

A Prompt Critique of ISIS's Statement on the Paris Attacks

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In the Name of Allāh, the Most Merciful,
the Bestower of Mercy

Following the Paris attacks, ISIS released an official statement claiming responsibility for the suicide bombings and shootings that killed at least 127 people in France.

This statement is part of a marketing campaign by ISIS to attract supporters based on ideological lines and political sentiment.

Any sensible person can see that ISIS is void of any Islamic integrity and basic principles of morality. ISIS “is not an expression of traditional Islam or fundamentalist Islam; it is a new understanding of Islam, cloaked in western revolutionary ideology.”¹

¹ *When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, interview with Olivier Roy.

Allah cautioned Muslims in the noble Quran about carelessly accepting the justification of tyrants and murderers for their criminal conduct. An example of this is Allah's condemnation of Pharaoh, who was responsible for many crimes amongst which was mass genocide, even though Pharaoh claimed:

“I show you only that which I see [correct], and I guide you only to the path of right policy.” [Ghāfir: 29]

I hope that this helps, even if only minutely, to comprehend the objectives and realities of this heretical group.

A qualitative analysis of the statement:

1. To justify the murder of non-combatants ISIS used the word “crusader” five times in a single paged declaration. They also referred to France as “the carrier of the banner of the Cross in Europe.” This is no coincidence. It is a flimsy attempt to justify islamically the massacre of innocent men, women and children. This reasoning is flawed from two angles:
 - i. The word “crusader” –*ṣalībī* in Arabic– is classically used to describe the Christians who entered the Muslim lands under the pretense of ridding *Bayt al-Maqdis* (the Sanctified Territory) and the surrounding areas of Islamic rule. How is this applicable to civilians walking the streets of Paris?
 - ii. If they argue that they are using “crusader” as a synonymous term for “*Ḥarbī* [combatant of war], then this is also unacceptable, as it is forbidden in Islamic law to murder non-combatants, women and children, even at times of combat. How is this applicable to men, women and children at a stadium, watching an international football match or indulging in other pastimes?

The use of such language is not only intended to provide religious context for these rabid psychopaths, but also to provide the islamophobes and the far right with ammunition to demonize all Muslims, and thus further polarize already fragile societies. A technique that is crucial for the success of any fringe movement.

The strategy is clear –and worryingly it appears to be working in some countries– to isolate peaceful Muslim minorities, subject them to further hostilities, force governments to define their version of an ‘acceptable Islam’ and then appear as the Islamic vanguard and savior to fight this injustice, recruiting the disenchanting youth produced by such a climate.

2. The misuse of Quranic passages. In the statement ISIS explicitly quoted two verses from the Quran and alluded to numerous others.

This is not a new phenomenon; rather, as Imam al-Shātībī, a famous jurist and scholar, stated:

“You will not find an innovator, who is attributed to this religion, except that he endeavors to validate his heresy with a divine text, so he applies it according to his logic and ulterior desires.”²

They quoted two verses:

- i. **“And they thought that their fortresses would defend them from Allah! But Allah's (Torment) reached them from a place whereof they expected it not, and He cast terror into their hearts, so that they destroyed their own dwellings with their own hands and the hands of the believers. Then take admonition, O you with eyes (to see).”** [Al-Ḥashr: 2]

² *Al-‘Itiṣām* (2/177).

- ii. **“But honor, power and glory belong to Allah, His Messenger (Muhammad), and to the believers, but the hypocrites know not.”** [Al-Munāfiqūn: 8]

The first verse has been applied so out of context it is farcical, which proves that the target audience is lacking any basic Islamic education. The verse in question is referring to a group from the people of the scripture who had a covenant with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), who was the head of the Islamic state at the time.

These individuals violated this agreement and conspired to murder the Prophet, believing that their fortresses would inevitably protect them. News of this reached the Prophet and he commanded them to vacate their fortresses, due to their violation of the peace treaty. Fear gripped their hearts and they were left with no alternative but to depart from what they once viewed as impenetrable walls.³

How can this be compared to civilians dining at a restaurant? How can this be compared to shooting innocent humans with Kalashnikovs like they are ducks?

As for the second verse, then it suffices us to ask what honor is gained from murdering humans in this fashion. This is the epitome of cowardice; and to quote a Quranic passage reveals how sick and indoctrinated this group is.

3. They attempt to dehumanize the victims of these attacks by lavishly praising the perpetrators, while portraying their targets as being worthless entities with no worth and no rights.
 - i. “The capital of prostitution and obscenity.”
 - ii. “Put the nose of his enemy in the ground.”
 - iii. “Streets of Paris and its rotten alleys.”

³ Refer to *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* or any classical Quranic exegesis.

- iv. “Hundreds of apostates had gathered in a profligate prostitution party.”
- v. “The death of no less than 100 crusaders.”

Let us not forget that they are talking about human beings. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) once mentioned a man whom Allāh admitted in to paradise because he quenched the thirst of a dog by giving it water. A scholar of Islam, Shaykh Ibn al-ʿUthaymīn, commented on the aforementioned tradition by saying, “What about a human being?”

Furthermore, the most immoral sin in Islam is idolatry [Shirk], and at the time of the Prophet the blessed Kaʿbah in Mecca, which was built by Prophet Abraham, was inhabited by various idols and it was under the control of his arch-enemies. However, this was never used as a justification to massacre innocent people, even during the periods in which great hostility was shown to the Prophet and his companions.

This type of reasoning has been formulated by heterodox sects to mask their insanity and filthy souls. No sensible person agrees with this, let alone a religion that has so much concern for the creatures of God that it even addresses the rights of an ant upon a human being.

- 4. They attempt to market their group as legitimate representatives of Islam and the Muslims. They refer to themselves as:
 - i. “Soldiers of the Caliphate.”
 - ii. “The Islamic State.”
 - iii. “The Muslims in the heart of the Caliphate.”

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīyah (may Allāh have mercy upon him) emphasized the need for investigation and caution when fringe elements start screaming Jihad. He stated:

“However, it is obligatory to differentiate between the legislated Jihad, which Allāh and His Messenger have

commanded with, and the heretical Jihad which is the Jihad waged by misguided individuals who perform Jihad in obedience to the Devil, but they believe that they are performing Jihad in obedience to The Most Merciful (al-Raḥmān). This is like the Jihad of the people of innovation and misguidance such as the Khawārij (extremist renegades) and other than them..." *Al-Radd 'Alā al-Akhnā'ī* (p. 205)

5. They portray the perpetrators as martyrs:
 - i. "Youths who divorced the world and went to their enemy seeking to be killed in the cause of Allah."
 - ii. "So they were honest with Allah..."
 - iii. "We ask Allah to accept them among the martyrs and make us follow them."

This is not unique to this era, the person responsible for murdering the fourth Caliph, a relative of Prophet Muhammad, adopted similar beliefs to ISIS, and when he struck 'Alī Abū Tālib with his sword he recited a verse about those who sell their souls for Allah's sake.

Like ISIS, this individual belonged to a fringe movement who were at odds with the main body of Muslims.

When groups or individuals appeared in the past calling to Jihad, the scholars would carefully scrutinize these claims, asking questions such as,

"Did they raise their sword and strike with it according to the teachings of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) or according to [a set of] heretical beliefs." This was stated by the Prophet's companion, Ibn Mas'ūd. *Al-Bida' Wa al-Nahy 'Anhā*

Bathing in the blood of innocent people is not a path to martyrdom, but a way to Hell, and taking one's own life is suicide, which is

deserving, according to Islamic texts, of repetitive torment in the Hereafter.

6. The language is pretentious and dramatic, as if someone is describing a Hollywood movie:
 - i. “Blessed Paris Invasion.”
 - ii. “Allah conquered through their hands.”
 - iii. “The fool of France.”
 - iv. “Paris shook under their feet.”
 - v. “The smell of death will never leave their noses.”
 - vi. “This attack is the first of the storm.”

The reason ISIS chooses to employ such melodramatic language is to entice the youth. Islamic scholars throughout the ages, based on Prophetic traditions, described how those most affected by the bravado of extremists are normally the ‘gullible, foolish youth.’”

For someone without Islamic knowledge growing up in the inner cities, facing daily challenges, especially those with bleak prospects, this rhetoric and the choreographed images on the net might be appealing.

Defeating ISIS, no doubt, requires a multifaceted approach and the most integral part of this strategy is to provide accurate counter-narratives by qualified individuals upon sound readings of religious texts. Such rigorously developed authentic narratives should then be made readily available to everyone in a professional and academic manner. This serves the objective of invalidating the fallacious rhetoric of the extremists as well as educating a confused and distraught non-Muslim audience, leading them to be fair and just in their own analysis and their interactions with Muslims.

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