



ICT
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ICT Jihadi Monitoring Group **PERIODIC REVIEW**

Bimonthly Report

Summary of Information on Jihadist Websites

The Second Half of March 2016

Highlights

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

- **The Islamic State** claims responsibility for terrorist attacks that its members carried out in Brussels and justifies their execution on Belgian soil by claiming that Belgium is a Crusader country that is fighting against Muslims. The attacks ignite a wave of publications and discourse on social networks among Islamic State fighters who call for the continuation of terrorist attacks against France, Belgium and other European countries, such as England.
- **Sheikh Dr. Hani al-Siba'i**, a senior Salafi-jihadist proponent, hurls harsh criticism against two Kuwaiti Salafi-jihadist preachers, **Sheikh Muhammd al-Hasam** and **Sheikh Jabir al-Jalahimah**, for demanding that **Ayman al-Zawahiri** dismantle Al-Qaeda as it does not contribute to the interest of the Muslim Nation and it harms the efforts of jihadist factions in Syria to topple Assad's regime. According to al-Siba'i, Al-Qaeda is more crucial than ever before, operates in an orderly and rational fashion, and receives widespread support.
- **Saad bin 'Atif al-'Awlaqi**, a senior **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** leader, condemns the US air strike against a training camp in western Mukala. According to him, the US misidentified the camp and attacked it thinking that it was an Al-Qaeda camp while it was actually a training camp for Yemeni volunteers who wanted to fight against the Houthis. According to him, every Muslim has the duty to fight against the Americans, the Houthis and their allies.
- **Al-Nusra Front** praises jihad fighters and rebel factions to mark the five-year anniversary of the outbreak of the revolution against the Bashar al-Assad regime. **Abu Mohammad al-Julani**, the leader of the organization, notes that Syria has entered a new phase, heralding victory among the rebels. In addition, Al-Nusra Front publishes a propaganda video starring several Al-Nusra Front leaders, for some of whom this was their first public appearance, in praise of the continued war of jihad in Syria and addressing international involvement the war in Syria.
- Islamic rebel factions in Syria praise Russia's withdrawal but emphasize that the overthrow of the Assad regime and the implementation of Islamic rule in Syria remain unchanged. **Abu Yahia al-Hamawi**, the leader of **Ahrar al-Sham**, emphasizes that Russia cannot impose a political

solution on the Syrian regime and that his organization will not agree to the division of Syria.

- **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)** claims responsibility for launching an RPG at a structure belonging to the British Petroleum company and the Norwegian Statoil company. According to the organization, the rocket was launched in order to send a threatening message to foreign companies operating in Algeria.

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New Publications

Ideology

- Sheikh Dr. Hani al-Siba'i, a senior Salafi-jihadist proponent, criticized a letter written by two Kuwaiti preachers loyal to the Salafi-jihadist movement, Sheikh Muhammad al-Hasam and Sheikh Jabir al-Jalahimah, which criticized Al-Qaeda and its leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri. The two men published the letter in the Kuwaiti *Al-Ray* daily newspaper, in which they called on al-Zawahiri to dismantle Al-Qaeda for several reasons, including:
 - A. The organization's leadership is failing to control and monitor all of its branches.
 - B. The commandment to wage a war of jihad is not given exclusively to one organization or another but rather applies to the entire nation. Therefore, Al-Qaeda is wrong to try and appropriate it as its own and to set rules regarding its operation.
 - C. Al-Qaeda is responsible for the creation of a radical conceptual climate on the basis of which organizations that espouse a radical interpretation of Islam's holy sources, such as the IS which was born from Al-Qaeda's womb.
 - D. The organization fills a negative role in the war against the Bashar al-Assad regime since it serves as an obstacle to the unification of Al-Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria) with other jihadist factions in Syria.
 - E. Al-Qaeda has clearly deviated from its path and, through its unbecoming behavior, is serving the aims of Shi'ite Iran. In their opinion, the organization bears responsibility for the erosion of the Sunni movement's power in the world and for the strengthening of the Shi'ite movement led by Iran.

In light of this, the two men called on Al-Qaeda leadership to dismantle the organization, carefully examine its positions and turn to the sages for proper direction. They added that the letter was posted in public after they had sent a secret message to al-Zawahiri calling on him to reform his organization in order to prevent friction with other jihad fighters, but since they did not receive a response they decided to publicly publish a letter on the subject.¹

In response to the letter, al-Siba'i listed several reasons justifying Al-Qaeda's existence, its continued activity and its doctrine. According to him, the organization acts in accordance with

¹ <http://www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/local/2016/03/14/664710/nr/kuwait> (Arabic).

the Sunnah and serves as a source of attraction for many Muslims. He emphasized that the death of Osama bin Laden, the first leader of Al-Qaeda, did not lead to the demise of the organization. On the contrary, after his death it expanded its activities and added more branches. Al-Siba'i then noted that the words of the two preachers are creating much satisfaction and joy among the enemies of Islam. In addition, he spurned the claim that the organization was responsible for spreading radical interpretation of Islam's holy sources and noted that many jihadist groups that were in existence before Al-Qaeda was founded were responsible for this trend, and not Al-Qaeda. According to him, the two preachers themselves also bear responsibility for the spread of radical interpretation.²

In response to this criticism and that of other Al-Qaeda supporters, Sheikh Muhammad al-Hasam explained at length why the idea of the letter that was published was correct. He emphasized that his intention was to call for the dismantling of Al-Qaeda and not to abandon the path of jihad. He explained that since Al-Nusra Front had declared its loyalty to Al-Qaeda, Arab regimes and Iran have concentrated their efforts on battling Al-Qaeda, proving that Al-Qaeda does more damage than good to jihad efforts in Syria and in general.³

- Al-Tahaya jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published the following:
 - The transcript of an audio clip from a sermon titled, "Explaining the Opposition to Global Jihad" given by Abu Musa'b al-Suri, an Al-Qaeda strategist, on October 26, 1990.⁴
 - The transcript of an audio clip from a lecture titled, "A Discussion about the Book 'The Elders of Zion' by Matvei Golovinski", given by Abu Qatada al-Filastini, a senior Salafi-jihadist philosopher who supports Al-Qaeda.⁵
 - The transcript of an audio clip from a lecture titled, "A Discussion about the Book 'Christianity and the Sword' by Bartolomé de las Casas" (a Spanish historian), given by Sheikh Abu Qatada al-Filistini. In the lecture, Abu Qatada discussed Western policy towards the nations of the world and accused it of perpetrating poverty and economic difficulties in order to

² <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

³ <https://noda3sh.wordpress.com/2016/03/18/7sm/>

⁴ <https://twitter.com/tayaha8/status/711222124665438208>

⁵ <https://twitter.com/tayaha8/status/714290309862187008>

strengthen Western hegemony in the world. For example, he accused the Americans of the eradication of the Indians in the Americas.⁶

- The transcript of an audio clip from a lecture titled, “A Discussion of the Book ‘What the World Lost as a Result of the Decline of Muslims’ by Sheikh Abu Hasan al-Nadawi” (an Indian philosopher 1914-1999) by Sheikh Abu Qarada al-Filistini.⁷

- Al-Hedaya jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published the following:

- An article titled, “The Desired State to be Established through Jihad for the Sake of Allah” by Sheikh Abu Qarada al-Filistini. In the article, Abu Qatada justified the establishment of the Islamic State, which is based on shari’a, through a war of jihad and he criticized detractors of the article.⁸



The article banner

- The Bushriyyat jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published the following:

- The transcript of a video clip titled, “Chatting with a Student” by Khalid bin Abdul Rahman al Husainanan, a senior member of Al-Qaeda who was killed in a US drone strike in 2013.⁹

- Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a senior Salafi-jihadist philosopher in Jordan, discussed his

⁶ <https://twitter.com/tayaha8/status/715774893175005188>

⁷ <https://twitter.com/tayaha8/status/715775574862639105>

⁸ <https://justpaste.it/sq1m>

⁹ <https://twitter.com/Bushryat1/status/714295822905708544>

Twitter account for the recruitment of Muslim citizens to the IDF in the State of Israel. According to him, these Muslims are infidels who must be killed.¹⁰

- The jihadist media institution of AQAP, Al-Malahim, published the following:
 - A video titled, “It Was Fair” in the framework of the publication series, “Towards Proper Awareness” by Sheikh Khaled bin 'Umar al-Batarfi, a senior leader of the organization.¹¹
 - A video titled, “In Praise of the Martyr’s Death”, which constituted part 13 in a series of publications titled, “Understanding” by Zakariyya Hamza al-Hatar.¹²
- Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent published several audio clips titled, “Save Yourself from Arrogance and Evil”,¹³ “Make Your Soul Count” and “The Allocation of Responsibility Based on Capabilities”, which constituted parts 4-6 in the framework of the publication series titled, “A Training Course by Those Responsible”.¹⁴
- Al-Himma Library, which is involved in the publication of pamphlets and manifestos sponsored by the IS, published the following:
 - “Why I Should Destroy My Satellite Dish”, which listed 20 reasons to refrain from watching satellite channels as they serve the infidels, weaken the faith, encourage breaches, and destroy body and soul.¹⁵
 - General pamphlets on religious matters, such as: bequeathing the concept of the Oneness of God to children, the laws of prayer and fasting, a brief history of the life of the Prophet, etc.¹⁶
- The Hafidat ‘Aisha jihadist media institution published a video regarding the notorious Al-Hair Prison in Saudi Arabia, which is used by intelligence agencies and populated by terrorism suspects, among others. The video included interviews with former prisoners and leaked photos of the torture taking place in the prison in order to counter the humanitarian perception of the

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/lmagdese/status/712720290086825984>

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

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

¹³ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁴ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁵ <https://goo.gl/qWxBd8>

¹⁶ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

prison that Saudi authorities are trying to create.¹⁷

- A visitor to the Shumukh al-Islam jihadist Web forum published a poster listing the operations that were carried out by the organization since the beginning of February until the middle of March. According to the poster, the organization carried out 93 suicide bombings, 23 invasions, detonated 92 explosive devices, fired 6,018 mortar bombs and launched 1,232 rockets.¹⁸



Summary of IS operations – from early February to mid-March

The Rift between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State

- Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a senior Salafi-jihadist philosopher residing in Jordan, strongly rejected claims that he had allowed IS fighters to be killed by serving as an agent for the Syrian regime. According to him, his ruling had to do solely with the right to self-defense due to the hostility shown by members of the IS.¹⁹
- The Bushriyyat media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published the transcript of a video titled, “The Testimony of Antar al-Kindi: The Former Emir of one of Al-Baghdadi’s Groups – Yemen Branch”. In the video, a former senior commander of the IS in Yemen described how the organization recruited members to its ranks using deception. According to him, the organization also sinned when it labelled Muslims as infidels and allowed them to be

¹⁷ https://videos.files.wordpress.com/Hfv6b9Bo/img_1398_dvd.mp4

¹⁸ <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic); <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Cd5QCrCWoAAIoIk.jpg>

¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/lmaqdesi/status/710021803654176768>

killed. He then called on Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and to the other leaders of the organization including Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Julani, leader of Al-Nusra Front (Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria), to forgive him and his friends for erring on their path and for their haste in labelling Al-Qaeda leaders as infidels.²⁰

- Al-Hidaya jihadist media institution, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published an article by Abu Mus'ab al-Muhajir, an Al-Qaeda supporter, in which he responded to an article that was published by the IS condemning Al-Qaeda in the beginning of March 2016. The writer accused the IS of trying to sully the name of Muhamad Mikawi (aka 'Abdallah al-Sudani) only in order to win a monetary prize offered on his head by the US. The writer stated that Mikawi, influenced by the Islamic State's PR campaign, turned to the movement's leadership in order to make it recognize the legality of the Islamic Caliphate led by al-Baghdadi. According to him, Mikawi was wrong to try to recruit more fighters from the movement who supported the Islamic Caliphate. In light of this development, the movement appointed a religious legal committee in order to mediate the crisis and the impending split. The council asked Mikawi to submit his position on the matter within a certain period of time but there was no positive response on his part. Finally, Mikawi asked to resign from the movement, provoked its members after trying to attack them, and as a result of this provocation he was killed in a gun battle. According to the writer, it would have been better not to bring this issue to public discourse at all but the lies spread by the IS about the Al-Shabab movement forced him to expose the truth.²¹

Oaths of Allegiance

- A senior member of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Abdul Qayyum Zakir, published an announcement in which he swore allegiance to the Emir of the faithful of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, and emphasized that he was the leader of the organization contrary to rumors that were published of his death.²²

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/Bushryat1/status/715449896996892672>

²¹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

²² <http://alemara.org/?p=19179>

- The Furat media institution published a video in which Jund al-Tawhid, a faction affiliated with Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, swore allegiance to the Islamic State. In addition to the traditional oath of allegiance, the speaker in the video explained that his men would join the leader of the IS in the Philippines, Abu Abdullah al-Filipini, and operate under his wing.²³



An armed faction in the Philippines swearing allegiance to the Islamic State

Strategy

- Al-Hedaya jihadist media institution, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published an article titled, “The Following is the Most Appropriate Solution for Libya” by Abu al-Bara al-Azadi. According to the writer, the achievements of the revolution against the Qaddafi regime in Libya are in danger due to attempts by the West to force upon it a government that will represent its interests by collaborating with local forces, such as General Haftar’s forces, among other things. According to the writer, the mujahideen must learn from the failure of the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia and prevent a similar scenario from taking place in Libya. For this reason, the writer suggested implementing the conception of AQIM as it was described by Sheikh Abu 'Ubayda al-'Inabi, a senior member of AQIM:
 - A. Strengthening the sense of faith and belonging to the religion of Islam, and removing beliefs and ideologies that are foreign to Islam, such as democracy;
 - B. Keeping weapons and not handing them over, lest Libya be conquered by Western forces. Maintain unity among the ranks, speak in one voice and be patient with the enemy;
 - C. Continue the PR war and do not ignore it since it is no less important than the battle in the field;
 - D. Welcome the refugees who are fighting for Islam with their lives;

²³ <https://goo.gl/ZbecSV>

E. Show solidarity and congregate around one leadership.

According to the writer, by implementing shari'a and maintaining unity among the ranks, the mujahideen are guaranteed success against their enemies. Any other attempt is doomed to failure, including the Islamic State's vision of establishing an Islamic caliphate since it lost 40% of the territory that it had controlled, and the integration of the Muslim Brotherhood in the political system in Egypt whose members were incarcerated because of a military coup.

Finally, the writer emphasized the importance of unity among the ranks of jihad fighters in Libya and other Muslim lands due to their common enemy.²⁴

- Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent published the sixth audio clip titled, "Jihad Forces and the Geographic Situation" by Mawlana 'Asam 'Umar, the leader of the organization.²⁵
- A visitor to the Shumukh al-Islam jihadist Web forum called on IS fighters in Europe to attack hospitals and universities in revenge for attacks by coalition forces in Syria and Iraq where such institutions were attacked. In addition, the visitor noted that hospitals and universities are less guarded than airports and, therefore, would be easier targets for attacks.²⁶
- Visitors to the Shumukh al-Islam jihadist Web forum discussed the Islamic State's PR success on Twitter. In this context, one of the visitors called on Twitter users to avoid spreading news that comes from Arab media networks, such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. Regarding the terrorist attack in Brussels, one of the visitors to the forum called on Twitter users to fight using hashtags that are published by the Western media, and another visitor suggested that IS supporters post more content on Twitter in English and French in order to reach its target audience in the West.²⁷

Promoting the Myth of the Martyr

- The Ifriqyya al-Muslima media group published the second article in the framework of the publication series titled, "Letters from the Notebook of a Mujahid" titled, "Sheikh Abu

²⁴ <https://justpaste.it/sol5>; <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb/> (Arabic).

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

²⁶ <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic).

²⁷ <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic).

Muhammad al-Yamani: Journey to Algeria and the Story of his Martyrdom” by Abu Akram Hisham.²⁸

- Al-Raya jihadist media institution, which belongs to the “Salafist Army of the Nation in Jerusalem”, eulogized two of its members, Muhammad Zahran Balush and Abu al-Hasan al-Bulaydi.²⁹
- Al-Fursan jihadist media institution published a biography about 'Abdallah bin Mustafa Abu al-Yazid Muhamad Khan (1986-2010), a senior commander in Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Muhamad Khan moved with his father from Egypt to Afghanistan when he was a child. At the age of 15, he underwent military training at an Al-Qaeda training camp and joined the organization. He served as the head of several committees in Al-Qaeda and in the Khorasan Group, which was responsible for exposing spies within the organization. In addition, he was one of the planners of several terrorist attacks carried out against Western targets in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, including the suicide attack against the Embassy of Denmark in Pakistan in 2008. In 2010, he was killed in a US drone strike as he was traveling in his car from Waziristan to Afghanistan.³⁰



The banner of the publication containing Muhamad Khan’s biography

- The Nukhbat al-Fikr jihadist media group, which is involved in publicity for Al-Qaeda, published an article titled, “The Story of the Martyr’s Death of Sheikh Abu Sulayman al-‘Utaybi, a senior member of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.”³¹

²⁸ <http://www.up-00.com/?j2Mo>

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

³⁰ <https://justpaste.it/smzf>

³¹ <https://justpaste.it/spec>; <https://twitter.com/tayaha8/status/714574052183162880>

- The Ibn Tamiyya Center, which is involved in publicity for the IS, published the first video in a series of publications titled, “Convoys of Personal Sacrifice”, which was dedicated to Said Jalal al-Sindi (aka Abu Mus'ab al-Tawhidi). In 2011, al-Tawhidi, of Palestinian origin, moved from the Gaza Strip after crossing the Rafah border crossing to Syria in order to join the ranks of the IS. He was deeply influenced by Sheikh Osama bin Laden, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu 'Umar al-Shishani, the IS warlord. On February 5, 2014 al-Tawhidi was killed in an air strike in Aleppo.³²



The banner of the video in memory of Said Jalal al-Sindi, a Palestinian member of the Islamic State

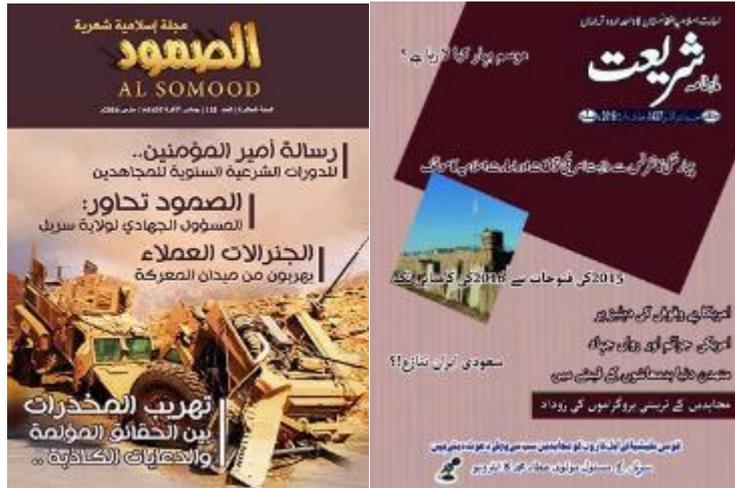
Magazines

- The Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan published a new issue (issue no. 20 for March 2016) of its Arabic-language magazine, *Al-Somood*.³³ In addition, it published a new issue of its Urdu-language magazine, *Shariat*.³⁴

³² <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com/2016/03/23/قوافل-الفداء--اصدارات-الخلافة-akhbardawlatislam/>

³³ <https://justpaste.it/sn7m>

³⁴ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).



The banners of *Al-Somood* and *Shariat*

- The Islamic State published issues no. 23-24 of the periodical, *Al-Naba*, which reviewed the arenas of jihad in which the organization is active.³⁵



A summary of the outcomes from the terrorist attack in Brussels published in *Al-Naba* periodical

- Issue no. 8 of the AQAP-affiliated magazine, *Al-Masra*, was published.³⁶

³⁵ <https://ia801503.us.archive.org/28/items/Naba23.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).



The banner of Al-Masra

Reports from the Field

Afghanistan-Pakistan

During the second half of March 2016, the Taliban in Afghanistan continued to attack security and government forces. At the end of the month, Taliban fighters blew up the Afghan Parliament building in the capital of Kabul.³⁷ In addition, during battles between Taliban forces and Afghan security forces along the central road in Urozgan Province, Taliban fighters killed at least 15 Afghan security forces soldiers.³⁸ There are those who claim that, following the success of attacks by the Taliban in Afghanistan in recent weeks, it refused offers to conduct negotiations with the Kabul government.³⁹

Meanwhile, several weeks after the Afghan government declared victory over IS fighters in the eastern part of the country, residents of the area spoke about life for the past year under IS rule. According to their testimony, schools in the area were closed and one of them was turned into the organization's headquarters. In addition, residents added that IS fighters had beheaded or shot

³⁷ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/taliban-fires-explosives-afghanistan-parliament-compound-160328074227812.html> (English).

³⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/afghanistan-taliban-fight-kills-15-security-troops-160330130441186.html> (English).

³⁹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/03/afghanistan-taliban-won-talk-winning-pakistan-isis-160322054137025.html> (English).

Afghan soldiers who fought them for control of the area.⁴⁰ Earlier in the month, John Campbell, a NATO commander in Afghanistan, estimated that there were between 1,000-3,000 IS fighters in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the Russian President's envoy to Afghanistan estimated the number of IS fighters in Afghanistan to be close to 10,000.⁴¹

Meanwhile, in Pakistan, a group belonging to the Taliban in Pakistan claimed responsibility for the explosion of a bus carrying government officials in Peshawar, in northwest Pakistan.⁴² In addition, a faction of the organization known as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar claimed responsibility for an explosion in Lahore, in eastern Pakistan, and claimed that the attack targeted Christians. The blast, which took place at a park, killed 70 people and injured over 300 more.⁴³

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan published the following:
 - A speech by Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, the leader of the Emirate, regarding the opening of annual shari'a courses for the mujahideen. Mansoor emphasized the importance of the mujahideen's participation, especially the senior ones, in this training in order to learn what is permitted and what is forbidden to do in jihad in the framework of shari'a, and in order to learn about obedience to leaders and how to treat civilians in the areas conquered by the organization. Mansoor then claimed that the situation of the mujahideen that belong to the Islamic Emirate is better now than it ever has been due to their conquest of various provinces in Afghanistan. In addition, he called for unity among the ranks and added that those who kept their distance from the Islamic Emirate in the last year should be appeased and brought back into the organization. He added that the mujahideen must also work to preach, guide and educate the younger generation in the

⁴⁰ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/afghanistan-isis-160323040012640.html> (English).

⁴¹ <http://goo.gl/2lF0it>

⁴² <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/blast-hits-bus-pakistan-160316033946124.html> (English).

⁴³ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/deadly-blast-hits-pakistan-lahore-160327143110195.html> (English).

framework of shari'a. At the end of the speech, Mansoor expressed his hope for additional conquests and for the "Islamic Emirate's" victory.⁴⁴

- An announcement regarding the Emirate's position on prisoner exchanges. The announcement stated that the organization believes in prisoner exchanges with the enemy and even has a committee responsible for releasing captives and organizing prisoner affairs. The organization also added that the rumors regarding the prisoner exchange between the organization and the government in Faryab Province were untrue since the government in Kabul does not believe in prisoner exchanges and has not yet taken action in this matter.⁴⁵
- A video documenting the conquest of Kolalgo, in Pakita Province, by Emirate fighters following the withdrawal of Afghan army forces, as well as interviews with the fighters who captured the area and with the residents there.⁴⁶
- A video titled, "Voices of the People", parts 11-12.⁴⁷
- A video titled, "The Loyalty Parade", which documented the breach of the Ghazni Prison in September 2015.⁴⁸
- A video titled, "Knowledge of Jihad – Part 5: The Army of Allah".⁴⁹

The Arabian Peninsula

The civil war in Yemen continued with greater vigor, with emphasis on attacks by Arab coalition forces against Al-Qaeda strongholds. The US also took part in the air strikes and, on March 23, it attacked an Al-Qaeda training camp in Hadramawt Province, which was under Al-Qaeda's control.⁵⁰ Al-Qaeda fighters also suffered a strong blow in the city of Aden when they were pushed out of the city by Yemeni army forces.⁵¹ In addition, it was reported that Al-Qaeda fighters retreated from the

⁴⁴ <http://shahamat-english.com/speech-of-amir-ul-mumineen-may-allah-protect-him-to-the-annual-shariah-courses-of-mujahideen/> (English).

⁴⁵ <http://alemara.org/?p=18808>

⁴⁶ <http://shahamat-english.com/conquest-of-kolalgo-a-new-video-release-by-al-emarrah/> (English).

⁴⁷ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁸ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁵⁰ <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/2016/3/28/11-قتيلا-بأبين-و-عدن-في-القاعدة-في-عدن-و-11-قتيلا-بأبين> (Arabic).

⁵¹ <http://buyemen.com/news25195.html>

city of Zinjibar in southern Yemen following aerial attacks.⁵²

Meanwhile efforts to defeat the Houthis continued, as army forces loyal to Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi waged heavy battles in the city of Taiz against the Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh's forces.⁵³

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

- The jihadist media institution of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Al-Malahim, published the following:
 - A speech titled, “Commentary on the American Bombing of Yemen” by Saad bin 'Atif al-'Awlaqi, a senior AQAP leader. He began his speech by expressing sorrow over the deaths of Yemeni civilians who were killed in US shellings and offering his condolences to the families of those killed. According to him, the American bombardments targeted a training camp in the area of Mayfa'a Hajar in western Mukala, in which volunteers from among Yemen's residents sought to fight against the Houthis. He noted that “The American Ministry of Defense claimed that the military camp presented a danger to US national security. It concealed reports that proved the camp was one of the training camps in which volunteers train to fight on various fronts against the Houthis and the ousted [President] 'Alki Salih”. Al-'Awlaqi then emphasized the importance of continuing to fight against the Houthis, the Americans and their allies.⁵⁴
- Ansar al-Shari'a in Yemen, which is affiliated with AQAP, published the following:
 - A condemnation of the US bombardment against one of the organization's units known as “Al-Baydha Liberation Battalion” in the city of Al-Mukala. According to the organization, the shelling was carried out as battalion fighters intended to launch an attack against the Houthis in Al-Baydha Province and, despite this, its members continued to strike their enemies.⁵⁵
 - The news agency of Ansar al-Shari'a in Yemen (branch of AQAP), Al-Athir, published a collection of photos documenting the execution of people accused of witchcraft in the

⁵² <http://www.yemani.net/news2465.html>

⁵³ <http://www.alhurra.com/content/yemen-clashes-taez/300381.html>

⁵⁴ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁵⁵ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

city of Ghayl Ba Wazir, in Hadramawt Province, by members of the organization.⁵⁶ In addition, the organization published a video describing its humanitarian activities for the civilian population.⁵⁷



The show trial of three Muslims accused of witchcraft who were executed

- A video documenting battles between members of the organization and the Houthis in Taiz.⁵⁸

The Islamic State

- The Islamic State news agency, 'Amaq, reported that its members had carried out a suicide attack at an Arab coalition forces base in Aden, in which 27 people were killed.⁵⁹

Iraq

During the second half of March 2016, efforts by the Iraqi army to repel the IS, especially in Al-Anbar and Nineveh Provinces, continued in earnest. The second half of the month opened with an operation by Iraqi security forces, with US air support, to liberate the city of Hit and the town of Kubaysah, which is located in western Al-Anbar Province, from the IS.⁶⁰ In this framework, the Iraqi

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

⁵⁷ <https://justpaste.it/Helppeople>

⁵⁸ <https://justpaste.it/Taiz4>

⁵⁹ <https://issdarat.net>

⁶⁰ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3499952/Iraq-forces-major-push-against-IS-Anbar.html> (English).

army – together with local tribes – managed to take control of Kubaysah.⁶¹ There are those who claim that the liberation of Hit, which is located on the banks of the Euphrates River next to a US Air Force base, will push the IS west towards the Syrian border, thereby severing its connection to the northern city of Samarra and making Fallujah the organization’s only stronghold near the Iraqi capital.⁶²

In addition, towards the end of the month the Iraqi army announced that it had launched – with the help of the US Air Force and Kurdish Peshmerga forces – an operation to liberate Nineveh Province, including the city of Mosul, from the Islamic State.⁶³ Nevertheless, the Iraqi army’s advancement in the area thus far has been slow and its achievements amount to several towns that it captured south of Mosul.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, coalition forces bombed targets in the city of Mosul, including the University of Mosul, which served as an IS base.⁶⁵

Alongside the Iraqi army’s battle against the IS in the north and west of the country, the organization continued to carry out a series of suicide attacks, especially around the city of Baghdad. In this framework, an IS suicide terrorist blew himself up in a soccer field in the city of Al-Iskandariya, south of Baghdad. At least 29 people were killed in the attack and approximately 60 others were injured.⁶⁶

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:
 - A. Battles and Military Deployment:

⁶¹ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/iraqi-army-liberates-kubaysa-anbar-isil-terrorists-flee/>; <http://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2016/03/19/1031369/iraqi-forces-stage-raid-to-retake-hit-in-anbar-province> (English).

⁶² <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-hit-idUSKCN0WXOWP> (English).

⁶³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/24/iraqi-army-begins-mosul-offensive-against-islamic-state> (English).

⁶⁴ <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-offensive-idUSKCN0WR0ZZ> (English).

⁶⁵ <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/20/middleeast/mosul-iraq-airstrikes-isis/> (English).

⁶⁶ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-3509714/Suicide-bomber-hits-stadium-Iraqi-city-killing-29.html> (English).

- Saladdin Province: A video regarding sniper activities in the organization, in which emphasis was placed on their importance in the battlefield and images were shown of sniper incidents carried out by the organization. The video included a review of sniper targets (enemy commanders and patrols, enemy snipers and individuals about whom intelligence was gathered) and of the attributes required to fill the role (concentration, intelligence and patience). The video combined quotes from the Hadith on the topic of shooting and sniper fire.⁶⁷
- Al-Anbar Province: Claims of responsibility for suicide attacks and other attacks against the Iraqi army in Kabisa, in which dozens of soldiers were killed, and an announcement regarding the killing of a commander in the Popular Mobilization Forces of the city of Hit.⁶⁸
- Fallujah Province: A video regarding attacks on Iraqi army posts in the area of Amerriyat al-Falluja using machine guns and a suicide terrorist dispatched in an explosives-ridden car;⁶⁹ Claims of responsibility for the launch of a Grad rocket that struck Shi'ite militias in Abu Gharib Prison, mortar bomb fire directed at the Iraqi army north of Fallujah, and a review of battles in Albushajal and Hamediyya.⁷⁰
- Baghdad Province: A claim of responsibility for a suicide attack against Popular Mobilization Forces in Baghdad, which killed and injured approximately 40 people.⁷¹
- Al-Furat Province: Claims of responsibility for the destruction of a helicopter by carrying out a suicide attack at the Ayn al-Asad base and for an attack against the Iraqi army along the Haditha-Baiji Road.⁷²

⁶⁷ <https://issdarat.net/2016/03/29/qatf/>

⁶⁸ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁶⁹ <https://issdarat.net/2016/03/16/forsan7/>

⁷⁰ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁷¹ <https://goo.gl/5J5zY0>

⁷² <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

- Saladdin Province: Claims of responsibility for attacks against the Iraqi army along the Haditha-Baiji Road, which included the destruction of military posts and suicide attacks. Battles in the area of Al-Tharthar were also reviewed.⁷³
- Dijla Province: Claims of responsibility for several attacks against the Iraqi army in Makhmur.⁷⁴

B. Executions:

- Nineveh Province: A video of the execution of a Kurdish soldier, which included aggressive messages and threats against Masoud Barzani, President of Iraqi Kurdistan, especially against the backdrop of his cooperation with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and against the backdrop of the Peshmerga bombardments in Mosul that harmed the civilian population. The video showed a Kurdish-speaking militant beheading a Kurdish soldier and threatening to behead two more captives as long as Barzani continues to fight against the organization and to “bomb Muslims”.⁷⁵



The execution of a Peshmerga soldier and threats, in Kurdish, against Masoud Barzani

⁷³ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁷⁴ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁷⁵ <https://issdarat.net/2016/03/28/l3lahm/>

- Fallujah Province: A filmed review of the execution of several people accused of spying against the IS and of passing information to various elements, especially the Interior Ministry.⁷⁶

C. Propaganda and Publicity:

- Nineveh Province: A video regarding the Islamic State's PR system and the coalition forces bombings that struck, among other things, the organization's informational stands. In the video, which included narration as well as street interviews with residents, an effort was made to present the fact that the US spends huge sums of money on missiles for the purpose of destroying informational stands whose costs are minimal.⁷⁷
- Al-Anbar Province: A review of a competition on the topic of preacher studies that was held in Hit, sponsored by the organization's "Center for Dawah and Mosques".⁷⁸

D. Civilian Matters:

- Nineveh Province: Filmed reviews regarding activities in the various markets in the city of Mosul as well as photos of nature in the springtime in an attempt to compare pastoral landscape to life under the IS.⁷⁹
- Dijla Province: Filmed reviews regarding the activities of the traffic police in the province, the pumping of rainwater in Al-Sharqat and the activities of the agricultural center in the city of Al-Qayyara.⁸⁰
- Al-Anbar Province: Filmed reviews regarding firefighting and zakat activities.⁸¹

Ansar al-Islam

⁷⁶ <https://goo.gl/7L89gX>

⁷⁷ <https://issdarat.net/2016/03/21/noreh/>

⁷⁸ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁷⁹ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁸⁰ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

⁸¹ <https://akhbardawlatalislam3.wordpress.com>

- Ansar al-Islam announced that it changed the appearance of its banner by placing the name of the organization at the bottom of the banner. According to the announcement, the reason for the change had to do with the existing classification between the organization's name and banner to other jihadist factions.⁸²



The new banner of Ansar al-Sharia'

Al-Sham [The Levant]

Air strikes continued in Syria. According to reports by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), almost 40 civilians were killed in a shelling on the city of Raqqa.⁸³ According to other reports, Russian fighter planes carried out dozens of attacks against IS strongholds in and around the city of Palmyra.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, the US announced the killing of Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli, who served as number two in the Islamic State and – according to a declaration by the US Defense Minister – was responsible for the organization's finances.⁸⁵ The organization was struck another blow when it returned control over the city of Palmyra to Assad's army, which turned it into a base for anti-IS operations.⁸⁶

⁸² <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁸³ <http://goo.gl/XT9iPa>

⁸⁴ <http://goo.gl/N8VFhG>

⁸⁵ http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2016/03/160325_syria_isis_qaduli (Arabic).

⁸⁶ http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2016/03/160328_palmyra_offences_continue (Arabic).

With regard to Russia, Vladimir Putin announced that Russian operations in Syria had achieved their goals but promised that Russia would return its forces if necessary.⁸⁷ In contrast, the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, declared that his forces would remain in Syria in order to fight against the IS.⁸⁸

Syria

Al-Nusra Front

- Al-Nusra Front’s media institution, Al-Manara Al-Bayda, published the following:
 - A propaganda video starring several Al-Nusra Front leaders, for some of whom this was their first public appearance, titled, “Heirs of Glory – Part 2”. Among the leaders who appeared in the video were:
 - A. 'Abd al-Rahim 'Atwan (aka Abu Abdallah al-Shami)**, a member of Al-Nusra Front’s Shura Council and a member of the Shari’a Committee (the brother of the former leader of Ahrar al-Sham), for whom this was his first appearance.
 - B. Ahmad Salama Mabruk (aka Abu al-Faraj al-Misri)**, a member of Al-Nusra Front’s Shura Council and Supervisory Committee (the former leader of an Egyptian jihadist group and a close friend of al-Zawahiri). He was imprisoned in Egypt and released from prison during the presidency of Mohamed Morsi, and moved to Syria following al-Sisi’s military coup where he joined Al-Nusra Front.
 - C. Jamal Husayn Zayniyya (aka Abu Malik al-Tali or Abu Malik al-Shami)**, for whom this was his first appearance. He is the most-wanted person on the Lebanese Hezbollah’s list and was the man behind the prisoner exchange of Greek Orthodox nuns.

In the opening of the video, Abu Abdallah al-Shami accused the West of attempting to thwart the Arab Spring revolutions by, among other things, supporting the local forces opposed to these revolutions. According to him, the Arab revolutions are facing difficulties due to the global system’s involvement in Muslim countries via the UN, the

⁸⁷ <https://goo.gl/t6mG4r>

⁸⁸ http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2016/03/160321_hezbollah_syria_fight_jihadists (Arabic).

Security Council, and the superpowers that belong to the International Monetary Fund. According to him, the global system was established following the dissolution of the Islamic Caliphate, the division of the Arab world into more than 50 countries, and the establishment of a Jewish entity in the heart of the Islamic world in Palestine. In addition, the global system supports posting ruthless rulers as the heads of these divided countries.

Later in the video, Abu al-Faraj al-Misri condemned democracy and pointed to the ousting of Morsi, the former President of Egypt and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, as testimony to the fact that democracy is not applicable. According to him, the Arab Spring proved that there is a need to switch from peaceful revolution to armed jihad in order to overcome the security and army forces that are operating on behalf of the Alawites. The video then showed Abu Malik al-Shami emphasizing that jihad in Al-Sham is essentially a school in which believers are raised and educated. Later in the video, Khaled Omar Batefi, the official spokesman for AQAP, was interviewed and accused the West of undermining the Arab Spring revolutions and of trying to impose weak rulers on the Muslim countries under its command.

The video also documented two members of the organization who carried out two suicide attacks against Syrian security forces buildings in Damascus on December 23, 2011. In addition, the video criticized the Riyadh Conference, which hosted most of the rebel factions in Syria in an attempt to reach an agreed-upon solution that would lead to the end of the fighting in Syria. According to Abu Abdallah al-Shami, the Syrian opposition - which sits in exile - is nothing more than a tool of the West to preserve and strengthen its hold in the region. In addition, he accused the IS of tilting the battle in favor of Bashar al-Assad, especially in Homs and Hamat.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

organization accepts their decision not to pass judgement in this matter and he added that the ruling of the shari'a court will be applied to the Firka 13 issue immediately upon the establishment of a new court, to be agreed upon by both sides.⁹³

- Al-Fustat Army, which is composed of Al-Nusra Front, Ahrar al-Sham and Fajr al-Umma, published an announcement in which it explained the reasons for its establishment. According to the announcement, the Army was established in order to operate under one banner to regain the rights of the Syrian people. The announcement called on all military factions to join the Army and to set aside their differences.⁹⁴



The logo of Al-Fustat Army

The Turkistan Islamic Party in Al-Sham

- The jihadist media institution of the Turkistan Islamic Party in Al-Sham, Voice of Islam, published the following:
 - Two videos titled, “Call from the Front Ranks of Jihad – Parts 12-13”.⁹⁵
 - Blessings to the residents of Al-Sham in honor of the fifth anniversary of the popular revolution in Syria.⁹⁶

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:

⁹³ https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Ceei9_tWwAAvOAX.jpg

⁹⁴ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Cej2XIWWQAEQGiB.jpg>

⁹⁵ <https://justpaste.it/tip12>; <https://justpaste.it/call013>

⁹⁶ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb/> (Arabic).

A. Battles and Military Deployment:

- Raqqaqah Province: Filmed reviews regarding the organization's attacks against Kurdish forces, which included a suicide attack and the launch of Katyusha rockets at PKK forces south of Jabal Abd al-Aziz, an infiltration operation against Kurdish forces south of Saluk, and the launch of mortar bombs towards Al-Faruq.⁹⁷
- Aleppo Province: Reviews regarding attacks by the organization against Kurdish forces in Jabal Qishla, the launch of mortar bombs at Syrian army forces in Tallet al-Ta'aneh, and the execution of two suicide attacks against the Sahawat in the village of Touqli.⁹⁸
- Al-Khayr Province: Filmed reviews regarding the organization's attacks against Syrian army forces in the city of Al-Khayr and its military airport. It also reported on the launch of mortar bombs at army forces in Tallet al-Rawad and the Furat al-Sham Hotel.⁹⁹
- Homs Province: An announcement regarding the killing of five Russian army soldiers as well as several Syrian soldiers and Hezbollah fighters near Palmyra; a review of battles near al-Duwwa.¹⁰⁰
- Damascus Province: Reports about attacks against Syrian army positions in Al-Qaryatain, battles against Al-Nusra Front forces in western Al-Qalamun, and a suicide attack in the village of Jbeb against the Sahawat.¹⁰¹

B. Executions:

- Aleppo Province: A review regarding the execution of several people accused of drug trafficking. The review stated that the accused were

⁹⁷ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

⁹⁸ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

⁹⁹ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

¹⁰⁰ <https://goo.gl/GIMllv>

¹⁰¹ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

arrested for the second time after being let off with a reprimand and a warning the first time.¹⁰²

C. Civilian Issues:

- Aleppo Province: Reviews regarding the city of Manbij (for example, road repair by the Services Center, traffic police activities and the burning of cigarettes by Hisba officials) as well as activities in the vegetable market in the city of El-Bab.¹⁰³
- Al-Khayr Province: A review regarding medical clinic activities in the city of Al-Mayadin.¹⁰⁴
- Raqqah Province: A review regarding the industrial area in the city of Raqqah.¹⁰⁵

D. Dawah:

- Aleppo Province: Reviews regarding a Quran memorization competition for children and teenagers in the city of Manbij, the distribution of gifts to the families of martyrs in the city of El-Bab, and a dawah meeting for children in the town of Akhtarain.¹⁰⁶



IS support for the families of martyrs

Ahrar al-Sham

¹⁰² <https://goo.gl/LZQk4u>

¹⁰³ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

¹⁰⁴ <https://goo.gl/9Q6og3>

¹⁰⁵ <https://goo.gl/PRB4KV>

¹⁰⁶ <https://goo.gl/gvxO09>; <https://goo.gl/X3aNxH>; <https://goo.gl/0pHw0d>

- Ahrar al-Sham published the following:
 - An announcement accusing the Islamic State’s Islamic Muthanna Movement of collaborating with the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade at the entrance of the Golan Heights area, in the western suburb of Daraa, which led Ahrar al-Sham fighters to retreat to the town of Heet. The announcement also stated that the Islamic Muthanna Movement had declared the town of Heet to be a military zone and gave a 24-hour extension to evacuate the area. At the end of the announcement, the organization addressed the Islamic Muthanna Movement and the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade and said they should expect to fail in their battle over the town since Ahrar al-Sham is expecting them and is ready for battle.¹⁰⁷
 - A message of condolences over the killing of brigade commander, Umar bin Al-Khattab, in the area of Daraa in southern Syria during a battle between the brigade and the IS in the area.¹⁰⁸
 - A message of condolences over the killing of Tariq al-Masalma, an Al-Nusra Front commander, by the Khawarij in southern Syria.¹⁰⁹
 - A video titled, “Even after a Period of Time” regarding the capture of an IS cell near Idlib.
- The leader of Ahrar al-Sham, Abu Yahia al-Hamawi, said on a program broadcast on Al-Jazeera that the division of Syria is a red line that cannot be agreed to and that negotiations had failed. He added that his country would not agree to a federal regime and emphasized that Russia cannot impose a political solution on the Syrian regime. Al-Hamawi claimed that those Syrians taking part in the negotiations must adhere to the principles of the Syrian revolution, especially the toppling of the al-Assad regime, and he emphasized the need to preserve the Islamic identity of the Syrian Nation. He added that Russia’s withdrawal surprised everyone, especially since it had declared its desire to fight against what it called “terrorist organizations”. He also claimed that the Syrian regime had achieved temporary victory thanks to Russian intervention but that it cannot sustain it and, therefore, he claimed that Russia’s withdrawal changes the regime’s approach to negotiations and is making a greater effort in that arena. In addition, al-

¹⁰⁷ <https://twitter.com/Lionshunters/status/713782538360193024>

¹⁰⁸ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CeUOVKqVIAA-wyk.jpg>

¹⁰⁹ <https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CeKfCYsWwAAmV5O.jpg>

Hamawi indicated the possibility of negotiations with Russia if they would put pressure on the Alawite regime in a way that would serve the interests of the Syrian revolution. Al-Hamawi then criticized the approach of the US to Russia's withdrawal and claimed that it was not supplying quality weapons to the rebels that would enable them to defend the rights of the Syrian nation because the Alawite regime is serving Israel's interests. Finally, he claimed that the Syrian nation had sacrificed a great deal during the five years of the revolution but that it was willing to continue to do so for the next five years in order to accomplish its goals.¹¹⁰

- The leader of Ahrar al-Sham, Abu Yahia al-Hamawi, published an announcement in which he rejected the document from the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, regarding the solution to the Syrian issue. He claimed that the document abandoned the demands of the Syrian nation and was working for the benefit of the Alawite regime. He added that the Syrian nation would not take part in negotiations with "the one who signs its surrender" and he claimed that the Syrian revolution would not settle for half-solutions. In addition, he claimed that the organization was not interested in temporarily saving the nation from attacks and allowing it to suffer later under a new regime.¹¹¹

Ansar al-Din

- Abu Abdullah al-Shami, a senior member of Ansar al-Din, addressed Putin's withdrawal from the battle against the Syrian revolution. According to al-Shami, the organization was pleased about Russia's withdrawal from Syria but he claimed that they had to wait for a clearer picture of the reality on the ground. In addition, he added that the Syrian war is not only a military battle but also a political battle against an enemy experienced in eliminating revolutions and battling against Sunni Islam.¹¹²

The Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula

The Islamic State in the Sinai Peninsula

- The Islamic State in the Sinai Peninsula (formerly Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis) published the following:

¹¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEI076MGxic>

¹¹¹ <http://goo.gl/voEWgN>

¹¹² <https://justpaste.it/sbjy>

- A video summarizing all of the organization’s military operations in the Sinai Peninsula in February-March 2016.¹¹³
- A video titled, “The Preparations of the Obstinate to Defeat the Tyrants”, which documented the military training of the organization’s fighters at the Abu al-Hajir al-Misri training camp, and emphasized the obligation to wage jihad against the Egyptian regime. The video also documented two military operations against Egyptian security forces.¹¹⁴



A clip from the video

Africa

The Maghreb

Battles in Libya continued in both the western and eastern parts of the country. Violent clashes were reported in the capital of Tripoli between the various militias operating in the city, including the Tripoli Brigade and Libya Dawn,¹¹⁵ and gun battles were reported in Benghazi between the Libyan army and the Shura Council of Benghazi Revolutionaries.¹¹⁶ In the political arena, the Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord of Libya, Fayez al-Sarraj, declared that his government was entering the capital of Tripoli while the Libyan government based in Tubruq refused to recognize the legitimacy of this move. This demonstrated that three different governments are currently fighting

¹¹³ <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁴ <https://justpaste.it/stnj>

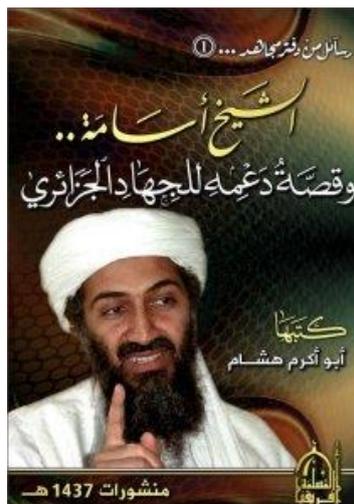
¹¹⁵ <http://goo.gl/4E1AKC>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.worldakhbar.com/maghreb/libya/55812.html>

for control in Libya: the Tripoli government affiliated with Libya Dawn, the internationally-recognized government in Tubruq, and the Government of National Accord of Libya led by Fayez al-Sarraj.¹¹⁷

Counter-terrorism efforts continued in the other North African countries. Although the Tunisia-Libya border was re-opened following the Ben Gerdane attacks, Tunisian authorities intended to improve the border security system with 25 million dollars in US aid.¹¹⁸ It was also reported that two extremist cells in Sidi Bouzid Province were dismantled.¹¹⁹ In Morocco, authorities reported the arrest of nine militants with ties to the IS in Libya, suspected of planning terrorist attacks in the Kingdom,¹²⁰ and in Algeria it was reported that security forces had killed three Islamist terrorists in Tizi Ouzou Province in eastern Algeria.¹²¹

- The Ifriqyya al-Muslima jihadist media group published an article titled, “Sheikh Osama...and the Story of his Support for Algerian Jihad” by a jihadist named Abu Akram Jisham.¹²²



The banner article

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

¹¹⁷ <http://goo.gl/tUSR1j>; <http://goo.gl/zo6dth>

¹¹⁸ <http://goo.gl/2fdweC>; <http://goo.gl/wsl0hW>

¹¹⁹ <http://goo.gl/J8cCbM>

¹²⁰ <http://goo.gl/GQeud>

¹²¹ http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2016/03/160326_algeria_terror_security_killing (Arabic).

¹²² <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (Arabic).

- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) published a claim of responsibility for the launch of an RPG at a structure belonging to British Petroleum and the Norwegian Statoil in Algeria. The announcement – which also included reference to the kidnapping incident in In Amenas in January 2013 – clarified that the launch of the rocket was designed to send a threatening message to foreign companies operating in Algeria. The announcement noted that, despite the opportunity to select local oil facilities as targets, a foreign facility was chosen instead and the organization did not even use all of the force at its disposal against it in order not to harm the Muslims who work there.¹²³

Libya

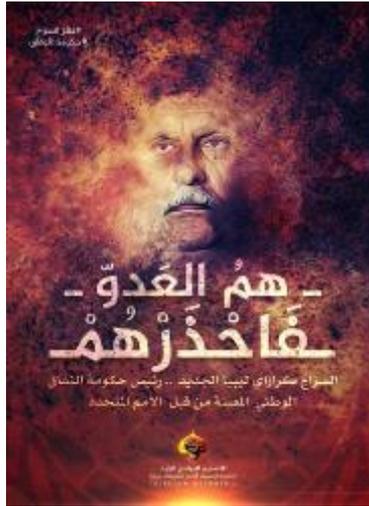
Ansar al-Sharia in Libya

- The jihadist media institution of Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, Al-Raya, published the following:
 - Filmed reviews of the battles waged by the organization in the Hawari area of Benghazi.¹²⁴
 - Designed posters on the topic of the “Crusader Attack” on Libya, the national unity government and the attacks by General Khalifa Haftar against a concrete factory in Benghazi that was under the organization’s control.¹²⁵

¹²³ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb>; <https://shamikh1.biz/vb> (both in Arabic).

¹²⁴ <https://twitter.com/tashtsha2/status/711332314215813120>

¹²⁵ <https://twitter.com/tashtsha2/status/710994285064278016>;
<https://twitter.com/al3mrooni/status/712909958065598464>;
https://pbs.twimg.com/media/CelKST-WIAA_M-f.jpg



Ansar al-Sharia warns against the unity government in Libya and its leader, Fayez al-Sarraj

The Islamic State

- The IS in Barqa Province published the following:
 - A video titled, “Residents of Libya, You Must Unite”. In the video, a masked man attacked the “apostate” Libyan government and called on the Libyan people to support the IS in Libya and swear allegiance to it in light of the attack that the “Crusaders” were planning together with the government. In addition, he called on the Sahawat to repent and join the ranks of the IS. The video included excerpts from the implementation of shari’a in Libya by the IS, including cutting off of the hands of thieves, etc.¹²⁶
 - Filmed reviews about the following topics: an attack against Sahawat forces in Derna, the distribution of dawah pamphlets in the city of Benghazi and the removal of national symbols from the public sphere.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ <https://uptostream.com/qztlevgjn17o>

¹²⁷ <https://akhbardawlatlislam3.wordpress.com>



The removal of Libya's national flag and its replacement with the black flag of the IS

- The IS in Tripoli Province published the following:
 - Filmed reviews regarding the enforcement of shari'a on the one hand (the execution of a Libyan soldier and lashes for people accused of adultery), and civilian issues on the other hand (raising sheep in the city of Sirte).¹²⁸

The Shura Council of Derna

- The jihadist institution of the Shura Council of Derna, Al-Sabeel, published the following:
 - A video titled, "Secret File: Together with the Security Brigade of the Shura Council of the Mujahideen in Derna and its Surroundings". The video followed the organization's security unit's thwarting of plans by IS militants to carry out a terrorist attack in Derna. The video included interviews with the supervisor of the security unit regarding the discovery of an IS terrorist cell, as well as interviews with members of the cell who were caught. For example, it was stated that the IS terrorist cell was composed of three groups: a planning group, a backup group, and a group that was responsible for executing the attack. The video then showed the names and photos of the members of the cell.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ <https://akhbardawlatislam3.wordpress.com>

¹²⁹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).



The video banner

- An announcement regarding the decision made by the organization's court to apply shari'a to the consumption of wine. For example, it stated that the organization intends to impose a monetary fine of 1,000-4,000 dinars on anyone involved in the sale and production of wine.¹³⁰
- An appeal to the kidnappers of 'Umar Muhamad al-Sayyid, a member of the organization, for his immediate release. According to the organization, al-Sayyid does not belong to the IS and any attempt to connect him to the organization is a lie.¹³¹

Mali

Ansar al-Din

- Ansar al-Din published the following:
 - A claim of responsibility (announcement no. 4) for the launch of several rockets towards the French Amachach military base in Mali on March 20, 2016.¹³²
 - A claim of responsibility (announcement no. 5) for a land mine explosion that took place as a convoy of MINUSMA forces passed by the French army base on March 22, 2016. In addition, the organization claimed responsibility for a land mine explosion that took place as a Malian army vehicle drove over it in the city of Manaka.¹³³

¹³⁰ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹³¹ <https://justpaste.it/stnj>

¹³² <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹³³ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

- A claim of responsibility (announcement no. 6) for a land mine explosion that targeted a Malian army armored vehicle on March 28, 2016. As a result of the explosion, two soldiers were killed and two others were injured.¹³⁴

Somalia

During the second 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 continued to attack Somali security forces' bases in the Lower Shabelle region.¹³⁵ On the other hand, Kenyan forces operating in the framework of African Union forces managed to kill 34 Al-Shabab fighters during clashes in southern Somalia.¹³⁶ In addition, clashes renewed between Al-Shabab and Somali security forces in the area of Puntland, in northeast Somalia, which led to casualties on both sides.¹³⁷ There are those who claim that there were two reasons for Al-Shabab's arrival in Puntland – to fight against those who left the organization and joined the IS in this area, and to expand the battle that was focused, until now, on the central and southern regions and not the northern and eastern regions.¹³⁸

The Caucasus

- The Islamic State in the Caucasus Province published a claim of responsibility for a suicide attack that was carried out at a police barrier in the village of Sirtych. According to the announcement, the suicide terrorist detonated his explosive belt at the barrier, killing and injuring several people.¹³⁹

The Indian Subcontinent

¹³⁴ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹³⁵ <http://goo.gl/AmFyhB>

¹³⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/kenyan-military-34-al-shabab-fighters-killed-160320171546165.html> (English).

¹³⁷ <http://goo.gl/ISoa8W>

¹³⁸ <http://goo.gl/TxPPIb>

¹³⁹ <https://goo.gl/qCBwCr>

- Al-Sahab jihadist media institution, which serves as a platform publications by Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, published the following:
 - A video titled, “The Battle – Part 1”, which documented the killing of a Pakistani officer as he rode a motorcycle in Dera Ismail Khan.¹⁴⁰
 - Additional videos in a series of publications titled, “Memories of Jihad”, parts 8-10.¹⁴¹
 - A video titled, “This is the Time to Fight!”¹⁴²

The West

Brussels Terrorist Attack

- On March 22, 2016 a series of suicide attacks were carried out in two locations in Brussels, the capital of Belgium. The first set of attacks was carried out at the Brussels Airport where two suicide attacks took place, and an hour and a half later another suicide attack took place at the Brussels metro station. 32 people were killed in these attacks, as well as the three suicide terrorists, and over 300 others were injured. The IS claimed responsibility for the attacks. The combined attacks in Brussels ignited discourse on social networks among jihad supporters who called for the wave of terrorism against Europe to continue. The following is a selection of publications from the jihadist discourse on this topic:
 - Al-Batar jihadist media institution, which is involved in publicity for the IS, published an article calling on supporters of the Islamic Caliphate in Belgium and France in particular, and in Europe and the West in general, to mimic the pattern of the terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris that were carried out by Mohammed Merah and Amedy Coulibaly. According to the author of the article, the Crusaders are systematically persecuting Muslims , imprisoning them and trampling their dignity. In light of this, the author called on Muslims to respond with force and to avenge this policy of oppression.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁴¹ <https://www.alfidaa.info/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁴² <https://ia601507.us.archive.org/0/items/AbhiToQitalKaWagtAayaHayUstadhFarooqAlSahab/>

¹⁴³ <https://justpaste.it/si9p> ; <https://twitter.com/Imran4AlShamy/status/712363326337110016>



A banner, in French, in which the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the Brussels attacks



Banners in praise of the Brussels attacks

- Al-Wafa jihadist media institution, which is involved in publicity for the IS, published an announcement warning British Prime Minister, David Cameron, that after Paris and Brussels, London will be the organization’s next target.¹⁴⁴
- Al-Thabat jihadist media institution, which is involved in publicity for the IS, published a video titled, “A Message to the Heretic West from Supporters of the Caliphate”. The video included various graphics and animation (for example, the explosion and collapse of the Eiffel Tower) alongside media images of the IS. Throughout the short clip, an English-speaker announcer whose voice was camouflaged could be heard threatening additional attacks in London, Brussels and Berlin, and vowing that the Caliphate’s soldiers will reach Christian lands.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ <https://twitter.com/alwafaa03133312>

¹⁴⁵ <https://goo.gl/6mUBma>



Animation of the destruction of the Eiffel Tower in an IS-supporting video

- The IS in Nineveh Province in Iraq published a video titled, “Appropriate Compensation” regarding the terrorist attacks that the organization carried out in Brussels. The video presented the attacks as a direct response to coalition forces’ attacks in Syria and Iraq, and it emphasized the fact that the NATO headquarters is located in Brussels. The second part of the video included interviews with IS fighters of Belgian origin who praised the attack and made other threats, in French, to the West.¹⁴⁶ Another video titled, “Eye for an Eye” was published by Al-Furat Province and showed a French fighter expressing similar messages and threats against the West.¹⁴⁷



Threats, in French, from Iraq against the backdrop of the terrorist attacks in Brussels

- The IS in Raqqah Province in Syria published a video titled, “Cast Terror into their Hearts” regarding the terrorist attacks in Brussels. In addition to photos from the attacks and threats against the West that appeared in previous videos, this video included street

¹⁴⁶ <https://issdarat.net/2016/03/25/jazawfaq/>

¹⁴⁷ <http://dabiq.ga/27753>

interviews with local residents in the city of Raqqah who praised the attacks and described them as revenge for coalition forces' attacks in Syria. Most of the video included statements by a Belgian fighter named Abu Hanifa al-Baljiki, who threatened the government of Belgium and claimed that routine life in Raqqah has been maintained despite the bombings. The last part of the video documented the execution of a man accused of spying.¹⁴⁸



A Belgian fighter in Raqqah making threats against his homeland

- The IS in Al-Khayr Province in Syria published a video regarding the attacks in Brussels. In the framework of the video, Belgium was presented as a Crusader country fighting against Muslims in light of, among other things, the sponsorship that it gives to NATO. Members of the organization were shown distributing announcements about the attacks to passer-by who blessed the organization's success in Belgium and looked forward to more attacks in the rest of the European capitals.¹⁴⁹
- The IS in Tripoli, Libya, published a video titled, "And What Is to Come Will Be More Devastating and Bitter". The video opened with several media clips about the terrorist attacks in Brussels and then showed several street interviews with residents who expressed their joy over the attacks, the distribution of candy, and claims of responsibility for the attacks. In addition, a fighter named Abu Umar al-Muhajer appeared in the video, making threats against the West and vowing additional attacks.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ <https://issdarat.wordpress.com/2016/03/26/qathf/>

¹⁴⁹ <https://issdarat.wordpress.com/2016/03/26/qathf/>

¹⁵⁰ <https://uptostream.com/mn6o4oywwefu>



The distribution of candy in Libya in celebration of the terrorist attacks in Brussels

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The Jihadi Websites Monitoring Group (JWMG) is a specialized research and analysis team at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). Composed of researchers fluent in Arabic, the JWMG monitors websites that support and serve the Global Jihad organizations. The unique characteristic of JWMG publications is the team's integration of diverse materials from a wide variety of Arabic sources. JWMG connects each source to larger trends, providing a complete understanding of events on both a local and a global scale.

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