



Supporters of the Islamic State Campaign for the Holidays: Encouraging Lone-Wolf Attacks in the West

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Summary

Throughout the latter quarter of 2021, online supporters of the Islamic State engaged in a campaign of incitement, calling on individuals to plan and execute individual-initiative (lone-wolf) attacks against western targets. While the campaign called for individual-initiative attacks in many western countries, supporters of ISIS emphasized incitement of attacks in the France and the United States. The actors continued this rhetoric throughout the latter part of the year, calling on supporters to take "revenge on the west during the holidays."

Keywords: Incitement, lone-wolf, individual-initiative, ISIS, Daesh

Encouraging Lone Wolf Attacks

In the past two months, supporters of the Islamic State organization have launched a new incitement campaign calling for lone wolf attacks against Western countries, with an emphasis on France and the United States.

The campaign addresses two main target audiences - **supporters of the Islamic State organization in Western countries**. "*Mujahideen in Europe, hit the Crusaders, the coalition countries*", "*Supporters of the suits in America and Europe, hit the citizens of the Crusaders Coalition countries*". And to **threaten Western countries**. "*We will conquer Rome, destroy your crosses, and enslave your women.*"



Selected examples of posters that were published to encourage a lone wolf attack

Most of the publications are in English and are distributed in **closed networks belongs to supporters of the Islamic State organization**, including closed telegram groups and independent servers on Rocketchat and Element. Within these closed groups, they are discussing and calling for **revenge on**

the west during the holidays. "With the advent of the so-called polytheistic celebrations that the infidels are experiencing these days, we send a message to our monotheistic brothers in Europe, America, Australia, Canada, Russia and other countries of disbelief and apostasy. **Revenge for your brothers and sisters who were killed and captured by these scumbags, oh our monotheistic brothers.**"



To the supporters of the Caliphate in France; Have you forgotten what the French Crusader artillery did to your brothers during the war of boredom of infidelity against the monotheistic Muslims in Iraq and the Levant? ...How is it good for you to live with those who killed and burned your brothers and sisters in Iraq and the Levant??You couldn't stab a French pig with a knife? Or run over by a car?...

There are also voices among Islamic State supporters calling to focus on attacking **Western countries on Islamic lands with an emphasis on Western forces in Africa.** "Stop attacking the infidels on their lands, it is not helpful, attack them wherever they invade, on our lands."

Hoping to incite a young audience, the propaganda is also spreading on social networks such as Instagram and Tiktok. Most recently the SUN conducted an investigation on Islamic state propaganda on Tiktok and found many accounts which are affiliated with the organization. One of the videos they identified used to encourage supporters to carry out terrorist attacks in western countries during Christmas.¹

¹ <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/16796685/isis-tiktok-recruit-suicide-bombers-christmas-attacks/>



SUN investigation:

Video encourages supporters to carry out terrorist attacks in western countries during Christmas

Alongside posters and videos displaying threats to various destinations such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Colosseum in Rome, there are also publication in closed groups of manuals explaining how to conduct a knife attack and methods to prepare at home explosives.



Jihadi cookbooks

Is Online Propaganda Effective?

The recent propaganda campaign was proven to be in somewhat effective. Yet, the scale of attempted or successful attacks does not necessarily meet with the extensive efforts of the online campaign. Furthermore, we see an effort to use "simple" and easy to get weapons such as knives in order to avoid law enforcement radar. As such, in September, a stabbing attack occurred in a local supermarket

in Auckland, **New Zealand**. The attacker, originally from Sri Lanka was found to have been inspired by the Islamic State propaganda.² In December, **French** police detained two people suspected to carry out a knife attack over Christmas. Both held Islamic State propaganda in their home. Another case in December, German police arrested a 20-year-old German, Moroccan who attempted to buy explosives. He was found to have radical martial arts in his house, including bomb-making manuals.

The Holiday time has always been an attractive period for an Islamic state to carry out attacks in the west. In recent years we have seen **more low scale attacks or attempted attacks** compared to Berlin's Christmas market attack in 2015. This trend is based on Islamic State strategy in recent years and the effectiveness of the security agencies. It is also due to Covid19 which have led to decline in holiday events. However, we should **always take into consideration the worst-case scenario - the possibility of another large-scale attacks that will be carried by the Islamic State in the west.**

² <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/new-zealand-saw-the-supermarket-attack-coming-but-couldnt-stop-it/>