

Monthly Informatics Report

Developments in Arabic and Bahasa Indonesian Websites

January 2010

Introduction

This report provides an analysis of significant developments and trends of the online extremist websites and communities during the month of January. For the purpose of this report, extremist or jihadi websites refer to those propagating violence, or have members affiliated to terrorist organizations linked to Al Qaeda, such as Taliban and Al-Shabaab.

Summary of Significant Developments

Arabic Websites

- Al-Shabaab (terrorist group in Somalia) shows a semblance of Islamic social justice by collecting and distributing zakat on sheep to the people of Middle Shabelle who are entitled to it.
- An essay by Abu Yahya Al-Libi (the ideological chief of Al-Qaeda and alleged to be its number 3) entitled 'we are not Houthis, nor are we like or from them' denies any alleged connections between Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Yemeni Shiite rebels, the Houthis.
- A short manual instructing readers on how to produce iron oxide (rust) for thermite was posted late January. Links to English video manuals were also included.
- An audio tape by Osama Bin Laden which was directed at President Barack Obama, threatens U.S. security late January following Christmas day foiled bombing attempt.

Bahasa Indonesian Websites

- Updates on the developments of Al Shabaab continues to be posted on the Islamist extremist websites following one of its leaders, Sheikh Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr's announcement on the organisation's support for, and affiliation with Al Qaeda.

- Support for Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda continue to resonate in websites, forums and individual blogs through continuous dissemination of the organisation's propaganda materials and netizens' acceptance of them.
- Attempts at spurring the spirit of jihad continues with articles focusing on emoting guilt in Muslims who has rejected jihad defined as an act of waging physical violence.

Explanation of Sources

Arabic Sites

In the Arabic-language online Jihadist presence, a handful of forums make up the most important hubs for information exchange, propaganda distribution, strategic discussion, and theological and practical debate. Important materials and ideas appear on these websites first, before they are reposted on other virtual spaces of secondary and tertiary importance.

Most of these websites are password restricted, and all have the forum format. This means that content is posted by a wide member base, not by one website administrator. Terrorist and Islamist organizations maintain within these forums to post their material for them. In addition, any member can post materials, observations, comments, and questions.

While forums have demonstrated some mechanisms for policing content and evaluating the veracity of statements, this cannot be guaranteed. Further, the authenticity of statements, documents, or remarks from terrorist and Islamist organizations which appear on these websites cannot be verified to complete certainty.

Jihadist forum members are identified in this document by their self-selected user names, which are usually not their real names. Not all Jihadist forum members are active terrorists or members of terrorist or Islamist groups. The remarks of forum members are their own and are not necessarily representative of the views of any particular radical group. The value of these remarks is that, in many cases, they are one source to aid the counterterrorism community in better understanding the opinions, ideas, and worldview of individual extremists. Comments selected for translation and use in this document are typically chosen because they are representative of common views posts appearing on these forums.

Participants refer to the body of activities conducted by terrorists, radical Muslims, and their supporters on the Internet as "the online Jihad." The Arabic language is the common language of the online Jihad internationally. Members and participants in these forums do not necessarily reside in Arab countries. Further, they concern themselves with matters pertaining to the entire Muslim world. Materials and discussion on these sites therefore do not only pertain to the Middle East/Arab countries. *Due to various security reasons, full URL of sources gathered is not disclosed.*

Bahasa Indonesia and Malay Language Sites

The Bahasa Indonesia sites which have been selected for monitoring have been evaluated and determined to represent important nodes of discussion and information exchange for Islamists in Indonesia and the neighboring region. This web presence is considerably smaller as compared to the Arabic websites, and has a local focus on Indonesia or nearby countries. Some of these sites have an element of interactivity, whereby members may contribute to content. Unlike the Arabic sites where there is more user input, content on most regional sites is controlled by an administrator or administrators.

This report will cover three major extremist and radical websites – arrahmah.com, muslimdaily.net and al-tawbah.com. Arrahmah.com and muslimdaily.net are run by and associated with high-profile Islamic extremist figures of the region. The former is owned and managed by Mohamed Jibril, son of Abu Jibriel - one of the key founders of Jemaah Islamiyah and current emir of Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia. Mohamed Jibril was also recently arrested for allegedly funding the July 2009 twin hotel bombings in Jakarta through links with Al-Qaeda. The latter is managed by the son of Abu Bakar Basyir, the former spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, former emir of Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia as well as current head of Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid. Al-tawbah.com or Forum Islam Al Tawbah is a password protected website that is among the most active in the region. This website is regularly updated with potentially dangerous materials such as motivation on jihad, videos of operations and bomb making manuals, cyber warfare manuals, combat training manuals and others. As part of a more holistic approach in analyzing online extremist activity, the report will also include extremist blogs and personal/group websites that do not have the same high traffic volume as the main sites listed above but contain useful information nonetheless.

Due to various security reasons, full URL of sources gathered is not disclosed.

User Statistics

Featured below is the percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country. The main objective of featuring this information on a monthly basis is to capture the country distribution of the visitors for each website. These observations will be compiled on a quarter-year basis to offer readers a deeper understanding on emerging issues within the larger jihadi community.

The data presented is for the top countries from which visits originate. They are gathered from alexa.com.¹ Data is available only for select websites and is extrapolated from a sample of traffic captured from the website. The true geographical locations of users employing proxy servers may not be represented accurately. Data represents traffic to the site for one random day (16 February 2010). The following websites have been chosen because of the bulk of articles selected from them for this month's report.

Al-faloja1.com

*Al-Fallujah Islamic Forums

*This site has more than one URL - This is the only URL with traffic statistics.

Percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country:

Algeria: 25.3%
Palestine: 3.1%
Other: 71.3%

¹ www.alexa.com is a comprehensive web information company that provides traffic data and rankings for websites

m3-f.com

Ma'arik Islamic Network

Percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country:

Algeria: 34.4%
Egypt: 40.8%
Morocco: 9.9%
Other: 30.5%

shamikh.net

Shumukh Islamic Network

Percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country:

Algeria: 15.9%
Egypt: 10.3%
UAE: 9.9%
Morocco: 6.0%
Other: 57.9%

arrahmah.com

Arrahmah media

Percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country:

Indonesia: 68.7%
Pakistan: 7.7%
Philippines: 5.4%
Other: 18.2%

muslimdaily.net

Muslim Daily

Percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country:

Indonesia: 90.2%
Saudi Arabia: 7.0%
Other: 2.9%

Arabic Websites

Al-Shabaab Distributes Zakat (Alms Giving)

Al-Shabaab's media wing Al-Kataeb has released a statement announcing the group's success in distributing sheep as a form of *zakat* (alms giving) to the locals entitled to it in Middle Shabelle, a region in southern Somalia. The *zakat* was collected from the regions under Al-Shabaab control and distributed to those entitled to it according to the Hanafi school of thought. The article also cited that *zakat* collection and distribution was being handled by the Office of *Zakat* operating under the movement. In late November, the movement announced the opening of a bridge - among other aid that they have provided for the people, hence publicizing their social works to win hearts and minds. But what makes it a bit different this time is that a religious component directly involved. Al-Shabaab implementing *zakat* - which they claim to be the first time it has ever been implemented in the country - gives the impression that there is a semblance of proper religious order in the movement and that Islamic social justice is being carried out. In turn, it fosters an image that they are actively and seriously engaged with the welfare of the people through the application of Islamic teachings.

Abu Yahya Al-Libi Denies Aiding The Houthis²

Al-Qaeda's so-called *mufti* (jurist) Abu Yahya Al-Libi has released an essay entitled "We are not Houthis, nor are we like or from them". The twelve-page long essay firstly rejects any similarities between Al-Qaeda and Houthis with regards to religion, creed, ideology and goals, thereby, denying Yemeni and Saudi governments' allegations that AQAP is aiding the Houthis and vice versa. Al-Libi then brought in the Saudis who he indicted were turning their backs on religion and bowing to their desires hence devoting themselves to justify their falsehood and deviation. Further, he disagreed with the actions of the Saudi *mufti* who condemns the 'jihad' in Iraq and discourages Muslims from partakeing in the cause, but advocates violent jihad against the Houthis. However, he immediately affirmed that this is not a form of defense for the Houthis, but only to assert the partiality of the Saudis towards the Americans in order to protect their interests.

The subject of Shiites, particularly Houthis has been previously discussed by AQAP commander Al-Rashid. Al-Libi's essay is an assurance that Sunni Al-Qaeda cannot and never will have any connections with Shiite Houthis because of their theological and stratigical differences. However, Al-Libi's rapid jump from the subject of Houthis to the Saudis indicates that the focus of the essay is not the Houthis but AQ's grievances with the Saudis, particularly its *mufti*, for selectively advocating violent jihad against the Houthis in Yemen and not against the U.S. in Iraq because of the pervasive influence of western ideas born out of foreign institutions across

² Houthis are a militant group of Zaydi Shiites operating in Yemen.

the Kingdom. This directly insinuates that the Saudi government and its religious establishment is a pawn of the West. Al-Libi's claim that Al-Qaeda does not refrain or hesitate to kill Muslims and civilians is a lie and contradicts with what the group preaches on the legitimacy of killing Muslims and civilians. Nevertheless he avoided discussing the matter further by justifying their killings with the massacre of civilians in Yemen by the Saudi army.

Manual Instructs on Producing Iron Oxide (Rust) For Thermite³

Late January, a short manual instructing readers on how to produce iron oxide, also known as rust, was posted in an extremist forum by a regular contributor 'safyah' in the tradecraft section. The post includes substances required to produce the iron oxide, methods of producing it and some notes on handling the substance. In addition to an introduction to thermite and how and where to get aluminum powder for it, links to English video manuals of iron oxide and thermite were also included. Previous articles posted in the forums were mostly focused on discussions regarding explosives and its chemical components, while this article provides introduction and instruction to the ingredients required to make an incendiary device i.e. thermite; a subject that has not been presented before. Although both devices – explosive and incendiary – are known to cause harm and damage, incendiary devices such as thermite that can melt through metals are designed to attack personnel or flammable targets, destroy equipments and disable artillery pieces. Hence, this article is merely to kick-start the imagination, allowing the reader to use his or her own logic to create a device to meet the purpose aside from suggesting a new method that can be used in acts of terror to aspiring violent extremists. With this, it is also apparent that extremists are expanding the discussions of tradecraft materials and educating the online extremist community.

Statement from Osama bin Laden to US President Barack Obama

Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden who has a 25-million-dollar bounty on his head has released yet another audio tape, threatening the security of the United States. In the one-minute statement directed at U.S. President Barack Obama, Osama made a few important and concise points. First, Osama claimed credit to the foiled US airliner bombing attempt during Christmas Day 2009, perpetrated by 23-year-old Nigerian Omar Farouq Abdul Mutallab. He also took the liberty of reminding the President on the 9/11 attack in 2001. Secondly, he reaffirmed his position on the Palestinian crisis and US policy towards Israel. Osama reiterated his usual rhetoric on fighting for justice in Palestine and blaming the US pro-Israeli policy for the suffering faced by the Palestinians living under Israeli aggression in Gaza. On this basis, Osama warned that unless the

³ Thermite is a pyrotechnic composition of a metal powder and a metal oxide which produces a thermite reaction. While most varieties are not explosive, they can create short bursts of very high temperatures focused on a limited small area for a short period of time.

US is willing to change its stand towards Israel, the threat of bombing and hijacking of airliners would persist.

Despite his failure of the attack, the plot and tape demonstrate Al-Qaeda's continued intention and capability to conduct operations against civil aviation. The statement also highlights Al-Qaeda's efforts to remain relevant to the struggle.

Bahasa Indonesian Language Websites

Continuous News Coverage on Somalia

Continuous coverage on Al Shabaab depicts the struggle for peace in Somalia, with the tone and content of reporting slanted towards showing the organisation's struggle and determination in efforts described to be ones purported in the name of Islam. International news pertaining to the developments of Islamist extremist groups or termed as terrorist groups by the Western media have always been a prominent feature in Islamist extremist websites. Although articles on Somalia are not unusual, its appearance has been observed to increase in frequency since December 2009. If reports on Somalia previously appeared approximately once a month in the past 2 years, its coverage seems to have increased to at least since around mid-April 2009. This is not surprising especially with the reactive nature of the websites in reporting current events as any news agency would. Tackling what the US deems to be terrorism in Somalia especially that led by Al Shabaab has been one of the focuses of the Obama administration since 2009.⁴

The current civil war in Somalia stems from conflicts in late 80's involving Somali's central government and rebel groups against Siad Barre's⁵ regime. Today, with the introduction of Islamist groups into the conflict, clashes between the Sufis and Salafis also constitute a major part of the conflict, with the Al Shabaab being one of groups present. What makes Al Shabaab the centre of attention today though, is its recent declaration of affiliation to Al Qaeda. The following are some of the Somali events covered in the websites manned by Indonesians and Malaysians. Original postings in the websites were either in Bahasa Indonesia or English.

⁴ Greg Jaffe and Karen DeYoung, "Obama Team Mulls Aims of Somali Extremists". *The Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/04/10/AR2009041003734.html#>. 11 April 2009.

⁵ **Mohamed Siad Barre** was the military dictator and [President](#) of the [Somali Democratic Republic](#) from 1969 to 1991

- Al Shabaab's Song on Invasion of Nairobi



Referring to Al-Shabaab as “Mujahid”, Arrahmah.com updated the release of Al Shabaa’s song which was also highlighted in several individual blogs and forums. The song is reported to be 6 minutes long and contains lyrics narrating Al Shabaab’s will, intentions and capability to take over Nairobi. It purports that the organisation has adequate weapons and resources for that invasion. It also referred to one of the Al-Shabaab leaders, Sheikh Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr who recently announced Al Shabaab’s support for, and affiliation with Al Qaeda, “*Abu Zubeyr, we will move, we fear not any threat. Allah is with us. Abu Zubeyr, we love you. Allah protects you.*” In Arrahmah.com, this news update was accompanied by 10 comments, all in support of Al-Shabaab.

- Developments in Baledweyne



Al-Shabaab’s progress in its takeover of the strategic city of Baledweyne was lauded. Baledweyne, which is near to the borders of Ethiopia, was reportedly taken over from the “*moderate Islamist*” by the “*mujahidin Al Shabaab*”. Such euphemistic labeling is a norm in Islamist extremist materials where they glorify the side they support whilst belittling the other, aggravating the separation of the society divided by the gap that is already wide enough to begin with.

- UK Students Unite with Al-Shabaab



Several Muslim youths in the United Kingdom have reportedly travelled to Somalia to unite with Al Shabaab in the students perceive as a justified religious one. They are said to be students from well-known universities such as the London School of Economics (LSE), Imperial College and King's College of London. Second generation immigrant Muslims in the United Kingdom, and Europe as a whole, have often been said to be vulnerable to the Al Qaeda ideology. This can be seen in high profile cases such as as the 9/11 20th hijacker French Zacarius Mossaoui and the four suicide bombers in the 2005 London bombings. This notion exists simultaneously with increasing discrimination such a community receives in Europe.⁶ Although there has been no direct link found between discrimination and Islamist terrorism, there are instances where discrimination has been speculated to be one of the causes behind the radicalisation of an individual, such as in the cases of Zacarius Mossaoui⁷ and *Wall Street Journal* Daniel Pearl's kidnapper, Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh⁸.

Support for Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden

Support for Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda continue to resonate in websites, forums and individual blogs. This is observed from the continuous dissemination of Al Qaeda's propaganda materials and remarks made by users on their support and admiration for such groups, as well as the condemnation of their enemies, the 'infidels' especially America. Two such instances which illustrate the aforementioned trends are the postings of translated Al Qaeda's statement on the 'martyrdom' of Humam Kholil Abu Milal al-Balawi, and Osama bin Laden's audio that contains his compliments for underwear bomber, Nigerian Omar Farouq Abdul Mutallab.

⁶ Ingrid Ramberg, "Islamophobia and its consequences on Young People". *European Youth Centre Budapest*. 1-6 June 2004. P9.

⁷ Abu Samad Mossaoui, "My brother Zac". *Guardian.co.uk*.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/apr/19/shopping.september11>. 19 April 2003.

⁸ Marc Sageman, "*Leaderless Jihad*". 2008. P5

- Al Qaeda's Official Statement on Humam al-Balawi



Claimed to have been written by the Al Qaeda General Commander Mushthofa Abul Yazid, the statement hailing Humam al-Balawi as a martyr regarded the latter's act as an inspiration for the rest of Muslims to follow. Humam al-Balawi is the double agent of the Jordanian Intelligence Service and the Taliban who conducted a suicide attack against a CIA base near Khost city in Afghanistan on 30 December 2009. The statement reiterates Al Qaeda's perception of a malevolent US and deemed it deserving of such 'martyrdom operations'. Postings from the Al Tawbah by forum participants lauded his suicide operation. Interest on his writings in Al Hesbah was also expressed. Some have read and reminisced on them, while others requested for his writings to be shared. None of his writings have been posted in the forum as at January 2010. According to ICPVTR research analyst who is monitoring the Arabic Islamist extremist sites, Humam al-Balawi's writings can still be found in the Arabic forums. From this, we can deduce that the majority of the Bahasa Indonesia and Malay language community do not frequent Arabic websites and depend on only a handful for their exposure to Arabic materials.

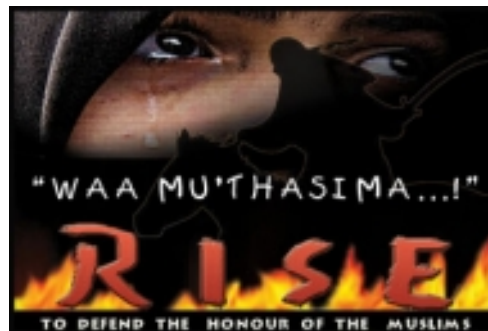
- Osama bin Laden's audio on Omar Farouq Mutallab



Omar Farouq Abdul Mutallab's link to Al Qaeda is further emphasised by the recent audio tape released by Osama bin Laden, who referred to Abdul Mutallab's as a 'mujahid' for his attempted attack on Christmas Day 2009. The audio communicated Osama bin Laden's usual rhetoric, reiterating the issue of Palestine and America's support for Israel. What is noteworthy however is the unyielding support the No. 1 Al Qaeda leader receives from the Bahasa Indonesia cyber community especially that from Arrahmah. Comments posted prayed for Osama's safety,

“...May God help you in your struggle...” and expressed their admiration, “*Salute to Syaikh Osamah bin Ladin*” for his struggle to save what is viewed as an oppressed Islam. They also echo Al Qaeda’s ideology observed through the condemnation on America, “*Scoundrel America*”, and all those who maligned the ‘*Mujahideen*’ as deviated Muslims. This sentiment resonate throughout the global jihadi community as a whole.

Spurring on the Spirit of Jihad



Jihad (defined as ‘a struggle for good, in the path of Allah’) is regarded as best performed through waging violence, and is deemed as *farḍu ain* (Individual obligation), and a direct and fast route to heaven. Failing to follow this obligation bring punishment from God, and one would regret dwelling on human weakness upon his rejection of jihad. This is the message propagated in one of the several similar articles in Arrahmah.com. Although Arrahmah typically encourages its online participants to persevere in their cyber jihad as cited in Muhammad Jibriel’s letter in ICPVTR’s reports in 2009, the importance of physical *jihad*, has never been neglected.

A myriad of tactics (types of content and media tools) are used by Islamists extremists in their communication strategy to attain support and recruits. These tactics are reused and constantly reflected online. They are used for three main objectives: to highlight the cause of struggle (The creation of a narrative or ‘story’ for a cause); to justify acts of violence and concretize methods and worldview); to attain supporters among Muslims. While the portrayal of Muslims’ suffering is used to create the narrative for the cause, bias selection of religious texts justifies, legitimizes and concretizes the extremists’ binary worldview and methods used to defend it. Support is garnered from two major groups of target audience: Muslims who already have the intentions to partake in jihad and also moderate Muslims. This is attained through content emphasising on the benefits and imminence of *jihad*, as well as the ailments of ignoring it. Many a times too, tone of content used is sarcastic and attempts at invoking guilt in a person idle from jihad, “*How can a person profess his love for the prophet of God when he has not partake in jihad for Allah not once in his life?*” Taken from an article from Arrahmah.com entitled, “*If only I had done it (Jihad)*” this quote is one among many used in the article which focuses its argument on the story of Ka’b ibn Malik as told by Osama bin Laden. Ka’b ibn Malik

is a figure in the past known for his regret for not partaking in the Prophet's last war, the *Tabuk* war.