**Greetings from ISIS**

- | [by Mitchell D. Silber](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/pods-author/silber-mitchell-d) COMMENTARY MAGAZINE AUGUST 25, 2015

**The letter below from Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is imaginary. The ideas it expresses are all too real.**

17 Dhu I-Kada 1436

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

Raqqa, the Islamic State

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington D.C., 20500

***Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuh,***[1](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/%22%20%5Cl%20%221) members of the Obama administration.

For many of you, the Islamic State was an entity that you were not familiar with until a year ago when my mujahideen captured Mosul in Iraq from the ***rafidah*** [*2*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#2)Shiites and ***munafiqun***[***3***](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#3) Kurds. Up until that point, your president referred to our group as the **“junior varsity.”**[4](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#4)

From my time in Iraq’s Camp Bucca, where I was imprisoned by New York State national guardsmen, I learned this was a term of derision. But, as is now obvious, it was a serious underestimation of our capabilities and aims. Today, we control a territory greater than the once mighty United Kingdom of Great Britain. Are we still the “jay-vee”?

Given the possibility of such misunderstanding, I thought it would be worthwhile to explain our view of the Middle East, review our accomplishments during the past 16 months, give you some insight into our grander intentions, and warn you where you should be warned.

In the lands formerly known as Syria, we established our capital at Raqqa and have expanded our control of terrain to include lands on the Euphrates River. Even now, we are maneuvering westward to capture Aleppo and defeat the so-called rebel Army of Conquest that fights against the butchering Assad regime, but for an unholy purpose. Meanwhile, our recent capture of Palmyra from the butcher dictator Assad brings us closer to the road to Damascus, Homs, and Hama. Ah, for all the talk from the West about human rights and the concept of the **“responsibility to protect,”**[5](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#5) where have you been in the fight against Assad, who has killed 200,000 of his own people with barrel bombs and chemical weapons? Is Assad not worse than Saddam or Gaddafi?

You wonder why so many Westerners from London, Paris, Copenhagen, Berlin, Toronto, Sydney, New York, and other Western cities come to join our effort as volunteer fighters, but it is clear: They see your impotence and your meaningless red lines and they know that the only way to defeat Assad is through war, holy war. They have come because you are afraid to fight in the Middle East again. Also, they know that it is the obligation for any able-bodied Muslim man to fight against the enemies of Islam—it is a collective obligation, or ***fard’ al kifaya.***[***6***](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#6)

They also come because they see the decadence and corruption of the West and aspire to be part of a cause greater than themselves. Your Zionist Crusader society of man-made laws has no place for Muslims. However, here, where we are reestablishing society as the Prophet knew it to be, they can fulfill all of their obligations as Muslims, living under Islamic law.

Meanwhile, in the lands formerly known as Iraq, you rushed to withdraw your soldiers, turning the country over to the *rafidah* Maliki the Shiite, who abandoned the Sunni tribes that had fought against us years earlier in Anbar, under your predecessor Bush’s American military leadership. Maliki, under the sway of his Persian benefactors in Tehran, didn’t pay the Sunni tribal warriors’ salaries or let them stay armed. Is it any surprise that our forces have been welcomed back into Anbar Province, where so many of your crusader soldiers fell while displacing us? You have allowed Iraq to be carved up among the Islamic State, the Persians, and the hypocrite Kurds. It will never be put back together.

In the summer of 2014, I directed our forces to capture Mosul for a number of reasons. First, it occupies a strategic position between the artificial borders that the French and British colonialists established when they divided Arab lands between Syria and Iraq almost 100 years ago. We also wanted to show how hollow and weak the army of Maliki was from the inside. This was proven when Maliki’s soldiers abandoned the city. Tikrit and Baiji soon fell as well.

Yes, your air strikes were able to prevent our full capture of the Mosul and Haditha dams and our extermination of the infidel Yazidis at the end of last summer (August/September 2014), but they have not prevented us from other advances. We now control Ramadi, again demonstrating the rottenness and hollowness of the “Iraqi Army,” and have gained control of the Fallujah Dam. Now our forces sit 60 miles from Baghdad. The Iraqi army has folded and essentially is a motley group of *rafidah* militias propped up by the Persians who are responsible for protecting the capital city.

By the end of 2015, we will have captured Aleppo, which means we will be at the gates of both Baghdad and Damascus, and we will control a contiguous swath of territory that reaches from **Sham**[**7**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#7)to the **Land of the Two Rivers**[**8**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#8)**.** Neither Assad the ***Nusayri,[9](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/%22%20%5Cl%20%229)***nor his Persian-sponsored Hezbollah henchmen, nor the Iraqi weakling Abadi and his Shiite militia butchers, nor pinprick air strikes from the United States and its allies will displace us from the lands of our Caliphate.

Ours is a program of conquest and a project to build a new state and a new society, reestablishing the Caliphate. We are the heirs of the Prophet and the founders of the original Caliphate who embarked on wars of conquest on behalf of Islam. We believe the world is divided into two realms—the Abode of Peace (*dar al-Islam*) and the Abode of War (*dar al-harb*). Since the only legitimate sovereign is Allah and the only legitimate form of rule is Islam, the various rulers and states within the Abode of War have no legitimacy; **their rule is simply tyranny.**[10](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#10)  This is what drives our strategy against Assad and Abadi, the Hashemites of Jordan, the al Saud and the Egyptian generals.

We already have established alliances and *wilayats* (provinces) in Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Gaza, Yemen, and Afghanistan/Pakistan. Our forces are on the move in Libya, and we continue to gain control of the Mediterranean coast.

What this means is that our ambitions are not confined between Damascus and Baghdad; our ambitions are global, for **as I said this past May,[11](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/%22%20%5Cl%20%2211)** “Islam was never a religion of peace, Islam is the religion of fighting.” Your ignorance on this subject is shocking. Time after time you and your ministers announce to the American people that **“Islam is a religion that preaches peace”**[**12**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#12)and that our Caliphate is not **“Islamic.”**[**13**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#13)

However, for a former professor, President Obama, you demonstrate willful blindness to the historical record. The Koran’s message about fighting and jihad are **inseparable**[**14**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#14) from its requirements of generosity and care for the poor.

Your labels do not matter either; you go to great efforts to call us ISIL instead of ISIS to avoid mentioning Syria, but it does not matter to us. We know who we are. And yes, President Obama, we are Islamic. We use the very same foundational Islamic texts that are **shared by virtually all Sunni Muslims.**[**15**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#15)

So far, we have chosen not to strike you in the West. Unlike al-Qaeda, who thought that their strategy should be to first strike and weaken the United States and its allies (the far enemy) and coerce the West to abandon its support for the Al Saud, Mubarak, and Hashemites (the near enemy) before re-establishing the Caliphate, **we have taken a different strategy.**[**16**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#16) We are doing it today. We do not need to strike you in the West, and it is our choice not to. It is a case of intentions, not capabilities. Certainly with the thousands of Westerners who have come to join our enterprise, we could have sent a team back to London or Paris or New York City to strike; however, we choose not to, for now. Nevertheless, if there are brothers who decide to act on their own in Copenhagen or Paris or Texas, we applaud their efforts on Twitter.

Your spokesmen say you have killed 10,000 mujahideen with your cowardly air strikes. You overestimated your success and instead killed many innocents. We will replace these fighters with more volunteers from the West. Body counts will not win this war. Nor will sending 450 more advisers to the Iraqi army change facts on the ground, for as your own secretary of defense said, **“they showed no will to fight.”**[**17**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#17)

Also, you promised to train “moderate rebels” to join the fight in Syria against the Islamic State, but how many fighters has this produced? That same secretary of defense says that as of this July, **only 60 fighters have been trained.**[18](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#18)How pathetic.

The Islamic State is here to stay. You will not degrade and defeat us the same as you have al-Qaeda, for your administration does not have the will to fight. Moreover, you do not even have a strategy to defeat us—and you, yourself admitted this just a few weeks ago publicly when you said **“we don’t have, yet, a complete strategy.”**[**19**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#19)

Our wars of conquest will continue unabated. Damascus, Baghdad, Amman, Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem will all be under the dar al-Islam, or Abode of Peace, again. But we will not stop there. As my spokesman, Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, has said, **“We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women…and if we do not reach it in our time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market.”**[**20**](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#20)

Please enjoy the rest of your term in office.

Sincerely,

Caliph Ibrahim

*formerly known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi*

**Footnotes**

[*1*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref1) *Greetings, and may peace be upon you*
[*2*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref2) *rejectors of the true path*
[*3*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref3) *hypocritical*
[*4*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref4) *President Obama, in describing the threat of ISIS vs. al-Qaeda to David Remnick of the* New Yorker*, January 27, 2014.*
[*5*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref5) *See “Informal Interactive Dialogue on the Responsibility to Protect,” a statement delivered by Samantha Power, U.S. ambassador to the UN, in New York City, September 11, 2013.*[*6*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref6) *See page 115 of Michael Bonner’s* Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice *(Princeton University Press, 2006).*[*7*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref7) *The Levant, or Greater Syria*[*8*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref8) *Iraq*[*9*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref9) *A derogatory term for Assad’s Shiite minority faction, the Alawi.*[*10*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref10)*Traditional Islamic jurisprudence. See page 92 of the aforementioned book by Michael Bonner,* Jihad in Islamic History.[*11*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref11) *Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a May 4, 2015, audio release.*[*12*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref12) *Obama in interview with Steve Kroft on 60 Minutes, September 14, 2014.*[*13*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref13) *Obama in presidential address, September 10, 2014.*[*14*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref14) *See Bonner, page 30.*[*15*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref15) *Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” the Atlantic, March 2015.*[*16*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref16) *The Islamic State’s strategy is based on Ayman al-Zawahiri’s 2001 book,* Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner*, which states:*The jihadist movement must build its plan on the basis of controlling a portion of land in the heart of the Islamic world in which to establish a defensible Islamic state from which it will launch its battle to restore the Rightly Guided Caliphate according to the program of prophethood (manhaj al-nubuwah). Just as armies cannot achieve victory except through the occupation of a portion of land, likewise the jihadist Islamic movement will not achieve victory against the global infidel alliance without possessing a base in the heart of the Islamic world. Without the establishment of a caliphate in the heart of the Islamic world, everything we have reviewed, the means and the plans of assembling and mobilizing the ummah, will be left hanging in the air without a concrete result or demonstrable benefit…
[*17*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref17) *Ashton Carter, on CNN, May 23, 2015.*[*18*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref18) *Carter before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, July 6, 2015.*[*19*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref19) *Obama in a news conference after the summit meeting of the Group of 7, June 8, 2015.*[*20*](https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/greetings-from-isis/#ref20) *Issue No.4, DABIQ magazine.*

**About the Author**

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