

Periodical Review: Summary of Information from Jihadi Forums - The First Half of January 2013

This report summarizes notable events discussed on jihadist Web forums during the first half of January 2013. Following are the main points covered in this report:

- The Taliban-Pakistan beings publishing propaganda on jihadist Web forums promoting jihad against the US in Pakistan.
- Jihadist groups and contributors to jihadist Web forums call for terrorist attacks against French targets worldwide in retaliation for France's incursion into northern Mali.
- Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa launches a new jihadist Web forum, featuring its official manifesto.
- The Al-Nusra Front and other Salafi-jihadist groups take credit for the impressive military takeover of the Taftanaz Syrian Air Force Base in Idlib Province.
- January sees the launching of the Al-Nusra Front Aid Forum, a new jihadist Web forum focusing on the civil war in Syria and the actions of the Al-Nusra Front.
- Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen in Somalia exults at the failure of the French Army to rescue a hostage from Lower Shibla Governorate. The failed operation results in the deaths of several French Marines, including the commander of the operation, and many casualties.
- Jihadist Web forums announce the broadcasting of a new Internet radio station – Fajr [dawn] – the first jihadist radio station.

New Publications

Ideology

- A prominent contributor to the jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen, who calls himself Abu Shadiyya, posted an opinion piece titled, “The Jihad Movement – Crushing the State and Establishing the Caliphate. Martyr Osama's Bequest.”¹ Following is the crux of his opinion:

When Osama bin Laden was killed in May 2011, his legacy did not die with him. Abu Shadiyya, who is known to be a frequent blogger on Ansar Al-Mujahideen Web site and whose blogging nickname may have been inspired by the first Palestinian martyr after the nakba [catastrophe], does not hide his admiration for the late Al-Qaeda leader.

Bin Laden never put his ideology in complicated words. In fact, the simplicity of his ideological testament is striking; this may be one reason why it has not lost popularity since bin Laden's demise. In his understanding of political Islam, Bin Laden did not hesitate to castigate his Muslim brethren who had allegedly abandoned true Islamic values and beliefs. In his opinion piece (which appeared on January 3, 2013), Abu Shadiyya essentially summarized Bin Laden's last public statement, drawing a fine line between how jihadists view the Arab revolutions and how other Arabs perceive the same events.

One of the most crucial features of intra-Islamic disputes is the question of the caliphate which has been at the very core of jihadist terminology since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the 1920s and the inception of the Muslim Brotherhood a few years later. However, jihadists such as Abu Shadiyya understand that today's mainstream Islam, aptly represented by the political parties of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the Arab world has strayed from early conceptions of the “Islamic State”. In fact, there is no such thing as a “state” in jihadist discourse; rather, the caliphate is the only legitimate political entity able “to encompass Islam's magnitude”. Crucially, Bin Laden understood that revolutions in the Arab world must lead to the caliphate, and must not under any circumstances be a mere expression of

¹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

nationalism. If Muslims do not grasp the opportunity to establish the caliphate, the Muslim Brotherhood (which Abu Shadiyya calls a “Western henchman”) will spread its “evil ideology” not only in Tunisia and Egypt, but also in Syria, Iraq and, finally, in Jordan.

In April 2011, Bin Laden pointed out that “the Islamic world stands at a dangerous crossroads with an unprecedented chance”, which it must seize [immediately]...even while waiting for the right moment to “spring the trap”. In other words, the revolutionary storm must continue to blow through Arab lands, carrying with it the rightly-guided caliphate. As Abu Shadiyya points out, these revolutions must meet five preconditions:

1. Heralding the dissolution of the “state” in Islamic countries
2. Making Iraq an example to other nations of unification
3. Judiciously shaping revolutionary Sunni legislation in Iraq
4. Transmitting to Syria both the negative and the positive experiences of Iraqi statesmen and fighters
5. Tangibly supporting the Syrian revolution with “covert mechanisms”

As in other texts, by his usage of discriminative language Abu Shadiyya reveals himself to be nationalistic: Strikingly, he exhibits an Arabism – at one point even warning of “the Crusader and Persian offensive” – that would seem to catapult Jihadist ideology back to pre-Abbasid discriminatory thought. However, this is a rather subtle footnote to his general enthusiasm for being closer to [establishing] the caliphate than ever before.

- The jihadist Web forum Snam Al-Islam published a translation of a book in Kurdish titled, “Defense of the Muslim Lands is.. the Most Important Obligation” by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, a founder of Al-Qaeda and the spiritual mentor of Osama bin Laden.² The book contains one of Azzam’s more important fatwas, issued in 1982 during Soviet war in Afghanistan, stating that defensive jihad is a religious obligation incumbent on all Muslims.
- Nukhbat Al-’Ilaam Al-Jihadi [The Best of Jihadist Propaganda] published a letter by Sheikh Muhammad bin Mahmud al-Bahtiti (aka Abu Dujannah), titled, “The Law

² <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).

Regarding Gifts to Workers”. In the prologue, Abu Dujannah writes that he composed the letter at the request of Sheikh Abu Yahya al-Libi, a senior leader of Al-Qaeda who was assassinated in June 2012. The book itself addresses the laws pertaining to gifts given to anyone who aids jihad.³



The cover of an epistle by Abu Dujannah

- A visitor to the Hanein Web forum discussed the importance of the media, in general, and the Internet, in particular, to the dissemination of jihadist- Islamist ideology. He also praised the Islamic News Agency – Justice [Wikalat Al-Anbaa’ Al-Islamiyya – Haq], which he depicted as a unique, reliable and effective means of freely spreading the ideology of jihad.

The writer contended that the media is nothing but a propaganda weapon for promoting interests in times of peace as in times of war. He bolstered his claim by reviewing the use of the media by various societies, East and West, in the distant and more recent past, paying particular attention to the use by Arab tribes during the jaihiliya [pre-Islamic time of ignorance] of hymns and odes praising allies and condemning enemies. He also cited Napoleon Bonaparte as having used a printing press in Cairo to publish a newspaper for the first time in Egypt, after his conquest of that country. The writer also cited the Jews as having succeeded in “controlling the media around the world” to promote their ambitions and public status. He therefore deduced that the media are subjective by nature, and not ideal for properly spreading the message of Islam. The Internet was preferable, he claimed; through it, jihad was

³ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

expanding its range throughout the world every day. He stressed that the establishment of the Islamic caliphate would be served by throwing off the chains of global media.⁴

Strategy

- A visitor to the jihadist Web forum Hanein posted a link to a training video titled, “For the Novice Jihadist: How to Search Rooms and Buildings”.⁵ Another visitor to the same forum posted a link to a training video titled, “How to Dress and Equip Oneself for an Operation”.⁶



Images from training videos on equipping oneself for jihad (l.) and searching rooms and buildings (r.)

Guidebooks and Instruction Pamphlets

- The Al-Raya media outlet, which functions under the auspices of the Army of the Muslim Nation in Jerusalem, a Salafi-jihadist group active in the Gaza Strip, published a training video on manufacturing a 107 missile for the mujahideen in Syria.⁷



How to produce a 107 missile

⁴ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁵ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁶ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁷ <http://vb.beit-almagdes.net> (Arabic).

Promoting the Myth of the Martyr

- A visitor to the jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen posted a link to a video clip documenting the funeral procession of Mohammad Ahmad Quneita (aka Abu Omar al-Maqdisi), who fought with Syrian rebels against Bashar al-Assad's regime.⁸

Formerly a member of the Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Quneita is known to have trained their forces. Shortly after Eid Al-Fitr in September 2012, he left for Syria, where he served as a military instructor for the rebel army on the border with Turkey. He was killed on December 27, 2012 during Syrian Army mortar fire on Maarat Al-Numaan, in northeastern Syria, and was buried in Sarmada, near the Turkish border. He left behind a wife and three children.



Mohammad Ahmad Quneita, aka Abu Omar al-Maqdisi

- A supervisor of the Al-Nusra Front Aid Forum published an exclusive photo of a martyr [shahid] named Muhammad al-Zalitani Abu Qasurah al-Gharib (b. 1994), who came to Syria from Benghazi, Libya. He was killed in Damascus by Syrian security forces on January 5, 2013.⁹

⁸ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁹ <http://www.jalnosra.com/vb> (Arabic).



A banner in memory of Abu Qasura al-Gharib

- The Salafi-jihadist movement in Jordan announced the death of Sheikh Riyad Hdeib (aka Abu Hamzah al-Urduni, r.) age 32, who had as the mufti of the Al-Nusra Front in the Deraa region of southern Syria. He was killed in a bombing raid by the Syrian Air Force. Abu Muhammad al-Tahawi, a prominent Salafi-jihadist in Jordan, noted that Abu Hamza had left Jordan in May 2012 to join the Al-Nusra Front near Deraa. According to al-Tahawi, Abu Hamza had gained combat experience in Iraq, although it was not clear exactly when or for how long he had fought there. During his time in Jordan, Abu Hamza had worked as a teacher and imam [prayer leader] at the Al-Bayan Mosque in Al-Jabihaa. Abu Hamza, who had a doctorate in hadith [oral tradition],¹⁰ left a wife and six children.



It is estimated that hundreds of Jordanian Salafi-jihadists are participating in the jihad in Syria; to date, only 13 of them have been declared dead. Several months ago, the Jordanian authorities apprehended several armed Salafi-jihadists who were trying to cross the border into Syria.

- Jund Al-Sham, a jihadist group formed on December 27, 2012, published a video clip dedicated to martyrs from another Salafi-jihadist group, Fath Al-Islam, who were killed in Syria.¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.marsad.net/index.php> (Arabic).

¹¹ <http://dawaalhaq.wordpress.com> (Arabic).

Magazines

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan published the latest issues of its jihadist magazines in Arabic, English and Urdu: Issue Nos. 80 (for December 2012-January 2013) and 81 (for January-February 2013) of *Al-Sumud* (both 56 pages), in Arabic;¹² Issue No. 48 (for December 2012) of *In Fight* in English (165 pages); Issue No. 49 (for January 2013) of *Nawai Afghan Jihad* in Urdu (71 pages);¹³ and Issue No. 10 of *Shariat* in Urdu (52 pages).¹⁴



***Nawai Afghan Jihad* (l.) and two issues of *Al-Sumud* (c. and r.)**

- Issue No. 43 of *Al-Waqi'* (29 pages) appeared. It focuses on international news and news of jihad.¹⁵

¹² <http://theunjustmedia.com> (English).

¹³ <http://nawiafghan.blogspot.co.il/> (Urdu).

¹⁴ <http://theunjustmedia.com/> (English).

¹⁵ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).



The cover of *Al-Waqi'*

Reports from the Field

Afghanistan-Pakistan

During the first week of January 2013, the official website of the Taliban in Afghanistan published a paper declaring a holy war [jihad] against the Afghan government, should it allow the US to keep any residual troops in the country after the US Army's slated withdrawal in 2014. Recently, several hundred Taliban fighters were freed, adding to the nearly 3,000 mujahideen in border regions – despite continuous US drone strikes meant to dismantle Taliban and Al-Qaeda cells in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan published a statistical report summarizing its activity for December 2012 (19 pages), as well as the casualties and property damage it and its enemies sustained, and mapping the location and type of suicide bombings. The Emirate also published a five-page report of the alleged war crimes of the US, NATO, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghani administration.¹⁶

¹⁶ <http://theunjustmedia.com> (English).



A report of allied war crimes (I.) and the statistical abstract for December 2012 of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

- During the first half of January 2013, the Taliban-Pakistan (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan) published the following:
 - Announcement No. 1, introducing the group’s propaganda activity on jihadist Web sites, including news and reports concerning jihad. The announcement stated that Umar Media, which issues its publications through the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), was the only legitimate, official media outlet of the Pakistani Taliban and that all other publications in the group’s name should be mistrusted. The Taliban-Pakistan also announced its intention to launch an official Web site dedicated to covering jihad against the US and its allies in Pakistan.¹⁷
 - Announcement No. 2, taking responsibility for the takeover by 27 mujahideen of a Pakistani Army base in South Waziristan on December 4, 2012. The base was burned to the ground, so that the Pakistani Army would never be able to use it again.¹⁸
 - Announcement No. 3, taking responsibility for an ambush against a Pakistani Army convoy, on December 17, 2012.¹⁹
 - Announcement No. 4, concerning an alleged crime by the Pakistani Army: the killing of nine captive mujahideen from the Mehsud Tribe, on December 30, 2012.

¹⁷ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁸ <http://as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁹ <http://aljahad.com/vb> (Arabic).

According to the announcement, The Army dumped the fighters' corpses in the street.²⁰

- A video clip of an interview with the emir of the Taliban-Pakistan, Hakimullah Mehsud, and his deputy, Wali-ur-Rehman Mehsud, on the enemy media's slander of the movement, and other topics.²¹ The emir instructed the Taliban mujahideen to cease their attacks against Pakistani government forces in North Waziristan, and turn their attention to attacking NATO forces in Afghanistan. The video clip was issued following increasing tension between Pakistani Army forces in North Waziristan and Taliban-Pakistan forces.



Wali-ur-Rahman (l.) and Hakimullah Mehsud (r.)

Iraq

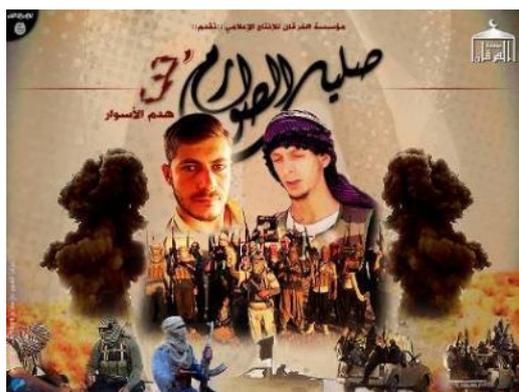
- The Islamic State of Iraq took responsibility for two terrorist attacks on Iraqi security forces during December 2012, as revenge for the incarceration and degradation of Sunni Muslim women. The Islamic State of Iraq also proclaimed its for the “Sunni Spring” in Iraq.²²
- On January 11, 2013, the Al-Furqan” media outlet, which functions under the auspices of the Islamic State of Iraq, published a video clip titled “The Clatter of Swords Part 3: Destruction of the Walls”, which documents the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq.²³

²⁰ <http://aljahad.com/vb> (Arabic).

²¹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

²² <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

²³ <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).



“The Clatter of Swords Part 3”

- The jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen published an interview conducted by Shumukh Al-Islam, another prominent jihadist Web forum, with a mujahid being held in an Iraqi prison. In the interview, the prisoner spoke of repeatedly being abused, and compared his Iraqi prison to an Iranian one. Addressing the ulama’ [scholars], he stressed that there was no difference between Al-Maliki’s government in Iraq and Bashar al-Assad’s government in Syria.²⁴ It is worth noting that the interview may have been issued by Ansar Al-Mujahideen because Shumukh Al-Islam ceased operating sometime in December or January.
- A prominent contributor to the jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen who calls himself Abu al-Qa’qa’a, published an article titled, “The Iraqi Spring: A Conflict of Unyielding Intentions”.²⁵

This publication is a response to recent events in civil war-torn Iraq. Following massive protests by the country's Sunni minority, 11 Sunni women who had been facing criminal charges were released; these events coincided with the Shi’ite festival of Arbaeen, during which thousands of men and women go on pilgrimage to Karbala. Al-Qa'aqa'a used these events to highlight what he and other Iraqi Sunnis perceive as discrimination against them. The Shi'ite oppressor – namely the government of Nuri al-Maliki – seems to be weakening as the Syrian revolt continues to take a bloody toll on al-Maliki's close ally, Bashar al-Assad, who nevertheless continues to cling to his “throne”. According to Abu al-Qa’qa’a, the Iraqi Spring must continue, and with it the efforts of the Islamic State of Iraq. Protests and strikes throughout the country

²⁴ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

²⁵ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> z

“shield” the Sunni population in its opposition to the Shi'ite alliance led by Iran. Abu al-Qa'aqa'a criticizes Al-Maliki for responding to these protests like “a terrorist” – much as does the Peninsula Shield Force to the protests of Bahrain's Shi'ites, which have been raging since 2011.

Interestingly, Abu al-Qa'aqa'a's call for action is entirely political; he does not use religious justifications to argue his cause. His approach is congruent with a school of jihadism that ascribes more importance to political action than to religious purism. He does give a nod to Islam by using the traditional blessings at the beginning and end of his article. He concludes, heuristically, that the establishment of an Islamic state within Iraq is the only solution to the [Sunnis'] problem, since corrupt rulers like those “in the West and US”, and like Arab leaders such as “Ibn Sa'ud or Ibn Hussein”, cannot be trusted with positive renewal. Thus, the freedom of the Syrian and Iraqi people can only be guaranteed by the dogged persistence of the protests.

Given the lack of tangible arguments or logical reasoning made in this article, Abu al-Qa'aqa'a's call for insurgency seems merely to disguise a discriminatory inter-denominational conflict that bears little if any resemblance to the “Arab Spring”.

- The Ansar Al-Alam Media Center, which functions under the auspices of the Snam Al-Islam Web forum, published a documentary video clip titled “The Change”. The clip tells the story of a US soldier's experiences in Iraq and how they changed his thinking. According to Ansar Al-Alam, “...this documentary sheds light on an Iraqi man [sic] who witnessed this war, describing [its] tragic events, and the change in his life caused by this war”.²⁶
- The Islamic Group in Iraq, a coalition of 17 Islamic revivalist groups founded on February 24, 2010, declared that it would wage jihad against the Iraqi government until Iraq was liberated from the Shi'ite rule of the al-Maliki government. Under al-Maliki's rule, Iraq is suffering from administrative and financial corruption, arrests, devastation and other evils. The Islamic Group in Iraq therefore calls all armed factions, clerics, and scholars to revolt until the current regime can be toppled. It also calls on Iraq's Sunnis in Iraq to aid one another.²⁷

²⁶ <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).

²⁷ <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).

- The jihadist media outlet Al-Masada launched a virtual workshop on designing and publishing banners called, “Who Will Stand Alongside the Free Women in Shi’ite Prisons? Support for the Sunni Spring and the Sunnis”. Al-Masada asked Web surfers to design banners in support of one of the Sunni women incarcerated in a prison in Iraq, and publish them on the Ansar Al-Mujahideen jihadist Web forum.²⁸



The banner reads, “Oh Sunnis, help your sisters in Shi’ite prisons in Iraq who suffer torture, humiliation and rape!! Let us act for their salvation...We are responsible for them”

- Since the incarceration last December of Sunni government officials, including the security detail of Sunni Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi, Sunni protests against the government of Nuri Al-Maliki have been growing. During the first half of January 2013, support for and identification with these protests – photographs of rallies, anti-government caricatures and the like – were posted on the jihadist Web forum Hanein by Web surfers from all over the Arab world.²⁹



A pro-Sunni caricature posted Hanein, whose caption reads, “The end of the dictatorship in Iraq”

²⁸ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

²⁹ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

One opinion paper praising the Sunni protests in Iraq was issued on behalf of the spokesperson of a Sunni Sufi organization called The Army of Men of the Naqshabandi Order [Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshabandi],³⁰ which is active in northern Iraq. The paper encouraged the Sunni minority to shirk Shi'ite rule, which trammled their rights time and again, by waging jihad until the country had been liberated from all “forms of occupation”, which are inextricably tied to the Shi'ite community in Iraq and elsewhere (that is, Iran). According to the paper, the current sad state of Sunni society is due to the constitution drafted by the Zionists [sic] and signed by Shi'ite agents of the occupation who wish to deny Iraq its Arab and Muslim identity, to divide the country into cantons, and to commit murder under protection of the law.³¹ The first task of Iraq's Sunnis, then, is to overturn the constitution, which the paper called “fraudulent and false”. The paper clarified that The Army of Men of the Naqshabandi Order wishes to protect the Iraqi people from the “ethnic fangs” of current Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, by virtue of its good conduct, religious observance, and commitment to chopping off the hand of any criminal who seeks to do harm to any Iraqi – for the good of the country's unity. The paper urged Sunni government officials and dignitaries, policemen and soldiers to join this legitimate fight against the government.³²



The logo of The Army of Men of the Naqshabandi Order

³⁰ <http://ia801609.us.archive.org> (English).

³¹ www.iraq-ild.org (Arabic).

³² <http://hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

The Arabian Peninsula

During the first half of January 2013, Yemeni security forces raided a terrorist hideout near Sana'a. Also during early January, fighters affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) assassinated prominent tribal leader Sheikh Ali Abd al-Salaam (aka Mullah Zabaar) in the mountains surrounding Al-Mahfad in southern Yemen – an area known for its high density of Al-Qaeda cells. Abd al-Salaam had been an asset to negotiations between AQAP and the Yemeni government.

Al-Sham [Greater Syria]

- During the first half of January 2013, the Al-Nusra Front published the following:
 - Announcement Nos. 188-195, taking responsibility for several military operations against Syrian security forces, including the killing of four officers on December 16, 2012 near Air Force Intelligence headquarters in the Al-Khalifiyya neighborhood of Aleppo.³³

The Al-Nusra Front, together with the Syrian Islamic Front [Jabha Al-Suriyya Al-Islamiyya], also credited itself with the capture and “liberation” of the Taftanaz Air Force Base in Idlib Province – a significant military achievement.³⁴ This achievement preoccupied visitors to the jihadist Web forum Hanein, who posted accolades, video clips – including one dedicated to a particular martyr of the Al-Nusra Front – photographs and eyewitness descriptions of the operation, bragging about the extent of death and destruction left by the operation.³⁵

Interestingly, one post was very angry that the operation had been attributed by the media to the Free Syrian Army, a key [secular] opposition force composed, in part, of Syrian Army deserters. The post ranted, “...as usual, the media attributed the operation the Free Syrian Army, which did not even take part in it”. It then listed the actual participants in the operation: The Free People of Al-Sham [Kataib Ahrar Al-Sham]; The Islamic Vanguard [Jama'at Al-Tali'a Al-Islamiyaa]; and the Daud Brigades [Liwa' Daud] – all jihadist groups active in Idlib Province in northwest Syria. The post also cited Islamic Dawn [Harakat Al-Fajr Al-Islamiyya]

³³ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb>; <http://jalnosra.com/vb> (both in Arabic).

³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=514504751904538&set=a.318832241471791.72803.318464171508598&type=1&theater> (Arabic).

³⁵ <http://hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

which is active in Aleppo Province in northern Syria, and the Al-Nusra Front, which is an Al-Qaeda affiliate.³⁶



From the Ansar Al-Mujahideen Web forum: a photograph crediting the jihadist groups that captured the Taftanaz Air Force Base

- A video clip documenting a suicide car bomb attack on a Syrian Army base on November 12, 2012, which resulted in the death of nearly 200 Syrian Army soldiers and the injury of hundreds of others. The clip was one in a series titled, “The Beginning of the End: Part 4”.³⁷
- A video clip titled “The Invasion of Commander Abu ‘Aisha”, documenting a suicide attack at the roadblock near the French Hospital in Aleppo, which killed over 300 supporters of the Syrian regime. The clip also shows the last will and testament of the suicide bomber, Abu ‘Awn Al-Shamali.³⁸



A segment from “The Invasion of Commander Abu ‘Aisha”

³⁶ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

³⁷ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

³⁸ <http://www.snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).

- On January 3, 2012 a new jihadist Web forum was launched: The Al-Nusra Front Aid Forum (<http://www.jalnosra.com/vb>). The Forum focuses on the armed struggle against the Ba’athist regime in Syria and the actions of Al-Qaeda affiliate The Al-Nusra Front.³⁹



The Al-Nusra Front Aid Forum

- The Qabidun ‘Ala Al-Jamr media outlet, which functions under the auspices of the jihadist Web forum Snam Al-Islam, published an article by Sheikh Abu Harith al-Maqdisi, a member of Ansar Al-Sharia in Syria, titled, “Woe to the Arabs from the Approaching Trouble”. In it, Abu Harith al-Maqdisi warns against the Christian and Shi’ite plots to divide Arab countries into areas of influence, which he claims are supported by the Freemasons and Zionists. According to Abu Harith al-Maqdisi, the Christians and Shi’ites wish to profit from the Arab revolutions with a minimum of losses.⁴⁰
- A member of the jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen posted a link to a video clip showing members of the Al-Nusra Front distributing heating and cooking gas.⁴¹ The video is part of the Al-Nusra Front’s effort to advertise its assistance to the civilian population, with the aim of strengthening its popular base of support.
- On December 27, 2012, Jund Al-Sham, A salafi-jihadist group active in Homs, issued a video clip declaring its establishment. The group is headed by Abu Sulayman al-Muhajir (aka Khaled Mahmud), who was previously an assistant to Sheikh Shaker al-Absi (1955-2008), the former leader of Fatah Al-Islam, Al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Lebanon.

³⁹ <http://www.jalnosra.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁰ <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).

⁴¹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

Fatah Al-Islam is best known for its infamous confrontation with the Lebanese Army at the Palestinian refugee camp Nahr Al-Bared in May 2007, which all but wiped it out. According to Arab sources, Jund Al-Sham is indeed tied to Fatah Al-Islam.⁴²



The banner for the video clip announcing the establishment of Jund Al-Sham

- A member of the jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen posted photographs and video clips showing members of the shabiha [a militia subordinate to the Syrian regime] allegedly involved in massacring civilians. He called for settling the score with them.⁴³



Photographs of members of Syria's infamous shabiha

- On January 5, 2013 a visitor to the Facebook page Issues of the Nation, which is dedicated to jihad, claimed that the Syrian government had begun building a new military airfield. He posted a photo of the site and urged mujahideen to attack it.⁴⁴

⁴² <http://www.syriatruth.org>; <http://www.youtube.com> (both in Arabic).

⁴³ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=495023843874436&set=a.493215280721959.114470.479850342058453&type=1&theater> (Arabic).



The alleged site of a new Syrian military airfield

- On January 6, 2013, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad gave a rare public address, in which he outlined a proposed consensual ceasefire. At the same time, Assad stated he would not initiate dialog with the rebels, adding that the “the solution must be comprehensive. It must be political, social and include war on terror”.

Assad’s speech aroused the visitors to jihadist Web forums to respond. One Web surfer calling himself Abu al-Qa’aq’a Mujahid2 analyzed the speech and Syria’s current strategic position, claiming that, with Iranian and Russian support, Bashar al-Assad had decided to continue fighting the war to the bitter end. He stressed that the war was jeopardized by Assad’s intention to reach a solution that will not be acceptable to Syria’s Sunnis, but rather only to the “opposition” that is loyal to the government. According to Abu al-Qa’aq’a Mujahid2, Assad will hold elections that result in the (re)election of the Ba’ath Party – Assad’s party – and in his own continued presidency. Assad’s conduct and speech show a total disregard for the rebels and their military efforts. Abu al-Qa’aq’a Mujahid2 noted that this speech had garnered reserved support from the West, which hopes that Assad’s regime will be willing to end the crisis peacefully. Abu al-Qa’aq’a Mujahid2 believes that the Syrian revolution is in danger from (a) increased pressure from the Syrian government and its allies, which will block transportation, halting the provision of logistical aid and stymieing the rebels’ military activity; (b) the opposition loyal to Assad’s government; (c) parliamentary and presidential elections. He therefore suggests that the armed groups in Syria prepare for the next phase of the conflict, in which they will be required to confront the government’s attempts to prevent money transfers. This they must do, first and foremost, by uniting their ranks. To cope with the possibility of imminent

elections, Abu al-Qa'qa'a Mujahid² recommends that rebel groups assassinate prominent political figures, following the model established by the Islamic State of Iraq.⁴⁵

- Members of the jihadist Web forum Hanein write almost incessantly about civil war in Syria, calling on all Muslims to support the families of the refugees in Egypt, for example, by every means possible, including the provision of funds, medications and even simple supplies, such as blankets. At the same time, contributors to the forum insist that their comments and those on social networks are insufficient, and that active aid is needed.⁴⁶
- The Haqq Islamic news agency, which is affiliated with global jihad, asked Muslims in Lebanon to participate in a demonstration organized by the families of prisoners in the Roumieh Prison in Beirut, Lebanon, on January 18, 2013 after the Friday noon prayer. The demonstrators plan to mitigate for the prisoners' release.⁴⁷



A call to join a demonstration protesting the incarceration of Sunnis in Lebanon

- The jihadist Web forum Minbar Al-'Ilami Al-Jihadi posted condolences on the death of the wife of Sheikh Muhammad al-Maqdisi,⁴⁸ who is considered the father of Salafi-jihadism in Jordan and the founder of the Minbar al-Tawhid wal-Jihad Web site. He is currently serving a prison term in Jordan for supporting terrorists in Chechnya.
- A visitor to the Ansar Al-Mujahideen Web forum reported to have learned that Jordanian Intelligence was planning to assassinate leaders of the Free Syrian Army, and frame the mujahideen in Syria for the assassination so as to thwart jihad and sow dissent among the mujahideen fighting Bashar al-Assad's regime. The contributor claims to be familiar with the rich history of attempts by Jordanian Intelligence to

⁴⁵ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁶ <http://hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁷ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁴⁸ <http://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb> (Arabic).

impede the mujahideen, most prominent of which was its assassination of Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, a founder of Al-Qaeda, in 1989. At the time, Jordanian Intelligence spread the rumor Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri and his cohorts were responsible for the assassination. The mujahideen in Syria must therefore be aware of the intentions of Jordanian Intelligence in Syrian arena. Another visitor to the site responded that if this report were true, then a series of terrorist attacks should be perpetrated throughout Jordan, so as to incite panic and bring down the Jordanian government. Other visitors to the site accused Jordan of collaborating with the British, and wished that the Jordanian people would have their own “Arab Spring” against the Hashemite monarchy.⁴⁹

- The administrator of the Issues of the Nation Facebook page, which focuses on news of jihad, criticized the Jordanian Army for training with the US Army, and its efforts to prevent Syria’s chemical weapons from falling into the hands of the mujahideen.⁵⁰



The text reads, “The King of Jordan...a lucrative trade”

The Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip

Western diplomatic sources estimate that foreign jihadists, possibly from Yemen and Somalia, are among the hundreds of extremists operating in the increasingly lawless Sinai Peninsula.⁵¹ Egyptian authorities are particularly concerned lest Islamist militants escalate their attacks on security forces, in retaliation for the Egyptian Army’s promise not to stop its operations in the Sinai Peninsula or negotiate with the militants, Arab media sources

⁴⁹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=497416376968516&set=a.493215280721959.114470.479850342058453&type=1&theater> (Arabic).

⁵¹ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/06/in-the-north-sinai-jihadis-stand-down-the-egyptian-government.html> (English).

reported.⁵² Media sources added that the militants had determined to show the Egyptian Army that its efforts to reign them in, which have been going on since August 2012, have been fruitless. The Sinai Peninsula continues to be a conduit for the transfer of weapons, primarily from Libya into the Gaza Strip. In recent weeks, Egyptian authorities captured short-range rockets and anti-aircraft missiles headed for the Gaza Strip.⁵³

- On January 4, 2013, Ansar Beit Al-Maqdes [Supporters of Jerusalem], which is active in the Sinai Peninsula, published a video clip titled, “The Punitive Invasion against Offenders of the Dear Prophet’s Honor.”⁵⁴ The video focuses on an attack perpetrated by three members of the group on the Israel-Egypt border on September 21, 2012. Ansar Beit Al-Maqdes [Supporters of Jerusalem] first surfaced on July 24, 2012, when it took responsibility for a series of explosions, beginning in 2011, along the Egyptian gas pipeline to Israel and Jordan.



- During the first half of January 2013, the Raya jihadist media institution, which functions under the auspices of the Jaysh al-Ummah in the Environs of Jerusalem, published the following:
 - A video clip documenting rockets being fired at Israel during Operation Pillar of Defense, in mid-November 2012.⁵⁵
 - An audio recording addressing the Sunni minority in Ahwaz, in southwest Iran and criticizing Iran’s oppression of them.⁵⁶

⁵² http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/01/report_egyptian_authorities_fe.php (English).
⁵³ <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/62274/Egypt/Politics-/Seven-hurt-in-Sinai-attack-on-Egypt-police-patrol-.aspx> (English).
⁵⁴ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).
⁵⁵ <http://vb.beit-almaqdes.net> (Arabic).
⁵⁶ <http://vb.beit-almaqdes.net> (Arabic).



A banner advertising an audio address to the Sunnis of Ahwaz, Iran

Africa

The Maghreb [North Africa]

Libyan, Tunisian and Algerian authorities, concerned that weapons are passing through their territories to Islamist militants in Mali, have attempted to increase security along their borders.⁵⁷ Since the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Qaddafi and the ensuing deterioration of security along Libya's borders, fears have increased in the Maghreb that mujahideen and arms are "leaking" from southern Libya into West Africa.⁵⁸ At the same time, Tunisia is struggling to quell an increase in internal political violence, fueled by radical Salafist groups that seek to impose their ideology on society, which threatens to interfere with the country's transition to democracy. The violence and tension are being exacerbated by the decline in security throughout the Maghreb.⁵⁹

- The Al-Bayariq jihadist media outlet, which is affiliated with Ansar Al-Sharia in Tunisia, published a video clip documenting Tunisian security forces breaking into the home of Salafist Ridha al-Sibtawi; during the break-in, al-Sibtawi's wife was killed.⁶⁰ This type of report is meant to taint the Muslim Brotherhood in Tunisia and depict it as a puppet of the West, which implements the latter's anti-Islamic policy.

⁵⁷ <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=56417> (English).

⁵⁸ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/12/us-libya-borders-idUSBRE90B0G220130112> (English).

⁵⁹ <http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5hDZuw-20zDHUQ4cH1DZjyUmjSDxw?docId=5c16cd793e7c4a098c6dc9ac4c0bb40d> (English).

⁶⁰ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

Mali

- For the first time, SaharaMedia published a video clip, titled, “Get Ready”. The clip encourages mujahideen in North Africa to prepare for the impending conflict with France, Mali and other African countries intent on banishing jihadists from northern Mali. The video includes statements by Abu Musab al-Wadudi, leader of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), urging the mujahideen in the Sahara to protect northern Mali from the threatened invasion.⁶¹



A video appeal to mujahideen to “Get Ready”

- During the first half of January 2013, Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa published the following:
 - An official manifesto, outlining the group’s ideology. For example, the group has inscribed its banner with a promise to fight heresy such as that exemplified by Shi’ism.⁶² The manifesto was issued by the group’s Shari’a Committee, through the Al-Murabiteen media institute.



A banner trumpeting the ideology of Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa

⁶¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-tFuu9r00A> (the link is no longer active).

⁶² <http://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb> (Arabic).

- An announcement heralding the establishment of the Al-Murabiteen media institution, which began functioning on January 8, 2013 at <http://almwurabten.org/cc>.⁶³



The logo of the Al-Murabiteen media institution

- A video clip showing an appeal by three Algerian diplomats who were abducted by Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad when it captured Gao, Mali in April 2012. The hostages asked the Algerian authorities to agree to the group's demands and thereby ensure their release.⁶⁴



One of the Algerian hostages

- A declaration of the founding of the Ansar Al-Sunna Brigade, composed primarily of members of the Al-Sugnay Tribes.⁶⁵ The Brigades are further subdivided into four military squads, named after notable jihadists: Abdullah Azzam; Al-Zarqawi; Abu al-Layth al-Libi; The Martyrs. This organizational structure reflects the expansion Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad to additional areas of northern Mali, and the increased numbers swelling its ranks.⁶⁶
- A video clip documenting the implementation of shari'a [Islamic law] law in Gao Province by Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad. For example, the clip documented the severing

⁶³ <http://almwurabten.org> (Arabic).

⁶⁴ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁶⁵ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

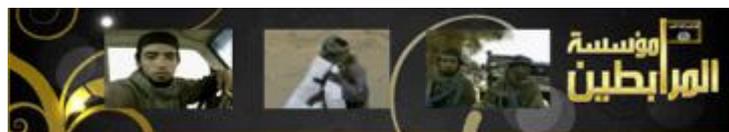
⁶⁶ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

of the hand of a Muslim accused of theft, and the beating of a young man accused of lewd behavior.⁶⁷



Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad tries a Muslim accused of theft in its kangaroo court. The sentence: amputation of the right hand

- The video clip, “Our Heroes”, which shows a military operation carried out by Abu Anas al-Sahrawi and Abu Jandal al-Azawadi, members of Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, against a military base of the National Gendarmerie in Tamanrasset, southern Algeria,⁶⁸ an oasis that is also home to the Joint Military Staff Committee comprising Algeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania, and dedicated to fighting Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).



“Our Heroes”

- Ansar Al-Din stated that it could accept the presence of a Christian minority as long as the Christians obeyed the edicts of Islam.⁶⁹
- The Salah Al-Din Squadron announced that it was joining Ansar Al-Din after having sworn allegiance to the latter’s leader, Iyad Ag Ghaly, in Timbuktu, northern Mali.⁷⁰ The Squadron is headed by Sultan Waled Badi (aka Abu Ali). According to Sanda Ould Bouamama, the group’s official spokesperson, this fusion was the fruit of months of effort to unite the mujahideen in Azawad.

⁶⁷ <http://almwurabten.org> (Arabic).

⁶⁸ <http://almwurabten.org> (Arabic).

⁶⁹ <http://www.saharamedias.net> (Arabic).

⁷⁰ <http://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb> (Arabic).

The war in Mali

On January 11, 2013, French forces embarked on a military operation in Mali with the aim of defeating the Al-Qaeda-linked insurgents who had taken over the north of the country in April 2012 following a coup in the capital, raising fears that the area could become a launching pad for terrorist attacks against the West and its allies.⁷¹ Three jihadist groups were known to be active in northern Mali: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); the Tuareg group Ansar Al-Din; and Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad [The Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa – MUJAO], an AQIM offshoot.⁷² France gradually expanded its aerial bombing campaign, and on January 14 launched strikes in central Mali to push back the Islamist rebels.⁷³ The insurgents nevertheless succeeded in seizing a strategic military camp, which brought them closer to the capital, Bamako.⁷⁴ An AQIM spokesman said he viewed the French operation as a “Crusaders intervention”, adding that France “would be digging the tombs of [its] sons” if the operation continued.⁷⁵ Similarly, an Islamist leader in Mali associated with Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad told European radio that, “France has opened the gates of hell.”⁷⁶

According to the French Foreign Ministry, the advancement of jihadist insurgents toward the center and south of the country had been halted, and French forces had begun to target terrorist bases in the north of the country.⁷⁷ However, there was concern that AQIM would attempt to retaliate by opening new fronts inside Mali and trying to infiltrate the capital.⁷⁸ It is important to add that the jihadist rebels were also holding seven French hostages, captured in 2010 and 2012.⁷⁹ As of early January 2013, the hostages were alive and well but were being held in “very difficult” conditions, according to the French Foreign Ministry.⁸⁰

⁷¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/14/france-mali-intervention-bombing-campaign_n_2471022.html (English).

⁷² http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jc2_8exR_RPJ74YoBORSQWvTmYA?docId=CNG.a501c43080aa337116c8686dbf98acf7.7f1 (English).

⁷³ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/14/france-mali-intervention-bombing-campaign_n_2471022.html (English).

⁷⁴ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/14/france-mali-intervention-bombing-campaign_n_2471022.html (English).

⁷⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20991723> (English).

⁷⁶ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/01/15/al_qaeda_country?page=0,1 (English).

⁷⁷ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/529269e6-5d70-11e2-a54d-00144feab49a.html#axzz2JkivJOWZ> (English).

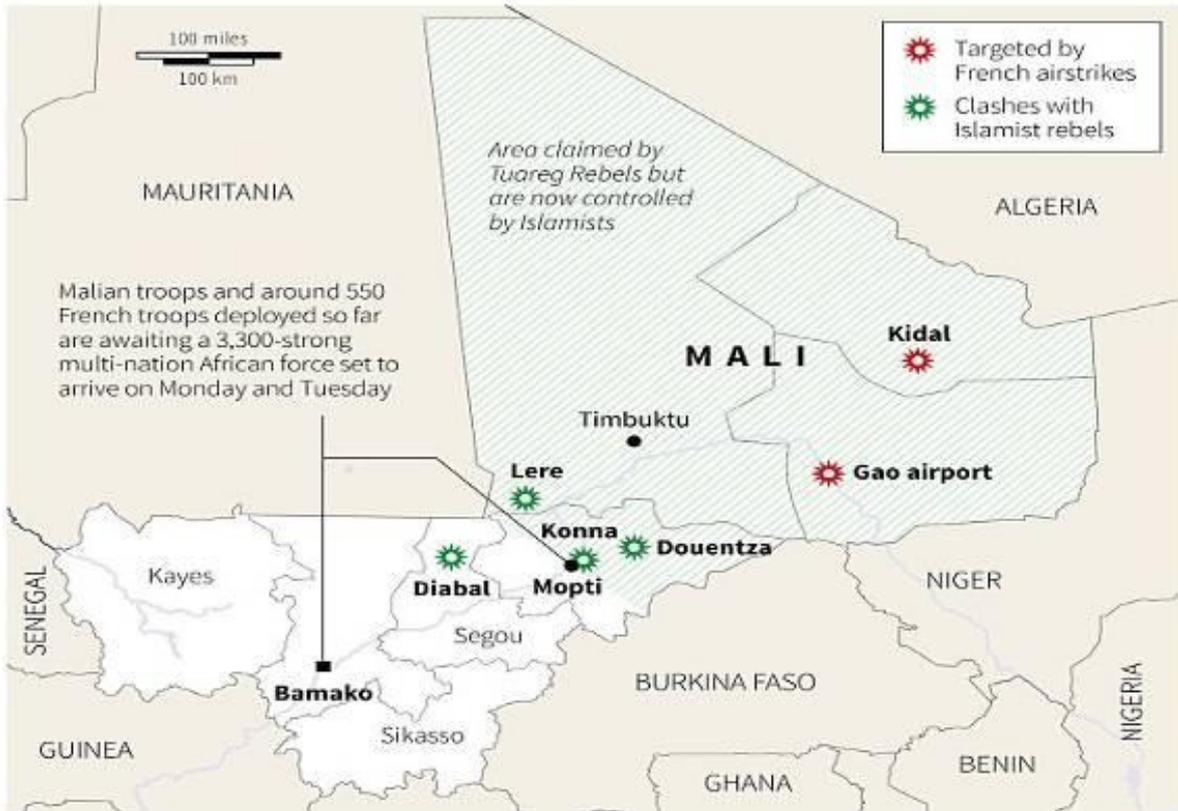
⁷⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/mali/9801339/Mali-al-Qaeda-have-numerous-options-for-retaliation.html> (English).

⁷⁹ http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-01-12/world/36312488_1_jihad-in-west-africa-somali-islamists-islamic-maghreb (English).

⁸⁰ <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/03/france-aqim-idUSL5E9C38DQ20130103> (English).

France bombs Islamist strongholds in Mali

French fighter jets pounded Islamist training camps in northern Mali as Paris poured more troops into the capital Bamako, awaiting a West African force to dislodge al Qaeda-linked insurgents from the country's north



MAIN REBEL FACTIONS IN NORTHERN MALI

		Strength
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad. Cited lack of development in north as a reason for taking up arms	Unknown**
Ansar Dine	Formed late 2011, group wants to impose Sharia Law across Mali	Estimates for hardcore Islamist fighters: 800 to 1200
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, borne out of the Algerian Salafist movement, GSPC. Group has links with Ansar Dine's leader	
MUJWA	Splinter group of AQIM that is controlling Gao, the biggest town in Mali's north	

Source: Reuters

**In hundreds, before their defeat to the Islamists

- On January 11, 2013 French Army and Malian Army forces, with logistical aid from Britain, stormed jihadist strongholds there. Visitors to the jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen called on Muslims to attack French interests, embassies, and public figures everywhere. One contributor wrote, "This is a call to every Muslim mujahid who can attack the French and their interests by himself or in a group". He asked that Ansar Al-Mujahideen create a "target bank" listing the addresses of French embassies and concerns around the world; he himself listed the

addresses of French embassies in Kabul, Tirana, Algiers, Andorra, and Sao Paulo. Another visitor to the forum encouraged Muslims in France to carry out “lone wolf” terrorist attacks inside France to undermine its security. Yet another visitor to Ansar Al-Mujahideen noted that a cell affiliated with Al-Qaeda had been operating for some time in Niger and following the movements of the French in the capital, Niamey. It was planning on attacking three major targets: the French embassy, which is near the American embassy; the Quawey Hotel, where many French military officers lodge; and the Grande Hotel, which also houses many French military personnel.⁸¹ Other forum visitors contended that the conflict must be expanded westwards and northwards into Mali, with efforts focused on perpetrating terrorist attacks against consulates, companies, military bases and other French targets.⁸²



Photos of potential French targets of attack, posted by visitors to the Ansar Al-Mujahideen Web forum: the French parliament (l.) and the Cattenom Nuclear Plant (r.)



A photograph of the Eiffel Tower; the Arabic reads: “A bomb in the elevator is enough to destroy [the Eiffel Tower]. If it were to fall, France would lose many tourists”

- Visitors to the jihadist Web forum Hanein referred to developments in northern Mali as a Crusader war against Islam, connecting the Christian wars on Islam throughout

⁸¹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁸² <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

the crusades in the past – that is, as just one more in the long history of Christian wars against Islam. Some visitors opined that the swift deployment of France and its allies reflected Western fears of Islam’s takeover of northern Mali and the concomitant weakening of its secular Crusader regime. They contended that the jihadists in northern Mali had no intention of harming anyone, as they do not treat their people the way Assad is treating his people, or the way Burma is treating its Muslims. Other visitors iterated that the European and American decision to declare a war whose sole aim is to stop the spread of Islamic law [shar’ia] in Mali only emphasizes Western Crusader hatred of Islam.⁸³

In addition to attacking France, the US, and other countries participating (directly or indirectly) in the fighting, visitors to Hanein also attacked the African leaders who are behind the request for aid from the UN. One contributor opined, “Where are the ulama’ [scholars], the preachers, the clerics, the nobles and dignitaries...who speak of following the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) [when] they accuse [us] of extremism, terrorism, exploitation and a lack of restraint...Is there any doubt...that the rulers, ministers and parties [are] agents [?]”.⁸⁴

One visitor to the Web forum expressed happiness that a poor, mountainous desert country like Mali could generate such a significant threat to European security. He added that the banner bearing the inscription of the shahada [the creed of Islam], which had been raised over Mali, was what was so threatening to Europe and to modern Crusader imperialism in the lands of the Prophet Muhammad. The shahadah [testimony] – “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger – is one of the five pillars of Islam, which Muslims recite daily in prayer, and which is recited when someone converts to Islam. Often cited in jihadist dialog, the shahadah is emblazoned on the banner of Al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups.⁸⁵

- A prominent contributor to Ansar Al-Mujahideen calling himself Naser Al-Qaeda claimed that France had not learned from America’s failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. He urged the French people to act quickly and pressure their politicians to end the fighting in Mali. Naser Al-Qaeda stressed that if the French did not cease their

⁸³ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁸⁴ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

⁸⁵ www.hanein.info/vb (Arabic).

aggression against the mujahideen in Mali, every Muslim would have to respond by attacking French interests around the world. So far, the US, UK and Spain had felt the lash of the mujahideen; it was not inconceivable that France would be next.⁸⁶

- Jihadist groups in northern Mali also discussed the war there. In an interview published in Algerian daily *Al-Shuruq* on January 12, 2013, Sanda Ould Bouamama, Ansar Al-Din's official spokesman and deputy leader, noted that the war in Mali was France's doing; France had been plotting it for several years, with the aim of reinforcing its standing in the region. Bouamama promised to turn Mali in a graveyard for French soldiers, adding that the war only served to unite the various Islamic groups in Mali. He threatened the lives of French citizens in the Islamic world, in retaliation for the anti-Islamic military campaign in northern Mali.⁸⁷
- Sheikh Abu al-Walid al-Sahrawi, head of the Shura Council of Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad in West Africa and its official spokesperson, threatened to harm attack neighboring countries involved in the onslaught on northern Mali. His threats were supported by ulama' [scholars] in northern Mali who, following a meeting with members of Ansar Al-Din in Northern Ariau, Mali, issued a fatwa permitting the killing of anyone who had joined the foreign forces in their attack on northern Mali.⁸⁸ Jihadist organizations in northern Mali were backed by Muhammad al-Amin Walad Mazid, a prominent Mauritanian religious cleric. Mazid issued a fatwa determining that jihad against "the Crusader war in Mali" was a duty, and that the regimes aiding France must be overthrown.⁸⁹



Muhammad al-Amin Walad Mazid, a Mauritanian cleric who supports the mujhaideen in northern Mali

⁸⁶ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁸⁷ <http://www.echoroukonline.com> (Arabic).

⁸⁸ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁸⁹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

- Abu Muhammad al-Tahawi, a senior Jordanian Salafi-jihadist, also expressed his support for the mujahideen in northern Mali, and offered the help of Jordan's Salafi-jihadists in confronting the French Army. He added, "I tell the French, the Americans and the Jews: Go back across the sea, return to your countries. There will be no peace between us". Jihad continues to advance and spread, he stated, promising that new arenas of jihad would yet open.⁹⁰
- The supervisor of Ansar Al-Mujahideen launched a campaign to design banners in support of the mujahideen in Mali.⁹¹



A banner posted by a visitor to Ansar Al-Mujahideen, whose caption reads, "France has declared war against Islam in Mali"

Egypt

- The jihadist Web forum Ansar Al-Mujahideen posted an epistle by Sheikh Abu al-Hassan al-Azdi titled, "Disclosure and Refutation by One Who Understands the Statement Permitting Voting for a Constitution" (the cover is at right).⁹²
- The Al-Masada media outlet published an article by Sheikh Abu Abd al-Malik al-Masri titled, "Between Islam and Secularism: A Response to the Insulting Alaa al-Aswani".⁹³ In it, Abu Abd al-Malik criticizes Alaa al-Aswani, a liberal Egyptian author and dentist, for opposing the implementation of Islamic law in Egypt.
- A post published on the jihadist Web forum Hanein during the first half of January 2013 highlights internal disagreements in jihadist discourse regarding the performance of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and the existence of an alleged

⁹⁰ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁹¹ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁹² <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁹³ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

conspiracy between members of the Egyptian government and Israeli Intelligence forces and their allies.

According to the post, it is better to berate President Morsi's puzzling conduct and Israel's Shin Bet and Mossad (internal and external security services, respectively), which operate from within the Egyptian government, secretly undermining it. Morsi is excessively lenient and hesitant, stated the post; he is blind and feeble in facing the challenge of managing Egypt – so much so, that he fails to understand how dangerous his conduct is for Egypt. The author of the post then identified the following “evidence” of President Morsi's weakness:

- He ignores the tirades of his son, Ahmed Mohamed Morsi, against his Egyptian opponents on his Facebook page, where he threatens to kill anyone who joins the demonstrations against his father's government.⁹⁴
- He ignores to the malicious plans to undermine Egypt of covert organizations such as the Shin Bet, Mossad, and Freemasons.⁹⁵ The Freemasons is an esoteric global fellowship that consecrates freedom religion, conscience and thought; both its origin and its functioning are shrouded in mystery. The Freemasons have been at the heart of conspiracy theories everywhere, and especially in Arab discourse. Some Freemasons hold key political roles; they are often depicted as abusing the organization's veil of secrecy to promote nefarious interests, while communicating through symbols and innuendo known only to them. Arab discourse ties the Freemasons to Zionist, Jewish, Western, and Shi'ite interests; in the past, it sometimes threw in the late King Hussein of Jordan and other Arab leaders for good measure. In this particular post, the author linked Egyptian officials to Israeli interests – largely because of the Egyptian-Israeli dialog concerning the threat of terrorism emanating from the Sinai Peninsula,⁹⁶ and during Operation Pillar of Defense.⁹⁷
- He showed restraint toward the head of the Egyptian Traffic Police who had arrested – and cursed at – his son, Ahmed, while he was driving on the freeway.

⁹⁴ <http://gate.ahram.org.eg>; <http://www.christian-dogma.com/vb> (Arabic).

⁹⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv0N9BEF7cE>;
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgzcdRG5eeU>;
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XXym4MkjLM> (all in Arabic).

⁹⁶ <http://ara.reuters.com> (Arabic).

⁹⁷ <http://vetoeg.net> (Arabic).

The media felt that Morsi's son had received improper treatment, even though the head of the Traffic Police knew who he was. The writer of the post saw this as another example of President Morsi's avoidance of "legitimate" conflicts, even with respect to his own family.⁹⁸

Throughout his post, the author posits a conspiracy theory involving members of the Egyptian government and Israeli intelligence agencies (Mossad, Shin Bet). He even explains the behavior of the head of Traffic Police toward Morsi's son by stating that the former was working for Mossad agents in Egypt, who wished to punish Ahmed Morsi for his anti-Israel statements during Operation Pillar of Defense.⁹⁹



A rant against Israel posted by Ahmad Morsi on his Facebook page during Operation Pillar of Defense. It reads, "...Allah will avenge the Jews and their collaborators; Allah will widow their women and orphan their children..."

Despite the absurdity of this and similar conspiracy theories, it is important to understand their purpose in jihadist discourse. Conspiracy theories are another means of discrediting President Morsi, who has yet to fulfill the jihadist dream of letting Israel's blood, choosing instead the "boring path of tolerance", according to the author.¹⁰⁰

Somalia

Since the African Union (AU) launched a military offensive in Somalia in mid-2011, Al-Qaeda-affiliate Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen has lost most of its strongholds, although it retains

⁹⁸ www.almasryalyoum.com (Arabic).

⁹⁹ <http://www.coptstoday.com> (English).

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.hanein.info/vb> (Arabic).

control of some rural areas.¹⁰¹ Neighboring countries and regional leaders have urged the UN and AU to extend the mandate that authorizes AMISOM forces to remain in Somalia, enabling the country to recuperate from years of warfare.¹⁰² The mandate is set to end in March 2013.

- The Jihadi Al-Kataeb Media Foundation, which functions under the auspices of Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen, published a video titled “The Distribution of Zakat [Charity] in Islamic Juba Province”.¹⁰³



A banner advertising a video about the social welfare work of Al-Shabab

- Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen announced that the French attempt to rescue French hostage Denis Alex from captivity in Lower Shabila Province ended in failure. According to Al-Shabab, the rescue attempt led to the death of Alex, whom the group had held for three years, and to the death of the commander and several soldiers of the French Special Forces and the wounding of many others. The commander of Special Forces was severely wounded during the rescue attempt; although Al-Shabab fighters took him to a local hospital, he later died of his wounds. Al-Shabab claimed to have extracted valuable information from him before he died.¹⁰⁴



The body of the commander of the French Special Forces

¹⁰¹ <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iejr7SXnFxCwTI0abMv9HEYfYIQ?docId=CNG.ffbbad36f113bb6a95ebd7ea9738427e.451> (English).

¹⁰² <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/638867-amisom-needs-more-time-in-somalia-katumba.html> (English).

¹⁰³ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

The Caucasus

- The Propaganda Department of Dagestan Province of the Caucasus Emirate published an announcement concerning a battle between Russian forces and seven mujahideen on December 29, 2012. All seven mujahideen were killed in the exchange of gunfire. The Russians purportedly attempted to use this event to falsely accuse the mujahideen of abducting a girl – something that never happened, according to the announcement.¹⁰⁵
- The Echo Media Center Kavkaz published a video clip documenting a 1996 attack led by Ibn al-Khattab (1969-2002) against the 136th Division, which was quartered in Buynaksk in the Republic of Dagestan. The clip is one in a series titled, “[Military] Operations in Chechnya 1996”.¹⁰⁶ Emir Ibn al-Khattab (aka Ibn al-Khattab Samir Saleh Abdullah) immigrated from his native Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight the Soviets. He subsequently joined the fighting against Russian forces in Chechnya.



Emir Ibn al-Khattab

Iran

- Abu Yasir Muskootani, the emir of Ansar Al-Din in Iran (also known as Ansar Iran), announced the founding of a faction to fight drugs in Baluchistan, to be headed by Abdullah al-Balushi. According to Muskootani, the drug problem in Baluchistan is most serious, causing divisiveness and perpetuating poverty among the people there, and drawing them away from Allah’s work and the obligation to jihad. It has also given the Iranian government license to conduct an ethnic purging of Iran’s Sunnis. According to Muskootani, five tons of drugs pass through Baluchistan via the Afghan border every month. He also claimed that the Iranian Border Police and the Army are involved in

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

the drug trade. Muskootani urged the Muslims in Baluchistan to help the mujahideen fight this scourge.¹⁰⁷

Women and Jihad

- The Facebook page of Issues of the Nation featured an article on the importance of women’s participation in jihad.¹⁰⁸



“The Role of Women in Jihad”

Miscellaneous

- The Qabidun ‘ala Al-Jamr media outlet, which functions under the auspices of the jihadist Web forum Snam Al-Islam, announced an open session with Jordanian Salafi-jihadist Sheikh Omar Mahdi Zeidan (Abu al-Mandir). During the session, visitors to Snam Al-Islam will be able to ask the Sheikh questions on jihad and other matters. The session will start on January 1, 2013, and will run for one week. The Sheikh’s answers will be published on Snam Al-Islam at a later date.¹⁰⁹
- The Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) published a speech in German delivered on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha by Abu Osama al-Gharib, a member of German Salafi-jihadist group Millat Ibrahim.¹¹⁰
- The deputy administrator of Snam Al-Islam announced that the first jihadist Internet radio station – Fajr [Dawn] – was now broadcasting at www.fajer.cc.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/Qdayalommah> (Arabic).

¹⁰⁹ <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁰ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹¹ <http://snam-s.net/vb> (Arabic).



The Web site of Fajr, the first Internet radio station devoted to jihad

- Al-Murasilun, a Facebook group dedicated to pro-jihadist propaganda, posted a link (for downloading) to a collection of fatwas first published on the Jordanian Salafi-jihadist portal Minbar Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad.¹¹²



An advertisement for a collection of fatwas first published on Minbar Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad

- During December 2012, three prominent jihadist Web forums were taken down: Shumukh Al-Islam, Al-Fida and Ansar Al-Mujahideen. The last of these has since resumed operation, but the first two remained absent from the Internet for most of January 2013. One visitor to the jihadist Web forum Al-Murabaten noted that the forums were probably “removed” temporarily due to a Zionist and Crusader plot, but would no doubt soon be up and running again.¹¹³

Facebook and Twitter

¹¹² <http://www.alplatformmedia.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹³ <http://almwurabten.org> (Arabic).

- In early January 2013, the administrators of the Facebook page Issues of the Nation, which focuses on jihad, announced the revitalization of the page for the eighth time. Facebook’s management has removed the page seven times in the past.¹¹⁴



The logo of the Issues of the Nation Facebook page

- Fursan Al-Balagh announced that it was expanding its propaganda efforts to Facebook and Twitter. On January 4, 2013, it launched a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/fursan.albalaagh.3>, and on January 1, 2013, it opened a Twitter account at <https://twitter.com/fursanalbalaagh>.¹¹⁵ It should be noted that Facebook’s management closed the Facebook page later in January 2013.



Fursan Al-Balagh announces its foray into the world of social networks

- On January 6, 2013, a Facebook page was launched titled, “The Bullet-Riddled Edifice: For the Unity of the Muslim Nation and the Closing of the Ranks”. According to its opening statement, the page’s objective is to unite mujahideen into one strong jihadist force. The page sports Qur’anic verses highlighting the importance of the unity of the mujahideen. As of February 2013, the page had received over 500 “likes”.¹¹⁶ On

¹¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/Qdayalommah> (Arabic).

¹¹⁵ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/AlBunyan.AIMarsous> (Arabic).

February 10, 2013, it launched a Twitter feed:

<https://twitter.com/albnyanamaroos>.¹¹⁷



The Facebook page of “The Bullet-Riddled Edifice”



The Twitter feed of “The Bullet-Riddled Edifice”

- On January 8, 2013, the Shura Council of the Mujahideen in Syria launched a Facebook page. By February 2013, the page had received over 700 “likes”.¹¹⁸



The logo of the Shura Council of for the Mujahideen in Syria

¹¹⁷ <http://www.as-ansar.com/vb> (Arabic).

¹¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/shoraalmjahden> (Arabic).