



## **INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM RESEARCH**

A Centre of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

# **Monthly Informatics Report**

## **Developments in Arabic Online Sites**

**May 2011**

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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 February. For the purpose of this report, extremist or jihadist 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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- The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) released a statement detailing the jailbreak at the counter terrorism bureau in Baghdad early May. The jailbreak was led by the October 2010 Baghdad church massacre alleged mastermind Abu Huzaifa Al-Battawi, who was later killed by security reinforcements.
- A forum member shared his experience watching a documentary on Sarin gas and the 1995 Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. Links to more information on the gas in English were provided, which prompted the author to ask those who understand English and the subject better to provide a translation.
- Al-Qaeda General Command (AQGC) issued a statement confirming the death of Osama bin Laden, debunking online forum participants' doubts surrounding the news of his death.

- In his final audio release, Osama bin Laden commended the people of Tunisia and Egypt for their revolutions that had ousted their rulers. He urged the rebels to persevere in their revolt until the end.

## Explanation of Sources

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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 a forum format. This means that content is posted by a wide member base, not by one website administrator. Terrorist and Islamist organizations maintain presence within these forums to post their materials there. In addition, any member can post materials, observations, comments, and questions.

While forum administrators have demonstrated the existence of mechanisms for policing content and evaluating the veracity of statements, this cannot be guaranteed. Similarly, 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 provide a 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 selected because they are representative of common views and 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 URLs of sources are not disclosed.***

## User Statistics

Featured below is the percentage of a site's total visitor access from any 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 provide readers with an idea of the trends in visitor traffic.

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 (27 May 2011). The following websites have been chosen because of the bulk of articles selected from them for this month's report.

### as-ansar

#### Ansar Al-Mujahideen Forums

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

Italy: 16.9%
Belgium: 13.4%
Egypt: 9.8%
Algeria: 6.8%
Saudi Arabia: 6.4%
Other: 48.7%

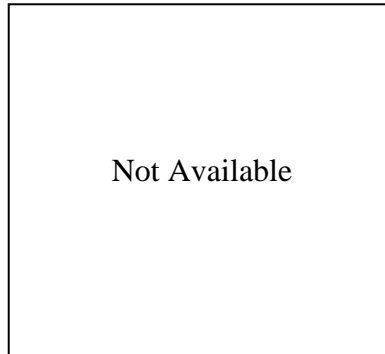
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<sup>1</sup> [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com) is a comprehensive web information company that provides traffic data and rankings for websites

**aljahad.com**

Global Jihad Network

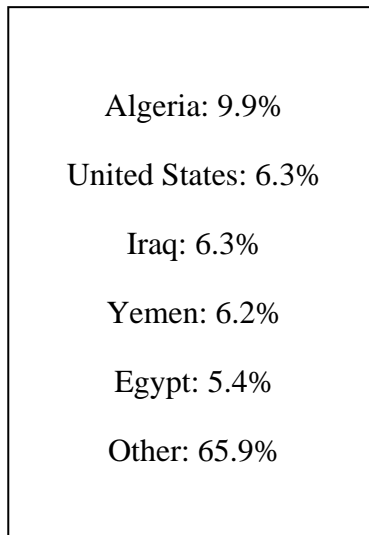
*Percentage of a site's total visitor access from a given country:*



**shamikh1.net**

Shumukh Islamic Network

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



## **Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) Detailed Prison Break in Baghdad**

The ISI has released a statement detailing the attempted prison break at Iraq's Interior Ministry's counter terrorism bureau led by a man called Abu Huzaifah Al-Battawi, who was accused of masterminding the Baghdad church massacre in October last year. The statement said that ISI managed to penetrate security weeks prior to the escape. They smuggled 3 guns and informed Al-Battawi and the others about the escape plan, ensuring that every angle of the operation was covered. According to the statement, the 'operation' started at 10pm, when Al-Battawi was brought to another room. He attacked the guard, grabbed his gun and started shooting, killing the guard as well as other officers present. Al-Battawi and his group proceeded to the office of the director of the counter terrorism bureau, General Moayyed Saleh, and shot him dead. 7 high-ranking officers were also killed. Before attempting to flee the building, they planned to take the police or military vehicle. Security reinforcements arrived before they could flee, and the assault began between the parties. Heavily surrounded and outnumbered, Huzaifa and his group, as the statement reported, decided to fight on until they were eventually killed by the security personnel. The unsuccessful prison break left 17 people dead, including inmates. It is not clear whether the inmates have had inside help, as the counter terrorism unit prison complex is said to be one of the country's most secure prisons.

## **Forum Member Intrigued by Sarin Gas**

'Abu Yaqin Al-'Askari', an active member at the **Shumukh Islamic Network** shared his fascination on Sarin gas and the Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo Subway in 1995. In his forum post entitled "chemical warfare: Sarin gas", Al-Askari said that he was motivated to do more research on Sarin gas after watching a documentary film entitled "Sarin group" on Al-Jazeera Channel. He recommended readers to watch the film and provided a link to the video. Besides the documentary, Al-Askari included links to a youtube video that elaborates on the mechanism of Sarin, and an article on Sarin gas. He even proposed to pay anyone who is able to translate some passages from the article. Al-Askari's post was met with praises and encouragement from readers. Although there were not many responses, one forum member named 'Ya'qob Al-Andalusi' commented that the Sarin gas used in 1995 Tokyo Metro attack was impure, not well prepared and unprofessionally made, hence the 'few' casualties. According to him, if the gas was professionally made by chemists, the number of casualties might have been greater. Another member, 'Asadul Malhamah' suggested posting a manual on sodium cyanide, to which he included a pdf document on cyanide.

**“You lived a praised life and you died a martyr”:  
Statement Confirming Osama bin Laden’s Death by al-Qaeda General Command**

Less than a week after U.S. President Barack Obama announced that Osama bin Laden had been killed by U.S. operation in Pakistan, Al-Qaeda General Command (AQGC) confirmed the news by posting a statement on Arabic extremist forums, thus debunking doubts amongst the online participants. The Arabic statement was also translated into English by The Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF). The statement was written in flowery prose, singing praises for the late leader of Al-Qaeda for his leadership and fearlessness. It also served as a reminder that Al-Qaeda does not cease with the demise of bin Laden. AQGC asserted that bin Laden was not a prophet sent for the twentieth century but a man who firmly upheld the Book (The Qur’an) and whose status is elevated by God. The statement promised that more ‘Osama bin Ladens’ will rise from the *ummah* and analogized bin Laden as a ‘graduate’ from the University of Faith, Qur’an and Jihad—a university whose doors would never close. Accompanying the praises to bin Laden for his ‘valiant’ death, AQGC reminded that his blood was precious and called upon people of Pakistan to avenge him.

Several attacks have taken place in Pakistan in the name of taking revenge for Osama bin Laden, claiming many lives. Following this statement, abundant eulogies and poetry in praise for the fallen al-Qaeda leader were posted on the Arabic extremist forums.

**Speech by Osama bin Laden: To His Muslim *Ummah***

An audio recording containing the final speech of the late Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, was released by Al-Ansar Media Institute on 19 May 2011, almost two weeks after al-Qaeda General Command issued a statement confirming his death. Al-Qaeda General stated that bin Laden recorded the message a week prior to his killing. Addressing the Muslim community as his Muslim *ummah*, Bin Laden commended the people of Tunisia and Egypt for the revolutions that had thwarted their rulers, and encouraged the rebels in other countries to remain steadfast in their struggle and to be wary of dialogue. He warned that “there is no half-way meeting point between the people of righteousness and people of deception”. Bin Laden asserted that it is a great sin and a great ignorance to waste the opportunity to advance the *ummah* and be liberated from “serving the whims of the rulers, manmade laws and Western domination.”

In the twelve-and-a-half minute long speech, bin Laden was speaking in his signature calm and poetic manner, and took a leadership stance in reminding “the faithful people” to create a council to offer opinion and advice to the Muslims, and announcing it as a *Shariah* duty. He also called for the rebels to cooperate with people whose revolutions have not started. In order to preserve the *ummah* and its revolution, bin Laden called for a revolution of awareness and correction of

terms, recommending the book “Concepts that Must be Corrected” by Syed Qutb. Bin Laden ended his final speech by urging the *ummah* to persevere in the revolt till the end and to prepare for it if it has not begun. He also called those who died in the revolution as masters of martyrs.

As the audio recording was released posthumously, numerous forum participants replied with prayers for Osama bin Laden to be blessed and accepted by God as a martyr.