



**RELIGIOUS
REHABILITATION
GROUP**

The Fallacies of ISIS Islamic Caliphate: A Brief Explanation



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an extremist militant group, has grabbed world headlines in recent months. Their brutal and violent actions, which include the mass executions of captives and ethnic minorities, sexual enslavement of women and girls as well as beheadings of soldiers and journalists, have sparked fear and outrage across the world. We have also seen a number of foreign fighters among its ranks – from teenage girls to young professionals. They have joined ISIS, believing in its goal of establishing an Islamic caliphate throughout the Levant region. Who is ISIS exactly? Why does ISIS continue to appeal to vulnerable individuals? What is the concept of an Islamic caliphate? Is ISIS the would-be caliphate that is reviving an Islamic system of governance? This pamphlet hopes to shed light on these issues so that YOU have a better understanding of ISIS.

WHO IS ISIS?

An offshoot of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), ISIS has gone through a few name changes in recent years. The militant group has called itself Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and it referred to itself as Islamic State (IS) on 29 June 2014. The group also declared Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi the caliph, and the territory under its control as the caliphate. The group's initial objective was to establish an Islamic state in Sunni-majority areas in Iraq, but that goal has since expanded to include Sunni-majority areas in Syria following the group's involvement in the Syrian civil war.

Al Baghdadi and his extremist group do not seem to have any clear objectives. At best, they appear very much to be an extension of the feuds within the Middle East region.

“...there shall come men who swindle the world with religion, deceiving the people in soft skins of sheep, their tongues are sweeter than sugar and their hearts are the hearts of wolves.”

CONDEMNATION BY SCHOLARS

More than 120 Muslim scholars around the world have rejected Al-Baghdadi's caliphate and condemned the atrocities committed by ISIS in an open letter in late September 2014. The scholars ruled that the concept of a caliphate is not legitimate unless it is established by consensus from the Islamic community. The letter, addressed to Al-Baghdadi, also detailed the many transgressions ISIS has made which are against Islamic principles. These transgressions include how ISIS has over-simplified matters related to the Sharia, ignored established Islamic sciences and principles in issuing rulings, used violence to achieve their goals and failed to follow procedures, show mercy and ensure justice when meting out punishments¹. ISIS has corrupted Islamic teachings, values and principles. Islam promotes peace, moderation and mercy among others. It acknowledges the importance of education, justice and truth. Closer to home, the Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) has declared ISIS to be haram (illicit). Locally, PERGAS (Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Association) has released a media statement condemning the terrorist acts of ISIS. PERGAS also stressed that the local Muslim community should neither support nor sympathise with ISIS or the group's cause.

1 For more details, please visit the site <http://lettertobaghdadi.com>

In short, ISIS claims that its aim is to establish an Islamic state. However if we delve deeper, we will discover that it is a convenient pretext to lure unsuspecting Muslims into supporting their violent cause. They are merely a militant entity fighting not for the religion but for their territorial and political ambitions.

MESSAGE OF ISLAM

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was sent by God Almighty as a blessing to the world (Holy Quran, Al Anbiya':107). He has emphasised His Mercy as all encompassing, far greater than His wrath as stated in verse Al-Araf, 7:156 and in an authentic hadith narrated by Bukhari in Kitab Al Tauhid and Nawawi in Kitab Al-Tawbah. Hence in this respect, ISIS' brutal wars and tactics are completely against Islamic principles which call for peace and mercy.

*“Let there be no compulsion
in religion.”*

They have committed 'grand theft' in the name of Islam, and tarnished its image and message of peace and tolerance around the world. Thousands of innocent lives have perished under ISIS' rule. ISIS did not seem to care that this is forbidden under Islamic Law.

The Islamic law stipulates that whoever kills a soul without any justification, he will be looked upon as having killed all mankind. On the other hand, if anyone saves a life, it will be as if he has saved the life of all mankind (Holy Quran, Al-Maidah:32). ISIS has rampantly and blatantly killed innocent people who were non-combatants and defenceless. Contrast this with Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who did not kill those who disagreed with him. Neither did he give permission to have them

*ISIS has corrupted the Muslim ideology
and distorted the principles of Islam.
Islam promotes peace, moderation
and mercy.*

killed. (Prophetic Tradition, narrated by Bukhari in Kitab Tafsir Al Quran and Muslim in Kitab al-Birr wal-Silah).

The rules of engagement are stipulated very clearly by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In war, the Prophet had advised Muslims not to among other things mutilate bodies or kill children, women and the elderly. He advocated showing mercy to retreating soldiers, the injured and non-combatants (Hadith narrated by Muslim in Kitab al-Jihad, Al-Tirmizi in Kitab al-Diyyat and Ibn Abi Shayba in Al-Musannaf).

Given specific instructions and advice by the Prophet, how does ISIS justify its violent actions? What they have done thus far is just unIslamic and indefensible beyond any reasonable doubt!

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ISLAMIC CALIPHATE

The term *caliph* or *khalifah* literally means “successor” but it is typically used to refer to an Islamic ruler who oversees the political and religious affairs of an Islamic community. A territory or state ruled by the caliph is known as the caliphate.

Islamic history has provided us with rich narratives of Islamic caliphates from the past. The following highlights some of the characteristics of an Islamic caliphate:

- Peaceful co-existence of people of various faiths – non-Muslims who came under the rule of Muslim rulers were not forced to embrace Islam. This is consistent with what the Quran states: “let there be no compulsion in religion” (2:286).
- Islamic rulers who demonstrate humility and religious piety. They represent themselves as honorable servants of their people.
- Islamic rulers who have sound and deep knowledge of Islam, who themselves have spent a significant part of their lives learning about the religion. These rulers were thus able to rule with wisdom and win the hearts and minds of their people.
- Openness to ideas – The caliphs of the past were open to ideas and information for the betterment of their people, and seek to encourage progress not merely in expanding their territories, but also in economic, social and intellectual areas that would prove beneficial for the future.

Dr. Rusydi ‘Alyan, in his book *Al-Islam wa al-Khilafah* (1976), had stressed on the important traits of a chosen caliph:

- Have profound knowledge of Sharia law and know the political and administrative affairs of the ruling.
- Being fair, virtuous, dignified, mature and sane.

The caliph is also responsible for upholding the sanctity of the faith and creating a system of governance that is just, progressive, internationally acceptable and virtuous. In addition, he must see it as his duty to protect both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. ISIS will have difficulties reconciling the requirements of an Islamic Caliphate as epitomised by the Caliphs of Islam.

“It has been narrated by many traditions other than this Hadith that those who read the Quran just beyond the esophagus and those who leave religion as fast as arrows out of the bow are the Khawarij Haruriyah.”

IS ISIS REALLY THE WOULD-BE CALIPHATE THAT IS REVIVING AN ISLAMIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE?

The various atrocities of ISIS have been widely reported in the mass media. Compared with some of the observations made of Islamic caliphs of the past, ISIS strays far away from the ideals and values Islam encourages.

- The group’s brutality and use of violence tarnishes Islam’s emphasis on compassion, respect and peaceful co-existence.
- The ways in which ISIS issues and implements legal Islamic rulings, and metes out punishments are questionable. It is unclear if they have within their ranks learned scholars well-versed in the Islamic sciences to issue and implement those rulings.
- The group seems more interested in expanding their territory than serving the people in the lands they control in areas that matters – education, provision of work and erecting basic infrastructure needs, just to name a few.
- ISIS has brought about more disunity among Muslims (between the moderates and extremists) and deepened the differences between them.

- ISIS has abused the religion. They are out to terrorise the world with their brutalities and are demonic in their approach.

Therefore, what is important now is that YOU do not be influenced by the various ideas and propaganda ISIS is promoting, be it on the Internet, social media or other platforms. **ISIS DOES NOT represent Muslims and Islam. IT IS A TERRORIST GROUP!**

THE COMING OF EXTREMISTS – WHAT PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH) SAID

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) had mentioned in his *hadiths* the coming of such extremists:

- From Abu Hurairah, the Prophet said, “...there shall come men who swindle the world with religion, deceiving the people in soft skins of sheep, their tongues are sweeter than sugar and their hearts are the hearts of wolves. Allah [Mighty and Sublime is He] says: ‘Is it me you try to delude or is it against me whom you conspire? By Me, I swear to send upon these people, among them, a Fitnah that leaves them utterly devoid of reason.’ [Tirmidhi].

“I heard the Messenger of Allah said, pointing his hand towards the direction of Iraq, “It will be out of there, those who read the Quran but just past the throat alone, they quickly leave Islam like an arrow out of the bow.”

The *hadith* refers to the righteous and pious people who must be wondering how something that is wrong can be made to sound right and apparently looked good, when it is the biggest slander in our time.

- The Prophet said that they will come to an age where the killer will not know why he killed, and those killed will not know why they lost their lives. [Muslim]
- From Abdullah bin Mas'ud, the Prophet said, "...there will come a people young in years and foolish in minds, reciting the Qur'an which will not go beyond their throats, uttering sayings from the best of creations, going through the religion as an arrow goes through the target." [Tirmidhi]

Imam al-Tirmidhi had said, "It has been narrated by many traditions other than this *hadith*, that those who read the Qur'an just beyond the esophagus and those who leave religion as fast as arrows out of the bow are the *Khawarij Haruriyah* (extremists/rebels)".

- Yusair bin Amr said, "I asked Sahal bin Hunaif, have you ever heard the Prophet said something about the *Khawarij*?" He said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah said, pointing his hand towards the direction of Iraq, "It will be out of there, those who read the Qur'an but just past the throat alone, they quickly leave Islam like an arrow out of the bow. " [Bukhari]

As what the *hadiths* suggest, there will come a time when extremists will rise. There have been various extremist groups in the past, and we see it in the form of ISIS today. It is thus critical that YOU become more cautious when reading about what ISIS promotes and believes in, lest you become influenced by their extremist ideas.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The Singapore Muslim community is not passive in our response to the events happening in Iraq and Syria. Organizations such as the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), Simply Islam and Religious & Educational League of Radin Mas (BAPA) have organised various humanitarian and donation collection efforts to assist those affected by the conflict in Syria. You can contact them if you are interested in involving yourself in some of these efforts.

Badan Agama & Pelajaran Radin Mas (BAPA)

(Religious & Educational League of Radin Mas)

www.bapa.org.sg/Syrian-Humanitarian-Appeal.html

Rahmatan Lil'Alamin Foundation

www.rlafoundation.org.sg

Simply Islam

www.simplyislam.com.sg/main/aid-to-syrian-refugees/

Have a question on ISIS or the caliphate? Need more clarifications on events happening in the Middle-East? Here's a list of things you can do to seek more information:

- Approach the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG). With a Resource and Counselling Centre housed at Khadijah Mosque, RRG members, will be able to discuss religious extremism and related issues you may be struggling with.

- Know an Ustadz or Ustazah and you would like to ask him or her about socio-political events affecting Muslims? Be sure to check that the Ustadz or Ustazah is in the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) administered by MUIS. You can be assured that the religious teachers listed in ARS are qualified to discuss about religion.
- Approach the nearest mosque with your queries. The religious teachers there, if they are unable to answer them, will be able to refer you to other experts so that you can clarify your doubts.

The public are welcome to seek clarification and understanding on the conflict and other matters related to religiously motivated extremism from the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) Resource and Counselling Centre at Khadijah Mosque 583 Geylang Road Singapore 389522. They can also visit their website at www.rrg.sg and visit their Facebook page.

