

THE DANGERS ISIS AND ITS PROGENY POSE TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PEACE

By way of introduction, the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is an international, Non-Governmental Organisation, dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights and to furthering the rule of law in international affairs. The ECLJ has held Special Consultative Status before the United Nations/ECOSOC since 2007¹. ECLJ thanks the Human Rights Council for the opportunity to submit this statement.

On 4 July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of the so-called “Islamic State” (formerly known as ISIS² or ISIL³), delivered a sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mosul, Iraq. He claimed the mantle of caliph and called on fellow Muslims to obey him as they would Allah and Muhammad. Al-Baghdadi (Caliph Ibrahim) grew up in Samarra, studied Islamic history, and gained a doctorate from Baghdad University⁴. After 2006, al-Baghdadi joined the predecessor to ISIS, the Islamic State of Iraq⁵. In 2010, al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISI⁶ and changed the name of the organisation to ISIS in 2013. Under al-Baghdadi’s leadership, ISIS has secured revenue streams through oil sales from ISIS-controlled oil fields, ransom payments, and cash and precious metals looted from banks⁷. ISIS’ cash and assets are worth approximately two billion dollars⁸.

ISIS has emerged as so ruthless that other well-known, radical Islamist groups have distanced themselves from ISIS and have publicly condemned ISIS’ actions⁹. ISIS jihadists commit violence against fellow Muslims in violation of Sharia; they routinely commit war crimes and engage in torture in violation of international law; and they also issue threats to Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities. ISIS is especially dangerous because, not only are ISIS leaders and fighters ruthless, but they also have sufficient material assets to support a standing military force and they possess the will to use weapons of mass destruction.

Claiming to uphold Allah’s law, ISIS, in fact, routinely violates Sharia, which forbids a Muslim from killing another Muslim unless certain conditions are met¹⁰. ISIS routinely kills Muslims and non-Muslims alike even when they have not taken up arms against ISIS. Such killings constitute violations of Islamic law and morality as well as war crimes.

¹*Consultative Status for the European Centre for Law and Justice*, U.N. DEP’T ECON. & SOC. AFF., <http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/consultativeStatusSummary.do?profileCode=3010> (last visited 25 July 2014).

²ISIS stands for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. It can also mean Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria or Islamic State of Iraq and *Sham*.

³ISIL stands for Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

⁴Graeme Baker, *The Fierce Ambition Of ISIL’s Baghdadi*, AL JAZEERA (15 June 2014),

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/fierce-ambition-isil-baghdadi-2014612142242188464.html>.

⁵*Id.*

⁶*Profile: Islamic State In Iraq And The Levant (ISIS)*, BBC NEWS (16 June 2014),

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24179084>.

⁷Terrence McCoy, *ISIS Just Stole \$425 Million, Iraqi Governor Says, And Became The ‘World’s Richest Terrorist Group’*, WASH. POST (12 June 2014), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/12/isis-just-stole-425-million-and-became-the-worlds-richest-terrorist-group/>.

⁸*Profile: Islamic State In Iraq And The Levant (ISIS)*, *supra* note 6.

⁹Liz Sly, *Al-Qaeda Disavows Any Ties With Radical Islamist Isis Group In Syria, Iraq*, WASH. POST (3 Feb. 2013), http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-disavows-any-ties-with-radical-islamist-isis-group-in-syria-iraq/2014/02/03/2c9afc3a-8cef-11e3-98ab-fe5228217bd1_story.html; Elisa Odden, *Jordanian Jihadist Leader Condemns Isis Caliphate*, AL MONITOR (7 July 2014),

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/07/jordan-maqdisi-jihad-iraq-isis-caliphate-qaeda.html>; Ellen Knickmeyer, *Al Qaeda ‘Disavows’ Syrian Terror Group For Being Too Terrorist*, WALL ST. J. (3 Feb. 2014), <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304851104579361041928884318>; *See also* Basma Atassi, *Qaeda Chief Annuls Syrian-Iraqi Jihad Merger*, AL JAZEERA (9 June 2013), <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/2013699425657882.html> (*follow* translated “here” imbedded link).

¹⁰ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI, *THE MEANING OF THE HOLY QUR’AN* 4:93 (Amana Publ’ns 10th ed. (1999) (reprint 2004)) [hereinafter *QURAN*].

ISIS routinely tortures its enemies in violation of international law. ISIS operates several detention facilities, which it uses to punish those who break Sharia or oppose ISIS. Individuals suspected of violating Sharia or opposing ISIS, including young children, have been abducted and transported to prisons, where they have been flogged, tortured, and executed¹¹. Other targets for imprisonment include: members of the media, local councils, rival rebel groups, international organisations, and foreign religious figures¹². Former detainees describe various modes of torture common in ISIS prisons: beating detainees with “generator belts, thick pieces of cable, sticks or other implements”¹³; forcing detainees to remain in “contorted stress position[s]”¹⁴; giving electric shocks¹⁵; solitary confinement¹⁶; and flogging¹⁷.

ISIS routinely targets civilians and soldiers rendered hors de combat and executes summary justice against civilians and soldiers in the most brutal, inhumane ways possible. ISIS’ penchant for violent, public executions began in March 2014 when ISIS accused a shepherd of murder and theft and executed him by shooting him in the head¹⁸. In a grotesque, symbolic display of authority, ISIS fighters tied the corpse to a cross and displayed it in the public square¹⁹. Again, in May 2014, ISIS publicly executed seven men in al-Raqqa, Syria, hanging two of the bodies on crosses and leaving them there for over three days²⁰. A witness to the killings claimed that the other five bodies were not displayed because they were all children²¹. On 29 May 2014, ISIS members executed at least 15 civilians in northern Syria by shooting them in the head or chest²². Residents said that at least six children were among those killed²³.

Since ISIS’ surge into Iraq, the group has escalated its violent shows of force. On 15 June 2014, ISIS released video footage of five unarmed Iraqi soldiers being taunted and forced to praise ISIS, before being shot²⁴. On that same day, ISIS used social media to spread photographs and videos depicting massacres at seven different sites in Iraq²⁵. ISIS claimed to have killed over 1,700 Iraqi soldiers²⁶. An ensuing analysis done by Human Rights Watch concluded that, in two mass graves near Tikrit, Iraq, ISIS left the bodies of between 160 and 190 men it had executed²⁷.

¹¹Abuse ‘Rife In Secret Al-Qaeda Jails In Syria,’ BBC NEWS (19 Dec. 2013), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25440381>.

¹²AMNESTY INT’L, *Rule of Fear: ISIS Abuses In Detention In Northern Syria* 6–7 (19 Dec. 2013), available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/063/2013/en/32d380a3-cc47-4cb6-869f-2628ca44cb99/mde240632013en.pdf>.

¹³*Id.* at 7.

¹⁴*Id.*

¹⁵*Id.* at 9.

¹⁶*Id.* at 7.

¹⁷*Id.* at 10.

¹⁸Salma Abdelaziz, *Death And Desecration In Syria: Jihadist Group ‘Crucifies’ Bodies To Send Message*, CNN (2 May 2014), <http://www.cnn.com/2014/05/01/world/meast/syria-bodies-crucifixions/>.

¹⁹*Id.*

²⁰*Id.*

²¹*Id.*

²²*Syria: ISIS Summarily Killed Civilians*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (14 June 2014), <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/14/syria-isis-summarily-killed-civilians>.

²³*Id.*

²⁴Adam Lusher, *Iraq Crisis: The Footage That Shows Isis Militants Taunting And Killing Shia Soldiers*, INDEP. (16 June 2014), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-crisis-the-footage-that-shows-isis-militants-taunting-and-killing-shia-forces-9541929.html>.

²⁵Rod Nordland & Alissa J. Rubin, *Massacre Claim Shakes Iraq*, N.Y. TIMES (15 June 2014), http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/world/middleeast/iraq.html?_r=3; see also, *Militants Post Grisly Images Of Mass Killing In Iraq*, CBS NEWS (15 June 2014), <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/iraq-conflict-isis-militants-post-grisly-images-of-mass-killing/>.

²⁶*Id.*

²⁷Connor Simpson, *Rights Group Confirms ISIS Mass Grave Images*, THE WIRE (27 June 2014), <http://www.thewire.com/global/2014/06/rights-group-confirms-isis-mass-grave-images/373598/>.

On 13 June 2014, ISIS posted a picture of a decapitated head on Twitter, along with the following text: “This is our football, it’s made of skin #WorldCup”²⁸. By using the “WorldCup” hashtag, ISIS managed to expose the gruesome photograph to thousands of innocent Twitter users who were simply following the FIFA World²⁹. Desecrating a body is forbidden by the law of armed conflict³⁰.

Throughout mid-June 2014, ISIS carried out numerous executions in Iraq. Witnesses have testified that ISIS has shot dozens of soldiers and policemen, concluding their gruesome killings by decapitating their victims and placing rows of decapitated heads along the road in Mosul³¹. One ISIS militant tweeted a picture of his seven-year-old son holding the decapitated head of a Syrian soldier accompanied by the quote “That’s my boy!”³².

Torture, intentionally targeting civilians, killing soldiers in custody and unable to defend themselves, desecrating corpses, genocide, and the like are commonplace with ISIS. They all constitute war crimes³³.

In Mosul, Christians faced death unless they converted or paid a fine, called Jizya³⁴, in accordance with Sharia³⁵. In Mosul, ISIS militants tagged Christian houses with the letter “N” for Nassarah, a common term used for Christians in the Quran³⁶, so that jihadist terrorists could attack them.

Nearly 50,000 Christians have been displaced from Qaraqosh, including those who fled from neighboring Mosul³⁷. Yazidis, Shias, and liberal Muslims have also been displaced from the region³⁸. ISIS views these groups as “infidels without human rights”³⁹.

Canon Andrew White, Vicar of the Anglican Church in Baghdad noted with horror that a Christian “child was cut in half” by ISIS “monsters”⁴⁰.

²⁸Simon Tomlinson & Amy White, “*This Is Our Football, It’s Made Of Skin #World Cup*”: After Posting Sickening Beheading Video Of Iraqi Policeman, Isis Boast Of Slaughtering 1,700 Soldiers, DAILY MAIL (13 June 2014), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2656905/ISIS-jihadists-seize-two-towns-bear-Baghdad-U-S-tanks-helicopters-stolen-fleeing-western-trained-Iraqi-forces.html>; see also, Chris Hughes et al., *Police Chief Beheaded By Jihadist Rebels Who Tweeted: “This Is Our Ball. It Is Made Of Skin. #WorldCup.”* MIRROR (14 June 2014), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/police-chief-beheaded-jihadist-rebels-3690513>.

²⁹*Id.*

³⁰Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War art. 16, Aug. 12, 1949, 6 U.S.T. 3316, 75 U.N.T.S. 135 [hereinafter Geneva Convention].

³¹Sam Greenhill et al., *Isis Butchers Leave ‘Roads Lined With Decapitated Police And Soldiers’: Battle For Baghdad Looms As Thousands Answer Iraqi Government’s Call To Arms And Jihadists Bear Down On Capital*, DAILY MAIL (12 June 2014), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2655977/ISIS-militants-march-Baghdad-trademark-bullet-head-gets-way-control-north.html>.

³²*Photo Of Boy Holding Decapitated Syrian Soldier’s Head ‘Barbaric’ - Australia PM*, RT (11 Aug. 2014), <http://rt.com/news/179480-australia-decapitation-syria-abbott/>.

³³Geneva Convention, *supra* note 30, arts. 16, 32, 47.

³⁴Fight those who believe not In Allah nor the Last Day, Nor hold that forbidden Which hath been forbidden By Allah and His Messenger, Nor acknowledge the Religion Of Truth, from among The People of the Book, Until they pay the Jizyah With Willing Submission, And feel themselves subdued. QURAN, *supra* note 10 at 9:29.

³⁵Mariano Castillo, *ISIS Overtakes Iraq’s Largest Christian City*, CNN (Aug. 8, 2014, 10:51 PM), <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/07/world/meast/iraq-isis-christian-city/>.

³⁶*Iraqi Christians Flee After Isis Issue Mosul Ultimatum*, BBC NEWS (July 18, 2014, 18:56),

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28381455>; see also QURAN, *supra* note 10 at 5:14, 61:14. The Quran refers to Christians as *Nassarah*, which is understood to mean people from Nazareth.

³⁷*Tens Of Thousands of Christians Flee ISIS Attack On Ninevah Town Of Qaraqosh (Hamdaniya)*, YAHOO! NEWS (26 June 2014), <http://news.yahoo.com/tens-thousands-christians-flee-isis-attack-nineveh-town-212600821.html>.

³⁸*Id.*; see also Sophia Jones, *In Face of ISIS Advance, Many Iraqi Christians Insist On Staying Put*, HUFFINGTON POST (25 June 2014), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/25/iraqi-christians-isis_n_5527266.html.

³⁹*Tens Of Thousands of Christians Flee*, *supra* note 37.

⁴⁰Coca, *Horror – Anglican Vicar of Baghdad: ‘Child I Baptized Cut In Half By ISIS’*, EAGLE RISING (11 Aug. 2014), <http://eaglerising.com/7886/horror-anglican-vicar-baghdad-child-baptized-cut-half-isis/>.

In addition to Mosul and Qaraqosh, three other villages were attacked, two of which are predominantly Christian⁴¹. Archbishop Dawod of the Syriac Orthodox church called ISIS' targeting of Christians a "genocide [or] ethnic cleansing"⁴². He stated, "[t]hey have burned churches They are occupying our churches and converting them into mosques"⁴³.

Tens of thousands of members of the Yazidi sect became stranded on Mount Sinjar when ISIS militants surrounded it⁴⁴. ISIS ordered the Yazidis to either convert or die⁴⁵—a video released by ISIS shows hundreds of Yazidi men converting to Islam⁴⁶.

Moreover, ISIS has even threatened to destroy the Kaaba in the Grand Mosque in Mecca⁴⁷. This is consistent with ISIS' practice of destroying shrines, tombs, mosques, and other religious sites⁴⁸; ISIS believes that giving veneration to these things violates Islamic teachings⁴⁹.

On 25 June 2014, ISIS threatened the United States and Israel by using social media to post warnings and pictures of executed victims.⁵⁰ In an audio recording posted online, al-Baghdadi implores Muslims to fight for the newly established Islamic State, even declaring they "will conquer Rome and own the world"⁵¹. On 19 August 2014, ISIS released the video showing the beheading of American journalist James Foley⁵².

Additionally, an ISIS-affiliated terrorist organisation has threatened death to the Moroccan Minister of Justice and Liberties⁵³. In June 2014, Lebanon suffered a series of attacks by suicide bombers thought to be associated with ISIS⁵⁴.

ISIS openly threatens everyone it sees as an opponent to its version of Islam. What makes ISIS especially dangerous is its possession of both the means and will to use the means to carry out its threats.

⁴¹Castillo, *supra* note 35.

⁴²Sam Jones & Owen Bowcott, *Religious Leaders Say Isis Persecution Of Iraqi Christians Has Become Genocide*, THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 8, 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/08/isis-persecution-iraqi-christians-genocide-asylum>.

⁴³*Id.*

⁴⁴Martin Chulov, *40,000 Iraqis Stranded On Mountain As Isis Jihadists Threaten Death*, THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 6, 2014), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/40000-iraqis-stranded-mountain-isis-death-threat>.

⁴⁵*Id.*

⁴⁶*Islamic State Video Shows Yazidi Men Converting to Islam*, N.Y. POST (22 Aug. 2014), <http://nypost.com/2014/08/22/islamic-state-video-shows-yazidi-men-converting-to-islam/>.

⁴⁷Yasmine Hafiz, *Reported ISIS Member Says They Will Destroy The Kaaba In Mecca, 'Kill Those Who Worship Stones'*, HUFFINGTON POST (1 July 2014), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/01/isis-destroy-kaaba-mecca_n_5547635.html.

⁴⁸Sophie Jane Evans, *Shocking Moment Isis Militants Take Sledgehammers To Mosul Tomb Of Prophet Jonah As More Than 50 Blindfolded Bodies Are Found Massacred South Of Baghdad*, DAILY MAIL (9 July 2014), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2685923/Shocking-moment-ISIS-militants-sledgehammers-Mosul-tomb-Prophet-Jonah-50-blindfolded-bodies-massacred-south-Baghdad.html>.

⁴⁹*Id.*

⁵⁰Johnlee Varghese, *Isis Issues Threat To US With Decapitated Head, Says Calamity Will Befall The Country*, INT'L BUS. TIMES (26 June 2014), <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/isis-issues-threat-us-decapitated-head-says-calamity-will-befall-country-603119>.

⁵¹Christopher Livesay, *Rome Is Not Intimidated By Isis Threats To Conquer It For The Caliphate*, VICE NEWS (11 July 2014), <https://news.vice.com/article/rome-is-not-intimidated-by-isis-threats-to-conquer-it-for-the-caliphate>.

⁵²Chelsea J. Carter, *Video Shows ISIS Beheading U.S. Journalist James Foley*, CNN (20 Aug. 2014), <http://www.cnn.com/2014/08/19/world/meast/isis-james-foley/index.html>.

⁵³Larbi Arbaoui, *ISIS-linked Jihadist Group Makes Death Threats Against Moroccan Minister of Justice*, MOROCCO WORLD NEWS (Aug. 10, 2014, 10:15), <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2014/08/136356/isis-linked-jihadist-group-makes-death-threats-against-moroccan-minister-of-justice/>.

⁵⁴Carine Torbey & Suzanne Kianpour, *Is Lebanon Next on ISIS Hit List?*, BBC NEWS (Jul. 15, 2014, 6:07 ET), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28292345>.

Coupled with its fanatical ideology is the fact that ISIS has huge amounts of money, military equipment, and materials available to carry out its threats. ISIS has captured significant amounts of high-tech U.S. military equipment abandoned by the Iraqi armed forces⁵⁵. These weapons make ISIS a formidable foe in the region.

ISIS also possesses radiological material that could be used to make dirty bombs⁵⁶. It is not beyond imagination that ISIS could also obtain chemical weapons from Syria. Were ISIS to obtain increasing numbers of weapons of mass destruction, the global danger of this group would increase exponentially.

With such weapons and funding, ISIS has been able to make strong advances across Syria and Iraq. ISIS forces have even expanded fighting into Lebanon⁵⁷. On 3 August 2014, ISIS captured Mosul Dam in Iraq in a mere twenty-four hours⁵⁸.

ISIS' recent actions in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon demonstrate a tangible, widespread threat to individual human rights, regional stability, and global peace, a threat that the world neglects at its peril. Western and moderate Muslim nations must come to terms with the threat posed by ISIS' actions.

⁵⁵Jeremy Bender, *ISIS Militants Captured 52 American-Made Artillery Weapons That Cost \$50,000 Each*, BUSINESS INSIDER (15 July 2014), <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-has-52-american-weapons-that-can-hit-baghdad-2014-7>; see also Douglas Ernst, *ISIL Captured 52 U.S.-Made Howitzers; Artillery Weapons Cost 500K Each*, WASHINGTON TIMES (15 July 2014), <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/jul/15/isil-captured-52-us-made-howitzers-artillery-weapo/>.

⁵⁶Perry Chiaramonte, *Stolen Uranium Compounds Not Only Dirty Bomb Ingredients Within ISIS' Grasp, Say Experts*, FOX NEWS (15 July 2014), <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/07/15/stolen-uranium-compounds-not-only-dirty-bomb-ingredients-within-isis-grasp/>.

⁵⁷Hwaida Saad & Rick Gladstone, *Border Fighting Intensifies Between ISIS and Lebanon*, NY TIMES (Aug. 4, 2014), <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/world/middleeast/isis-lebanon-syria.html>.

⁵⁸*Iraq Conflict: ISIS Fighters Seize Mosul Dam, Oilfield and 3 Towns*, CBC NEWS (Aug. 3, 2014), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/iraq-conflict-isis-fighters-seize-mosul-dam-oilfield-and-3-towns-1.2726684>.