



## **THE RISE OF CALIPHATES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

2014 witnessed the rise of two Islamic Caliphates; one born in the Middle East and the other born in Africa. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and Boko Haram ('Western education is forbidden'). The rise of Caliphates symbolizes a new international phenomenon within the bloodiest propagation of radical Islam. This article explains the causes and the environment that enabled the rise of these Caliphates. The paper presents a historical overview of the concept of the Caliphate, and then examines the parameters (internal and external) enabling and facilitating the revival of Caliphates in the Islamic world.

\* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

# The Rise of Caliphates

Mr. David Doukhan

In 2014 the world witnessed the rise of two Islamic Caliphates; one born in the Middle East and the other born in Africa. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) was established on June 30, 2014 in Iraq and Syria, while Boko Haram ('Western education is forbidden') was established on August 31, 2014 in Nigeria.

The rise of Caliphates symbolizes a new international phenomenon within the bloodiest propagation of radical Islam. This article will try to explain the causes and the environment that enabled the rise of these Caliphates. The paper will start with a short historical overview of the concept of the Caliphate, and then will examine the parameters (internal and external) enabling and facilitating the revival of Caliphates in the Islamic world.

What is Caliphate? Caliphate (khilafah: "succession" in Arabic)<sup>1</sup> is an institution that first emerged in the 7<sup>th</sup> century after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The original Caliphate was established in the year 632 A.D. in the Arabian Peninsula, and the title of Caliph, or Khalif, was given to the four rulers who immediately succeeded the Prophet. They are regarded by most Muslims (Shi`a Muslims are the exception) as model rulers and upholders of the Quran and Muhammad's Sunna.

The first Caliph, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, was a friend and companion of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni Muslims believe him to be the rightful heir of Muhammad, while Shi'ite Muslims dispute the legitimacy of his leadership and believe that Ali, his son-in-law, should have been chosen instead. The first four Caliphs are known as the 'Rashidun' in Sunni Islam, which means 'The Rightly Guided' or 'Righteous' Caliphs. The Islamic Empire expanded greatly during this time, from Arabia to Persia, Syria, Armenia, Egypt, and Cyprus. Their period of rule in the seventh-century was centered in Medina, and together with Muhammad's rule before them, was regarded as the "Golden age of Islam".

The institution of the Caliphate continued from the seventh century until its abolition in 1924. The Islamic world has been without a Caliph since the secular leader of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk,

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<sup>1</sup> The word 'Caliph' means successor, and designates the political leader of the Islamic community, or Ummah.

banished the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 after the fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. The Caliph was sometimes an autocratic ruler, and more often a figurehead who symbolized the unity of the Islamic state. His function, whether actual or ideal, was to maintain the Quranic-based law and the Islamic character of the state.

## **The Return of the Caliphate**

### **The ISIS Case**

By announcing the "restoration of the Caliphate" and by using the language of Caliph and Caliphate, ISIS is attempting to establish itself as the leader of a worldwide Muslim movement by mobilizing a broad coalition of support and erasing national boundaries.

In a video statement, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the head spokesperson of the Islamic State, said that the new Caliphate nullified the legality of all established Muslim bodies, from emirates to states, which now had to respect the authority of the new leader of the global Muslim community. He commanded all Muslims to accept and obey al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, now anointed 'Caliph Ibrahim' and Prophet Mohammed's successor. He called for Muslims around the world to pledge allegiance (in Arabic 'bayah') to the new Caliph.<sup>2</sup> Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi made it simple and clear by releasing a 19-minute tape demanding, "Muslims, rush to your state. Yes, it is your state."<sup>3</sup>

It is important to view the ISIS phenomenon as part of two wider trends within the Sunni Muslim world, which make ISIS a long-term ideological threat. First, the rise of ISIS should be seen in the context of the Sunni sense of alienation and separation that are common in the Arab society particularly in the Middle East. This sense of injustice, (in Arabic 'madhloumiya'), is a concept historically associated with Shi'ite Muslims.<sup>4</sup> Remarkably, Sunnis throughout this part of the

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<sup>2</sup>Liz Fields, Video Released of Islamic State Leader Calling on All Muslims to 'Obey Him', *Vice News*, 5.7.2014 <https://news.vice.com/article/video-released-of-islamic-state-leader-calling-on-all-muslims-to-obey-him> [Accessed on 28.9.2014]; Patrick Goodenough, "Pledge Allegiance to the new 'Caliph', ISIS Demands of World's Muslims in Ramadan Declaration," *CNS News*, June 29, 2014, <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/pledge-allegiance-new-caliph-isisdemands-world-s-muslims-ramadan> [Accessed on 28.9.2014].

<sup>3</sup> Tyler Durden, ISIS Caliphate Demands All Muslims Immigrate To "Islamic State", 1.7.2014. <http://www.zerohedge.com/news/2014-07-01/isis-caliphate-demands-all-muslims-immigrate-islamic-state> [Accessed on 28.9.2014].

<sup>4</sup> Shi'ite Muslims, the followers or party of Ali, believe that Muhammad's religious leadership, spiritual authority, and divine guidance were passed on to his descendants, beginning with his son-in-law and cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib,

region behave as a minority: paranoid, insecure and under siege. On the other hand, Shi'ite Muslims act more decisive, confident and well organized. With the active support of Iran (funds, equipment and ideology) as well as militias and proxies such as Hezbollah, Shi'ite Muslims are vocal, active and ever more present. For the first time in history, Shia fighters cross borders to carry out jihad, as can be seen in Syria and Iraq. These fighters are invited officially as consultants, under the pretext of protecting Shia temples and monuments.<sup>5</sup>

The Sunnis of the region, by comparison, feel they are under attack, with no defenders. The Arab Sunni world is extremely divided. This division is due to an ocean of dissimilar opinions on many issues and subjects that worsened during the "Arab Spring". The idea that fighting is the only way to get their rights, is gaining attraction. Even though the group that is fighting is vicious, some believe this is a price that must be paid before forming daunting militias to act as Sunnis' line of defense. In particular, they justify their actions, given the fact that Shia militias behaved in a similar way during the Iraqi civil war. Sunnis' traditional centers, whether political or religious, are perceived as standing alongside the oppressors, completely discredited or silent. ISIS emerged out of this desperate situation with the potential to fill this vacuum created by the weak governments of failed countries such as Syria and Iraq. This attitude can be further seen by the fact that clerics across the region have responded weakly to the atrocities committed by ISIS and its seizure of Sunni provinces in Iraq have been widely celebrated.

The second trend that makes ISIS a dangerous phenomenon is the neglected ideological shake-up of Sunni Islam's traditional Salafism.<sup>6</sup> This has been taking place more noticeably since the "Arab Spring", as Salafism became increasingly politicized.

Salafism, not to be confused with Wahabbism<sup>7</sup>, was traditionally limited and loyal to the political establishment. Salafist, religiously speaking, hold extremist views, but also tend to hold

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his daughter, Fatimah , and their sons, Hasan and Husayn. For more details refer to: John Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p 40.

<sup>5</sup> Will Fulton, Joseph Holliday, & Sam wyer, *Iranian strategy in Syria* (ISW- A joint Report by AEI's critical threats project & Institute for the Study of War) May 2013.

<sup>6</sup>Salafis are fundamentalists who believe in a return to the original ways of Islam. The word 'Salafi' comes from the Arabic phrase, 'as-salaf as-saliheen', which refers to the first three generations of Muslims (starting with the Companions of the Prophet), otherwise known as the Pious Predecessors.

<sup>7</sup>Wahabbism faith -it is an austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Koran. Strict Wahhabis believe that all those who don't practice their form of Islam are heathens and enemies. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703 – 22 June 1792) was the first modern Islamic fundamentalist and extremists. Wahhab made the

pragmatic political positions. Jihadists, who are heavily influenced by Salafi ideas are equally influenced by political Islam, started polarizing the Salafi landscape and gradually eroded traditional Salafism.

### **The Boko Haram Case**

A few months later, another Caliphate was declared in Africa by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau's self-declaration of the second Caliphate should be observed from different points of view, since the declaration created some disorder in the Islamic world from the theological aspect. According to classical Muslim political theorists, there can be only one Caliphate for the entire Muslim global community, or Ummah. In practice, though, there have been rival claimants to authority and even competing Caliphates throughout the history of Islam [e.g. the Abbasid in Baghdad (749-1258), Umayyad in the Iberian Peninsula (929-1031) and Fatimid in Cairo (909-1171)].

Therefore, Boko Haram's declaration should be regarded with the following in mind: (1) the group has declared its own Caliphate in Nigeria; (2) the group is trying to revive the Sokoto Caliphate created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Mallam (cleric) Usman dan Fodio, where the Caliphate was proclaimed across most of the modern day northern Nigeria and was considered separate from other Islamic kingdoms, such as the Ottoman Empire<sup>8</sup>; (3) the group has pledged allegiance to ISIS.

If the third option is the right one, then Abubakar Shekau agrees that al- Baghdadi is the Caliph... or the sole leader of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to have some background about Nigeria in order to follow and understand the power game within the country among the various forces. Nigeria is unofficially divided into six

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central point of his reform movement the principle that absolutely every idea added to Islam after the third century of the Muslim era (about 950 C.E.) was false and should be eliminated. Muslims, in order to be true Muslims, must adhere solely and strictly to the original beliefs set forth by Muhammad.

<sup>8</sup>The Sultan of Sokoto has the title *amir al-mu'minin* (in Arabic "commander of the faithful") and is considered the spiritual leader of the Sunni Muslim community in Nigeria. The Sultan carries influence in particular with the Fulanis and Hausas of northern Nigeria, but less with the Kanuris of Borno State.

<sup>9</sup>In a video movie dated July 26, 2014, Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau gave his 'bayah' (oath of allegiance) to 'caliph' Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi and the caliphate in Syria-Iraq. Refer to:

<http://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2014/07/boko-haram-leader-pledges-allegiance-to-isis-caliph-abu-baghdadi-video/> [accessed 28.9.2014].

geopolitical zones, with all 36 of the country's states and Abuja Federal Capital Territory falling into one of these zones. The geopolitical zones do not represent ethnic or religious homogeneity and are accepted in political discourse by almost all Nigerians. The North-West zone including Sokoto, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa and Zamfara formed the core area of influence of the Sokoto Caliphate. The Sokoto Caliphate lasted from 1804 until the British abolished the Caliphate in 1903. The British, however, retained the Sultan as a symbolic position in the newly established Northern Nigeria Protectorate. The current Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, maintains this status in present-day Nigeria. Boko Haram's operations are mostly in Borno State and Yobe State, located in the present-day North-East zone. This zone remains outside of the influence of the Sokoto Caliphate and were under the influence of the ethnic Kanuri-led Borno-Kanem Empire (1380-1893). Thus, the Shehu (traditional ruler) of Borno state is Abubakar Ibn Umar Garbai El-Kanemi, and not the ethnic Fulani Sultan of Sokoto,<sup>10</sup>

The Western influence of British colonialists caused a division among the people of Northern Nigeria, who were once united by Islam. This division saw, on one side, the so-called 'civilized' - by Western standards – elite (the traders, scribes and clerks) who were used by the British as agents of colonization. On the other side were the commoners, who vehemently resisted Western influence in the region. Written accounts show that not only did the system of governance cause animosity among the people living in Northern Nigeria; the system was also seen as a cheap and an ineffective colonization project. Dissatisfaction with Western influence also led to an emergence of Islamist fundamentalists among people of the Northeastern region of Nigeria.<sup>11</sup>

The reason Mohammed Yusuf founded Boko Haram appears to be that he saw an opportunity to exploit public outrage at government corruption by linking it to Western influence in governance. Yusuf wanted to gather young impressionable minds that had never gotten a fair deal from the government; he was fascinated with the idea of destroying the social, political and religious status in order to create a new path in which the wretched would inherit the earth. The religious aspects were not in the core of Yusuf's actions. Religious dimensions of the conflict

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<sup>10</sup>For more details about Nigeria see: Gerald McLoughlin and Clarence J. Bouchat, *Nigerian Unity: in the Balance* (Carlisle: PA, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) U.S. Army War College Press, June 2013), pp. 1-19.

<sup>11</sup>Moses Ochonu, "Colonialism within Colonialism: The Hausa-Caliphate Imaginary and the British Colonial Administration of the Nigerian Middle Belt," *African Studies Quarterly*, Volume 10, Issues 2 & 3 (Gainesville: University of Florida. Fall 2008), pp.95-127.

have been misconstrued as the primary driver of violence when, in fact, disenfranchisement and inequality are the root causes.<sup>12</sup>

## The Islamic World Reaction

### The ISIS Caliphate

The idea of creating an international Islamic state is certainly not new. It appeals to an ideal that emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was put forward by a number of people including al-Qaida's ideologue and founder Osama Bin Laden. There was talk that ISIS actions would reverse the Sykes-Picot Agreement, playing into the notions of the past, when the Muslim world became divided.<sup>13</sup> In order to rally broad support in the Muslim world, mobilize fighters, and legitimize what they wanted to do, ISIS talked about the creation of this identity.

The self-proclaimed 'Caliph Ibrahim' uses the name Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – an easily recognizable reference to the first Caliph in 632. To consolidate the title of Caliph, ISIS says al-Baghdadi has scholarly credentials: the announcement mentioned a lineage that purportedly stretches back to the Meccan tribe of Quraysh, to which the prophet Muhammad belonged.<sup>14</sup>

However, the Caliphate declaration will be seen as political rather than theological. The new 'Caliph Ibrahim', could well find himself challenged not only by Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq and Iran but also by other extremist Sunnis rising up to dispute his credentials. Far from being a symbol of unity in the Islamic world, he could intensify dissension and provoked further bitter fighting. Indeed the proclamation of a Caliphate provoked anger across much of the Arab world and in parallel, raised the question of the legitimacy of this proclamation.

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<sup>12</sup> To follow this thesis refer to Chris Kwaja's article who is a Lecturer and Researcher in the Centre for Conflict Management at the University of Jos, Nigeria; see: Chris Kwaja, "Nigeria's Pernicious Drivers of Ethno-Religious Conflict," *Africa Security Brief* No. 14(Washington, D.C. : Africa Center for Strategic Studies, July 2011).

<sup>13</sup> On May 19, 1916, representatives of Great Britain (Sir Mark Sykes) and France (Francois Georges Picot) secretly reach an accord, known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, by which most of the Arab lands under the rule of the Ottoman Empire are to be divided into British and French spheres of influence with the conclusion of World War I. Gianluca Mezzofiore, "Iraq ISIS crisis: Is this the end of Sykes-Picot?" *International Business Times*, June 30, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/iraq-isis-crisis-this-end-sykes-picot-1454751>. [Accessed on 28.9.2014]

<sup>14</sup> Refer to: *This Is the Promise of Allah*, the Caliphate proclamation and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the chosen caliph of all Muslims. The proclamation was given in Arabic by the press secretary of Ad Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-Iraq wa ash-Sham/Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), al-Adnani on June 30, 2014, see: [https://ia902505.us.archive.org/28/items/poa\\_25984/EN.pdf](https://ia902505.us.archive.org/28/items/poa_25984/EN.pdf) [Accessed on 28.9.2014].

Muslim religious authorities, advocacy groups, and Imams have come together to denounce the Islamic State's un-Islamic crimes against humanity and the creation of a Caliphate as an illusion. For example, Al-Azhar's Grand Mufti Shawqi Allam, Egypt's highest religious authority, denounced the Islamic State as a threat to Islam and said that the group both violates Sharia law and humanitarian law: "[They] give an opportunity for those who seek to harm us, to destroy us and interfere in our affairs with the [pretext of a] call to fight terrorism." The Grand Mufti added that the Caliphate is an illusion: "the announcement of Caliphate is nothing more than a mirage or dream."<sup>15</sup>

More than 120 Muslim leaders and scholars have co-signed an open letter to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader, arguing that the Islamic State Caliphate's establishment and practices are not legitimate in Islam. The letter includes a technical point-by-point criticism of ISIS' actions and ideology based on the Quran and classical religious texts.<sup>16</sup>

The letter is not the first instance of ISIS being denounced by Islamic scholars. The 21 senior clerics of Saudi Arabia labeled terrorism a "heinous crime" in a recent fatwa, or legal ruling, and the country has been increasingly vocal in its opposition to ISIS. The influential Sheikh Abdullah Bin Bayyah, a native of Mauritania who teaches in Saudi Arabia, issued a fatwa of his own condemning the establishment of a Caliphate by force. Bin Bayyah's words —"We must declare war on war so the outcome will be peace upon peace"— were cited by President Obama in his speech on September 24, 2014 to the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

The International Union of Muslim Scholars, led by influential Sunni cleric, Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, released a statement concerning the recent declaration of a Caliphate by ISIS. The Union said that the Caliphate declaration is "null and void" and "lacks any realistic or legitimate standards." It warned of serious consequences of the declaration on both Sunni Muslims in Iraq and the revolution in Syria. The union defined the concept of a Caliphate linguistically and

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<sup>15</sup> Al-Azhar: Islamic State Is Corrupt and "A Danger to Islam," *The Daily Star*, 13.8. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Filipa Ioannou, "Scholars' Open Letter Adds to Chorus of Muslim Leaders Condemning ISIS," *The Slate*, 25.9.2014.  
[http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_slatest/2014/09/25/muslims\\_scholars\\_open\\_letter\\_to\\_isis\\_baghdadi\\_caliphate\\_s\\_actions\\_against.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2014/09/25/muslims_scholars_open_letter_to_isis_baghdadi_caliphate_s_actions_against.html) [Accessed on 28.9.2014].

<sup>17</sup> For the full text of President Obama's 2014 address to the United Nations General Assembly refer to:  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/full-text-of-president-obamas-2014-address-to-the-united-nations-general-assembly/2014/09/24/88889e46-43f4-11e4-b437-1a7368204804\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/full-text-of-president-obamas-2014-address-to-the-united-nations-general-assembly/2014/09/24/88889e46-43f4-11e4-b437-1a7368204804_story.html) [Accessed 29.9.2014]



religiously. The leader of the Muslim Ummah (nation) should be "a representative" of the nation, based on the people's choice of that leader, or their representatives. "The mere announcement is not enough to establish a Caliphate," the statement added.<sup>18</sup> Even radical Islamic leaders condemned the self-proclamation. For example, Assem Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohamed al-Maqdesi, who was released from a Jordanian prison last June after serving a sentence for recruiting volunteers to fight in Afghanistan, called fighters loyal to the Islamic State group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi 'deviant'. Maqdesi, a supporter of the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, blamed the Islamic State group for its brutal methods. "Is this Caliphate a sanctuary for the vulnerable and a refuge for all Muslims, or a sword hanging over those Muslims who disagree with them?"<sup>19</sup>

### **The Boko Haram Caliphate**

The picture in Nigeria is quite similar to that of ISIS. The proclamation of a Caliphate was made by Boko Haram after they seized the city of Gwoza and raised their flag over the palace of the Emir of Gwoza, the town's traditional ruler. At this point, it is important to emphasize that the methodology of the announcement and its contents differ between ISIS and Boko Haram. Boko Haram's declaration was dispersed by Agence France Press who received a 52-minute video tape containing the speech (in Hausa). The speech sounds more like a threatening speech against non-believers and western countries rather than a programmatic Islamic agenda of a Caliphate establishment. In his speech, Abubakar Shekau does not refer to his status as the chosen Caliph and his suitability to fulfil the mission.<sup>20</sup>

Reaction to the disseminated video tape came on the spot from various sources in Nigeria. First, at the military level, by Nigerian Defence Spokesman Major General Chris Olukolade who said: 'Any group of terrorists laying claim to any portion of the country will not be allowed to get

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<sup>18</sup>Prominent scholars declare ISIS caliphate 'null and void', *Middle East Monitor*, 5.7.2014.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/12567-prominent-scholars-declare-isis-caliphate-null-and-void> [Accessed on 28.9.2014].

<sup>19</sup>Shafik Mandhai, "Muslim leaders reject Baghdadi's caliphate," *Al Jazeera*, 7.7.2014.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/muslim-leaders-reject-baghdadi-caliphate-20147744058773906.html> [Accessed on 28.9.2014].

<sup>20</sup>To follow Abubakar Shekau video check the following link: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/08/nigeria-rejects-boko-haram-caliphate-claim-20148251062176395.html> ; also in: <http://skygatenews.com/boko-haram-declares-gwasa-islamist-caliphate-nigeria-army-refutes-claims/> [Accessed 29.9.2014]

away with the expression of delusion and crime. [...] Operations to secure that area from the activities of the bandits are still on-going.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the Nigerian government refuted a claim by the militant group Boko Haram that it has set up an Islamic state in a town in the country's north-east saying that: "The claim is empty". Nigeria's Defence Ministry Musiliu Obanikoro Twitted: "That claim is empty; there can never be a republic within a republic. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Nigerian state is still intact. [...] Appropriate military operations to secure that area from the activities of the Bandits is still on-going".<sup>22</sup> The reactions from military and government officials show that they refute the declaration and threaten the group. On the ground they intensified their military operations against the group units and strong holds on one hand, and on the other hand, via Borno Governor Kashim Shettima, who advised residents of the state to remain calm following the proclamation of Islamic State in Gwoza by Boko Harm insurgents. In his speech he added: "I can assure the good people of Borno [...] that the state government is actively in touch and supporting security agencies deployed to the state. We are not just studying the situation with collaborative tact and urgency but indeed appropriate measures are being taken by the right authorities."<sup>23</sup> It is believed that the Governor's aim was to avert the population from fleeing the state. Since the beginning of the year, at least 400,000 Nigerians have been forced from their homes, fleeing as Boko Haram continues to push through the northeast. In the past year as many as a million people have fled to Maiduguri, the capital of Nigeria's Borno state.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ismail Omipidan and Philip Nwosu, Minister Dismisses Boko Haram Islamic Republic Declaration, *The Sun*, Voice of the Nation, 26.8.2014. <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/?p=78780> [Accessed 29.9.2014] ; also see at:<http://news.yahoo.com/nigeria-military-rejects-boko-haram-caliphate-claim-180154486.html> [Accessed 29.9.2014]

<sup>22</sup>"Boko Haram: Defence Ministry Says Boko Haram's 'Islamic Caliphate' Claim A Ruse," *The Nigerian Voice*, 25 August 2014. <http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/155983/1/boko-haram-defence-ministry-says-boko.html> [Accessed 29.9.2014]

<sup>23</sup>For the full text of Shettima's speech see: "Shettima calls for calm over Boko Haram Caliphate," *The Cable*, 26.8.2014. <http://www.thecable.ng/shettima-calls-for-calm-over-bharams-caliphate> [Accessed 29.9.2014]

<sup>24</sup>Read more on the issue in: Colin Schultz, "Boko Haram Has Displaced 400,000 People. Even As the Nigerian Military Fights Back," *smithsonian.com*, August 14, 2014 <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/nigerian-military-pushing-back-thousands-continue-flee-boko-haram-180952353/?no-ist> [Accessed 29.9.2014] ; refer also to Patrick McGroarty in Johannesburg and Gbenga Akingbule in Abuja, "Hundreds of Thousands of Nigerians Flee Boko Haram, Seek Sanctuary," *The Wall Street Journal*, 12.8.2014. <http://online.wsj.com/articles/hundreds-of-thousands-of-nigerians-flee-boko-haram-seek-sanctuary-1407855499> [Accessed 29.9.2014]

The Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) in a strong-worded statement signed by its leader, Professor Isiaq Akintola, said Boko Haram is un-Islamic, while it urged Nigerian Armed Forces to stand up and cleanse the country from the Boko Haram fighters. In the statement they rejected the declaration: "We of the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) hereby totally and unequivocally reject this declaration. We reaffirm our faith in the unity and indissolubility of Nigeria." The Muslim Rights Concern did not forget to mention that: "Whereas Boko Haram members are aware that the Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III is the indisputable leader of all Nigerian Muslims, they have refused to heed all his appeals. Instead of giving honour to Muslim leaders and Emirs, Boko Haram has killed some of them and attacked some others."<sup>25</sup>

## **Conclusion**

First, we should all agree that ISIS and Boko Haram are a genuine danger to the world. The highest degree of cruelty and savagery they have showed by killing masses of Muslims and non-Muslims must be condemned and stopped.

Second, in a very agitated Muslim world, Caliphates are not welcomed; in contrast they create reluctance and objection from theological points of view.

Third, in the case of Boko Haram Caliphate, it is obvious that it is threatening the integrity and the stability of Nigeria. The country is suffering from numerous internal problems due to its heterogenic populace (more than 175 tribes), brutal political atmosphere, corruption, etc.

Fourth, the events in Nigeria do affect neighbouring countries such as Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina-Faso, Niger and all parts of the Sahel zone, which serve as al-Qaeda affiliated group sanctuaries such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Arab Movement of AZAWAD-MAA (MAA claims to be a secular, non-terrorist organization, whose main objective is to defend the interests of the Arab people in northern Mali), and the Islamist Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (known as MUJAO - The Mouvement pour l'unification et le

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<sup>25</sup> Check the full document in: Sahara Reporters, "Muslim Group Rejects Boko Haram Claim of Forming Gwoza's Caliphate," 25.8.2014.

<http://saharareporters.com/2014/08/25/muslim-group-rejects-boko-haram-claim-forming-gwoza%E2%80%99s-caliphate> [Accessed 29.9.2014]

Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest). All the above mentioned groups are coordinating their operations with the aim of creating an Islamic Ummah in the region.

Fifth, ISIS represents an immediate danger to all countries in the Middle East, not only due to their achievement and victories on the battle field, but also due to their creation of a huge wave of refugees (Arabs, Kurds, and Yazid). The phenomena's of refugees is threatening the economy and stability in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon.

Lastly, the ISIS Caliphate has occupied large territories in Iraq and Syria without real military resistance, controlling areas where oil is abundant. This has directly challenged Western and Muslim countries; hence, they have to react physically to the threats by first by cutting the funds based on oil exportation from occupied zones. In the long range, if ISIS will succumb to the coalition attacks, Western and Muslim countries must internalize that ISIS serves as model for other groups with radical, religious and national aspirations. Therefore the free world, concerned by the ISIS and Boko Haram expansion, needs to develop a clear plan and a strategy to eradicate them.