

Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2014: The Rise of ISIS & Sustained Online Recruitment

Updated: April, 2015

The rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its increasingly sophisticated social media communication and recruitment strategies influenced a diverse group of people from around the world, including the United States, throughout 2014. ISIS's far-reaching propaganda machine has not only attracted thousands of recruits, but has also helped Syria and Iraq emerge as the destinations of choice for this generation of extremists.

At least seventeen American citizens and permanent residents motivated by extreme ideologies propagated by ISIS and other Islamic terrorist groups overseas were charged in 2014 with terror-related offenses. Four others were not charged but were definitively identified as having joined terrorist groups abroad; three of those four died fighting. And an additional five minors are believed to have attempted to join such groups but were not charged. Of these 26, nearly all engaged to some degree with online terrorist propaganda and 18 are believed to have attempted to join or aid ISIS.

These individuals, however, are only a fraction of the total number of homegrown extremists believed to have joined ISIS and other terrorists groups in the region. [According to a November 2014 statement by FBI Director James Comey](#), the FBI is currently tracking nearly 150 Americans who travelled to Syria, "a significant number" of whom went there to fight.

Perhaps the biggest threat to domestic security is the potential for some of these individuals to return to the U.S. with new training and experience, as well as reinforced hopes for carrying out attacks in the communities they came from.



Image from ISIS' online magazine, *Dabiq*

The recent terror attacks in France underscore this concern. Cherif Kouachi, one of the men who [attacked the Charlie Hebdo magazine](#) office in Paris on January 7, 2015, told reporters that he trained in Yemen with [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#) (AQAP) prior to his attack. Similarly, Mehdi Nemmouche, who killed 4 people [at the Brussels Jewish museum](#) in May 2014, fought in Syria with ISIS prior to his attack, according to a French journalist who claims he was held captive by Nemmouche in Syria.

In fact, terrorist groups, including ISIS and Al Qaeda, have been particularly focused on exploiting hatred of Jews in an effort to appeal to and recruit a cadre of would be-extremists in the United States, Europe, and around the world.

There was one reported domestic terror plot motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in the U.S. in 2014. [Mufid Elfgeeh](#) of New York was arrested in September on charges that he had planned to shoot members of the U.S. military who had fought in Iraq, as well as for recruiting others to join ISIS.

In addition, there were [several violent criminal acts](#) not officially defined by authorities as terrorism that may have been influenced, at least in part, by online terrorist propaganda. These attacks included a beheading incident in Oklahoma in October and a hatchet attack on police officers in New York in November.

There was also one attempted domestic attack at the very start of 2015. On January 14, 2015, an [Ohio man was arrested](#) for allegedly plotting an attack on the U.S. Capitol building. Christopher Lee Cornell had read and shared propaganda from ISIS and AQAP online and told an undercover informant that he hoped to undertake his attack in support of ISIS.



Christopher Lee Cornell

While the exact number of Americans being radicalized by online propaganda or currently fighting with ISIS and other terrorist groups abroad remains difficult to gauge, a look at the American citizens and permanent residents charged in 2014 with terror-related offenses sheds light on the impact of terrorist activity online and underscores the enduring danger of this domestic terror threat.

AMERICAN RECRUITS

Although they represent a small subset of the total number of American citizens and residents government officials estimate have engaged in activity with or on behalf of international terrorist groups in 2014, a closer look at the 26 individuals in the U.S linked

to terrorist activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology demonstrates the relatively broad appeal of terrorist propaganda and the diversity of the individuals responding to their recruitment efforts.

They range in age from 15 to 44, with 12 in their twenties and 7 in their teens. The average age is 24 and the median age 21. This number includes five uncharged minors – three from Denver, Colorado, and two from Chicago, Illinois, all of whom allegedly attempted to join ISIS, but were stopped in route and returned to the U.S. by government officials.

The three girls from Denver who attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIS in October 2014 are all naturalized U.S. citizens from East Africa; two sisters, aged 15 and 17, of Somali descent, and a 16-year-old friend, of Sudanese descent. They are believed to have been recruited online; at least one of the girls was encouraged to travel to Syria by an individual she was communicating with online, according to reports.

The 15-year-old described her radicalization in a series of Tweets. “I started to notice the people I called ‘friends’ weren’t my true friends. But the people who reminded me about my *Deen* (religious path) were my TRUE friends.” Some of the 16-year-old’s Tweets reveal the degree to which she identified with this extreme ideology “Those who identify as ‘gay’ and ‘Muslim’ at the same time deserve death,” and, “Muslims handing out apologizes (sic) because of 9/11 are a disgrace to the *Ummah* (global community of Muslims).” All three girls were released to their parents’ custody after being stopped at an airport in Germany and have not been charged.

The two other minors are the 16 and 17-year-old siblings of [Mohamed Hamzah Khan](#), a 19-year-old arrested at Chicago O’Hare International Airport in April as he and his siblings attempted to board a flight to Turkey allegedly en route to Syria. Before leaving, all three wrote letters to their parents expressing their intentions to join ISIS. Khan’s sister, for example, wrote, “By the time you are reading this we could be captured, or stranded or possibly even killed.” His brother wrote, “The evil of this country makes me sick... They tricked us Muslims and enticed us with an easy life and wealth.” And Mohamed Khan himself wrote, “I extend an invitation, to my family, to join me in the Islamic State. We are the lions of war. My nation, the dawn has emerged.” Khan was charged with providing material support for terror. His siblings have not been charged.

At least one quarter of the 26 are converts to Islam (information about conversion is not available for two of the individuals). When the 5 minors are excluded, that number rises to



Douglas McAuthor McCain was killed in 2014 while fighting with the ISIS

over one third. This is consistent with previous years, where the number has not fallen below 20% and has been as high as 69% in 2013.

It is not uncommon for individuals who do not grow up within the Muslim community to be susceptible to the broader appeal of terrorist propaganda that sanctions violence in the name of Islam. [Nicholas Teausant](#), for example, is from Acampo, California and was arrested in March 2014 for attempting to join ISIS. Teausant was raised Christian, and attended a Christian school and youth programs. Similarly, [Douglas McAuthur McCain](#), arrested in August 2014 for attempting to join ISIS, primarily grew up in the suburbs surrounding Minneapolis, was raised Christian and, according to his uncle Ken McCain, “loved his [Christian] faith.”



The 26 come from 12 states. The states with the highest numbers of recruits in 2014 were Minnesota, Virginia, California, Illinois and North Carolina, with three individuals from each. In the last 3 years (2012, 2013 and 2014) there have been a total of 59 Americans and permanent residents linked to terrorism from 18 states and the District of Columbia.

Women

Perhaps most notably, 9 of the 25 Americans – 35% – are women. ADL documented a total of only 12 female U.S. citizens and permanent residents charged on similar terror offenses in the entire 11 years between 2002 and 2013.

This uptick comes at a time of [increased propaganda aimed at recruiting women](#), particularly by ISIS. Six of the women believed to have engaged in terrorist activity in 2014 are accused of involvement with ISIS and the other two were providing material support to Al Shabaab. Some [estimates](#) indicate that about 10% of the group’s Western recruits are female. ISIS’s messaging to women emphasizes their potential roles as the wives of fighters and mothers to the next generation of extremists.

Below are profiles of the American women linked to terrorism in 2014:



Poster announcing the creation of Al Zora, an ISIS organization for women

- [Shannon Maureen Conley](#), a 19-year-old convert to Islam from Colorado, was arrested in April 2014 at Denver International Airport – allegedly en route to Syria. According to court documents, Conley was hoping to meet and marry an ISIS member with whom she had been communicating online. She then planned to use her skills as a nurse to provide medical services for ISIS and to fight with them “if necessary.” Conley reportedly joined the U.S. Army Explorers, a program that exposes youth to military career opportunities and occupational skills, so that she could use those skills on behalf of terrorist organizations. Prior to her arrest, Conley had actively engaged with ISIS members and propaganda on social media, including Facebook and Twitter. According to court documents, Conley communicated with alleged ISIS members on the Internet and possessed a series of “materials about jihad and Al-Qaeda” including “a number of CD/DVDs labeled ‘[Anwar al-Awlaki](#).’” She went by the name Halima on her Facebook profile, where she described her job as “Slave of Allah.” Following an undercover operation, Conley was arrested, found guilty, and has been sentenced to four years in prison for conspiracy to support ISIS.
- [Heather Elizabeth Coffman](#), a 29-year-old convert to Islam from Virginia, was arrested in November 2014. Coffman had allegedly maintained several Facebook accounts on which she posted pro-ISIS messages and propaganda. She allegedly told an undercover agent that she could facilitate travel to join ISIS for potential recruits, offering to connect them with terrorists abroad. Coffman denied these activities in an interview with law enforcement and was charged with lying to federal agents about her involvement with ISIS. She has pleaded guilty to the charges.
- Hinda Osman Dhirane, a 44 year old naturalized U.S. citizen from Somalia residing in Washington and Muna Osman Jama a 34-year old apparent permanent U.S. resident from Somalia residing in Virginia were arrested in July 2014 in Washington and Virginia, respectively, for allegedly sending money to Al Shabaab.
- Hoda Muthana, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Alabama, reportedly travelled to join ISIS in November 2014. She has not been charged.
- Three teenage girls, aged 15, 16 and 17, attempted to join ISIS from Colorado (see above). They have not been charged.
- An unnamed 17-year-old female from Illinois allegedly attempted to travel to Turkey to join ISIS in April 2014 (see above). She has not been charged.

Americans Who Died Fighting

Three Americans who died fighting abroad on behalf of terrorist organizations in 2014 have been identified by name. Two are believed to have died fighting for ISIS and the

third died in a suicide attack undertaken on behalf of [Jabhat al Nusra](#), the Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria. Unconfirmed reports indicate as many as two other Americans, including a Bosnian-American from St. Louis named Abdullah Ramo Pazara and an ISIS commander who called himself Abu Muhammad Al-Amriki who lived in the U.S. for 10 years and may have been a citizen, died fighting with ISIS as well.

Their deaths demonstrate the integration of Americans in terrorist fighting forces, as well as the absolute level of commitment that at least some American terror recruits have to their extremist cause.

- [Moner Abu-Salha](#) died on [May 25, 2014](#), carrying out a suicide attack on behalf of Jabhat al Nusra. In an interview released after his death by the [Global Islamic Media Front](#), an Al Qaeda linked propaganda outlet, the 25-year-old native of Florida discussed his anger with America and noted his admiration for influential Al Qaeda ideologue [Anwar al Awlaki](#). At one point in the video, he even quoted Awlaki as having influenced him, saying, “In a lecture, Anwar al-Awlaki said



Moner Abu-Salha

when you make *hijrah* (a religious migration, here to join extremists) it’s like a cliff, jump off the cliff and you don’t know if the water is deep or shallow.... You just have to jump and put your faith in Allah that it’s going to be deep and you won’t be harmed, that you’re going to be safe after you land in the water.” He was featured in no fewer than four terrorist propaganda videos that included lengthy interviews in which he explained his motivations to leave the U.S. and join terrorist groups abroad. These videos were likely released to showcase the fact that an American had been a suicide bomber for Jabhat al Nusra, and to encourage other Americans and English speakers to join the group as well. This is supported by Abu Salha’s statements in the videos as well. “I advise all American people to come and make jihad in Syria,” he said. For those who might fear they were ill equipped to do so, Abu Salha explained that extensive savings were not necessary, saying, “I made my immigration [to Istanbul] with only \$20 in my pocket — only enough to buy a visa.” He also compared his negative impressions of life in the U.S. to what he described as his positive experience in Syria, stating, “I lived in America. I know how it is. You have all the fancy amusement parks and the restaurants and the food and all this crap and the cars. You think you’re happy. You’re not happy. You’re never happy. I was never happy. I was always sad and depressed. Life sucked,” but “The life of a *muhajid* [religious warrior] is an unbelievable life,” he says. “This is the best I’ve

ever lived.” Notably, Abu-Salha traveled back and forth between Syria and the U.S. at least twice, according to American authorities and unsuccessfully attempted to recruit a friend to join him in Syria. Abu-Salha is at least the fourth known American to have successfully undertaken a suicide bombing on behalf of an Al Qaeda linked terrorist organization. The other three, Shirwa Ahmed, [Farah Mohamad Beledi](#) and [Abisdalan Hussein Ali](#), were among a wave of [Americans who joined Al Shabaab](#) between 2007 and 2012.

- [Douglas McAuthor McCain](#), a 33-year-old convert to Islam who grew up in Minnesota and later moved to California, died while fighting with ISIS in August, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based group that monitors the Syrian conflict. Prior to his death, McCain regularly used social media to express his support for extremism and militancy. “It takes a warrior to understand a warrior. Pray for ISIS,” he tweeted on June 26, 2014. McCain was also apparently in contact with [Troy Kastigar](#) and [Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan](#). Kastigar and Hassan are both believed to have joined Al Shabaab in 2008, and like McCain, both grew up in Minnesota. Kastigar and McCain had been close friends since high school according to news reports citing sources who knew them. Hassan’s statements on Twitter after McCain’s death included, “The Hardest thing in Jihad is when a brother u love is granted Shahadah (martyrdom). Today im (sic) experiencing those feelings. May Allah accept @iamthetooth (McCain).”
- [Abdirahmaan Muhumed](#), a 29-year-old Somali-American from Minnesota, died in August while allegedly fighting with ISIS. He took part in the same attack as McCain, who allegedly wrote on Muhamed’s Facebook wall “continue protecting our brothers and sisters.”

PROPAGANDA-INSPIRED INCIDENTS IN THE U.S.

There were [several troubling criminal acts](#) not officially defined by authorities as terrorism that may have been influenced, at least in part, by online terrorist propaganda. These incidents speak to the broader impact such violent material may be having on society.

- In August, an individual named [Ali Muhammed Brown](#) was allegedly engaged in a robbery when he shot a man in a passing car. When apprehended, Brown claimed the murder as revenge for U.S. actions in the Middle East. “My mission is vengeance,” Brown allegedly told a police investigator, “For the lives, millions of lives are lost every day...[in] Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, all these places where innocent lives are being taken every single day. ... So, a life for a life.” Brown had a previous criminal record and is also accused of killing three individuals in California in June.

- In September, [Alton Nolan](#) allegedly beheaded one former coworker and stabbed a second after being dismissed from his job in Oklahoma. Nolan had regularly posted images from ISIS and other terrorist propaganda on his social media profiles. Some of his Facebook posts, for example, indicate an affinity for violent images commonly propagated by Islamic extremists. One post from March 2014 featured an image of a beheading with text that justified that form of murder in Islam, an image of a woman receiving lashes, and an image of a man holding a poster that states “Islam will dominate the world.” Nolan included a caption that stated “Sharia law will takeover (sic)...Cut the hands off the thieves...Islam is the true religion.” In June 2014 he posted a screed against Father’s Day together with an image of a militant from ISIS. Nolan had a previous unrelated criminal record.



One of Alton Nolan’s Facebook posts

- In November, [Zale Thompspon](#) was accused of attacking two New York police officers with a hatchet. Thompspon was rumored to be depressed and suffering from drug abuse and was allegedly angry about what he perceived as oppression of African-Americans in the U.S. According to law enforcement sources, he read about “holy war” and beheadings online and googled the phrase “jihad against police” before his attack.

Notably, both ISIS and AQAP touted these attacks as triumphs.

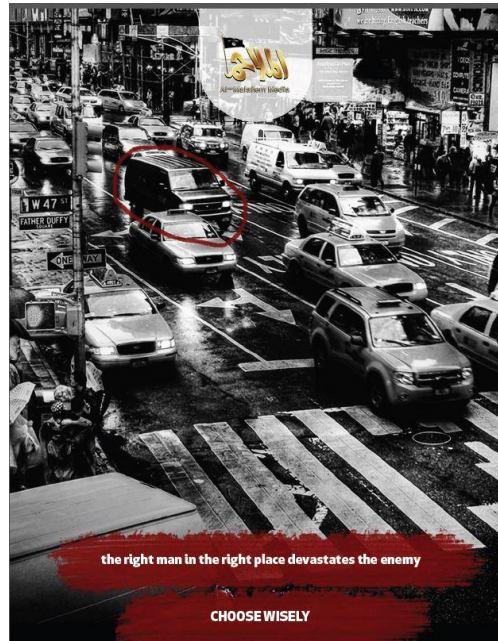
AQAP included the Brown, Thompspon and Nolan attacks as examples of attacks by Muslims against the West in a list published in the December 2014 issue of its English-language magazine *Inspire*. The list was printed under a statement that included the phrase, “fighting American (sic) has never been easier.” The December 2014 issue of ISIS’s English-language magazine *Dabiq* stated that the Thompspon and Nolan attacks were “the direct result of the Shaykh’s (ISIS leader Abu Baker al Baghdadi’s) call to action.”

Encouraging Attacks

Throughout 2014, terrorist groups have also continued to actively call for homegrown attacks in the West. The following is a small sampling of calls for homegrown attacks in the U.S. in 2014:

- December 2014:** The 6th issue of ISIS’s English-language magazine *Dabiq* praised individual attacks on various Western countries including the U.S., Canada, Australia and France, stating, “There will be others who follow the examples set by Man Haron Monis and Numan Haider in Australia, Martin Couture-Rouleau and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Canada, Zale Thompson in America, and Bertrand Nzohabonayo in France, and all that the West will be able to do is to anxiously await the next round of slaughter.”
- December 2014:** The [13th issue of AQAP’s *Inspire*](#) magazine called for attacks on American, French and British airlines and assassinations of prominent Western financial leaders. Quotes included, “The Lions of Allah who are all over the globe – some call them lone wolves – should know that they are the West’s worst nightmare,” and, “It’s not necessary to do what Mohammed Atta (of the 9/11 attack) did, it’s enough to do what [Nidal Hasan](#) (the Ft. Hood shooter) did.”
- October 2014:** The 4th issue of ISIS’s *Dabiq* magazine included the text of a speech released in September (see below) that called for attacks on the West. It also included an image of individuals in business suits walking on a sidewalk with the caption “Crusader ‘Civilians.’”
- September 2014:** ISIS released a text version of a [speech by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani](#), the group’s primary spokesman calling for attacks in the West. Initially released in English, French and Hebrew, this was the first significant instance where ISIS incited home-grown attacks rather than encouraging travel to Iraq and Syria. Excerpts from the speech include: “If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the...French – or an Australian, or a Canadian...kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone’s advice and do not seek anyone’s verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military....”
- August 2014:** A special edition AQAP English-language magazine titled “[Palestine: Betrayal of the Guilty Conscience](#)” attempted to harness anti-Israel sentiment to call for attacks against the U.S. and the U.K. The magazine reprinted instructions for building pressure-cooker bombs and car bombs from previous issues of *Inspire*. Quotes included, “We tell the Muslims in America and Europe: There is a better choice and easier one to give support to your *ummah* (the Muslim community). That is individual work inside the West such as the operations of [Nidal Hassan](#) (the Ft. Hood shooter) and [Faisal Shazad](#) (attempted Times Square bomber).”
- May 2014:** Al Shabaab [released a video](#) that called on Muslims living abroad to either join the group in Somalia or undertake “a lone wolf mission” in their home country.

- March 2014:** The [12th issue of AQAP's Inspire](#) magazine provided instructions for making car bombs along with a list of potential targets in the U.S., U.K. and France. Statements encouraging attacks on the West include, "Whether the brother has a channel to join the brothers [abroad] or not it is better for him to perform his duty of Jihad in the West. On the battle-field, you are just another soldier, but in the West you are an army on your own."



The back cover of *Inspire 12*

ONLINE RECRUITMENT

ISIS has transformed the way terrorist groups and their supporters reach, influence and recruit followers around the world by developing an aggressive social media strategy. This approach enables ISIS to employ tactics that empower individual supporters to take part in creating and distributing its narrative.

Twitter is ISIS' platform of choice, in part because it is able to conceal the identities of its users more effectively than on forums and other social networking sites. And while accounts are regularly shut down by Twitter (close to 1900 ISIS-related accounts were shut down by Twitter in the second half of 2014 alone, according to a report submitted to Congress on terrorist use of Twitter), new ones can almost always be immediately established.

Official ISIS accounts are augmented by supporters, some of whom seem to have quasi-official status. These supporters both share official propaganda and contribute to the barrage of online voices supporting terrorist ideology. Some supporters add personal details about their experiences in the group – information that adds to the authenticity of their narratives by providing concrete experiences.

Supporters can also sign up for an app called "Dawn of Glad Tidings" as a way of receiving information from ISIS on the smart phone. When they do so, ISIS also gains the ability to post Tweets from users' Twitter accounts – which therefore become de-facto ISIS propaganda outlets.

In order to unify its messaging, ISIS also organizes hashtag campaigns, encouraging supporters to repeatedly Tweet various hashtags such as #AllEyesonISIS. The goal is that these terms will then trend on Twitter, vastly increasing the visibility of tweets with ISIS's message.

Similarly, ISIS uses hashtag campaigns to insert its messages into trending topics on Twitter that have nothing to do with violent extremism. Thus, it will encourage its supporters to tweet ISIS messages with popular hashtags such as #worldcup or #Ferguson so that people searching for those hashtags will inadvertently come across pro-ISIS posts.



Beginning in June 2014, when the possibility of U.S. intervention in Iraq and Syria grew apparent, ISIS launched a social media campaign called a “[Warning to the American People](#)” that threatened reprisals against American citizens should the U.S. attempt to attack the group. Use of trending hashtags to promote propaganda

[ISIS resumed this social media campaign](#) in August 2014, when the U.S. began limited airstrikes in Iraq to counter ISIS and provide humanitarian aid, using the #CalamityWillBefallUS hashtag along with the hashtag #AMessageFromISIS to US. Tweets from official ISIS Twitter accounts included “Would you like to taste the losses, pain, death and all what (sic) you tasted in Iraq again?” and “O Westerners, your governments have lost their minds, and they will let you pay the cost of their stupidity, the Islamic State is too strong, so you must yield to it, not fight it!”

On August 19, 2014, ISIS acted on those threats, [releasing a video depicting the beheading](#) of American journalist James Wright Foley and threatening to behead a second American journalist. The video cited American airstrikes as the reason for the murder. ISIS later beheaded the other American journalist, and has since publicly beheaded British captives and burned a Japanese captive as well.

ISIS supporters are often active in a variety of languages and on a variety of platforms beyond Twitter, including the social networking site Facebook, the picture-sharing site Instagram, the chat services Kik and WhatsApp, the video sharing site YouTube, and the question and answer service Ask.FM. These individuals also encourage direct contact with potential recruits via encrypted messaging services such as SureSpot.

Kik, WhatsApp and SureSpot are used for private communications. For example, Mufid Elfgeeh, arrested in Rochester, New York, in May for providing material support to ISIS, allegedly communicated with a Jordanian member of ISIS living in Syria using WhatsApp. According to court documents, Elfgeeh said that the man told him “we are longing for you,” which Elfgeeh interpreted as meaning that “your brothers in the Islamic State (ISIS) love you.”

On Ask.FM, where users can post questions anonymously, known members of extremist organizations are asked questions by potential recruits. For example, the user Mujahid Miski, believed to be [Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan](#), and Al Shabaab member from Minnesota, was asked and answered questions including, “My brother wants to be a *mujahid* (fighter) but he’s got glasses. Will that stop him from becoming one?” Many of his answers also include encouragement for readers to join terrorist groups including ISIS. In one, for example, he wrote, “every minute and every second is wasted if you’re not out there building the Islamic Caliphate (a reference to ISIS). Go out and make *hijrah* (migration to a Muslim land) from the east and the west and join *jihad* (the fighting). Let your blood be the water for the tree of *Khilafah* (caliphate, a reference to ISIS).

Social media also enables dead Al Qaeda figureheads including Osama Bin Laden and [Anwar al Awlaki](#) (who was killed in a U.S. drone strike in 2011) to remain highly influential among extremists. Both ISIS and Al Qaeda claim them as their progenitors and spiritual leaders. If anything, the new media has created only more opportunities for terrorists to spread their quotes, writings, and messages.

In response to efforts by Twitter and other social media platforms like Facebook to remove pro-ISIS accounts when alerted to their presence, ISIS supporters have attempted to utilize alternative social media platforms.

In July 2014, [ISIS announced that it was suspending its official accounts on Twitter in favor of presence on alternative sites Friendica, Quitter and Diaspora](#). Friendica and Quitter quickly removed the new pages, and Diaspora removed them after ISIS released its first video showing the beheading of an American citizen in August, resulting in the return of official ISIS accounts to Twitter. The group and its followers continue to search for means of exploiting new resources; currently, [ISIS supporters broadcast terrorist propaganda on the live broadcast and chat website Mixlr](#).

ANTI-SEMITISM

One of the fundamental elements of terrorist propaganda is anti-Semitism, which is often packaged with explicit calls for violence against distinctly Jewish targets around the world. Terrorist groups, including ISIS and Al Qaeda, have been particularly focused on exploiting hatred of Jews in an effort to connect with, appeal to, and ultimately recruit a cadre of would-be extremists in the United States, Europe and around the world.

Such propaganda is not only used as a tactical tool to attract and radicalize potential recruits, but has had deadly consequences, including the recent attacks in France, Kenya and Bulgaria.

At least 22 of the 25 American citizens and permanent residents read or watched terrorist materials online. At least two, Shannon Maureen Conley, arrested in July 2014 for attempting to join ISIS, and Donald Ray Morgan, arrested in August 2014 for attempting to join ISIS, specifically cited anti-Israel sentiments as personal motivations for violence or revenge.

Conley noted this when questioned about a church she had been asked to leave after behaving suspiciously. According to court documents, Conley stated that she did not like Israel and she did not like the church's "active and vocal support for Israel." Morgan made statements about Israel on social media that included, "Let's gets (sic) some quality rockets to hamas bc these ones aren't hitting and destroying anything. Over 1000 & no deaths?" and "Honestly can we not kill one piece of crap Zionist?"

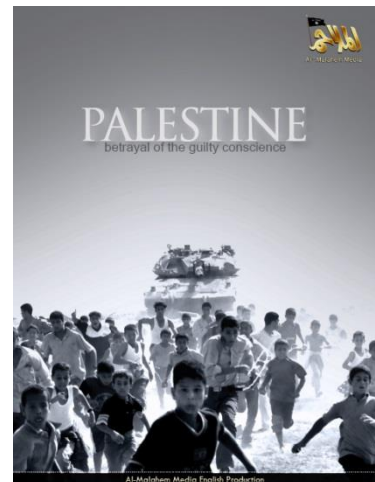
And a third, Rahatul Ashikim Khan, was a member of the virulently anti-Semitic Authentic Tauheed chat group sponsored by radical cleric and ISIS supporter Abdullah al-Faisal.

In 2014, [ISIS](#), [Al Qaeda Central](#), and [AQAP](#) all featured anti-Semitism in their propaganda. They all also used the war between Hamas and Israel in their propaganda to advance their own missions and rally recruits. For example:

- November 2014:** Images of violence against identifiably Orthodox Jews featured prominently into cartoon and video campaigns promoting attacks against Israelis in the wake of a [hatchet attack in a synagogue](#) and attacks committed [by running over Israelis with vehicles](#).



- October 2014:** The cover story of Al Qaeda’s [Resurgence magazine](#) was titled “Besiege Them: Practical Steps Towards the Liberation of Palestine.” It suggested that the best way to destabilize the State of Israel is to divest from “international trade and finance” and revert to the barter system, presumably because Jews (and by proxy Israel) control the world economy.
- September 2014:** ISIS’s primary spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani blamed Jews for the international opposition ISIS was facing, stating, ““The jews! The jews! Save the jews! This is the reason they [the U.S.] came.” Adnani also calls President Obama a “mule of the Jews,” a statement that was further popularized by ISIS supporters on Twitter using the hashtag #Obamamulejews. Adnani similarly claimed that Arab countries including Egypt and Syria exist as “guard dogs of the jews” ensuring Israel’s security against their best interests.
- September 2014:** Radical cleric and ISIS supporter [Abdullah Al-Faisal](#) hosted an online conference. Al-Faisal made [statements that included](#), “Did you know that they say Abu Bakr al [Baghdadi is a Jew](#)? When they accuse Abu bakr al Baghdadi of being a Jew, what are they? They are nothing but the barking dogs of *jah-hanam* (hell).” He also tweeted, “Why should #Jews commit genocide and then play the race card to defend themselves. To me, #Hitler was right.”
- August 2014:** AQAP released a new English-language magazine titled “[Palestine: Betrayal of the Guilty Conscience](#),” which used the conflict in Gaza as an excuse to renew the group’s call for [lone-wolf attacks](#) in the U.S. and the U.K. Various articles in that magazine stated that, “The Jewish nation remains to be the nation of treachery, betrayal and aggression,” and “There is no meaning to life when you see Jews do all sorts of things to your brothers and women and children.” It also specifically praised terror attacks in which “all Jews present were killed.”



- July 2014:** ISIS used anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric during the summer's war in Gaza. [The second issue of ISIS's English-language *Dabiq* magazine](#) stated that, "the Islamic State will do everything within its means to continue striking down every apostate who stands as an obstacle on its path towards Palestine," and then quoted a statement attributed to Mohammed, sometimes cited



ISIS media wing tweets threat: "Patience, Jews, our appointment is at al-Quds [Jerusalem] tomorrow, for the one who waits is close."

by extremists as an order to kill Jews. Around the same time, the Twitter account "Prophet's Khilafa," an unofficial ISIS account posted images of destruction in Gaza and a series of posters depicting anti-Semitic conspiracy theories such as "Jews after emancipation involved in slave trade, women trafficking and prostitution." And Al-Battar media, one of ISIS's media groups, [tweeted a series of graphics](#) in July that threatened Israel. One graphic posted on July 9 shows storm clouds over Jerusalem with a warning: "Patience, Jews, our appointment is at al-Quds [Jerusalem] tomorrow, for the one who waits is close." Another image posted the same day shows the Dome of the Rock mosque superimposed in front of militants and features the same statement.

- May 2014:** [Adam Gadahn](#), an American spokesman for Al Qaeda, issued a video blaming the coup that installed the current military government and "crimes against Islam and Muslims" on "the Jews and the crusaders." Quotes included, "This criminal Pharoanic clique [the current government] is nothing but the protector of the Jews and the agent of the western crusaders which lives on their handouts and bribes" and, "Power, force, arms, ammunition and leadership of armies must be in trustworthy Muslim hands not in the hands of the secular officers and hypocritical kings and emirs who are the friends of the West and protectors of the Jews."

Supporters of various terrorist groups are also among those [hacking](#) Jewish institutional websites, replacing the original text on the site with anti-Semitic and pro-terrorist messages.

Appendix: A list of American citizens and permanent residents arrested or charged on terror offenses in 2014, as well as Americans who have been identified as having joined terrorist groups in 2014.

February 6, 2014: **Liban Mohamed**, a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from Virginia was named in an arrest warrant for having allegedly joined Al Shabaab. Mohamed was also added to the FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists list on January 29, 2015 and Interpol issued a red notice to seek Mohamed as a wanted fugitive on August 15, 2014.

March 17, 2014: **Mohammad Hassan Hamdan**, a 22-year-old U.S. permanent resident from Michigan, is believed to have attempted to join Hezbollah.

March 17, 2014: [Nicholas Teasant](#), a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from California, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS.

March 19, 2014: **Avin Marsalis Brown**, a 21-year-old U.S. citizen from North Carolina, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS.

March 19, 2014: **Akba Jihad Jordan**, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from North Carolina, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS.

April 8, 2014: [Shannon Maureen Conley](#), a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Colorado, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS.

May 25, 2014: [Moner Abu-Salha](#), a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from Florida, died abroad in a suicide attack on behalf of Jabhat al Nusra.

June 17, 2014: [Rahatul Ashkim Khan](#), a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested for allegedly recruiting Westerners to join Al Shabaab.

June 17, 2014: [Michael Todd Wolfe](#), a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Texas, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS.

July 2, 2014: **Adam Dandach**, a 22-year-old U.S. citizen from California, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS. Dandach was charged with passport fraud on July 3, 2014.

July 23, 2014: **Hinda Osman Dhirane**, a 44-year-old U.S. citizen from Washington, was arrested for allegedly attempting to aid Al Shabaab.

July 23, 2014: **Muna Osman Jama**, a 34-year-old apparent U.S. permanent resident from Virginia, was arrested for allegedly attempting to aid Al Shabaab.

August 2, 2014: **Donald Ray Morgan**, a 44-year-old U.S. citizen from North Carolina was arrested in New York for being a felon in possession of a firearm. He is believed to have attempted to join ISIS.

August 23 or 24, 2014: [Abdirahmaan Muhumed](#), a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Minnesota, died abroad allegedly fighting with ISIS.

August 23 or 24, 2014: [Douglas McAuthur McCain](#), a 33-year-old U.S. citizen from California and Minnesota, died abroad allegedly fighting with ISIS.

September 15, 2014: [Mufid Elfgeeh](#), a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from New York, was arrested for allegedly attempting to aid and recruit for ISIS and Al Shabaab, Al Qaeda in Somalia, and plotting a domestic attack.

October 5 2014: [Mohammed Hamzah Khan](#), a 19-year-old U.S. citizen from Illinois, was arrested for allegedly attempting to join ISIS

November 2014: Hoda Muthana, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen from Alabama, reportedly travelled to join ISIS. She has not been charged.

November 17 2014: [Heather Elizabeth Coffman](#), a 29-year-old U.S. citizen from Virginia, was charged with providing false statements to a government agency and believed to have attempted to help Americans travel to join ISIS.

November 24, 2014: **Abdi Nur**, a 20 year old U.S. citizen from Minnesota was charged in absentia for allegedly having joined ISIS.

November 24, 2014: **Abdullah Yusuf**, an 18-year-old U.S. citizen from Minnesota was charged in absentia for allegedly having joined ISIS.

The uncharged minors believed to have attempted to join ISIS and included in statistics throughout this report included three teenage girls from Colorado and the teenage brother and sister of Mohammed Khan of Illinois.