



ICT
International Institute
for Counter-Terrorism
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ICT Jihadi Monitoring Group **PERIODIC REVIEW**

Monthly Report

Summary of Information on Jihadist Websites

March 2018

Highlights

- Sheikh **Ayman al-Zawahiri**, the leader of **Al-Qaeda**, gives three different speeches:
 - In the first speech, he threatens to attack France and teach it a lesson due to its involvement in the internal affairs of North Africa and the Sahel region. In the video, al-Zawahiri calls on Muslims in North Africa to attack the French in the Sahel region, and to continue the way of their fathers who fought against other colonial invaders throughout history. In addition, he calls on Muslim nations to continue their activities against the tyrannical regimes as they did during the Arab Spring.
 - In the second speech, **Ayman al-Zawahiri** refers to the East Africa region as an area that Islam has reached throughout history thanks to publicity and dawah. According to him, Muslims in East Africa and Egypt were able to join forces against the Crusader enemy because they were loyal to the Ottoman Empire. However, as he sees it today, Muslims in East Africa are unable to defend their territory due to several factors, including: the blurring of the obligation to wage defensive jihad against the invading infidel due to the passivity preached by the Sufi movement. According to him, the Sufi movement is largely responsible for the weakening of Muslims, and is nurtured by the West and Ethiopia because it is perceived as an ally that could help weaken Islam. Political corruption, internal conflicts and the pursuit of forbidden money led to the destruction of the concept of jihad. In addition, al-Zawahiri accuses **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, the leader of the **Islamic State**, of trying to undermine the unity among the ranks of Muslims and the mujahideen, and to destroy Osama bin Laden's enterprise.
 - In the third speech, **Ayman al-Zawahiri** emphasizes that the United States continues to be considered the primary enemy of Muslims and Islam due to, among other things, its war in Afghanistan, its defense of Israel, its betrayal of the Palestinians, its leadership of the Crusader campaign against Muslim lands, etc. In addition, he condemns Trump's declaration that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. He stresses that no grain of Palestinian land should be abandoned, nor should other lands formerly under Muslim rule, such as the Philippines. In his view, the Muslim Nation must fight the United States and wage jihad against it everywhere in the world, just as the US is fighting against Muslims everywhere.
- **Hamza bin Laden**, the son of Osama bin Laden and a senior leader in **Al-Qaeda**, accuses the Saudi regime of being unable to defend the two holy sites of Islam, Mecca and Medina, and the Sunnis

in Yemen from the expansion of Shi'ite Iran in the region. According to him, this situation requires Sunnis in the Arabian Peninsula to demonstrate responsibility, and to rebel against the Saudi regime in order to replace it and defend themselves from Iran's aggression.

- **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)** launches a new periodical titled, "Madad", in which it praises the Muslims' war against the Jews in Israel and calls for adherence to jihad in order to liberate Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque. He praises Ahmad Jarrar, who headed the assassination cell of an Israeli rabbi, and calls on Muslims in Israel to emulate him by killing Israelis.
- **Sheikh Abu Mus'ab al-Wudud w'Abd al-Malim Drukdal**, the leader of **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)**, harshly criticizes the armed factions in Syria because of the split and the rift between them - a negative trend that, according to him, delays victory in the battlefield against the enemies of Islam. He notes that "jihad has gone from strength to weakness, from glory to disgrace, and from harmony to separation, victory has distanced itself from you". In addition, he accuses the factions of abandoning the struggle against the enemy for the sake of mutual skirmishes between the factions, and warns that a continuation of this trend undermines the willingness to adhere to jihad.
- **Abu Yahya al-Hammam**, the deputy leader of **Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin** and a senior leader in **AQIM**, warns countries of the Sahel (Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mali) not to take part in the military campaign initiated by France against jihad fighters in the Sahel region or any other region, lest they face the consequences.
- **Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin**, a Salafi-jihadist umbrella organization in Mali affiliated with Al-Qaeda, claims responsibility for a terrorist attack against the French Embassy and Burkina Faso's military headquarters in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, which was carried out to deter the regime from cooperating with France in its military campaign in the Sahel region.
- Many jihad factions in Syria announce that they are joining **Horas al-Din**, which is affiliated with **Al-Qaeda** in Syria. According to the factions, the oaths of allegiance that were made to Horas al-Din reflect a desire to unite the ranks of jihad fighters, defend the Muslims Nation, fight against the enemies of Islam and elevate the word of God.
- **The Islamic State in Khorasan Province** (Afghanistan) encourages immigration to Afghanistan while criticizing the Taliban for not implementing shari'a in the areas under its control.
- **The Islamic State in Sinai Province** claims that the military campaign by the Egyptian army and

its president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, against the organization in Sinai is a failed operation. In addition, the organization calls on Egyptian army and police to defect and join the ranks of the IS, and threatens to attack the Egyptian presidential elections at the end of March.

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New Publications

Ideology

Publications by Al-Qaeda and its Supporters

- Al-Sahab jihadist media institution, which belongs to Al-Qaeda leadership, published **three speeches by Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of the organization:**

Speech no. 1 regarding France:

- A threat to attack France and teach it a painful lesson due to its involvement in the internal affairs of North Africa and the Sahel region. In the video, al-Zawahiri called on Muslims in North Africa to attack the French in the Sahel region and to continue the path of their fathers who fought against other colonial invaders throughout history. In addition, al-Zawahiri noted that the Arab Spring revolutions were a complete failure. According to him, Muslim nations must wake up and continue to act against the tyrannical regimes.¹

Speech no. 2 regarding East Africa:

- A speech titled, “East Africa: The Fortified Stronghold of Southern Islam” which constituted part 10 in a series of publications titled, “The Islamic Spring”. The series itself was first published in March 2015.

At the beginning of his speech, al-Zawahiri noted that in previous messages in the series, he discussed:

- The Crusader campaign against Iraq and the area of the Levant;
- Crimes carried out by the US and Pakistan in Waziristan;
- Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s fictitious Caliphate;
- The need to work to unite the ranks of the mujahideen;
- The Shi’ite danger;
- Events in Yemen;
- Muslims in East Asia;
- Muslims in East Turkestan.

¹ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

Al-Zawahiri devoted the current section (“East Africa: The Fortified Stronghold of Southern Islam”) to Muslims in East Africa. In the introduction, he briefly outlined the Muslim history of the region. For example, he noted that the Prophet Muhammad had sent some members of his community to East Africa due to persecution by the Pagan Quraysh tribe. In Habash, Ethiopia, friends of the Prophet succeeded in converting some of the local blacks. At the same time, Christianity succeeded in spreading to several areas in East Africa and the Christian rulers in the region persecuted the Muslims. However, al-Zawahiri stressed that Islam was spreading successfully thanks to merchants and dawah, its propaganda system. Finally, Muslims became the majority in East Africa and many Ethiopian residents converted to Islam. "60% of those living in Ethiopia today are Muslim."

With the weakening of Islamic countries, European countries tried to conquer East Africa and allied themselves with the Ethiopians against the Muslims. Al-Zawahiri emphasized that, for centuries, the East African region had experienced conflicts and battles between Muslims and Christians, but at the same time Muslims in Egypt and East Africa were able to join forces against the Crusader enemy because they saw themselves as one nation loyal to the Ottoman Empire, despite the corruption that plagued it.

According to al-Zawahiri, there were two main reasons for the Muslims' defeat by the infidel enemy. One, the enemy's military superiority. Two, the political corruption that has debased Muslims' lives. As to the first reason, Muslims' preoccupation with nonsense, such as theology or deviant thoughts and mystical rituals, which are fostered by the Sufi movement in Islam, has damaged their minds and caused them to become mentally unstable. Al-Zawahiri accused the Sufi movement in Islam of being the primary reason for the weakening of the Muslim world because of the indiscretions that spread among Muslims, such as the idea of abandoning jihad against the infidels, and cooperation between the movement and the conquerors of Muslim lands. According to al-Zawahiri, as a result of the above, the Americans are anxious to support the various Sufi groups, as reflected in the American Rand Corporation's recommendation to the American government that it is best to support them. Later, al-Zawahiri emphasized that today there is clear support by the West and Ethiopia for the Sufi groups in Somalia, which are fighting among the ranks of the Crusader alliance against the mujahideen. He even referred to a fatwa published in Egypt, which ruled that the Sufi sect

in Somalia should be assisted in its battle against members of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen in Somalia and East Africa.

Regarding the second reason, al-Zawahiri noted that political corruption has damaged jihad and led to internal conflicts, the pursuit of forbidden money, thus weakening of common sense and leading to a deviation from the path of jihad. According to him, the Caliphate fell because of its deviation from the prophet Muhammad's path of prophecy to a corrupt regime based on the violation of Muslims' rights and their dignity.

Towards the end of his speech, al-Zawahiri accused Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the IS, of attempting to undermine the unity among the ranks of Muslims and the mujahideen, and to destroy the enterprise of Osama bin Laden. According to him, at the time when the United States began to attack Iraq and Syria from the air, Al-Qaeda initiated cooperation with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi but this initiative was greeted with scorn and threats. Al-Zawahiri emphasized that he still calls on Muslims and the mujahideen to unite and work together to liberate Muslim lands from the occupation of the infidels, to establish the Caliphate according to the path of the Prophet Muhammad, and to apply shari'a.²

The series of al-Zawahiri's speeches, titled, "The Islamic Spring", indicates that al-Zawahiri ascribes considerable importance to the battle against the US, first and foremost, due to its perception as the head of the snake because of its extensive involvement in Islamic countries and its close alliance with Muslim regimes, which he claims are its proxies. After the US, al-Zawahiri considers France to be an enemy state against which effort must be focused due to its involvement in the countries of the Sahel and its alliance with the leaders of North African countries, especially Algeria. Regarding the State of Israel, it is also considered an enemy in his eyes due to the occupation of Palestine (Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa) but in his view, such an effort would only be possible with the liberation of Syria and the establishment of an Islamic Emirate on its territory to serve as a base from which to attack Israel. In addition, al-Zawahiri views Iran as a real danger to the Sunni territories in Iraq and Syria due to its desire to expand and seek regional hegemony, and while he calls for thwarting Iran's plan to expand, he is not in favor of fighting against Shi'ites who do not share Iran's plan.

² <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).



The banner of al-Zawahiri's speech about East Africa

Speech no. 3 regarding the United States as the main enemy:

- Al-Zawahiri emphasized that the US is considered the number one enemy of Muslims and Islam due to, among other things, its war in Afghanistan, its defense of Israel, its abandonment of the Palestinians, its leadership of the Crusader campaign against Muslim lands, and more. In addition, he condemned Trump's declaration that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. He emphasized that no inch of Palestinian land should be abandoned, nor that of other lands formerly under Muslim rule, such as Andalusia, Spain, the Philippines, Chechnya and others. In his opinion, the Muslim Nation must fight against the US and wage jihad against it everywhere in the world, just as the US is fighting against Muslims everywhere.³

Hamza bin Laden in a speech against the Saudi regime, calling for a popular uprising that would lead to the replacement of the regime

- A recorded speech by Hamza bin Laden, the son of Osama bin Laden and a senior Al-Qaeda leader, titled, "Sovereignty of the Best of Nations is in the Uprising of the People of the Haram". According to Hamza, the Saudi regime failed to protect Islam's two holy places, Mecca and Medina, from the spread of Shi'ite Iran in the region, and is unable to protect the Sunni population in light of Iran's aggression in Yemen and other parts of the Middle East. Hence, the Sunnis in the Arabian Peninsula must revolt against the Saudi regime in order to

³ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

replace it, and to defend against Iran's aggression in Yemen and its ambitions to spread toward Mecca and Medina.

Hamza went on to accuse the Saudi regime of treachery against Islam and Muslims since the beginning of the 20th century due to its cooperation with Britain in the war against the Ottoman Empire; its cooperation with the US in actions against Muslims; its permission for US army bases to be built on the land of the Arabian Peninsula, which is under US occupation; its unwillingness to help jihad fighters in Yemen against aggression by Iran and the Houthis; its disregard for the issue of Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque and its abandonment of them to the Jews; and more. In light of this, Hamza called on Muslims to wake up and refuse to accept this reality, but rather to act to change the situation.⁴



A clip from Hamza bin Laden's speech

Advice to emirs on how to function in the field by Sheikh Abu Yahya al-Libi (1963-2012)

- A letter by Sheikh Abu Yahya al-Libi, a former senior Al-Qaeda leader who was killed in June 2012 in a US drone strike, to one of the emirs of (Islamic) groups. The letter was written on February 16, 2011 but was only published in March 2018. Attached to the letter was a commentary by Abu 'Umar al-Naji, a member of Al-Qaeda. The letter included several tips by al-Libi regarding how emirs should conduct themselves in different scenarios, such as how to treat group members, ways to cope with tension created with other emirs; how to treat the civilian population, and more.⁵

⁴ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

⁵ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

Tips for balanced writing that will draw inspiration from Al-Qaeda in everything related to the presentation of Islam

- An article titled, “Errors of the Islamic Pens: An Open Message regarding the Jihadi Quill Tip” by a writer named Awab bin Hasan al-Husni. In the article, the writer addressed Islamist movements regarding the various ways to show a degree of responsibility for the content of their articles regarding the presentation of reality. For example, he recommended guiding Muslims in the proper study of religion and correcting misconceptions about Islam, with Al-Qaeda serving as a central source for understanding Islam.⁶

Publications by the Islamic State and its Supporters

- Al-Turath al-‘Ilmi jihadist media institution, which belongs to the IS, published a letter titled, “The Nigerian Questions”, which included questions by IS fighters in the West Africa Province regarding jihad that were answered by Abu Malik al-Tamimi, a member of the IS. For example, one of the questions dealt with the law regarding a Muslim living in lands under non-Muslim control. It should be noted that the letter itself was first written on March 31, 2015 but was only published now.⁷
- Al-Wafa jihadist media institution, which is involved in media for the IS, published the following:⁸
 - An article by Sheikh Abu Ibrahim M’utiz bin ‘Abd al-Hakim regarding media and propaganda in favor of the IS, which was presented as an attempt to heal the rift among the ranks of the organization's supporters. In the framework of the article, the writer reviewed the history of media support for jihad and clarified its goals. In the historical context, the writer reviewed jihadist media from the early days of the Internet (when he and his friends encouraged jihad against the “Crusaders” in discourse on Paltalk after the attacks against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998), through the establishment of old jihadist forums such as Al-Ansar (which led to media independence from satellite channels), and ending with the establishment of the Islamic State’s current

⁶ Telegram

⁷ Telegram

⁸ Telegram

media institutions. The lion's share of the article included the author's nine tips for jihadist media, the main points of which are:

- Jihadist propaganda must act against the infidels;
 - It must be done pleasantly without causing embarrassment and "exposing mistakes";
 - It must avoid information that will cause the enemy to gloat;
 - It is forbidden to publish information that contains sensitive or inappropriate information;
 - Only shari'a-based information from reliable religious scholars should be published;
 - Information should be worded carefully in order to avoid exacerbating the conflict;
 - Be wary of a "cult of personality" and following one leader or another;
 - Keep coverage respectable – while maintaining belief in the survival and just path of the Islamic State.
- A letter by a writer known as "The Doubt Smasher" (Nasif al-Shubaat), which mainly attempted to support and encourage the beliefs of IS supporters. In the framework of the article, the writer explained that victory has nothing to do with weapons or military equipment, claimed that the enemy is concealing his real losses, and accused the Crusaders of carrying out a "war by proxy". The writer emphasized to readers of the article that being in a minority position does not mean that their path is wrong, and he stressed that media activists must continue their activities just as the fighters continue their battle. The writer ended the article by encouraging Muslims to be patient and not to hasten the victory ahead of time.
- An article by a writer named Abu Mariya al-Asif regarding the controversy that developed between the writers of Al-Wafa and Al-Battar jihadist media institutions. In the framework of the article, al-Asif rejected accusations according to which Al-Wafa is slandering the Caliphate and criticized the writers of Al-Battar, claiming that they were acting maliciously to harm Al-Wafa and its writers. A major part of the article was devoted to the issue of Sayyid Qutb's (one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s)

status as an infidel, which was one of the main issues of dispute between the writers of the two media institutions.

Opinion Leaders in the Jihadist Discourse

This section deals with the statements of opinion of several clerics, military commanders and publicists affiliated with Salafi-jihadist terrorist organizations seeking to shape the jihadist discourse and influence thoughts and actions in the field. The statements and their publication received a large number of views among global jihad activists, hence their importance.

- **The Khayr al-Umma in Al-Sham media group, which is involved in media for Al-Qaeda, published the following:**
 - A video titled, “The Meaning of Victory”, in which the group harshly criticized the clerics of establishments such as al-Azhar in Egypt and the religious establishment in Saudi Arabia, and the Syrian rebel factions that express willingness to hold ceasefire negotiations with the Syrian regime. According to the group, this trend does not serve the interests of the Muslim Nation, as proven by the silence of the Muslim world in the face of the massacre of the Sunni population in Syria. According to the group, true victory will be expressed in the return of land to Muslims who want to worship God wholeheartedly.⁹
 - Articles and online campaigns aimed at urging Muslims to take an activist line and act against the enemies of Islam wherever they may be. For example, the group called on Muslims to act to free female Muslims imprisoned in enemy jails, such as Israel (see photo).



A banner published by the Khayr al-Umma in Al-Sham media group calling for the release of female prisoners from the jails of Islam’s enemies

⁹ Telegram

- A new series of publications titled, “Biographies of Preachers”, which told the life stories of prominent Salafi-jihadist clerics, such as Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and Dr. Tariq Abdelhaleem, a cleric residing in Canada and affiliated with Al-Qaeda.
- **Dr. Hani al-Siba’i**, a Salafi-jihadist cleric of Egyptian origin affiliated with Al-Qaeda and residing in London, published the following:¹⁰
 - An answer to the question, “Is it permissible to pray behind the Salafist leaders of the Al-Nour party, who supported the bloodthirsty President al-Sisi, since they elected him president of Egypt?”. In his response, which was published on March 19, 2018, al-Siba’i harshly criticized the Salafist Egyptian Al-Nour party, and stressed that it committed a grave sin in assisting the military coup in Egypt and supporting al-Sisi's aggression against Islam. Al-Siba’i accused members of the party of helping the infidel ruler and of partnering with him to fight against the foundations of Islam. Therefore, they should be treated the same as the despotic rulers (Tawaghit). In other words, one should not pray behind them during prayer, marry their daughters, participate in their funerals, or bury them in Muslim cemeteries unless they repent and renounce their support of the ruling tyrant. Al-Siba’i noted that this ruling also applies to preachers of the "Al-Madkhiliyya" school of thought, i.e. Muslim clerics who support the regime and are loyal to it without reservation. Al-Siba’i also stressed that this ruling applies to the leadership of Al-Nour, and not to its supporters.



The banner of al-Siba’i’s response to the question concerning permission to pray behind leaders of the Salafist Al-Nour movement in Egypt

¹⁰ Telegram

- **Sheikh Dr. Sami Uraydi**, a Salafi-jihadist cleric affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Syria, published the following:¹¹
 - A call on jihad factions to maintain unity among the ranks and help the residents of Al-Ghouta in the face of the attack by the Syrian regime and its allies.
- **Sheikh Dr. Abdullah al-Muhaysini**, a Salafi-jihadist cleric of Saudi origin, affiliated with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and apparently with Al-Qaeda as well, published the following:¹²
 - A filmed interview regarding migrants to the arena of jihad in Syria. According to al-Muhaysini, jihad in Syria is intended to focus solely on the battle against the Syrian regime and its allies, and many Muslims migrated to Syria to assist this noble cause. Unfortunately, however, they came across a reality in which jihad factions were fighting against one another instead of the real enemy.

Al-Muhaysini used the platform to call on the various jihad factions in Syria to be considerate of the migrants, and to remember that they left families and their entire former world in order to alleviate the suffering of the residents of Syria. According to him, it is not enough that the migrant is forced to deal with difficulties, but he is also forced to shoulder the additional burden of mutual clashes between jihad factions. Al-Muhaysini called on the jihad factions to stop fighting and to focus on the jihad war against the real enemy. He also used the opportunity to announce the launch of a special campaign called, "Fathers' Union," signed by several migrants from various jihad factions in Syria, which called on jihad factions not to exploit the migrants for their internal wars, and emphasized the commitment of migrants in various factions to maintain brotherhood and friendship. It also stated that the campaign was started by al-Muhaysini and his deputy, al-Aliani, and that this is not a new jihadist faction, but rather an initiative of migrants seeking a brotherhood between the various factions.

¹¹ Telegram

¹² Telegram



A reconciliation initiative for brotherhood between migrants in the various jihad factions in Syria

- A call on jihad factions in northern Syria, Daraa and around Homs to regain their composure in the face of the tragedy that befell the residents of Al-Ghouta, and not to sit idly by in the face of the Syrian regime's aggression.
- A filmed review documenting al-Muhaysini touring in a car in Idlib to mark the day of its liberation from the Syrian regime. In the video, al-Muhaysini praised the jihad fighters who liberated Idlib and shared his impressions of the city's development since then.
- **Sheikh Abdul Razzaq al-Mahdi**, a Salafi-jihadist cleric affiliated with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Syria, published the following:
 - A call on the various jihad factions in Syria to stop the mutual clashes and to maintain unity among the ranks in order to focus their effort against the “close enemy”, namely, the Syrian security forces and its allies.
 - A call on jihad factions to thwart the danger posed to Al-Ghouta by Russia, Iran, and the Syrian regime. According to him, they must attack all fronts in Syria in order to help its besieged residents.

- **Dr. Tariq Abdelhaleem**, a cleric residing in Canada and affiliated with Al-Qaeda, published the following:
 - An article in which he addressed imposing *Takfir al-Adhir* (i.e. a Muslim “seeking excuses for his ignorance” of Islam). In the beginning of the article, Abdelhaleem reviewed the dispute that exists among two prominent streams of thought in the IS regarding the issue of *takfir*: A. The al-Hamziyya school of thought, which supports imposing *Takfir al-Adhir*; B. The al-Bin’aliyya school of thought, which opposes imposing *Takfir al-Adhir*. The majority of the article dealt with criticism of a book written on the subject by a writer named Hasan Husayn Adam, who justifies *Takfir al-Adhir*. Abdelhaleem emphasized that the book contains numerous errors and considerable inaccuracies, and falsifies the interpretations of ancient Muslim commentators, such as Ibn Taymiyya of the 14th century CE. According to Abdelhaleem, the issue remains open and needs to be considered. At the same time, he categorically rejected the strict interpretation of the Al-Hazmiyya school of thought and emphasized that a Muslim should not rush to judge if another Muslim should be considered a heretic for his actions, but rather he must also take into account the faith in his heart.
 - Reference to an issue raised by several rebel factions in Syria as to whether Islam permits the return of Muslims who migrated to the arena of jihad in Syria to infidel countries. According to Abdelhaleem, it is absolutely forbidden to extradite male and female Muslim migrants, and in this context, he quoted proof from several *hadiths* and verses from the Quran.
- Sheikh Surajuddin Zureiqat, the leader of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, which operates in London and Syria and is affiliated with Al-Qaeda circles, published the following:¹³
 - An audio clip in which he emphasized that self-sacrifice in the battle against the enemy in Al-Ghouta and other areas in Syria is the only guarantee of victory. According to Zureiqat, Al-Ghouta faces danger of invasion and takeover by the Syrian regime and its allies. In light of this, he urged the rebel factions in Daraa and Quneitra to help the

¹³ Telegram

residents of Al-Ghouta repel this attack. He even shared a video on his Telegram account of a group of clerics and senior commanders of jihad factions in eastern Al-Ghouta al-Sharqiya, who called on jihad factions to help them eradicate the evil at hand.



From left to right: the banner in which Zureiqat called on jihad factions in Daraa and Quneitra to defend the residents of Al-Ghouta; a group of clerics and commanders of jihad factions in eastern Al-Ghouta calling for help in defending against the Syrian regime

- An expression of gratitude for the intention of the Lebanese regime to release Sheikh Ahmad al-Asir from prison following pressure and efforts by the umbrella organization of the Muslim clerics in Lebanon. According to Zureiqat, this is a positive step, but all prisoners should be released from Lebanese prisons. "Their only crimes were being Sunnis and their stand against Iranian hegemony in Lebanon and Syria."

Guidebooks and Instruction Manuals

- The Khayr al-Umma media group, which is involved in media for Al-Qaeda, published the following:
 - A booklet titled, "Leadership of Infantry Soldiers" (195 pp.) by an anonymous writer using the name Abu Mustafa al-Suri. The book included advice and guidance for infantry commanders on how to behave in the field; combat tactics; methods of defense; safeguarding the well-being of the soldiers; and more.¹⁴

¹⁴ Telegram



The banner of the book

Strategy

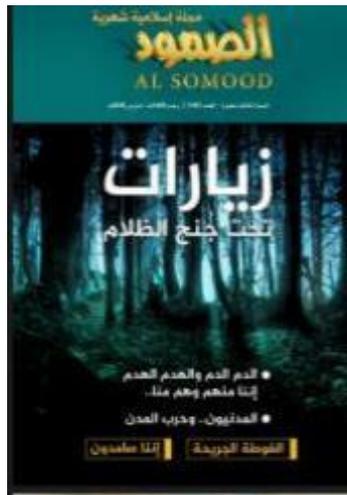
- The Khayr al-Umma media group, which is involved in media for Al-Qaeda, published the following:
 - Several announcements calling on Muslims in Syria to move to a war of attrition. For example, one of the announcements included a quote by Abu ‘Abd al-Karim al-Gharabi, a jihad commander in Syria, on the topic: “Conducting a war of attrition in Syria would not be easy at all. Every small number of comrades should establish a secret group that will be able to move between the factions’ checkpoints, and before the eyes of security and intelligence personnel without attracting attention. It must be able to strike at the enemy or the collaborator...and return to civilian life...without anyone knowing about it, not even the trusted comrades who are close to it. This is the real war of attrition. Who can help it?”.¹⁵
- A visitor to the Shumukh al-Islam jihadist Web forum, which is affiliated with the IS, published an announcement in which he asked what drug can be used to immediately put someone to sleep by stabbing them with a needle, as is done in a kidnapping.¹⁶

¹⁵ Telegram

¹⁶ <https://shamukh.net/vb> (Arabic).

Magazines

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan published issue no. 145 of *Al-Somood* magazine in Arabic. Among the topics covered in the issue were: the effect of guerrilla warfare on civilians; criticism of the surprise visits of senior US officials in Afghanistan; glorifying martyrs from the ranks of the organization; a note expressing solidarity with the situation in Al-Ghouta in Syria, a presentation of US soldiers in Afghanistan as victims of Trump's ambitions and a chart containing details on the number of attacks carried out by the organization in each of Afghanistan's provinces, detailing the damage caused to lives and property.¹⁷



The banner of *Al-Somood*

- Issue no. 24 of the periodical, *Al-Nafir*, was published by Al-Qaeda. The issue was dedicated to the slaughter of the Sunni population in Al-Ghouta by the Syrian regime. The beginning of the periodical stated that while the Holocaust of the Jews received attention and condemnation from infidel nations, including Arab nations and even the Vatican, when it comes to the terrible crimes inflicted on the Muslim population in Afghanistan, Iraq, and today in Al-Ghouta in Syria, the world does not open its mouth and does not condemn the massacres that it has experienced. According to the author of the article, the reason for the tragedies befalling the Muslim Nation, such as the massacre of Muslims in Al-Ghouta, is its abandonment of the commandment of jihad against the enemies of Islam, and hence the remedy for the present situation is the fulfilment of this

¹⁷ <https://alemara1.net/>

commandment. According to the author, Islamic organizations must act for the sake of unity among the ranks of Muslims, and coordinate their methods of response to any act of aggression by infidels, otherwise other Muslim cities such as Riyadh in Saudi Arabia will experience a fate similar to that of Al-Ghouta. Towards the end of the article, the author called on jihad fighters in Syria to abandon their mutual disputes, overcome the rift, serve as an example and help the Muslims in Al-Ghouta.¹⁸

- Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) launched a new periodical titled, *Madad*. In the first issue, the organization praised the battle against the Jews in Israel following the murder of Rabbi Raziel Shevach by a cell of Muslims. The organization specifically praised Ahmad Jarrar, the head of the cell who was killed by Israeli security forces three weeks after the murder. According to the organization, Jarrar is an example of a Muslim who adheres to the commandment of jihad against the enemies of Islam - in this case the Jews - even if it means dying for the sake of God's path. The organization emphasized that Jarrar fulfilled his duty regarding Palestine, namely adherence to jihad for the sake of liberating Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque from the Jews, and that the Muslim Nation – especially the Palestinians – must continue his path. It also stated that every Muslim must act for the sake of liberating Palestine, maintain unity among the ranks, and abandon everything divisive in order to achieve this goal. At the same time, the organization emphasized that, “One must not forget the role of the United States, the head of the snake, which protects the Jews. This is expressed in the determination of the United States to turn Jerusalem into the capital of the Jews, as expressed by Sheikh Osama bin Laden, who said the United States and Israel are two sides of the same coin”. The organization threatened the Jews that Muslims had a duty to liberate the land of Palestine and that the Prophet Muhammad's nation would fulfill his prophecy, as stated in the *hadith* about the end of days when the Jews will hide behind trees and stones, which will open their mouths and call upon the Muslims to kill the Jews hiding behind them. The last page of the periodical included a quote by Sheikh Abu Mus'ab al-Wudud w'Abd al-Malim Drukda'li, the leader of AQIM, that he and his fighters have not forgotten the issue of

¹⁸ Telegram

Palestine, that they are fighting in Algeria, which cooperates with the Jews and the Crusaders, and that “their eyes look forth towards Palestine and Jerusalem”.¹⁹



The banner of the new periodical, *Madad*

- Issues no. 121-125 of the periodical, *Al-Naba*, were published by the Islamic State. Among the topics covered in the articles were: reports on the organization’s attacks in various arenas (with emphasis on developments in the arena of Sinai and Khorasan); an infographic poster criticizing the Twelver Shia; a poster regarding an attack in Kabul near a Shi’ite house of worship that killed over 200 people; an article on maintaining the personal security of the mujahideen and its importance; and other articles on various religious issues.²⁰
- Issues no. 4-5 were published of the women’s magazine, *Baytuki*, by the Khayr al-Umma media group, which is involved in media for Al-Qaeda. Among the topics covered in the issue were: child development; tips on how to manage a household; tips on how to make a husband love his wife more; tips on caring for a crying baby; stories about jihad during the period of the Prophet Muhammad; cooking recipes; and more.²¹

¹⁹ Telegram

²⁰ <https://dawaalhaq.com/post/81713>

²¹ Telegram



The banner of the women's periodical, *Baytuki*

- Al-Hur jihadist media institution, which belongs to Ansar Ghazwat al-Hind, published a new periodical titled, *Al-Nasr*, in Hindi and English. The first issue included a eulogy in memory of three of its fighters who were killed during a battle against Hindu security forces in south Kashmir on March 13, 2018. Special emphasis was placed on **מחמד תופיק**, who was described as one of the first members of the organization and the first jihad fighter who migrated from India to Kashmir to join the ranks of the organization. The second issue of the periodical included eulogies for three more members of the organization who were also killed by Hindu army forces in Kashmir on March 16, 2018.²²



The *Al-Hurr* periodical of Ansar Ghazwat al-Hind

²² Telegram

Reports from the Field

Afghanistan-Pakistan

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

- The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the Taliban-Afghanistan) published the following:
 - Announcements on various topics, including: a condemnation of the gathering of Muslim clerics in Indonesia; the disconnection of electricity in Kabul by the organization in response to the disconnection of electricity and other services in Kunduz and Baghlan Provinces; and an accusation against US forces of attempting to divide Afghanistan.²³
 - Videos regarding attacks by the organization in Ghazni Province and training camp activities.²⁴

The Taliban Pakistan

- The Taliban Pakistan published the following:
 - A statement by Muhammad Khurasani, the spokesman of the organization, regarding the deaths of 21 jihad fighters, including the son of Mullah Fazlullah, the leader of the organization, in a US drone strike on March 6. According to the spokesman, all of casualties were students who were killed next to the Bajur tribal region in Afghanistan. He threatened that this attack would be met with a wave of revenge attacks.²⁵ According to the Pakistani media, two of the organization's regional commanders who had been training suicide terrorists were also killed in the strike.²⁶
 - A video documenting the organization's activities in Balochistan; threats by members of the organization; and more.²⁷

²³ <https://alemara1.net/>

²⁴ <https://alemara1.net/>

²⁵ Telegram

²⁶ <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-taliban-confirms-leader-sons-death-drone-strike/29089323.html>

²⁷ <https://umarmedia.xyz/2018/03/28/347/>

The Islamic State in Khorasan Province

- The IS in Khorasan Province published a video titled, “The Land of Allah is Wide”, which documented the spread of the IS in Afghanistan, and encouraged *hijra* to this province. In the narration accompanying the video, the American attempt to wipe out the IS in Afghanistan was presented as a failure given the organization's success in taking over large areas in the Tora Bora region, Wazir Tanki and Jowzjan. The video showed fighters and civilians in these areas, some of which were under the Taliban’s rule, while criticizing the Taliban for not applying shari’a in the areas under its control (especially by allowing the existence of drug trafficking). The video also featured photographs of children and youth in a training camp in the Jowzjan Province.

The call to migrate to Afghanistan can be seen as an appeal to fighters in distress and restricted in terms of their movement in Syria and Iraq (especially foreign fighters who cannot return to their countries of origin). It is also possible to view the activity in Tora Bora as an attempt to present IS activity in this region - which stood firm against the Soviet and American invasion of Afghanistan - as a continuation of the legacy of Al-Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. The video demonstrated that the territorial element remains important in the eyes of the IS, in contrast to estimates that the organization will move to a pattern of guerrilla warfare or to a classic terrorist organization that operates without territorial control.²⁸



The prominence of the Khorasan area as a new center of IS activity

²⁸ <https://dawaalhaq.com/post/80781>

Al-Sham [The Levant]

Syria

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham

- The Amjad jihadist media institution, which belongs to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, published the following:
 - Clarification of the talks held with the Syrian Liberation Front, the organization created by the merger of Ahrar al-Sham and Nur al-Din al-Zenki. The announcement expressed indignation over the fact that Ahrar al-Sham reneged on its previous understandings with Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and, therefore, cancelled the continuation of negotiations. It stressed that even before the conflict, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham had offered to cooperate and establish a joint operations room against the Syrian regime. The announcement ended with a call on members of the Syrian Liberation Front to renounce their leadership and stop fighting against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham instead of the Assad regime.²⁹
 - A statement containing additional criticism against the Syrian Liberation Front, accusing it of falsifying the facts, of fighting against Hayat Tahrir al-Sham on behalf of foreign elements, and of changing its policy in accordance with its military successes on the ground. Syrian Liberation Front commanders were accused of failing to rescue the residents of Al-Ghouta and other communities but of seeking a ceasefire now that they have weakened and retreated. The announcement made it clear that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham supports a cease-fire and arbitration in a shari'a court, but that members of the Syrian Liberation Front refrained from finding a practical solution to the conflict and did not even attend a mediation meeting between the two sides that was set up by intermediaries.³⁰
 - The first part of a video titled, "Eastern Al-Ghouta – A Fortress Standing Firm". The video included a review of the siege on Al-Ghouta and the difficult humanitarian situation that developed in the city as a result, while placing emphasis on the suffering of the residents due to a shortage of food and medical supplies, as well as the regime's attacks against civilians, especially those using chemical weapons. The video presented Hayat Tahrir al-

²⁹ Telegram

³⁰ Telegram

Sham as one of the only organizations that refused to believe Assad and to reach understandings with him, but rather continued the battle by dispatching suicide terrorists to avenge the civilians who were killed and injured. A large part of the video was devoted to documenting an attack by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Damascus, which included – according to a military commander in the organization – several buildings and sites serving the Syrian army.³¹

- Another video in the series titled, “From the Archive”, which showed photographs documenting battles in various arenas in Syria over seven years of battle. The video showed an attack that was carried out by the organization’s fighters on April 26, 2015 against Al-Qarameed camp (in Idlib Province) and several posts around it.³²
- A video regarding the training of the organization’s "elite unit" operating in the Daraa-Quneitra area. In the video, the fighters were shown undergoing physical training and exercises with weapons, with narration in the background praising their virtues and bravery.³³

Horas al-Din

- During the month of March, several Salafi-jihadist rebel factions throughout Syria announced their merger into Horas al-Din, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Syria, including: Saraya al-Ghuraba, Katibat Battar, Katibat ;’Ubaydah, Katibat Abu Bakr al-Sidiq, Saraya Ghawta, Saraya Kabul, Jaysh al-Badaya, Jaysh al-Sahl and Jaysh al-Malahim. According to the factions, the oath of allegiance to Horas al-din expressed a desire to unite the ranks of jihad fighters, defend the Muslim Nation, fight against the enemies of Islam, and elevate the word of God.³⁴

Khalid bin al-Walid Army

- The Khalid bin al-Walid Army, which is affiliated with the IS, published a video about educational activities in the Yarmouk Basin. According to a member of the group, this video was a response

³¹ <https://amjad-media.com/smood/>

³² <https://amjad-media.com/archive-grmid>

³³ <https://amjad-media.com/nukhba-site/>

³⁴ Telegram

to claims that the organization prevented educational activities in the areas under its control. According to the video, the organization is concerned with educating the next generation on the path of Islam rather than the path of the Ba'ath regime and, therefore, the *hisbah* police decided to close the Ba'ath schools. Later in the video, a child was shown burning textbooks, including “heresy materials”, while spewing propaganda against Bashar al-Assad. The end of the video showed photographs from Arabic classes, mathematics and physical education for the students.³⁵

Katibat al-Imam al-Bukhari

- Katibat al-Imam al-Bukhari published the following:
 - A statement in which it criticized the US decision to include the organization on its list of terrorist organizations.³⁶ According to the organization, “The decision that you made today, the United States, is terrorism. This proves that the United States has double standards and that the reasons for the decision are political rather than security-related”. According to the organization, it would have been appropriate had the American regime taken harsh measures against the crimes of the Syrian regime and punished it for using prohibited weapons against the Sunni population of Syria. The organization criticized the decision and emphasized that the Shi’ite militias should have been included on the list of terrorist organizations because they fight alongside the Syrian regime. The organization also stressed that its actions are not considered terrorist acts, but rather an effort to protect the residents of Syria from the criminal Syrian regime. The organization thanked the Syrian Liberation Front, a Syrian rebel organization, for its support and condemnation of the US decision. The organization is considered the largest Uzbek organization fighting in northern Syria alongside supporters of Al-Qaeda.³⁷

Jama’at al-Islam

- Jama’at al-Islam, a Salafi-jihadist organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda circles, published the following:

³⁵ <http://ou7zytv3h2yaosqq.isremaining.top/36364>

³⁶ <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/03/279454.htm>

³⁷ Telegram

- A claim of responsibility for a military operation against a group of Syrian soldiers near northern Hama on March 2.³⁸
- A video following some of the organization’s fighters before they left to fight against Syrian regime forces.³⁹

The Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula

The Islamic State in the Sinai Peninsula

- The IS in Sinai Province published the following:
 - A video titled, “The Failed Confrontation”, which contained propaganda against Egyptian army activities and Egyptian President al-Sisi. The 30-minute long video focused on presenting the “Sinai 2018” campaign as a failed campaign that did not affect the organization or its operational capabilities, while presenting photographs from attacks and ambushes that were carried out against army and police forces. It should be noted that in comparison with previous videos, this video dealt less with presenting the suffering of Sinai residents at the hands of the government and more with presenting scenes from the daily life of the organization's fighters during rest and the preparation of food. The messages that appeared in the narration at the end of the video focused on encouraging the military and police to defect and join the ranks of the IS, and to renounce the democratic system and portray it as heretical, clearly threatening the Egyptian presidential elections at the end of March.⁴⁰
 - Reports about various attacks, such as an attack against an Egyptian army patrol east of Al-Arish using an explosive device.⁴¹

Liwa al-Tawhid

- Al-Buraq jihadist media institution, which belongs to Liwa al-Tawhid, a Salafi-jihadist faction in the Gaza Strip, published an announcement denying the group’s involvement in “the recent

³⁸ Telegram

³⁹ Telegram

⁴⁰ <https://dawaalhaq.com/post/81713>

⁴¹ <https://dawaalhaq.com/post/80777>

incident in Gaza”, hinting at the detonation of an explosive device against the convoy of Rami Hamdallah, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority. The announcement explained that Liwa al-Tawhid continues its battle against the Jews and that it does not work for any side among the hawkish factions in the Gaza Strip.⁴²

Africa

The Maghreb

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

- Al-Andalus jihadist media institution, which belongs to AQIM, published an audio clip by Sheikh Abu Mus‘ab al-Wudud w’Abd al-Malim Drukda’l, the leader of the organization, titled, “Trust in Allah”. In the audio clip, al-Wudud levelled harsh criticism at the armed factions in Syria because of the split and the rift between them, a negative trend that he claims delays victory in the battlefield against the enemies of Islam. He noted that “jihad has gone from strength to weakness, from glory to disgrace, and from harmony to separation, victory has distanced itself from you”. In addition, he accused the factions of abandoning the struggle against the enemy for the sake of mutual skirmishes between the factions, and warned that a continuation of this trend undermines the willingness to adhere to jihad.⁴³



The banner of a speech by Sheikh Abu Mus‘ab al-Wudud w’Abd al-Malim Drukda’l, the leader of AQIM

⁴² Telegram

⁴³ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

Mali

Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islām Wa-l-Muslimīn

- Al-Zallaqa jihadist media institution, which belongs to Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islām Wa-l-Muslimīn, a Salafi-jihadist umbrella organization in Mali, published the following:
 - An audio clip titled, “You will win by Patience” by Abu Yahya al-Hammam, the deputy leader of Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islām Wa-l-Muslimīn and a senior leader in AQIM, in which he referred to joint military preparations of five countries in the Sahel (Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Mali), which earned the name G5 in an initiative by France to fight the terrorist organizations in Mali and its environs. According to him, it is a dead initiative with no hope. He noted that France succeeded in entangling these countries and exploiting them to fight against the jihadists on its behalf. In addition, he warned these five countries not to take part in France’s war campaign. According to him, France’s involvement in Mali only contributed to the doubling of fighters from the tribes to battle against France. He added that the French military campaign planned in the area will not succeed in reaching its goals and will fail just as similar campaigns have failed in the past. He noted a number of flaws in the planned operation, the lack of sufficient funding of 450 million euros, and the lack of determination among the five Sahel countries mentioned above.⁴⁴



The banner of an audio clip by Abu Yahya al-Hammam, the deputy leader of Jamā'at Nuṣrat al-Islām Wa-l-Muslimīn

- A video titled, “Save Sophie”, in which it instructed the French government led by Macron to act for the release of Sophie Petronin, a French civilian who was kidnapped in December 2016

⁴⁴ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

by Al-Murabitun, which is affiliated with AQIM. The video showed the elderly hostage lying on her bed while the tape was heard in the background with the voice of French President Emmanuel Macron, saying, "I will protect you." Sophie Petronin ran an aid organization for children at risk until her abduction.⁴⁵

- A statement (from March 3, 2018) claiming responsibility for an attack against the French Embassy and Burkina Faso's military headquarters in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. According to the organization, seven fighters stormed the above-mentioned targets while using a suicide terrorist. According to the statement, the attack killed and injured dozens of enemy forces and seven of the organization's fighters were killed in an air strike by the French Air Force. The organization emphasized that its fighters intend to continue the path of jihad and that the attack was aimed at deterring the regime in Burkina Faso, which was quick to join the G5 umbrella organization and fight alongside France in the Sahel region.
- A statement signed by "the Emirate of the Timbuktu Region", claiming responsibility for an attack against a Malian army base in the city of Soumpi in northern Mali on January 27, 2018. According to the statement, the raid on the base ended with heavy losses among the Malian army. It also stated that the organization revealed the identities of collaborators who monitored the organization's fighters when they returned from the attack and gave information to the enemy. The organization warned that it would judge those collaborators severely and called on them to atone for their actions.⁴⁶
- A claim of responsibility for an attack against a military camp belonging to French and MINUSMA forces in Kidal, Mali, on March 22, 2018. According to the organization, its fighters launched rockets at the camp, killing five and injuring dozens of the camp's inhabitants.
- A video titled, "Deterring Tyrants – Part 2", in which emphasis was placed on recruiting jihad fighters to the battle against French forces and their allies in the Sahel region. The video opened with a statement by Sheikh Ayman al-Zawahiri, the leader of Al-Qaeda, who called on Muslims to wage war against the French troops spread throughout the Sahel and North Africa. Later in the video, members of the organization called on Muslims to adhere to the

⁴⁵ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

⁴⁶ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

commandment of jihad against the enemies of Islam. The video also followed the training of the organization's fighters in training camps. In the video, the Malian regime was vilified as one that wages an oppressive policy against Muslims and, therefore, it is necessary to sanctify a war against it.⁴⁷

The Islamic State

- The IS published a video documenting an ambush set by 50 IS fighters against an American-Nigerian military force (12 US soldiers and 30 Nigerian soldiers) on the Niger-Mali border in October 2017. Four American soldiers and five Nigerian soldiers were killed in the attack.⁴⁸



The video banner

Egypt

- Al-Balagh jihadist media institution, which is affiliated with the Egyptian Al-Murabitun, which is close to Al-Qaeda, published a pamphlet by the family of Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Masri (1958-2017), a senior Egyptian Salafi-jihadist leader who died in an American prison. In the pamphlet, the family explained that the Americans abused Abu Hamza during his incarceration and deprived him of many things, such as visits by family members.⁴⁹

Somalia

Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen

- Al-Kataib jihadist media institution, which belongs to Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen, published the following:

⁴⁷ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

⁴⁸ <http://www.alfidaaforum.net/vb/> (Arabic).

⁴⁹ Telegram

- A video in Somali and Arabic in memory of Muhammad Dhu al-Yadain, a former senior leader in the organization. The video reviewed al-Yadain's biography and dealt with the state of war in Somalia.⁵⁰



The banner of the video in memory of Muhammad Dhu al-Yadain

The Indian Subcontinent

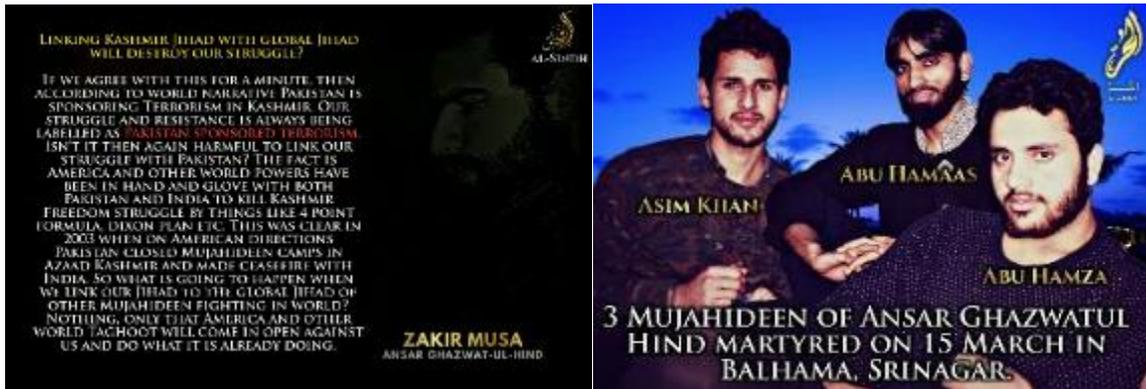
Kashmir

Ansar Ghazwat al-Hind

- Al-Hurr jihadist media institution, which belongs to Ansar Ghazwat al-Hind, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, published the following:⁵¹
 - Statements in memory of three members of the organization who were killed in battle against Indian security forces in Kashmir on March 16, 2018. In addition, the organization published a video with the fighters' last will and testament before they embarked on their mission.
 - An online social media campaign surrounding the call by Zakir Musa, the leader of the organization, to disengage from the Pakistani regime's support for rebel groups in Kashmir. According to Musa, Pakistan is a close ally of the US and helps it oppress jihad fighters. Moreover, the struggle in Kashmir is not meant to serve the narrow interests of countries like Pakistan, but rather it should be seen in a broader spectrum as an Islamic struggle or part of global jihad rather than a national struggle.

⁵⁰ <http://shahadanews.com/?p=1281>

⁵¹ Telegram



From left to right: a promotional flyer for Zakir Musa’s speech regarding the need to disengage from Pakistan’s support and turn the Kashmir issue into a global Islamic issue; the banner in memory of three members of the organization

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