

# Monthly Informatics Report

## Developments in Arabic and Bahasa Indonesian Websites

May 2010

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### 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

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### Arabic Online Sites

- AQIM has taken a retired French engineer in Niger hostage and demands that the French government release a list of mujahideen imprisoned in France as ransom.
- Al-Shabaab's *da'wah* office has been very active in organizing seminars this month such as the graduation ceremony held for participants of a *da'wah* camp, as well as a seminar on *Jama'at Al-I'tisam's*.
- As a product of the seminar held earlier this month, Al-Shabaab disavowed *Jama'at Al-I'tisam* as a *Salafi-jihadi* movement in an article written by Sheikh Abu Bakr Al-Zayla'i, one of Al-Shabaab's key leaders, entitled "death of *Al-I'tisam*: a medical report on the death of the group in Ethiopia and the consummation of the memorial ceremony in Garowe".
- ISI denied allegations of plotting terror attacks in South Africa during the World Cup.

## Southeast Asian Online Sites

- Hatred on Detachment 88 increases with forum participants' lamenting on their adopted perception of a malicious Detachment 88 violating human rights and conspiring in the global drama aimed at tainting the image of Islam.
- Interests on Abu Bakar Bashir revived following the arrests of Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) members early this month.
- Absence of interests on the audio recording alleged to contain Noordin M Top's speech signifies its lack of credibility in the perception of the Bahasa Indonesian and Malay language online community.
- Materials purported to be from Al Qaeda continue to receive attention in the Bahasa Indonesian extremist online forums. This was observed through forum participants' comments which showed not only popular support for AQ, but also the influence gathered in increasing their motivation to partake in *jihad* as that carried out by the group.

## Explanation of Sources

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### Arabic-Language Sources

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 with certainty.

Jihadist forum members are identified in this document by their self-selected user names, which are usually pseudonyms. 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.

### Bahasa Indonesia Websites

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 its neighboring region. This web presence is considerably smaller, 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. On others, content is controlled by an administrator or administrators.

This section will be mainly based on six major extremist and radical websites – arrahmah.com, muslimdaily.net, hizbut-tahrir.or.id, al-tawbah.com, luwaran.com and puloinfo.net.

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 Jibriel, son of Abu Jibriel - one of the key founders of Jemaah Islamiyah and current emir of Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia. Mohamed Jibriel was also recently arrested for allegedly funding the July 2009 twin hotel bombings through links with Al-Qaeda. The latter is managed by the son of Abu Bakar Basyir, the former spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah and emir of Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia as well as current head of Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid.

Hizbut-tahrir.or.id is the official website of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). HTI is part of a wider international organization Hizbut Tahrir and is very active in the propagation of their ideology of the establishment of the Caliphate and Syariah as well as in community involvement. 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. Luwaran.com is considered the official mouthpiece of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF is considered to be a legitimate organization in the campaign for autonomy Philippine government. PuloInfo is the official website of the Pattani United Liberation Organization – the only separatist organization in Southern Thailand with an official website. 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.

# User Statistics

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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.

The data presented is for the top countries from which visits originate. They are gathered from alexa.com.<sup>1</sup> 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 (25 May 2010). The following websites have been chosen because of the bulk of articles selected from them for this month's report.

## alfaloja.ws<sup>2</sup>

\*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:*

Kuwait: 66.6%
Yemen: 13.0%
Other: 20.4%

## majahden.com

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<sup>1</sup> [www.alexacom](http://www.alexacom) is a comprehensive web information company that provides traffic data and rankings for websites

<sup>2</sup> New URL for Al-Fallujah.

## Mujahideen Electronic Network

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

Austria: 26.9%
Egypt: 16.2%
Netherlands: 16.2%
Algeria: 14.3%
Other: 26.4%

## **shamikh1.net**

### Shumukh Islamic Network

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

Syria: 21.0%
Egypt: 18.8%
UAE: 7.8%
Other: 52.4%

## **atahadi.com**

## Al-Tahaddi Islamic Network

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

Kuwait: 23.3%
Algeria: 14.5%
UAE: 12.2%
Yemen: 11.7%
Other: 36.4%

## **hizbut-tahrir.or.id**

Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia official website

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

Indonesia: 95%
Malaysia: 1.0%
Other: 4.0%

**arrahmah.com**

Arrahmah website

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

Indonesia: 82.8%
India: 5.4%
Philippines: 2.8%
Kuwait: 1.7%
United States: 1.5%
Thailand: 0.9%
Other: 4.8%

**Muslimdaily.net**

Muslimdaily website

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

Indonesia: 86.3%
Japan: 6.7%
Malaysia: 1.7%
Other: 5.2%

## almuhajirun.net

al Muhajirun website

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



## Arabic Websites

### **AQIM Announced the Kidnapping of Retired French Engineer**

In a statement released by *Al-Andalus media* and posted on **Atahadi Islamic Network** mid May, AQIM announced that it has kidnapped a retired French engineer, Michel Germaneau. The Frenchman, who once worked for an oil company in Algeria, was kidnapped in northern Niger on 22 April 2010, a day after the Algerian Defence Ministry announced the opening of a joint command headquarters in the south of Algeria to coordinate efforts to counter a growing threat from al Qaeda<sup>3</sup>. AQIM claimed that the man is currently running an association with an unknown purpose. The group demanded that France release *mujahideen* prisoners in the country in exchange for Germaneau's release, and added that the list of the *mujahideen's* names be sent to a French negotiator. Lastly, the statement said that President Nicolas Sarkozy is responsible for the life of the French hostage, and hence demanded that the ransom be paid quickly. A scanned copy of Germaneau's passport and a photo of him standing in front of AQIM banner were also provided. This kidnapping of foreign targets is yet another hallmark of AQIM's tactic to drive foreigners out of North Africa, besides demanding release of their imprisoned fighters.

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<sup>3</sup> Reuters, "Saharan States Open Joint Anti-Qaeda Command HQ", <http://www.africagoodnews.com/conflict/saharan-states-to-open-joint-anti-qaeda-command-hq.html>. *Africa The Good News*. 21 April 2010.



**Al-Shabaab's Da'wah Office Organized Graduation Ceremony, Seminar**



Da'wah office of Al-Shabaab has had its hands full early May as it organized a graduation ceremony for the 'Abdullah Azzam's Da'wah Camp' which was held on 30 April 2010, in Mogadishu's Nasruddin mosque. The group's senior leadership participated in this ceremony and it was chaired by Al-Shabaab's spokesperson, Ali Muhammad Ragi. According to a statement released by Al-Shabaab on 3 May 209 preachers graduated from the four and a half month *da'wah* camp which focused on Islamic studies and memorization of selected Islamic books and literature. Lessons on oratorical and public speaking skills were also incorporated into the course. Hence, the camp served as an effort contributed by Al-Shabaab for the training of future *duaat* (preachers) and leaders who will spread the teachings of Islam and take over the reins of Al-Shabaab leadership.



A week after the graduation ceremony, the *Da'wah* office organized a two-day seminar at Abu Hurairah Mosque in Mogadishu. The seminar entitled '*Jama'at Al-I'tisam ...Between Serving the Enemies and Abandoning Mujahideen*' opened its floor to six scholars who presented on topics relating to the historical background of *Jama'at Al-I'tisam*, its deviations and Al-Shabaab's response to *Jama'at Al-I'tiam*'s latest remarks regarding the former. The seminar was aimed at criticizing and rejecting the recent Islamic conference in Puntland held last month that discussed history of Islam in Somalia and the methods of *da'wah* as well as the invitation of non-Muslims to the Muslim faith through Islamic knowledge and the sharing of the Prophet's message. The discussions then turned to the issue of Islamist insurgent groups and their strife to overthrow the Western-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and to install an Islamic state governed by *Shari'ah* law. The scholars suggested that the Islamist insurgent groups, namely Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, are propelled by *Salafi* ideology to promote a literal translation of Islamic literature and to create an Islamic state by overthrowing any government that does not apply *Shari'ah* law in a Muslim country, hence disagreeing with the Al-Shabaab in this respect.

Sheikh Bashir Ahmed Salad, the chairman of the Mogadishu-based Somali clerics umbrella and leader of *Jama'at Al-I'tisam* said the conference comes at an appropriate time for the people to

understand the religion better and to avoid mistakes that continue to disintegrate the society and fuel conflicts. They also did not believe waging armed jihad is the way to establish an Islamic state. In response, Al-Shabaab condemned the group by labeling it as deviant from the Salafi ideology and accused it of supporting the government and submitting to it. *Jama'at Al-I'tisam* or, *Jama'at Al-I'tisam Bil Kitab Wal Sunnah* (Abidance by the Quran and *Sunnah* Group) was the name used by the militant Salafist movement under the leadership of Shaykh Bashir Ahmad Salad after the collapse of *Al-Ittihad Al-Islami*.

### Al-Shabaab Declares *Jama'at Al-I'tisam* Dead



Following the seminar organized by Al-Shabaab's *Da'wah* office early May, one of the group's key leaders, Sheikh Abu Bakr Al-Zayla'i, aka Ibrahim Haji Jama Al-Afghani had written an article entitled 'Death of *Al-I'tisam*; A Medical Report on the Death of the Group in Ethiopia and the Consummation of the Memorial Ceremony in Garowe'. Al-Zayla'i wrote a medical report-like article on how the group died and the events that ensued. He compared the group's support for pro-government and Western organizations to a virus that had embedded itself in the head of the group, making the group incapable of walking properly, thus stumbling on the 'threshold of presidential palaces repeatedly and continuously' that caused severe injuries to its head. This had led it to seek medication from the government as it had been diagnosed with paranoia; the effect from constant 'stumbling'. Unfortunately, the government's medication had only intensified the disease, 'making it anemic of knowledge and understanding', which finally led to its death as a true Salafi movement. The memorial service for *Al-I'tisam* came in the form of conferences that

discussed of Islamic history, *da'wah* of the group, and attempts to put the group in a light that will not be shunned by the government and its allies.

The article serves as an analogy of what Al-Shabaab claimed to be *Jama'at Al-I'tisam's* departure from its *salafi-jihadi* form, hence its death, in Ethiopia when the latter renounced violence, and its transition to a moderate, non-violent movement. More importantly, this was written particularly in response to the declaration made public by the group on its renouncement and disapproval of any acts of violence against governments, and its disbelief in armed jihad as a way out of the conflicts faced in Somalia. Further, Sheikh Bashir Salad, leader of *Jama'at Al-I'tisam*, along with scholars who participated in the discussion, disagreed with Al-Shabaab's strict and rigid *Salafi* ideology to promote literal translation of Islamic literature and to create an Islamic state by overthrowing any government that does not apply *Sharia* law in a Muslim country as this will only continue to disintegrate society and fuel conflicts. This has angered Al-Shabaab not primarily because of what was being said, but also because it came from a movement Al-Shabaab considered as fellow *Salafi-jihadi*. Moreover, Al-Shabaab was once part of *Al-Ittihad Al-Islami*, the militant Salafist movement *Jama'at Al-I'tisam* used to be known as. In a way, the declaration was seen as a form of treachery, thus, compelling Al-Shabaab to overact with an exaggerated analogy of disavowal.

### **Islamic State of Iraq Denies Plotting Attacks on South Africa**

Following the arrest of Al-Qaeda operatives and a Saudi national suspected to have ties with Al-Qaeda in Baghdad, the Ministry of Information for Islamic State of Iraq has issued a statement denying allegations that Al-Qaeda is plotting to attack the World Cup in South Africa. ISI said the allegation from 'the Green Zone government', which refers to the fortified zone in central Baghdad that houses U.S. military personnel, the U.S. embassy and several Iraqi government buildings, surfaced after a series of successful capture and arrests of Al-Qaeda operatives in the capital as well as other areas, and two Saudi nationals linked to Al-Qaeda suspected to be plotting attacks on South Africa. ISI totally denied the allegation, saying that it was baseless and untrue. They expressed their amusement at how the government could imagine spinning lies such as this in order to cover other lies that they've previously fabricated regarding the arrests of AQ operatives.

Iraq's Baghdad Military Command announced on 17 May the arrest of a Saudi national, Abdullah Azzam Saleh Al-Qahtani who once worked with Ayman Al-Zawahiri, for plotting terrorist attacks during the World Cup<sup>4</sup>. Qahtani said that he had merely discussed with friends the idea of attacking the Danish and Dutch team and their fans in revenge for "insults" toward

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline Alexander, "Al-Qaeda Denies World Cup Terror Plot Alleged by Iraq", <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-05-25/al-qaeda-denies-world-cup-terror-plot-alleged-by-iraq-update1-.html>. *Bloomberg Business week*. 25 May 2010.

the prophet Mohammad in Denmark and the Netherlands, but hasn't yet been approved by Al-Qaeda leaders. Further details were not disclosed by the Military Command. South Africa on the other hand denied claims that the country faces a high risk of a terrorist attack during the World Cup<sup>5</sup>, given the fact that the country has no history of international terrorism. Hence, its non-aligned status and lack of substantial support for local militants will keep terror attacks at bay. Although the World Cup host has heightened security measures, there is ever the possibility of terrorist attacks due to the high-profile nature of the event.

## **Bahasa Indonesian Language Websites**

### **Hatred on Detachment 88**

Detachment 88's series of crackdown of safe houses, arrests, as well as, shootings of Islamist militants in Aceh and Jakarta have been counter-productive in the efforts to tackle extremism in the Bahasa Indonesian extremist online community in two ways. Firstly, it has aggravated their perceived state of victimization as they lament on their view that Muslims are being discriminated against in Indonesia. This has in turn led to the second effect – the fuelling of their motivation to create change. Actions to meet this objective of creating change have not been all violent. While the one that implies violence was advocated through means of writings published online, actions that materialised offline were non-violent. These sentiments observed were expressed through online postings of biased selection of mainstream news, commentaries and short articles.

#### Aggravation of State of Victimization

The aggravation of the state of victimhood adopted by the Bahasa Indonesia extremist online community was observed through the narration of a Detachment 88 that is repressing Islam and is violating human rights through their killings of those they deem as terrorists. An article originally from mainstream Indonesian online source *detik.com* and reposted in extremist website **ashhabulkahfi.com** raised questions on the credibility of the phenomenon of terrorism in Indonesia. It suggests a collaboration between Detachment 88 and media organisations *Metro TV* and *TV-One* in self constructing a news story as a communication strategy aimed at creating a skewed perception of terrorism. It did not specifically state the objective of such a news construction as a means to taint the reputation of Islam. However, the message was put across with the storyline of the article that ended with a witness account describing Detachment 88's men present at the place of attack the night before, suggesting a staged up crackdown that would boost the unit's reputation at the expense of tainting Islam's.

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<sup>5</sup> Agnieszka Flak, "South Africa Denies High Terror Threat", <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE64T1WL20100530> Reuters, 30 may 2010.

## Fuelled Motivation to Act for Change

### *A Reflection of Reality*

The perceived grievances described above were observed to have motivated both the online and offline Indonesian extremist community to act for change. Non-violent activities demonstrated offline, were featured online. So were violent intentions absent in reality. These non-violent and violent Islamist activities available online reflects the different variants of extremist Islamism in Indonesia today. Based on a recent report by the *International Crisis Group* (ICG), there are violent and non-violent aspects of extremist Islamism in Indonesia today. The non-violent aspect is represented by *Jemaah Islamiyah* (JI) and their focus is on religious outreach. Here, military training and *jihād* with emphasis on the use of violence is advocated but coupled with the belief that there is a lack of resource, hence the need for *da'wah* (religious outreach) at current. Online, this non-violent variant was observed through Abu Jibriel's request to the Indonesian National Committee of Human Rights and students demonstrations in Surakarta, to have the Detachment 88 abolished. The violent aspect, on the other hand, is represented by two networks. One was led by the late Noordin Top, while the other by the late Dulmatin. Their operational militant tactics are suicide bombings and assassinations respectively.<sup>6</sup> Online, this violent variant was observed to be contained in Abdullah Sonata's statement. The statement had Sonata, whom the Indonesian authorities believe to be a potential replacement for Dulmatin, call out to former '*mujahideen*' from Poso, Moro-Mindanao and Poso to unite against Detachment 88.

### **Interests on Abu Bakar Bashir**



After three to four months of the absence of interest on Abu Bakar Bashir in the online Bahasa Indonesian extremist community, a surge of accorded attention was observed in the online Bahasa Indonesian extremist community this month. This is especially since the recent arrests of

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<sup>6</sup> "Indonesia: Jihad Surprise in Aceh" Asia Report N 189. *International Crisis Group*, 20 April 2010.



In a nutshell, response on this piece of news have been low in Bahasa Indonesian extremist online sites, probably because of the absence of the actual audio, diminishing its credibility altogether.

### **Statement from Al Qaeda in the Islamic State of Iraq**

The announcement on the new leaders of Al Qaeda in the Islamic State of Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husainiy al-Quroisyy and Abu Abdillah al-Husayniy al-Quroisyy received a significant amount of attention from **AlTawbah** forum participants. At least 18 comments were recorded, a high number as compared to most forum threads that saw less than 5 comments. The comments showed the reasons as to why physical destruction of Islamist militant organisation is counter-productive in tackling the Islamist extremist ideology. They lauded the new appointees and bragged on how the killings of leaders would not stop their fight, "*The Islamic State of Iraq will always exist...*" In fact, the desire to continue the struggle on their own grounds in Indonesia seemed to have been fuelled, "*Allah, give the Indonesian mujahideen triumph and power.*" This highlights the online Bahasa Indonesian extremist community's support for Al Qaeda, and the extent of the influence of such materials in spurring their motivation to continue their struggle.