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# BeeHive

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## From the Editors

The Doron Halpern Middle East Network Analysis Desk is happy to present the January issue of **Beehive**. The first article in this issue is devoted to the wave of demonstrations that erupted in Iran, beginning with a local event in Mashhad and quickly spreading to other cities throughout the country, as well as the structural problems that led to the protests' decline. We then uncover the internal Jihadist discourse following the publication of a video by the Sinai Province of ISIS criticizing Trump's declaration regarding Jerusalem and the factors that made it possible. This gives us a window into the power struggles within the local and international terror arenas. We conclude with the deadly attack that ISIS perpetrated in the heart of Baghdad in mid-January, shortly after the official announcement of the organization's defeat in Iraq, thereby challenging the authorities prior to the upcoming national elections there.

**Enjoy!**

## **Demonstrations in the Islamic Republic in the Telegram Era**

**Dr. Raz Zimmt**

On 28 December 2017, the most significant wave of protests since the 2009 riots erupted in Iran, which prompted renewed interest in the role of online social networks in promoting social change. In addition to the demonstrators' widespread use of SNS to promote the protests and disseminate information, these platforms were also used by other political forces, including supporters of the regime and critics of the protests who circulated counter-messages. Furthermore, the authorities imposed strict restrictions on online spaces following the demonstrations, to include blocking access altogether. All these factors present challenges for the potential use of SNS to lead social and political change.

The wave of dissent in Iran began with a local demonstration in Mashhad against the continuing economic crisis. It spread rapidly across Iran and quickly morphed into a political and anti-establishment protest. Demonstrators were not satisfied with merely demanding improvement in the economic situation, and challenged the very fact of clerical rule in Iran. During the protest, calls were heard against the regime, and its' head, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, whose pictures was defaced by a number of demonstrators. Additionally, there were isolated attacks on government institutions and on patrol vehicles belonging to the security forces. More than twenty demonstrators were killed, and several thousand were arrested. The intensity of protests began to wane approximately one week following their outbreak, though demonstrations continued throughout the country on a smaller scale.

In contrast to the 2009 riots, which had been led by the reformist movement headed by Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi, the current protest operated without known leadership – a phenomenon that has become common around the globe in recent years. This phenomenon is closely linked to the widespread proliferation of online social networking services (SNS) that have facilitated unprecedented possibilities for leaderless organizing – although the demonstrations in particular cities may have been organized by local activists.

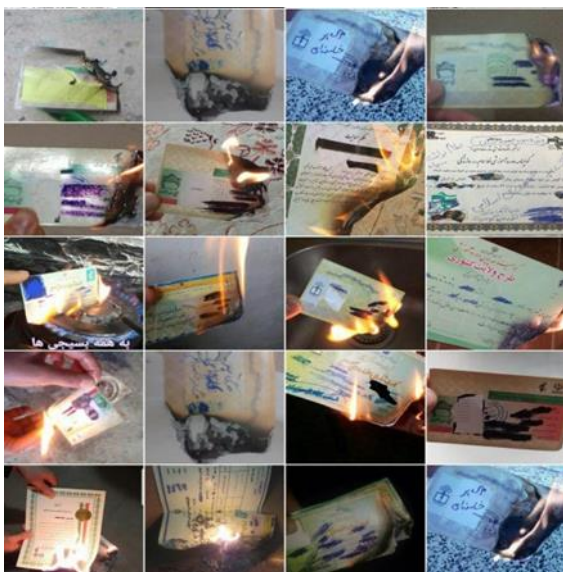
The scale of the 2017 protests, while estimated at tens of thousands of participants, was smaller than that of 2009, when hundreds of thousands of Iranian citizens took to the streets. On the other hand, the geographical distribution was very broad, with demonstrations held simultaneously in dozens of cities across the country, especially in distant cities in the periphery. The socio-economic composition of the demonstrators was also different than that of past years. While the urban middle class played a central role in the 2009 demonstrations, the current wave of protest was led by the working class and the weaker sectors of the population, who are waging an ongoing struggle as a result of their own economic distress and President Rouhani's neoliberal economic policy.

Online social networks played a conspicuous role from the very beginning. Demonstrators used them to transmit messages, publish the dates of demonstrations and their locations, and to disseminate thousands of videos documenting the protests themselves. Although the protests were mainly fueled by economic distress, online social networks were used to convey dissident messages opposing the regime on other issues, such as its investments beyond the borders of Iran at the expense of solving the hardships of its citizens, and the policy of enforcing Islamic law. Thus, for example, the picture of a young woman demonstrator, who took off her hijab (head covering), placed it on a pole and waved it in front of the security forces, became a symbol of the protest (Figure 1). Another manifestation of defiance against the regime was initiated by several dozen members of the Basij militia, which is subordinate to the Revolutionary Guards, who uploaded pictures of their Basij membership cards being burnt (Figure 2).



**Figure 1. Protester who removed her hijab in the presence of Iranian security forces.**  
[From Twitter.](#)

The encrypted message application Telegram played a central role in encouraging the protest. The channel of Amad News, which was established by the exiled Iranian journalist Ruhollah Zam and has more than 1.2 million followers, was particularly prominent. In a message to his followers, Zam roused protesters against the regime. This led to Telegram’s decision to close the channel after Iranian Minister of Communications Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi complained to the company’s CEO, Pavel Dorov, that it was being used to incite violence.<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, the regime blocked the use of the application altogether. The Instagram network had already been blocked, while the block on the Chinese messaging application WeChat, which had been imposed about four years ago, was lifted, perhaps in an attempt to encourage its use as a substitute for Telegram.



**Figure 2: Photograph documenting the burning of Basij membership cards.** [From Twitter.](#)

The authorities’ decision to block social networking services sparked incisive discussion among the public and in the media. Supporters of the regime and senior members of the conservative-religious establishment justified the move by claiming that their use by demonstrators was additional evidence that they are a tool in the hands of Iran’s enemies. The leader of Friday prayers in Tehran, Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami, claimed that the riots stopped after once the services were blocked, and called on the authorities to demand the transfer of the servers used by the networks to Iran, which would facilitate strict supervision of their activities.<sup>2</sup> Conversely,

critics claimed that a sweeping block of social networking services, especially Telegram, would be

ineffective because of the widespread use of bypass measures by Iranian citizens. Indeed, shortly after Telegram was blocked, there was a sharp rise in public interest in technological means for circumventing barriers.<sup>3</sup> Some warned that blocking the application would disrupt the lives of citizens and would severely harm the livelihoods of many who rely on social networking to manage their businesses.<sup>4</sup> As the demonstrations faded, the sharp reactions were apparently the basis for President Rouhani's directive in mid-January to lift the obstruction of Telegram.

In addition to demonstrators' widespread use of social networking services, the voices of those who opposed the protests were also heard, especially concerning the use of violence and the damage to state symbols. For example, Iranian users condemned incidents in which the Iranian flag was burned and public property was destroyed. "Those who burn the national flag should be deported from Iran," read one comment.<sup>5</sup> Many users warned against descending into violence, and an online campaign was launched under the slogan "Iran is not Syria" (#ایران\_سوریه\_نیست) in which the demonstrators were warned not to escalate the situation into a civil war. Opponents to the use of violence included both activists in the reformist camp as well as supporters of the president; they feared that escalation would not only threaten the stability of the regime but also weaken Rouhani's position. The president's supporters accused his opponents of having initiated the first demonstrations in Mashhad in order to harm him. A number of reformist activists expressed their preference for the gradual reforms being led by the president over the prospect of violent revolutionary change. In turn, these activists were criticized by users who claimed that there was no longer any expectation that the president could keep his promises or meet the demands of the public. At the same time, many users expressed reservations about any external involvement in their country's internal affairs, especially by US President Donald Trump, using the hashtag "#ShutUpTrump." This reflects the sensitivity of the Iranian public about any foreign intervention in their country's affairs, alongside criticism of Trump's policy which is prevalent in Iran.

Social networks are not responsible for the basic motivations that ignited the protest movement, which was in fact prompted by economic and social distress and the regime's failure to meet the public's demands. Even the decline in the protest cannot be linked to the access limitations placed on the platforms, although it is possible to point to a decrease in the number of demonstrations parallel to the severe restrictions imposed by the authorities on their use. Rather, the protests' key weaknesses were the lack of leadership, which damaged their ability to continue over time, and the indifference of the urban middle class, especially in Tehran, which invariably chose not to join the demonstrations. However, there is no doubt that the involvement of social media did make a significant contribution to realizing the potential of the public protest. Furthermore, the socio-economic composition of the demonstrators, who were mostly among the weaker sectors of society, attests to the widespread use of these services, and their influence among all segments of the Iranian public.

## Trump's Declaration at the Heart of Jihadist Discourse

Ariel Koch

Although the storm surrounding Trump's declaration recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel seems to have subsided, a video released in early January by the Sinai Province of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Egypt<sup>6</sup> returned it to the headlines. The video, which denounces the declaration, ruthlessly targets Hamas, which it claims was unable to prevent the declaration, and brands its activists "traitors" and "heretics" guilty of capital offences.<sup>7</sup> It also allegedly that Hamas, along with its parent movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the Egyptian and Iranian regimes (the latter through its proxies in the Gaza Strip<sup>8</sup>), are cooperating to prevent Salafi groups from attacking Israel. The video, which was published on online social media and Telegram channels identified with ISIS, has repercussions in two arenas: locally, where the Sinai Province is working to strengthen its image in the Gaza Strip, by provoking Hamas and undermining its legitimacy, and globally, where the video provoked a response from al-Qaeda and its affiliates, as part of the organization's efforts to regain its lead over ISIS for leadership of the global jihad movement, including in Egypt and Sinai.



Figure 3: Segment from the video showing an execution, disseminated by the Sinai Province, from the website [Jihadology](http://Jihadology).

The Sinai Province was founded as "Ansar Bait al-Maqdis" and was considered an affiliate of Al-Qaeda.<sup>9</sup> After the rise of ISIS, the organization transferred its loyalty, and became the official Islamic State franchise on the Sinai Peninsula. This change challenged the current leadership of al-Qaeda, now headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri, a native Egyptian. On the local level, the Sinai province benefited from direct and indirect aid from Hamas in the Gaza Strip as long as the Egyptian regime treated Hamas with hostility.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between the organizations was destabilized when Egypt improved its attitude towards Hamas, which it considered a way to harm the jihadists in Sinai. The cooperation between Hamas and Egypt is evident, *inter alia*, in their joint struggle to contain the Sinai Province's control over the smuggling of weapons between Sinai and Gaza,<sup>11</sup> which harms not only Hamas, but also the other factions in the Gaza Strip, including members of the Salafi-Jihadist faction.

In the twenty-two-minute video, Hamas is accused of not only failing to prevent the Trump declaration, but also of fighting ISIS's supporters in the Gaza Strip and preventing the Salafis from firing rockets at Israel, all as part of its activity in the anti-ISIS coalition. Throughout the video, a Gazan resident Muhammad Sa'ad al-Sa'idi, also known as Abu Kathem al-Maqdisi, a former

member of Hamas's military wing, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, and now a member of the Sinai Province, is seen accusing Hamas of heresy and abandoning Islam, an act punishable by death. Indeed, the end of the video documents the execution, by shooting, of another resident of the Gaza Strip, Musa Abu Zamat, wearing the notorious orange jumpsuit (see Figure 3). He was affiliated with the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and accused of smuggling weapons from Sinai to the Gaza Strip. The executioner is also a resident of the Gaza Strip, Abu Aisha al-Dajani, another former member of Izz al-Din al-Qassam.

The arguments and threats directed against Hamas in the video are not new, and have been expressed in previous publications by Salafi-Jihadists from the Gaza Strip and elsewhere. For example, in July 2015, ISIS in Syria published a video threatening to "uproot the Jewish state, including Hamas, the PLO and all the secularists."<sup>12</sup> Another example is a video distributed by ISIS supporters in the Gaza Strip last April, in which they attacked Hamas for being an "agent" of Israel, by their definition, who cooperates with infidels at home (the Palestinian Authority) and abroad (Iran and the Shi'a), does not impose *shari'a* (Islamic law), and prevents Salafi-Jihadist organizations in the Gaza Strip from acting against Israel.<sup>13</sup> The adoption of intra-Salafist discourse in the Gaza Strip, especially in light of the fact that the protagonists of the current video are jihadists from the Gaza Strip for whom this discourse is familiar, allows the Sinai Province to exploit the existing tension between the Salafi-Jihadist organizations and Hamas in order to strengthen its standing in the region, and to position itself as an alternative to Hamas.

However, the accusations that Hamas is cooperating with Israel quickly became a double-edged sword, when users, including many Palestinians, responded by accusing the Sinai Province of themselves cooperating with Israel. The claim is based on the common interest of the Sinai Province and Israel in preventing the transfer of weapons to the Gaza Strip, which harms the Hamas "resistance" against Israel. For example, Palestinian journalist Ziyad Halabi tweeted that the Sinai Province video proves that the agenda of ISIS in Sinai overlaps with that of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.<sup>14</sup>

Although the video addresses a local audience, its influence spread to the international terror arena. The strengthening of the Sinai Province in Sinai makes it difficult for al-Qaeda supporters in Egypt to establish an alternative framework that will draw volunteers who are interested in fighting against Israel, which may explain the opposition to the video and its makers among al-Qaeda supporters in Egypt. For example, the Twitter accounts and Telegram channels affiliated with al-Qaeda in Egypt and Sinai attacked ISIS, calling on the Sunnis to reject them summarily. Sinai Province activists were sarcastically dubbed "Khwaraj Sinai," an expression used for Muslims who break away from Islam as in, "The end of the Khwaraj Sinai is approaching." A picture posted on the al-Qaeda-affiliated Telegram channel Manbar Sinai, read sarcastically: "Soon... a video of Khwaraj Sinai in which they kill one of their operatives." Another channel noted mockingly that only one minute of the video was devoted to threatening Israel. Another example was a video released on 25 January by a Salafist-Jihadist group Jund al-Islam (Soldiers of Islam), which is

affiliated with al-Qaeda, and is behind attacks against the Egyptian army and ISIS in Sinai.<sup>15</sup> Jund al-Islam presented an interview with a former Sinai Province activist who testified that activists in the Province who wish to leave the organization face danger of incarceration and torture, and even execution.<sup>16</sup>

The impact of the video was also apparent in official al-Qaeda publications distributed shortly thereafter, showing narratives similar to those in the video, including some that repeat familiar themes used by the organization. For example, a video released by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula on 23 January again attacked the Trump Declaration, after having already condemned it in December.<sup>17</sup> In the video, Khalid Batarfi called on Muslims to join the jihad for the sake of Jerusalem and to carry out attacks against Western and Jewish targets around the world in response to Trump's declaration. It declared that this is "an issue shared by every Muslim." Three days later, al-Qaeda published an audio clip to mark the seventh anniversary of the Arab Spring, in which the voice of the organization's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, is heard attacking – as is his custom – the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis who he claims support the Egyptian army and provide it momentum.

While Salafi-Jihadist propaganda against Hamas, including from ISIS and its supporters in the Gaza Strip, is not unusual, this is the first time that a Salafi-Jihadist organization publicly carried out its threats against Hamas. However, the video seems to have created an unexpected counter-reaction. Most of the discourse on social media condemned the Sinai Province, which was accused of collaborating with Israel, the very accusation it leveled against Hamas. al-Qaeda was the organization that took best advantage of the situation, by choosing hate-generating narratives similar to those appearing in the video, and adapting them to its own familiar rhetoric in hopes of re-establishing itself as the main global jihad organization and an alternative to ISIS, not only in Syria but also in Sinai and Egypt.



# **Ghosts of the Past: The Double Suicide Bombing in Baghdad after the Defeat of ISIS in Iraq**

**Adam Hoffman**

Throughout the Middle East, 2017 was marked by the collapse of ISIS as a territorial entity. This was the direct result of the campaign of the Global Coalition against the organization, which was led by the United States and included the participation of the Iraqi army and Kurdish forces. The collapse of ISIS was especially evident in Iraq, which was where the first iteration of the organization was formed following the US invasion in 2003. During the summer of 2014, ISIS was able to take control of a large portion of Western Iraq. However, despite recent declarations of victory against the group, ISIS is still active and determined to continue disrupting public order and security in the country. This was made eminently clear by the double suicide bombing attack in central Baghdad in mid-January 2018, which made manifest the threat that ISIS terrorism might return to the heart of Iraq shortly before the planned general elections.

On the morning of January 15, two suicide bombers detonated themselves in Tiran Square in the center of Baghdad, killing at least 38 people and injuring about 100 others. A video documenting the moment of the first suicide bombing was distributed on Twitter by a resident of Baghdad and received more than 12,500 views.<sup>18</sup> The immediate assessment made by senior intelligence officials in Iraq was that the attack had been perpetrated by sleeper cells of ISIS. After the attack, Iraqi Prime Minister Dr. Haider al-Abadi ordered military and intelligence officials in the country “to locate and punish sleeper terrorist cells, and protect the citizens’ safety.”<sup>19</sup>

Two days after the attack, ISIS' news agency Amaq claimed responsibility for the attack, but its announcement included several incorrect details. For example, it was claimed that three suicide bombers carried out the attack instead of the two originally reported. The delay in publishing the announcement, in contrast to previous terrorist attacks in Iraq for which ISIS claimed responsibility shortly after the incident, and the incorrect details in the text of the announcement may attest to difficulties the ISIS communications system has experienced in recent months and to the decline in the volume of its online activity.<sup>20</sup>

The fatal attack was exceptional in two respects. First, attacks in the Iraqi capital have been quite rare, even during the period of fighting against ISIS in Mosul and other parts of Iraq, due to the tight security system in and around the city. Secondly, this was the first terror attack in Baghdad since al-Abadi declared the end of fighting against ISIS in early December.<sup>21</sup>

The discourse on online social networks following the attack expressed the pain and shock that many felt about those killed, while also illustrating the fear of ISIS returning to Iraq so soon after the official announcement of its defeat. Mournful tweets carried the hashtags “Iraq is bleeding but not dead” and “Tiran Square.” One photo that was retweeted many times showed a father of five who was killed in a terror attack, with a caption asking that people to pray for mercy on his soul. Another popular tweet, which was posted by a Shi’i Iraqi user, showed a street cleaner before the attack and his body sprawled out the ground afterwards. It was accompanied with curses directed at the “Traders in religions” that were responsible for the attack. The user also related to the atmosphere in Iraq after the declaration of victory: “We looked at the future optimistically after being saved from ISIS” but “We have forgotten the political class in Iraq which is essentially connected to bloodshed.” In this way, this Shi’i user attempted to turn the spotlight on the country’s Sunni population, which many Iraqis identify with the murderous regime of ISIS and the terrorist attacks that it perpetrates.

However, despite these sectarian comments, Sunni citizens from Mosul chose to express solidarity with the residents of Baghdad following the attack. A resident of the city tweeted pictures of the city’s residents holding Iraqi flags and a placard reading “Your *shahids* (martyrs) [are] our *shahids*” (Figure 4). The user added, “Today, Mosul stands in solidarity with those martyred in Tiran Square, Baghdad.” It should be remembered that Mosul had been the capital of ISIS’s “caliphate” in Iraq, and was controlled by the organization for nearly three years prior to being re-conquered by the Iraqi army last July.

By mounting an attack in the Iraqi capital, ISIS wanted to show not only that it is still active and dangerous, but also that it is no less determined to disrupt political stability in Iraq, especially in the run-up to the May elections. al-Abadi stated, “Our responsibility as a state is to maintain the democratic process and to ensure that the elections are free and fair.”<sup>22</sup> These remarks were also aimed at Sunni and Kurdish politicians who demanded postponing the elections until public security is restored, and until displaced Sunnis and Kurds can return to areas that were controlled by ISIS. They are making this demand out of concern that holding the elections as scheduled will give Shi’a a representational advantage in the new parliament.<sup>23</sup> The Global Coalition against ISIS is also aware of the sensitivity of the security situation in Iraq ahead of the upcoming elections. A Coalition spokesperson said that its forces are working together with the Iraqi security forces to ensure that the security situation in Iraq is “firmly in place” until the elections.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 4: Residents of Mosul demonstrate in solidarity with residents of Baghdad after the double attack. The sign reads “Your *shahids* (martyrs) [are] our *shahids*.” [From Twitter.](#)**

The terrorist attack by ISIS in central Baghdad also highlighted Iraq's vulnerability to terror perpetrated by ISIS even following the official defeat of the organization, especially considering the already rattled nerves of Iraqi citizens who fear a possible return of ISIS to their country. Despite the international claim that ISIS was defeated in Iraq, there is a significant gap between declarations of victory (such as that of the Iraqi army in early December 2017)<sup>25</sup> and the reality in which ISIS is indeed still active and operating using terrorism and guerilla methods. However, the discourse on online social networks reveals a degree of solidarity and unity among Iraqi society, which is trying to recover from the period of the ISIS regime, even if from an international point of view the struggle against ISIS is no longer high on the media agenda. These reactions indicate that, for many Iraqis, the ideological and the security threats posed by ISIS have not yet passed.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://twitter.com/azarijahromi/status/947098403531640832>.

<sup>2</sup> "Ayatollah Khatami: When cyberspace was controlled, the protests waned" ISNA, 2 February 2018.

<sup>3</sup> "Astonishing data on Iranians' uses of the anti-block software," Tabnak, 6 January 2018, [goo.gl/viHJN5](http://goo.gl/viHJN5).

<sup>4</sup> "Telegram blocked," Shargh Daily, 1 January 2018, [goo.gl/Hwu9CX](http://goo.gl/Hwu9CX).

<sup>5</sup> <https://twitter.com/BellatriX313/status/947185572182937600>

<sup>6</sup> For further reading on this topic: Shaul Shay, "Egypt's Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and the Islamic State", *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism* (Herzliya), February 11, 2015. <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/1341/Egypt-Ansar-Bayt-al-Maqdis-and-the-Islamic-State>

<sup>7</sup> See: Gilad Shiloach, "The Islamic State Declares War on Hamas: The Latest Episode in a Complex Relationship," *Jihadscope*, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, January 8, 2018.

<https://dayan.org/content/islamic-state-declares-war-hamas-latest-episode-complex-relationship>

<sup>8</sup> A reference to *Al-Sabirin Natza laFalistin* – The Patient for the Victory of Palestine, a Hezbollah-like organization in late 2014. See: "The Shi'ite Presence in the Gaza Strip: The Patient [*A-Sabirin*] for the Victory of Palestine Movement and the Salafi Response," *Online Jihad Exposed*, 27 February 2015,

[http://www.onlinejihadexposed.com/2015/02/blog-post\\_27.html](http://www.onlinejihadexposed.com/2015/02/blog-post_27.html) (Hebrew).

<sup>9</sup> An example of the identification of *Ansar Bait al-Maqdis* with al-Qaeda can be found in the first propaganda video that *Ansar Bait al-Maqdis* produced and disseminated (via SNS). At the end, it quotes Ayman al-Zawahiri attacking the Egyptian government for the peace treaty with Israel that transfers natural gas from Egypt to Israel. This video was published in July 2014 with the title, "And if you return [to your sins], we will return [to our punishments] وَإِنْ عُدْتُمْ (عُدْنَا) (Quran 17:8). See: "New video message from Jamā'at Anṣār Bayt al-Maqdis: 'If You Return (to Sin), We Shall Return (to our Punishment)'" , *Jihadology*, July 24, 2012. <http://jihadology.net/2012/07/24/new-video-message-from-jamaat-anṣar-bayt-al-maqdis-if-you-promised-we-promised/>

<sup>10</sup> For more on this cooperation, see: Ehud Yaari, "Hamas and the Islamic State: Growing Cooperation in the Sinai", *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, December 15, 2015. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hamas-and-the-islamic-state-growing-cooperation-in-the-sinai>

<sup>11</sup> Yoni Ben Menachem, "Who would have believed: ISIS vs. Hamas," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 8 January 2018, <https://jcpa.org.il/article//מי-היה-מאמין-לאיש-נגד-המאס>

<sup>12</sup> Yassar 'Okavi, "ISIS Threatens Hamas: We'll Conquer the Gaza Strip," *Maariv*, 1 July 2015, <http://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-485767>

<sup>13</sup> The video "Palestine of the Caliphite" was produced by the media branch known as *Shahad al-Alamiya*

<sup>14</sup> <https://twitter.com/ziadhalabi1/status/950649872977481728> retrieved on 14 January 2018.

<sup>15</sup> For additional information, see: "Jund al-Islam", *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, [no date].

<https://timep.org/esw/terror-groups/jund-al-islam/>; and David Barnett, "Jund al Islam Claims Credit for Sinai Suicide Car Bomb Attacks", *The Long War Journal*, September 12, 2013.

[https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/09/jund\\_al\\_islam\\_claims.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/09/jund_al_islam_claims.php)

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<sup>16</sup> The video was disseminated on Telegram channels identified with Al-Qaeda, see Mohamed El-Sharkawi, "Soldiers of Islam Publish the Confessions of an Opponent of the Sinai Province, *Qol Ha'uma*, 25 January 2018 [Arabic]

<http://www.soutalomma.com/Article/750988/جند-الاسلام-تتشر-اعترافات-منشق-عن-ولاية-سيناء>

<sup>17</sup> "Al Qaeda condemns Trump's Jerusalem move, calls for action", *Reuters*, December 7, 2017.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-israel-aqap/al-qaeda-condemns-trumps-jerusalem-move-calls-for-action-idUSKBN1E126H>

<sup>18</sup> [https://twitter.com/sunji\\_1/status/952842960449753088](https://twitter.com/sunji_1/status/952842960449753088)

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/HaiderAlAbadi/status/952870828303159296>

<sup>20</sup> Gilad Shiloach, "ISIS's Defeat in Syria and Iraq Is Also the End of ISIS's Media as We Know It." *Jihadscope*, November 9, 2017. <https://dayan.org/content/isis%E2%80%99s-defeat-syria-and-iraq-also-end-isis%E2%80%99s-media-we-know-it>

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Coker and Falih Hassan, "Iraq Prime Minister Declares Victory Over ISIS." *The New York Times*, December 9, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/09/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-haider-al-abadi.html>

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/IraqiGovt/status/953362689111330816>

<sup>23</sup> "War-ravaged Iraq not ready for elections, say Sunnis calling for delay", *Rudaw*, January 17, 2018.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/170120182>; "Iraq Sunni tribes: Postpone elections until displaced return", *Middle East Monitor*, January 15, 2018. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180115-iraq-sunni-tribes-postpone-elections-until-displaced-return/>

<sup>24</sup> "Coalition, Iraqi forces focus on security ahead of May elections", *Rudaw*, January 16, 2018.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/160120182>

<sup>25</sup> [https://twitter.com/Defense\\_Iraq/status/939480414221209600](https://twitter.com/Defense_Iraq/status/939480414221209600)