

Jordan in the eyes of Islamic State



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This briefing series builds on the research conducted on political Islam at DU to shed light on the narrative of Islamists and jihadis in the MENA region and beyond.

This short briefing paper discusses IS' view of the Royal family and the government of Jordan. It surveys IS' newsletter, *al-Naba'*, and the magazines *Dābiq*, *Rumīyyah* and *Dār al-Islām*, to investigate the group's perception of the country.

In IS' discourse, those Sunnis who oppose the group are 'apostates', *murtaddīn*, referring to those Muslims who rejected to pay *Zakat* (charity), to Caliph Abū Bakr. Thus, in the articles surveyed, IS sees the Jordanian monarch, 'Abdullāh II bin al-Hussein, as a *tāghūt* (tyrant), and the regime as an apostate regime (*al-Naba'*, 3, p. 10; 21, p. 12; 36, p. 8; 37, p. 3; 51, p. 6; 53, p. 3). Similar attributes can be found in *Dār al-Islām* (7, pp. 27-28), *Dābiq* (7, pp. 4-7; 9, p. 21; 12, p. 46), and *Rumīyyah* (5, p. 41; 6, p. 12 and p. 27).

The main argument used by IS to delegitimize the Jordanian regime is the country's alliance with the international coalition in the fight against the group. The latter, thus, focuses on Jordan's ties with Israel, the United States, and Russia – the enemies of 'true Islam' – as evidence of its anti-Islamic agenda. It also accuses Jordan to have taken part into the "crusade" airstrikes against "true Muslims". *Dār al-Islām* wrote, "[T]he Jordanian *tāghūt* with its Jewish ally" (7, pp. 27-28) target Muslims. In the same vein, *Dābiq* accuses Jordan of supporting the Russia intervention in Syria (12, pp. 45-46). Referring to the infamous burning of the Jordanian pilot Mo'āth al-Kasāsbah (arguably on 3 February 2015), *Dābiq* commented: "[W]hen the news of the video broke out, the *tāghūt* of Jordan [King Abdullāh] who at the time was in Washington to meet with his masters at the White House – as is the habit of the crusader puppets – cut short his trip..." (7, p. 5).

According to IS, Jordan's submission to the "crusaders" is not new since it goes back to the British rule after WWI. A historical article published in *Dābiq* explains: "Al Husayn [The Sharif of Mecca] and his sons meticulously obeyed the orders dictated to them by the British crusaders so as to guarantee their backing" (9, p. 21). The same article continued, "[T]he current *tāghūt* of Jordan is a descendant of this same family" (*Ibid.*), and "[T]he *tāghūt* ['Abdullāh] of Jordan raises the *jāhilī* [the era before Islam] flag of his great-great-grandfather "Sharīf" al-Husayn" (*Dābiq*, 9, p. 22). *Dār al-Islām* and *Dābiq* claim that Jordan belongs to the "anti-'revolution' [Syrian revolution]" bloc. They also postulate that Jordan supports al-Assad's regime over his "equally secular and *murtadd*" opponents because the country fears that such revolutions might propagate into their own countries (7, p. 28; 12, p. 46 respectively).

Hence, Jordan is not only the ally to IS' far enemies but also it strongly supports the group's close enemy, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in Syria. *Al-Naba'* and *Dār al-Islām* published a detailed article on the relations between the Jordanian intelligence service and the FSA, and the training camps that were set inside Jordan to train the FSA forces (34, pp. 8-9; 9, p. 14 respectively).

In the narrative of IS, Jordan, the United States, and the FSA belong to a sole alliance against Muslims in Syria. Referring to the capture of the Jordanian pilot in December 2014, *Dābiq* states, “[H]is father and brother [of the pilot] then pleaded for his release, claiming he was a ‘sincere Muslim’, not realizing he was a murderous [murtadd] due to his military service for the Jordanian tāghūt and his participation in the crusade that killed many Muslims” (6, p. 34).

Not only Jordan disregards the fate of Muslims in Syria, but also it consciously sentenced, IS argues, the Jordanian pilot and the Japanese hostage Kenji Goto Jogo. In an article published in *Dābiq*, IS explains that it requested the release of the prisoner Sājidah ar-Rīshāwī in exchange for Kenji Goto Jogo (7, p. 4). However, “[T]he Jordanian regime recklessly complicated the process” and both prisoners were executed “due to the negligence of [the Jordanian regime]” (*Ibid.*). The article concludes: “The relatives of Kenji Goto Jogo and the [murtadd] pilot have no one to blame but the political leaders of their lands who strive to appease and serve the American crusaders” (*Ibid.*). IS, thus, sees the world in black and white terms and uses its religious-base narrative for the articulation of its approaches to neighbouring Muslim states.

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