



ICT
International Institute
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ICT Jihadi Monitoring Group

INSIGHTS

Al-Sumud Magazine – A Review

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Introduction

Al-Sumud is an Arabic language magazine published by the Taliban in Afghanistan, which covers the jihad objectives in the Afghan arena. The organization, which is also called the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan", is an Islamic jihad Sunni organization first active in Afghanistan in 1994, after the fall off the Soviet regime in that country. Initially, the organization was for the most part comprised of students pursuing Islamic Studies, and thus the new name "Taliban" – literally meaning "students". The organization ruled in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, when the United States entered Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks. Today, the organization is headed by Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada, appointed as leader in May 2016 after the death of the previous leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansour – who was killed by an American drone. Today the organization's activities focus on two areas: terror attacks against foreign forces in the country and against the Afghan government, and conquest of Afghan lands and the implementation of Sharia law in the occupied regions.

The Magazine

The Al-Sumud magazine was first published in 2006, and has been printed every month since then. Every issue contains an average of 44 pages. In April 2015 the magazine entered its eleventh year. The name of the magazine comes from the Arabic word "al-Sumud", which means "standing firm". The magazine was founded by Sa'ada Nasiruddin, better known as "Herawi" – who was close with Mullah Omar and was one of the more prominent Taliban activists at the beginning of 2008. According to reports, he used an alias because he was on the United States "Most Wanted" list. The purpose of the magazine was to publish interviews with the organization's officials, reports on uprisings, and news about events in Afghanistan. The articles was written in very simple Arabic, probably since it was the second language of the editors. Most of the articles in the magazine were authored by a number of steady writers, who also used pen names.

In 2007, the "worthy one" created an internet site for the magazine, which today can be found at: <http://alsomod.com>. On the first page of the magazine is the Afghan Taliban symbol, and text stating that the magazine is published by the "Islamic Emirates in Afghanistan" media center. It is also written on the first page that the entire issue of the magazine deals with three main subjects:

- An accurate depiction of the Islamic jihad in Afghanistan.

- Reports about one of the events taking place in the Afghan arena.
- Publicity regarding the Afghan problem.

Themes

The magazine can be divided into a number of central themes, such as those found in the February, March, and April 2016 editions:

1. Official statements by the Afghan Taliban

The first articles in the magazine are usually devoted to official announcements published by the Afghan Taliban, which also appear on the organization's official website - <http://alemara.org/?cat=8>. The announcements primarily include statements made by the organization's two official spokesmen, and official notifications which the organization publishes on behalf of the former leader - the "commander of the faithful" Mullah Akhtar Mansoor - and other leaders, such as the leader's deputy, Sirajuddin Haqqani. The magazine also publishes statements issued by the organization's Shura Council.



A message from the deputy leader of the Taliban, Sirajuddin Haqqani

2. Interviews with senior jihad activists in the organization

The second part of the magazine usually includes an interview with one of the senior jihad activists in the organization, from different provinces in Afghanistan, describing the victories of jihad activists in each area and the unity of the forces. Every interview concludes with a call for jihad.

- An interview with the head of the Military Council in the Sar-e Pol province in northern Afghanistan, Attaullah al-Amri. In the course of the interview al-Amri describes the successes and conquests of the mujahedeen in the Sar-e Pol province the previous year. He adds that the number of mujahedeen in the area had quadrupled over a period of one year, with the forces becoming more powerful and possessing more weaponry. He also said that about 1,000 soldiers and policemen assisting the enemy had surrendered to the mujahedeen in the area. He also claims that in the areas under control of the mujahedeen there were religious schools and sharia courts. He adds that there were no other groups in the province, aside from the "Islamic State" which was battling the enemy. At the end of the interview, al-Amri calls upon the mujahedeen to maintain their unity and continue engaging in jihad until the entire area was liberated.¹
- An interview with a senior jihad official in the Urozgan province in central Afghanistan, Mulla Aminullah Yousuf, who was close with Mullah Omar. During the interview Yousuf explains the importance of the region in strategic terms, and describes in depth the organization's conquests in the area and in the adjacent provinces in the previous year, during the "Azam" operation. He adds that in the provinces he refers to there are no other active organizations aside from the Afghan Taliban, and he claims that there are only two provinces where independent activists can be found. At the end of the interview Yousuf calls for a continuation of jihad in order to establish an Islamic government and expel the apostates.²

3. Promoting the Myth of the Shaheed – Martyr

In every issue of the magazine there is a column called "Our Heroic Martyrs", which describes the activity of different shaheeds who acted on behalf of the organization. Some of the shaheeds featured died in battle, such as Faisal Allah Salim, who was killed by an American drone in November 2015³. Other shaheeds featured were jihad fighters who had once been affiliated with the organization, and who died of various illnesses, such as Mullah Hassan Rahmani, who was a member of the organization's financial council, and who died of an illness

¹ Al-Somood (120), March 16, issue 03, p.4.

² Al-Somood (121), April 16, issue 04, p.6.

³ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 14, p.29.

in February 2016.⁴



4. Teaching about Jihad and the Traits of the Mujahedeen

- Publication of articles about education, religious, and Sharia courses for the mujahedeen. In the February issue, for example, there was an article about the Afghan Taliban military council offering three-day educational courses for the mujahedeen in different Afghan provinces during January. According to the article, the topics covered in the course were related to religion, the principles of jihad, the obligation to obey leaders, and the importance of preserving unity and the political goals of the Afghan Taliban, since the mujahedeen need to represent true Islam.⁵
- An article about the importance of religious zealotness in Muslim life.⁶
- An article about the need for mujahedeen to lead modest lives and make do with little. The author preaches about the need for the mujahedeen to be satisfied with what they have, and to be thankful, and not to desire and pursue monetary gain.⁷

5. Ideological Attacks

- Criticism of media channels which broadcast – according to the organization – enemy based propaganda against Islam that depicts the mujahedeen in a negative light.

⁴ Al-Somood (120), March 16, issue 12, p.27.

⁵ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 02, p.2.

⁶ Al-Somood (120), March 16, issue 15, p.32-33.

⁷ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 17, p.35-38.

- An article about the "al-Tolo" channel, which according to the author, promotes Western culture and employs people who are spies for the American enemy. The author goes on to state that the channel publicizes propaganda against mujahedeen and against Islam in general.⁸
- An article criticizing the Afghan media, which transmits Western messages and attempts to impose Western culture upon the Afghan populace. The author adds that the media takes advantage of the Afghan people by habitually using terms such as "equality", "freedom", and "Democracy".⁹
- A political attack on the United States and principles associated with it: Democracy and secular education.
 - An article about Obama's failures in every political area: nationally and internationally. The main criticism is directed towards the fact that American forces have not withdrawn from Afghanistan. The author claims that there are both intelligence and military reasons behind keeping the American forces in the country.¹⁰
 - An article about Afghan students who have scholarships to study in the West, and who are influenced by Western culture. The solution to this problem is that the mujahedeen and religious scholars must educate the younger generation.¹¹
 - An article about the Americanization of Afghan and Muslim women. The article criticizes the desire of the Afghan government to build a university in the country for women. The author claims that "liberating women" will lead to the death of women's honor, and will cause damage to the family unit.¹²

⁸ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 06, p.12.

⁹ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 18, p.39.

¹⁰ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 05, p.10.

¹¹ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 12, p.26.

¹² Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 16, p.33.



An article about the Americanization of Afghan Muslim women

6. Ideology

- An article about Afghan soldiers who deserted the army and joined the Taliban during battle, and turned their weapons against the enemy – the foreign forces and their allies in the country, and government activists.¹³
- A summary of the fighting in Afghanistan in 2015 – American losses in battle and the victories of the mujahedeen in the "Khaibar" and "Azam" operations, during which they were able to reach the centers of Afghan provinces.¹⁴
- An article about the moral reasons for mujahedeen victory.¹⁵

7. Reactions to the Syrian Arena

- An article covering human rights in Syria, which have been breached with the slaughter of Syrian civilians by Assad's regime and its allies. The article advocates jihad and claims that it is the only way to save the Syrian people.¹⁶

8. News Summary

In every issue of the magazine there is a column describing the crimes committed that month by conquerors against the Afghan people. In addition, in the last pages of every magazine there is a table summarizing the activities the organization engaged in throughout Afghanistan that month.

¹³ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 08, p.14.

¹⁴ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 09, p.16.

¹⁵ Al-Somood (120), March 16, issue 16, p.34-35.

¹⁶ Al-Somood (119), February 16, issue 10, p.22.

Target Audience

The magazine targets mainly Muslims who are not Afghans, and who support the Islamic goals. According to the Afghan Taliban's official website, the magazine is the only voice that publicizes in Arabic what is happening in Afghanistan, for the benefit of Muslims throughout the Arab world. The site adds that the magazine originated in Afghanistan in order to make the voices of Muslims persecuted by the apostates heard. The purpose of the magazine is to bring the truth to millions of Muslims outside of Afghanistan who are interested in the reality of what is occurring in that country, aside from the lies publicized by the enemy.¹⁷

The Media

The magazine encourages its readers to stay in touch. An email address appears on the first page, so that readers can make contact with the magazine. In addition, the magazine's website address is also provided, as well as its Twitter account.



Contact information for the magazine as it appears on the first page

Conclusion

The Al-Sumud magazine was first published on a monthly basis in 2006 by the Afghan Taliban organization, and in April 2016 entered its eleventh year of publication. The magazine is printed in Arabic, and is specifically directed towards non-Afghan Muslims throughout the Arab world. The goal of the magazine, according to its writers, is to present to its readers "the true picture" of what is happening in Afghanistan – in contrast to what they are exposed to via other media sources which take the side of the organization's opponents. In light of that, every issue also provides a summary of the "crimes" committed by foreign forces against the residents of Afghanistan, and the activities the organization's members took part in during the month each issue is published.

Of the various magazines reviewed it was found that this magazine customarily begins with official

¹⁷ <http://alemara.org/?p=20247>

announcements published by the Afghan Taliban, usually in the form of statements issued by the organization's official spokesmen, the organization's leader, or one of his deputies. Afterwards, articles devoted mainly to educating mujahedeen and specifying desired traits, to the organization's ideology in the jihad arena in Afghanistan, and to attacks against American ideology – and specifically against the continued US military activities in Afghanistan. In addition, most of the issues include interviews with senior jihad leaders in the organization, who glorify their victories and other activities in different regions of Afghanistan. There is also a special column that pays homage to the organization's *shaheeds* [martyrs].

With regard to the topics covered, the magazine primarily provides material that promotes the ideas and ideology of the organization (interviews with senior activists, and attacks on American policy, and Western values), and less on strategic matters. In addition, the magazine publishes no articles describing how jihad is carried out, but rather focuses on the type of religious lifestyle the mujahad is expected to adopt.

As mentioned above, the magazine also encourages its readers to maintain contact with the writers via an email address appearing on the first page of the magazine. The magazine's internet site is provided as well.

ABOUT THE ICT

Founded in 1996, the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) is one of the leading academic institutes for counter-terrorism in the world, facilitating international cooperation in the global struggle against terrorism. ICT is an independent think tank providing expertise in terrorism, counter-terrorism, homeland security, threat vulnerability and risk assessment, intelligence analysis and national security and defense policy. ICT is a non-profit organization located at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel which relies exclusively on private donations and revenue from events, projects and programs.

ABOUT THE JIHADI MONITORING GROUP

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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