhaka, Burma and other places. The army, regime, media and other bodies in Pakistan have declared war on shari’a and are pretending to be waging a justified war against the mujahideen. However, in reality the picture is different. In order to correctly present the reality and the truth, through the continuous defeat of the powers fighting against shari’a, Al-Sahab media institution (which represents Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent) decided to launch a new publication titled, “Al-Hadeed News Report”. The organization called on Muslim journalists to do some soul-searching about their false reporting in favor of the Pakistani regime, and to return to the correct path.¹¹³

¹¹² <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹³ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).



The English translation of the announcement banner

- The first video in a series of publications titled, “Al-Hadeed News Report”. The video included interviews with senior leaders of the organization about “war crimes” committed by the Pakistani regime against Muslims and a call on Muslims to embrace jihad as the only way to overthrow the regime.¹¹⁴ In another video, the organization addressed the tarnished image of the Pakistani police,¹¹⁵ and another video presented the organization as defenders of Sunnis.¹¹⁶



The banner of Al-Hadeed News Report

Miscellaneous

¹¹⁴ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁵ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁶ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

- Al-Fajr Technical Committee, a cyber group dedicated to the development of security and communications tools for jihadists, announced the launch of a Web site that will enable a more secure way to send and publish messages on Twitter and other interfaces on the Internet at the following address: <http://www.fajrtagnipastemaker.net>.¹¹⁷



The banner of the Web site launch

- The Muassat al-Nukhba lil-'Ilam jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, announced the opening of a new account on the social network, Twitter, after its previous account was closed by the Twitter administration. The account includes articles, statements and other propaganda materials for Al-Qaeda.¹¹⁸



The banner of the media group's Twitter account

¹¹⁷ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/massagesnokbah/status/708081492954628096>

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