My Beloved Brothers in God, This Is An Invitation: The Islamic State’s Dawa and Mosques Administration

AARON Y. ZELIN
The Author

Aaron Y. Zelin is the Richard Borow Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a Visiting Research Scholar in the Department of Politics at Brandeis University, and an Associate Fellow for the Global Network on Extremism and Technology. He is founder of the widely acclaimed website Jihadology.net and author of the new book Your Sons Are At Your Service: Tunisia’s Missionaries of Jihad (Columbia University Press, 2020).
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AARON Y. ZELIN

Program on Extremism
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Since the founding of the Islamic State (IS) and its predecessor groups in 1999, the use of *dawa* (call to Islam, invitation, outreach, proselytization) has only been a priority of the group’s repertoire of activities within the territory it has operated in beginning in 2013. In its early years when the group, then calling itself Jund al-Sham, was based in Afghanistan, much of its focus was on training camps. In its initial years in Iraq, the focus was terrorism and insurgency. And even when it claimed to be a state in October 2006, its two initial cabinets set up in April 2007 and September 2009 did not contain a ministry related to *dawa* activities specifically. This research will explore how this began to change for IS when it entered Syria in 2013 and how it then played out as it built itself toward the revival of its self-proclaimed Caliphate and what it meant in the context of a governance and state-building project.

To better understand this aspect of how IS has attempted to garner support and promote its interpretation of Islam, this paper will also explore important background on *dawa* itself, the jihadi movement and *dawa*, how IS began to implement its use of *dawa* prior to the Caliphate announcement, how this was then propagated by IS in its official media productions following the Caliphate announcement. The paper will conclude by exploring how this was administered on a daily basis on the ground, supported by internal IS administrative documents. This will not only provide a deeper understanding of IS and *dawa* but will also situate it more broadly in a historical perspective. This is in part because there have been very few standalone studies on the intersection between dawa and the jihadi movement. This study will hopefully add insight into a burgeoning research topic.

In addition to typical primary sources utilized to better unearth, examine, and explain this phenomenon, this paper also had access to the George Washington University’s Program on Extremism’s ‘ISIS Files’ Digital Repository. In particular, 19 internal administrative documents were examined from IS’s Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid (The Call and Mosques Administration), based in its Wilayat Ninawa and Wilayat al-Jazirah,
which spanned the time period of September 22, 2014 to August 28, 2016. Due to the paucity of files related to this Diwan in comparison with others analyzed as part of the broader ‘ISIS Files’ project, it would be imprudent to make large-scale, generalized conclusions from what was uncovered. That being said, between Aymenn al-Tamimi’s ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents’ and available IS propaganda, one insight is worth noting: at least for the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid, there is a synchronicity between what IS said it was doing with its online media releases and what it implemented on the ground locally. It is likely, however, that in other administrations of IS’s bureaucracy this was not the case.

**Background on Dawa**

To some, *dawa* today has taken on connotations similar to Christian missionary work via how Islamists—and more recently jihadis—conceive of it. Historically, the term had greater complexity to its meaning. *Dawa* can refer to a number of concepts, from an invitation, calling individuals to Islam, religious outreach to Muslims and non-Muslims, and proselytization. According to the Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, *dawa* is “the exhortation to heed the Qur’anic message. The Qur’an issues its basic invitation to all people: worship and serve the sovereign and unique God alone and practice true religion. Invitations come through messengers and prophets to their peoples.” Sohirin M. Solihin, a practitioner of *dawa* in the modern environment, further argues that humans then become the vicegerents of God in order to spread the message, which is based on the example of the Muslim Prophet Muhammad. However, the Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World notes that “in the Qur’an and the *sunna* [traditions and practices of Muhammad], *dawa* partly has a mundane meaning and refers to, for instance, the invitation to a wedding,” among other things.

Prior to the Western colonial footprint in the Arab and Muslim world in the 19th and early 20th century, much of the focus related to *dawa* was on “animat[ing] Islamic doctrine into an effective vocation, by interconnecting and urging humans to recognize the two core principles of the creed, as rendered in the *shahada* (Muslim testament of faith)....
dawa further means recognizing the sacredness of the *umma* (Muslim nation) and implementing *sharia* (Islamic law)... [and] dawa refers to the invitation of humankind to afterlife.”

In short, Jamal Malik explains that it was simply “propagation, or peaceful invitation to non-Muslims and Muslims alike to convert or to improve their Islamic behavior.”

Beginning in the 19th century as a response to Western colonialism as well as the rise of Christian missionary activities in the Arab and Muslim world, “dawa is increasingly associated with socially vital activities, such as edification, education, conversion, and charity.”

Furthermore, according to Thomas Pierret, “dawa was no longer defined as an individual effort but transformed into a collective and organised endeavour of social reconquest.” Likewise, “dawa increasingly became an endeavor to reform the individual, rather than the public, institutions of society.”

This led to the creation of different types of organizations that focused on *dawa* in the early 20th century, such as the South Asian Deobandi Tablighi Jama’at that encourages lapsed Muslims to return to the path of following Muhammad’s teachings. In the Arab context, the premiere example of this has been the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Though unlike the apolitical Tablighi Jama’at, the MB has always maintained political aspirations and at various points in its history has swung between a gradualist and revolutionary approach. To implement the MB’s program, “preaching, social activities, and education are the prime vehicles in this venture.” It is only in the post-colonial era that states such as Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as international Islamic NGOs began to set up their own *dawa* programs to propagate their interpretations of Islam and garner support domestically or worldwide. In addition to the methodologies articulated above, increasingly, “charity directed primarily to Muslims has become an integral part of much *dawa* work.” In other words, charity rendered through *dawa* is in the service of spreading state and non-state actors’ preferred ideology.
The Jihadi Movement and Dawa

For many years, the groups within the jihadi movement did not take *dawa* as a method of spreading its message seriously. Part of this could be due to the fact that it is not one of the movement’s core doctrines, as articulated by Shiraz Maher: *jihad* (armed struggle in the context of jihadiis), *takfir* (excommunication from the Muslim nation and generally declaring someone to be a disbeliever), *al-wala’ wa-l-barā’* (loyalty to the believers and disavowal of the disbelievers), *tawhid* (the oneness of God), and *hakimiyya* (God’s sovereignty).15

Of course, there were exceptions like al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah (JI) in Egypt in the 1970s, which began as a movement on the university campus and focused on *dawa* to garner more support as well as *hisba* (moral policing) actions.16 JI would however, in 1980, merge with Tanzim al-Jihad, led by Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Faraj, to assassinate Egypt’s president Anwar al-Sadat in 1981.17 Faraj in many ways is likely the reason why many jihadi organizations rebuffed the use of *dawa* as part of their repertoire, even though Faraj was not against it full stop.

In the late 1970s, Faraj wrote Tanzim al-Jihad’s main source of ideological inspiration, *al-Jihad al-Farida al-Gha’iba* (Jihad: The Neglected Duty). Fawaz Gerges notes that this work was the operational manual for Egyptian jihadiis in the 1980s and the 1990s.18 In it, Faraj promotes the efficacy of *jihad* in Islam and its prime role in Egyptian society at the time. As he saw it, *jihad* was a “neglected duty,” so it was necessary to rebel against the Egyptian regime of President al-Sadat. Once this was accomplished, it was one’s obligation to create an Islamic state.

Beyond the call to violence, the treatise was also a critique of past efforts by Islamists and jihadiis alike to overthrow the Egyptian regime. Faraj identified five insufficient trends at the time: 1. those that follow “obedience, education and intensive worship” [the Muslim Brotherhood]; 2. those who were “chasing good professions” [JI before their merger]; 3. those “giving dawa alone” [Shaykh ‘Abd al-Hamid Kishk]; 4. those who are “busy seeking knowledge” [al-Azhar University]; and 5. those who prefer “migration” (Shukri Mustafa’s group Jama’at al-Muslimin, better known as Takfir wa-l-Hijrah).19 Regarding the third one, Faraj states:
Some of them [Shaykh Abd al-Hamid Kishk] say that the way to establish the [Islamic] state is by *dawa* alone, and forming a wide base (i.e. a large number of practicing Muslims), but this will not do...

If a person concludes that what I have said means keeping from *dawa*, his understanding is wrong, because the basis is to take Islam as a complete religion. This is rather a reply to the one who has taken it as his duty to create a large base, which is the reason behind his diversion from *jihad*, and which has lead him to stop and delay it.20

In other words, Faraj is not necessarily against pursuing *dawa* in and of itself, but is against those who justify not fighting *jihad* by only performing *dawa* and shirking from their responsibility to engage in *jihad*. Even so, because of Faraj’s forcefulness in focusing on the singularity of *jihad* as a method of bringing about an Islamic state, it likely deterred subsequent jihadis from participating in *dawa* on a broader scale due to the negative connotations with other Islamist movements.21 There is also the fact that most jihadi groups that were operating at the time were living under authoritarian conditions in their home countries and were therefore highly constrained.

It is also plausible that in the instances of jihadi foreign fighter mobilizations in the 1980s and early 1990s, much of the *dawa* work on behalf of the jihadi movement was being propagated by Islamic NGOs. It is important to remember that prior to 9/11 and the securitization of the charity sector, there was overlap between fighting and mainstream Islamic relief efforts during foreign fighting endeavors.22 For instance, in Bosnia, the Kuwaiti charity Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) was doing *dawa* that promoted the *jihad* for the foreign fighter outfit Katibat al-Mujahidin.23 RIHS even published a screed by Imad al-Masri (a jihadi fighter in Katibat al-Mujahidin) against local Bosnians’ alleged un-Islamic practices titled *Notions That Must Be Corrected*.24 In the aftermath of 9/11 and a changed security architecture globally, RIHS would be designated by the U.S. Treasury Department and the United Nations for providing financial and material support to al-Qaeda and other jihadi groups.25
This bifurcation of roles between organizations and charities would recede with jihadism in the West. In some ways, it makes sense that the jihadi group that began to use *dawa* as a key method in spreading jihadi ideology took shape in the United Kingdom in 1996, due to the democratic freedoms allowed within a Western context. The group was called al-Muhajirun (the emigrants) and was founded by the Syrian émigré ‘Umar Bakri Fustuk, better known as ‘Umar Bakri Muhammad. In addition to protests conducted against UK foreign policy and liberal morals, al-Muhajirun set up ‘*dawa* stalls’ to spread its message to passersby on the street whether to convert non-Muslims to Islam or to convince other Muslims of their particular radical interpretations. Part of the rationale for doing *dawa* and not *jihad* in the UK was due to the open conditions and speech rights given to those living in the country compared to the restrictive nature of mobilization in authoritarian Arab states. Moreover, Bakri claimed that he had a ‘covenant of security,’ whereby UK security would let him organize so long as he did not call for terrorist attacks in the country.

Over time, al-Muhajirun would garner more support in the UK. It was then able to parlay its organization and messaging online due to the growth in commercialized Internet technologies and social media. This led al-Muhajirun, when it was later headed by Anjem Choudary, to export the group’s model and *dawa* methodologies to a number of Western countries beginning around 2010. Some of the branches included Revolution Muslim in the United States, Sharia4Belgium, Sharia4Holland, Forsane Alizza in France, Millatu Ibrahim in Germany, Kaldet til Islam in Denmark, and Profetens Ummah in Norway, among others. This is relevant to the later discussion on the Islamic State and its use of *dawa* because many of these organizations were key feeders for the later foreign fighter mobilization that brought thousands of Europeans to fight with IS in Iraq and Syria. Some members of these organizations went on to become foreign fighters themselves, bringing with them organizational and planning skills that would be useful to IS when it was attempting to implement similar measures.
al-Qaeda and Dawah

Similarly, following the Arab uprisings in 2011, a number of new jihadi groups that were fronts for al-Qaeda (AQ) began to develop dawah programs, either as their initial objective or as one tool in a broader repertoire of actions that included violence. In particular, there was a series of Ansar al-Sharia groups in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen, as well as Jabhat al-Nusrah (JN) in Syria. This was due to two factors: First, lessons learned by al-Qaeda from the prior decade, especially the Iraq jihad and second, the new opportunities wrought either by the opening up of public squares and/or the development of safe havens.

Regarding the former, in response to the increasingly draconian rule over Sunni territory in western Iraq and extreme attacks on civilians of all backgrounds, beginning in 2005, AQ felt the need to rein in the ideas of Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi. As a result, in the years preceding the Arab uprisings and then subsequently afterwards, AQ began to build an intellectual program that would be a deterrent and corrective against what it viewed as deviant interpretations of jihadi ideology and methodology. For instance, AQ ideologue ‘Atiyat Allah ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Libi began to more forcefully write about the dangers of the excessive use of takfir that leads to unnecessary shedding of Muslim blood.

AQ and its branches expanded beyond their traditional geopolitical messages and began to pursue a concerted digital outreach strategy by releasing religious lectures online since they did not control territory and therefore were not necessarily close to local populations for personal recruitment. It became AQ’s approved way of educating its branches, supporters, and recruits in its understanding of Islam, which anyone from anywhere could download. Therefore, this was essential for AQ in also overcoming command and control issues.

For example, in 2010, AQ ideologue Khalid bin ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Husayn (Abu Zayd al-Kuwayti), who was killed in a drone strike in December 2012, began releasing a lecture series during Ramadan that discussed basic religious duties and obligations. He would later release a regular dawah video series from 2011 to 2013. Similarly, Al-Qaeda in the
Arabian Peninsula’s ideologue Harith bin Ghazi al-Nazari (Muhammad al-Mirshadi), who was killed in a January 2015 drone strike, had a number of dawa video series from 2010 until his death: “With the Qur’an,” “Thoughts in Testimonial and Behavior,” “The Good Reminders,” and “The Free Advices,” among others. Likewise, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb’s Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Rashid al-Bulaydi had a dawa series titled “Sit Down with Us and Have Faith for an Hour,” and Dr. Sami al-Uraydi, the senior sharia official of Jabhat al-Nusra, hosted a lecture series called “Milestones in the Methodology of the Pious Predecessors.” These various dawa series by AQ’s stable of ideologues illustrates its establishment of what is described in my book, Your Sons Are at Your Service: Tunisia’s Missionaries of Jihad, as “jihadi operational art” for outreach, education, and, most importantly, public support. This outreach differed from traditional jihadi media work, which was more geopolitically focused or inciting watchers to partake in a specific action either at home or abroad.

With this mechanism in place right before and as the Arab uprisings were developing, after promoting and discussing dawa activities on a more theoretical and information-operational level, AQ’s branches and front groups were able to put this into practice on the ground due to the changed environments in many Arab states. Doing dawa was also a key part of AQ and associated ideologues’ approach for how to respond to the new situation, which would be in concert with or precede turning to jihad depending on a particular country's conditions. Therefore, instead of this dawa being conducted through a computer screen, it would move to face-to-face outreach, which provides a more intimate setting to spread a group’s ideas. Furthermore, as noted earlier about the growing symbiosis between dawa and charity, many AQ-aligned groups after 2011 combined their dawa efforts with relief and charity campaigns. This provided another platform for spreading the groups’ beliefs through service provision. As the Ansar al-Sharia groups and JN implemented dawa in their broader organizational structure and their dawa efforts worked in expanding the scope of the groups’ recruitment and likeability, this modus operandi validated AQ’s correctives in many ways.
One of the more broad sweeping groups in their development of *dawa* programs was Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST), in part because it was operating as a social movement and not as an insurgency. For 2.5 years, it was able to openly operate and bring people into its fold based on the opening of Tunisia after its revolution while the Islamist Ennahda-led government at the time was employing a light touch policy when dealing with jihadism.\(^42\) AST primarily conducted public outreach on streets, at markets, and in schools by providing individuals their *dawa* literature as well as religious lectures at mosques or in outdoor forums. But AST also did a number of charitable and relief activities that they were able to parlay into spreading the group’s ideology by sharing its *dawa* literature and impromptu speeches when carrying out the following campaigns:

Helping refugees from Libya, organizing convoys (food, medical, religious), selling produce at wholesale price, repairing roads, providing food for the needy during Ramadan, providing sacrificial animal meat during Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, providing Iftar meals to people in the street and walking by, collecting aid/money for Gaza, collecting donations for the needy/poor, cleaning the streets, landscaping and planting trees, cleaning the weekly market, maintaining buildings, painting walls, visiting hospitals (providing presents and food), fixing homes, organizing blood donations, cleaning cemeteries, providing acupuncture, performing exorcisms, fixing roofs, and visiting the elderly.\(^43\)

Beyond appealing to the broader adult public, AST also focused on outreach to children and teenagers. The group understood that the future lay with them, especially given that much of the Tunisian population is under the age of twenty-five. If AST could mold these young minds, the jihadi-salafi project would be the way of the future.

These developments continue to this day amongst those within AQ’s network that are in control of territory or are in safe havens. For example, during Ramadan 2020, AQ’s official branch in Syria, Huras al-Din, promoted a *dawa* campaign titled ‘Oh Our People, Respond To The Messenger of God’.\(^44\) There were five key components of this campaign to spread the group’s interpretations of Islam: Friday sermons, *dawa* lessons and forums, passing out *dawa* literature to people on the streets,
Qur’anic memorization competitions and prizes for those that do best, and popular *dawa* interviews.\(^45\)

**The Islamic State and Dawa Prior to the Caliphate**

We saw a similar methodology with the Islamic State as it was building itself up in Syria in 2013. It should not come as a surprise that alumni or defectors from the Ansar al-Sharia groups and JN based on their experiences in *dawa* programming would help IS with these developments. For example, Abu Waqas al-Tunisi became one of the faces of IS’s *dawa* program, appearing in six of its videos on the topic by the end of 2013.\(^46\) These activities — which included giving lectures, distributing gifts to children, and reciting the Qur’an in competitions, among other things — allowed IS to ingratiate itself with locals and dispel negative views many had of the group as a result of its conduct during the Iraq *jihad* (even though it would eventually revert to such practices, especially after January 2014 when the Syrian rebel opposition and JN turned against it.)

Part of this also relates to the fact that IS, when it first entered Syria, did not have a monopoly on territorial control and therefore had to pretend that it was going to work with others, as Aymenn al-Tamimi explains: “central to the first stages of an ISIS presence in a given area was the establishment of a da’wah office, which would not only function as a means of social outreach and recruitment of members of the local population, but also as a front for gathering intelligence on ISIS rivals in the local area, plainly with the intention of undermining and destroying them.”\(^47\)

In the aftermath of IS’s predecessor group declaring that it was the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in October 2006, there was intense criticism of the organization and its legitimacy to do so, especially since it did not really control much territory. In response, it released a treatise titled “Informing the People About the Birth of The Islamic State,” which attempted to clarify and justify why it did it based on religious and historical grounds. In it, the author Shaykh ‘Uthman ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, outlines the state’s responsibilities for areas it controls:
prosecuting criminals and sinners, implementation of the *hudud* (fixed punishments in the Qur’an and Hadith), mediating and resolving conflicts, providing security, distributing food and relief, and selling oil and gas. Nothing related to *dawa* though. Similarly, as alluded to at the beginning of this paper, the two initial cabinets of the ISI set up in April 2007 and September 2009 did not contain a ministry related to *dawa* activities specifically.

An interest in *dawa* began to take on more importance only mere months after the second cabinet was formed. Similar to al-Qaeda, the Islamic State did in fact also internalize lessons from the group’s own actions that led to the tribal *sahwa* (awakening) movement against it in Iraq. However, according to IS’s own internal write-up in December 2009/January 2010 called the ‘Fallujah Memorandum’, it did not take any blame for itself. And unlike al-Qaeda, which began to curtail excessive violence and focus on regaining the trust of local populations, IS concluded that their experiences are “why the mujahidin no longer abide by the preferences of the people, but rather abide by their objective to satisfy God’s will.” However, at the end of the ‘Fallujah Memorandum’, it did note that the, “[Ministry of Legal Committees] should also set plans and goals for *dawa* to spread the salafi *manhaj* (methodology). Mawardi said, ‘A state can be established by the strength and power of resources such as money or by the power of religion; the latter is more stable.’” Those last two quotes might appear contradictory, but it makes sense from IS’s perspective. Unlike AQ, which sees its relationship with the local population through the lens of reciprocity, even if AQ has the ultimate administrative authority when it is in charge of a particular area, IS is fully totalitarian. IS sees the local population as *ri’aya* (subjects) and that “[mistakes occur when] the mujahidin were worrying about the will and happiness of the people rather than the will and pleasure of God.” That being said, to implement the will of God, IS’s subjects must heed its interpretations of Islam and therefore *dawa* is necessary so the populace knows and understands it. But taking part in *dawa* for IS is not in relation to building political legitimacy as AQ-related groups see it, because IS’s self-declared Caliphate, from its perspective, is ordained by God.
At the same time, when IS entered Syria originally, it did so via JN since it was aware of its past reputation. As Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi stated when he officially announced the group’s presence in Syria in April 2013, “we didn’t declare that [JN was sent into Syria by the US] for security reasons for the people to see the reality of *al-dawlah* (the state) away from the distortion, forgery, and fabrication of the media and time has come to declare before the people of al-Sham and the whole world that Jabhat al-Nusra is only an extension of the Islamic State.”

Thus highlighting that although they might not claim legitimacy or sovereignty from the people, the leaders of the group were perceptively self-aware of how the group was viewed.

Similarly, while IS continues to view the local population as *ri’aya*, by 2013, when it officially entered Syria, it did in fact admit that it made mistakes in the past, illustrating tactical flexibility when it saw an opportunity. After all, it is a political organization run by humans, even if IS wants to portray itself above politics and worldly affairs. Therefore, in late July 2013, the group’s spokesperson Shaykh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami attempted to recast the group’s past stumbles in a sympathetic light: “As for our mistakes, we do not deny them. Rather, we will continue to make mistakes as long as we are humans. God forbid that we commit mistakes deliberately. Anyone who seeks leaders and *mujahidin* who work without mistakes will never find them. And those who work will make mistakes, while those that sit back and watch won’t make mistakes...So how could they blame and criticize us for something that humans are compelled to do, and that they have been born with?”

**Components of Dawwa**

Due to the confusion over Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s April 2013 announcement and JN’s leader Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani rebuffing it as well as many foreign fighters picking IS over JN in the ensuing war of words, it took some time for IS to begin to manifest itself publicly as an independent entity in Syria. But once it did, it was organized and busy. Beginning in late May of 2013, IS sought to cultivate a base of support in Aleppo and al-Raqqah governorates, and to a lesser extent in Damascus and Deir al-Zour governorates.
There are a number of critical features of IS’s dawa campaign. In particular, it established permanent and/or roving *nuqtat i’alamiyah* (media points - see pictures 1&2) in various locations that distributed IS’s media content that was originally released online; passed out its own custom *dawa* literature,\(^60\) which was produced by its al-Himmah Media Office as well as provincial-level statements; erecting billboards throughout cities and villages; and conducting *dawa* forums, among other things.

*Pictures 1&2. IS’s Media Point in Wilayat Ninawa\(^61\)*

All of these activities are aimed at calling people to IS’s message and interpretation of Islam. It also sought to educate individuals to return to the “true” Islam, which they either have abandoned or have a mistaken understanding of (from IS’s perspective). At the time, IS’s first move was to often set up billboards around town that emphasized the importance of *jihad*, *sharia*, women’s purity, and other pietistic themes.\(^62\) One of the more interesting billboards (see picture 3) is a series of emphatic statements about the alleged realities on the ground in the Caliphate: “Here is the Abode of Islam. Here is the Land of the Caliphate. Here [the ideas of] *al-wala’ wa-l-barā’* (loyalty to the Muslims and disavowal to the unbelievers) [stand]. Here is the market of *jihad*. Here are the winds of paradise. Here is the glory. Here is the dignity.”\(^63\) All of these messages reinforce the ideas IS hoped to ingrain within society and for it to become second nature.
To further buttress this, IS organized *dawa* forums in neighborhood squares. In Aleppo, al-Bab, al-Dana, Jarabulus, Azaz, and other cities, IS speakers frequently exhorted people on the virtues of *jihad* and fighting the Assad regime, sometimes balancing the speeches with fun, fair-like activities such as tug-of-war competitions. In addition, the group interacted with children in order to curry favor. Many of these forums have targeted this particular age group because IS understands that they are the basis of the future, similar to AST. At one forum, local boys chanted *anashid* (religiouly sanctioned a capella). Children were also invited to participate in pie-and cantaloupe-eating contests and a Qur’anic recitation competition. In al-Tabqah, IS members even gave presents to children during Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan. And many of the group’s videos featured kids talking about the ills of the *nusayri* (a derogatory term for Alawite) regime and the valor of *mujahidin*. In short, IS realized that winning the long war requires gaining the trust and support of children.

The *dawa* forums were also potent tools for promotion, as the pseudonymous Mahmoud explained: “I sat in the sermon when one of...
[IS’s] shaykhs came to my village in Idlib. He blamed this war on the 
kafrs [sic], accusing Alawites and the West. But his speech was eloquent 
and powerful. When he came back the following week, a bigger crowd had 
come to the mosque, and by the next week, he had won followers.”65 This 
illustrates how IS was able to ingratiate itself with the local population at 
the time.

As for its dawa literature, in Halab province, IS distributed a number of 
pamphlets to residents as well as taping them to walls of shops and the 
outside of mosques. The titles of this literature include “Loyalty to Islam 
and Not to the Nation (al-watan)”, “Remembrance for the End of the 
Daytime”, “The Islamic Gold Dinar or the American Paper Dollar?”, “The 
Pinnacle of Islam”, “Important Questions on Doctrine (‘aqidah)”, “Why 
Prayer in the Mosque?”, and “The Two Bases Upon Jihad.”66 This was all 
distributed by the aforementioned al-Himmah, which Jacob Olidort 
describes as IS ‘guidance literature,’ “which includes pamphlets aimed at 
lay Muslims on topics related to Islamic ritual practice, ethics, or 
contemporary issues” as well as “a series of pamphlets for fighters, longer 
manuals on religious guidance and political governance, and editions of 
medieval texts.”67

Within the ‘ISIS Files,’ one of them from the January/February 2016 
timeframe was an al-Himmah Media reproduction of Muhammad Ibn 
‘Abd al-Wahab’s The Six Fundamental Principles in pamphlet form (see 
picture 4).68 According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahab, “these principles are 
amongst the most important affairs of the religion and which every 
Muslim is required to know, by necessity.” IS would later publish it online 
in late March 2016 as a compendium alongside two other Ibn ‘Abd al-
Wahhab works: The Three Fundamental Principles and The Four 
Foundations.69 It also illustrates the intersection in some respects at least 
with regard to dawa between what IS was propagating on the ground and 
online. Highlighting that in some cases there really is utility in taking IS 
media content at face value.

That said, after IS did announce its Caliphate, the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-
Masajid,70 which this paper will explore in greater detail below, also 
printed its own propaganda pamphlets, including one that appeared in
the ‘ISIS Files’ from Tal Afar, about 45 miles west of Mosul, about doing jihad and not getting paid for it in money, but receiving other spiritual rewards (see picture 5). Similarly, the Diwan also shared, only locally, a publication called *Akhbar al-Khilafah* (News of the Caliphate), which included a series of biographical releases on IS members and martyrs called *qisah mujahid* (a holy struggler’s story), among other things.
Through these and other types of soft-power outreach, IS was attempting to lay the groundwork for a future Islamic state by gradually socializing Syrians to the concept. One of IS’s media outlets called al-‘Itisam set up stalls to distribute DVDs of the videos it posted online.75 Dovetailing with these efforts is IS’s provision of printed literature and SIM cards (memory chips for mobile phones) to its frontline fighters. IS also threw public video viewing parties for people to watch its official online releases, highlighting that while there is due focus on the spread of its materials online, much less attention has gone to what this meant for the local populations under its control.76 This in many ways illustrated how IS was interweaving its real world and online spheres once it began to feel comfortable in Syria. From its onset in Syria until the June 2014 Caliphate declaration, IS promoted 18 videos related to da’wa in its official online communications.77 Showing the interactivity between conducting events in the real world, showing it off to a global audience, and then repackaging it to the local populations in the areas it was controlling, even if those locals may not have participated directly in the original event or were from a different city or village.
In a number of IS-held locales in Syria, a *dawa* truck drove around broadcasting information about the group’s belief system. Moreover, IS began to establish a number of religious schools for children, including ones for girls where they could memorize the Qur’an and receive certificates if successful, while also holding “fun days” for kids replete with ice cream and inflatable slides. For their older counterparts, IS established training sessions for new imams and preachers. Schedules for prayers and Qur’anic lessons were also posted at mosques.

All of these activities were in the service of preparing the ground for IS’s eventual Caliphate announcement. IS was not subtle about it since it was one of the themes in their local messaging and sermons during their *dawa* forums prior to late June 2014. The above program showcases the precursor to the more formalized Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid that IS established and formalized after its Caliphate announcement. It also illustrates the implementation of elements from the ‘Fallujah Memorandum’. Moreover, these early efforts in Syria were duplicated when IS was building the group’s capacities in Libya prior to it becoming an official *wilayah* (province) of IS. Therefore, once IS announced its self-declared Caliphate, this process became systematized and was also exported to its external provinces. For example, when IS established itself in Sirte, Libya (as a part of its Wilayat al-Tarabulus), IS began testing potential imams and preachers with a qualifying exam, illustrating how it was beginning to establish religious structures under its guidelines through the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid.

**Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid (The Call and Mosques Administration)**

According to IS, the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid was created because “when the Caliphate was established, it became obligatory for the soldiers of *tawhid* (unicity of God) to bring back the prestige and true role of mosques in this ummah: education and raising awareness among Muslims.”

So what is the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid and what are its actual functions? In July 2016, the Islamic State released a video explaining its...
governmental bureaucracy. According to it, Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid is one of fourteen administrations of IS’s bureaucracy, whereby these administrations claim to “assume the maintenance of public interests” and “protect the people’s religion and security.” It is difficult to know whether IS ordered these administrations in a particular manner when explaining their writs, but considering the importance of implementing sharia within its discourse and the fact that Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid is the third one featured after Diwan al-Qada’ wal-Madhalim (Judgement and Grievances) and Diwan al-Hisba (Moral Policing), it appears this Diwan is one of the core administrations and holds significance. The video explains that its main function is concerned with the “call of God” and implementing it, preparing and appointing Imams and preachers, holding preparatory seminars and sharia courses, and building (see picture 6) and preparing mosques.

As a way of comparison with how IS implemented these matters outside of its core territories in Iraq and Syria, during the anti-IS campaign in Libya, Katibat 9/19 al-Shahid Nabil recovered an IS Markaz (Center) al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid document that described its responsibilities: 1. Establishing daily lessons in the mosques; 2. Establishing compulsory
sessions for the people of the Abu Hadi area [which is just south of Sirte];
3. Tracking the imams and preachers; and 4. Writing daily reports.\textsuperscript{87} This
in many ways shows the consistency of IS as it implemented its
governance model across various locales and highlights a particular
methodology irrespective of if it is in its core or external provinces.

An IS administrative report from its Maktab al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid in the
Ramadi Belt Sector dated May-June 2015 and retrieved by Aymenn al-
Tamimi provides insights into how the administration was set up locally
and what its officials in that administration’s duties were in carrying out
the strategic directives of the administration mentioned above.\textsuperscript{88}
Accordingly, it had an office amir, deputy amir, administrative official,
mosques official, assistant mosques official, \textit{dawa} official, assistant \textit{dawa}
official, and media official. This confirms in many ways what we already
know about IS, in that it is a highly bureaucratic entity. The report also
shows coordination between this local version of this office and the
‘security brothers’ and ‘Islamic police’ when planning \textit{dawa} for those on
\textit{ribat} (the front lines).\textsuperscript{89} As the report notes, the office amir helped set up
a program for those on \textit{ribat}, which included small books such as
\textit{Ta’allamu Amr Dinikum} (Learn the Matters of Your Religion), \textit{Akhl\textit{a}q al-
Mujahid} (Manners of the Holy Struggler), \textit{Ijabat al-Su’al ‘an ‘Ahkam al-
Ghalul} (Responding to the Question about the Rulings of Stealing From
the Spoils of War), and \textit{Mukhtasir fi Fiqh al-Jihad} (Summary of the
Jurisprudence of Jihad).\textsuperscript{90} These books would then be printed by the
media official and then shared and distributed to those going on \textit{ribat} by
both the administrative and \textit{dawa} official.

The report also provides insights into how IS might translate its activity
on the ground and then later use it for its online propaganda. One of the
directives for that month in the report by the office amir was “to remove
what remains of the practices of innovation in the mosques.”\textsuperscript{91} The report
then notes that the mosques official “removed innovations from the
following mosques: al-Shuhada’, al-Tawhid, al-Husayn, al-Hasan al-Basri,
and al-Salihin.”\textsuperscript{92} Finally, later in the report it says that the media official
took pictures of the changes that occurred at the al-Hasan al-Basri
Mosque.\textsuperscript{93} This was done possibly to confirm that it happened to the
media officials’ superiors, but more likely since the individual was a
media official, for use in propaganda that IS would later post online to show it was not only “talking the talk,” but also “walking the walk” in terms of putting its beliefs into action. This report also could highlight that although IS allegedly made changes at a number of mosques, the media official only took photos at one in particular illustrating that even though IS had such a large online media apparatus not everything it did was necessarily documented for the broader global audience.

Apropos of the ‘ISIS Files,’ which derive mainly from the Wilayat Ninawa region, IS actually released a propaganda video from said province on its Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid there, providing some other details on what it was doing as part of its work. According to the video, this administration was “removing or altering the names of some of the mosques that are not sharia-compliant to ones that are... They are changing the name to names of the sahaba (companions of Muhammad) and Muslim ulama (religious scholars).” Furthermore, IS explains that this administration “is protecting the mosques from Sufis, careless religious references [see pictures 7&8], or those loyal to tawaghit (tyrants). And in cooperation with [Diwan] al-Hisba, all the temples of al-kufr (infidelity) were destroyed.”

This final point is noteworthy in terms of understanding cooperation across the different administrations. For example, in one of the ‘ISIS Files,’ for a sermon to be delivered and dated September 20, 2015, at the end of the document it also included an advertisement to be read to the congregation about the Diwan al-Hisba accepting new applicants to work
for them. This shows some of the more mundane aspects of IS’s administration, but also that similar to services or sermons one might go to at any religious service, IS also has an announcements section at the end of their prayers for the day or week. In terms of other forms of cooperation between those two administrations, IS propaganda in Wilayat Ninawa shows individuals arrested by the Diwan al-Hisba would be placed in sharia courses run by the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid. This piece of propaganda is confirmed by an IS administrative document found in Aymenn al-Tamimi’s ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents’ that shows Diwan al-Hisba referring individuals to a Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid sharia course, potentially as part of a reeducation program.

Similarly, at the end of a sermon on September 29, 2014, that was on the topic of ‘Virtues of Jihad,’ the ‘ISIS Files’ show that the individual doing the sermon was to “Note to all Imams and Preachers: As the Diwan al-Zakat wa-l-Sadaqat [Almsgiving and Charities Administration] has been established, you have to forbid beggars from soliciting at the doors of the mosques.” This showcases how new policies by IS are announced and then implemented at the local level.

Returning to the aforementioned Wilayat Ninawa video, a segment of it highlights a Friday sermon at a mosque in Mosul whereby the preacher says, “du’a (the call) against the oppressors is wala’ (loyalty) and bara’ (disavowal). One of the ulama says, ‘a person’s faith is not complete by believing in God and leaving shirk (polytheism), it is complete by fighting mushrikin (polytheists) and telling them that publicly’.” This is relevant to this study since one of the sermons that shows up in the ‘ISIS Files’ is on the concept of al-wala’ wa-l-bar’a (loyalty [to the Muslims] and disavowal [to the unbelievers]) at a sermon in Mosul on August 28, 2016. This concept is followed by salafis, which signifies loving and hating for the sake of God. Again underscoring at least in relation to dawa and ideology, there is not any daylight between what is being publicized online and what is being preached locally.
Sermons

While 13 of the 19 ‘ISIS Files’ are copies of sermons given at mosques in the Wilayat Ninawa and Wilayat al-Jazirah region of IS’s self-declared Caliphate, one in particular is worth highlighting since it is a good example of how IS introduced dawa to locals.\(^{104}\) This sermon was on inviting people to the ways of Islam and following God’s edicts, and it took place in the Rashidiyah neighborhood of Mosul on an unknown date.\(^{105}\)

The sermon provides a series of du’at (invitations) to those listening to the speech, which the individual that would have performed the sermon summed it up by saying “in short, it is an invitation to know God, a knowledge that makes you fear Him and love Him.” It concludes by telling its audience in relation to understanding the truth of this world through kitab Allah (the book of God; the Qur’an): “my brother, come with me for a tour. I hope the impatient won’t see it as too long, and the busy won’t see it too distracting. Let us roam around the universe, with its heavens, its earth, and its living things, confident and mindful.”\(^{106}\) This showcases that in private, IS is not always brutish. It also provides greater depth in understanding why one might become interested in joining IS or not viewing them as bad as someone from the outside might construe. Of course, there are myriad of instances in IS propaganda that they themselves show off their own sadistic and ghoulish machinations, but for someone locally that might have hardship in life or some form of grievance, this could provide the opening whereby that individual then seeks redemption through religion, which IS is harnessing for its broader societal project.

If this approach worked for IS and someone then wanted to join the group as a member, the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid took bayat (oaths of allegiance) from individuals to then leader of IS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The individual would then be referred to specialized sharia and training courses coordinated by Lajnat al-Wafidayn (Arrival Committee).\(^{107}\) The Diwan would then throw a reception for said individual(s) as shown in an internal document from IS’s Wilayat Dijlah.\(^{108}\) Showing that there are various levels of indoctrination for people that lived within IS’s territory.
**Seminaries and Competitions**

In addition to the ideas IS is putting forward in its sermons, another area that is relevant to the operation of the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid was to hold preparatory seminars and *sharia* courses (see picture 9 for an example of what it might look like). Two of the ‘ISIS Files’ provide differing levels of detail on this. One file at the end of another sermon advertised that registration for Manhaj al-Nabawiyah (Prophetic Methodology) Center for the Memorization of the Noble Qur’an and Teaching of Sharia Sciences, which is located next to al-Arqam Mosque in al-Muthanna neighborhood of Mosul, would run between September 1-7, 2015.\(^{109}\) Another document from Aymenn al-Tamimi’s ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents’ helps further elucidate conditions IS placed on individuals to join a Qur’anic memorization session around the same time in mid-August 2015 in Manbij, Syria: 1. Purity in intention to God Almighty 2. Able to read and write 3. Good manners and restraint 4. Commitment to memorizing and not wasting time. It goes on to then incentivize those joining by noting “those who excel will be honoured at the end of the session.”\(^{110}\)

Like any school, IS would provide grades at the end of the school year, which one of the ‘ISIS Files’ from al-Ba’aj, about 20 miles southwest of Sinjar, showed. It was a template for how students would be graded at the Institute of Memorization of the Noble Qur’an for the Islamic hijri year of 1436-1437 (end of October 2014-mid-October 2015). It showed the dates students were tested for particular *surat* (chapters) and *ayat* (verses) of the Qur’an and what grade they garnered and any notes the teacher might have about how a student did with the particular *surah* or *ayah*.\(^{111}\)
This would then be further gamified as a way to get individuals more involved and serious about studying and memorizing the Qur’an through competitions. For example, in September 2014 in Wilayat al-Raqqa, IS announced a Qur’anic memorization competition for individuals between the ages of 18-40 with two levels of memorization competency (level one: memorization of 5 *ajza’* (parts) [of the Qur’an] with correct rules of recitation and memorization and level two: memorization of 3 *ajza’* (parts) [of the Qur’an] with correct rules of recitation and memorization). Again, there are ways to encourage participation since IS notes at the bottom of the call for the competition that “monetary and real prizes will be distributed according to the levels, with precious prizes for those who excel.” This again reinforces the fact in a similar fashion to the sermon described above that IS was involved in positive inducements for its activities and that not all of it was purely fear-based.

**Training**

In addition to Qur’anic memorization courses and competitions, the Islamic State also trained Imams and preachers through specific centers. The ‘ISIS Files’ features the announcement for the opening of the third study course for the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Center For Training of Imams.
and Preachers in the Sahl Sector, which is north and east of Mosul, beginning December 19, 2015. This course lasted six months and covered a variety of sharia sciences (aqidah [creed], fiqh [jurisprudence], recitation techniques, hadith [oral reports of the words, actions, and the silent approval of Muhammad] terminology, grammar, and oratory. There is also evidence to suggest from another internal IS document that individuals were able to receive their lessons from a media point in town (or on Facebook), highlighting how IS was able to have dual uses for its media points operation. On the more mundane side of things, but relevant insofar as highlighting IS’s adherence to their salafi strictures is that those that were to attend the course must follow ‘visible guidance’ in terms of keeping a long beard and wearing a thawb above the ankles in line with the hadith tradition. There was also a proficiency exam conducted prior to admitting individuals to this program, suggesting a necessary certain level of knowledge needed just to attend. Therefore, it is also plausible there is likely an exit exam at the end of the course since in another administrative document IS gives away certificates if one passes a course.

Another administrative document from IS’s Wilayat Barqah in Harawa, Libya provides insights into what one such exam might look like since it is the exam for the end of that particular shari’i session, which focuses on aqidah and fiqh (all of the questions that were asked within this exam can be found as item 1 in the appendix). It is unsurprising that questions related to concepts such taghut, tawhid, legitimacy of prostrating at tombs, rulings on individuals that joined into Khalifah Haftar’s army or Libya Dawn, and defining what defensive jihad is were all part of this examination since they are all core aspects of IS’s ideology. This reinforces again that, at least in the realm of IS’s Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid, there is a throughline between what IS says and what it implements in reality.

There was a small item in the ‘ISIS Files’ that gives us insights into how IS “prepares mosques” as it alludes to in its video on its administrative structure. It describes supplies needed at the Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir Mosque in the village of al-Qubah, 11 miles southwest of Tal Kayf, in Wilayat Ninawa on December 23, 2015. It notes that the “mosque’s needs
of furniture would be supplied exclusively from churches.” This would confirm reports from the ‘ISIS Files’ when cross-referencing with its Diwan al-Aqarat wa-l-Kharaj (Real Estate and Land Tax Department) operation, which Aymenn al-Tamimi analyzed and concluded that IS viewed Christian property “to be ‘IS real estate’.” This highlights how IS might have furnished other newly built mosques or Islamic-related institutions such as centers and/or schools.

There were also other examples of how supplies were allocated to mosques in Aymenn al-Tamimi’s ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents’. For instance, during Ramadan (June/July) 2015, Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid provided oil and gas supplies for the mosques’ generators in Wilayat Ninawa While mosques in Wilayat al-Fallujah also borrowed solar panels from the Diwan and then had to pledge to the administration that “in the event of its theft.. the mosque administration should cover” the costs of lost or damaged items at a rate of 2 million dinars for a 24 volt solar panel and 1 million dinars for a 12 volt solar panel. This is an interesting example of how IS may have extracted more money from entities within its own territory that would be unknowable without internal documentation.

Women and Dawa

Although it is alluded to in earlier parts of this paper, on how dawa and charity become intertwined in many respects, there were no examples of this in the ‘ISIS Files.’ Similarly, there was nothing related to women’s involvement in IS’s dawa apparatus. If there had been more than 19 files, cases of either would have likely shown up. That said, the Telegram channel al-Nadhir al-‘Uryan (The Bare Warner), which has criticized IS from the more extreme angle for supposedly having lost its way, has leaked internal IS documents on a variety of topics in recent years, including on controversies related to women’s dawa within IS, which provides some insight into some of its operations.

According to al-Nadhir al-‘Uryan, the core of IS’s women’s dawa institutions, at least in Syria, were based in al-Raqqah and al-Tabqah. With the latter area being filled with foreign women involved in such
activities. One of the main centers of women’s *dawa* was called Mahad Dhat al-Nitaqayn (She of the Two Belts Institute), which was run by Dr. Iman Mustafa al-Bagha (Umm al-Mudhafar al-Dimashqiyyah). Prior to joining IS, al-Bagha received her doctorate in *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *usul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) from the University of Damascus and then worked as lecturer while also doing *dawa* at al-Malik Faysal University in al-Dammam, Saudi Arabia for 25 years. According to an IS biography of her in its *qisah al-mujahid* series, once she joined IS, she also helped with studies in the Diwan al-Buhuth wa-l-‘Iftaa’ (The Research and Religious Legal Opinions’ Administration), worked with the women’s *hisba* activity (ie. Katibat al-Khansa’), and focused on researching al-*wala’ wa-l-barâ’* and *shirk* (polytheism).

The Dhat al-Nitaqayn Institute had six teachers on staff, including al-Bagha, who lectured on eleven subjects; Umm ‘Amru al-Halabiyah al-Urduniyah, lecturing on Qur’anic sciences, *tafsîr* (exegesis), and *fiqh*; Umm ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Muhajirah al-Jazrawiyah, lecturing on *sîra* (prophetic biography), history, *fiqh* al-jihad, and the ways of peace; Umm ‘Uthman al-Shamiyah al-Manbajiyah, lecturing on Arabic language; Umm Maryam al-Shamiyah, lecturing on *fiqh*, and Umm Muhammad al-Kurdiyah, lecturing on *tajwid* (correct Qur’anic recitation methods). And the Institute maintained four levels of teaching with the following number of students for each level: first, 200 female students; second, 70 female students; third, 50 female students; and forth, 30 female students.

However, due to controversies surrounding al-Bagha’s views on *takfir*, or lack thereof, she was sacked from her position as director of the Institute and it would then be shuttered. This similarly happened with a rogue women’s *dawa* institute set-up in al-Tabqah by Umm Himam al-Tunisiyah, who was also perceived to be not strict enough in her views on *takfir* of groups like Jabhat al-Nusrah. That led to internal *fitna* (discord) between those that followed the likes of al-Bagha and al-Tunisiyah versus the ultra-extremists within IS. In the end, this led to women’s *dawa* within IS only being done within the mosques via the Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid and not ostensibly self-maintained institutes. This highlights that the issues over doctrine that plagued the
men of the Islamic State, which Cole Bunzel examined within the ‘ISIS Files,’ also occurred within the context of women’s activism within IS too.

Conclusions

As a consequence of the over representation of sermons within the ‘ISIS Files’ in which they covered ideas and themes already analyzed over the years related to IS thought and ideology it didn’t seem appropriate to do yet another content analysis of what IS’s beliefs are. Therefore, if someone wanted to do that in the future, these ‘ISIS Files’ provide the platform to do so.

Yet what is noteworthy about this and what comes out most from the ‘ISIS Files’ related to its Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid is that what IS was doing locally resembled what it said it was doing via its online media architecture. Of course, it would be unwise to generalize this to all aspects of IS’s bureaucracy, but at least in terms of these particular activities, one can gain deep insights into IS’s apparatus from the primary sources it releases, which reinforces the importance of them in the study of jihadism, especially its Arabic-language content since that is where the vast majority of its corpus lays.

Related to this, the ‘ISIS Files’ and other IS administrative documents show the direct, operational importance of IS’s in-theatre dawa program and how it far outstrips that of its virtual outreach online. In part, this is because it has a much greater audience and can control things in greater detail on a day-to-day basis of people's lives that were under IS’s writ due to their totalitarian system.

Since there was a similar methodology in the way IS was conducting its Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid in its core territories of Iraq and Syria as well as one of its distant provinces in Libya, further research might want to do a comparative look at how much different or similar dawa campaigns between IS and other jihadi groups are. And if not, what is that attributable to?
Nevertheless, probably the most important broader takeaway when contextualizing IS’s *dawa* and the broader history and evolution of the jihadi movement is that one cannot analytically view them through a purely terrorism or insurgency lens. Rather, jihadi actors in 2020 are multi-faced entities that have a deeper reservoir of expertise beyond just fighting and therefore are also more embedded within locales. And as a result, killing one’s way out of fighting IS or any other jihadi group is unrealistic nor will drone campaigns that may have degraded AQ in Afghanistan and Pakistan a decade ago play out in such a manner against the jihadi movement today. Without understanding the sociology of these groups’ milieus and the fact that there is an ongoing competition of governance between various entities and ideologies in the broader Middle East and North Africa, governments in the West and the Arab regimes they work with will continue to miss the broader picture and continue putting out fires when they pop up instead of creating sustainable solutions beyond authoritarian regimes or jihadi theocracy.
 Appendix

اختيار نهاية الدورة الشرعية

أولا: العقيدة

السؤال الأول:

- عرف الطاغوت، وما أقسامه؟ مع التمييز لكل قسم بمثال.
- ما هو التوحيد، وما أقسامه؟ مع تعرف كل قسم والتيميز له.
- ما حكم جنود وعساكر الطاغوت، وما هي النواصض التي وقعوا فيها؟

السؤال الثاني: بين الحكم فيما يأتي:

- رجل سجد لقيب ودعوا غير الله عز وجل.
- مسلم طلب من رجل حاجة قادر على أن يعطيها له، فسأله:
  - مجدف في جيش حفتر أو فجر ليبيا أو حرس المشايخ؟
  - مسلم فعل كبيرة من الكبار (كالزنار والسرقة وعقود الوالدين).
  - شيخ قبيلة حكم في رجل زنى بامرأة بتزويجهما، ثم زوجت بعضهم.

ثانيا: الفقه

ما هو حكم صلاة الجماعة؟ 
ما هو المrade.
ما هي السنة المنبية عند الوضوء والصلاة؟ 
ما هو جهد الدفع؟ وما حكمه؟
First: Aqidah

The first question:
- Define taghut. And what are its categories? Represent each category with an example.
- What is tawhid? And what are its categories? Give the definition for each category and an example for it.
- What is the ruling on the soldiers and military personnel of taghut? And what are the nullifiers they have fallen into?

The second question: make clear the ruling on the following:
- A man who has prostrated to a tomb and has called on one besides God-Almighty and Exalted is He.
- A Muslim who has sought from a man a need he is capable of fulfilling for him.
- A person recruited into Haftar’s army or Libya dawn or the installation’s guard.
- A Muslim who has committed one of the great sins (like fornication, theft, and disobeying parents).
- A tribal shaykh who has ruled for the marriage of a man who has committed fornication with a woman.

Second: Fiqh

- What is the ruling on prayer of the congregation?
- What is the Sunnah Mansiyah on ablution and prayer?
- What is defensive jihad? And what is its ruling?

Item 2. Dawa-related items in Aymenn al-Tamimi’s ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents’
MY BELOVED BROTHERS IN GOD, THIS IS AN INVITATION


4 The full list of Files can be found at isisfiles.gwu.edu.


8 Ibid.


10 Hedin, Torsten, and Westerlund, “Da’wa.”


12 Hedin, Torsten, and Westerlund, “Da’wa.”

13 Malik, “Fiqh al-Da’wa.”
14 Hedin, Torsten, and Westerlund, “Da’wa.”


19 For a more in-depth explanation of this, see: Aaron Y. Zelin, “al-Farida al-Ghāiba and al-Sadat’s Assassination, a 30 Year Retrospective,” *International Journal for Arab Studies* 3, no. 2, 2012.


24 Ibid., 53-54 and 142.


27 Ibid.


37 For his full archive, see: http://jihadology.net/category/individuals/ideologues/khalid-bin-abd-al-ra%E1%B8%A5man-al-husaynan-abu-zayd-alkuwyti.

38 For his full archive, see: http://jihadology.net/category/individuals/ideologues/harith-bin-ghazi-al-na%E1%BA%93ari-mu%E1%B8%A5ammad-al-mirshadi.


42 Aaron Y. Zelin, Your Sons Are At Your Service, 96-187.

43 AST’s Activities Database, created by Aaron Y. Zelin, last updated February 18, 2019.

44 The name of the campaign comes from a part of Qur’anic verse 46:31.


51 In many ways, Ayman al-Zawahiri’s “General Guidelines for the Work of a Jihadi,” released in mid-September 2013, was a culmination of such a practice for those within the AQ ecosystem. Available here: https://jihadology.net/2013/09/14/as-sa%e1%b8%a5ab-media-presents-a-new-release-from-al-qaidahs-dr-ayman-al-%e1%ba%93awahiri-general-guidelines-for-the-work-of-a-jihadi.

52 Ingram, Whiteside, and Winter, The ISIS Reader, 114.

53 Ibid., 143.


55 Ingram, Whiteside, and Winter, The ISIS Reader, 113.


64 Ibid.


There is evidence to suggest that there was a prototype for the Diwan called the Committee for the Administration of the Affairs of the Mosques, which can be seen in Ninawa after the conquest of Mosul. For more see under specimen D: http://www.aymennjawad.org/15961/aspects-of-islamic-state-is-administration-in.

“Mujahid Brother,” ISIS Files 34_001566. [Accessed 30 November 2020].


“Mujahid Brother,” ISIS Files 34_001566. [Accessed 30 November 2020].


MY BELOVED BROTHERS IN GOD, THIS IS AN INVITATION


Islamic State, “Qualifying Session for Imams and Preachers,” Wilayat Tarabulus Media Office, December 8, 2015. This file is part of the personal collection of the author.

The Islamic State, “The Da’wah and Mosques Administration.”


Ibid.


89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 The Islamic State, “The Da’wah and Mosques Administration.”
95 Ibid.
96 The Islamic State, “Removing the Cross and Putting the Banner of Tawhid in its Place,” Wilayat Ninawa Media Office, April 5, 2015. This file is part of the personal collection of the author.
98 The Islamic State, “Establishment of a sharia lesson for the detainees of the hisba,” Wilayat Ninawa Media Office, April 16, 2015. This file is part of the personal collection of the author.
101 The Islamic State, “The Da’wah and Mosques Administration.”
103 For a deeper discussion of this concept see: Joas Wagemakers, “Framing the ‘Threat to Islam’: al-Wala’ wa al-Bara’ in Salafi Discourse,” Arab Studies Quarterly 30, no. 4, Fall 2008.
106 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 “Devotion to and Abidance by the word Tawhid,” The ISIS Files 36_001648_56, 31 August 2015. [Accessed 30 November 2020].


111 “Log of attendance and assessment of the students of The Institute of Memorization of the Noble Quran For the year 1436 - 1437 Hijri,” The ISIS Files 33_001514. [Accessed 30 November 2020].

112 The Islamic State, “Work of the Dawa and Education Center - Lessons for memorizing and reciting the Holy Qur’an in mosques of Mosul city,” Wilayat Ninawa Media Center, January 7, 2017. This file is part of the personal collection of the author.


114 Ibid.


116 Ibid.


121 Ibid.


127 Named after the nickname that the Muslim prophet Muhammad gave to one of the earliest female converts to Islam, Asma’ Bint Abi Bakr. Due to her ingenuity when secretly providing goods and food to Muhammad and Abu Bakr when they were hiding in the cave of Thawr outside of Mecca during their migration to Medina in 622 CE.


al-Masri, “Report After Meeting With Umm al-Mudhafar al-Dimashqiyah.”

Ibid.


Al-Tamimi, “Women's Dawa in the Islamic State: Internal Files.”


There are a number of aspects of IS’s Diwan al-Dawa wa-l-Masajid that are not presented here due to the more mundane aspects of them such as prayer times, rules related to mu’azin (individual that does the call to prayer), appointment of Imams and preachers at mosques, a notice on the prohibition of selling IS dawa literature, lineage tracing, and ID cards for those working in the Diwan. But if you are interested in exploring such documents, you can find them maintained in Aymenn al-Tamimi’s ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents’ (item 2 in the appendix lists all of the dawa-related items in his archive).