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NJOHSP

EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

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ISIS's Strategy to Divide Muslims in the West

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) global attacks since last year are part of a deliberate strategy to provoke anti-Muslim rhetoric and actions in the West that create fissures between Muslims and local populations; ISIS aims to capitalize on the tension by casting itself as a defender of Muslims worldwide. ISIS's predecessor organization, the Sunni-majority al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), employed a similar approach in Iraq in 2006 when it destroyed a major Shia mosque in the country. This attack galvanized the Shia majority population to crack down on Sunnis throughout the country, even those unaffiliated with terrorism, a response AQI exploited to recruit new Sunnis into its ranks.

- A recurring theme in ISIS propaganda is depicting Islam and the West as irreconcilable. In 2014, ISIS established its self-proclaimed caliphate, claiming Muslims can no longer justify living in the West and, by refusing to join the group, they will expose themselves to “persecution” by Western governments. In a recent edition of ISIS's online English-language magazine *Dabiq*, the group writes, “Muslims in the West will quickly find themselves between one of two choices”—joining ISIS or fighting it.
- Since March, ISIS has directed or inspired eight attacks in four Western countries, killing approximately 170. In some countries, the attacks have fueled retaliatory hate crimes and governmental responses that have alienated Muslims. For example, in April, Germany passed a law requiring refugees—the majority of which are from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan—to learn German or lose residency rights. Earlier this year, moreover, Austria and nine Balkan countries restricted the flow of refugees to Germany.
- In response to the Brussels attacks in March, Poland's Prime Minister refused to allow refugees into Poland, stating, “We cannot allow a situation in which events taking place in the countries of Western Europe are carried over to the territory of Poland.”



ISIS's online English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, released in February

Anti-Muslim hate crimes in the United States:

In May, Georgetown University published a report asserting 174 anti-Muslim incidents in the United States in 2015. They included 12 murders, 29 physical assaults, 50 threats against persons or institutions, 54 acts of vandalism or destruction of property, eight arsons, and nine shootings or bombings. In 2014, the number was 154.

Contact Information

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