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SMALL WARS

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Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's May 21, 2016 Speech

By *Paul Kamolnick*

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Abu Muhammad al-Adnani's May 21, 2016 Speech: More Evidence for Extreme Marginalization, Implosion, and the Islamic State Organization's Certain Future as a Hunted Underground Ultra-Takfiri Terrorist Criminal Entity.

Paul Kamolnick

Introduction

On May 21, 2016 a 31-minute audio file by Islamic State Organization (ISO) chief spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani (real name: Taha Sobhi Falaha) was uploaded by the ISO's Al Furqan Media outlet onto the internet.[1] Last heard from publically some seven months ago on October 13, 2015,[2] commentators have noted in this speech ISO's seeming admission of recent defeats; no direct claim of responsibility for the crash of an Egyptian Air Flight 804 some three days earlier; and also its focus on directing its European and American inspire 'lone wolves' to engage in home-based terror, murder, and mayhem, by any means.[3]

A careful examination of this speech furnishes powerful evidence that the ISO as an organization suffers from several self-inflicted fatal errors arising from its nature as an ultra-takfiri deviant terrorist criminal entity. [4] Moreover, it is highly suggestive of an even more marginal and now more desperate organization aware of and actually announcing and preparing for its imminent second exile, the first occurred upon its *near* destruction in 2008-2009, as a hunted underground organization inhabiting the desolate Arab badlands. Other highly revealing and noteworthy sub-arguments are also embedded in Adnani's latest messaging. Let us now proceed to decode ISO's latest missive to the world.

Defining Islam: Adnani's Religion of Merciless Ultra-Jihadist Unconditional Warfare

Orthodox Sunni Islam rests on the five pillars of creed, prayer, alms, fasting, and pilgrimage, and the means for its spread are legitimately three: preaching (*da'wa*), the forbidding of evil acts and commanding of good acts (*hisbah*), and fighting (*jihad*) in the path of Allah until the entire world proclaims that there is no God but God, and that Muhammad is his Prophet. The vast majority of observant Sunni Muslims deem *da'wa* and *hisbah* as the virtually exclusive means available in contemporary times for raising the Word of Allah supreme. Moreover, there is a great deal of precedent in even an originalist-fundamentalist Islam, including the Prophet's own words and actions as recorded in biography and traditions literature (*ahadith*), that *da'wa* should be done in a manner that encourages rather than coerces, and also exemplifies the noble virtues of kindness, fairness, generosity, and humility.

Islam in its orthodox jihad-realist Sunni version maintains that the military jihad, both defensive *and* offensive, is a superlative religious prescription obligatory upon observant Muslims until Islam has prevailed throughout the earth, and until the Day of Judgment. In opposition to various apologetic approaches, the present author has strenuously argued that it is neither possible nor desirable to deny this central feature of actually existing Islam.[5] Owing to the enormous consequences for the Islamic community (*umma*) and Islamic state (*dawla*) of violence and possible extinction in matters of war and peace among peoples and religions, however, the military jihad is governed by a body of jurisprudence and legal precedent, and the original sources--*Qur'an*, *ahadith*, and the Prophetic biographies (*Sira*), upon which jurisprudential reasoning is based. For the vast majority of 'jihad-realists' jihad is neither a suicide pact nor an unconditional, relentless permanent war that must be fought at all times in all places. Rather, it is an enduring *duty* that must be discharged, but only under specified conditions. Some of those conditions include that the jihad be *sincerely* motivated (i.e. that jihad be motivated exclusively by a desire to

elevate the Word of Allah, and by no other motive); *probability* (i.e. that prudential calculations are essential in the decision to conduct warfare that may endanger the Islamic community or polity); and *legality* (i.e. adherence to the strict application of the shari'a of lawful military jihad, including such matters as rules of engagement, initiation and cessation of hostilities, truces, treaties, captives and their treatment, non-combatant treatment, etc.).

Within Islamic jurisprudence there is a highly developed body of authoritative jurisprudential precedent that demands that the military jihad be subject to careful scrutiny based on the degree to which probable harms are likely to outweigh probable benefits, and greater harms potentially outweigh lesser harms.[6] Finally, jurisprudence has established that the military jihad is merely one instrument of many available to the Islamic community and state for ensuring that the actual objects and purpose of the *shari'a*--the five cardinal Allah-derived 'inalienable' rights to life, religion, intellect, lineage, and property are actualized--and that it actually realizes the broader and longer-term public interest of the Islamic state or community.[7]

Contrast the above tradition of normatively binding Sunni orthodoxy, with ISO's chief spokesman al-Adnani's ultra-jihadist conception of the "religion of Allah". For him, Islam has become ruthless killing in masse to the last man, woman, and child. It demands a blood-drenched, fanatically relentless unconditional permanent war against the world, regardless of costs or benefits, or the consequences for those five essential Allah-derived values for which the *shari'a* and Islam itself exist.

We will fight to the death, even if crops are destroyed, houses are demolished, honor is disgraced, people are killed, and blood is shed. Either we will live in the might of our religion as noble masters, or we will die for it with honor.

We fight in obedience to Allah and to become closer to Him. And victory is that we live in the might of our religion or die upon it. It is the same, whether Allah blesses us with consolidation or we move into the bare, open desert, displaced and pursued. It is the same, whether one of us is carried off to prison as a captive, or spends the night with his family, safe and sound. It is the same, whether we are unharmed and take ghanimah [war spoils] or we are wounded or killed, as victory – according to us – is to live as muwahhidin [monotheists], to disbelieve in taghut ,[8] to fulfill wala and bara,[9] and to establish the religion. If this exists, then we are already, and under all circumstances, victorious. This is the reality, by Allah, and not mere slogans. Those who were truthful soldiers and leaders of the State wrote this with their blood. Whoever thinks otherwise, even if he is in our ranks, is not of us. He will inevitably be cast out or leave, even after some time...

We will fight, and fight, and fight until the religion is entirely for Allah. We will never beg people to accept the religion of Allah and to rule by Allah's Shari'ah. Whoever is content, then this is the Shari'ah of Allah. Whoever dislikes it, is discontent with it, and refuses it, then we will continue in spite of him. This is the religion of Allah. We will declare the apostates as disbelievers and disavow them all. We will take the disbelievers and polytheists as enemies and hate them.

Redefining Victory: When You Can't Beat Them, Redefine Victory and Defeat - From Territorial State Power as "Consolidation, Expansion!" to the 'Qur'an in our Heart?!

The essential defining trait of ISO's unique path to the self-proclaimed State and later Caliphate is based on its constantly-repeated assertion in ISO messaging that it is in possession of actual physical and sociocultural territorial expansion, consolidation, and further expansion. This is evident in every issue of its flagship English language publication Dabiq, but also in predecessor publications, and also its many published speeches. Adnani here however supplies an entirely unconvincing and opportunistic re-definition of the very meaning of victory and defeat: one that shifts from possession of actual territory to the alleged possession of hearts infused with the spirit of Islam. This ISO U-turn on its territorial state conception presumes ISO is shaping the information battlefield to prepare its recruits to abandon its presently occupied territories, and to counter the potentially devastating effects of anti-ISO messaging accompanying ISO's battlefield defeats including the finding, fixing, and finishing of several key ISO leadership targets.

[Y]our armies and your masses will never scare us. Your threats and your campaigns will not dissuade us. You will never be victorious. You will be defeated. Or do you think, O America, that victory is by killing one leader or another? Indeed, it would then be a falsified victory. Were you victorious when you killed Abu Mus'ab, Abu Hamzah, Abu 'Umar, or Usamah? Would you be victorious if you were to kill ash-Shishani, Abu Bakr, Abu Zayd, or Abu 'Amr? No.

Indeed, victory is the defeat of one's opponent. 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 Raqqah 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. America will be victorious and the mujahidin will be defeated in only one situation. We would be defeated and you victorious only if you were able to remove the Quran from the Muslims' hearts.* (emphasis supplied)

It is also noteworthy that beyond this blatantly opportunistic redefinition of victory and defeat, Adnani also admits in the above text that the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), ISO's earlier incarnation, was strategically defeated in territorial and battlefield terms. "Were we defeated *when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land?*" (italics supplied) refers to the ISI's practical decimation owing to its self-inflicted alienation from the Sunni populace and insurgents, a successful U.S.-led Sunni 'Awakening' (*sahwat*) unconventional warfare campaign, and the effective decimation of ISO leadership cadre by the lethal Joint Special Operation Forces (JSOC) and their Iraqi counterparts.

Evidence of ISO's Extreme Marginalization from Islam and the Islamic World

ISO views itself as the singular chosen vehicle for the global actualization of Allah's Word. This self-annointed role is coupled with and actually arises from ISO's ultra-jihadism and ultra-takfiri terrorist creed and practice. Once these premises are fully understood, one is now in a position to fully appreciate ISO's full-throttled war against every other existing expression of Islam, including every existing non-ISO armed militant Islamic organization. This is easily discerned as Adnani in his arrogant self-assurance proclaims that it is not through gentle preaching and exemplary conduct that one is brought to Islam, but only by the ruthlessly violent, coercive, immediate imposition of ISO's variant of the strictest 'Muslim' tests being implemented and enforced. Let us now observe how this self-conceit is manifest in Adnani's message to the entirety of the actually existing Sunni Muslim world.

Message to The Deluded Ignorant Muslims and 'Ummah of Muhammad'!

Adnani exhibits supreme contempt for the vast majority of Muslims. He is perplexed by their failure to embrace ISO's ruthless will to power. His message to them is basically threefold.

"We are the Shit!"

The first task is to assert the exclusive ISO right to represent Islam, to refute any and all that question the prudence of ISO's war against the world, and to demand a starkly Manichean choice now faces them: backing the party of Faith (ISO) that kills, and that of Disbelief (all others) that must be killed.

O Muslims! Truly, the mujahidin are victorious – victorious by the sword and arrowhead, by the evidence and proof. This is the small group striking armies and nations of the world, enduring these long years. It did not enter any land except that the tawaghit were unable to crush it and end it therein. No army fought it except that it caused them to become weak, to bleed, and to weep. And indeed, the mujahidin have refuted all doubtful arguments, despite the mobilization of every evil scholar against them, and despite the use of every form of media. There remains no excuse for anyone after the war of Sham. The truth has appeared clearly for both the learned and the commoners. There are only two armies, two camps, two trenches. It is the war between *kufir* [disbelief] and *iman*[belief]. It is the war of *wala* [loyalty] and *bara* [disassociation]. Any other war is nonsense, no matter the slogans raised by the disbelievers in their war, and no matter the goals they have claimed.

"Hey Dumb Asses, THEY Started It Because They are Idolaters Who Hate Allah and Islam!"

Second, Adnani unloads on all Muslims who doubt or question whether a Muslim-hating disbelieving world is waging a relentless war against Allah's Party of Truth, rather than the other way around, i.e. it is ISO that has initiated a fanatically brutal war against the world that is unethical in its means, imprudent in its likelihood of success, and one that has severely damaged the worldwide reputation of Islam.

O Muslims! O Ummah of Muhammad ! Sham has exposed them. The reality has become as clear to you as the sun... [T]he whole disbelieving world that has gathered, joined in alliance, and rushed madly into fighting the Islamic State. They made waging war against it, defeating it, and annihilating it their first priority. By what means? What is their goal? What is the reality? What is the rallying cry? Why have dozens of disbelieving nations gathered to wage war against the Islamic State? Why have America and its allies launched some 20,000 airstrikes against us? Yes. Some twenty-thousand airstrikes! Why do they spend billions of their wealth on their war against us? Why do they train and arm armies, gangs, and militias? Why do they carelessly send their sons from overseas to fight us? Why do they not train, arm, back, or support any fighters except those who are vetted? Ask them, if they would answer, or answer, if you can already comprehend.

The whole world has not come together to wage war against us except because we command the worship of Allah, alone without partner, and we incite others to do so. We make wala based upon it and we declare the disbelief of those who abandon it. We warn of shirk in the worship of Allah, and we are severe against it. We make enemies based upon it and we declare the disbelief of those who engage in it. This is our call. This is our religion. For this alone, we fight the world and they fight us.

It is not a mockery that America claims to fight us to support the oppressed and aid the feeble, or to defend the “freedom of the people” or the “citizenry.” The only mockery is that *this is actually believed by the mindless beasts who attribute themselves to Islam, especially those who saw what happened in Sham against the Muslims*. It is not a mockery that America claims to fight us in defense of Islam or to protect it from extremist alteration, nullifying imitation, or ignorant interpretation. *The mockery and greatest calamity is that the donkeys of knowledge – who are falsely counted as mujahidin – pass fatwas against the mujahidin, declaring that the vetted apostates are actually mujahidin for Allah’s cause, fighting against the renegade Khawarij! Indeed, Allah’s curse is upon the oppressors.*

Adnani in the above quote conveniently excludes two essential facts. First, that the US air campaign and targeting of ISO was initiated *not* out of Allah hatred, but of the genuine belief that it had the responsibility to protect a besieged isolated ancient syncretic sectarian religious minority group, the Yazidi, from imminent extermination, and also that the Iraqi security forces required immediate reinforcement against the ISO blitzkrieg then threatening Kurdish territories. Second, it is ISO’s own self-proclaimed prerogative to interpret and enforce in ultra-takfiri terrorist fashion Allah’s commandments that has led virtually every other Islamic militant group to declare them extremist “Kharijites”.

An additional point is worth mentioning. Adnani’s specific attack on Islamic scholars shall be considered below but in the italicized passages above (supplied by present author), one is introduced to the utterly contemptuous attitude Adnani maintains toward virtually every existing Islamic fighting organization that has opposed them. These “mindless beasts who attribute themselves to Islam” and “donkeys of knowledge--who are falsely counted as mujhadin” are to be savagely crushed, rather than won over by argument, example, and Islamically-based prudential battlefield alliances.

“You Stupid Muslim Fools! It is the West not ISO that Wages War Against and is Indifferent to the Suffering of Innocent Civilians!”

The world has witnessed three undeniable facts: the post-Arab spring emergence of failed and failing states, civil wars, insurgencies, terrorism, and ISO’s unique role as a brutally effective terrorist army entering the fray to deeply complicate potential political reconciliation in Iraq and Syria; the massive internal and external migration of several million persons whose lives have been utterly transformed as a result of this devastating carnage; and finally, the Arab, Muslim, and Western worlds responding to this humanitarian catastrophe through various forms of emergency assistance, modified asylum and immigration policies, and vigorous diplomacy. Moreover, the US has very carefully crafted its anti-ISO campaign to ensure that precise and targeted munitions are used to find, fix, and finish ISO elements, and that every effort be made to reduce to an absolute minimum losses to non-combatant civilians. The laws of war strictly upheld by the US-led coalition demand that the principle of distinction between armed combatants and non-combatant civilians be maintained, and that any deviation that permits so-called ‘collateral damage’ must be strictly vetted and judged by other criteria including the principles of necessity, and proportionality. These are the facts. Yet Adnani supplies his ISO version which through hyperbolic venting and mere conclusory allegations attempts to turn these facts upside down. What is interesting here is not that Adnani could be correct, but that Adnani is on the extreme defensive attempting to deny actual deeds, facts, and realities that the entire world has witnessed. Moreover, he is doing so as part of his pitch to those he above refers to as “Muslims!” and the “Ummah of

Muhammad !” Having lost the battle of perception, because of undeniable reality, Adnani is forced to engage in blatantly false propaganda.

Where are the Kafir West’s alleged defense of “civilians” and protection of “human rights” and “freedom”? Indeed, the false and deceiving mask of nobility has fallen, showing its ugly face under the Nusayri [Syrian regime] barrels of death, destruction, and gas. America and its allies do not ache and feel pain, except when the mujahidin advance and gain victories. The world does not weep at the Russian and Nusayri massacres each day against the Muslims. The sentiments in Europe, America, and other disbelieving nations are not moved nor shaken by the displacement of millions. They are not disturbed by the hunger, disease, suffering, and death of thousands of helpless and besieged children, women, and elderly people. America and its allies did not care... The people of Europe and other lands of kufr do not shudder at the Russian destruction of hospitals and residential zones, though they are afflicted by sleeplessness and insanity whenever the Islamic State decapitates some of the disbelievers, causing them to shiver, tremble, flare up, bombard, and rally... So it is not transgression, criminal, or terrorism unless it is perpetrated by a Muslim; just as it is not transgression, criminal, or terrorism if the victim is a Muslim.

Message to ‘The Evil Scholars, the Shuyukh of Dollars and Dinars, and the Assembly of Sorcerers, Hypocrites, and Agents, and Their Fatwas’

Adnani above assailed the broader Muslim world for rejecting ISO’s self-appointed role as exclusive emissary on all matters Islamic, denying that the West’s hatred of Islam has caused current events, and denying that the West actually hates and destroys non-combatant civilians rather than assists, comforts, and attempts to prevent them from harm.

Next on Adnani’s Muslim enemies list are those Salafist Muslim religious scholars he condemns as nothing more than regime-supporting apostates who have exchanged Islam for a seat at the table with the enemies of Allah. An unbridgeable chasm separates Adnani from these scholarly sheikhs, religious scholars, and jurisprudents (*fuqaha*), however, arising from two completely divergent interpretations of the legal requisites that must be met for violently overthrowing a sovereign ruling in a Muslim land, the pace for practically implementing Islamic criminal legal penalties, the authority to declare and wage jihad, and the legitimacy of forming alliances with non-Muslims (*kufr*) to wage war on other Muslims.

In Adnani’s version of fanatical ultra-jihadist, ultra-takfirism every Sovereign is to be immediately violently overthrown, whatever the cost; a full-throttled implementation of originalist Islamic criminal law is to be immediately implemented and enforced; and any potential alliances with non-Muslims is deemed forbidden and immediate grounds for declaring them apostates. Dehumanization, invective, scorn, ridicule, and hate-dripped language characterize his diatribe.

For the Salafi sheikhs, in radical contrast, the likely costs to Islamic lives, property, and security resulting from the violent overthrow of even gravely sinful Muslim rulers almost always outweighs the hypothetical and highly uncertain benefits that might result; enforcement of Islamic criminal law is essential yet failure to do so does not except under very specific conditions prove one has left the realm of Islam and can be declared apostate; and current alliances formed with non-Muslim forces are *not* aimed at warring against Islam, but rather at a takfiri terrorist criminal enterprise at war with Islam, and whose activities are forbidden and constitute major sins at best, or more likely place ISO beyond the pale of normative orthodox Islam as extreme Kharijites.

Having set the stage, let us now observe the mind of an ultra-takfiri terrorist in the certainty that every existing Muslim sovereign is to be violently crushed and ISO as vanguard granted the exclusive right to enforce its will to power.

[T]he evil scholars, the shuyukh [plural of sheikh] of dollars and dinars, and the assembly of sorcerers, hypocrites, and agents, then the falsity of their fatwas, which they vomit, has become clear... When their masters [Muslim rulers] gain strength and tighten their grip on the peoples’ necks, they pass fatwas on the obligation of obeying them and the prohibition of disobeying them and waging jihad; no matter how much they have fallen into kufr, tyranny, wrong, and spreading corruption.

[W]hen the mujahidin gain a foothold in some city, ruling therein by what Allah revealed, their blood boils and they burst in anger, regurgitating their vomit and passing the fatwa to disobey the mujahidin and to fight them, expel them, and to uproot them, no matter the cost of Muslim blood, ruin, and destruction, and permitting – even recommending – seeking support from the kuffar in this regard. Yet whatever the disbelievers do to the Muslims of slaughter, torture,

devastation, and displacement, *these evil scholars are deaf, dumb, and blind*. There is no fatwa, no condemnation, and no criticism. But when the mujahidin kill a kafir in a distant land or respond to some transgression, *the donkeys of knowledge* clamor and mobilize without shame to disavow, condemn, criticize, offer condolences, wail, and lament. All while the tawaghit rulers of usurped Muslim lands have not left a single nullifier of Islam, except having committed it, and these *evil scholars* have not left any “evidence” in their defense, except that they altered its meaning, whitewashed it, and exploited it. The mujahidin do not practice a ritual, revive a sunnah, implement a ruling, or establish a hadd, except that the palace scholars find fault with them, revile them, criticize them, and spread suspicions in order to avert people from the cause of Allah.

Woe to you, O evil scholars, of the Day of Gathering, the day when secrets are tested and you have no excuse. Woe to you! You altered the meanings of words and replaced the truth with falsehood. You made the mercy of Islam to mean taking the kuffar, tawaghit, and mushrikin as allies! You made the assailing enemy, in their military bases inside Muslim lands, people of dhimmah (contractual protection) and refugees! You made the disbelief and shirk of democracy a form of legitimate shura! You made being silent of the truth and accepting of falsehood, when being afraid to deny it, a form of praiseworthy patience! You made taking the apostate rulers as allies and relying upon the oppressors a form of wisdom, forbearance, and correct consideration! You made speaking the truth to a disbelieving, tyrannical ruler a form of rebellion against those in authority! You concealed what Allah revealed and you forbade jihad, making its incitement equivalent to sedition! You made killing the enemy kuffar equivalent to permitting sanctified blood! You made the mujahidin, those who stand for righteousness, as renegade Khawarij! And the apostate secularists, nationalists, democrats, agents of America, and their dogs, you made them mujahidin! You made disbelieving in taghut a great fitnah, making wala and bara a crime, and you made the tyrant, kafir, apostate rulers leaders of guidance, authorities of justice, and Muslim rulers! You cast Allah’s book behind your backs, sold His verses for a miserable price, and discarded the signs of Allah and His religion. *Your likeness, O apostates, is the likeness of the dog and that of the donkey carrying books*. You sold guidance for misguidance and forgiveness for punishment. Upon you is the curse of Allah, the angels, and all of mankind. (italics supplied)

Message to The Apostates Disguised as Al-Qa’ida and the Jihadis of Sham!

Adnani’s third target consists of every other Islamic, Islamist, and Salafi-jihadi fighting organization presently engaged in the Syrian theatre to overthrow the Bashar Al-Assad regime. Chief among these is Al-Qa’ida and its affiliate al-Nusrah, but all tendencies are openly condemned. The grounds for condemnation consist chiefly in their willingness to form defensive tactical battlefield alliances with tendencies that do not adhere to Adnani’s ultra-jihadist extreme-takfiri terrorist version of the religion of Allah. Adnani’s fanatical ‘Muslimness’ tests lead him not just to condemn, but to openly apostasize and declare war against each and every existing militant organization.

We cannot take allies from the disbelievers and apostates of the national military councils or democratic and secularist factions and boost them up as the apostates of those groups with Islamic names have done. . . We are not able to flatter them and overlook them, thereby not rejecting their shirk [idolatry] and not declaring our enmity and hatred to them, and instead showing them brotherhood, love, and allegiance, just as al-Qa’idah in Sham, the Jabhat ar-Riddah (the apostate front) losers, have done.[10] If we do not show enmity and hatred to the kuffar, then wala and bara will be lost, along with the religion, and the disbelievers would be mixed with the believers.

... If we knew that any of the righteous predecessors surrendered a hand span of land to the kuffar, using the claim of popular support or to save buildings from being destroyed or to prevent bloodshed, or any other alleged interest, we would have done the same as the Qa’idah of the Fool of the so-called Ummah[11] But this is an honorable, noble Quran, a pure Sunnah and upright methodology, a monotheist religion that does not accept concession or alteration. We will fight to the death, even if crops are destroyed, houses are demolished, honor is disgraced, people are killed, and blood is shed. Either we will live in the might of our religion as noble masters, or we will die for it with honor...

Message to ‘Lone Wolves’ of the Caliphate

Adnani concludes by directly addressing the single remaining potential element he seeks to recruit: isolated self-selecting individuals and cliques of ‘lone wolves’ willing to turn themselves into shrapnel-laden bombs in the service of ISO’s ultra-takfirist criminal enterprise. Even here he is on the defensive, however. Ensuring that terrorist murder and mayhem will be

committed on command requires that he address three issues that appear to cast doubt in recruits minds on the legality and ethical acceptability of ISO's demands: the necessity and legitimacy of attacking and terrorizing Saudi Arabia; his demand that emigration to ISO lands be abandoned with home-based terrorist mayhem; and finally, concerns regarding the permissibility of attacking innocent non-combatant civilians in Europe and the United States.

Regardless of What Others Have Said, WE Know! Do Not Hesitate You Cowards, Attack the Saudi State!

It is not difficult to discern that Adnani's ISO is in deep trouble in the land of Prophet Muhammad's birth. It is obvious from this hortatory tone that the wisdom and necessity of ISO's proclaimed jihad against Saudi forces remains controversial. Again we witness the mind of an ultra-takfiri fanatic demanding terrorist attacks in a land that for the vast majority of observant Sunni Muslims is equated with the very promotion and defense of the Islamic cause and Islamdom more generally.

O soldiers of the Islamic State, examine and tend to your intentions! Mend your thoughts! And be happy with the news that you are supported, by Allah, for verily we are upon clear guidance and we were not deceived. By Allah, we were not deceived. Give the news to Al Salul [derogatory reference to ruling Saudi regime] of that which will soon harm them, by Allah's permission. They will be the first to be defeated, if Allah wills... Though the fuqaha [jurisprudents] of old differed about the meaning of conquering the Arabian Peninsula, its meaning today is very clear! Our Prophet was truthful and did not lie. Determination! Determination! You – on behalf of the Ummah – are fighting against all nations. If you are resolute, you will win. If you flinch, you will fail and lose. Ahead of you are battles that the insolent or cowardly will not be able to handle, and there are goods that have no source but combat and war. You are its people, by Allah's permission. Ramadan has come near, and it is the month of raids and jihad, the month of conquest...

No More Hijra! Murder, Terror and Mayhem is YOUR Ticket to Paradise!

Adnani no longer requests that foreigners fulfill their ultimate destiny living in ISO's Caliphate, but rather remain in place as human bombs. This tactical shift toward mass casualty global terrorism evidences ISO's diminishing options as nations enact legislation restricting travel, impose stiff legal penalties for ISO related criminal activities, and ISO's war against the world leaves it surrounded in an ever-diminishing territory facing ever-increasing anti-ISO coalition activities directed at every dimension of ISO's enterprise: finance, travel, supply lines and logistics, battlefield assets, command and control, information warfare, recruits, intelligence, to name the most prominent. Just as Adnani earlier redefined victory and defeat, he here redefines the path to salvation advertised to these 'soldiers of the Caliphate' away from the earlier-demanded mandatory emigration, to its very opposite.

[A]nd we specifically direct this to soldiers and supports of the Khilafah in Europe and America. O slaves of Allah, O muwahhiddin! If the tawaghit have shut the door of hijrah in your faces, then open the door of jihad in theirs. Make your deed a source of their regret. *Truly, the smallest act you do in their lands is more beloved to us than the biggest act done here; it is more effective for us and more harmful to them. If one of you wishes and strives to reach the lands of the Islamic State, then each of us wishes to be in your place to make examples of the crusaders, day and night, scaring them and terrorizing them, until every neighbor fears his neighbor.* If one of you is unable, then do not make light of throwing a stone at a crusader in his land, and do not underestimate any deed, as its consequences are great for the mujahidin and its effect is noxious to the disbelievers. [emphasis supplied]

Do Not Hesitate! Your Merciless Murder of Civilians is Islam, and is Justified!

Adnani ends his message with a final defensive retort. It appears that serious doubts exist among some recruits in Europe who though willing to attack purely military targets, believe that except under the most strenuous conditions, Islam strictly prohibits attacks on non-combatant civilians. They are right to believe that is the case,[12] but Adnani asserts instead that Islamic law permits the indiscriminate killing in masse of such persons.

It has reached us that some of you do not act due to their incapacity to reach military targets, or their finding fault with targeting those who are called "civilians," so they leave harming them, doubting the permissibility thereof. Know that inside the lands of the belligerent crusaders, there is no sanctity of blood and no existence of those called "innocents."

This is not the venue for mentioning all of the evidences, for the list is too long; the least of which is dealing with them is just, as their warplanes do not distinguish between one who is armed and another who is unarmed, nor between a man and a woman. Know that your targeting those who are called “civilians” is more beloved to us and more effective, as it is more harmful, painful, and a greater deterrent to them. So go forth, O muwahhidin everywhere! It might be that you attain great reward or even shahadah during Ramadan.

Adnani’s ‘proofs’ for this indiscriminate killing in masse fails on legal and factual grounds. The use of the principle of “lex talionis,” the law of retaliation, does *not* license acts deemed forbidden or reprehensible under Islamic law. A forbidden evil can never committed as a means of addressing forbidden evil, for example, suicide, rape, murder, theft, or blasphemy. Moreover, the Qur’an in several key passages elevates human forgiveness and mercy above the strict criterion of justice among persons.[13] Second, Adnani is factually wrong. The US-led anti-ISO coalition *has* meticulously observed the principles of international humanitarian law and the key principle of ‘discrimination’ which demands the severest scrutiny for ensuring that non-combatant civilian immunity—male or female—is observed.

But Adnani also furnishes in the above passages the *actual* reason he demands the indiscriminate murder of innocent civilians. It is not for Islam. It is not for Allah. It is not the methodology of the Prophet. It is not out of necessity, or last resort. No. It is simply to ensure that a particular ultra-takfiri terrorist criminal entity can continue to attempt to terrify, recruit, raise money, and feed its own will to power.

Truly, the smallest act you do in their lands is *more beloved to us* than the biggest act done here; it is *more effective for us* and more harmful to them. If one of you wishes and strives to reach the lands of the Islamic State, then *each of us* wishes to be in your place to make examples of the crusaders, day and night, scaring them and terrorizing them, until every neighbor fears his neighbor.

Know that your targeting those who are called “civilians” is *more beloved to us* and more effective, as it is more harmful, painful, and a greater deterrent to them. So go forth, O muwahhidin everywhere! It might be that you attain great reward or even shahadah during Ramadan.

It is not Islam, or Islamic legality, or US bombing that is really at issue here. ISO has placed its own existence as mere organization (*tanzim*) above that of the Divine it claims to worship. Instead of preserving and defending the five cardinal values, or sanctifying the life, security, and property of innocents, it has instead elevated itself as object of worship. In the end, then, Adnani is not an Allah-fearing exemplar of righteous Islamic piety (*taqwa*), but instead a ruthless, merciless criminal self-satisfied with violating the “sanctity of blood” that Islam itself strictly forbids.

Conclusion

Adnani’s “Islam” inhabits the furthest reaches even of the Salafi-jihadi spectrum, and even these latter are declared enemies and accused of apostasy. ISO represents the splintering of this Salafi-jihadi splinter, and its conduct has led even those of Salafi and Salafi-jihadi provenance to view ISO as either a deviant, sinful, criminal organization or even outside the fold of Sunni orthodoxy, and exhibiting the characteristics and traits of the extremists of an already extreme sect, the Khawarij or Kharijites. These extremists are characterized by: their willingness to engage in virtually indiscriminate takfir, i.e. apostasizing virtually all with whom they disagree; equating the committing of sins with actual disbelief; viewing faith (*iman*) and disbelief (*kufir*) as categorical absolutes without degree; rejecting virtually every form of Muslim sovereign; rejecting any form of arbitration other than warfare; upholding rules of engagement that permit the merciless targeting and slaughter of non-combatants, including women and children; and finally, upholding a virtually unconditional jihadism.[14]

Given the above, alarmist interpretations of ISO’s current and future prospects are unwarranted. Sound US policy and strategy must simply leverage ISO’s own fatal flaws to assure that its self-inflicted extreme marginalization and implosion continue. A careful reading of Adnani’s latest rant provides clear evidence that ISO is on the run and is again preparing to hide out and secretly rebuild its capacity to sow fear, terror, and mayhem in the name of Sunni Islam. In this author’s opinion strategic patience, continuing the present US campaign, and continuing our present diplomatic efforts to create a permanent political reconciliation between Sunni and Shi’a in Iraq shall ensure ISO’s permanent destruction. The Sunni Muslim world is the primary theatre for their macabre and ruthless conduct, and it is the Sunni Muslim world that they condemn, and that now, along with the US led coalition, shall assist in ISO’s obliteration.

End Notes

[1] Removed from the Justpasteit site, the English translation consulted by the present author was available as of May 24, 2016 at: <http://heavy.com/news/2016/05/new-isis-islamic-state-al-furqan-media-audio-message-that-they-live-by-proof-egyptair-flight-ms804-804-mp3-read-english-translation-text-download/2/>, accessed on May 24, 2016.

[2] See: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, “Say to Those Who Disbelieve ‘You Will Be Overcome,’” available at <https://archive.org/details/SayToThoseWhoDisbelieveYouWillBeOvercome>, and also, <http://pietervanostaeyen.wordpress.com/2015/11/01/audio-message-by-is-spokesman-abu-muhammad-al-adnani-say-to-those-who-disbelieve-you-will-be-overcome/>, accessed on November 16, 2015.

[3] See, for example: Liz Sly, “Top Islamic State official suggests militants are feeling the heat,” May 21, 2016, available at www.washingtonpost.com/world/top-islamic-state-official-suggests-the-militants-are-feeling-the-heat/2016/05/21/14a8f8e2-1f8d-11e6-82c2-a7dcb313287d_story.html, accessed May 23, 2016; Maamoun Youssef, “Islamic State Group Leader Urges Attacks in Europe and US,” available at http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_ISLAMIC_STATE?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2016-05-22-09-32-56, accessed on May 23, 2016; Adam Withnall, “Isis official calls for ‘lone wolf’ attacks in US and Europe during Ramadan,” available at www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-official-calls-for-lone-wolf-attacks-in-us-and-europe-during-ramadan-a7042296.html, accessed on May 23, 2016.

[4] For evidence in previous speeches, see: Paul Kamolnick, “On Self-Declared Caliph Ibrahim’s May 2015 Message to Muslims: Key Problems of Motivation, Marginalization, Illogic, and Empirical Delusion in the Caliphate Project,” *Small Wars Journal*, 4 June 2015, Journal Article, available at www.smallwarsjournal.com/print/24089; Paul Kamolnick, “On Self-Declared Caliph Ibrahim’s December 2015 Speech: Further Evidence for Critical Vulnerabilities in the Crumbling Caliphate,” January 2, 2016, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/print/36330>.

[5] See: Paul Kamolnick. 2012. *Delegitimizing Al-Qaeda: A Jihad- Realist Approach*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA. <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1099>

[6] See: Paul Kamolnick, “The Egyptian Islamic Group’s Critique of Al-Qaeda’s Interpretation of Jihad.” *Perspectives on Terrorism*, , October 2013, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 93-110. www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/293/591.

[7] See: Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, Third Revised and Enlarged Edition, 2003, esp. chapters 13, 16, 17; Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Shari’a Law: An Introduction*, Oxford: OneWorld, 2008, ch. 6; Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An introduction to Sunni usul al-fiqh*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, ch. 3.

[8] “Taghut” here refers to ISO’s claim that existing regimes in the Muslim world view themselves, and are viewed by others, as idols.

[9] The doctrine of “*al wala wal bar’a*” (i.e. love/devotion/loyalty to Allah and Allah’s demands, and hatred/disavowal and disassociation from all that is alien to Allah) is a cardinal premise of variants of Salafi and Salafi-Jihadi Islam. For a recent comprehensive academic investigation, see: Mohamed Bin Ali, *The Roots of Religious Extremism: Understanding the Salafi Doctrine of Al-Wala’ wal Bara’*, London: Imperial College Press, 2016.

[10] Adnani here re-translates *Jabhat al-Nusrah* (‘The Support Front’) , Al-Qa’ida’s Syrian affiliate, as *Jabhat al-Ridda* (‘The Apostate Front’).

[11] This is a reference to Al-Qa’ida emir Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is often referred to by pro-al-Qa’ida elements as the ‘Wise Old Man’ of the Ummah.

[12] See: Paul Kamolnick. 2013. “Al Qaeda’s Shari’a Crisis: Sayyid Imam and the Jurisprudence of Lawful Military Jihad.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, May 2013, 36(5): 394-418. DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2013.

[13] Ten of Allah’s 99 divine names found in the Qur’an bear on forgiveness and Allah’s mercifulness as a deviation from strict justice (see, George Braswell, *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics, and Power*. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996, p. 46): Forgiving (*al-Tawwab*), Pardoner (*al-Afuw*), Compassionate (*al-Rauf*), Merciful (*Al-Rahman*), Clement (*Al-Rahim*) Forgiver (*al-Ghaffar*), Forbearing (*al-Halim*), Forgiving (*al-Ghafur*), Forgiver (*al-Ghafir*), Gracious (*al-Mannan*), and Generous One (*al-Karim*). One-hundred thirteen of the Qu’ran’s 114 chapters begins with the phrase, “In the name of Allah, most gracious (al-Rahman), most merciful (al-Rahim).” A selection of quranic verses (ayat) also indicates the sacred

provenance of forgiveness and mercy in Islam. For example: *Qur'an* 2:109: “Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after ye have believed. From selfish envy, after the Truth hath become manifest unto them: But forgive and overlook, till Allah accomplishes his purpose: for Allah hath power over all things.”; *Qur'an* 2:194: “There is the law of equality. If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him, but fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who restrain themselves.”; *Qur'an* 4:43: “For Allah doth blot out sins and forgive again and again”; *Qur'an* 4:48: Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom he pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed.”;

Qur'an 4:116: “Allah forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth whom he pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with Allah, hath strayed far, far away (from the right).”; *Qur'an* 4:110: “If anyone does evil or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seeks Allah’s forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most merciful.”; *Qur'an* 7:199: “Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant.”; *Qur'an* 39:53: “Say: ‘O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins for he is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’”; *Qur'an* 16:126-128: “And if ye do catch them out, catch them out no worse than they catch you out: but if ye show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient. And do thou be patient, for thy patience is from Allah; nor grieve over them: and distress not thyself because of their plots. For Allah is with those who restrain themselves, and those who do good.”; *Qur'an* 20:82: “But, without doubt, I am (also) He that forgives again and again, to those who repent, believe, and do right—who in fine, are ready to receive True guidance.”; *Qur'an* 35:45: If Allah were to punish men according to what they deserve, he would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature: but He gives respite for a stated term: when their term expires verily Allah has in His sight all His servants.”; *Qur'an* 42:5: “The heavens are almost rent asunder from above them (by His glory): and the angels celebrate the praises of their Lord, and pray for forgiveness for all beings on earth: behold! Verily Allah is He, the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”; *Qur'an* 42:37, 40: “Those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and when they are angry forgive. . . The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loveth not those who do wrong.”; *Qur'an* 45:14: Tell those who believe, to forgive those who do not look forward to the Days of Allah: It is for him to recompense (for good or ill) each people according to what they have earned.”; *Qur'an* 53:32: “Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults—verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness. . . ”; *Qur'an* 57:21: “Be ye foremost (in seeking) forgiveness from your Lord, and a Garden (of bliss), the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His messengers: That is the Grace of Allah, which he bestows on whom he pleases: and Allah is the Lord of Grace abounding.”; *Qur'an* 67:12-14: “As for those who fear their Lord unseen, for them is forgiveness and a great reward. And whether ye hide your word or publish it, He certainly has (full) knowledge, of the secrets of (all) hearts. Should He not know he that created? And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries (and) is well-acquainted (with them).”

[14] For scholarly accounts of the Kharijites, see: Jeffrey T. Kenney, *Muslim Rebels: Kharijites and the Politics of Extremism in Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; Patricia Crone, “Ninth-Century Anarchists,” *Past and Present*, No. 167, May 2000, pp. 3-28; “Kharidjites,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. 4 (eds. E. van Donzel, B. Lewis, C. Pellat, C. Bosworth), Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978, pp. 1074-77; Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis’ Path to Self-Destruction*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, esp. chapters 1-2.

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