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"Not in My Name - ISIS and protests against it as reflected on SNS "



List of Twitter accounts used that ISIS regions use to report their activities

Dr. Michael Barak

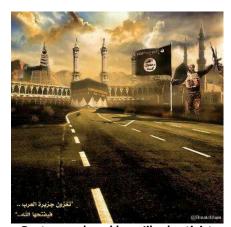
Social networks (SNS) are a central component of PR and recruitment efforts of the Islamic State (ISIS), which makes sophisticated use of SNS to transmit its messages to multiple target audiences, and as a tool for both indoctrination and psychological warfare. For example, many of its members have personal Twitter accounts in several languages, which they use to document their battle experiences, explain the organization's activities, praise fulfilling the duty of *jihad*, and encourage Muslims around the world to fight alongside ISIS. The organization controls a wide-

ranging structure of media outlets that are responsible for maintaining a constant flow of information regarding its activity in the areas it controls in Iraq and Syria. Its main official media site, for example, is al-Furqan. Others include ISIS's official print media organization and Al Hayat, which publishes videos in various languages, primarily in order to recruit new members.¹

In recent months, ISIS activists on SNS have been waging psychological warfare against the Saudi regime, and recruiting Muslims to fight the Royal House of Saud, which ISIS considers a heretical agent of the West and an obstacle to its vision of an expansive Islamic caliphate. For this purpose, activists created several hashtags, including "Mobilizing supporters in the Land of Two Holy

Places" (the Islamic term for Saudi Arabia used by Islamists who do not recognize territorial nation-states), to communicate that ISIS is willing to wage *jihad* against the Saudi regime and conquer the country.² The psychological warfare conducted by ISIS includes distributing documentation of the atrocities committed by its members. This material, which frequently

occupies the international media, has apparently had the effect of inspiring an increasing number of attacks by individual Muslims on Western security personnel. In addition to creating an atmosphere of anxiety, attacks in the West contribute to Western antagonism towards both Muslims and Islam.³ In response, Muslim activists from several streams mounted an extensive, international campaign on SNS in September to drive home the point that ISIS does not represent the Muslim majority, and is distorting the true nature of Islam which preaches, they claim, values of tolerance and acceptance of the "other."



Poster produced by a Jihad activist showing the ISIS flag flying near Black Stone in Mecca.

In early September 2014, British Muslims from the Active Change Foundation launched an Englishlanguage, online PR campaign against ISIS under the heading "Not in my name." The direct cause for this campaign was the murder of the British humanitarian aid worker David Haines by ISIS. The campaign included a PR video explaining not only why ISIS does not represent Muslims but also that its behavior and practices actually violate the laws of Islam. Many users claimed that the organization disregards human values including compassion, harms innocent people, and is trying to appropriate Islam in order to brainwash young Muslims. Activists in the organization called on Muslims around the world to join together in order to bring an end not only to ISIS and its activities but also to the radicalization it represents. They note that history is overflowing with examples of violence by extreme groups. Just as Nazism should not use an example to claim that Christianity is inherently violent, so too ISIS should not be taken to represent Islam.⁴

This online campaign earned an honorable mention from US President Barack Obama in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2014,⁵ and has inspired young Muslims to undertake similar activities in Canada,



Left to right: A British Muslim woman in advertisement against ISIS; Banner uploaded to SNS by a British Muslim

France, South Africa, and elsewhere around the world. In Canada, for example, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (a Muslim movement that supports tolerance) launched a similar campaign in late October, under the title "Stop the CrISIS," which included flooding SNS with proposals of how to deal with the challenge of radicalization, including educating children to the values of loving the other from a young age, and maintaining open dialogue with other Muslims around the world in order to find a solution for the ISIS crisis.⁶ The online dialogue of young Muslims in France is also highly critical of ISIS and calls on others to repudiate the organization because it is, they claim, ruining Islam's good name, and has become a magnet for people who are "intellectually and emotionally disabled."⁷

A similar campaign has also spread in Arab countries. Mahmoud al-Arab, a leading journalist for the satellite channel Al-Arabiya in Bahrain, initiated an exchange on Twitter intended to clarify why ISIS does not represent Muslims. "I believe that Islam is a tremendous religion that spread in the hearts of humanity even before there were nation-states. ISIS, MSIS, HALAS [in Arabic, "Da'esh," "ma'esh," and "hal'esh," respectively] are heretical movements," he tweeted using Arabic rhymes to make fun of ISIS. Many young Muslims, particularly those from the Gulf States, agreed with him, declaring "anyone who kills, exiles and displays corpses" does not represent them and "ISIS has blighted the image of moderate Islam, "and "ISIS is responsible for the increase of Islamophobia in the West."⁸ Furthermore, many users demanded that ISIS be included in the list of terrorist organizations, together with Muslim Brotherhood, Lebanese Hezbollah and Houthis (partisans of God) in Yemen, which they claim are no less dangerous.⁹

In Morocco, a group of politicians, media personalities, intellectuals and young activists launched a similar campaign on SNS in Arabic, Amazight (the language of Berber minority), and French. The declared purpose of the campaign was to eradicate "the barbaric actions taken by bloodthirsty extremists who can in no way be associated with Islam." Some participants uploaded protest videos and added the campaign's logo to their accounts. The logo shows a



Not in My Name

bloody palm with the caption "Not in my name." One young Moroccan noted that the terrorists are bringing disgrace on Muslims, and that is important for a Moroccan voice against terrorism to be heard. Another noted that the silent majority must awaken from its apathy and reject the militant, radical minority.¹⁰ They claimed that the rebellion against the Syrian regime is a popular protest against an oppressive and corrupt government and that the rebels virulently oppose the

ascent of another oppressive, corrupt regime such as ISIS. In their words, "ISIS does not represent the Syrian revolution but rather is taking advantage of it."¹¹



Poster designed by a Palestinian ISIS supporter declaring, "The Islamic State does represent me."

ISIS activists and supporters frequently attempted to infiltrate the discourse with messages supporting the organization. Their claims were characterized primarily by apologetics that attempt to explain how the Islamic State expresses the true values of Islam, and strongly criticizing those who oppose the organization. For example, one supporter disparagingly asked why Christians in central Africa

are not protesting the slaughter of Muslims there. Another accused the Gulf states of cooperating with enemies of the Muslim nation and the forces of the West in their war on Islam. Some created a hashtag "I am a Muslim, ISIS represents me."¹² However, this type of intervention is marginal when compared to the vibrant discourse amongst opponents of ISIS around the world.

In conclusion, SNS are a central platform in the PR campaign opposing ISIS but also an important tool that the organization uses for both psychological terrorism and recruiting activists. However, as the media presence of ISIS grows, so do the voices of young Muslims around the world who transmit an unequivocal message both to the West and to ISIS. They do not identify with the organization's actions and indeed condemn them. In their minds ISIS is responsible for the increase in Islamophobia throughout the non-Muslim world; it grossly distorts the inherent values of Islam and threatens the unity of the Muslim nation. Therefore, they reject ISIS and anyone who would join its ranks. The increasing use of SNS by both sides demonstrates that it is a key arena in the battle for Muslim hearts around the world.

"Turks have no friends but the Turks"

Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak

Over the past months, the fight against ISIS in Kobani and the attitude of the Turkish government towards the Kurds has continued to top the agenda of Turkey social networks (SNS).¹³ In addition, anti-American public discourse is expanding in Turkey, and making its mark in both the public and virtual spheres.

Violent demonstrations erupted across Turkey in November after an extended period in which the Turkish government avoided taking a clear position in the struggle against ISIS, and continued to deny Peşmerge Kurdish fighters from Iraq permission to cross through Turkish territory so they could join the defense of Kobani. Calm was restored only after jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan issued a conciliatory call at the behest of the Turkish government. The cooperation between PKK and Ankara must be understood against the backdrop of the peace process that is still developing between the parties. Succumbing to a combination of international pressure by its allies in NATO

and internal pressure applied by the Kurds, the Turkish government finally agreed to allow Turkish fighters to pass through its territory. This agreement led to a further round of reactions, on both sides, on SNS. While the Kurds celebrated the opening of the border crossing, both online and in the streets, by flying the flag of Kurdistan (see picture), Turkish nationalists expressed concern that the presence of Peşmerge would reinforce the PKK over the border.¹⁴



Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin welcome Peşmerge fighters on the border between Turkey & Iraq

Many Turks expressed doubts about the motivation behind the pressure from NATO to open the border crossing. Among their claims was the contention that NATO was attempting to damage critical Turkish interests. This mood is reflected, *inter alia*, in a survey conducted by the American research Center PEW, which found that 70% of the Turks did not support continued membership in NATO.¹⁵ Moreover, the survey testifies to an extreme low in the image of the United States in Turkey with 73% of the respondents expressing a negative attitude towards the US. We can assume that the attacks of the US Air Force in Iraq and Syria in previous weeks reinforced the Turks' sense of alienation, as only 7% of the respondents in Turkey expressed support for those attacks.¹⁶

The crisis in the relationship between Turkey and the United States began during the presidency of George W. Bush when Turkey refused to take part in the coalition fighting Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and the US passed two clearly anti-Turkish measures: they refused to allow Turkish companies to work on the



rehabilitation of Iraq after the war, and imposed severe limitations on the presence of Turkish covert agents and military personnel in Iraq, and particularly in its Kurdish region. US-Turkey

relations reached its nadir on July 4, 2003 (US Independence Day) when American soldiers raided the headquarters of the Turkish soldiers in Iraq. The operation itself and the denigrating photographs of Turkish soldiers, with their hands cuffed and heads in hoods, published in its aftermath shocked the Turkish collective. This is clearly evident in the Turkish movie "Valley of the Wolves: Iraq," in which the hero is a Turkish secret agent who takes revenge on the American soldiers who participated in the raid. Further tangible proof of this downturn in public opinion was the incident that occurred on November 12, 2014 in Istanbul. At dawn, activists from the Youth Union of Turkey (TGB) ambushed American sailors disembarking from the USS Ross, which was anchored in port after returning from an NATO intelligence mission in the Black Sea. The activists attacked the sailors and even managed to cover the heads of three seamen with hoods (pictured), clear evidence that even today, more than a decade after the notorious raid, Turks still hold a deep grudge against Americans. On SNS, users celebrated the "hood event" using the slogan "Hoods for the US, from TGB"¹⁷

It is important to emphasize that members of TGB are Kemalists who consider the US responsible for paving Erdoğan's way to power. They claim that Washington (and particularly President Obama) is trying to promote moderate Islam in Turkey at the expense of secular society, as part of a "Greater Middle East Project," in hopes that it will become an example for other Middle Eastern countries. Conversely, it must be noted that anti-American sentiment in Turkey is not necessarily evidence of increasing support for Islamists, including ISIS. A survey conducted by the Turkish firm Metropoll showed that 92.5% of the respondents despise the organization and 80.6% consider it a terrorist organization.¹⁸ The capture of 49 Turkish diplomats last July¹⁹ and the extremely disturbing videos of ISIS executions are among the many factors contributing to the poor reputation of ISIS. Its publications have drawn severe criticism in Turkey because of the tremendous damage they are doing to the reputation of Islam. Many users have declared that its members are not Muslims, but rather extremists who speak in the name of Islam only in order to gain the support of Muslims.

In conclusion, the discourse on SNS, in public opinion surveys, and reports of establishment media in Turkey all show that the "average Turk" is uninterested in having his country join the battle against ISIS. On the contrary, the fight is perceived as an "American-Israeli project" that allows Israel to continue operating unhindered while other countries in the region fight each other.²⁰ In other words, it seems that the Turkish public opposes having the Turkish army become a "secondary actor in a play directed by the West." The aforementioned survey conducted by Metropoll found that 60.6% of the respondents oppose Turkey's involvement joint military operations being conducted by NATO forces in Syria, while only 22.5% supported the option. Simultaneously, the discourse shows a serious lack of trust between the Turkish public and both state and non-state actors in the region. While the hostility shown towards Israel by 86% of the respondents is unsurprising, it is less understandable why 65% of Turkish citizens also expressed disregard for Brazil, a country which would superficially seem to have neither historical or current issues with Turkey. These statistics show more than mere disrespect for the outside world but rather the xenophobia that has become an inseparable part of the Turkish experience, a feeling well expressed by the well-known Kemalist slogan, "Turks have no friends but the Turks," even though Kemalism is on the decline.

Kobani and Tehran: Iran SNS on the Struggle between the Kurds & ISIS

Dr. Raz Zimmt

The Islamic State's (ISIS) control over parts of Syria and Iraq poses a significant threat to Iran, who is concerned about the threat of instability on its borders and damage to its territorial integrity being a minority state. Although Iran is aware that the international coalition has advantages in the effort to weaken ISIS, it remains disturbed by the possibility that western countries will take advantage of the circumstances to deepen their presence in the region and topple Assad's regime in Syria. Iran's concern over developments in the region has intensified since September 15, 2014 when ISIS launched a massive attack on Kobani, located on the border between Syria and Turkey. In the ongoing battle, local Kurdish forces have shown stubborn persistence, and with the assistance of a coalition led by the United States have, to date, successfully prevented ISIS from capturing the city. The increasing strength of ISIS near Iran's borders is of great interest to Iranian users of social networks (SNS), who express clear hostility towards the movement, along with concern about the impact that ongoing fighting will have on the stability in the region, and the possibility that it will spread into Iranian territory.

Simultaneously, the fighting in Kobani has awakened a wave of support and identification with the Kurds, and SNS have become a central arena for expressing this support. In recent weeks, Iranian citizens have launched several Facebook pages entitled "Kobani is not alone." These pages, which have received tens of thousands of likes to date, post ongoing updates about the fighting and

expressions of support for the Kurds.²¹ In online discussions, Iranian users express great respect for the Kurdish fighters, especially the women among them, and confidence that Kobani will not surrender. This PR campaign is not limited to members of Iran's Kurdish minority, which is approximately 7% of the country's population, but also includes other citizens with a variety of opposing political views. In recent weeks, this campaign has moved from cyberspace into the streets as thousands of Iranian citizens in Tehran and other cities demonstrated in support of the Kurds. Participants in these demonstrations, some of which have been organized on SNS, have protested that Turkey is not – in their opinion – doing enough to help the besieged residents of Kobani.²²

The public discourse surrounding the events in Kobani reflects, to a great extent, the dilemma that the fighting between the Kurds and ISIS presents to Iran. On one hand, Iran is committed to fighting ISIS because the organization is harmful to its strongholds of influence in Iraq and Syria. On the other hand, Iran, like Turkey, is worried about increasing separatism among the ethnic minorities living in its border regions. This dilemma is also reflected in online discourse expressing support for the Kurds that is accompanied by anxiety that their struggle will spread into Iran and jeopardizes the country's territorial integrity. Many SNS users used historical context and the deep cultural ties between Iranians and Kurds to justify their support for the Kurds, while others emphasized that "In Iran, the Kurds are Iranian citizens, and there is no difference between them and other citizens."²³ Reformist journalist and activist Foad Shams addressed this issue in a note on his Facebook page, stressing the unifying characteristics he claims are shared by all citizens of Iran. He contended that the support of Iranian citizens from Tabriz to Tehran for the Kurds is evidence of the national unity prevailing between all ethnic and religious groups, which has the power to prevent the social and national disintegration that is plaguing Syria and Iraq.²⁴ Conversely, fear of Kurdish separatism is also expressed by some users' hesitant responses to the possibility of Iranian support for the Kurds. For example, one noted that the Kurdish forces include "terrorists" from PJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), which declared an armed struggle against Iran in 2004.²⁵

Discourse on SNS also reveals the complex attitude of Iranian citizens towards the increasing strength of ISIS. While some voices demand that Western nations join in a military operation on behalf of the Kurds, there is also criticism of the Western policies that supposedly led to the ascent and strengthening of ISIS. Some users claimed that the international coalition was actually intended to make it possible for the Americans to establish their control of the region.²⁶ Massive

criticism was also directed at the Turks and particularly at Prime Minister Erdoğan, who was accused of supporting ISIS and not assisting the Kurds in Kobani. Against this background, calls were heard for boycotting Turkish products and outgoing Iranian tourism to Turkey.²⁷



Demonstration in front of the Turkish embassy in Tehran.

However, most users avoided calling for direct Iranian intervention in the fighting, apparently because of the fear prevailing among the Iranian public that Iran could become more deeply involved in the regional conflicts that has already exacted a high human and economic price. Only a few users think that Iran should send the Revolutionary Guards to assist the Kurds in their fight.²⁸ On October 7, journalist Sadeq Rouhani published an article on the conservative website "Khabar Online" calling for the commander of the Quds Force

of the Revolutionary Guard to liberate Kobani from ISIS immediately, just as it liberated Amerli in northern Iraq in late August. In addition to expressions of support, the article also garnered critical responses warning against Iranian involvement that might cause the conflict to spread into Iranian territory and lead to direct conflict with Turkey.²⁹

Another characteristic of the online discourse emerges from the comments made by opponents of the regime, who draw parallels between ISIS and the Iranian regime. This comparison has gained momentum against the background of two issues that riled the Iranian public during August: the execution of Reyhaneh Jabbari, who was accused of murdering a man who intended, she claimed,

to rape her; and a wave of attacks in Isfahan where women's faces were disfigured with acid. These events led to many parallels between the oppression of women in Iran and the oppression of women by ISIS. On Tweeter, one user compared Reyhaneh Jabbari to the women of Kobani who refuse to submit to rape,³⁰ while another tweeted, "Death to ISIS: both in Kobani and in Isfahan."³¹



Kobani and Isfahan

In conclusion, the discourse on Iranian SNS regarding the ongoing conflict in Kobani reflects the complex situation in which Iran finds itself vis-á-vis regional developments and the growing strength of ISIS. This position grows out of clear opposition to ISIS, a lack of trust in the foreign forces intervening in the region, and fear that the national and territorial integrity of Iran will be harmed. In the midst of this, opponents of the regime are taking advantage of the discussions

about ISIS to reflect on events in Iran and emphasize the threat inherent in radical Islam of all

types, including that of the Iranian regime.

- ³ For example the detailed report of hostile actions towards Muslims in Europe
- http://www.islamophobie.net/sites/default/files/CCIF-Annual-Report-2014.pdf https://twitter.com/Active_Change_F, http://www.activechangefoundation.org/portfolio-item/notinmyname/,

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aPXMMp2z6X0

#PasEnMonNom

http://www.hespress.com/societe/242306.html

داعش لا تمثلني¹¹ أنا_مسلم_دولة_الإسلام_تمثلني#

http://www.dayan.org/sites/default/files/behive%20october%20final%202014.pdf

¹⁴ Peşmerge Koridor

¹⁵ PEW Research Turkey [Accessed in: November 14, 2014]

http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/6/country/224/

¹⁶ "The Turkish people don't look favorably upon the U.S., or any other country, really", PEW Research, [Accessed on November 14, 2014] http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/31/the-turkish-people-dont-look-favorablyupon-the-u-s-or-any-other-country-really/

¹⁷ TGBdenABDyeÇuval#

¹⁸ "Türkiye'nin Nabzı, Ekim 2014, Savaş ve Barış Arasında Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası", Metropoll,

[Accessed on November 14, 2014] http://www.metropoll.com.tr/upload/content/files/1774-turkiyenin-nabzi-ekimsunum.pdf

¹⁹ See: Cohen Yanarocak, "ISIS and the Kurds," footnote 13 above.

²⁰ Cem Küçük, "IŞİD bir Amerika ve İsrail Projesi mi?" Yeni Şafak, November 9,

2014 http://m.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/cemkucuk/isid-bir-amerika-ve-israil-projesi-mi-56857 [Accessed on: November 16, 2014]

²¹ Currently, the most prominent pages are "Kobani" (more than 27,000 likes),

https://www.facebook.com/kobaninews?fref=nf; "Kobane is not alone" (more than 5,000 likes).

https://www.facebook.com/pages/%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-

%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AAkobane-is-not-

alone/1444692845797413?ref=br rs; "Kobani is Not Alone" (more than 2,500 likes),

https://www.facebook.com/pages/%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-

%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%87%D8%A7-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA-Kobani-is-Not-Alone-

%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D8%AA%DB%95%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%A7-

%D9%86%DB%8C%DB%95/1512037972344132?ref=br rs ; "Campaign in support of Kuban" (more than 3,500 likes), https://www.facebook.com/pages/%DA%A9%D9%85%D9%BE%DB%8C%D9%86-

%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B2-

%DA%A9%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8CCampaign-in-support-of-Kuban/322358064607279?ref=br rs;

and "Supporters of Kobani (more than 1,100 likes), https://www.facebook.com/koobaniiiiiii2014?ref=br rs.

²² http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/iran-kobane-turkey-syria.html#ixzz3HFiLPg5Y.

²³ https://www.facebook.com/bbcpersian/posts/10152567429042713.

²⁴ https://www.facebook.com/foad.shams.1/posts/10152795463096079:0

²⁵ https://www.facebook.com/mehdi.parpanchi/posts/612750765513902.

¹ For example, see the Twitter feed of Al Hayat in French: https://twitter.com/fralhayat

[#]أستعداد_الأنصار_في_بلاد_الحرمين, #عمليات_أنصار_الدولة_ببلاد_الحرمين²

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfYanI-zJes, #notinmyname

⁶ #StopTheCrISIS. See another campaign by young Muslims from Ontario Canada deprecating ISIS and its ideas www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbZ0dpf8lkY

انا_مسلم_داعش_لا_تمثلنى# 8

⁹ https://twitter.com/malarab1/status/508318928062267392

¹⁰ ; #MachiBessmity; <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=993GNIC-lug;</u>

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Machi-BessmityPour-IHumanit%C3%A9-contre-la-barbarie/1511781215727986 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hdw7NoXxqM for me details on the campaign, see:

¹³ For more on this context, see: Hay Eytan Cohen Yanarocak, " ISIS and the Kurds: Difficult Dilemmas facing Turkey," beehive, volume 2, issue 9 October 2014

https://www.facebook.com/parazit/photos/a.453577731440.240838.76683931440/10152324801731441/?typ <u>e=1</u>.
<u>https://www.facebook.com/mehdi.parpanchi/posts/612750765513902</u>.
<u>http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/379205/weblog/rouhani</u>.
<u>https://twitter.com/kiankk202/status/525924013726396417</u>.
<u>https://twitter.com/koobani/status/525336958000971776</u>.

26

https://www.facebook.com/bbcshoma/photos/a.215988678413903.58047.152332344779537/909510492395048/?ty <u>pe=1</u>.