



International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism



New “Breaking the ISIS Brand” Video Clip Released Today - Join or Defect from Ad-Dawlah?

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As ISIS is rapidly being defeated on the Syrian and Iraqi battlefield, it continues radicalizing and recruiting in full force on the Internet. The so called "Islamic State" has thus far with unprecedented success among any other terrorist group in history, via their polished and prolific online campaign, successfully recruited over 30,000 foreign fighters to come to the battlefield, and inspired dozens more terrorists to attack at home. ISIS is adept at attracting the curious, and has skillfully mastered the feedback mechanisms of social media to enable them to "swarm" in on those expressing interest, to seduce them into the group. The West must understand that ISIS is not just a terrorist organization and the fight against ISIS is not only on the battlefield; it is also in the digital space where ISIS is currently winning.

As ISIS continues to lose its territory, it is increasingly telling new recruits not to travel to Syria and Iraq; instead, turn to inspiring homegrown terrorism, aimed in particular at Western countries carrying out attacks as simple as renting a lorry or buying an assault rifle to mount an attack. All evidence points towards ISIS continuing its Internet recruiting success in the West, and we have seen that the longer ISIS goes unchallenged, the more dangerous they become.

ISIS has a brand that sells its vision of a utopian Islamic "Caliphate" and a path to justice to those who feel marginalized, discriminated against, fearful of their governments, and feel as though they are under attack by the West. Unless the West takes the fight to the online battlefield where ISIS is currently winning, more Westerners will buy what ISIS is selling as it operates with impunity and we will continue to see attacks in the places we all routinely frequent: airports, restaurants, nightclubs, concerts, parks, trains, sporting events. It's time to fight back.

As an expert who has interviewed hundreds of terrorists worldwide, I firmly believe that the most credible voices to use against ISIS are those of former terrorists who have defected. Such sentiments are shared by many in the counterterrorism field as well. The International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism ([ICSVE](#)) engages in action-based research and aims to break the ISIS brand by creating and flooding the Internet with powerful counter-narratives to their claims of creating a utopian "Caliphate" and Internet seduction of vulnerable sectors of society. Over the past year and a half, the ICSVE researchers have conducted forty in-depth interviews with ISIS

defectors—Syrian, European, Central Asians and Balkan former ISIS fighters – men, women, teens and parents of fighters – who have shared personal horror stories of ISIS brutality and hypocrisy. They have borne witness to Muslim children as young as six manipulated into suicide bombings; systemic rape of Muslim women as sex slaves; massacres of Muslim dissenters; seduction of youth around the globe and the complete perversion of their faith.

At this juncture, we have at the urging of the U.S. State Department created our nonprofit center, the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE), to push out the product we are creating from these interviews, which for the most part have been audio and video recorded. ICSVE is taking the raw interview material and editing them down into short video clips that mimic ISIS propaganda, naming them with pro-ISIS titles and opening screens that look like ISIS—to be fed onto the Internet and into encrypted ISIS chat rooms to offer a sobering counterpunch and reality check to those drawn to ISIS. As each video is being produced we are testing its power in face-to-face focus groups held in Berlin, Germany; Zarqa, Jordan; Pristina, Kosovo, Osh, Kyrgyzstan and in the US to name but a few, as well as on the Internet where ISIS recruiters thrive, to learn if the voices of defectors denouncing ISIS can turn vulnerable individuals away from the group, and break the ISIS brand.

Thus, far we have created with the help of a Hollywood producer and documentary film maker three edited video clips of ISIS defectors denouncing the group and have begun to subtitle these videos into 21 of the languages of nationalities that ISIS targets on a 24/7 basis. The [third such video](#) has just been released today. Please help us continue this project by sharing the video, writing about and publicizing our effort and supporting it financially.

Our online video materials and Internet memes are produced with titles that make them sound like ISIS products in order that those who are already consuming ISIS materials will be interested to open and watch (or read) them as well as retweet or repost them. Evidence from years of interviewing now over five hundred terrorists is that vulnerable individuals join terrorist groups because the group, its ideology and social support it provides is initially meeting the needs of the person who gets drawn further and further into the group, with the group eventually overtaking the person and using him or her to serve

the needs of the group versus the way it initially started. Likewise, those who begin to consume ISIS related material often get tunneled into seeing only the perspective of the terrorist group versus a wider dissenting point of view that would contest the ISIS claimed and distorted Islamic validity for terror acts or even the materials being presented as facts and “news”. Our Breaking the ISIS Brand materials are designed to break through that by appearing at first glance to be from ISIS and indeed many of the voices will be from ISIS insiders—but no longer glorifying or supporting the group but instead actively denouncing it and calling others to do the same. Please help us to fight ISIS and Break the ISIS Brand. Share our videos and to donate to ICSVE please visit our [website](#) or contact the [director](#).

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