

SPECIAL ANALYSIS**The Islamic State Releases *Dabiq* Magazine**

Tuesday, July 8, 2014

Prepared by MSA's Research and Intelligence Analysis Team

Information Cut-off: 2:30PM

Overview

The Islamic State, formerly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), launched an English language periodical through the Al Hayat Media Center, following the release of the group's newsletter. The magazine is named *Dabiq* after the area of northern Syria where they believe Malahim (Armageddon) will begin. The publication is primarily aimed at recruitment rather than technical training or directives and further outlines the Islamic State's ultimate goals.

The first volume of *Dabiq* contains seven sections, which are described below.

***Dabiq* Magazine**

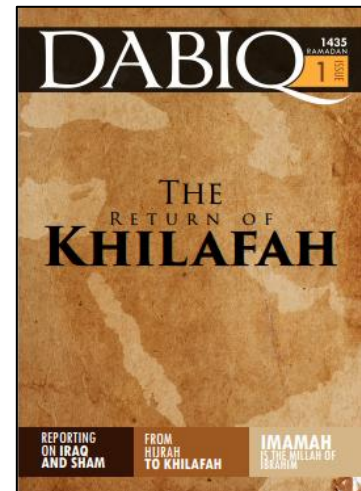
The first section of the magazine is an in depth introduction to the publication and its title. Islamic teachings and Koranic quotes are used to describe the last battle and Malahim, which they claim will start in Dabiq. In addition to the geographical significance, the passage serves as a message to readers that those who "flee" or abandon Jihad will never be forgiven. Alternatively, those that are killed in battle and those that conquer are depicted as the "best martyrs." The meaning of the magazine's introduction is simple and reminds readers that they must be on the side of the Islamic State.

Khilafah Declared

This section of the magazine officially announces the formation of the khilafah (caliphate), under the leadership of Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and describes the world's division into "two camps." One camp is composed of Islam and faith, while the other is composed of non-believers and hypocrites. The camp of the kufr, or non-believers, is defined as "the camp of the Jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the Jews." Those in the camp of the ummah (believers) are called to help support the new Islamic state. The magazine specifically attempts to recruit scholars, experts in Islamic jurisprudence, legal professionals, people with military experience, medical doctors and engineers of all different specializations and fields.

Islamic State Reports

The reports are composed of images and stories regarding regional issues. The section serves as a "call to arms," which primarily focuses on building relationships with tribes in the Islamic State. According to the publication, the Islamic State held meetings with tribal representatives to encourage their support and respond to "doubts being circulated about the Islamic State." The "benefits and services" provided by the Islamic State are also listed in the reports chapter and include returning rights and property to their rightful owners, pumping millions



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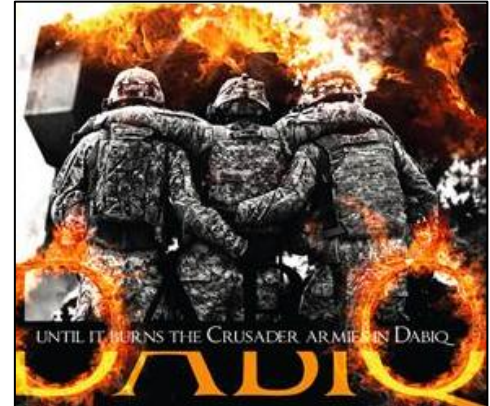
of dollars into services important to Muslims, state security/stability and ensuring the availability of food and commodities. In return, the group asked tribal leaders to encourage youth to join the ranks of the Islamic State, collect zakah (donations) and turn in weapons acquired from the regime and Free Syrian Army (FSA). At the end of the section, the Islamic State features pictures of the tribal gatherings and claims that several tribes pledged their allegiance to the group. The report indicates that the Islamic State is disseminating its message at a community level, to gain additional fighters, weapons and money to grow its support base.

Imamah is from the Millah of Ibrahim

This part of the publication describes Islamic leadership and the future of the newly restored Caliphate. It extensively covers the history and meaning of imamah (leadership) and methodically applies it to justify the function of the Islamic State. After describing the concept of imamah, the article interprets it to cover both political and religious leadership and claims that modern society has “failed to understand that imamah in religious affairs cannot be properly established unless the people of truth first achieve comprehensive political imamah over the lands and the people.” This point serves as the group’s thesis for declaring the Islamic State the true imamah by claiming the state emulates the millah (path) of Ibrahim with regard to imamah. The section demonstrates the philosophical approach the group is taking to indoctrinate potential followers, and equates the Islamic State to an “unquestionable” imamah.

The Islamic State in the words of the enemy

Similar to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s (AQAP) *Inspire* magazine, *Dabiq* features a section with quotes from “the enemy” about the Islamic State. The excerpts were taken from an article entitled “The Reality of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” by former Director for Iraq at the U.S. National Security Council Douglas A. Ollivant and former Director of Research for Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point Brian Fishman. The article describes both Ollivant and Fishman as “American crusaders,” and uses their comments to illustrate the group’s progress. The section also further serves to identify the U.S. as an enemy.



From Hijrah to Khilafah

The feature section of the publication offers a historical look at the khilafah and describes a five prong process to developing a khilafah. According to the Islamic State, the path begins with hijra and jama’ah, in which believers migrate to the state to organize and fight a “common enemy.” The article states that the ideal lands for hijrah should be a “place where they can operate without the threat of a police state,” and “support jihad.” Specifically, the article cites Yemen, Mali, Somalia, the Sinai Peninsula, Waziristan, Libya, Chechnya and Nigeria as well as parts of Tunisia, Algeria, Indonesia and the Philippines. These are places with weak governments and security posture, such as Iraq, where the group can carry out attacks to create chaos and slowly take over. This is referred to as destabilizing the taghut regime, which must take place before the final stages of tamkin

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(submission) and ultimately the establishment of the khilafah. The group claims they progressed through these phases before making the khilafah a reality. They also criticize “famous jihad groups,” stating that they are frozen in the destabilization phase, carrying out attacks for “corrupt desires, fame, wealth and power,” rather than to expand their territory. This is likely an indirect reference to al Qaeda, who disavowed the Islamic State earlier this year.

Islamic State News

The final section of the magazine contains brief news focusing on regional issues impacting Syria and Iraq. The majority of the content highlights Islamic State victories and announces tribes that have pledged allegiance to the group. They also cover attacks on the Islamic state by the Syrian regime and feature graphic images of deceased and injured children, which serve as propaganda to recruit potential sympathizers.

Implications

The main focus of *Dabiq* appears to be recruitment and propaganda as the magazine emphasizes themes of duty, jihad and final judgment. It also uses philosophical reasoning and Koranic quotes to support their call to arms in an attempt to unite “believers” against “crusaders.” They express a desire to bypass modern states and internationally recognized borders to establish a transnational Islamic caliphate ruled by Sharia law. This is consistent with their pursuit of foreign fighters and reported plans for expansion. Additionally, they attempt to justify their violent tactics by focusing on the end result.

The tone and content of the magazine differs from AQAP’s *Inspire* magazine and indicates a different intent for readers. While *Inspire* is primarily focused on the radicalization of Muslims throughout the western world and providing technical and tactical guidance, *Dabiq*’s first edition aims to educate Muslim’s on prophecies and teachings associated with the reformation of a Caliphate. However, like *Inspire* magazine, *Dabiq* is written in fluent English, suggesting that it may have been authored or edited by a native speaker. Both publications also use Koranic references to reinforce their point. While this issue of *Dabiq* does not focus on carrying out attacks in the west, their use of the English language shows a desire to attract American and European recruits. Additionally, they specifically refer to the U.S. as crusaders and enemies of the Islamic State. Although there is no direct threat exhibited in this issue of the magazine, there continues to be concern over the group’s advancements and strategies, particularly its online recruitment techniques and incorporation of foreign fighters in their ranks.

