

THE IDEOLOGY OF ISIS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JUNE 21, 2016

Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.fdsys.gov/>

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

24-130 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2017

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

RON JOHNSON, Wisconsin *Chairman*

JOHN McCain, Arizona	THOMAS R. CARPER, Delaware
ROB PORTMAN, Ohio	CLAIRE McCASKILL, Missouri
RAND PAUL, Kentucky	JON TESTER, Montana
JAMES LANKFORD, Oklahoma	TAMMY BALDWIN, Wisconsin
MICHAEL B. ENZI, Wyoming	HEIDI HEITKAMP, North Dakota
KELLY AYOTTE, New Hampshire	CORY A. BOOKER, New Jersey
JONI ERNST, Iowa	GARY C. PETERS, Michigan
BEN SASSE, Nebraska	

CHRISTOPHER R. HIXON, *Staff Director*

DAVID S. LUCKEY, *Director of Homeland Security*
ELIZABETH E. MCWHORTER, *Senior Professional Staff Member*
GABRIELLE A. BATKIN, *Minority Staff Director*
JOHN P. KILVINGTON, *Minority Deputy Staff Director*
HARLAN C. GEER, *Minority Senior Professional Staff Member*
ERIC K. HANSON, *Minority U.S. Army Detailee*
LAURA W. KILBRIDE, *Chief Clerk*
BENJAMIN C. GRAZDA, *Hearing Clerk*

CONTENTS

Opening statements:	Page
Senator Johnson	1
Senator Carper	2
Senator Ayotte	16
Senator Tester	17
Senator Heitkamp	19
Senator Peters	21
Senator Baldwin	23
Senator Lankford	25
Senator Booker	26
Prepared statements:	
Senator Johnson	35
Senator Carper	36

WITNESS

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2016

Hassan Hassan, Resident Fellow, Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, and Co-Author, "ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror"	4
Tarek Elgawhary, Ph.D., Director Religious Studies Programs, World Organi- zation for Resource Development and Education	6
Subhi Nahas, Chairman of the Board, Spectra Project	8
Nadia Murad, Human Rights Activist	9

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF WITNESSES

Elgawhary, Tarek.:	
Testimony	6
Prepared statement	74
Hassan, Hassan:	
Testimony	4
Prepared statement with attachment	38
Murad, Nadia:	
Testimony	9
Prepared statement	80
Nahas, Subhi:	
Testimony	8
Prepared statement	78

APPENDIX

Responses to post-hearing questions for the Record	
Mr. Hassan	83
Mr. Elgawhary	85
Mr. Nahas	90
Ms. Murad	91

THE IDEOLOGY OF ISIS

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2016

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Ron Johnson, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Johnson, Portman, Lankford, Ayotte, Ernst, Carper, McCaskill, Tester, Baldwin, Heitkamp, Booker, and Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOHNSON

Chairman JOHNSON. Good morning. This hearing will come to order.

We do have one witness who parked over at Union Station. He is making his way over here. I thought we would get going, and he can join us when he gets here.

I want to thank the witnesses for appearing, for your time, and for your testimonies.

The mission statement of this Committee—you have heard it, repeatedly, but I will repeat it again—is to enhance the economic and national security of America. On the homeland security side, one of our top four priorities is, certainly, doing whatever we can to keep our homeland safe—to counter Islamic terror.

The goal of every hearing, from my standpoint—coming from a manufacturing background, I solved a lot of problems. The first step in solving a problem is admitting you have one—properly identifying it, defining it, but really facing reality. And so, the goal of every hearing is to lay out a reality, so that, certainly, the Members of the Committee and the people in the audience understand what we are dealing with, in terms of a particular problem.

Today's hearing is our eighth hearing dealing with some form or component of the threat we face from Islamic terror. It is a harsh reality. It is one I wish was not true. It is one I wish we did not have to face. But, we have to.

We are going to be hearing testimonies today that will be hard to hear. It will be hard to hear, but they are testimonies that, I think, are incredibly important for us to hear.

So, again, I thank the witnesses for appearing. I would ask that my written statement be entered into the record,¹ without objection.

It is important for us to understand that Islamic terrorists declared war on the United States. Quite honestly, Islamic terrorists declared war on the civilized world. We did not declare war on them. They declared war on us.

I cannot exactly point to the date, but, certainly, one that is pretty visible was the first attempt to bring down the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center. That was on February 26, 1993. And, the fact that we did not face the full reality, right there and then, I think, eventually led to the fact that we then faced the tragedy of the attack on September 11, 2001 (9/11), a terrorist attack where almost 3,000 Americans were slaughtered.

Now, there are two ways to end a war—only two ways: either one side defeats the other or both sides decide to lay down their arms. The tragic events of yet another terror attack, inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), on this country, in Orlando, Florida, has proven Islamic terrorists are not laying down their arms. So, the only way we are going to end this war and the only way we are going to keep our homeland safe and return peace to the civilized world, is if we defeat Islamic terrorists—if we defeat ISIS.

Now, on September 10, 2014, President Obama laid out America's goal, as it relates to ISIS. It is pretty simply stated: to degrade and, ultimately, defeat them. That was 22 months ago.

In his testimony last week, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director John Brennan laid out the reality, as it relates to our success—or lack thereof—in our war on ISIS. And, he testified—and this is a quote—that “ISIS remains a formidable, resilient, and largely cohesive enemy,” and that “our efforts have not reduced [their] terrorism capability and their global reach.”

Now, that is a depressing reality after 22 months, but it is a reality we have to face.

Again, I just want to thank the witnesses. Do not hold back. Lay out the reality. Make sure that, certainly, the Senators on this dais, as well as the American people, understand the threat—the enemy we face—and why it is just crucial that we actually defeat them. I wish they would lay down their arms. I wish they would declare peace. But, it does not seem like that is going to happen.

With that, I will turn it over to my Ranking Member, Senator Carper.

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER CARPER

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, thank you for delaying this hearing for a week, so that our witnesses could be assembled and we could have more time to prepare. We welcome each of you. Thank you for coming and sharing with us your stories and your perspectives. They are valued, and we are delighted that you could come.

¹ The prepared statement of Senator Johnson appears in the Appendix on page 35.

I want to just follow up, very briefly, on how the fight against ISIS is going. I went over a map of that part of the world, today, and the United States—and our coalition forces, which now number about 60 nations—have recaptured almost 50 percent of the land that ISIS once held in Iraq and in Syria. Almost 50 percent. I think we are up about 47 percent. ISIS has also lost 20 percent of the land it once held in Syria. Ramadi and Tikrit were key victories for the U.S.-backed Iraqi forces. And, last Friday, Iraqi forces—ground forces—captured the city center of Fallujah and are now working to clear out the last few pockets of resistance in that city. And, that is only about 20 miles to 25 miles west of Baghdad.

As we speak, Kurdish, Iraqi, and Syrian democratic forces, backed by the U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), are making preparations to retake ISIS's key strongholds in Mosul and Raqqa. We have killed some 25,000 ISIS fighters and more than 120 key ISIS leaders. We have cut ISIS funds by a third or more. We have literally destroyed hundreds of millions of dollars in cash that they were hoarding, and we have reduced, by a dramatic amount, their ability to realize profits from oil reserves and resources in that part of the world.

We have, drastically, slowed the flow of foreign recruits from a high of about 2,000 a month, in 2014, to 200 a month, today. And, that also goes for young Americans who have sought to travel and join ISIS. About 1 year ago, every month, about 10 Americans were leaving this country to join ISIS. Today, that number is one per month. And, at home, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) is cracking down on recruits as well. And, over the past 2 years, the FBI has arrested 88 individuals on ISIS-related charges.

I was a naval flight officer (NFO) for 23 years—combined active and reserve duty. I served 5 years in a hot war in Southeast Asia—I know a little bit about fighting wars—and another 18 years, right up to the end of the Cold War, as a P-3 Orion aircraft mission commander. And, one of the ways we are going to win this fight is not by ourselves. There is not an appetite in this country for putting boots on the ground. But, there is an appetite for working with the coalition of countries, throughout the region and around the world, and that is what we are doing. And, I believe we are making progress. Is it perfect? Are we where we want to be? Is this where we want to go? No, it is not. But, I think we are making progress.

The other thing I want to say is that, last Saturday, 9 days ago—10 days ago, my wife and I went up to New York. We have a son who lives in that area—in the city—and he took us, for Father's Day and for his mom's birthday, to the 9/11 Memorial Museum, which is located right on the location where the Twin Towers once stood. I was reminded there, as we saw the faces and the names and as we heard the voices of the family members of some of the 3,000 people who died that day—I was reminded of the way we responded to that tragedy. In this room, we helped to create the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (9/11 Commission). In this room, we received some 40 recommendations from the bipartisan group—the 9/11 Commission—presented to us by Tom Kean, former Governor of New Jersey, and presented to us by Lee Hamilton, former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee—co-chairs of the 9/11 Commission. They presented

to us, after months and months of work, some 40 recommendations that they came to, unanimously, on what we could do to reduce the likelihood that these kinds of attacks would occur again. We adopted, maybe, 80 percent of them—again, almost unanimously, and then set about implementing them.

The response to that tragedy was bipartisan. It was a unified approach, and I think, ultimately, it has been successful. Ultimately, it has been successful. And, when you compare that response to the response to the tragedy in Orlando, it could not be more different. It could not be more different.

My hope, today, is that we are going to have the kind of conversation, with all of you, that will enable us to better improve this fight—and this is a fight that we are going to win—the fight against ISIS. And, we have a lot of allies that happen to be, not just folks in this country and not just people who might be Catholic or Protestant, but people of all faiths, including the Muslim faith. And, together, we are going to prevail.

Thank you so much. And, Mr. Chairman, I would ask unanimous consent, if I could, that the rest of my statement be entered into the record.¹ Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Without objection.

It is the tradition of this Committee to swear in witnesses, so if you will all rise and raise your right hand. Do you swear the testimony you will give before this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Ms. MURAD. Yes.

Mr. NAHAS. I do.

Mr. HASSAN. I do.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I do.

Chairman JOHNSON. Please be seated.

Our first witness is Hassan Hassan. Mr. Hassan is an associate fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy (TIMEP). Mr. Hassan co-authored “ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror.” In 2008, he started working in Abu Dhabi in journalism and research, focusing on Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf States and studying Islamist, Salafist, and jihadist movements in the wider region. Mr. Hassan.

TESTIMONY OF HASSAN HASSAN,² RESIDENT FELLOW, TAHRIR INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY, AND CO-AUTHOR, “ISIS: INSIDE THE ARMY OF TERROR”

Mr. HASSAN. Thank you, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and Members of the Committee.

By way of introduction, I also want to add that I come from an ISIS-controlled, area that is still controlled today. I have also interviewed dozens of ISIS members for my book and for other research. And, I want to say this: This is not a sectarian war. The very people that ISIS claims to represent are victims of its brutality just as much as everyone else. This is the reality felt on a daily basis. When family and friends go to the market and see severed heads on pipes, when ISIS condemns its Sunni opponents—people that they claim to represent—as apostates—they burn them alive, they

¹ The prepared statement of Senator Carper appears in the Appendix on page 36.

² The prepared statement of Mr. Hassan appears in the Appendix on page 38.

stab their hearts before they shoot them, and when they display their dead bodies for days in central squares—when it says to its fellow Sunnis, “It does not matter if you pray, if you fast on Ramadan, or if you turn your face toward Mecca and pray, we will still kill you as long as you do not pledge allegiance to us.” Not far from where I come from, in my area, called Deir Ezzor, ISIS killed 700 Sunni villagers, in a matter of days, because they dared to stand up against the group.

And, I want to move on to say that, as a belief system, those who believe in the sort of ISIS ideology are a minority, not only in the Muslim world but also within the group. During my research, I found that members come in six categories:

One, longstanding religious radicals who deviate even from al-Qaeda. For example, they believe that there is no sanctity of life. Unlike al-Qaeda, which, for example, justifies killing civilians—but only as collateral damage—ISIS considers killing civilians, themselves, as the preferred outcome. In fact, just a month ago—exactly a month ago, the spokesperson for ISIS said—when he called for sympathizers in the West, in Europe, and in the United States to launch attacks, he said, “I receive complaints from people—sympathizers—saying we could not find military targets and we are afraid to kill civilians.” And, he said, “There is no such thing as innocent civilians in the West.” And, in fact, he moved on to say, “We prefer that you kill civilians.” And, he said, “I do not have time to justify that,” basically. He did not even give the justification during the statement.

And, the second category of people who join ISIS are young zealots, who are victims of the first category—people who are between age 12 and 17, people who are drawn to this idea of a caliphate, and so on and so forth. They are brainwashed. They are taught Islam in a way that ISIS understands, which distorts a lot of things. And, because people do not have religious knowledge, they hear a lot about the events as well as the traditions that ISIS relates for the first time.

And, there is a third category, which is very important: people who are drawn to ISIS’s political ideology—not religious one—and this is a major problem, not only within ISIS, but, I think, in the region—people who are drawn to this political ideology, not only for ISIS, but for al-Qaeda and for other Islamist groups, because they think there is political stagnation in the region and only these groups can actually shake up the political order in the region.

And, I think Omar Mateen belongs to this category of people that are only superficially influenced by this organization. He, obviously, did not follow their way of life, but he was still animated, probably, by this idea of ISIS.

The other categories are those who are drawn to the group because of its military success, its model of governance, an attraction to its brutality, or, simply, they are profiteers. But, the group—and this is important. The group swims in a sea of political failures in the region—and that is where we should focus. It is not a surprise, for example, that ISIS emerged in Iraq and in Syria, countries that suffered unimaginable brutality and violence over the past decade, in the case of Iraq, and half of a decade, in the case of Syria.

The group has built its narrative around the idea of Sunni victimization. It benefitted from the brutal reality, in both Iraq and Syria, to say that Sunnis are, systematically, under attack by Iranian-backed militias or governments in those two countries, that the two greatest superpowers in the world are helping both of them, and that there are traitors—apostates, in other words—in our midst who help them.

It is important—without downplaying the genocidal acts of ISIS—to highlight that the regime of Bashar al-Assad, in Damascus, had carried out almost all of the atrocities—probably, without an exception—that ISIS has committed even before ISIS arrived in Syria. In 2012, for example, pro-government militias in Syria stormed villages, slaughtered children and women, and smashed—using rocks—the heads of condemned people.

I just want to conclude by saying and emphasizing that ISIS thrives in this context and should be defeated in this context in order to stem its international appeal. This can only happen at the hands of the very people that ISIS claims to represent.

Thank you very much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Hassan.

Our next witness is Dr. Tarek Elgawhary. Dr. Elgawhary is Director of Religious Studies Programs for the World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE). Dr. Elgawhary also serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Coexist Corporation and as a trustee of the Coexist Foundation. He has a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from Princeton in Islamic law and he studied traditional Islamic sciences at Al-Azhar Seminary in Cairo, Egypt. Dr. Elgawhary.

TESTIMONY OF TAREK ELGAWHARY, PH.D.,¹ DIRECTOR, RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROGRAMS, WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Senator Johnson, Senator Carper, and other Members of the Committee, thank you very much for this opportunity. I would like to make very brief introductory remarks and, maybe, save the other discussion points for the question and answer portion.

I would like to add to what Senator Johnson said, in the beginning, that, before ISIS or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other related groups declared war on our homeland, they declared war on Islam. And, this is not only a threat to our homeland—not only a threat to our national security, but an existential threat to our religion.

Normative Islam, in both its Sunni and Shia expressions, is defined by a very robust, interpretive methodology. That is what you go to seminary to be trained in.

Very briefly, this interpretive methodology requires one to understand the divine text—to understand the text of the Quran and to understand the various statements of the prophet. There are 6,236 verses in the Quran. There are about 60,000 to 70,000 prophetic texts and their different narrations. There are over 100,000 narrations of these prophetic texts.

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Elgawhary appears in the Appendix on page 74.

Understanding the divine text means understanding about a dozen different sciences, beginning with Arabic grammar, syntax, morphology, and logic—all of these are different interpretive tools that we use to understand what the text actually means in the context in which it was revealed.

The second thing is to understand the context that we live in now—the current moment—understanding full well that people change, times change, circumstance change, and location and place change. How does one fast the month of Ramadan in the northern latitudes, which the early Muslim generations never experienced? How do we deal with usury in the light of fiat currency—currency that is not backed by gold or silver bullion—and so on and so forth? So then, that further adds the idea that one needs to understand the current moment that we live in as well as its complexity and its changing.

And then, the third aspect of this interpretive paradigm is, how do we link the divine text into the current moment in which we live—and that, as we were taught, is a talent. Not everyone is endowed with that type of talent.

Violent and extremist groups, like ISIL, have no interpretation, whatsoever—nor do they have a fundamental understanding of Islam. They are unlettered warmongers who have, in essence, created a parallel religion. Yet, this parallel religion that they call to is no more Islamic than a pool with one lemon squeezed in it is lemonade.

And, because of the gross misunderstanding of the primary text and because of their lack of a robust interpretive methodology, the good news is, we are able to identify what is so wrong with their thinking. And, in my work and in my analysis, I have been able to deduce about a half dozen or so main concepts that they have, and I have been able to trace them back to a certain cluster of sources that are used by every single Islamist extremist group from the middle of the 20th Century until our time, today. And, in that, I am able to isolate those concepts. We are able to provide a counter-narrative and deal with it.

Now, I do not have an army at my disposal. I do not own any weapons, whatsoever. I leave that to law enforcement. What I do have is, I have my intellect and I have my scholarly training. And, I can employ that to provide a robust counter-narrative to inoculate our youth, to protect the next generation, and to make it absolutely, unequivocally clear that what ISIL represents and what they stand for has nothing to do with the religion, whatsoever.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Dr. Elgawhary.

Our next witness is Subhi Nahas. Mr. Nahas is an activist for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights, who fled Syria, in 2012, after receiving threats from soldiers and jihadists because of his sexual preference. Mr. Nahas fled, first to Lebanon and then to Turkey, where he applied at the United Nations (U.N.) for refugee status. He was granted refugee status after a year and has since moved to the United States. In August 2015, he testified before the United Nations Security Council's summit on LGBT rights in Syria. Mr. Nahas.

**TESTIMONY OF SUBHI NAHAS,¹ CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,
SPECTRA PROJECT**

Mr. NAHAS. Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and Members of the Committee, thank you for offering me the honor and the opportunity to be here, today, to share my story in the context of the larger events happening around the world—and here in the United States.

My personal story mirrors the stories of many other LGBT individuals. One day, I was heading to the university. An organized group of militants accosted and threatened me, solely because they perceived me as gay.

In the local mosque, it had been announced that they would cleanse the city of all “sodomites.” ISIS had not yet been formed, yet militants and the regime targeted all gay men in the country. I fled from my home country of Syria in 2012. After living in Lebanon for 6 months, I moved to Turkey.

My history of activism for LGBT rights meant that, even in Turkey, I once again found myself in danger. Extremist groups, like al-Qaeda and ISIS, were gaining strength and access there. Although I was employed for 2 years in a senior position with Save the Children International, I was still not safe because of my sexual identity.

A Syrian friend informed me that I had been targeted for death. My director at Save the Children helped me register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to be resettled to a safer country.

Prior to my resettlement, I completed an extremely thorough screening process, which included testifying, under oath, in front of an officer from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), security checks, medical tests, and a cultural orientation. After this 10-month process, I was relocated to San Francisco, California.

In August 2015, a few months after resettlement, I spoke before members of the U.N. Security Council about the threats to sexual minorities in the Middle East during a historic event organized by the United States and Chile. As I stated during the meeting and to the press, alongside Ambassador Samantha Power, ISIS is simply one of many threats to the LGBT community in the Middle East.

Reports from recent refugees of Syria say that ISIS and other groups actively target gay people. It is enough just to be perceived as gay by them to be arrested, tortured, or raped. Then, this perceived gay person can be thrown off of a building to a cheerful crowd that will stone them to death if they are not dead.

While ISIS is viewed, in the public eye, as the most notorious group in Syria and Iraq, it may come as a surprise that their methodology—when it comes to the treatment of LGBT people—is very similar to many other groups, including governments, themselves. We know that many groups, including ISIS, target and kill gay people in Syria. They just use different methods to kill.

While good fortune has allowed me to begin a new, much safer life as a refugee in the United States, the recent event in Orlando shows that LGBT people still face huge challenges here. The “New

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Nahas appears in the Appendix on page 78.

York Times” reported on June 16, “Even before the shooting rampage at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people were already the most likely targets of hate crimes in America, according to an analysis of data collected by the FBI.”

Put simply, efforts to discredit the poisonous ideology of ISIS and other extremist groups—while extremely important—are insufficient to completely erase the threat of anti-LGBT violence, either here in this country or abroad. Rather, we must also commit to combating homophobia, xenophobia, and bigotry in all of its various forms, regardless of the source.

In order to deal with these issues, I recommend two things:

One, through the bridges and the convening power unique to the United Nations, support actions that promote, not only human rights for LGBT persons, but also love, inclusion, tolerance, and equality among religions and communities. This requires continued U.S. leadership at forums, like the U.N. Human Rights Council, and supporting funding for U.N. institutions, like the UNHCR. Statements, such as the one issued by the U.N. Security Council, on Monday, condemning the Orlando attack, are critical. This statement, specifically, denounced, for the first time, violence targeting people “as a result of their sexual orientation”—and it received support from Russia and Egypt. This will make it more difficult for those countries and others to argue that sexual orientation is not a recognized international human right.

Two, we need partnerships across communities that can address the serious negative consequences of ISIS’s ideology, including assisting the communities affected by it. For example, I have launched the Spectra Project, which assists LGBT refugees in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by providing shelter and education, while also promoting, in the United States and abroad, a more positive image of LGBT people.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Nahas.

Our final witness is Nadia Murad. Ms. Murad is a Yazidi rights activist and one of the thousands of Yazidi women who were abducted and enslaved by ISIS. Since her escape, Nadia has been outspoken about her experiences to draw attention to the ongoing genocide. Earlier this year, the Iraqi Government nominated her for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize.

Ms. MURAD. And, I will mention that Murad, coincidentally, is her interpreter. Thank you.

TESTIMONY OF NADIA MURAD,¹ HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] Mr. Chairman and Senators, I am very grateful and very happy to be testifying among you. And, thank you for the opportunity.

The first thing I would like to tell you is that I was heartbroken when I witnessed the crimes in Orlando, because, for the same reason—for no reason, they were killed and they were abused—just the way I was.

¹ The prepared statement of Ms. Murad appears in the Appendix on page 80.

But, I was not surprised by this, because I knew, if ISIS was not stopped, they would deliver their crimes everywhere.

When I was captured, I was 19 years old. I was one of the 6,000 Yazidi women and children who were taken into captivity.

This happened in August 2014—more than a year and a half ago, now—and ISIS attacked the Yazidis for one reason: because they are considered infidels, not “People of the Book.” And, their interpretation is that the men must be killed and the women and the children must be enslaved.

And, this is what they applied to us. Thousands of men, women, and children were killed in the first day of the attack in Sinjar. In the hottest days of the summer, more than 100,000 Yazidis were stranded on the mountain.

It is true that crimes were committed in Iraq and Syria, but what happened to the Yazidis was different. I was one of the girls who were enslaved in Mosul. I was one, among the thousands of women who were taken to Mosul.

The first thing they did, in Mosul, after distributing us to the fighters, was to take us to the court and have us convert by putting our hand on the Quran. It is true that I was raped, sold, and abused, but I was lucky. I wish that everyone, from the 6,000 women and children, was like me, because girls at the age of 9 were raped as well.

In only 2 hours, in my village, more than 700 men were killed. Among them were six of my brothers—and the same day my mother was killed, too, for no reason except for having a different religion.

I am not saying that ISIS represents Islam, but ISIS is using Islam to commit these crimes. And, this needs to stop as an ideology, first. Many people in the area, they had the choice to leave when ISIS came, but they were happy to join ISIS, when they came.

There are many things for me to testify about—to tell you today—just the time is limited and I do not speak English. I wish I could tell you more.

I would like you to give me one more minute, if possible.

Chairman JOHNSON. Honestly, take your time. We want to hear the story. Take whatever time it takes.

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] This was committed against the Yazidis, first—and it is still continuous, now. I delivered this message to Egypt and to Kuwait, because what is happening has been happening under the name of Islam.

People there, they had sympathy. And, they said, “This does not represent us.” But, we have not seen Daesh labeled as an infidel group within Islam—not from any Muslim country. And, I asked the leader of the Al-Azhar Seminary, in Cairo, to say that ISIS is an infidel group within Islam—and he has not committed to it yet.

Many families in Iraq and Syria, when the Yazidi women and girls were escaping to these houses, they could have helped them. But, no, they seized them and they gave them back to the militants.

Daesh will not give up on their weapons unless we force them to give away their weapons. Before all, the Arab countries must stop the flow of their citizens into Daesh and prevent them from

joining Daesh. And, we have to prevent the supplies of weapons and money to them. And, we must prevent their oil from being sold. And then, we have to fight them, literally, after that.

The Yazidis and all other religious minorities in Iraq, they are unable to protect themselves in Iraq and Syria. If a country as strong as your country cannot protect the citizens in Orlando, in Belgium, or in France, how can a small minority, like us, protect ourselves while we are in the heart of the land where the radicals are?

There are many things for me to ask you, because, for 2 years, we have been waiting—but the list is just too long for me to ask you.

I know what is going on now with the more than 3,200 Yazidi women, girls, and children who are still in captivity. When I was held, for every hour that passed, I was very happy and grateful for that hour if I was not sold and if I was not raped. One hour was counted for me—and every hour was counting for me. I was freed, but I do not enjoy the feeling of the freedom, because those who committed these crimes have not been held accountable.

What happened to the Yazidi people was a genocide. Just the first day, thousands were killed. They forced the displacement of 80 percent of the Yazidi people, who do not have the joy to have a tent to live in. And, they are holding more than 1,000 Yazidi children, in Syria, to be trained to have the exact same ideology that the crimes were committed under. Because of the children who were, at the age of nine—who did not enjoy their childhood and became slaves—and for the people who drowned in the Aegean Sea—and that is also a crime of ISIS, because those people escaped because of ISIS. Because thousands of our children also have been prevented from going to school—and this is all because of them.

Today, I am saying that small religious minorities, such as the Yazidis, Christians, and other minorities, if they are not protected, they will be wiped out. We only are seeking peace. We want to live with dignity wherever we are.

As a little girl, I had a dream. And, that dream was to open a beauty salon. And, I was prevented from accomplishing that dream, and that is the exact same story of thousands of children and people like me, who were prevented from continuing to pursue their dreams.

Racism should not be practiced against Islam, but these crimes have been committed in the name of Islam—and Muslims must be the first ones to resist this. And, I do not like anyone to attack an entire religion—for example, the family that liberated me, in Mosul. But, at the same time, this is being committed under the name of Islam.

There is so much time that is needed for me to tell my entire story, but now I will stop. And, I will give you the opportunity to ask any questions.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Murad. Thank you for your courage in coming forward and testifying.

Let me just ask, did any of your family survive?

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] Yes, two of my sisters, three of my brothers, and some of my nephews and nieces. I think people from

my family and my extended family, they were killed or they are missing.

Chairman JOHNSON. Could you just tell us how you escaped?

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] I never believed I would be able to escape, because—not me or the other girls—because we were held in areas—it was just vastly occupied by ISIS. The first couple of days, I tried to escape, because I could not hold on anymore with the rape that was committed against me and the insult that was committed against me—I could not take it anymore. I decided to escape.

I attempted to escape, but I was not successful. I was taken back, and I became a subject of rape by multiple people—collective rape.

The second time I attempted to escape, I was successful. And, a family in Mosul held me, and they made me an Islamic identity document (ID). And, with that ID, I was able to escape from Mosul.

Chairman JOHNSON. You mentioned there were 3,200 additional Yazidi girls and women being held captive. Are they dispersed throughout Syria and Iraq at this point in time?

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] Yes, they are everywhere, because they are not held in a specific place. What is happening is that they are being sold—and their places will be changed from one place to another.

Chairman JOHNSON. By the way, we are holding the questioning rounds to 5 minutes, because we have so many Members attending this.

Again, thank you, Ms. Murad.

I do want to go to Dr. Elgawhary—a real scholar of Islam. Can you just explain, is there any way for us to understand—how did adherents of this barbarity—this violence—how did it get to that point? What happened?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. So, thank you, Nadia. And, Nadia was saying that Daesh—they do not represent Islam, but they use Islam—and she gave some examples. But, they are even using Islam wrong. So, for example, they told her that she had to go to the court and she had to swear on the Quran to become a Muslim. But, that is not how you become a Muslim. You become a Muslim by testifying, saying the testification of faith. So, even small, mundane things they do not understand.

I just was so moved by what she said. And, it reminded me that the prophetic text—the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him—he said, “Fear the supplication of the oppressed because there is no veil between that supplication and the Lord.” And, he never mentioned that it is a Muslim or not a Muslim. And, he said, “I am the protector of the religious”—“I am the defender of the religious minority on the Day of Judgment against the Muslim that aggresses against the religious minority.”

It is a big question that you asked, Senator Johnson, but, basically, the way I see it is that they are taking certain concepts—or certain phrases—and adding to it and appropriating to it new meaning that does not exist. For example, Nadia mentioned that one of the things they told her was that Yazidis do not count as the “People of the Book”—that they are apostates. But, the concept of the “People of the Book,” in Islamic law, is not proscriptive. It is descriptive. It describes an organized religion that has a legal

code, that has a book—meaning sort of sacred text—and so on and so forth. And, as Muslims expanded eastward out of Arabia, they encountered Yazidis. These are communities that have existed with Muslims—and co-existed with Muslims—since the first generation of Islam, up until now.

And, all of the other Dharmic faiths—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Shintoism, and Daoism—all of these religions—Muslim scholars understood these as “People of the Book,” because it is a description. It is not proscriptive. So, these differences are how they misunderstand certain things.

The basic axis around which this thinking exists is this concept of takfirism, or declaring people to be apostates. I am an apostate—according to them—so, therefore, they can aggress against me. Why am I an apostate? Because I do not agree with what they agree on, I do not pledge allegiance to them, and so on and so forth. And, with this tactic, they go on and on and on.

But, one last thing. Nadia mentioned, when she asked the sheikh of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmed el-Tayeb, in Cairo—why does the senior leadership of Sunni Islam not declare ISIS as non-Islamic—because I know this is a common question that I get—our understanding of organizations like ISIS is that it is even worse than apostasy, because there is no capital punishment for apostasy. The Prophet said that these people are khawarij—they are outliers. And, in all of his mercy, all of his love, and all of his beautiful teachings, he said, “Khawarij [foreign language].” He said that the khawarij are the “dogs of hellfire.” And, he said, “[foreign language],” or “Glad tidings to those that fight them and kill them and are killed in the process of killing them,” about the khawarij—about the outliers. So, it is even worse—it is even more of a derogatory statement—a derogatory label—than being an apostate. And, it is an obligation on all of us, in the family of Islam, to do what we can to combat it with whatever tools that we have at our disposal.

Chairman JOHNSON. Just one very quick question, for either you or Mr. Hassan. Of the Muslim population—1.4 billion to 1.6 billion people—what percent of that population adheres to this barbaric ideology? Do you have any sense of that, whatsoever?

Mr. HASSAN. For me?

Chairman JOHNSON. Whoever has an estimate.

Mr. HASSAN. ISIS does not need a lot of numbers. We have seen this, recently, when they start being—like, when there is a force that pushes them in a certain area, they can hold territory with like 200 people. I think they are a small minority. Even within the Syrian rebel groups, they are still a smaller group than others. But, I think, because of the sheer violence and brutality, they deter people—and they use the word [foreign language] in their literature, which means deterrence—with extreme violence and brutality. So, when they kill one person, they make sure that 100 or 1,000 people see that person being killed.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Carper.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Did you say we have 5 minutes?

Chairman JOHNSON. Yes, we were trying to keep it at 5 minutes. There are so many people here.

Senator CARPER. OK. Again, our thanks to each one of you for joining us today, and for sharing with us some parts of your life

that are not easily shared. And, we are deeply grateful to each of you, but especially to you, Nadia. Thank you.

Here, in the United States, we are, as you probably know, people of many different religions. We are Protestant, we are Catholic, we are Jewish, we are Muslim, we are Hindu, we are Buddhist, and we are other religions as well. And, one of the reasons why our country was established was because of the concept and the nature of freedom of religion—people yearning, not just to be free, but to be free to worship God as they saw fit.

There are some people who take the Bible—most people in America are probably Protestant and Catholic—most, but, certainly, not all—but some people take verses of Scripture out of the Bible and they twist them into things—in ways that are not really meant to be done. And, there are people in our own faith who bastardize our faith—they “cherry-pick” our faith. A great example is, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” People take that as an admonition to go out and wreak vengeance on people that have wronged them. But, that same verse of Scripture goes on to say, “‘Revenge is mine,’ sayeth the Lord.” “‘Revenge is mine,’ sayeth the Lord.”

There is another verse in Scripture that says, “When I was a stranger in your land, did you take me in?” And, we have some people in this country—some political leaders—I do not know that they have read Matthew 25—whatever their religion is—but there are some people in this country who have argued that the United States needs to stop accepting, not just Syrian refugees, but, in some cases, all Muslim refugees. And, in the case of the Syrian refugees that they would not allow us to accept, that included people who are not Muslim. They could be of different faiths. They could be a Christian or they could be a Jew—a variety of religions.

And, I would just ask—starting with you, Mr. Elgawhary—I would start with you and just to ask, what are your opinions about a ban on, we will say, all Syrian refugees—or even all Muslim refugees? And, how would such a ban affect the ability, in this country, to counter ISIS propaganda and ideology? Would you go first?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I am not really trained as a politician, so—
Senator CARPER. Neither are we. [Laughter.]

We are untrained.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. At the risk of saying or making a political statement, I mean—I think, as an American, I understand—

Senator CARPER. My question is: What are your thoughts about how a ban on all Syrian refugees—or really all Muslim refugees—how does that affect our ability as a country to counter ISIS propaganda and ideology? That is my question.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Well, I was going to say that I think, as I understand our Nation, I think it is un-American not to accept refugees. And, we have, I think, the legal, political, and, more importantly, moral authority to take in the people that we can. And, this is what this “E Pluribus Unum”—this is what makes our Nation great. And, I think that, from a social cohesion standpoint, societies that are more plural are stronger.

I think that, by bringing in refugees, we will be able to understand the problem more and see how we can help them more. But, I think some sort of form of isolationism—or some sort of rejection—will only increase the problem and make it fester more.

Senator CARPER. Good. Thank you.

Other witnesses, please—same question.

Mr. HASSAN. Sure. I can say two things.

The first one is that, I try to keep in touch with people who left Syria—and they now live in Germany and other countries. And, I have seen how positive the message that European countries—and the case of here—only recently here—that they accepted them—and that was a positive sense. We only hear good things from refugees. They praise the Germans and how hospitable they are, and so on and so forth.

And, the second thing that we have to recognize is—I think, especially for the United States—that the thousands of Syrian refugees, who left Syria and are in Turkey and Europe or are in the United States, have been instrumental in the fight against ISIS. They provide intelligence, information, mapping, and guidance. And, ISIS operates in these areas that—in Eastern Syria, Northeastern Syria, and Northwestern Iraq—and these people have been affected the most by violence—they were driven out. There is a reason why they were helpful in the fight against ISIS.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

Anyone else? Mr. Nahas, just very briefly.

Mr. NAHAS. OK. From my experience, as a refugee, myself—I went through the process and I would say that it is very highly unlikely for the process to let in any terrorists that try to come. It is a highly intense process that includes security checks, background checks, a waiting period of at least one year, and eye-witnesses. They ask you a lot of personal questions. It is highly unlikely that a terrorist, or a person who believes in these ideologies, would be able to pass through.

Senator CARPER. All right. Thank you.

Nadia, could you briefly respond to my question? Very briefly, please.

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] I would like, first, to say that every country has the right to protect itself and to protect its borders and its laws. But, the people who are escaping from religious discrimination and genocide, they should not face closed doors before them.

I would just like to say that, if the terrorists want to go someplace, they can go—regardless of the process. And, some of them have already immigrated.

Senator CARPER. I think we have a moral imperative here. We face, in this country, a moral imperative to be true to those words that are written on the Statue of Liberty. We have a moral imperative where they happen to be—whatever faith, we have a moral imperative to Matthew 25: When you are a stranger in our land that we take you in. But, we also have a moral imperative to the people who live here and want to live in safety and be able to live to be old and have kids and grandchildren.

And so, I think our challenge here is to make sure that, while we need to be true to our faith in allowing people who are in distress, on the run, and haunted by their memories—we need to be welcoming to them. We also, at the same time, have to be mindful of the need to protect our safety. Sometimes they are in conflict with one another.

The last thing I want to say—and, Dr. Elgawhary, you can comment on this later, but my understanding is that every religion—just about every religion, including Islam—has a Golden Rule: Treat other people the way we want to be treated. Is that true? And, is that not also true of Islam?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Yes, it is.

Senator CARPER. My view is, if all of us would sort of abide by that, since that is part of the fabric of all of our religions, we would all be a whole lot better off on this planet.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper. So, we equally went over the time.

Now, I think we need to keep it to 5 minutes in order to be respectful of all of the people here. So, Senator Ayotte.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR AYOTTE

Senator AYOTTE. I want to thank the Chairman. I want to thank all of you for being here. In particular, Mr. Nahas and Ms. Murad, we are so sorry for what you have gone through. And, your courage in coming forward here, today, is very important, so that we can hear what you have endured—and it is horrific.

But, I wanted to follow up, Ms. Murad, on the issue that actually you raised—and I would like to have Dr. Elgawhary comment on it. And, that is, Doctor, you said that what Daesh is doing is beyond apostate. You have described it as the “dogs of hellfire.” And, I would agree with that description.

But, what I want to understand is—to what Ms. Murad asked, as we look at how the reaction should be from—for example, I think she may have identified the Al-Azhar Seminary in Cairo, which I believe you studied at, and which is a very important seminary in Islam. Do you believe that leaders in this seminary, and other leaders in the Muslim world, have described and called out Daesh in the way that you have described it, today—as forcefully as they should?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Thank you, Senator. So, just a correction. Those are not my words. I was quoting Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad said that the outliers are the dogs of hellfire.

Senator AYOTTE. Right, but, I think, to ask—what I want to understand is—to really answer her question. Do you think that leaders, in a position to influence, for what Islam truly stands for, do you think that they have been forceful enough in calling out—whether you call them “dogs of hellfire” or “apostate”—however, how Daesh is warping—as you have testified today—your religion?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. So, I think there is—yes and no. I think there are definitely those who are very outspoken. One scholar that comes to mind, who we have worked with, is Shaykh Muhammad Yaqubi, himself a Syrian refugee, for all intents and purposes—now living in Morocco. And, he has written a very extensive fatwa, a nonbinding religious opinion, in English, against ISIS. And, he actually makes the argument, which is a valid argument, that Daesh or ISIS are, in fact, outside of the folds of Islam.

But, if you have ever worked with scholars and academics, they are a little bit slow on the uptake and not very good in front of the camera. And, I think that one of the—

Senator AYOTTE. We need leaders to—

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Well, that is one of the problems, I think—one of the deficiencies—one of the weak points of Al-Azhar is its communication capacity. In a former life, I actually helped establish the Office of Communications for the Grand Mufti of Egypt, between 2003 and 2007, before I went to Princeton—and that was a coup. I mean, when I asked them, “How do you deal with journalism?”, they said, “Oh, we call the police and we arrest them.” I said, “No, no, no. You have to work with the media, because, if you do not, what you are trying to say—what the Mufti is trying to say—is not going to get out there.”

So, I think there is a lot of training that can happen to help that. But, I agree with you. More needs to be done, and more voices need to be heard.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you.

Ms. Murad, I wanted to say that I believe that Daesh has engaged in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. How important do you believe it is—you have put in your written testimony, today, and you have also told us—how important is it to formally recognize Daesh’s actions as genocide? And, I mean, with reference to the Yazidis and what you have told us today about how they are treating the Yazidis.

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] It is very important for us that what happened to us be acknowledged as a genocide. On the 16th of this month—just a few days ago—when the U.N. acknowledged the genocide—for the Yazidis, who have been hopeless for the past 2 years, this was the first time they started having some hope.

I would like these crimes to be legally recognized by you and I would like to be acknowledged. I would like you to look into the crimes—the things that I have talked about today and the things that Daesh has done—not secretly. They, publicly, have said that they will do it—and they did it. And, I would like you to look at these crimes and this evidence.

Senator AYOTTE. I want to thank all of you for being here. I would just say that there is a Senate resolution, Resolution 340, which would call this for what it is—a genocide. And, I hope that we can come together and declare this a genocide. I would like us, as a Congress, to come together and declare this for what it is.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Tester.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR TESTER

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all of you for your testimonies.

Dr. Elgawhary, I came in toward the last half of your comments, but, one of the things you said, right at the very end, was—and I just want you to confirm this—that ISIL has nothing to do with religion. Did I hear you right?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. ISIS has nothing to do with Islam is what I believe I said.

Senator TESTER. OK. So tell me the difference really quickly.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I began by saying that normative Islam, in its Sunni and Shia expressions, is defined by an interpretive methodology.

Senator TESTER. OK.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. And, I walked through a little bit about the high level of what that is.

Senator TESTER. Right.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. And, that the texts that we have—what we believe to be divine texts—live in time. And, there is a discursive tradition in how we interpret these verses and these injunctions for the moment that we live in. But, ISIS, they have no—they are unlettered. They are completely unlettered in the religion and the fundamentals of the religion. Nor do they have an interpretive methodology. So, what they conclude is based on their own whims and desires, from what they are reading *prima facie*—without understanding the text, itself.

Senator TESTER. OK, gotcha. So, I keep coming back to why these guys exist. There is absolutely a criminal element, because we saw that in Paris and we saw it in Brussels. The people belong to ISIL. There are also doctors, engineers, and other well-educated folks that are a part of it that, quite frankly, should not be a part of a twisted ideology, such as this.

Could you tell me what about their ideology appeals to that broad of a base, from crooks to professionals and everything in between?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I think, maybe, Hassan will know more, because he has actually interviewed some of them. But, I mean, intellectually or academically, I think that the first thing I would point out is that I do not know if they, necessarily, believe in what ISIS is saying or if they are coerced to believe in what ISIS is saying, or what they are holding to be true. I also think that—

Senator TESTER. Coerced by force?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Yes, coerced by them—by ISIL—and—

Senator TESTER. So either you believe this or you are going to die?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Yes, exactly.

Senator TESTER. That kind of coercion.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. As we heard from Nadia, for example—and from other stories that have come out from ISIL-controlled areas.

Senator TESTER. OK.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I also think that there is a spectrum of extremist thought within Islam.

Senator TESTER. OK.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. And, I think that it can start as something sort of innocuous, but there is something wrong with that way of thinking—and it can slide. And, I think that, when they find somebody that sort of looks like they are from central casting, they are able to pull them to that side.

Senator TESTER. There are a lot of folks in that group, it appears to me, anyway.

Do you want to comment, very briefly, on that—on what makes it—or just agree with the doctor, if he is correct?

Mr. HASSAN. I mentioned in my testimony, before his, that the people who believe in the sort of ideology that ISIS believes in—as in, they really believe in it—

Senator TESTER. Right.

Mr. HASSAN. There are only two categories: people who are young zealots or people who are indoctrinated by another category, which is of longstanding radicals that believe in takfirism, which is declaring fellow Muslims as infidels—as apostates—based on specific criteria that they have. They rely on books like—there are two books that come to mind. I do not want to get into too much detail there, but there is a book, for example, that is 1,000 pages of a man who, when he appeared on TV and he explained his methodology of fatwa, he said that fatwa should not be done in the same way that Muslim clerics have done it over the centuries.

Senator TESTER. All right.

Mr. HASSAN. That I, as a person, can declare you as a fellow Muslim or as an apostate, based on my impression of you—if you work with the West against Muslims, if you are an agent to a certain government, and so on and so forth.

Senator TESTER. OK.

Mr. HASSAN. So their criteria are very post-modernist in a way.

Senator TESTER. OK. Back to you, Dr. Tarek. So, are there statements or actions the United States has taken that might encourage people to be a part of ISIL?

Mr. HASSAN. Me?

Senator TESTER. No. Dr. Tarek.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. To be honest, that is a tough question for me to answer. I think that the rhetoric that comes out of ISIL sometimes makes us think that, if it were not for the U.S. invasion in Iraq or if it were not for the U.S. policy of doing this or the U.S. policy of doing that—but, the fact of the matter is, one can make that argument for any other country. One could make that argument for any other regional player in that region. And, politics is all based on interest—geopolitical interest—and things like that. So, I do not think that that is necessarily fair. I think, because America is so dominant in the world and so out there, it is just an easy target. And, it is this easy, “Oh, if America just stopped doing this, then we would stop doing that.”

But, that is not going to happen. We know that. If we stop doing whatever they say, they are not going to change.

Senator TESTER. All right. Well, my time is up. I want to thank you all for your testimonies. I will submit questions for the record, if appropriate, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman JOHNSON. It will be.

Senator TESTER. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Heitkamp.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HEITKAMP

Senator HEITKAMP. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. And, thank you all for such thoughtful comments and for such thoughtful words as well as for such courage and bravery—especially our last two witnesses. I think everyone here, who frequently spends a lot of time on their smart phones during the testimonies, sat and really listened. And, really, you moved us all. Thank you so much for your courage and for the fact that you are survivors—and, as survivors, you are willing to testify to the horror and to the imperative that we all, as good people, have to engage.

But, I want to, for a minute, turn to our first two witnesses and engage in a discussion about the message and the messengers. Doctor, I was fascinated by the work that you have done, basically, parsing kind of the perversion and responding to the perversion of Islam that is being done by these radical groups. And, obviously, having met with people who have been radicalized, you have a pretty good sense of what messages we could deliver that would actually make a difference—especially in this country, where, now, I think our greatest threat is the radicalization of young men and women—or American citizens. We have seen that now twice.

And so, there are two parts of a message. It is the right message, and then, the right messenger—and I am just going to make a couple of points. I want both of you to respond to what you think the right message is and who the right messenger is. And, I want to know if you are familiar with what the Department of Homeland Security is doing, today, to try and provide a countermesssage—and to offer any advice to us, as we review that, in our oversight role. And, that will be the last question I ask. And, I would ask that you both split up your time.

Mr. HASSAN. Thank you. In terms of messaging, I think it is different, because it is complicated—because ISIS should be treated as two organizations in one. There is the local one, which operates on the ground in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere—like, in Libya and elsewhere—and they have their own messaging, which is usually based on sectarianism. And, there is the international one, which is very close to al-Qaeda. They, in fact, are trying to recollect and regather the dispersed networks of al-Qaeda that were, basically, dispersed after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the campaign against it. So, they are trying very hard to do that in Europe, in the United States, and elsewhere—but also in North Africa. So, the messaging should be different, because they are different organizations.

On the ground and internationally, there is this danger that what happens—its appeal on the ground has become an international appeal. Why? Because it presented itself with some sort of an idea that everyone is fighting and the enemies of this organization are the West, Iran, or something else—that this organization stands for something.

So, the most effective messaging against this is to not talk too much about only the victims of ISIS outside of the group that it claims to represent but, rather, what is really happening on the ground—which is that, on a daily basis, the group kills fellow Sunnis—people that it claims to represent—and we do not see that in media.

For example, next to my village, I mentioned that they killed 700 people. Only the “Washington Post’s” Liz Sly did the story about that, and, at the time, it was the single most horrific massacre. They killed a lot of people, but they killed 700 people in a matter of days. That needs to be the message—that, look, this is not an organization—not a sectarian organization—not an organization that represents a sect—or it is not just Islam versus the West. It is a crazy organization—an extremist organization that recasts itself in religious terms that the people of that faith rejected. And, that needs to be hammered again and again.

Senator HEITKAMP. Doctor?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. As far as messaging, I think there needs to be an unequivocal counternarrative from Muslim religious leaders—no wishy-washy stuff and no statements, saying, “Well, maybe there are five opinions on that.” Yes or no and black or white. There is right Islam and there is wrong Islam. Period.

What I have been trying to do, in our organization—in WORDE—is, I conduct a monthly traditional class we call “halaqa.” And, I try to take one of the concepts that organizations like ISIL uphold and I try to deconstruct it in a very detailed way. And, my goal—obviously, the audience is, primarily, Muslim—but my goal is for young Muslim people to understand why it is wrong and why there is a perversion in their thinking—not that I am saying that I am the example, but I think that kind of effort is what we need more of. And, I think that the English language is actually very important in this regard, because a lot of the media that we have been seeing coming out of ISIL is in English and it appeals. So, I think that is very important.

As far as recommendations, some of the things that come to mind—for example, in our home county of Montgomery County in Maryland, we have noticed a drastic increase in bullying toward Muslim students in the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system. And, I think that anti-bullying work is very important, so that our children feel safe in schools, so that they are not pushed to the side, and so they are not isolated.

Also, in our organization, we work with helping refugees to resettle. And, I think those type of services are very important, so that people, like Subhi, Nadia, and others, who are coming as refugees, have something to plug into—so they are not left to drift in the wind.

So, those are some of the things—and, sorry, one last thing. I think that media training for Muslim leaders abroad is also very important. And, I think there are a lot of good people—there are a lot of—I cannot remember who we were talking about, earlier. There are a lot of good leaders that are making the right argument, but they need to know how—you cannot write a 40-page legal opinion and expect that to be trending on Twitter. It is just not going to happen. And, when I told my teachers that, they were like, “Well, what we are seeing is the dumbed down version of what our teachers said.” I said, “OK. We have to stop the humility thing and we have to be smart about how we inject this message into the media, because there is a certain way that media works.” So, media training, I think, is very important—social media, that kind of thing—for leaders abroad.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Heitkamp.

Again, I want to make sure everybody gets to ask questions, so I will ask everybody to be mindful of the 5-minute limit. Senator Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PETERS

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, thank you to our witnesses here, today. Ms. Murad and Mr. Nahas, thank you both for your very compelling testimonies and for your journeys here, to this country. It is very important, as we discuss refugees

and folks, like yourselves, who have been fleeing intense persecution and terror, that people see the human faces of the refugees that are in this country. Your presence here, today, is important and, hopefully, many people will see that and be as moved as I know everybody on this panel was moved by your testimony. So, thank you for your courage to be here, today.

Dr. Elgawhary, I would like you to respond to what seems to be somewhat of a debate back and forth that we are hearing, in the political realm, now, as to whether or not we should call ISIS “radical Islam.” When you hear someone call it “radical Islam,” do you think that is an accurate description of what we are seeing with ISIS?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I seem to be intent on getting all of the difficult questions.

One of the things they taught us at seminary is that there is no—I am just trying to translate, in my head, on the fly. There is nothing wrong with labels, because, a lot of times, we get stuck on labels: “Why are you saying this?” or “Why are you calling it that?” And, I think that labels are only what their definition is.

When somebody says—I use that term, “radical Islam,” and I know a lot of people in my community get upset. But, what I mean by it is, people that look Muslim, say they are Muslim, quote the Quran, and do horrible things. What are we going to call them? They are terrorists for sure. But, they are very different than a neo-Nazi group, for example.

I, personally, do not have a problem with that. When people say that—whether it is Congress, the White House, or in the media—I understand what is meant.

However, I fear that that can very easily slide into any form of religiosity from a Muslim is a form of radical Islam. And, that is, I think, where the fear is—that we limit it to what it is supposed to define.

Senator PETERS. Mr. Hassan.

Mr. HASSAN. That is a good question, because, personally, when I was in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last year, I was an advocate of using these terms and on pressing clerics to speak up against this organization. I remember the late Saudi king, who died 2 years ago, admonished clerics—the high clerics—for the first time, in public. And, he said, “I feel you are lazy. You are not speaking up against ISIS,” when it came out.

But, I think, when I moved to the United Kingdom (U.K.), last year, I felt that there is a question of the messenger—who says this term and why. And, it is important to keep this in mind. ISIS wants to divide—this is the thing that ISIS did in the Middle East and it is trying to do it elsewhere. It wants to polarize its enemies and it wants to polarize the society under its control. And, they want to divide their enemies. And, they have succeeded, in the Middle East, and they are, probably, succeeding here by getting people busy talking about what to call it and what not to call it.

I think what is clear is that this organization, like Doctor Elgawhary said, has declared war on Islam—this is how it should be seen. It is a problem within the Islamic world, and it needs to be dealt with there.

And, here, what can be done is to help Muslims fight this organization.

Senator PETERS. I appreciate that. The issue that we face here, in the United States, in dealing with this threat, deals with lone-wolf folks, who may be inspired by what they see in the ideology. Is it safe to say that the folks that may be inspired by this are folks who, really, have very little understanding of Islam? Is there a correlation there? And, does that have something to do with this recent shooter that was claiming allegiance, I believe, to ISIS, but also, at some point, to Hezbollah—and how that may be inconsistent? If you could kind of address what may be going on in the minds of lone wolves as well as the things that we should be considering, in terms of how we respond to this phenomenon?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. So, I would say that, absolutely, people that self-radicalize—just like the radicals that we have been speaking about this morning—they have very little to no understanding of the religion, whatsoever. And, that is really the danger. And, part of that is that they have no training—they have no living teacher that they can sit with or that they can ask questions to, not allowing this discursive, interpretive tradition, which I described earlier, to take place.

So, I think that that is definitely a fear—people that are surfing online, finding a lecture here, finding a statement there, cutting and pasting these together, formulating some kind of a conclusion, and acting on it—I definitely think it is a problem. And, I think that more instruction—more religious literacy for Muslims will help, in that regard.

Senator PETERS. OK. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Baldwin.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BALDWIN

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, I want to add my words of appreciation and thanks to our panel. These were very powerful testimonies. Thank you for being here.

I know the hearing is about the ideology of ISIS—of Daesh. And yet, it was called in the wake of a horrible tragedy, in Orlando, that was, at once, a terrorist-inspired attack and also a hate crime—in this case, against members of the LGBT community. It was also “Latin Night” at the club, and it is unclear whether that contributed to the targeting of the club on that particular night.

Mr. Nahas, when you were testifying, you shared with us that attacks against LGBT Syrians preceded the formation of ISIL—that it was called for, tolerated by, or perpetrated by the regime as well as militants that opposed the regime in Syria—that they, too, perpetrated violence against LGBT Syrians.

In the United States, violence, bullying, intimidation, and discrimination against members of the LGBT community has a long history also. And, in the early days, you could, certainly, argue that it was sanctioned, at one point in our Nation’s history, by the government also—but things have changed. And, I want to just draw attention to something you highlighted, in your testimony, about the U.N. Security Council acting very recently to recognize that LGBT rights are human rights—a first in that international forum.

You highlighted it as something that is very important in moving forward.

I guess, I want to ask, in terms of your proposals—your recommendations to this Committee and to others—how important is it for governments, for authorities, and for regimes to say that LGBT rights are human rights? And, how dangerous is the absence of that—the silence to that?

Mr. NAHAS. Thank you, Senator, for this important question. From my own experience, growing up as a gay man in Syria, I knew, at an early age, that the government has laws against us and that my existence was not legal. So, I was not allowed to say it out loud. I was not allowed to be out in the open. It was punishable by up to 3 years in prison—this is the least—and, at worst, you could be persecuted by your own community members. So, it is very important for us to put the words out there—to say to governments—and to hold them accountable—to tell them that LGBT rights are human rights and they are not—just sexual rights. In my understanding, my community traditions say that LGBT rights are only sexual rights—they do not relate at all to human rights. And, to make this message clear to governments and to communities, it is very important to at least start to elevate discussions of the problems that I witnessed, in my country, where LGBT people were being bullied all of the time, persecuted, harassed in the street, and even verbally and physically abused. We could not go anywhere. We could not go to the police and we could not tell our families, because, if we did, they would have persecuted us more—because they would always say, “You have to man up and defend yourself. This is not an issue that you can talk about.”

So, we need to use international platforms, like the U.N., to tell governments that these rights should be properly addressed. That delivers a very strong message.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you. I wanted to follow up—oh, I am out of time.

Chairman JOHNSON. You can ask it as a question for the record.

Senator BALDWIN. So, a question for the record then. Senator Peters was asking questions about self-radicalization and lone wolves. And, I think, in the case of Orlando, it is not clear how deep of an understanding the perpetrator—the gunman—had with ISIL. He appeared to have online relationships with various terrorist organizations. But, I guess, I want to ask an even broader question about self-radicalization, because, we have seen, in recent instances of mass gun violence, in the United States, people that are self-radicalized, but that are inspired by different types of hatred of minority religions—as we saw in Wisconsin, Mr. Chairman, when a gunman entered the Sikh temple in Oak Creek and as we saw in Charleston, South Carolina, which was motivated by racial hatred.

What can we learn about self-radicalization by studying those who have been self-radicalized by ISIL to deal with the self-radicalization of people who hold different types of hatred?

Chairman JOHNSON. And, the witnesses can answer that in their written responses.

Senator Lankford.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LANKFORD

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here. I appreciate your bravery in coming forward and your courage to be able to speak out. These are important days, and we need to be able to hear clear, articulate voices. And, I thank you for bringing that.

Mr. HASSAN, let me ask you, what is the end goal for ISIS? What do they see on the horizon? They are fighting for what? And, when will they know they have achieved it?

Mr. HASSAN. Well, they say they want a caliphate that dominates the world. This is their stated mission. I think their realistic objectives are to control Syria and Iraq, to expand in the region, and to become this leader of jihad—and global jihad. That is why they spent so much effort targeting al-Qaeda. They are more critical of al-Qaeda than, probably, the other ones, because they see it as their competitor and their rival.

So, their goal is regional dominance, but, obviously, they want to expand in the West and elsewhere.

Senator LANKFORD. So, you talk about the regional dominance, yet they are trying to motivate people in Western countries—whether that be in Europe, the United States, Australia, or wherever it may be—to be able to fight and attack in those locations as well. So, why try to motivate people in Australia, in the United States, or in Europe to be able to fight for them, if the goal is the caliphate there?

Mr. HASSAN. Well, I mean, listen to them and how they talk, reading their books—the books that they say that they read—the pamphlets and so on, they talk about the war, today. And, this is important, I think, for the anti-ISIS campaign, today. Because there is this tendency to think about tactical defeat as strategic defeat against ISIS, and that is not—though ISIS presents itself as—it is a long-term project. They talk about “nikaya,” which is a war of attrition, as a tactic. So, they want to exhaust the West and exhaust everyone else. They think, “10 years ago, we were fighting the Americans—the Americans were in Iraq and they had the appetite to fight us. Ten years later, President Obama had little appetite—or less appetite—to fight us. In 10 years’ time, that will be even less.”

They have a core—and that is the most important part of ISIS—a core that mostly consists of security officials. These are the most dangerous people. Many of them are former members of Saddam Hussein’s Mukhabarat, or security apparatus. They shape the organization, in terms of how it operates, how it works, and how it ensures its survival.

So, I think they have a goal. That core will not go away. You can defeat the organization—defeat the members who joined it 2 years and so on. But, they think of their long-term strategy as a strategy of “nikaya,” or a war of attrition.

Senator LANKFORD. OK. So, if you go back 15 years ago or 10 years ago, the United States was talking—and challenging—and the West was challenging leadership, in Islam, to call out al-Qaeda, which was happening, and to say that it was not consistent. Now, it is a challenge toward ISIS, Al-Nusra Front, or whoever may be in it—and to say that it does not line up with theology. We see this

springing up in multiple areas around the world. You used the term that I think is very familiar to us: “radical Islam”—is twisting off. But, it is not just around ISIS. It is around, mostly, ISIS, today, but it could be Al-Nusra Front, it could be al-Qaeda, and it could be others. It is a more broad system. So, is it a “confront ISIS” or is it a “confront a larger set of teachings that is separate from traditional Islam?”

Mr. HASSAN. Well, that is the difference between defeating the organization, tactically—you can launch a very effective military campaign against it and you could defeat it. You can expel it from Mosul, Raqqa, and Fallujah. But, the organization’s appeal and the spectrum—the broader appeal of groups like it—like-minded groups, like al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups that believe in violence as a strategic goal, rather than violence just because they are pushed to violence.

Senator LANKFORD. Does the worldwide movement of ISIS diminish if they do not have a functioning caliphate in Syria and in Iraq?

Mr. HASSAN. It will. But, the fear—I think we have reached the point, today, where what has happened on the ground in Iraq and Syria does not so much affect the international appeal of ISIS. This is, I think, directly because of the fact that the campaign against ISIS has not been done properly. Using the wrong forces to fight ISIS, in towns where these organizations are viewed suspiciously, is a disastrous campaign that even the Department of State (DOS) officials complained about. They said, in that letter that they sent—a document saying that—for example, allowing the People’s Protection Units (YPG), which is an organization affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), in Turkey, which is designated, by the United States, as a terrorist organization—using that organization to fight ISIS—another terrorist organization—in Sunni Arab areas—that is just wrong.

So, I think the campaign, today, is allowing ISIS to convert territorial losses into legitimacy in that region, specifically. And, that is why I have been warning time and again that the campaign is not being done properly. It is only making ISIS stronger.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Booker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOOKER

Senator BOOKER. I think Senator Lankford’s line of questioning is really right on and I would like to pick up right where he left off.

First of all, you say, in your testimony, that you can defeat the group in Raqqa, Mosul, and Fallujah, but these defeats will remain tactical, unless the group is discredited by the same people it claims to represent. Could you go a little deeper into that? So, what then, specifically, are you advising for us to do, as we get these—we are shrinking their territory, clearly, but it seems like you are saying that we are giving them more strength, in some ways, by the way that we are doing it. Can you be a little more specific about what you are suggesting?

Mr. HASSAN. That is a good question. I think we defeated ISIS. If I want to speak as the other side, ISIS was defeated in Iraq, in 2006, after the surge. But, ISIS came back and took Mosul—was

defeated from 2006 to 2010. It was a very marginal organization in Iraq. Sunni Arabs, in the areas that ISIS operated in, defeated the organization, worked with the Americans, and policed their areas. That worked.

But then, the policy that followed, in 2010, when the United States pulled out of Iraq—before Iraq was able to govern itself—and because there was support—perceived support—between the—cooperation between the United States and Iran to work with Maliki, who was a sectarian prime minister—and work with him, despite the fact that he was weakened and there was a rival—another Shia rival—who was more moderate and more tolerant—was supported.

And then, the mistakes that followed that very success—the success that was between 2006 and 2010—led to circumstances that enabled ISIS, in 2012, to tell all Sunnis in these areas, “Look, the only way forward is for us to work together and reject this government from our area.” And, they were able to rally people—mobilize people against this government. And, that is why they were able to take Mosul in 2014—in the summer of 2014—took Mosul, forced the Iraqi army to drop its arms and flee, took massive weaponry—American weaponry—and marched back into Syria. And, they took Deir Ezzor, fortified Raqqa, took some of Hasakah, and so on. They became a strong organization, because of the political failures. And, my fear is that there is so much focus on the military component, rather than on the political, social, and religious dimensions to what is going on there.

Senator BOOKER. And so, I see your point. And, I also appreciate that, in your testimony, you discussed how we, in the West, should be trying to discredit—or have Islamic voices discredit Daesh. And, maybe, that gets me to your testimony, which I thought was really wonderful—discussing all of the ways that they are perverting Islam in the way that they are waging their war and taking advantage of our political failures, in terms of how we are gaining territory.

And so, this is not a clash of civilizations. This is about people perverting Islam and taking advantage of political realities. And so, I just want to get from you—and, you said this already, but I want to go one step deeper. For those of us who focus so much on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) efforts, here in the Senate, what are the specific tactics then, to start to expose ISIL for their perversions and to discredit them? What are some of the best ways to go about that?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Thank you, Senator. I think I really believe in the counternarrative. And, that is very important, because, when I started to do this, less than a year ago, I realized that there is no very articulate, very clear-cut counternarrative. And, by counternarrative, I mean, how are we going to—how does Islam deal with issues of plurality? How do we deal with issues of democracy, citizenship, and constitutional nation states? All of these things have been argued, in the last 200 to 300 years, by Muslim jurists, but they are unknown to the vast majority of Muslims.

So, a lot of the issues that Daesh—or ISIL, whatever—claim are the bones that they are picking with modernity, really, have been dealt with already. It is just the memo has not been passed around.

So, the counternarrative is effective, because it is steeped in very rigorous, authentic scholarship. It is based on the primary sources—the Quran and the Sunnah, which are very important for orthodox Muslims—

Senator BOOKER. And, Doctor, let me interrupt you there, because I am being mindful of my time. And, that is helpful, and I hope you will make yourself available if we have further questions. I just want to say, in my remaining 10 seconds, to Mr. Nahas and Ms. Murad, that your testimony was so courageous and so moving. The outrageous attacks going on against LGBT people in the Middle East and here in the United States, which, as you point out in your testimony, are the most common types of hate crimes we see—I am grateful for your honesty. And, your courage, Ms. Murad, is really just so profound. And, I am grateful that you would come here, today, and share your story, which is so important to hear.

Thank you very much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Booker.

I actually want to kind of pick up on both Senator Lankford and Senator Booker's lines of questioning, just in terms of what has been the reality of the situation, in terms of where ISIS is, right now, in terms of success—or lack of success—against it. There is a State Department report, called the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) Report—very difficult numbers there. They are very inaccurate. They are changing all of the time. But, when I looked at it, and I did a little calculation, globally, the number of people killed in terrorist attacks, prior to 9/11, was a little under 5,000. With updated numbers, that has grown five, six, or seven times.

So, this is a real and, from my standpoint, a growing threat. The news reports show that, outside of Syria, ISIS-inspired attacks have cost 1,191 lives—in just the last 2 years?—last year. The analogy I have been using, in terms of—and I realize we have made some progress. We have taken back some territory. But, they still control territory. And, the analogy I am, somewhat, using is that of a beehive. You might have a beehive in your back yard. You can poke it with a stick and do damage to the hive, but you are also stirring up the hive.

Is that what we are witnessing? And, what is the danger there? And, is it not true that we do have to defeat ISIS—we do have to deny them that territory—we have to deny them that caliphate? But then, we have a lot of mopping up to do. These Islamic terror groups, if anything, they are spreading, they are growing, they are evolving, and they are metastasizing. It is like a cancer, and we are not winning this battle. Mr. Hassan.

Mr. HASSAN. Well, I come from the perspective that ISIS and al-Qaeda are growing and there will be other groups that join them. So, they are on a trajectory of expanding for the next decade—or even two. And, it is important, I think—at this moment, ISIS has been rolled back. It has been defeated, territorially, in Iraq and Syria—like the statistic mentioned before—50 percent in Iraq—they lost 50 percent of their territory. In Syria, they lost 20 percent of their territory. And, in Libya, they are also on the back foot. And, in Libya, they are struggling to even establish any presence

there. Al-Qaeda is doing very well in Yemen. The same thing in Afghanistan. They are not doing very well there.

So, their capacity, currently, is limited. However, I think their ability to inflict damage is strong. They benefit from the open space, obviously, on the Internet—self-radicalization—you can become self-radicalized by watching a video by Anwar al-Awlaki, the American citizen who was killed in a drone attack in 2011, I think. It is very easy to become one of them. The radicalization—the sort of radicalization that leads someone to ISIS is swift and animating, meaning they can push a person, in a very short time, to do some damage. It is very hard to predict it, but it is there. It is a danger that will remain for—

Chairman JOHNSON. But, a short answer—I mean, the gains we are rolling up in Syria and Iraq, does that give you much comfort? Because you are saying this is a long-term project. You think they are going to be growing in strength over the next decade or two?

Mr. HASSAN. Yes. And, briefly, that is good. The problem is the other tracks: the political track, the social track, and the religious track—the political process in Iraq and Syria—the conflict—is lagging behind. If they are catching up to the military advances, then ISIS will go away for a while. But, for now, the problem is the focus on military, while neglecting the other things.

Chairman JOHNSON. Dr. Elgawhary, I want to shift a little bit to the Muslim Brotherhood. I think it is, oftentimes, reported as, maybe, a more moderate group. Do you have any thoughts about the Muslim Brotherhood?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I have a lot of thoughts about the Muslim Brotherhood and similar groups. I think that goes back to what I was trying to say earlier—the concept of a spectrum. And, I think these Islamist groups—while some of them are on the very left of the spectrum and while some of them are not, necessarily, open to violence, there are certain procedural changes, which, if those took place—if certain boxes were ticked on the form—violence then would be authorized. I mean, look at what has happened in Egypt, my home country and the country of my family.

So, I think that I am always shocked—utterly shocked—at how engaging our government is with organizations, like the Muslim Brotherhood, quite frankly. And, when I spoke to people in the embassy, in Cairo—when I was living there for a while—and I said, “Why do you not engage with Muslim leaders?” And, they said, “We do. We engage with so-and-so, so-and-so, and so-and-so.” And, they gave me a dropdown list of all of these Islamist Muslim Brotherhood activists. So, I think there is a big mismatch and I think, by engaging with them so openly and so freely, we almost legitimize that approach.

So, I think that it is dangerous. I think it is definitely on the spectrum. It is not necessitated that it will go from one end of the spectrum to another, but it is definitely on the spectrum that I am concerned about.

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator Carper.

Senator CARPER. Thank you. Again, we thank each of you for being with us today, for spending this time with us, and for sharing your thoughts with us—and your advice as well.

I want to start with a question. Mr. Hassan, I will start with you, but then invite other witnesses to respond, too. I think, in your testimony, you wrote that the United States must highlight that the war with ISIS is not a sectarian conflict. That is pretty much what you said, I think. And, you point out that there are Muslims of both Shia and Sunni Islam joining Christians, joining Jews, and joining people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds in fighting ISIS.

With that said, some people here, in the United States, are trying to paint this battle against ISIS as a broad clash between the West and Islam. I think our President has made it clear that he believes this kind of rhetoric is dangerous, it is patently false, and it plays directly into the hands of ISIS. And, I would just ask: Do you agree with this?

Mr. HASSAN. I agree that this is not a sectarian war and this is not a war—again—I mean, it is not an “Islam-versus-West” war. In fact, if anything, ISIS is all about Muslims versus Muslims. This is what the ideology is built on. We can talk about ideas and ideology, but, practically speaking, the way that the ideology of ISIS has matured and become kind of framed was a reaction to the events that happened after the Iraq War—not the Iraq War, itself, but how, for example, Sunnis reacted to the presence of Americans on the ground. And, they started declaring these people as apostates—and asking, “What is the punishment for these people?” So, they started to appropriate events in Islamic history to the context that is going on here.

So, it was not at all about the West. It is about what is going on, on the ground, in the Muslim world.

Senator CARPER. Thank you.

Dr. Elgawhary, again, the question is: Do you agree that portraying this war against ISIS as a war against Islam plays directly into the hands of ISIS—or not?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. I mean, I sort of agree with what Hassan was saying. I think, if anything, the victim of ISIL is Islam, itself. And, they have definitely declared war on our scholars, our normative tradition, and our Sunni and our Shia sects. And, that is the biggest tragedy. And, I do not think that—and I think that our best allies in this are normative Muslims, who are people like me. I mean, my life is threatened just by being here, speaking out against this. And, I do not say that lightly. And, I think that I want to stop that even more, probably, than you do. I mean, I really want this to end and I want to know what I can do to push that forward. And, I think, in that desire, exists the greatest ally we have to counter the rhetoric and the ideas that are coming out of ISIL.

Senator CARPER. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Nahas, the same question, please.

Mr. NAHAS. I am sorry. I do not have the capacity to answer this question.

Senator CARPER. All right.

Nadia, do you want to respond to that question, please? Do you agree that painting this war against ISIS as a war against Islam plays directly into the hands of ISIS and, inadvertently, that we are helping ISIS by portraying this as a war against Islam?

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] The first thing I did was I went to Egypt and tried to deliver that message, because, the things that happened to me, I wanted to go to these countries and to tell them what happened to me.

I want to prevent the youth from joining the Islamic State. I went and I told them what crimes were committed, what actions they took, and what ideology they had. I want to stop the flow of the youth to them.

Speaking against this is not help for Daesh. You have to speak against it. Also, minimizing the role of Daesh, or their power, is not right, because, only as its border, it is more than 3,000 miles—and they protect it all. Tens of thousands are fighting for them.

Some of our villages are only 150 people living in a small village. We have not been able to recapture these villages for a year and a half. So, how about the big cities? It is not a small power.

Speaking against ISIS does not mean speaking against Islam and also does not mean speaking in favor of Sunnis or Shias—one against another. When we all speak together against this, then we are united. Then, we can defeat it.

Senator CARPER. All right. My time has expired.

Mr. Chairman, you and I are both supporting legislation that would strengthen the ability of the Department of Homeland Security to reach out to faith communities—to reach out to civic groups, parents, and community leaders in order to prevent ISIS from recruiting Americans, which we believe is the greatest threat that we face. If I could just have 30 seconds and ask Dr. Elgawhary, what advice would you give the Department of Homeland Security, as they put together and implement this outreach to a broad community—to focus on reducing the likelihood that people will be radicalized here? Just give us, maybe, one strong piece of advice for the Department of Homeland Security.

Mr. ELGAWHARY. Work with us.

Senator CARPER. OK. Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper.

I will give all of the witnesses a chance to just have a closing comment after we go to Senator Booker. But, I do want to ask Nadia a quick question. Who helped you to escape?

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] A Muslim family.

Chairman JOHNSON. That answers your question. Senator Booker.

Senator BOOKER. Doctor, Senator Carper asked a pointed question, to which you said, “Help us,” basically, to help you. But, we are looking at specific efforts that have been going on to activate lone wolves in the United States as well as cells in Belgium and France. And, this is part of the war that, obviously, hits Western countries right where they are—being preached at—where citizens of those countries and American citizens are finding the ISIS ideology and the perversion of Islam so compelling that they are willing to take up arms against their fellow citizens in Europe or in the United States of America. And, clearly, we are doing a lot already, trying to empower local organizations in our communities, working with mosques, and we have had panels here where folks have given testimonies about that. We now have allocated more resources toward that. I have been one of the people saying CVE ef-

forts should not be law enforcement's focus. They should be focused on empowering communities and empowering those networks. If CVE becomes just more police, more surveillance, and more of that, it is not going to really help us deal with the core of the problem. And, what I found so compelling about you is, you pointed out so clearly—in a way that I learned a lot from your testimony—so clearly that this is a perversion of Islam. This is not Islam we are fighting against. This is about people that are using it to fuel hatred, violence, and, as Hassan Hassan said, tactically, for political objectives—to control territory and to expand the reach of their totalitarian ends.

But, my concern is, I still think we need to be doing more—frankly, a lot more—to counter that narrative. And, I liked what you said in one of your responses, that another paper—another 150-page paper is not that effective against the means that you often see online that often seduce and pull in sort of vulnerable souls to this kind of terrorist activity.

So, I understand your sort of short answer to a short question, but I am trying to figure out what the specific strategies are. And, we are seeing some of them that are working, where you expose the fact that ISIL is killing far more Muslims—killing far more Sunnis—than they are killing people in the West, which really begins to expose this, so that those young people who might be susceptible to them see them for who they are—naked before their eyes. And, those are the kind of strategies that we need to start really investing in more.

And so, in the 2 minutes I left you, after a 3-minute preamble, could you go, really, to the core of those things that, if you were making the investments in the budgets that we have to oversee—where would you be placing those dollars, more specifically?

Mr. ELGAWHARY. We have a very successful model, in Montgomery County, called “The Brave Model.” It is a public-private partnership. We work with law enforcement. We work with the County Executive. It is a really good program. It is getting national recognition. We are trying to export this model and train other people, in other counties in the country that need this type of message.

What I do, in this model, is I do a lot of the counternarrative. I would love to be in a position where I could train other young Muslim leaders, in this country and our counterparts in Western Europe, on what these points—I did the research. I am happy for them to take it. I am happy for them to say that they did it. Maybe my colleagues will be upset about that, but I am happy for people just to get the message out there.

I also mentor people—people that might be on the spectrum, who are referred to us by law enforcement or the school board—that might be on the spectrum, but there is no capacity for local government to deal with them. I sit down with them. I talk with them. I try to decipher: Is there a problem? Are they on the spectrum? Is it a mental health issue? Then we try to refer them out to county-wide programs that will help them.

So, this public-private partnership is working. It is working in our county. And, I think, if I had some say on the purse strings, I would like to see us be in a position to train other counties, first—wherever in the country it is needed the most—and I would

like us to go overseas to Western European cities, like Brussels or London, and work with our counterparts over there to train them in this model.

Senator BOOKER. And, that is a proactive strategy that often saves a lot of money, in terms of the reaction that we have to do with law enforcement or, God forbid, something happening. Today, your testimonies have been testimonies of courage, which, as you said, people should understand that you are risking your life by coming here, by speaking truth, and by laying bare the evil that we are up against. And, for that, I am deeply grateful.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Booker. And, you are right. I mean, just think of the evil—that people are threatening somebody speaking the truth—with their lives.

Again, I would like to offer all of the witnesses about a minute to just make a final comment. And, we will start with you, Mr. Hassan.

Mr. HASSAN. I think we sort of covered most of the ground, but I want to just emphasize that we all need to show ISIS—show what it is like on the ground—like what it does to the people that it claims to represent. We need to emphasize that these are its victims as much as the others are. And, I think that needs to be present in the media. It is not one person's war. It is everyone's war.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Hassan.

By the way, Doctor, you had the harder questions because you have “Doctor” in front of your name. [Laughter.]

Mr. ELGAWHARY. It is actually at the end of the name.

Senator Johnson and Senator Carper, thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee and to submit testimony about something that is much more than work. This is something very personal. I think of my children when I come here and how the rhetoric—even though they are young—the political rhetoric, unfortunately, is something that scares them. And, I hope that what we are doing here will help build a more resilient homeland, so that the America that they grow up in will be better than the America that I grew up in.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Mr. Nahas.

Mr. NAHAS. Thank you, Senators, for the opportunity and for allowing me to speak in front of you. And, every time that I have a chance to speak and to talk about my experience, I always think about my counterparts that are still in danger—that are still under threat, especially, because they are different and because they do not conform with other people's expectations. And, I hope that the United States will take a stand and will be more active in holding governments and other actors on the ground accountable for their actions—and do something about this.

Thank you so much.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Ms. Murad.

Ms. MURAD [Interpreted.] Thank you. And, thank you also to all of the attendees and witnesses who came here.

I wish that we could all work together and stand up together to stop this terrorism. I would like also for you to recognize our genocide and to bring every single one from ISIS—whether a leader,

someone in the middle, or soldiers—to bring everyone who committed these crimes to justice.

Chairman JOHNSON. We would love to see that.

Again, thank you very much—

Senator CARPER. Mr. Chairman, before we adjourn—

Chairman JOHNSON. Senator.

Senator CARPER. I do not have any more questions, but I, certainly, would like to thank all of you. And, one of the key takeaways for me here is, we talk a lot here about the Golden Rule: Treating other people the way we want to be treated. We both have children. Our children are out of school and out into the world. But, in the schools that they went to, there was bullying. And, in some cases, I remember, as a parent, I was aware of some bullying that was going on and I was, actually, going to the school and speaking out against it, trying to make sure that that did not persist. And, I think we were successful.

But, I applaud folks of the Islamic faith—I really applaud those who are speaking up, in some cases, at risk—at real risk to your own personal safety. I want to make sure you do not pay any price for that, but that is a matter of real concern.

But, for the kids who are being bullied, because they happen to have a name like Elgawhary, Hassan, Nahas, or Murad, I especially am concerned about them—that they, somehow, are paying a price as well. And, I think, if I were giving them advice, it would be to be vocal and brave in speaking out against the kinds of abuses that we see perpetrated by ISIS. And, I think, maybe, the best protection that they have is to denounce those kind of activities. And, it may be a hard thing to ask kids to do, but I think, in the end, they will be safer. And, I think, ultimately, they will feel better about their own situation.

Thank you.

Chairman JOHNSON. Thank you, Senator Carper.

Again, I want to thank all of the witnesses for your testimonies and for your courage. You, certainly, have, I think, accomplished our goal of laying out a reality and helping us understand this better. We have a long way to go in fully understanding this—the American people do—but you have, certainly, helped that. So, again, thank you for your testimonies and your courage.

The hearing record will remain open for 15 days until July 6 at 5 p.m. for the submission of statements and questions for the record. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:04 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Chairman Johnson Opening Statement “The Ideology of ISIS”

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Good morning. Thank you for joining us today.

On June 12, 2016, an ISIS-inspired terrorist carried out the deadliest attack in the United States since 9/11, killing 49 and wounding 53 other patrons of a nightclub in Orlando. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the victims and their families.

But we can do more. The purpose of this hearing is to examine ISIS’ poisonous ideology and how it results in the slaughter of innocents through executions and terrorist attacks. The most recent ISIS-inspired terrorist attack in Orlando continues the alarming trend of attacks on “soft targets” here in the U.S. and abroad. It was also an attack against the LGBT community, a community specifically targeted by the ideology that we will discuss today.

Our witnesses will provide first-hand accounts of the persecution they, and others like them, suffered at the hands of ISIS just for being themselves. ISIS’ brutality towards women, homosexuals, and other groups is overt, and these communities will continue to be vulnerable until ISIS is defeated. We have heard previous testimony that confirms that territorial control enables ISIS to overtly brutalize these communities, plan external operations, and inspire terrorist attacks.

In September 2014, President Obama articulated America’s goal related to ISIS: “to degrade and ultimately destroy” it. That was 22 months ago. Last week, in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, CIA Director John Brennan stated that ISIS remains “a formidable, resilient, and largely cohesive enemy” and that “our efforts have not reduced the group’s terrorism capability and global reach.” That is a sobering and depressing assessment.

As long as ISIS controls territory, the caliphate will survive and continue to inspire and direct the kind of barbarity we are regularly witnessing. America must lead the civilized world in assembling a committed coalition of the willing to defeat ISIS by denying it its territory and relentlessly hunting down and destroying Islamic terrorists wherever they have found safe haven.

The American people deserve a strategy to defeat ISIS. As a means to advance dialogue on that strategy, today we will examine key aspects of ISIS’ ideology and hear from its victims. You are courageous. Your willingness to share your harrowing life experiences today is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“The Ideology of ISIS”**

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like to begin by extending once again my deepest sympathies to the people of Orlando and to the families and friends of the 49 people who lost their lives in the horrendous attack at the Pulse nightclub more than a week ago now. Just hours before this tragedy, I was with my own family visiting the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. Seeing the names and faces of the more than 3,000 people who died that day brought back many painful memories from nearly fifteen years ago. Those memories were still at the forefront of my mind when I first heard the tragic news of the Orlando attack less than 24 hours later. Much like the 9/11 attacks, the Orlando attack has already had an impact on our country in several ways.

First and foremost, this attack was an act of hate meant to terrorize our LGBT community. We need to be mindful of the profound impact this has had on them in particular. The Orlando shooting was also another tragic case of gun violence that may have been prevented by common sense gun control measures. And it appears that the Orlando terror attack was another case in which a very troubled American, inspired in part by ISIS's online propaganda, opted to carry out a massacre in the name of the most brutal terrorist group in the world.

While it is still not entirely clear why the killer carried out this attack, this tragedy reminds us that the greatest threat to our homeland comes not from overseas. It doesn't come from Syrian refugees or from those who travel as tourists on the Visa Waiver program. The greatest threat to our country now comes from within—from American citizens and legal residents. My colleagues and members of our staff may recall the words of renowned counter terrorism expert Peter Bergen who testified before this committee in November of last year that, 'Every person who's been killed by a jihadi terrorist in this country since 9/11 has been killed by an American citizen or resident.'

Think about it. Many of these attacks are being carried out by Americans. Yet some have suggested that the way to stop these attacks is for America to ban entire groups of people from traveling to our country. They want to keep out people like two of our witnesses: Mr. Nahas and Ms. Murad; Syrian refugees who have been brutalized by ISIS, Al-Qaeda and the Assad regime and want nothing more than a safe space away from war.

That makes no sense. In fact, it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how to stop these homegrown attacks. The reality is that stopping homegrown terrorism starts with building stronger partnerships among all Americans and people residing here. We need to build partnerships between all levels of government and non-profit groups like Dr. Elghawary's WORDE campaign, which seeks to educate and mentor young Muslim Americans who otherwise might be tempted by ISIS propaganda. And we need better partnerships with families, schools, religious leaders and community officials to build the kind of trust and awareness we need to combat extremism at the local level. We need to know that when somebody sees

something suspicious in their mosque or their university, they will know to say something and know who to say it to.

The Department of Homeland Security is doing just this with its Office of Community Partnerships. I am proud that this committee passed a bill that many of us supported to enhance the ability of the department to work with the Muslim community and others in order to counter the violent messages of ISIS and other terrorist organizations.

Stopping these attacks also requires that we use some common sense. It's quite simple actually. We just have to avoid doing and saying things that feed ISIS' propaganda. ISIS is essentially a group of several thousand savages who have perverted one of the great religions of the world for their own twisted goals. Their core recruitment message is that America is at war with Islam.

But nothing could be further from the truth.

However, when politicians bend over backwards to try to equate ISIS and Islam, they're playing right into ISIS's hands. We have to stop talking like ISIS and the atrocities they commit somehow represent a religion peacefully practiced by 1.7 billion Muslims around the world. I think we'll hear today about how incompatible ISIS's ideology is with Islam, and how ISIS tries to cherry-pick and reinterpret religious texts to justify their actions.

Finally, it's been pointed out that the attractiveness of ISIS's message is anchored in the group's ability to portray itself as a winner. That's why it's so important that we keep taking the fight to ISIS. Simply put, we must continue to degrade and destroy this horrible terrorist group. After scrambling for a while, the 60-nation coalition that we lead has found its footing. With almost each passing week, we are putting ISIS on the run in more and more parts of Iraq and Syria.

We've taken back more than 40 percent of the land they once held in Iraq, and our coalition forces appear to be close to running ISIS out of Fallujah. Mosul should be next. We've killed 25,000 ISIS fighters and more than 120 key ISIS leaders over the past two years. We've cut ISIS funds by up to one-third. And we've drastically slowed the flow of foreign recruits from a high of about 2,000 a month in 2014 to 200 a month today. Not that long ago in the U.S., roughly ten Americans per month were leaving this country to join forces with ISIS. Today, that number has dropped to one per month.

The battle is far from over, but we're on the right track. We need to make it clearer every day that ISIS is not the winning team that they present themselves to be. In fact, they are well on their way to becoming a losing team. All of us have a role to play in making that clear to all Americans, especially those who are susceptible to ISIS' siren song. I hope our witnesses can give us some additional insights into ISIS's ideology and help us to identify ways in which we can further counter their hateful message. Our thanks to all of our witnesses for your testimony today. We look forward to a productive and informative hearing today, one that will better enable us and our Senate colleagues to do our part in making America and the rest of the world a safer place in which to live.

Testimony of Hassan Hassan – Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, and author of New York Times bestseller *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*

Exactly a month ago, the Islamic State's spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, issued a global call for action to sympathizers with his group, particularly in Europe and America, to launch attacks in their countries. This was the second such call made by Mr Adnani in the space of a year. He said that they should be attacked until "every neighbour fears his neighbour".

In the statement, he also said something that departs fundamentally even from extremist Islamic groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban. He said he received complaints from sympathizers in the West that they were unable to find military targets and that they were concerned about killing innocent civilians. He responded that in the West there is no such thing as innocent civilians and, here is the departure, that killing civilians is more "beloved to us and more effective, as it is more harmful, painful, and a greater deterrent to them."

For other extremist groups, killing civilians is justifiable as collateral damage. For the Islamic State, civilians are the preferred target. They justify this through the religious concept of reciprocity, even though that Islamic texts explicitly state that killing one innocent life is equal to the killing of the entirety of the human race. But this goes to show that it is time governments took this threat more seriously than they currently do, and recognize it is different from previous threats.

Unlike Al Qaeda, the Islamic State seeks to integrate sympathizers – who tend to sympathize with the group without necessarily in sync with its strict ideology, and thus tend to be wider than those who actually join it – into its active army. A key part of the group's strategy, especially today as it is losing ground in Syria (where it lost 20% of the territory it controlled in 20014) and Iraq (where it 50%), is that it does not want sympathizers to sit idly by.

Al-Qaeda presents itself as a vanguard movement whose aim is to rally the Muslim masses to the cause of jihad. The very existence of sympathisers means its project is working and so is regarded as a gain in and of itself. The Islamic State, in contrast, views sympathizers as potential recruits to its army, and views the mobilization of its sympathizers strategically, rather than as a revenge tactic or a short-term call for action. Sources within Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda affiliate active in Syria, see small-scale attacks by jihadi sympathizers as counterproductive. They believe that the Islamic State is "bleeding" jihadi-minded Muslims in the West, and regard its strategy as playing into the hands of Western governments.

It is important to remember that for most of its existence since it was founded in 2004, the Islamic State has been an Iraqi organization with largely local focus. It was only after its expansion into Syria in 2013 that it began to focus internationally and extend foreign networks. The group is developing its foreign cells and tapping into both its sympathy base and Al Qaeda's old networks. Today, it is helpful to think of the Islamic State as two organizations in one. There is the international terrorist organization, which learned a great deal from Al Qaeda but it is developing its own brand in terms of appeal and operation. The messaging of its foreign cells is distinct from its core in Iraq and Syria, albeit they obviously feed off each other. There is then the locally focused branches in the Middle East and North Africa, which operates more like an insurgency.

I come from an area controlled by the Islamic State and witnessed as the group started to roll into my region and recruit people. I have also interviewed dozens of members from Syria to Iraq to Bahrain. In Turkey, for example, I spoke to a security official who spoke about international expansion way before the group began to launch attacks in the West. He said the lesson we learned from the war in Iraq is that we should not wait for others to spy on us or attack us, and that the group was already developing its foreign apparatus benefiting from the flow of foreign fighters in 2013 and 2014.

This is a group that knows what it is doing. It could have tried to neutralize the West and limit its ambitions, instead of turning the whole world against it. But it chose to deliberately wage war against everything. For them, territorial control today is not the overarching goal. For them, it is a war of *nikaya*, or attrition. They teach that in their training camps since they expanded into Syria in 2013-2014. They knew the US will deploy its firepower and troops into Iraq and Syria. It knew that fellow Muslims will join the fight and serve as footsoldiers for foreign powers. The group's spokesman reiterated this during his statement in May, when he said: "Or do you, O America, consider defeat to be the loss of a city or the loss of land? Were we defeated when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land? And would we be defeated and you be victorious if you were to take Mosul or Sirte or Raqqa or even take all the cities and we were to return to our initial condition? Certainly not! True defeat is the loss of willpower and desire to fight."

The terror attack in Orlando shows that the group's territorial losses over the past year have not diminished its appeal. And I argue that we have reached a point where the Islamic State's international appeal has become untethered from its military performance on the ground. This is because the campaign in Iraq and Syria has not been conducted properly. It has treated the Islamic State as a disease, and not a symptom of broader problems that helped the group rise in the first place, and will ensure it will survive the territorial losses. The US-led campaign has failed to rally everyone against the Islamic State, including those who proved to be opposed to the group. In Syria, for example, the campaign has failed to mobilize rebel forces -- who in January 2014, before everyone declared war on the Islamic State, fought the group in five Syrian provinces and expelled it from much of Syria before the group returned after the takeover of Mosul, armed with momentum and advanced weaponry seized from the Iraqi army.

It is imperative to understand that the fight against the Islamic State is everyone's fight. The group has not spared anyone. In a village next to mine in Deir Ezzor, near Iraq, the group slaughtered 700 civilians after a tribal rebellion against the group. The group targeted Yazidis, Christians, Shia, but it has also slaughtered thousands upon thousands of supposedly fellow Sunnis. In Ramadi, Haditha and Marea in Syria, Sunni locals fought the group till the bitter end.

I will end with this critical note. The US should acknowledge publicly that there are thousands of Syrians, including refugees in this country, have helped the US in its fight against the Islamic State. Thousands are providing information and intelligence on the Islamic State, which operates in historically marginalized Sunni areas. Highlighting that this war is not sectarian, that Sunnis are victims of this group just like everyone else, is key to defeating it. You can defeat the group in Raqqa, Mosul, Fallujah, but these defeats will remain tactical defeats unless the group is discredited by the same people it claims to represent. The Islamic State is learning from the lessons of Iraq, that its greatest enemies are fellow Sunnis who reject it. It is time the United States learned from the lessons of the Awakening Councils that

its troops helped organize in Iraq in the period 2005-2007, which led to the defeat of what was then the Islamic State in Iraq, or Al Qaeda in Iraq, until its resurgence in 2014.



THE SECTARIANISM OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

Ideological Roots and Political Context

Hassan Hassan

JUNE 2016



CARNEGIE
ENDOWMENT FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE

THE SECTARIANISM OF THE ISLAMIC STATE

Ideological Roots and Political Context

Hassan Hassan

This paper was published through a generous research grant from the Henry Luce Foundation.

© 2016 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All rights reserved.

Carnegie does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented herein are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Carnegie, its staff, or its trustees.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the Carnegie Endowment. Please direct inquiries to:

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Publications Department
1779 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
P: +1 202 483 7600
F: +1 202 483 1840
CarnegieEndowment.org

This publication can be downloaded at no cost
at CarnegieEndowment.org/pubs.

Contents

About the Author	v
Summary	1
Introduction	3
The Wahhabi Root	4
A Hybrid Ideology	6
<i>Takfirism</i> to the Extreme	9
The Islamic State's Scholars of Jihad	12
The <i>Sahwa</i> Link	15
Justifying Savagery	17
Storytelling and Jihad	18
Conclusion	19
Notes	21
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	29

About the Author

Hassan Hassan is a resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, a think tank in Washington, DC. He is also co-author of *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*, a *New York Times* best seller chosen as one of the *Times of London's* Best Books of 2015 and the *Wall Street Journal's* top ten books on terrorism. He is an associate fellow at Chatham House's Middle East and North Africa Program in London, and a columnist and former deputy comment editor for the *National* in Abu Dhabi. His writing has appeared in the *Guardian*, *Foreign Policy*, *Foreign Affairs*, and the *New York Times*, among other outlets. His research focuses on Syria, Iraq, and the Arab Gulf states as well as Islamist and Salafi groups. He received a master's degree in international relations from the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. Follow him on Twitter @hxhassan.

Summary

Forces throughout the Middle East are attempting to roll back the self-proclaimed Islamic State, which seized territory in Iraq and Syria in 2014. But regardless of how the jihadi group fares militarily, its ideology remains a long-term challenge. The Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period. Understanding it is crucial to defeating the group.

A Hybrid Ideology

- The Islamic State presents itself as the representative of authentic Islam as practiced by the early generations of Muslims—Salafism—and it draws on an especially strict brand of Salafism in particular, Wahhabism.
- It is overly simplistic, however, to blame any one ideology for the Islamic State's extremism. Its extremism is the product of a hybridization of doctrinaire Salafism and other Islamist currents.
- The Islamic State relies on the jihadi literature of ideologues who support its stance as well as clerics who do not formally support the group. These clerics adhere to a set of ideas that significantly deviate from mainstream Islam, and many are direct heirs of the *Sabwa*, an intellectual religious movement that began in earnest in the 1970s.
- The *Sabwa* blended Salafi concepts with revolutionary ideas from political Islam in a broad sense, but primarily currents influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. The intermarriage polarized and produced new and unpredictable religious currents.
- Politically submissive Salafism gave way to political *takfirism*—excommunication after one Muslim declares another an infidel or apostate. This ideology carries the banner of caliphate, jihad, and rebellion.
- The Islamic State is part of a legacy of *takfiri* schools and ideas to emerge from al-Qaeda. But the Islamic State's ideological rigidity stands out. Its refusal to bend creates a culture of *takfirism* within *takfirism*.

The Ideology in Practice

- The Islamic State promotes a political ideology and a worldview that actively classifies and excommunicates fellow Muslims.
- The group is adept at cultivating and exploiting preexisting sectarian fissures in the Middle East. The Islamic State taps into communal hatred and

religious concepts to recruit and justify its acts, or to foster sympathy and neutralize forces that actively reject it. It has proven particularly powerful in outbidding al-Qaeda for recruits.

- It uses clerics' material to justify the *takfir* of the Saudi state and Muslim rulers across the Middle East, and to support the rejection of official institutions and forces.
- For the Islamic State, clerics offer justifications for its savagery, especially against fellow Muslims. And the group cites stories from early Islamic history to justify its brutal practices to new recruits.

Introduction

Since the self-proclaimed Islamic State swept through large swaths of northwestern Iraq and eastern Syria in the summer of 2014, the origins of its sectarian and ultraextremist ideology have been debated in the region and beyond.¹ The enslavement of hundreds of Yazidi women in Sinjar,² the slaughter of at least 1,500 Shia soldiers in Tikrit and hundreds of Sunni tribesmen in Syria and Iraq,³ and the beheading of Western hostages and Syrian and Iraqi civilians triggered a collective soul-searching that soon turned into a religious and political blame game.⁴ A Saudi commentator typified the debate when he said on Twitter that the Islamic State's "actions are but an epitome of what we have studied in our school curriculum. If the curriculum is sound, then [the Islamic State] is right, and if it is wrong, then who bears responsibility?"⁵

Understanding the ideological appeal of the Islamic State is crucial to defeating it. Top U.S. military commanders have repeatedly emphasized the importance of ideology in fighting the group. As Major General Michael Nagata, a former commander of the U.S. special operations forces in the Middle East, has noted, "We do not understand the movement, and until we do, we are not going to defeat it."⁶ Field commanders battling the Islamic State in Syria have likewise reported that ideology impedes efforts to mobilize forces against the group. Muslim fighters often refuse to take up arms against the Islamic State on religious grounds, even if they would not join the group themselves. This is especially the case for efforts backed by Western powers. Ideology can therefore have practical implications in the fight against the Islamic State.

There is little consensus on the factors to blame for the Islamic State's violent and confrontational ethos. Some maintain that the Islamic State is the natural heir of a long history of such behavior.⁷ Others attribute its rise and brutality to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and to Iran's expanding role in supporting Shia militias in the region. Some commentators point broadly to political Islam as the precursor to the Islamic State's intolerance,⁸ while others reduce the Islamic State to an entity whose sectarianism is driven solely by political opportunism fueled by regional political players.⁹

In fact, the Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period. And relying on the titles of books and writings used by the Islamic State can distort, not inform, the understanding of

The Islamic State's ideology is multifaceted and cannot be traced to one individual, movement, or period.

its ideology. Instead, it is important to closely examine how the group selects, understands, and teaches its ideas.

In isolation, Salafism and political Islam do not produce an Islamic State member or catalyze extremism.¹⁰ On the contrary, both Salafism and political Islam have safeguards that may inhibit the kind of extremism adopted by the Islamic State. Similarly, political or moral outrage alone does not drive people to the Islamic State. The group has flourished in a context of political oppression, governance failures, and sectarian fissures, but this same political context can, and often does, lead individuals to insurgent groups that hold moderate views.

This paper explores the Islamic State's ideology and sectarianism in context, drawing on primary sources and direct testimonies from Islamic State clerics and members in Syria and Iraq. It discusses broader themes relevant to the group's ideology to explain the origins of the Islamic State's violent and exclusivist vision. Until the illusion that the group's ideology is traceable straight to Salafism is dispelled, the world will not be able to understand the Islamic State's appeal, or to defeat it.

The Wahhabi Root

The Islamic State presents itself as the representative of authentic Islam as practiced by the early generations of Muslims, commonly known as Salafism. Many postcolonial and modern Islamic movements describe themselves as Salafist, including the official brand of Islam adopted by Saudi Arabia known as Wahhabism, named after founder Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the eighteenth-century cleric who helped establish the first Saudi state with the assistance of Muhammad Ibn Saud.

The Islamic State presents itself as the representative of authentic Islam as practiced by the early generations of Muslims, commonly known as Salafism.

Wahhabism is the intellectual legacy of the thirteenth-century Islamic scholar Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyyah and the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, as interpreted and enforced by Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his successors. Marked by extreme traditionalism and literalism, Wahhabism rejects scholastic concepts like *maqasid* (the spirit of sharia law), a principle that many other Islamic schools uphold; *kalam* (Islamic philosophy); Sufism (Islamic spirituality); *ilal* (the study of religious intentions in the Quran and *hadith*, sayings attributed to the Prophet); and *al-majaz* (metaphors).¹¹

Its clerics also use the concept of *bidah*—an Islamic term that forbids inventing religious practices unsanctioned by the religion—to label many practices, largely Sufi and Shia, as polytheistic. Wahhabi clerics' fixation on *bidah* creates a slippery slope that sometimes leads to the declaration of a fellow Muslim as an apostate. Adopting saints or their graves as *wasila* (means or intermediaries) to worship God, for example, is considered something that automatically leads an individual out of Islam. Circumambulating graves, slaughtering animals

in the name of a saint, or believing in the divine authority of imams are also deemed polytheistic practices. While mainstream Muslims agree that innovation in religion is forbidden, Wahhabi clerics go one step further, drawing on Ibn Taymiyyah's hardline stance to label as *bidah* many practices that other Muslims consider legitimate. Wahhabi clerics reject Sufi and Shia contentions that such practices are not intended as worship.¹²

The Islamic State largely borrowed from Wahhabism the penal code that is already institutionalized in Saudi Arabia and practiced less systematically in other Muslim countries. Wahhabism's greatest contribution to the Islamic State, however, may be the concepts of *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways) and *tawhid* (the oneness of God). While these concepts exist in traditional Salafism as preached by Ibn Taymiyyah and other early scholars, they are interpreted and promoted more extremely by Wahhabi clerics.

According to the concept of *wala wal bara*, it is not enough for a Muslim to dislike un-Islamic practices and non-Muslims; instead, true Muslims must reject un-Islamic practices and non-Muslims actively and wholeheartedly.¹³ Ibn Abd al-Wahhab reflected this precept when he wrote, "One's Islam cannot be sound, even if they adhered to the oneness of God and worshipped none but God, without enmity to the polytheists and showing to them hate and hostility."¹⁴ For the Islamic State, this obligation to act in enmity applies to fellow Muslims who do not fulfill the criteria of *tawhid* by recognizing the oneness of God.

A basic tenet of Islam, as preached by Ibn Taymiyyah, is that a Muslim must abide by three criteria of *tawhid*: to worship God, to worship only God, and to have the right creed as prescribed by the Quran or by the Prophet's traditions.¹⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah drew on the three criteria of *tawhid* to excommunicate Shia and Sufis after he established that their practices and beliefs, including the veneration of imams, compromised their worship of God alone.

In areas conquered by the Islamic State, symbols of *shirk* (polytheistic practices) are systematically demolished, notably Sufi and Shia shrines and historical sites that denote a deity. After taking over a town, Islamic State clerics typically launch a campaign against what they deem polytheistic practices, including superstitions and soothsaying. The clerics' doctrine is slowly shaping societies under their control because many of the ideas preached by the Islamic State are based in established Islamic schools.

Because of such beliefs, study of the Islamic State's rigid, hostile, and sectarian ideology has centered on Wahhabism. Also, because the Islamic State cites or preaches the writings of Salafi and Wahhabi clerics, some scholars have concluded that the group is a manifestation of those ideas. But it is overly simplistic to blame Salafism and Wahhabism for Islamic State extremism.

A Hybrid Ideology

The Islamic State's extreme ideology can be viewed as the product of a slow hybridization between doctrinaire Salafism and other Islamist currents.

Many of the extremist religious concepts that undergird the Islamic State's ideology are rooted in a battle of ideas best understood in the context of Saudi Arabia's *Sahwa* (Islamic Awakening) movement in the 1970s, and a similar movement in Egypt, as well as in other countries. In those countries, the interplay of Salafi doctrinal ideas and Muslim Brotherhood-oriented political Islamic activism produced currents that still resonate today. Indeed, the commingling of Salafism and Brotherhood Islamism accelerated in the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2011, filling the void left when traditional religious establishments failed to respond adequately to the aspirations and grievances of the Arab masses. The Islamic State and other Islamist and jihadi groups seized the opportunity to enforce their vision of the role of Islam.

Many of the extremist religious concepts that undergird the Islamic State's ideology are rooted in a battle of ideas best understood in the context of Saudi Arabia's *Sahwa*.

In Saudi Arabia and in Egypt, the marriage of traditional Salafism and political Islam produced new forms of Salafism that were influenced by, and critical of, both movements.¹⁶ Political Islam became more conservative and Salafism became politicized.

In many instances, Salafi concepts were substantially reinterpreted, appropriated, and utilized by a new generation of religious intellectuals who started to identify with a new movement. In Saudi Arabia, the *Sahwa* generation moved away from the Najdi school, the adopted name for the Wahhabi clerical establishment.

The practice of *takfir*, or excommunication after one Muslim declares another an infidel or apostate, became increasingly prominent, first during the 1960s in Egypt and then after the first Gulf War in the 1990s when veterans of the jihad in Afghanistan began to apostatize Saudi Arabia for hosting and supporting Western troops to fight Iraq's then leader, Saddam Hussein.

Politically submissive Salafism, which had rejected political rebellion, began to give way to political *takfirism* that carries the banner of caliphate, jihad, and rebellion. At the same time, the growing influence of Salafi ideals led to the Salafization of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁷

Sayyid Qutb, an Islamist theorist and leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s, drew on Salafi ideals to create an all-embracing *takfiri* ideology.¹⁸ Qutb argued that Muslim-majority societies are living in a state of *jahiliyya* (pre-Islamic obliviousness).¹⁹ He believed that all ideologies—including capitalism, communism, and pan-Arabism—have failed, and that the only system that will succeed globally is Islam.²⁰ Qutb considered Islam the only reference for society (known as *hakimiyya*, or sovereignty of God), and he urged Muslim youth to reject their societies and lead change.

Qutbism provided a political ideology that introduced Islamic supremacism and nationalism, and that rejects many aspects of modern Muslim society and political regimes. It took conservative ideas and molded them to serve as the foundations of a political ideology that has little sympathy for views that deviate from Qutb's understanding of the Islamic way of life.²¹ It is inward-looking and prioritizes internal threats over foreign threats.

Qutbist concepts such as *hakimiyya* and *jahiliyya* shape the Islamic State's dealings with the religious and ethnic communities it controls. The Islamic State believes that local populations must be converted to true Islam and that Muslims can accuse one another of apostasy without adhering to traditional clerical criteria, which stipulate a series of verification measures to ensure the apostasy of an accused person.²² The group also believes in the Qutbist idea that Muslims have fundamentally deviated from the true message of Islam and that correcting this deviation will require a radical, coercive revolution. As one Islamic State member told the author, "If you think people will accept the Islamic project [voluntarily], you're wrong. They have to be forced at first. The other groups think that they can convince people and win them over but they're wrong. You have a ready project, you should place it on society like a tooth crown and make sure to maintain it."²³

According to Egyptian researcher Hussam Tammam, the Muslim Brotherhood influenced Salafism through at least two channels. The first was the ideas of Qutb, represented by ideologues such as Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian-born leader of the jihad in Afghanistan.²⁴ The second was Mohammed Surur, a former Muslim Brotherhood leader from Syria. Surur's influence produced a current somewhere between Saudi Salafism and Salafi jihadism. This current can be discerned in the ranks of Syrian rebel groups that until 2015 made up the Islamic Front, in the group of clerics known as the Syrian Islamic Council, and, to some extent, in the Nusra Front, the al-Qaeda-affiliated group fighting in Syria.²⁵

Increasingly, Salafism has shifted from being a *dawa* (proselytism) movement to a political ideology. In an interview with the London-based newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi*, Surur said that the current named after him had "transformed Salafism from one worldview to another" and "destroyed the myth of *wali al-amr* [religiously mandated blind obedience to Muslim rulers] and the obligation to respect them."²⁶

The influence of Salafism on political Islam and vice versa led to varying outcomes—broadly referred to by its adherents as *haraki* Salafism, or activist Salafism. In Saudi Arabia and Egypt, some who adopted formulations of these ideas went on to fight jihad in Afghanistan; this included, notably, Osama bin Laden. A vast number of modern jihadists have cited the influence of Islamist ideas next to their study of Salafism, including, arguably, the true spiritual father of the Islamic State, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. He is a Jordanian-Palestinian ideologue who mentored Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,²⁷ the group's founder in 2004

when it was known as al-Qaeda in Iraq.²⁸ Al-Maqdisi never met Osama bin Laden, but he taught at al-Qaeda camps.²⁹

The vanguard of activist Salafism transformed Salafi concepts, it did not just borrow them. Qutb's brother, Mohammed, often known as the father of the *Sahwa*, integrated Ibn Taymiyyah's three criteria for monotheism and added a fourth he called *tawhid al-hakimiyya*, or the unity of the sovereignty of God and his laws alone. This fourth criterion was a defining contribution to the *Sahwa* and to Salafi-jihadi thought in general.³⁰ Jihadi clerics took the

Quranic term *taghut* (false deity) and built a full-fledged ideology on it: rulers of the Muslim world have been apostatized, and based on this, a Muslim who works for the ruler—from clerics to civil servants—can be a legitimate target. Democracy has been labeled a religion and democratic institutions as “habitats of apostasy,” as a *Daily Beast* article reported.³¹

The Islamic State and al-Qaeda diverge ideologically, but the former continues to rely heavily on the jihadi literature used by al-Qaeda.

The Islamic State and al-Qaeda diverge ideologically, but the former continues to rely heavily on the jihadi literature used by al-Qaeda. The Islamic State lacks the religious resources, in terms of committed preachers, both within and outside its territories to develop its own jihadi school reflecting its intense sectarianism.

The same marriage of ideas that helped produce the al-Qaeda generation in the 1990s also produced more conservative Islamist movements that are politically active without endorsing violent jihadism, indiscriminate killing, or genocide. Religious intellectuals such as Kuwaiti Hakim al-Mutairi, for example, called for progressive Salafi ideas, including a multiparty democracy, citing Salafi references.³² Surur's followers emphasized the Salafi doctrine of *tawhid*, while vehemently criticizing the Salafi concept of obedience to Muslim leaders, although they remained committed to traditional Sunni authorities.³³

The schools that emerged from the mutual influence of Salafism and Islamism integrated *aqadi* (doctrinal or creed-based) and *ilmi* (scholastic) aspects of Salafism with the Muslim Brotherhood's political activism and revolutionary concepts.³⁴ Qutb's concept of *hakimiyya* and other Islamist ideas provided the political and activist ingredients of the new hybrid formulations, while Wahhabism and traditional Salafism provided its jurisprudential and doctrinal basis.

Although the intertwining of Salafism and political Islam has led to diverse outcomes, most reflect a key feature of Salafism: its propensity to narrowly define who is a Muslim. This makes Salafism sectarian almost by definition. Political Islam, meanwhile, galvanizes its followers and provides them with a political ideology that advocates religious rule, the implementation of religious practices, and Islam's way of life. Stephane Lacroix, in his book *Awakening Islam*, explained, “On theological questions connected to creed and on the major aspects of Islamic jurisprudence, the [*Sahwa* generation] adhered to the Wahhabi tradition and considered themselves its faithful heirs. But on political and cultural questions, their view of the world tended toward that of the

Muslim Brotherhood, although it was partly reformulated in terms derived from the Wahhabi tradition.³⁵

The Islamic State combines ideas such as *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways) and apostasy with a religious penal code to form a political ideology and a worldview actively classifying and excommunicating fellow Muslims.³⁶ In this sense, revolutionary religious ideas derived from political Islam are as central to Islamic State ideology as fundamentalist ones.

Takfirism to the Extreme

The Islamic State is part of a legacy of *takfiri* schools and ideas to emerge from al-Qaeda. But while the Islamic State was once affiliated with al-Qaeda, the two groups have ideologically parted ways. Comparing the Islamic State's vision with al-Qaeda's, and noting where their paths diverged, helps to shed light on the evolution of the Islamic State's sectarian ideology.

Differences between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State can be traced back to early encounters between Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Bin Laden and al-Zarqawi differed when they were in Afghanistan in the 1980s, as their successors do today, on the use of extreme violence and the targeting of Shia civilians.³⁷ According to the Islamic State, the worst enemies of Islam are the enemies within. The group argues that focusing on the far enemy (the West) and ignoring the near enemy (Muslim enemies in the region, especially Shia) is ineffective. Under the Islamic State's vision, the far enemy will be dragged into the region as Osama bin Laden planned, but by attacking the near enemy. This scenario has, in fact, played out since Islamic State fighters took over the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in June 2014, drawing more than 60 countries to the fight against the group.

The Iraq war in 2003 provided space for al-Zarqawi to spread his sectarian vision. Iraq's distinctly cross-sectarian familial bonds had previously made it largely resistant to sectarianism. Yet, al-Zarqawi's followers succeeded in kindling a civil war after bombing the Shia Askari Shrine in Samarra in 2006. Extremist ideas brought to Iraq by al-Qaeda after 2003 became entrenched as al-Zarqawi's jihadi group evolved into a local movement under the leadership of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, who ruled the Islamic State in Iraq from 2006 to 2010, and his successor, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who currently leads the group.

For al-Qaeda, such a focus on Shia would distract from the fight against the West. Furthermore, mainstream Sunni clergy reject a genocidal attitude toward the Shia public. Al-Qaeda's central leadership has admonished the Islamic State (and its earlier incarnations) against attacking Shia civilians. Bin Laden reportedly favored an alliance between Shia and Sunni groups that would position them to jointly attack the West.³⁸

The Islamic State argues that focusing on the far enemy (the West) and ignoring the near enemy (Muslim enemies in the region, especially Shia) is ineffective.

According to a letter published by the U.S. State Department, al-Zarqawi urged bin Laden to focus on Shia. He wrote: "If you agree with us on [targeting Shia] . . . we will be your readied soldiers. . . . If things appear otherwise to you, we are brothers, and the disagreement will not spoil [our] friendship."³⁹ The Islamic State's current leaders have criticized al-Qaeda's mellow, as they call it, stance toward Shia,⁴⁰ and in May 2014, Islamic State spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani said that al-Qaeda was deliberately avoiding confrontation with Iran and Shia.

In September 2013, current al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri addressed al-Qaeda's position on Shia in a letter that became public in 2015. He cited religious and practical reasons for the Islamic State to steer clear of targeting the Shia public and places of worship. Referencing Ibn Taymiyyah, he wrote that "such acts affect the protected blood of women, children, and noncombatant

Shia public, who are protected because they are excused for their ignorance [of true religious doctrine, unlike Shia clerics]. This is the consensus of the Sunni toward the Shia public and ignorant followers."⁴¹

The rigidity of the Islamic State's ideology stands out even in a jihadi landscape marked by rigidity.

Al-Qaeda officially disassociated itself from the Islamic State in February 2014. Generally, outside Islamic State-held territories, the Islamic State has failed to win the support of any prominent jihadi ideologues, with the exception of a few jihadi clerics. Most jihadi ideologues have criticized the group's indiscriminate violence and sectarian bent. Al-Zarqawi's old mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi has described the group as "deviant," and has criticized its public beheadings and alienation of local Muslim communities and armed groups in Syria.⁴²

The Islamic State's ideological divergence from al-Qaeda is discernable in its outlook and actions toward clerics and leaders as well. The rigidity of the Islamic State's ideology stands out even in a jihadi landscape marked by rigidity. Its refusal to bend creates a culture of *takfirism* within *takfirism*, where any leniency is forbidden.

In a video interview posted online in October 2013, Sami al-Aridi—the top cleric of the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front—explained some of the ideas that differentiate the Islamic State from other jihadi groups, including al-Qaeda. In contrast to the Islamic State, al-Aridi cited as legitimate scholars mainstream Wahhabi clerics, such as Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Abd al-Aziz Al al-Sheikh and prominent theologian Abd al-Aziz Ibn Baz.⁴³ He noted that al-Qaeda adheres to the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence and is more accommodating than the Islamic State of Muslim clerics, often engaging them.⁴⁴

In contrast, the Islamic State considers clerics a key factor in the persistence of tyrannical, illegitimate governments in the Muslim world. The Islamic State believes that *tabayun* (a process of investigation) is sometimes needed to determine whether a person is a true Muslim. According to al-Aridi, the Islamic State declares a Muslim to be *kafir* (an infidel or unbeliever) based on intuitive suspicion, consequentiality, and vagueness.⁴⁵

For the Islamic State, ordinary Muslims receive their religious education from clerics who are aligned with corrupt Muslim rulers who perpetuate Western hegemony. Accordingly, the Islamic State prioritizes the fight against clerics and rulers over the fight against the West.⁴⁶

The Islamic State's particular sectarian outlook is also characterized by the tendency to emphasize *sunna* (the Prophet's traditions) as integral to the faith—a departure from mainstream clerics who consider them nonobligatory secondary practices that only strengthen faith. The Islamic State deems a person who adheres to these traditions to be respectful of the Prophet and those who do not adhere to the traditions to be disrespectful. Abu Mariya al-Qahtani, who served as the Nusra Front's chief cleric before he was replaced by al-Aridi, wrote in February 2014 that the Islamic State distinctly integrated these traditions into Islamic jurisprudence, changing terms from "optional" and "recommended" to "obligatory" and "duty."⁴⁷

This view was also popular among followers of Juhayman al-Utaybi, a Saudi extremist who seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca along with his followers in November 1979 and declared himself the *Mahdi* (an expected messiah in Islam). According to Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, religious followers of al-Utaybi would often pray in a mosque with their shoes on, and would take them off as they leave the mosque, as the Prophet Muhammad had reportedly done on occasions.⁴⁸ Mainstream clerics often dismiss such practices as signs of the Islamic State's lack of religious qualifications, but for the group, these revivalist practices are evidence of adherence to original Sunni traditions.

The Islamic State is also extreme in its application of the Salafi concept of *nawaqid al-Islam*, or nullifiers of Islam. These are a set of conditions with which doctrinaire Salafists believe all Muslims must comply. The founder of Wahhabism narrowed nullifiers to ten acts: engaging in *shirk* (polytheistic practices); accepting intermediaries in worship; failing to deem infidels as infidels, or doubting or justifying infidels' unbelief; mocking religious practices; believing that there is better guidance or rules than those of the Prophet; despising a practice ordained by the Prophet; exercising or accepting black magic; allying with infidels against Muslims; believing some people can do without sharia; and deliberately avoiding learning about or practicing religion.

While some clerics insist that there are degrees of faithlessness and that a sinner does not necessarily become an infidel by committing certain acts, the Islamic State generally rejects gradation and believes that all acts of unbelief are effectively equal. In the same vein, it believes that a Muslim has a religious duty to identify and label infidels or apostates, and failure to do so can lead one to become an infidel or apostate himself.

According to the Islamic State, a Muslim becomes an infidel if he fails to declare as an infidel another person worthy of being declared as such. The group declared al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri to be an infidel because he sympathized

The Islamic State generally rejects gradation and believes that all acts of unbelief are effectively equal.

with ousted Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi, who endorsed democracy. The Islamic State considers members of the Nusra Front as apostates because they fight alongside foreign-backed groups.

This view and its implications are particularly pronounced among adherents of a movement in the Islamic State known as the Hazmiyya. At least some Islamic State members believe that some Hazmiyya teachings permit them to kill and rob Muslims who have committed any degree of unbelief⁵⁰—which could mean most of the population under their control.⁵⁰ The Hazmiyya misinterpreted a fatwa issued by Saudi cleric Omar bin Ahmed al-Hazimi, who is also identified as a member of the *Sabwa* generation that merged Islamist ideas with Salafi concepts. The fatwa, which al-Hazimi later recanted, forbade “the excuse of ignorance” in matters of faith, suggesting that a Muslim would be accountable for an act of disbelief even if that person did not intend to do so.⁵¹ “Hazmiyya say that ignorance is not an excuse,” Sheikh Hassan al-Dagheem, a prominent Syrian cleric, said in an interview.⁵² In December 2014, the Islamic State produced a video showing the execution of four of its members on suspicion of extremism because they had plotted to rebel against the group for failing to implement the full scope of sharia as it preaches the doctrine.⁵³

The Islamic State's Scholars of Jihad

The Islamic State relies on the jihadi literature of ideologues who support its stance to wage war against nominal Muslims. These clerics adhere to a set of ideas that significantly deviate from tradition, as some of them have explicitly stated. The Islamic State typically uses their material to justify the *takfir* of the Saudi state and Muslim rulers across the Middle Eastern region and to

The Islamic State relies on the jihadi literature of ideologues who support its stance to wage war against nominal Muslims.

support the rejection of all official institutions and forces within those countries. Because of the hostility between the Islamic State and many of those clerics, observers often downplay the profound influence such ideologues have had on the organization.

Sources include Saudi clerics Khalid al-Rashed, Nasir al-Fahd, Sulaiman bin Nasser al-Alwan, Omar bin Ahmed al-Hazimi, Ali bin Khidr al-Khudayr, and Hamud bin Uqla al-Shuaibi.⁵⁴ Others include al-Qaeda ideologues Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi and Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz.

Four of these clerics—al-Fahd, al-Alwan, al-Khudayr, and al-Shuaibi—were part of a network that heavily influenced al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s as well as the transnational jihadi movement.⁵⁵ They wrote extensively on Saudi Arabia's apostasy for helping the United States in its regional interventions, especially during the first Gulf War. For the Islamic State, these writings provide the necessary theological foundations for its campaigns against apostates. The fact that these clerics were theologically trained (a rarity for

jihadi ideologues⁵⁶) makes them even more of an asset to the Islamic State, as does their disagreement with Saudi Arabia's clerical establishment.⁵⁷ Al-Fahd has reportedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State,⁵⁸ and the group considers al-Shuaibi's book on the impermissibility of seeking help from infidels to be influential.

Al-Khudayr and al-Rashed are heavily referenced in the territories controlled by the Islamic State. Al-Khudayr in particular offers the Islamic State a one-stop shop in his writing on one of the most defining facets of the Islamic State's ideology: he stipulates that un-Islamic systems and followers are illegitimate and that adherence to their teachings is inexcusable. Al-Khudayr is unequivocal in his position on modern legislative systems and Muslims who become involved with them. He deems Muslims who voluntarily join a parliament to be infidels. A Muslim who swears loyalty to a constitution, even if compelled to do so, is considered an apostate, and Muslims who oppose a constitution through democratic means are deemed sinners. The idea that ordinary Muslims may not know such practices are illegitimate is no excuse for al-Khudayr.

The clerics whom the Islamic State mentions in its sermons are particularly critical of Shia, preaching that ordinary Shia cannot be excused for their faith. In a series of sermons titled "The Sharp-Edged Sword on the Evil Shiites," al-Rashed attacked Shia in graphic language. Similarly, al-Fahd has written a treatise on "the permissibility of excessiveness against the *rafidha*," replete with abusive and denigrating language directed at Shia.⁵⁹ (*Rafidha*, literally rejectionists, is a pejorative word for Shia.)

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi has also influenced the Islamic State, arguably more than any other religious cleric outside the organization. Because he vehemently opposed the group's expansion in Syria and has criticized its approach to other jihadists, there is a tendency to downplay his ideological influence on the group. Al-Maqdisi, who grew up in Kuwait and studied in Iraq and Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, directly influenced the Islamic State's founder, al-Zarqawi, and the two were jailed together in Jordan between 1993 and 1999. His contribution to its overall ideology is profound; he recently described his influence on the Islamic State, claiming, "I am their sheikh who taught them the concept of *tawhid*."⁶⁰

Although the Islamic State does not publicly promote al-Maqdisi's books, his ideas are cited to repudiate the group's detractors, and his books are distributed in Islamic State-controlled areas.⁶¹ The first issue of the Islamic State's magazine, *Dabiq*, also featured an article about al-Maqdisi's writings. Ahmed Abaza'id, a Syrian expert on Islamists and jihadists in Syria, described al-Maqdisi's writings as "the basis of the *takfiri* cancer and the cause of the ease with which the blood of people and mujahideen is shed."⁶²

The clerics whom the Islamic State mentions in its sermons are particularly critical of Shia, preaching that ordinary Shia cannot be excused for their faith.

Al-Maqdisi's book *Millat Ibrahim* is particularly instrumental for the Islamic State. The book applies the concept of *wala wal bara* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of un-Islamic ways) to label as apostates a wide range of Muslims who practice un-Islamic ideas or habits, even if they are related to the accuser. In another book, *The Unspoken Scandals on the Apostasy of the Saudi State*, al-Maqdisi declares Saudi Arabia an infidel state. He rules that because abandoning *wala wal bara* leads to *kufr* (unbelief), many of Saudi Arabia's practices—such as interest-based banking, foreign aid to non-Muslims, membership in the United Nations, and alliance with the West—render it apostate.

Al-Maqdisi's teachings are, of course, readily applicable to all Muslim communities that adhere to practices that the Islamic State deems un-Islamic, including membership in the Baath Party or alliance with Western and regional governments. Even though he is critical of the Islamic State, for example, he condemned Syrian rebels' cooperation with the U.S.-led air campaign against the Islamic State as apostasy.⁶³

Another ideologue heavily cited by the Islamic State is Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Aziz, also known as Sayyid Imam al-Sharif and Dr. Fadl, a former Egyptian jihadist who revised his extremist views after his release from prison

in the wake of the 2011 uprising. His most influential book is *The Comprehensive Guide for Seeking Noble Knowledge*.

Abu Ali al-Anbari, the Islamic State's high cleric, repeatedly cited the book in his lectures, even though he claimed that the author had retracted his views. In one audio lecture, he quoted Abdul Aziz to explain that a Muslim who joins a parliament is an apostate even if he intended to use the platform for advancing a religious agenda. Abdul Aziz's explanation, as quoted by al-Anbari, is directed at former

Extremist ideas about modern institutions and democratic norms are applied by the Islamic State to justify war against members of the military and security forces in Muslim countries.

Saudi mufti Abd al-Aziz Ibn Baz, who argued that membership in a parliament depended on the intention of the member.⁶⁴

Such ideas about modern institutions and democratic norms are applied by the Islamic State to justify war against members of the military and security forces in Muslim countries. They are also used to apostatize Islamists as well as mainstream clerics who are part of official religious establishments. Al-Anbari, the longest-serving and highest authority in the Islamic State until his death in March 2016, produced 40 lectures designed to explain his group's religious ideology. The lectures centered on the illegitimacy of institutions in Muslim countries, including mosques and courts. He saved special ire for Shia, Sufis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and mainstream Salafists (he often referred to the latter as *murjia*, a pejorative term for pacifist imams). In one of his lectures, he singled out these Salafists as the "most absurd" among the Islamic State's detractors, a reflection of the fierce ideological battle between the two since the group's recent rise in Syria and Iraq.⁶⁵

The *Sahwa* Link

Many of the clerics that the Islamic State cites to justify its anti-Shia ideology come from the *Sahwa* generation or are otherwise associated with the *Sahwa* movement. These include Ibrahim al-Fares, Muhsin al-Awaji, Mohammed al-Barrak, Hamoud al-Omari, Mohammed al-Nojaimi, Saad al-Durihim, and their contemporaries from Egypt and elsewhere, such as Omar Abdulrahman, sometimes known as “the Blind Sheikh.”

These clerics tend to be particularly outspoken against Shia. Al-Fares, for example, wrote extensively about Shia as an “emblem of treason,” and once quoted Ibn Taymiyyah as saying: “The origin of all sedition and calamity is Shia and their allies, and many of the swords unleashed against Islam come from them.”⁶⁶ Some of these clerics, however, notably Hamoud al-Omari, emphasize that while they deem Shia as a sect to be deviant, violence against Shia civilians is unacceptable, in contrast to Islamic State doctrine.

In the Islamic State, Turki al-Binali, from Bahrain, is second to al-Anbari in terms of influence.

According to an online biography, al-Binali is a disciple of Salman al-Awda, a prominent figure in Saudi Arabia's *Sahwa*. Al-Binali claims that the two were close before al-Awda started to “deteriorate,” or become more moderate.⁶⁷ Al-Binali has been associated with Hajjaj al-Ajmi, an activist Salafi Kuwaiti cleric known for his fundraising activities for radical rebel groups in Syria. Al-Binali has also been influenced by Abdul-Aziz al-Tarifi, a well-known Saudi cleric from the *Sahwa* generation, who was arrested by Saudi authorities in April 2016 presumably for criticizing Riyadh's Western-driven religious reforms.⁶⁸ He continues to speak favorably of al-Tarifi and to recommend his writings.

Before he traveled to Syria in 2013 to join the group, al-Binali had gained credibility as a jihadi mufti through close association with fourteen known clerics in the region. In 2009, al-Maqdisi authorized him to teach and to issue fatwas, which he did in prominent jihadi forums under the nom de guerre Abu Hummam al-Athari. Islamic State members highlight al-Binali's teachings and fatwas to counter attempts to downplay his religious weight by other clerics, including al-Maqdisi.

Although al-Binali is a theological lightweight compared to some clerics, his early jihadi activities help the Islamic State stake a claim in a long line of jihadi jurisprudence. This makes him particularly useful to the Islamic State in defending itself against allegations by other jihadi factions that its ideology is not sufficiently rooted in jurisprudence. One Islamic State cleric has noted that al-Binali's accepted authority prior to his membership in the Islamic State is either a testament to the group's credibility or a testament to its al-Qaeda critics' lack of credibility because they had previously approved of his credentials.

Al-Binali has been at the forefront of building legitimacy for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. As a former al-Qaeda associate, al-Binali is seen as well positioned to win over al-Qaeda supporters. Al-Binali was reportedly dispatched to the

Libyan city of Sirte in March 2013 and in 2014 to proselytize for the Islamic State from the Rabat Mosque.⁶⁹ And he authored a booklet about Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his claim to the caliphate, *Maddu al-ayadi li-bayat al-Baghdadi* (Extend the hands to pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi).

Al-Binali's sectarian views and background also make him valuable to the Islamic State. In 2007, he was expelled from Dubai, where he was studying, and was later banned from Kuwait, Egypt, Qatar, and his home country Bahrain because of his *takfiri* and sectarian ideas. He has been a prolific critic of Shia and their "warped" ideology, as he and other critics see it. In July 2015, he threatened attacks against Shia mosques in Bahrain in the wake of Islamic State suicide bombings of Shia mosques in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Al-Binali tends to focus on two themes that are central to Islamic State ideology: nullifiers of Islam and *tauhid* (the oneness of God). In Libya, he lectured on nullifiers of Islam, and he wrote a textbook on *tauhid* for use in Islamic State training camps.⁷⁰

While the Islamic State uses terms often associated with Salafists, or Wahhabis, it also cites sermons and writings by individuals who do not belong to the traditional religious establishment. For instance, a recommended list of

While the Islamic State uses terms often associated with Salafists, or Wahhabis, it also cites sermons and writings by individuals who do not belong to the traditional religious establishment.

196 written, video, and audio items distributed by Islamic State supporters to new members overwhelmingly features work by the clerics mentioned above.⁷¹ On the doctrine of *wala wal bara*, new members are advised to watch sermons by clerics associated with the *Sahwa*, who often comment on the ideas of religious scholars widely accepted by mainstream Muslims.

The influence of *Sahwa*-era scholars does not, of course, absolve Salafism, particularly the Saudi version, of its contribution to legitimizing groups such as the Islamic State.

Salafi traditions provide religious fodder for the Islamic State's discourse and help it link itself to traditional Islam. But the group has moved beyond these traditions, and the Islamic State and traditional Salafists have confronted each other on religious grounds. Many of the extremist ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah and Wahhabism were already used for political and revolutionary purposes by modern religious intellectuals who influence jihadi ideologies today. The concept of *wala wal bara*, for example, was weaponized during the *Sahwa* era to target not only heretical Muslims but also the West, a reinterpretation that heavily influenced jihadists in the 1990s.⁷²

Many of the Islamic State's practices are rejected by traditional Salafists. Suicide bombing, for example, is rejected by most Salafists on the grounds that suicide is forbidden by Islam in all its forms. Islamist clerics, such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, have sanctioned suicide bombing—although he later stated that his fatwa was specific to Israel.⁷³ Rebelling against rulers, declaring ordinary Shia as apostates, and bombing mosques are some of the practices rejected by traditional Salafists.

Justifying Savagery

The Islamic State's favored clerics offer justifications for its savagery, especially against fellow Muslims. Some of them, however, do so by stoking totalitarian and sectarian hatred rather than directly espousing the type of violence the Islamic State exhibits.

Al-Rashed is known for his fiery remarks, often featured in weepy sermons. In one sermon, he told of the beheading of Khalid bin Sufyan al-Hadhli in the seventh century. According to al-Rashed, Muhammad asked for a volunteer to kill al-Hadhli for orchestrating attacks against Muslims. Abdullah bin Anas volunteered, and killed and then beheaded al-Hadhli. When he returned with the severed head, according to al-Rashed, Muhammad praised and rewarded him. Although this account is disputed, it is repeatedly cited by Islamic State members.

The Islamic State cites two clerics in particular—Abu Abdullah al-Muhajir and Abu Bakr Naji—to justify its gory brutality against opponents.⁷⁴ With their justifications for beheading and similar harsh tactics, the writings of Naji and al-Muhajir are indispensable to the Islamic State.

Al-Muhajir is an Egyptian who authored *Questions About the Jurisprudence of Jihad*, a book that Islamic State founder al-Zarqawi studied and then taught at a jihadi camp in Herat.

Naji—whose real name is Mohammad Hasan Khalil al-Hakim—a former member of the Egyptian jihadist Islamic Group, wrote *The Management of Savagery*,⁷⁵ reported by an Islamic State-affiliated cleric to be widely circulated among the group's provincial commanders and members. The book's seminal contribution is to differentiate between jihad and other faith matters. The author said that the way jihad is taught “on paper” makes it hard for young people to absorb its true meaning. He stated, “Those who have practiced jihad know that it is nothing but brutality, callousness, terrorism, deterrence and infliction. I am talking about jihad and fighting, not about Islam, so do not confuse the two. Fighting cannot continue and transition from one phase to another unless the first phase includes infliction and deterrence of the enemy.”⁷⁶ The impact of these two ideologues on the Islamic State is not new: they heavily influenced al-Zarqawi.⁷⁷ Al-Muhajir and Naji both justify beheading as not only religiously permissible but also recommended by God and his Prophet. They claim that the spilling of an infidel's blood is “permissible in an absolute way,” and that aiding infidels against Muslims is a greater unbelief, which renders a person unequivocally an infidel.⁷⁸

The Islamic State's favored clerics offer justifications for its savagery, especially against fellow Muslims.

Storytelling and Jihad

In terms of indoctrination, the Islamic State tends to steer clear of exposing new members to teachings that are not directly derived from sharia books. New members are almost exclusively shown religious texts, according to Islamic State-affiliated clerics. Established members or commanders, in contrast, can study manuals such as Abu Bakr Naji's book.⁷⁹ Limiting new members' readings to religious texts and historical stories conforms to the group's position that it is an extension of authentic Islam rather than an organization with its own set of teachings.

Stories from early Islamic history (often from the period known as the Apostasy Wars, which followed Muhammad's death) are also cited by the Islamic State to justify beheading, crucifixion, mass killing, and similarly brutal practices to new members. Abu Asaad al-Samaan, an Islamic State cleric, cited the story of Safiyya bint Abdulmutalib, a woman from the Prophet Muhammad's time, to justify beheading as a terror tactic. According to al-Samaan, Muslim women were separated from the men in the city of Medina during the Battle of the Ditch and put in a secured place.⁸⁰ But a man, identified in the story as Jewish, managed to climb to the secured place and approached the women. Safiyya asked an old man to kill the intruder, but the old man responded that he was incapable of fighting. Safiyya, who had fought in a previous battle, killed the approaching man, beheaded him, and threw his severed head onto enemy fighters to terrorize them. Islamic State members also reference verses from the Quran that call for the "smit-

ing of necks" and similar tactics, although mainstream Muslim clerics maintain that these verses must be understood in the context of the battlefield.

The Islamic State relies heavily on stories and events from Islamic history because they can be more powerful than the citation of Islamic principles, especially if the stories and events support Quranic verses or *hadiths*. The

group makes the most of any example it can find, and borrows from what Muslim clerics consider isolated incidents that should not be followed as rules. It uses stories not always to argue a religious idea: they may be offered to help Islamic State members who struggle with committing acts of extreme violence.

The group cites the story of Islam's commander in chief, Khaled Ibn al-Walid, who killed thousands of captives after the Battle of Ullais,⁸¹ contrary to Islamic teachings. Ibn al-Walid had pledged to God that he would make a river of his enemies' blood if he overran them. When he could not find enough people to make that river, he killed the captives and ordered a river's dam to be opened onto their bleeding bodies. The Islamic State points out that the first caliph, Abu Bakr, praised Ibn al-Walid for his victory, and the Prophet Muhammad referred to him as the "Unleashed Sword of God." When the

The Islamic State deliberately employs unusual punishments to shock observers and to highlight similar incidents in Islamic history.

Islamic State kills its captives, it can simply cite this story, relying on what can be described as “kinetic sharia”—events and stories, rather than mere theology.

The Islamic State deliberately employs unusual punishments to shock observers and to highlight similar incidents in Islamic history, as followers of Saudi extremist Juhayman al-Utaybi did in the case of rituals in the 1970s. In December 2014, for example, Islamic State fighters threw a twenty-year-old man accused of homosexual acts from the highest building in Deir Ezzor “as the Muslim caliph Abu Bakr did,” according to statements by the Islamic State.⁸² Conversations with new Islamic State members suggest that the group’s clerics often dig deep into Islamic history for obscure stories or *hadiths* to impress new members and demonstrate that true Islam has been absent from their society. Islamic State member Muthanna Abdulsattar explained, “When you listen to the clerics of the al-Dawla [State, as Islamic State members refer to their group], you are shocked that most of our Islamic societies have deviated from the true religion. They follow a religion that was invented two decades ago, or less.”⁸³

Mainstream clerics may struggle to deal with the stories of extreme violence upon which the Islamic State relies. They typically abstain from telling such stories in public, creating space for the Islamic State to shape these stories to fit its narrative. Furthermore, mainstream clerics often find themselves unable to engage in discussions around these stories without risking sectarian implications. For example, criticism of Ibn al-Walid, who is highly revered by Sunnis and disliked by Shia, would put a cleric in the awkward position of vindicating members of the opposing sect.

Conclusion

Regardless of how the Islamic State fares militarily in the coming months and years, its ideology remains a long-term challenge. It is a symptom of a broader issue that has been largely overlooked: an unchecked shake-up in Salafism that allows new movements to derive from both Salafism and Islamism. Until the interplay of Salafi and Islamist ideas is recognized, the Islamic State’s ideology will continue to be misdiagnosed. The group’s emphasis on Islamic theology in its public discourse clouds its revolutionary nature and creates the illusion that its ideology is traceable to Salafism rather than to the confluence of fundamentalist and revolutionary strands.

The central role of Islamist ideas is best captured in a saying popular among Islamic State supporters, attributed to Yemeni journalist Abdulelah Haider Shaye: “The Islamic State was drafted by Sayyid Qutb, taught by Abdullah Azzam, globalized by Osama bin Laden, transferred to reality by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and implemented by al-Baghdadis: Abu Omar and Abu Bakr.”⁸⁴

The Islamic State has added a focus on sectarianism to a history of radical views. In particular, it has linked itself to the Salafi-jihadi movement that evolved

out of the Afghan jihad. This link has helped the group to authenticate itself, and renders it less subject to ridicule or accusations of deviance. The Islamic State's brand of sectarian jihad is flourishing in the current regional climate. Sectarian polarization; the rise of similarly sectarian militias in Iraq, Syria, and beyond; and the absence of religious and political leadership help the Islamic State to appeal, recruit, and endure. Sectarian media and political rhetoric continue to provide the group with ammunition by stoking communal hatred.

Meanwhile, the messages from mainstream clerics fail to resonate largely because of their links to authoritarian regimes. Moderate institutions were weakened in the wake of the Arab uprisings of 2011, when religious establishments were perceived as complicit with repressive regimes and as failing to address the aspirations of revolutionary youth. The Islamic State and others quickly filled the resulting vacuum, and the group appears to be on track to turn its obscure teachings into an established school as al-Qaeda did over the years, but potentially to greater effect.

Notes

- 1 Roula Khalaf, "Rise of ISIS Shakes Arab World From Long State of Denial," *Financial Times*, July 16, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9d802a64-0cde-11e4-bf1e-00144feabdc0.html>.
- 2 Isabel Coles, "Islamic State Seeks to Justify Enslaving Yazidi Women and Girls in Iraq," Reuters, October 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/13/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-yazidis-idUSKCN0121H620141013>.
- 3 Tim Arango, "Escaping Death in Northern Iraq," *New York Times*, September 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/04/world/middleeast/surviving-isis-massacre-iraq-video.html?_r=0; and "Islamic State 'Executes 70 Sunni Tribesmen in Iraq,'" BBC, October 5, 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-34446066>.
- 4 Liz Sly, "Syrian Tribal Revolt Against Islamic State Ignored, Fueling Resentment," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syria-tribal-revolt-against-islamic-state-ignored-fueling-resentment/2014/10/20/25401beb-8de8-49f2-8e64-c1cfbee45232_story.html.
- 5 Ibrahim al-Shaalan, Twitter post, July 5, 2014, 7:07 p.m., <https://twitter.com/ialshaalan/status/485605935688065024>; and Hassan Hassan, "Now a Caliphate Has Been Declared, the Debate Begins," *National*, July 9, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/opinion/comment/now-a-caliphate-has-been-declared-the-debate-begins>.
- 6 Eric Schmitt, "In Battle to Defang ISIS, U.S. Targets Its Psychology," *New York Times*, December 28, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/29/us/politics/in-battle-to-defang-isis-us-targets-its-psychology-.html>.
- 7 Alastair Crooke, "You Can't Understand ISIS If You Don't Know the History of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia," *Huffington Post*, August 27, 2014, last updated October 27, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabia_b_5717157.html.
- 8 Nasim Ahmed, "To Defeat ISIS We Need to Stop Shooting in the Dark and Understand Political Islam," *Middle East Monitor*, October 8, 2014, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/14552-to-defeat-isis-we-need-to-stop-shooting-in-the-dark-and-understand-political-islam>.
- 9 William Dalrymple, "The ISIS Demand for a Caliphate Is About Power, Not Religion," *Guardian*, July 13, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jul/13/isis-caliphate-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-jihadi-islam>.
- 10 This paper refers to political Islam in its broad sense because Islamist ideas since the 1960s, specifically, influenced new movements that did not necessarily identify with the Muslim Brotherhood. In some cases, as is argued, such movements were influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism but became critical of the two.
- 11 Jonathan Brown, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 20, 2011, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/salafis_sufis.pdf.
- 12 Ali Jumuah, "Wasila, Circumambulating Graves and Accusing Others of Shirk and Kufr," trans. Mahdi Lock, Marifah, last updated December 20, 2012, http://www.marifah.net/articles/Al-Watan_Ali%20Jumuah.pdf.

- 13 Devin R. Springer, James L. Regens, and David N. Edger, *Islamic Radicalism and Global Jihad* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 50.
- 14 Mohammed bin Saeed al-Qahtani, *Min mafاهيم agidat al-salaf al-salih, al-wala wal baraa fil Islam* [The Islamic concept of allegiance and disavowal as preached by the early noble generations of Muslims] (Mecca, Saudi Arabia: Tayba Publishers, 2014), <http://islamhouse.com/ar/books/468544/>.
- 15 Suhaib Webb, "Ibn Taymiyyah and the Division of Tawhid Into Three Parts: A Call for Insaf and Taqwa," Virtual Mosque, December 8, 2007, <http://www.virtualmosque.com/islam-studies/ibn-taymiyyah-and-the-division-of-tawhid-into-three-parts-a-call-for-insaf-and-taqwa>.
- 16 Stephane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
- 17 Hossam Tammam, *The Salafization of the Muslim Brothers: The Erosion of the Fundamental Hypothesis and the Rising of Salafism Within the Muslim Brotherhood; The Paths and the Repercussions of Change* (Alexandria, Egypt: Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 2011).
- 18 Sujata Ashwarya Cheema, "Sayyid Qutb's Concept of Jahiliyya as Metaphor for Modern Society," in *Beyond Textual Islam*, ed. Nadeem Hasnain (New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2008). The chapter is available online as a draft paper at http://www.academia.edu/3222569/Sayyid_Qutbs_Concept_of_Jahiliyya_as_Metaphor_for_Modern_Society.
- 19 John Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- 20 Tammam, *The Salafization of the Muslim Brothers*.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 This attitude can be discerned during conversations with Islamic State members. They believe the local population is ignorant of and resistant to true Islam.
- 23 Interview by the author, cited in Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015), 222.
- 24 "Al-Salafiyya takhtariq jamaat al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin fi akbar hazza tandhimiya" [Salafism infiltrates the Muslim Brotherhood in the largest organizational shake-up], Al Arabiya, November 28, 2010, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/11/27/127653.html>.
- 25 Hassan Hassan, "New Syrian Islamic Council Repeats the Patterns of Old," *National*, April 22, 2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/new-syrian-islamic-council-repeats-the-patterns-of-old>.
- 26 "Sheikh al-Sururiyyah Mohammed Surur Zein al-Abidine li al-Quds al-Arabi" [Sheikh of the Sururiyyah Mohammed Surur Zein al-Abidine speaks to al-Quds al-Arabi], *al-Quds al-Arabi*, January 20, 2013, <http://alqudsalarabi.info/index.asp?fname=data%5C2013%5C01%5C01-20%5C20z495.htm>.
- 27 Ben Kesling and Suha Ma'ayeh, "Jordan Releases Zarqawi's Spiritual Mentor From Prison," *Wall Street Journal*, June 16, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/jordan-releases-zarqawis-spiritual-mentor-from-prison-1402960962>.
- 28 CNN Arabic's interview with Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Al-Maqdisi li CNN bil arabi: Ibn Baz sabab tarki li jamiyat al-Mosul . . . araftu al-Zawahiri wa al-Zarqawi bi Afghanistan wa lam ubayie al-Qaeda" [Al-Maqdisi to CNN Arabic: Ibn Baz was the reason why I left the University of Mosul . . . I knew al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi in Afghanistan and did not pledge allegiance to al-Qaeda], May 24, 2015, <http://arabic.cnn.com/middleeast/2015/05/24/me-240515-maqdisi-intv-p1>. In the interview, al-Maqdisi stated that in his youth he was influenced by "activist Salafism, a blend of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafism." He said Salafi jihadism emerged later during the jihad in Afghanistan, where "different currents merged under so-called Salafi jihadism."

- 29 Michael Scheuer, *Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.
- 30 Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 54.
- 31 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Democracy: A Religion!," trans. Abu Muhammad al-Maleki, ed. Abu Sayf Muwahhid, Jihadology, uploaded August 30, 2010, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/democracy-a-relegoin.pdf>; and Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, "Everything We Knew About This ISIS Mastermind Was Wrong," *Daily Beast*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/15/everything-we-knew-about-this-isis-mastermind-was-wrong.html>.
- 32 Zoltan Pall, "Kuwaiti Salafism and Its Growing Influence in the Levant," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/kuwaiti_salafists.pdf.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 "Al-Qutbiyyah al-ikhwaniiyyah wa al-Sururiyyah qaedat manahij al-Salafiyyah al-takfiriyyah" [Qutbism and Sururism: the foundations of Salafi takfiri ideology], al-Arab Online, August 19, 2014, <http://www.alarab.co.uk/?id=30798>.
- 35 Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 52.
- 36 Ideas such as *wala wal bara* have roots in early Islamic thought and are held by the majority of Muslim clerics today, albeit in much mellowed forms. Anti-Islamic State clerics from Syria, such as Ratib al-Nabulsi, Osama al-Rifai, and Moaz al-Khatib, advised Syrians against permanent residency in the West based on the *wala wal bara* principle. See Abdulsattar al-Sayid, "Hiwar hadi bain talameeth al-madrasah al-wahida houl fatwa al-sheikhayn al-fadhilayn al-Nabulsi wa al-Rifai fi mawdhoui hijrat wa iqamat al-Muslimeen fi diyar khayr al-Muslimin" [A quiet dialogue among the disciples of the same school about the fatwa issued by the two sheikhs al-Nabulsi and al-Rifai about the migration of Muslims to non-Muslim lands], Islam Syria, December 26, 2014, <http://www.islamsyria.com/portal/consult/show/792>, for example, in which the participants said that no Muslim should live permanently in the West and that Muslims who wish to study in the West can stay there temporarily as long as they have a wife and children who are too young to be influenced by the decadent Western lifestyle.
- 37 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "English Translation of Ayman al-Zawahiri's Letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi" *Weekly Standard*, October 11, 2005, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/english-translation-of-ayman-al-zawahiris-letter-to-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/article/7397>.
- 38 Peter Bergen, "Strange Bedfellows -- Iran and al Qaeda," CNN, March 10, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/10/opinion/bergen-iran-al-qaeda/>.
- 39 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, "Zarqawi Letter," U.S. Department of State Archive, February 12, 2004, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/31694.htm>; see also Emily Hunt, "Zarqawi's 'Total War' on Iraqi Shiites Exposes a Divide Among Sunni Jihadists," Policy Watch no. 1049, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 15, 2005, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/zarqawis-total-war-on-iraqi-shiites-exposes-a-divide-among-sunni-jihadists>.
- 40 Bill Roggio, "'Iran Owes al Qaeda Invaluably,' ISIS Spokesman Says," *Threat Matrix* (blog), *Long War Journal*, May 12, 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/05/iran_owes_al_qaeda_invaluably.php.
- 41 Full text of the letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi available at: Mustafa Kamel, "Nanshur akhtar risalah min al-Zawahiri li zaeem Daesh" [We publish the most serious letter from al-Zawahiri to the leader of the Islamic State], Mobtada, August 26, 2015, http://www.mobtada.com/details_news.php?ID=374654.
- 42 Shiv Malik, Ali Younes, Spencer Ackerman, and Mustafa Khalili, "The Race to Save Peter Kassig," *Guardian*, December 18, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2014/dec/18/sp-the-race-to-save-peter-kassig>.

- 43 "Al-Manarah al-Baydah lil intaj al-ialami, manhajuna wa aqidatuna, muqabala maa al-daktour Sami al-Aridi" [Al-Manara al-Baydah for media production's interview with Dr. Sami al-Aridi, our methodology and doctrine], Internet Archive video, 29:45, posted by Abu Qudamah al-Muhajir, October 21, 2013, <https://archive.org/details/Moqabla>.
- 44 The four main Sunni schools of jurisprudence are Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafii.
- 45 "Al-Manarah al-Baydah lil intaj al-ialami," Internet Archive.
- 46 Former Islamic State leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi said: "Since the legislations that govern all Muslim lands today are falsehood rules and legislations, we consider all rulers and armies of these countries and that fighting them is more of a priority than fighting the crusader occupier." See: "Aqidat al-dawla al-islamiyyah li amiraha Abu Omar al-Baghdadi" [The doctrine of the Islamic State, by its leader Abu Omar al-Baghdadi], goostmmb.wordpress.com, January 23, 2014, <https://goostmmb.wordpress.com/2014/01/23/%D8%B9%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B9>.
- 47 Interviews with Islamic State members in Turkey via the Internet and telephone, over several months in 2014.
- 48 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi speaks about the Mecca incident and the Juhayman al-Utaybi movement: "Al-haqeeqa al-mughayabah Juhayman al-Utaybi wa hadithat al-haram" [The suppressed truth, Juhayman al-Utaybi and the Mecca incident], YouTube video, 15:01, posted by Ali al-Yafai, September 3, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_zwh8_NDO0.
- 49 Interviews with Islamic State members via the Internet, January 2015.
- 50 Interviews with Islamic State members who are critical of the organization's campaign against what one member referred to as *muwahidin*, or true monotheists, via the Internet, May 2015.
- 51 Abu Abdullah Imad Abdullah al-Tunisi, "Taqeebat ala al-taeleeqat wa naqdh al-fatwa al-tunisiya lil sheikh al-hazeemi . . . taqdeem al sheikh abi muhammad al maqdisi" [Responses to the comments and refutation of the Tunisian fatwa by Sheikh al-Hazimi . . . introduction by Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi], Tawhid and Jihad Forum, December 10, 2014, http://www.ilmway.com/site/maqdis/MS_4872.html. In the introduction, al-Maqdisi wrote: "Many brothers have corresponded with me asking me to respond to al-Hazimi regarding his confusion and excessiveness, whose evil has spread among the youth until it infiltrated the jihadi arena in Syria, and his [fatwa] had a huge effect on bloodshed and violation of honor."
- 52 Interview with Hassan al-Dagheem via Facebook and telephone, December 2014.
- 53 Ari Soffer, "ISIS Executes 'Extremist' Members Plotting Rebellion," *Arutz Sheva*, December 23, 2014, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/189017#.Vm9edYuoHhg>.
- 54 The list, which is not exhaustive, is based on discussions with two Islamic State-affiliated clerics and another Islamic State member, who provided the names and in one case pictures of a book disseminated by the Islamic State. The book in question, *Clarification About the Unbelief of He Who Assists the Americans*, is authored by Nasir al-Fahd.
- 55 Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 56 Interview with Thomas Hegghammer via e-mail, December 23, 2014.
- 57 Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Saudi Arabia's Jihadi Jailbird: A Portrait of al-Shu'aybi Ideologue Nasir al-Fahd," *Intelligence Quarterly*, December 27, 2010, <http://www>

- .intelligencequarterly.com/2010/12/saudi-arabia's-jihadi-jailbird-a-portrait-of-al-shuaybi-ideologue-nasir-al-fahd/.
- 58 Robert Spencer, "Muslim Cleric Who Issued Fatwa Permitting WMD Pledges Allegiance to Islamic State," *Jihad Watch* (blog), August 25, 2015, <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2015/08/muslim-cleric-who-issued-fatwa-permitting-wmd-pledges-allegiance-to-islamic-state>.
 - 59 Nasir al-Fahd, "Risalat mashrouiyat al-ighladh ala al-rafidha" [Permissibility of excessiveness against al-rafidha], Quraa al-Arab, posted in 2001, accessed on May 18, 2016, <http://arareaders.com/books/details/7096>.
 - 60 Abulzahraa al-Athari, "Risalat nusus wa irshad Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi" [A message of advice and guidance from Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi], Islamion.com, May 10, 2015, <http://www.islamion.com/news/show/20391>.
 - 61 Interviews with an Islamic State associate from Deir Ezzor via the Internet, October 2015.
 - 62 Interview with Ahmed Abazaid via the Internet, December 2015.
 - 63 Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, Twitter post, March 19, 2016, 1:34 a.m.: "Everyone who fights Muslims, whoever they are, with the help of the coalition, he becomes an apostate if he is a Muslim, and an enemy combatant if he is non-Muslim," <https://twitter.com/lmaqdes/status/711108543739502592>.
 - 64 "Hukum dukhoul al-intikhabat binyayat tahqeeq al-maslaha al-shariyya" [The rule about running for election to achieve sharia's interests] Islamweb, April 10, 2001, <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id=5141>.
 - 65 According to audio lectures by Abu Ali al-Anbari recorded in Iraq after the Islamic State's 2014 takeover of Mosul and obtained by the author.
 - 66 Ibrahim al-Fares, Twitter post, June 14, 2015, 11:42 a.m., https://twitter.com/ibrahim_alfares/status/610155392820064256.
 - 67 Turki al-Binali, "Al-tarjama al-ilmiyyah lil sheikh al-mujahid Turki al-Binali" [The curricula vitae of the Mujahid Sheikh Turki al-Binali], Internet Archive document, posted by "sun1278," March 4, 2014, https://archive.org/details/s_shykh_bin3li.
 - 68 Abdul-Aziz al-Tarifi, Twitter post, April 24, 2016, 12:42 a.m., https://twitter.com/Altarefe_En/status/724141439744118784.
 - 69 Abdulsattar Hatita, "Al-Binali yadhghat li tawsee nufudh Daesh fi Libya rughm tazayud al-araqeel ala al-ardh" [Al-Binali seeks to expand the influence of the Islamic State in Libya despite growing setbacks on the ground], *Asharq al-Awsat*, May 11, 2015, <http://aawsat.com/node/357561>.
 - 70 Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Islamic State Training Camp Textbook: Course in Fiqh [Islamic Jurisprudence]" (brackets in the original). *Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi's Blog*, July 6, 2015, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/07/islamic-state-training-camp-textbook-course-in>.
 - 71 Lacroix, *Awakening Islam*, 56.
 - 72 "Top Sunni Muslim Cleric al-Qaradawi Does About-Face, Opposes Suicide Bombings," *Jerusalem Post*, July 29, 2015, <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Top-Sunni-Muslim-cleric-al-Qaradawi-does-about-face-opposes-suicide-bombings-410483>.
 - 73 List obtained by author in January 2015.
 - 74 Sharia training organized by the Islamic State varies in length: two weeks, one month, forty-five days, six months, or up to one year.
 - 75 This is the English title used by William McCants of the Brookings Institution, who translated the book. See Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. William McCants (Boston: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006). *Tawahush* literally means savagery, and also connotes a power vacuum and chaos; it can also be translated as lawlessness. The term was coined by Abu Qatada al-Filistini, a Palestinian ideologue,

who has denied he wrote the book. The author was first to reveal that the Islamic State uses the book as part of its curriculum.

- 76 The translation used is original and directly taken from the Arabic, *Idarat al-Tawahush*, by Abu Bakr Naji. The Islamic State used the word *tashreed*, or deterrence, as a title for the massacre carried out by its al-Battar squad, a special forces unit, against the Shaitat tribe in eastern Syria in August 2014. It was described at the time as the bloodiest single atrocity committed by the Islamic State in Syria, and featured graphic pictures of Islamic State members beheading tribesmen. See Liz Sly, "Syria Tribal Revolt Against Islamic State Ignored, Fueling Resentment," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syria-tribal-revolt-against-islamic-state-ignored-fueling-resentment/2014/10/20/25401beb-8de8-49f2-8e64-c1cfbee45232_story.html.
- 77 Moataz al-Khatib, "Tandheem al-dawla al-islamiyyah: al-bunya al-fikriyyah wa taqeedat al-waqe'" [The Islamic State: the intellectual structure and the complications of reality], Al Jazeera Center for Studies, November 23, 2014, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/files/isil/2014/11/2014112355523312655.htm>.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 *The Management of Savagery* provides advice to jihadists, including to teach people religion; gradually plant eyes and ears everywhere; construct an intelligence apparatus; deter "hypocrites" and force them to suppress their hypocritical, demoralizing views and tolerate the influential among them to halt their harm; ally with those permissible to work with other than those who are already aligned with the movement; and keep attacking the enemy to make it seek peace. See the McCants translation, <https://archive.org/details/TheManagementOfBarbarismAbuBakrNaji>.
- 80 See Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Battle of the Ditch," last updated February 21, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-the-Ditch>.
- 81 The battle took place in the seventh century between Muslims and the Persian army in Anbar, in modern-day Iraq.
- 82 James Kirchick, "ISIS Goes Medieval on Gays," *Daily Beast*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/19/isis-goes-medieval-on-gays.html>.
- 83 Interview by the author, published in Weiss and Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*.
- 84 Abdelrahman Haider Shaye, "Haqaeq fi taghreedat an dawlat al-khilafa al-Islamiyyah wa Ikhtilaf al-Qaeda" [In Tweets, Facts About the Islamic State and Its Differences With al-Qaeda], Abdelrahman Haider Shaye's blog, August 4, 2014, <https://abdulrahman.wordpress.com/2014/08/04/%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A6%D9%82-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AA%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84-2/>.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

The **Carnegie Endowment for International Peace** is a unique global network of policy research centers in Russia, China, Europe, the Middle East, India, and the United States. Our mission, dating back more than a century, is to advance the cause of peace through analysis and development of fresh policy ideas and direct engagement and collaboration with decisionmakers in government, business, and civil society. Working together, our centers bring the inestimable benefit of multiple national viewpoints to bilateral, regional, and global issues.

The **Carnegie Middle East Program** combines in-depth local knowledge with incisive comparative analysis to examine economic, sociopolitical, and strategic interests in the Arab world. Through detailed country studies and the exploration of key cross-cutting themes, the Carnegie Middle East Program, in coordination with the Carnegie Middle East Center, provides analysis and recommendations in both English and Arabic that are deeply informed by knowledge and views from the region. The Carnegie Middle East Program has special expertise in political reform and Islamist participation in pluralistic politics throughout the region.

BEIJING BEIRUT BRUSSELS MOSCOW NEW DELHI WASHINGTON

THE GLOBAL THINK TANK



CarnegieEndowment.org

Understanding ISIS in order to Better Protect the Homeland

Dr. Tarek Elgawhary
Director of Religious Studies, World Organization for Resource Development and Education (WORDE)

Testimony submitted to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on June 22, 2016

Violent extremist groups like ISIL are not only a national security threat to the United States, but represent one of the major existential threats facing Islam today. Their distortion of primary, agreed upon texts and their fundamental lack of a coherent interpretative methodology, the hallmark of normative Islam, have led them to conclusions and interpretations that no other group in the vast intellectual history of Islam has ever concluded. While a confirmed minority of people in comparison to the over 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide, their media savvy has projected their evil far beyond their numbers and dominated discussions about Islam in the public square.

The urge to misinterpret various passages of the Quran and Hadith literature is something that the Prophet of Islam himself warned against. He famously said that a time will come when people will out worship you, but will have no understanding of the Quran.¹ This statement is profound on many levels and draws an extremely important distinction necessary to understand how exactly groups like ISIL distort normative Islam. This statement affirms the fact that there is a difference between religiosity and religion. Religiosity is the personal act of practicing one's religion. It can be measured in how much one prays, how much one gives to charity, how many days one fasts, etc. Yet this religiosity, the Prophet warned, can lead one astray without proper understanding, or proper religion. Understanding of religion, therefore, requires the study of religion, and like any sophisticated field of study, requires time and effort to arrive at the goal. It is this last point, perhaps more than any, which sets "us" apart from "them." Islam, in both its Sunni and Shia expressions, is marked by a very deep and sophisticated discursive interpretive tradition that contains three essential components:

1. Understanding the Divine text: the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet.
2. Understanding the current moment/context in which we live.
3. The ability and talent to link the two in a way that does not violate the meta principles of Islamic law which are the preservation of life, religion, intellect, property, and lineage.

¹ This hadith is found in the collection of Bukhari: 3364.

² Elgawhary, Tarek and Friedlander, Nuri trans., *Responding from the Tradition* (Louisville: Fons Vitae:

This process is a skill that requires proficiency of various areas of study, including many of the secular sciences to properly understand the current context. For example, Muslim jurists wishing to opine on certain financial transactions are required to know the nature of modern money (that it is fiat currency and not gold bullion, for example), the nature of modern financial transactions, the way risk is calculated, etc. If one were not to do this and relied only on medieval legal writings, one's opinion would be mismatched and potentially dangerous. This discursive, interpretive paradigm is what has allowed Islam to stay relevant in the face of great change. The 13th century jurist Imam al-Qarafi (d. 1258) reminded his fellow jurists that Islamic law changes with time, people, place, and circumstance. This implies that a jurist must understand the nature of these changing variables at all times.

Violent extremist groups like ISIL have no interpretive tradition, nor do they have a fundamental understanding of Islam whatsoever. They are unlettered warmongers who have, in essence, created a parallel religion and called it Islam. Yet, this parallel religion that they call to is no more Islamic than a pool with one lemon squeezed in it is lemonade.

The question remains, however, where does this thinking come from? In my research on this topic I have identified several central concepts that form the hallmark of their thinking, which are necessary to know if one seeks to develop an effective counter narrative. I will suffice with the three most major positions:

Takfirism

Takfirism is the process by which one is labeled an apostate due to some act or statement that is seen as taking one outside the folds of Islam. While classically understood as a matter for the courts and an extremely lengthy litigious process, violent and extremist groups usurp this authority for themselves and simply label any Muslim who does not agree with them an apostate. They then incorrectly conclude that since these Muslims who disagree with them are apostates, they have the right to engage in acts of violence against them due to their moral infraction, despite the fact that there is a universal prohibition against unjustly taking life (Quran 5:32). This line of thinking is not only unheard of in Islamic history; the Prophet never executed someone for leaving Islam², but also assumes that one can measure another's faith. However, the Quran clearly states in 2:256, "there is no compulsion in religion" as well as in 18:29, "whoever wills let them believe and whoever wills do not let them believe." The issue of religious freedom is clear as the light of day and no one has the right to attack anyone due to their choice in belief.

Ignorance of Society (Jahiliyya)

The second major intellectual underpinning of these groups is that Muslim societies are in a state of perpetual spiritual and religious "ignorance", a term used to describe the

² Elgawhary, Tarek and Friedlander, Nuri trans., *Responding from the Tradition* (Louisville: Fons Vitae: 2011).

polytheistic state of Arabia before the advent of Islam. While used throughout Islamic intellectual history to praise the pristine and equitable message of Prophet Muhammad to 8th century Arabia, violent and extremist groups argue that since we do not adhere to their warped way of thinking, the rest of us have slipped into a pre-Islamic age of ignorance and, using the aforementioned tactic, have essentially left Islam. This, again, is used as a justification for the use of force against innocents.

Ruling with God's law (Al-Hākimiyya)

While the previous two concepts serve as justification for an aggressive and exclusionary theology, the concept of ruling with God's law serves as the main justification for usurping political and military power. This concept deals with ISIL's misinterpretation of the Quran 5:44, in which it is clearly stated, "Whosoever does not rule with that which the Lord has revealed indeed they are disbelievers." When I sought to examine how Muslim jurists and theologians have understood this verse, I discovered that there is a consensus amongst the over 30 exegesis consulted, from the early generations of Muslims until the 21st century, that this verse refers to a person who rejects in totality and outright the corpus of Divine legislation (what we term Sharia) as a disbeliever. The verse does not mean, however, that if the Sharia is not used exclusively in state legislation that the entire state has apostated and therefore signals the green light to take rule by force.

Violent and extremist organizations like ISIL argue that what we typically refer to as Muslim nations are not in fact Muslim at all and their governments reflect the worst form of disbelief possible. What this thought process misses, however, is the fact that throughout the 19th and early part of the 20th century, Islamic law was codified in its various branches and written in modern, European legal format. So in fact, these nations that ISIL claim are not Islamic represent the best expression of contemporary Islamic legal thinking and the adaptability of Islamic law to modernity.³

The Common Thread

If the positions of groups like ISIL are so wrong and obvious violations of agreed upon interpretations, how then is that they have lasted as long as they have?

In the mid 1940s an obscure Egyptian literary figure visited the United States on an exchange program. In February of 1949, February 14th to be precise, Sayyid Qutub read of the news that the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hasan al-Banna, had been assassinated. Mistaking American's observation of Valentine's Day for a national celebration of the death of the Islamist leader, Sayyid Qutub concluded that Islamism was his true calling. Completely untrained in the Islamic sciences, Qutub spent the rest of his life, until his execution in 1966, writing what was to become the main works and intellectual paradigm of the modern global Islamist movement. The three concepts described briefly above are profuse in his writings, most importantly in his commentary

³ Elgawhary, Tarek, "Restructuring Islamic Law: The Opinions of the Ulama Towards Codification of Personal Status Law in Egypt" (PhD diss, Princeton University, 2014), 83-86.

and reflections of the Quran *In the Shade of the Quran*. Every single violent and extremist organization claiming to adhere to Islamic principles since the middle of the 20th century have relied, in some cases exclusively, on the writings of Sayyid Qutub. For example, Muhammad al-'Adnani, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's number two in command, spent 20 years pouring over Qutub's commentary of the Quran and proudly claims that he has attempted to write *In the Shade of the Shade*.⁴ These groups, fueled by the gross, misinformation posited by Qutub, have perpetuated these concepts and used their resources to slowly infect the minds of thousands.

It should be clear that not every extremist Muslim necessarily believes in all these issues. These concepts are porous and within the intellectual paradigm of extremism there is a great deal of fluidity. Likewise, it is possible that someone can hold some of these views without knowing how dangerous they are, nor leading them to actual acts of violence. This also means that there is a clear spectrum of extremist thought that can lead, but not necessarily, to violence and acts of terror. The solution, in my opinion, is education and literacy. Normative Muslim leaders need to be empowered to teach normative Islam that is grounded in the discursive, interpretative tradition outlined briefly above. Part of this instruction needs to be a clear and unequivocal counter narrative to help average Muslims understand *why* the narrative of ISIL and related groups is wrong. Until this happens in a mass way, the rhetoric of ISIL and related groups will only grow.

⁴ Al-Binali, Abu Sufyan Ibn Mubarak, *Al-Lafẓ al-Sānī fī Tarjamat al-'Adhānānī* (n.p., 2014), 3.

SPECTRA

Subhi Nahas
The Senate

2180 Bryant St. Ste 100
San Francisco, CA 94110

Date: 06/21/2016

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, Members of the Committee, thank you for offering me the honor and the opportunity to be here today and to share with you my own story in the context of the larger events happening around the world and here in the United States.

My personal story mirrors the stories of many other LGBT individuals, but I am one of the few fortunate refugees who has been accepted for resettlement in the United States. I fled from my country because an organized group of militants threatened me solely because they perceived me as gay. ISIS had not yet been formed, yet militants and the regime targeted all gay men. When, after six months in Lebanon, I moved again, this time to Turkey, my history of activism in LGBT rights in Syria and Lebanon followed me.

Since extremist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS were gaining strength and access to Turkey, once again, I found myself in danger. Although I was employed for 2 years in a senior position managing the translation department for the Turkey office of Save the Children International, I was still not safe because of my sexual identity.

A straight friend from Syria told me that I had been targeted for death, and my Save the Children Country Director helped me register with the UN Refugee Agency, to be resettled to a safer country. Because my identity placed me in a category of refugees facing particular danger, I was resettled in the U.S.

Prior to my resettlement, I had to complete a thorough screening process and consuming procedures including testifying under oath in front of an officer from the DHS, security checks, medical tests and cultural orientation. These processes took 10 months to be finalized.

In August 2015, I had the privilege to speak before members of the UN Security Council and civil society on threats to sexual minorities within the Middle East region during a historic event organized by the United States and Chile. As I stated during the meeting and in a follow-up press meeting with the United States Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, at the present time ISIS is simply one of many threats to the LGBT community in the Middle East.

While ISIS is in the public eye as the most notorious extremist group in Syria and Iraq, it may come as a surprise that their methodology --when it comes to the treatment of LGBT people-- is similar to many other groups, including governments themselves. Government regimes in the region prescribe, at the least, harsh punishments for LGBT residents, and, at the worst, the death penalty. There is no haven for LGBT people in Syria, even for young gay men that ISIS uses as sex slaves.

We know that many groups, including ISIS, target and kill gay people in Syria. The only difference is the method of killing they use. Good fortune has allowed me to begin a new, much safer life as a refugee in the United States, but sadly, the recent events in Orlando show that I and other LGBT people face huge challenges here. In fact, the New York Times reported on June 16, 2016, "Even before the shooting rampage at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla., lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people were already the most likely targets of hate crimes in America, according to an analysis of data collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation." Put simply, efforts to discredit the poisonous ideology of ISIS and other extremist groups—while extremely important—are insufficient to completely erase the threat of anti-

Subhi Nahas
The Senate

SPECTRA

2180 Bryant St. Ste 100
San Francisco, CA 94110

Date: 06/21/2016

LGBT violence either here in this country or abroad. Rather, we must also commit to combating homophobia, racism, xenophobia, and bigotry in all of its various forms regardless of the source. And specifically with regards to U.S. domestic policy, we must do something about gun violence in this country.

In order to deal with the issues raised in my testimony, I have several recommendations for the United State Government:

Through the bridges and convening power unique to the United Nations, we can support actions that promote not only the human rights of LGBT persons, but also love, inclusion, tolerance and equality among religions and communities. This requires continued U.S. leadership at forums like the UN Human Rights Council, supporting funding for UN institutions like the UN Refugee Agency, and groundbreaking efforts like the special meeting, among members of the UN Security Council last year, which was the first of its kind to focus exclusively on the abuses faced by LGBT persons in the context of international peace and security. These types of multilateral discussions, along with the Security Council statement issued on Monday condemning the Orlando attack, are critical. The Orlando statement specifically denounced, for the first time, violence targeting people "as a result of their sexual orientation," and it received support from Russia and Egypt. Going forward, it will make it more difficult for those countries and others to argue against sexual orientation as not being recognized under international human rights agreements.

1. We also need partnerships across communities that can address the serious negative consequences of ISIS Ideology and others like it, including assisting the communities that are most at risk and vulnerable. For example, in San Francisco I have partnered with other activists to launch Spectra Project which assists the LGBT community by providing necessary education and shelter to them, while also promoting a positive image of the LGBT community among refugees and host communities.
2. While U.S. domestic policy is slightly outside of my area of expertise, on a personal level I would like to emphasize the need for our country to prevent military-style weapons from falling into the hands of deeply disturbed individuals who seek to do harm to others. Such policies are necessary to protect not only members of the LGBT community, but all Americans.

Thank you once more for the invitation to speak today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Statement of Nadia Murad

June 21, 2016

Honorable members of the Senate

I am deeply grateful to this committee for allowing me to share my story.

We Yazidis are a human society. We are at a critical stage. We love each other as you do. And we love your nation for its history of helping when all seems lost.

Terrorism has destroyed our world and threatens, no doubt, the existence of mankind and civilization as we know it.

Terrorism is destroying the human heritage we have collectively built, not as one people, one nation, one color, one religion, but the civilization we've built together as humans of different cultures and faiths.

I am one of thousands of Yazidi girls that were taken captive by the so-called Islamic State. I had a normal life before August 3rd 2014. I lived with my mother and siblings in peace. Our people go back thousands of years in the heartland of Mesopotamia where civilization was first started.

I was going to high school; I had dreams like every girl in the world.

I wanted to become a teacher and build a family.

My community of about half million people never harmed anyone. We lived in peace with Muslims, Christians and other groups, religious or not.

But our peaceful ways did not save us. The Islamic State militants attacked us in Sinjar with the clear intention to destroy the Yazidi people as a distinctive, non-Muslim religious group.

The Yazidis were given a choice: convert or die.

Unlike others attacked, the Yazidis were denied a third choice – the ability to pay Jeziyah or leave.

Daesh said we were not “People of the Book” - essentially authorizing our men to be killed, our women and children to be enslaved, our property to be confiscated. We were powerless.

More than 3,000 Yazidi men, women and children were killed in two weeks. Hundreds of disabled and elderly that could not escape were slaughtered. Tens of thousands of Yazidi watched in a 75-mile march from Mount Sinjar without water with many getting killed along the way.

Daesh killed my mother and six brothers in one day.

More than 1,600 children were taken from Sinjar to be subjected to ISIL brainwashing and terrorist ideology, including my 13-year-old nephew who has now been brain washed and tells his own mother that she is an Infidel.
More than 3,000 women and girls as young as 8 years were forced to be sex slaves.

I was so forced. I was 19.

My niece Katherine, 19 years old, was killed by an IED as she tried to escape.

Lamia, a 9 years old girl, was also killed escaping with Katherine.

Today captive Yazidis are systematically used as human shields in combat by their ISIS captors.

Daesh has committed genocide against my people, against United Nations law, against US law, the UK parliament, in France and so many others, yet the ISIS or Daesh case has not been referred to the ICC or the international court.

I am sad that the world doesn't focus on bringing such genocidal perpetrators to accountability. It's painful to me as a survivor to see a world that turns away, averting its eyes, ignoring the worst crimes.

Some are old enough to remember what happened in Germany and other places. The civilized world did not act until it was too late.

The Yazidis are experiencing holocaust anew. We suffer a human brutality, murder, sex slavery, and forced displacement.

I have seen Daesh, I have lived under their barbaric rule, I well know the Daesh intention. And they make it clear in their statements.

Daesh intends to rule and destroy the whole world.

The attack on Orlando was so motivated. San Bernardino was so motivated. I send condolences to the families and friends of all victims. There will be more.

Orlando will be repeated if the world doesn't put an end such terrorism. There is no sanctuary. With today's weapons and bioterror, no place is safe for anyone! Daesh is powerful. And it has been helped.

I appeal to you, to this committee, to the US senate and government, and to the American people formally to recognize Yazidi Genocide.

Please help my people. Please work with us to bring Daesh to Justice.

Today the circumference of Daesh control is about 3,000 miles. Help us bring an end to their

rule. Do not let them grow more and more by indifference.

Any form of ambivalence will be felt as encouragement.

The world must act, definitely the USA must act. We must terminate Daesh and all such terror.

We need to act decisively now so that some of the remaining 3,200 Yazidi captives can come back.

I ask the US, also, to work with allies and foe alike to establish a safe and protected zone for Iraqi and Syrian religious minorities. All must agree on this, now. The Yazidi people cannot wait.

Established governments world-wide are threatened as never before.

Learn from the Yazidis experience. Come to us, sit with us, let us teach you what this is like... Visit our people, face and hug our orphaned children, see our unprotected mass graves, view our ravaged farms and hill tops...

Please bring your powers to help, to heal, to solve.

Come share our tears.

Our crisis is your crisis.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Hassan Hassan
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“The Ideology of ISIS”

June 21, 2016

- 1. You describe the historical roots of ISIS's ideology as a hybrid of Salafism and political Islamism. Is there any influence the United States could wield or any action that could facilitate the decoupling of Salafism and political Islamism?*

Response:

The hybridization between traditional Islam (Salafism) and revolutionary Islam (political Islam) is accelerated by the instability in the region and the steady erosion of the authority of the clerical establishment. So, given the turmoil in the region, the trend is hard to stop. It is very possible, however, to shape its direction. I propose the following steps:

- 1) Recognize the contribution of otherwise peaceful Islamist movements to the intellectual formation of groups such as ISIS. Failure to do so, often by academics, obscures the insidious teachings that continue to be broadcast in media, at the pulpit or on social media. Justification for suicide bombing, for example, is widely rejected by traditional clerics but accepted by “moderate” clerics who subscribe to political Islam, such as the Doha-based Youssef al-Qaradawi.
- 2) Support moderate voices who oppose both revolutionary Islamist ideas and rigid Salafist teachings, the two facets that make up the bulk of the Salafi-jihadism ideology that influences Al Qaeda, ISIS as well as other country-focused Islamist groups.
- 3) The credibility of moderate voices often hinges on whether they are linked to despotic regimes or governments. The voices should be independent.
- 4) One of the intellectual pillars of extremist Islamic ideology is the idea of “loyalty and disavowal” — loyal to Islam and disavowal to anything non-Islamic, a version of with us or against us. Extremists turned the concept into a tool to discourage Muslims living in the West from full integration. In its publications and statements, ISIS has frequently addressed sympathizers by “the people of loyalty and disavowal”. To extremists, working with Western governments against Muslim radicals is a betrayal of a core Islamic stipulation. The idea has purchase beyond extremist forces, and often prevents clerics from speaking loudly and consistently against radical groups.

2. *In May 2015, Peter Bergen testified that the government should do more to illustrate that ISIS “positions itself as the defender of Islam, but its victims are overwhelmingly Muslim” because that statement is not only factually accurate, but also ideologically agnostic while undercutting the group’s religious legitimacy. Do you have any advice for an effective counter-message my colleagues and I can employ?*

Response:

Throughout the Middle East, clerics describe ISIS as “*kharijites*”, a religious term that denotes an internal Muslim group that focuses on excommunicating and killing fellow Muslims. Its victims are fellow, and even pious, Muslims. In its publications, ISIS has occasionally emphasized that being a practicing Muslim does not spare one from being killed by the group. Media does not reflect this reality well enough. Inside and outside the region, ISIS claims to represent Sunnis, but Sunnis are among its worst victims. In November, ISIS beheaded an old Sufi cleric approaching the age of 100 years in Sinai, Egypt. Media barely covered the story.

As such, this aspect of ISIS’s grand narrative should be dismantled by highlighting that ISIS kills primarily fellow Muslims, and those fighting it are primarily fellow Muslims.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Dr. Tarek Elgawhary
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“The Ideology of ISIS”

June 21, 2016

1. *As someone who works with radicalized youth in America, what are some of the soundbites from ISIS propaganda that are most often repeated to you by youth as a justification for even tacit support of such a brutal organization?*

I have not actually met someone who is completely open to the brutality of an organization like ISIS. I have, however, mentored some who have expressed views that cause me to be concerned. Some of these views are:

- That a “good Islamic life” is incompatible in the US.
- There is no “real Islam” found amongst the Muslim community in North America.
- A critique of the spiritual practices of Islam, such as many of the celebratory events in our liturgical calendar, which they consider a “reprehensible innovation.”
- A critique of Muslim practices as not being “correct enough”
 - *How would you advise an Imam in America counseling a similarly radicalized youth to respond?*

I would plead with them to understand the intellectual underpinnings of the extremist narrative and weave this in their weekly classes/sermons, not necessarily as a direct topic, but as part of the general discourse. I know for a fact that our youth are very confused and starving for direction and guidance on these matters. If Imams in North America cannot meet these needs (myself included), they would have failed in their most basic duty. The Prophet of Islam said, “all of you are shepherds and each one of you is responsible for their flock.”

- *How would you advise someone with no Islamic knowledge or education to respond?*

For those who live in diverse areas of the country, I would have them say, “hey, I have Muslim neighbors and they do not express what you express. Why don’t you come with me to the nearest Islamic center and meet the Imam, etc.” The point being that as an American-Muslim I have many non-Muslim neighbors. They know me, they’ve been to my home, we discuss neighborhood politics with each other, my kids play with their kids, etc. The same goes for American-Muslims in the workplace and in schools. This means

that the vast, vast majority of American-Muslims are the best line of defense against this type of extremist rhetoric.

For those who do not know any Muslims, I would have them say the following: Islam sees itself as the heir to the great Abrahamic revelations before it. Islam honors the Hebrew Prophets, Christ, and Mary (as a matter of fact an entire chapter in the Quran is dedicated to Mary). Islam very much honors and respects the teachings of the revealed religions before it. There were followers of Prophet Muhammad who used to read the Torah on a weekly basis and derive benefit from it. On the highest levels, the moral injunctions of Judaism and Christianity are the same as the moral injunctions of Islam. By reminding ignorant Muslims of these moral injunctions, one can tap into the moral center within the Islamic revelation.

- *In your experience, are these responses effective?*

Yes. This is what I say when I am asked this question, and I have found it to be effective. All it takes is a powerful, morally grounded statement to get people to start thinking.

2. *When asked whether we should label ISIS's ideology as "radical Islam" you answered that there is nothing wrong with labels. You also referenced an Islamic verse about "dogs of hell" to describe ISIS.*

- *How would you counsel United States Government representatives to label an adherent to "radical Islam" in official documents and during public speaking engagements?*

This is a tricky issue. I respect very much the debate about this terminology and the potential offensiveness of the term "radical Islam." I also respect the President for making an effort to avoid using this term in discussing recent events. I would like to add, however, two points. First, my response during the testimony was to highlight something I learned at seminary. Namely, that terms are not inherently bad and the real issue is what is meant by these terms. There are certainly those who use the term "radical Islam" and seek to implicate the vast majority of Muslims. I obviously do not subscribe to this and hold this definition to be grossly in error. There are others, however, who use this term to highlight that there is some use of Islamic ideology, as distorted as it may be, by violent extremist groups. This is my second point, which I feel is very important in light of the current discussion. There is a clear pseudo-Islamic theological rhetoric that groups like ISIS use and this needs to be addressed and defeated. My use of the term "radical Islam" and its derivatives is to highlight this point.

- *Which other religious authorities, if any, draw parallels between the "dogs of hell" verse in the Quran and ISIS?*

In the vast literature of the Prophet's sayings (known as hadith) there is a well-known subject called "Description of the Kharajites." The Kharajites were an early group of Muslims who went against the normative group with violence and extremism. The Prophet's description of these renegades represent for our community a timeless reminder

of how religion can go terribly wrong, descriptions of the people who use religious texts out of context to kill and terrorize people, and, more importantly, lessons of how to defeat them. This body of literature is extremely important for Muslim community leaders to rally behind and utilize.

3. *In May 2015, Peter Bergen testified that the government should do more to illustrate that ISIS "positions itself as the defender of Islam, but its victims are overwhelmingly Muslim" because that statement is not only factually accurate, but also ideologically agnostic while undercutting the group's religious legitimacy. Do you have any advice for an effective counter-message my colleagues and I can employ?*

I would ask that you help empower Muslim-led counter-messaging efforts that have proven to work. As a minority community in this country, we are extremely aware of the problem and, I think, equally capable of addressing the counter-messaging portion of it. Yet, there seems to be a perennial disconnect between government efforts and community efforts shrouded in a cloud of mistrust. We cannot afford to let this continue and it is vital that we put resources where they belong to empower and enfranchise groups that are already fighting the fight.

I also want to reiterate my oral testimony when I said, "work with us." Our work is open to this committee and to any other government agencies wanting to learn about our programs.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Dr. Tarek Elgawhary
From Senator Kelly A. Ayotte**

**“The Ideology of ISIS”
June 21, 2016**

1. *As you mention in your written testimony, ISIS relies in part on the writings of individuals like Sayyid Qutb who wrote *In the Shade of the Quran*. You note that ISIS's number two in command has been heavily influenced by Qutb. You also state in your written testimony that there needs to be a “clear and unequivocal counter narrative to help average Muslims understand why the narrative of ISIL and related groups is wrong. Until this happens in a mass way, the rhetoric of ISIL and related groups will only grow.” For young Muslims who have not spent the time you have studying the Quran, what would you say to those who are inclined to rely on the writings of Qutb and others to argue that terrorism is condoned or encouraged by Islam? What would you say to those who believe Islam condones or encourages terrorism and the kind of behavior that Ms. Murad and others have endured?*

I would say that there has been over 14 centuries of Islamic scholarship and it extremely foolish and dishonest to the sources we hold sacred as Muslims (i.e. the Quran and Hadith literature) to discard all of that for the interpretations of one or two people. I would also remind them that over 95% of the primary sources (the Quran and the Hadith literature) speak to morals and belief tied to morality, meaning that the overwhelming majority of our religion teaches the importance of being upright, productive, peaceful, and loving of others.

As to those who believe Islam condones terrorism, etc., I would say that you have lied about Prophet Muhammad and he is the one who said, “Whoever lies about me on purpose, let them await their seat in the hellfire.” He never told us to kill anyone or to treat people the way Ms. Murad was treated. Rather, he said, “I will be the protector of the religious minority on the Day of Judgment [i.e. against those who harm them].” I would say, therefore, that if you believe in the tenants of Islam, and you still believe in violence and extremism, you will face the one you have lied about in the hereafter.

2. *Last week CIA Director John Brennan testified before the Senate Select Intelligence Committee and underscored that ISIS is using Twitter, Telegram, and Tumbler to recruit, inspire attacks, and spread its ideology. How can Muslim scholars and leaders better engage online to undercut ISIS's use of the digital domain?*

This is a really important question. Muslim scholars need proper media, communications, and sentiment analysis training. Communications, a field I have been professionally involved with for a decade, is agnostic. Good communications is good for everyone, and bad communications is bad for everyone. In other words, there is no such thing as

“Islamic communications” and the best training of the communications industry is desperately needed.

Part of these “lessons learned” is the need to be concise and unequivocal. It is ok for an academic/scholarly discussion in the classrooms of seminaries around the world. In fact, this is very important and where ancient texts are reconciled vis-à-vis modern realities. But it takes a certain type of person to engage in that kind of discourse. When it comes to the public-square and social media, communications has to be precise. Also, they need to understand that by using certain analytical tools (many which are free) one can understand better who they are communicating to and how.

3. *If a young Muslim man confided in you that he was considering conducting a terrorist attack in the name of ISIS, what would you tell him regarding Islam’s view of terrorism?*

I would ask them simply if they loved Prophet Muhammad. If they answered in the affirmative, I would say, “If you love him you must obey him” and I would then cite his numerous statements about the sanctity of life, regardless of faith.

You might find this response awkward, but I firmly believe that if someone actually confided this type of information in me, it would be a sign that they have doubt, but have not located that doubt. Religion is very much about emotions and I believe that people who express interest in violence and extremism have a lot of emotions that is directed at wrong action. This line of questioning is my way of tapping into that emotional base, but redirecting it to something beautiful and sound.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Subhi Nahas
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“The Ideology of ISIS”

June 21, 2016

1. Your courageous testimony offered the Committee a first-person account of the threat you faced not only in your hometown of Idlib, Syria, but also in Turkey. Can you describe the changes that would have to occur in your hometown of Idlib, Syria, or in Turkey for you to feel safe moving back?

The threats I mentioned in the hearing are integrated deep within the community fabric, and supported by the government and discriminatory laws. I am afraid that the required changes cannot be implemented now or suddenly come about. We require a complete change of the community mindset, a change of laws to recognize LGBT people, decriminalize homosexuality, and educate people and new generation of LGBT issues.

I am afraid that the above changes are not feasible in an unstable country like Syria.

2. Is there a message that you'd like to communicate to any American who may be influenced by ISIS's propaganda to commit a terrorist attack like the recent attack in Orlando, Florida in an effort to dissuade them?

I experienced ISIS cruelty and injustice first hand. They attack anyone that doesn't comply with their ideology. It is not just LGBT people that are under direct threat, but everyone, and especially, minorities. Their ideology brings destruction and hatred only, they don't aim to create a better society or a religious one; they only strive for power and control. Their soldiers and people are punished severely, while their leaders are given green light to violate and kill as they please. There is no message or cause for this group.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Nadia Murad
From Senator Ron Johnson**

“The Ideology of ISIS”

June 21, 2016

1. Is there a message that you'd like to communicate to any American who may be influenced by ISIS's propaganda to commit a terrorist attack like the recent attack in Orlando, Florida in an effort to dissuade them?

My message for the Americans is that they should stay away from terrorism and terror acts. America is your country, it is the place that gives you shelter, opportunity, and freedom; you must respect it and stand up for its values. I have suffered from terrorism, and my community did, also did other religious communities in Iraq, terrorists want to destroy societies, they have sick minds and sick souls. Do not fall into their traps.

2. Your courageous testimony offered the Committee a first-person account of the brutality of ISIS. You are one of very few people who have had direct contact with our enemy over an extended period of time, escaped, and were brave enough to share your experience with the rest of the world. As such, you have unique insight into the motivations of the group as well as those of your individual captors.

ISIS want to cause total damage to human civilization in the form we know it. They want to destroy our ways of life, our dreams, cities, schools, and homes, they want to end every society that is different from them and they want to establish a new system of life under the so-called Islamic caliphate, they want the whole world to adopt their version of Islam, they do not want anyone who have different beliefs. They want to rule the world under their Sharia.

ISIS motivation to commit crimes is their collective and firm belief – based on their religious interpretations of Islam – that they believe they are ideal and superior people and somehow “Messengers of God on Earth” to execute what they preserve God have asked them to do. ISIS has a strong belief system; it is so strong that they embrace death for their beliefs.

Those individuals who kept me, they wanted to humiliate me, use me in whatever way they desired, they wanted me to yield to their desires. They want to destroy my religious Yazidi Identity, they felt proud forcing us to convert.

Their reason for harming was again their personal beliefs, they believed absolutely that God have granted them the full right to commit such crimes. They did not see this as crimes, but a sacred thing and that they were obligated to do.

- Did you ever have an opportunity to ask your captors what motivated their brutal actions? If so, what was their response?

I asked them why they did this to me; their answer was that I was an infidel and that Yazidis were devil-worshippers, they said they came to destroy the entire community and they were proud of it.

- Is there anything further that you think the American people should know about ISIS?

The American People should know that ISIS whenever capable to harm America, or France, or Germany, or any other civilized country, they will. ISIS is not only present in the middle east, they are present everywhere, their ideology can spread quickly like fire spreading in dry hay and even normal people can be brain washed quickly to become ISIS.

ISIS is a global threat and it must be stopped before they destroy the whole world. It is not only, but all radical Islamic groups of ISIS, Al-Qaidia, Al-Shabab, and Al-Nusra.

I also want them to know that ISIS have committed a genocide against Yazidis, Christians and other religious minorities, and that if the US and other countries do not support, the minorities will be wiped out by ISIS and alike-minded groups.