

6 Analysis and Conclusions

6.1 Target Audience

Anyone with an internet connection can access insurgent media products directly. The delivery platform and nature of the material offered up by insurgents suggest that the primary target audience is young, technically savvy, educated, and often middle-class or above—a generation that will shape the future of the Arab world.

The dominant language of insurgent media is Arabic and the preeminent delivery channels are Arabic-language websites and discussion forums. Most of the audiovisual material is packaged in forms that require a high-speed Internet connection to download files running to several hundred megabytes (although smaller files are also available for users with dial-up connections). And because the bulk of audiovisual materials are available for downloading, not viewing online, they are best accessed at home, rather than from an Internet café, where downloading may not be advisable (because of surveillance) or possible (because of restrictions). Individual users can also reformat downloaded materials as DVDs or audiocassettes for local distribution.

Taken together, these factors point to a relatively well-defined profile for the average consumer of insurgent media products: A native speaker of Arabic with a strong interest in politics and access to a high-speed Internet connection. This consumer most likely resides in a Persian Gulf country, where high-speed Internet access is most widespread in the Arab world, and is probably a member of at least the middle class. Data collected from alexa.com on the geographical spread of visitors to the primary distribution sites for insurgent media support this (see Figure 92), with the largest number of visitors to most sites coming from Saudi Arabia (although Egypt and the Palestinian territories are often high on the list as well).

Iraqis themselves, it should be noted, are not the apparent target audience for the insurgent media materials distributed on the Internet,

although DVDs with insurgent films are available for sale in Iraq. Intermittent electricity throughout Iraq and limited Internet access are the primary reasons for this.¹ Iraqis also have more pressing concerns. Evidence that insurgent groups treat Iraqis as a separate target audience is found in the printed leaflets distributed within Iraq (see Section 5.2.1, Print), which adopt a different tone than materials created for global distribution and focus primarily on specific, local issues.

Within the community of “typical consumers,” two groups stand out (see Figure 93). The first are sympathizers who seek out insurgent materials on the Internet in order to obtain more details than they can find in mainstream Arab media. From the insurgent perspective, of course, sympathizers are important as a potential source of financial support. Recruitment appears to be of lesser importance to insurgent groups, some of which have stated that they neither need nor want foreigners to join the fight. Meanwhile, the group that makes the most active use of foreign fighters—**Al-Qaeda**, currently branded as the **Islamic State of Iraq**—seems to have little difficulty attracting foreigners to act as suicide bombers.

Just as important as potential financial backers are opinion makers, the second community within the “typical users” targeted by insurgent groups. These are the media professionals who create the content of mainstream Arabic-language media. It is, of course, their job to follow and report on the media activities of insurgent groups. For the insurgent groups, making materials available to media professionals ensures that the insurgent message reaches a larger audience through the “amplification effect” of mainstream media (see Section 5.3.2, The Amplification Effect).

¹ Given the state of infrastructure in Iraq, it is reasonable to assume that few Iraqis are viewing insurgent websites. As of mid-May 2007, RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq reported that areas of the capital and some governorates were only receiving one hour of electricity a day. RFI's Al-Basrah correspondent reported on May 17 that the city had been without electricity for four days.



Figure 92. Alexa.com reach graphs and geographical breakdowns of visitors to the main websites distributing insurgent media materials

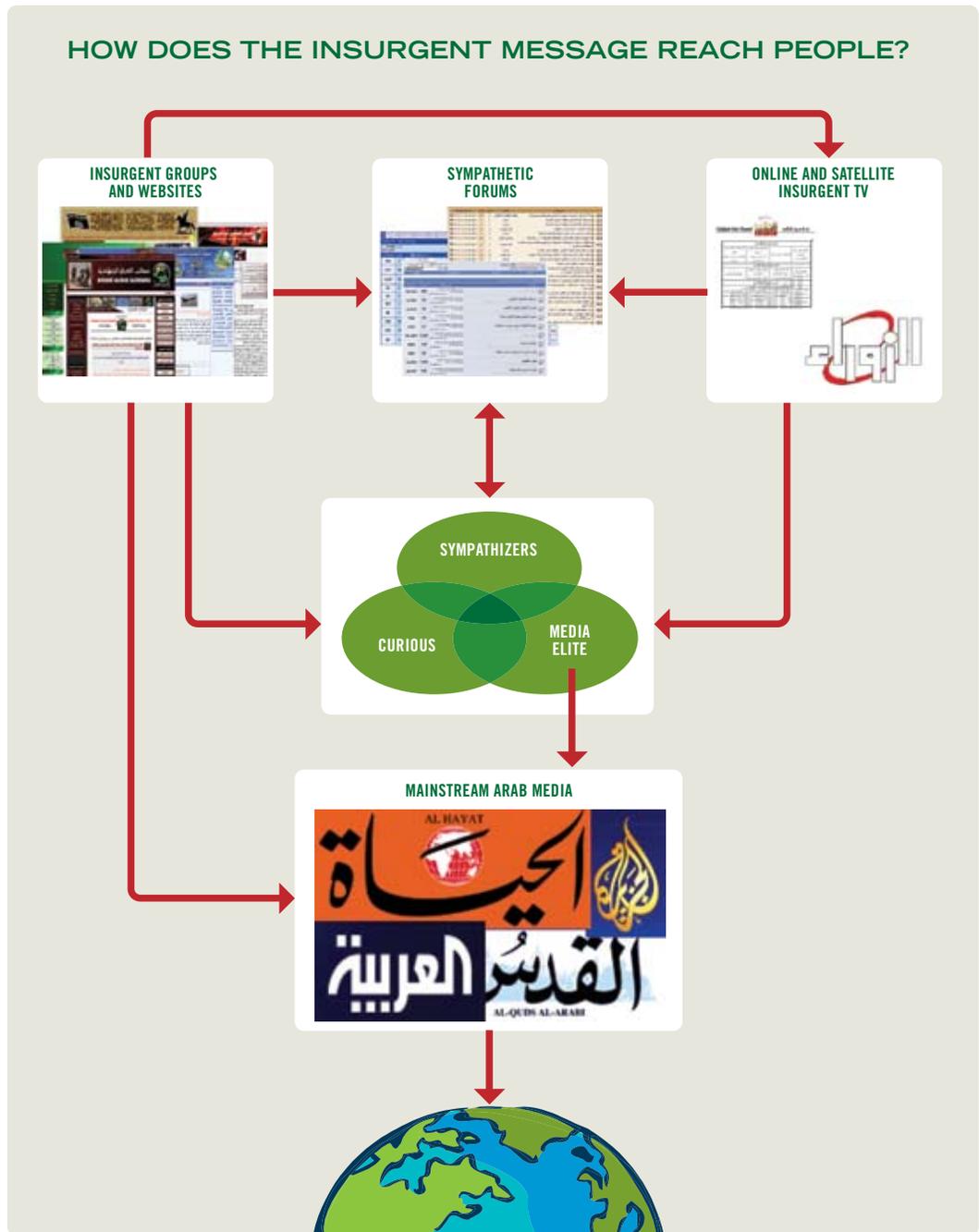


Figure 93. A diagram illustrating the distribution of insurgent media products from websites to consumers of mainstream media

6.1.1 Failsafe Mechanisms

The active public participation on Iraqi insurgent websites and forums ensures that statements, videos, and other insurgent propaganda, once posted to a site, are

replicated on other sites. This failsafe mechanism ensures that if one site is shut down or goes offline, the content of that site is not lost. It can be accessed on a variety of other sites, thereby guaranteeing constant visibility and a steady flow of information potentially to millions of users each day.

6.2 Accuracy and Coherence

Insurgent media do not strive for accuracy. Their purpose is not to inform, but rather to score points in a battle for hearts and minds in the Arab world. As such, they advance numerous unverifiable claims that target a sympathetic consumer who is unlikely to believe the competing claims of alternative official sources and mainstream media.

A good example is the total number of U.S. soldiers insurgent groups claim to have killed. According to the U.S. military, confirmed U.S. deaths in Iraq stood at roughly 3,380 as of May 8, 2007. Insurgent groups put forward various numbers, but generally claim to have killed 25,000–35,000 U.S. troops. The number is not accurate, but it is, roughly speaking, likely to be credible to a reader, viewer, or listener who is hostile to the U.S. presence in Iraq, sympathetic to the insurgent cause, and deeply skeptical of information from U.S. official sources.

Coherence is not a strong suit of insurgent media. In part, this is a natural consequence of the decentralized, “do-it-yourself” production paradigm (see Section 3.3.1, The Decentralized, ‘Do-It-Yourself’ Media Factory). The same lack of centralization and “do-it-yourself” production model that render insurgent media resilient and abundant acts as an impediment to overall coherence. For example, each insurgent group advances its own claims about the number of U.S. troops killed; taken together, they provide only a rough tally.

6.3 Message and Ideology

6.3.1 Message

The basic message of Iraqi insurgent groups is simple—they are a serious military force that is confronting and defeating the U.S. military, the collaborationist Iraqi government and its military forces, and Shi’ite militias. Most groups, whether global-jihadist or nationalist in

orientation, now view Iranian Shi’ite influence as the primary threat to Iraq, and they reflect this in their statements and operations, which are frequently directed against Shi’ite targets. The U.S. presence, while still an important target, now figures less prominently amid a general sense that the United States is preparing to pull its forces out of Iraq in the foreseeable future.

Beyond this general message, insurgent groups have not succeeded in advancing anything resembling a political program that would extend to their vision of a future Iraq. In part, this is a reflection of the number of groups that comprise the insurgency and the resulting lack of coherence in the insurgent media network. On a deeper level, however, it points to a serious weakness in the insurgency, which has rejected the current political process in Iraq but has been unable to articulate a meaningful alternative beyond armed struggle, with no clear aim beyond defeating U.S. forces, the current Iraqi government, and Shi’ite militias.

6.3.2 Ideology

Despite the prevalence of jihadist rhetoric among Iraqi insurgent groups, their political statements reveal two distinct ideological visions of the struggle they are waging. One vision is that of a global jihad, in which the battle for Iraq is only a part of a larger clash of civilizations. The other is that of a more traditional national-liberation struggle. Recent statements by the **IAI** and **Al-Qaeda** underscore the difference.

In an April 11 interview with *Al-Jazeera*, **IAI** spokesman Ibrahim al-Shammari clearly defined his group’s struggle in national terms. Interviewer Ahmad Mansur asked, “Do your goals include causing America to fail abroad or does your goal relate only to Iraq?” Al-Shammari responded, “No, our goal is the liberation of Iraq from the occupation it is experiencing—the Iranian occupation and the American occupation....”

The U.S. presence now figures less prominently in insurgent media amid a general sense that the United States is preparing to pull its forces out of Iraq in the foreseeable future.

An Islamic Army in Iraq spokesman said recently that Iran's influence in Iraq, which he called an "occupation," is "more dangerous" than the "U.S. occupation."

Al-Shammari described Iran's influence in Iraq, which he termed an "occupation," as "more dangerous" than the U.S. "occupation." He also stated that he knows of no "Shi'ite resistance" to U.S. forces, suggesting that U.S. and Iranian interests largely coincide in their dual "occupations" of Iraq. Nevertheless, Al-Shammari refused to cast the conflict in Iraq in purely sectarian terms, asserting that the **IAI** does not target "innocent" Iraqis—those who do not collaborate with foreigners—whether they are Sunni, Shi'a, Muslim, or Christian. He also stressed that all **IAI** fighters are Iraqis, and that its ranks include no "Arabs" from elsewhere.

By contrast, a mid-April 2007 address by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, leader of **IS/Al-Qaeda**, advanced an entirely different vision. Summarizing gains and losses on the fourth anniversary of the fall of the Hussein regime, Al-Baghdadi stated, "Let everyone know that our aim is clear: the establishment of God's law, and the path to that is jihad in its wider sense." Earlier in the address, he made it clear that "the outlines of the gains and losses in the past four years" indicate that "jihad has been adopted as the primary solution to drive out the unbelievers and apostates from Muslim countries."

That their goal extends far beyond Iraq is clear from a recent essay by the **Al-Qaeda**-affiliated writer Abu Mariyah al-Qurashi. In the essay, which summarizes the final work by Abu Umar, a Chechnya-based Saudi radical who was killed fighting with Russian forces, Abu Mariyah provides a rare glimpse of Al-Qaeda's understanding of Iraq's role in the global jihad. We quote the passage in full:

The jihad in Iraq is a great historic opportunity that the mujahidin and true scholars must seize and exploit. The defeat of the crusaders in Iraq has far-reaching, historic implications for the region and the entire Muslim nation. These include halting the overall crusader advance that aims to devastate the [Muslim] nation, evicting them from Iraq, cleansing that country of their filth and unbelief, and establishing an Islamic state in Mesopotamia.

The defeat of the crusaders in Iraq has significant implications for aiding the mujahidin in Palestine and Afghanistan. For those who have spent decades bemoaning the fate of Palestine and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the inability to reach the Holy Land, the chance has come. For the Christian, Protestant, and Jewish Zionists are within arm's reach in Mesopotamia. So take the battle to them, kill them, and inflict great harm.

Moreover, there are ramifications for the network of collaborationist statelets and their ilk that the crusaders established through the Sykes-Picot Agreement to safeguard their aims and objectives in the region, defend the Jewish state in Palestine, and maintain its borders against attempts to defend Al-Aqsa and help oppressed Muslims. Their ruling regimes will experience a great shock, God willing, when they see their overlord and defender, the United States, crushingly defeated in Mesopotamia. Undermining these statelets is necessary to break the defensive ring around the Jewish state in Palestine and help Muslims there. This blow, God willing, could be the historic beginning of the end for these quisling statelets or, to be more precise, colonies, which have become forward bases for the crusader campaign against Islam and Muslims.

This global focus stands in direct contradiction to the stated aims of the more nationalist insurgent groups. Perhaps the best statement of the "nationalist" position came in a May 2 statement by the **IAI**, the **Mujahidin Army**, and the Legal Commission of **Ansar al-Sunnah** announcing the establishment of a **Front for Jihad and Reform**.

Though couched in the religious rhetoric employed by all Sunni insurgent groups, the statement refrains from using specifically jihadist terms like "crusaders" and "apostates," preferring instead to employ the nonreligious terms "occupiers" and "collaborators." More importantly, while describing the struggle in Iraq as a "jihad," the statement defines its goals in national, not global, terms: "The complete and actual withdrawal of the occupiers in all their forms and the establishment of God's faith..."

In an oblique criticism of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, the statement stresses the need for moderation in matters of faith. The invocations that close the statement retain the national focus, asking God to “defeat the Americans and those who are with them and the Safavids and those who are with them.”

The statement and invocations make no mention of global aims or a broader jihad to remake the Arab-Islamic world. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the three signatories to the statement reject the legitimacy of the current Iraqi government and stress their refusal to take part in the political process as presently constituted.²

6.4 Tendencies and Trends

The most notable trends in the development of Iraqi insurgent media are growing attention to the importance of the insurgency's media efforts, an increasingly sectarian focus, and a widening rift between nationalist and jihadist groups.

6.4.1 Attention to Media

The May 2, 2007, proclamation of the **Front for Jihad and Reform** signed by the **IAI**, **Mujahidin Army**, and Legal Commission of **Ansar al-Sunnah** appeals directly to “the people of the media, speakers and writers. They must tell the truth and cast their arrows at falsehood, for media is half of the battle.” **IAI** spokesman Ibrahim al-Shammari made a similar point in an undated interview posted to the **Muhajroon** forum in October 2006, saying, “If an opportunity arises to speak, even on foreign [satellite] channels, not only *Al-Jazeera*, I am ready, out of a desire to serve jihad in Iraq. As you know, we are in

² According to media reports, Iraqi and U.S. officials have met with nationalist-leaning resistance groups on a number of occasions. For more, see *Amman Talks Could Bring Political Breakthrough*, by RFE/RL freelance contributor Suredha Senanayake, November 3, 2006 (http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=11&y=2006&id=B72EA5ED-56DD-4E4F-8106-033DE6814793), *Insurgent Groups Differ On Talks With Government*, by Kathleen Ridolfo, June 30, 2006 (http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=06&y=2006&id=4312C166-5C5C-4DD3-86D2-446E0316E743), and *Initiatives On Militias, Armed Groups Raise Concerns*, by Kathleen Ridolfo, *RFE/RL Iraq Report*, May 5, 2006 (<http://www.rferl.org/reports/iraq-report/2006/05/18-050506.asp>).

dire need of any media opportunity that will show the true face of jihad in Iraq.”

A 221-page study of “jihadist media in Iraq” released by **Wikalat Haq** in spring 2007 is further evidence of the growing attention to the media component of insurgent efforts (see Figure 94). The study, which is strongly sympathetic to the Sunni insurgent cause, opens with the following quotation: “The leading lights of the jihadist media must recognize the importance of their role, for they are on the front lines just as the fighters are. A soldier cannot leave his trench, or else the enemy will attack him at his weak spot...”

The continuing stream of increasingly sophisticated media products distributed through failsafe Internet-based delivery channels comes as confirmation that insurgents are more aware than ever that they are engaged in a battle not just of bullets and bombs, but also a war of images and ideas. With Sunni insurgents fully conscious of the importance of media, and clearly skilled in the creation and

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Figure 94. The cover of a 221-page sympathetic study of “jihadist media in Iraq” released by **Wikalat Haq**

distribution of information products, we must expect that their media endeavor will only grow in reach and sophistication.

6.4.2 Sectarian Focus

Against this backdrop of growing attention to media, the products themselves are more sectarian in focus than ever before. Insurgent groups treat the “Iranian threat” as a danger equal to or greater than the U.S. presence, and insurgent statements claim responsibility for daily attacks against Shi’a-dominated branches of government and Shi’ite militias. While the political statements of nationalist groups such as the IAI eschew the rabidly anti-Shi’a rhetoric favored by **ISI/AI-Qaeda**, the distinction is often lost against the larger backdrop of sectarian violence and hate speech.

Recent films released by **Ansar al-Sunnah** and **ISI/AI-Qaeda** show graphic scenes of the Sunni insurgent groups executing Shi’ite employees of the Defense and Interior ministries (see Section 7.1, A Day in the Life of Insurgent Media). In both films, the executions are carried out in response to crimes allegedly committed by Shi’a against Sunnis, heightening a sense of mutually reinforcing sectarian reprisals. Another film by **Ansar Al-Sunnah** juxtaposes incendiary comments by Hazim al-A’raji, an aide to Shi’ite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, with footage of the gruesomely mutilated corpses of Sunnis (see Figure 95). As al-A’raji urges “Shi’ite believers” to kill “loathsome Ba’athists” and “filthy Wahhabis” and assures the killers that they will go to paradise, the film’s unmistakable message to Sunnis is that they face the gravest peril and must take up arms. The combination of hate speech and glorification of violence calls to mind disturbing parallels with the media campaign that preceded the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.³

3 The role of the media and hate speech in the Rwandan genocide has been extensively documented. For examples, see *The Graves Are Not Yet Full*, Bill Berkeley, Basic Books, 2001; *Shake Hands with the Devil*, Romeo Dallaire, Random House, 2003; *Leave None To Tell The Story: Genocide In Rwanda*, Alison Des Forges, Human Rights Watch, 1999; *Conspiracy to Murder: the Rwandan genocide*, Linda Melvern, Verso, 2004; *The Media And The Rwandan Genocide*, Allan Thompson, ed., Pluto Press, 2007; *Rwanda, Les Médias Du Génocide*, Jean-Pierre Chrétien, Jean-François Dupaquier, Marcel Kabanda, Joseph



Figure 95. Excerpts from a film by Ansar al-Sunnah, a Sunni insurgent group, showing an address by a radical Shi’ite cleric and photographs of Sunnis allegedly killed by Shi’ite death squads; the caption reads “The crimes of the Mahdi Army against Sunnis—these crimes are committed on the orders of their preachers and leaders”

6.4.3 Rift Between Nationalists and Jihadists

Finally, the rift between nationalist and jihadist groups within the insurgency (see Section 6.3.2, Ideology) appears to be widening, with insurgent media reflecting the split. Against a backdrop of basic differences in ideology, with nationalist groups limiting their goals to Iraq

Ngarambe, Karthala, 1995; *Broadcasting Genocide: Censorship, Propaganda And State-Sponsored Violence In Rwanda, 1990–1994*, Article 19, 1996. See also the case materials of the “media” trial in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, in which Hassan Ngeze, Ferdinand Nahimana, and Jean Bosco Barayagwiza were found guilty of incitement to genocide and other crimes. The cases are currently under appeal. Trial materials are available at: <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/cases/Ngeze/index.htm> (Hassan Ngeze), <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/cases/Nahimana/index.htm> (Ferdinand Nahimana), and <http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/cases/Barayagwiza/index.htm> (Jean Bosco Barayagwiza).

and jihadist groups spearheaded by **Al-Qaeda** seeing Iraq as part of a global struggle, open conflict has become more common.

The polemic between the **IAI** and **ISI/Al-Qaeda** that began in early April was a watershed moment, bringing to light conflicts over approach and ideology that had simmered for months, if not years. The **IAI** statement sharply criticized **ISI/Al-Qaeda** for issuing baseless accusations against other groups, including the **IAI**; “threatening to kill members of the group [the **IAI**] if they do not swear allegiance to **Al-Qaeda** or its other names;” killing more than 30 members of the **IAI**, as well as members of the **1920 Revolution Brigades**, **Mujahidin Army**, and **Ansar al-Sunnah**; and killing unarmed Muslims and “soft targets” such as imams and individuals who issue the call to prayer.

The statement also leveled a direct challenge at the organizational model employed by **Al-Qaeda** not only in Iraq, but in other Arab countries, where various regional franchises now exist, such as **Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula** and **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrib**. The **IAI** appealed directly to Osama bin Laden, saying:

He and his brothers in the Al-Qaeda leadership are responsible on Judgment Day for what is happening on account of their followers. It is not enough to wash one’s hands of their actions; one must also correct them. In the two collections of utterances of the Prophet by Abdallah bin Umar, the Prophet said, “Is not each of you a shepherd, and is not each of you responsible for his flock? The imam must look after his people, for he is responsible

for them.” And Al-Faruq⁴ says, “If a beast of burden should stumble in the mountains of Iraq or the Sham⁵, then I would believe that God will call me to account for it and ask, ‘Why did you not make the road passable?’”

The gist of the criticism is that **ISI/Al-Qaeda** is out of control in Iraq, its parent organization is unwilling or unable to bring it to heel, and Osama bin Laden is failing to live up to Islamic standards of leadership. It is a charge that the subsequent polemic, which included responses from **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, failed to disprove, in large part because Osama bin Laden remained conspicuously silent throughout the debate.

The formation of a **Front for Jihad and Reform**, bringing together the **IAI**, **Mujahidin Army**, and Legal Commission of **Ansar al-Sunnah**, came as the formal expression of these groups’ differences with **ISI/Al-Qaeda**. On May 12, 2007, just days after the Front proclaimed its existence, it issued a statement charging **Al-Qaeda in Iraq** with killing 12 field commanders, “most of them from the **Mujahidin Army**,” and asking **Al-Qaeda** to surrender those responsible to the Front’s courts for judgment. While the long-term ramifications of this internal conflict are difficult to predict, insurgent media will provide an invaluable window on its future development, as well as on other trends and tendencies within and around Iraq’s ongoing Sunni insurgency.

⁴ Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second of the four “rightly guided” caliphs (634-644).

⁵ Roughly equivalent to present-day Lebanon, Jordan, Israel/Palestinian Territories, and Syria.

7 Annex: Case Studies

7.1 A Day in the Life of Insurgent Media: April 22, 2007

We survey here one day in the life of insurgent media—April 21. The overview provides a representative sample of the insurgent media products made available on April 21-22 across the delivery platforms enumerated in the report. Websites were accessed on April 22.

7.1.1 Insurgent Group Websites

7.1.1.1 Islamic State of Iraq

The group's website featured an announcement and download addresses for an April 20 videotaped statement by **ISI/Al-Qaeda's** official spokesman, proclaiming the formation of the State's "cabinet." As is usually the case with such offerings, the videotaped statement was available in a number of formats: high quality (53 megabytes), medium quality (8 megabytes), low quality (1.3 megabytes), mobile-phone quality (2.09 megabytes), and sound only (604 kilobytes).

The site also advertised a new film, dated April 20, titled *The Confessions Of 20 Men Affiliated With The Interior And Defense Ministries*. Produced by **Al-Furqan**, the six-minute film shows 20 men, all in uniform with IDs affixed to their chests, "confessing" to employment in the ministries of defense and the interior (see Figure 96). A voiceover explains that **ISI/Al-**



Figure 96. Employees of the Interior and Defense ministries kidnapped (and later executed) by ISI/Al-Qaeda

Qaeda captured men after the rape of Sabrin al-Janabi (see Section 7.2, The Sabrin al-Janabi Case) and gave the Iraqi government 48 hours to release Sunni women held in Interior Ministry prisons and surrender those responsible for the rape of Al-Janabi. The narrator announces that the deadline expired with no action taken and **ISI/Al-Qaeda's** court sentenced the "apostates" to death under Islamic law.

The film closes with the execution. The men kneel in a line along the side of a road, blindfolded, while a single individual kills them by shooting them in the back of the head with a pistol. In a clear indication that the violence is being carried out as a "media event," the execution is filmed from two camera angles; scenes recorded from one camera angle show both the gunman and the cameraman at his side who is recording close-up shots (see Figure 97).

7.1.1.2 Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI)

The group's website featured 11 press releases dated April 21, all of them covering operations conducted on April 19–20. They were titled (in translation):

- Shelling, bomb blasts, and sniper attacks against the occupiers and apostates in the city of Mosul
- Destruction of a Humvee belonging to the crusader forces in Al-Mushahadah district
- Killing of an American soldier by a sniper in north Baghdad
- Destruction of a transport vehicle for the Idolatrous Guard and killing of four in Salman Pak
- Killing of three members of the Apostate Army of the Antichrist in Al-Mada'in district
- Destruction of a vehicle belonging to the apostate Idolatrous Guard and the killing of three of them in south Baghdad
- Destruction of a pick-up truck belonging to Interior Ministry commandoes and the killing of two in Al-Latifayah
- Killing of three members of the apostate police with an explosive device
- Mortar strike against a group of the apostate Army of the Antichrist in Al-Mu'tasim district

A film posted on April 20 shows 20 men in uniforms and with ID cards "confessing" to being employed in the Iraqi Defense and Interior ministries, after which a "court" sentences them to death.

- Mortar attack on the headquarters of the occupying American Army in Al-Mashru district
- Wounding of an American soldier by sniper in Al-Mushahadah district

7.1.1.3 Mujahidin Army

Although it was functional on April 22, the group's website did not feature any materials updated more recently than March 20.

7.1.1.4 JAMI

The most recently updated materials on the group's website dated to March.

7.1.1.5 Jihadist Brigades of Iraq

The most recent operational statement on the group's website described an April 13 IED attack against Interior Ministry commandos that wounded two.

7.1.1.6 Army of the Naqshibandi Tariqah

The most recent material featured on the group's website was an April 1 statement on the possible unification of insurgent groups.

7.1.1.7 Jaysh al-Rashidin

The group's website featured an April 21 announcement of an IED attack against a U.S. Army Humvee and the "killing of those in it." The operational statement was accompanied by a downloadable 2.7-megabyte film lasting 30 seconds and showing an explosion at night. Available for downloading on the same page was a 56-megabyte, 10-minute film titled *Our Jihad Overcomes The Occupiers' Ruse*, which shows an IED attack against a U.S. Humvee in Al-Dawrah and a missile attack against U.S. forces stationed at Baghdad Airport.

7.1.2 Forums

Many forums featured new and ongoing threads with insurgent materials on April 21. We survey two of the most popular forums. Sections featuring posted statements usually begin with



Figure 97. The execution of Interior and Defense Ministry employees by ISI/Al-Qaeda; note the cameraman at the executioner's side

a number of “fixed threads” on popular or noteworthy themes.¹ The overview notes those as well.

7.1.2.1 Al-Firdaws

The forum does not record the exact times of posted threads. The following materials were dated April 21:

- **Ansar al-Sunnah** (marked “breaking news”): Some of the operations of your brothers, the lions of Al-Hadithah and adjoining areas
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda** (marked “breaking news”): Elimination of three leaders in the gangs of the Army of the Antichrist in Baghdad
- **Ansar al-Sunnah** (marked “breaking news”): More than 20 explosive devices in addition to a violent clash with the crusaders and apostates
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda** (marked “breaking news”): violent attack; death of one of the most prominent aides to the rotten bastard Ammar al-Hakim²
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda**: News report for some southern districts of Baghdad Governorate
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda**: Martyrdom-seeking operation against a stronghold of the crusaders and apostates in Al-Saqlawiyah
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda**: Detonation of an explosive-laden vehicle against a crusader barracks in Al-Saqlawiyah district
- **ISI/Al-Qaeda**: News report for some parts of Al-Rusafah in Baghdad Governorate
- **Ansar al-Sunnah**: Destruction of a tank belonging to the Apostate Guard and the killing of two of its crew near the Al-Kurayat section in north Baghdad
- **Ansar al-Sunnah**: Some of the operations of your heroic brothers in Western district
- **Ansar al-Sunnah**: Destruction of a vehicle belonging to the commandoes and killing of two using an explosive-laden motorcycle in Al-Mada’in
- **Ansar al-Sunnah**: Execution of one of the apostates from the collaborationist police in

¹ As new threads are posted to forums, they displace older threads. Administrators “fix” particularly important threads so that they remain at the top of the forum despite the addition of new threads.

² A Shi’ite political leader described in the text as a “rotten Safavid heretic.”

Diyala

- **ISI/Al-Qaeda** (marked “breaking news”): political statement titled *Collapse Of The Plans Of The Crusaders And Their Hangers-on*

Fixed threads available on April 22 were:

- **Al-Furqan** presents issue No. 32 of *Biographies Of Notable Martyrs*
- **Al-Furqan** presents the film *Confessions Of 20 Employees Of The Interior And Defense Ministries*
- **Ansar al-Sunnah** presents the *Top 20* [compilation of attack videos]
- **Al-Furqan** presents [the film] *The Blowing Up Of A Headquarters Of The Peshmerga In Mosul Governorate*
- **Ansar al-Sunnah** presents an audio statement by the leadership of the group **Ansar al-Sunnah**
- **Al-Furqan** presents an audio statement by our master, commander of the faithful, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi [head of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**]
- **Al-Furqan** presents [the film] *Some Of The Efforts By The Soldiers Of The State To Protect Their Brother Civilians*

7.1.2.2 World News Network

World News Network posted all of the materials noted above on **Al-Firdaws**. Also posted on April 21 were:

- **Mujahidin Army**: Missile attack on U.S. forces headquarters at kilometer 39
- **Mujahidin Army**: Destruction of a mine-sweeper with an explosive device in West Baghdad
- **Mujahidin Army**: Watch the destruction of a Humvee with a disguised explosive device in Al-Ramadi
- **Mujahidin Army**: Mortar attack on U.S. forces headquarters in Al-Fallujah

Fixed threads available on April 22 were:

- *The Nuclear Danger...Shelters and Reasons for Survival*: a packet of materials on the dangers of radiation and ways to survive the

fallout from a nuclear attack, including an Arabic translation of an English text titled *11 Steps to Nuclear War Fallout Survival*

- **Al-Nusrah Campaign to Shelter the Palestinians of Iraq** presents *Where to Flee? Materials On The Plight Of Palestinians In Iraq*.
- **Elite of the Jihadist Media** presents the republication of a book on the doctrine of monotheism. Download links did not work.
- **Al-Furqan** presents *Confessions Of 20 Employees Of The Interior And Defense Ministries*
- **1920 Revolution Brigades: Position On The Occupation, Its Institutions, And Collaborators** (political statement)
- **1920 Revolution Brigades:** Statement on the latest address by the Amir of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**
- **Ansar al-Sunnah:** Clarification of the official source that distributes **Ansar al-Sunnah's** statements (April 18)
- **Ansar al-Sunnah:** Denial of the defection of the group's legal section (April 18)

7.2 The Sabrin al-Janabi Case: Manufacturing Sectarian Strife

On February 19, *Al-Jazeera* broadcast an interview with a woman identified as Sabrin al-Janabi. She explained in a short, tear-filled monologue that four Interior Ministry officers had raped her earlier that day after detaining her on suspicion of aiding insurgents. The alleged rape of a Sunni woman by Shi'ite officers set off a round of sectarian recriminations between Sunni politicians and Iraq's Shi'ite-led government.³ For Sunni insurgents and their supporters, the incident was a propaganda godsend, and insurgent media used it to full effect.

In a good example of how the insurgent message reaches the world through a variety of interconnected platforms, a participant in the **Ana al-Muslim** forum, one of the most popular jihadist forums on the web (see Section

³ For more, see *Iraq: Rape Case Highlights Sectarian Power Struggle* Kathleen Ridolfo, RFE/RL, February 21, 2007 (<http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/02/22896c39-741d-4f69-980a-6602e5162912.html>).

5.1.3, Forums and Message Boards), posted a news report from the hard-line Sunni news site **Islammemo** on February 20. The **Islammemo** report stated that the insurgent group **Ansar al-Sunnah** had distributed leaflets "in several Baghdad neighborhoods threatening swift revenge against the Safavids who attacked the Sunni woman Sabrin al-Janabi." Noting that the leaflets were affixed to the doors of several Baghdad mosques, **Islammemo's** correspondent explained that they vowed revenge and described the incident as a rebuke to those who call on the "resistance" to stop targeting "national forces."

By February 21, pro-insurgency jihadist forums were boiling with discussions of the latest outrage allegedly perpetrated by Shi'a against Iraqi Sunnis. The same day, the Kuwait-based radical cleric Hamid al-Ali, who frequently addresses Iraq-related issues and is a strong supporter of Islamist elements within the insurgency, posted a poem on his website dedicated to Sabrin al-Janabi. The verses were bitterly sectarian, asking, "Who has given the filth power over our Iraq so that the Magi should be raised high and made rulers?" The poem appeared within minutes on virtually all jihadist forums.

The same day, the **IAI** released a written statement titled *Support For The Female Believers*, vowing that "sleep will not avail us, our eyes will not close, and life will be intolerable until we exact vengeance for every free woman whose chastity and dignity have been taken away." **JAMI** put out a statement on February 20, saying that "they have released their filthy dogs to tear into the bodies of our daughters and sisters."

On February 22, as **Islammemo** reported Sunni demonstrations in Iraq calling for revenge, **Al-Furqan** released a statement by Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir, official spokesman of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**. In an 11:50 audio recording, Al-Muhajir announced that **ISI/Al-Qaeda** had readied 300 "martyrdom-seekers," including 50 individuals from the Al-Janabi tribe, for suicide attacks. Also on February 22, the **Albayanat** blog posted

The alleged rape of a Sunni woman by Shi'ite police officers was a propaganda godsend for the insurgents and insurgent media used it to the maximum effect.