

The 2016 Message of the Islamic State (IS) to Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)

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In the premier English language publication of Islamic State (IS) targeting Muslims of the West Dabiq 15 carries an article titled: "Interview Abu Sa'd at- Trinidad" which is an escalating engagement with the Muslims of T&T by the IS. This article was preceded by two video clips and now an article in Dabiq: what then is the importance of the Muslims of T&T to the strategic agenda of IS? The article utilises the propaganda tool of a Muslim of T&T who undertook hijrah to IS to be a mujahid of IS to extol the worldview of IS and much more importantly to present the position of IS on the bona fides of the T&T Muslims as Muslims acceptable and embraceable by IS. This message is stated unequivocally and without apology by IS to the Muslims of T&T thereby changing dramatically the future range of possible action that can be undertaken by IS assets in T&T as in the message a range of choices of action were presented all premised on extremist violence.

Abu Sa'd states that he was exposed to Christianity as a small boy but soon found inconsistencies in doctrines that were in abrogation of the first and second commandments of the law of Moses. Abu Sa'd through interaction with a Muslim colleague will eventually accept Islam but for Sa'd and the IS there is a path to Jihad separate and apart from the path to Islam and his path to Jihad was facilitated by the works of Anwar Al-Awlaki (1) via the internet. Sa'd's path to being Mujahid was completed when he found his Shaykh in Trinidad to guide him to the stage of acceptance then action who was Ashmead Choate. Sa'd and the IS propaganda machine has listed the path to acceptability and entry to the ranks of Mujahid and Shahid of the IS. The IS methodology of Jihad has to be actualised and a Shaykh accepted and certified by IS is central to this process who is also recruiter and referee. The article reports that Shaykh Ashmead Choate died the death of the Mujahid of IS at Ramadi, Iraq attaining the existential condition of Shahid. Are there other Shaykhs of IS in T&T? Sa'd insists in the article that there is the right methodology of Jihad and a wrong methodology of Jihad and in T&T there is an existing example of the wrong methodology applied and the price paid by Muslims for embracing and applying the wrong methodology: The Jamaat al Muslimeen (2). Sa'd states: "There was a faction of Muslims in Trinidad known for 'militancy.' Its members attempted to overthrow the disbelieving government but quickly surrendered, apostatised, and participated in the religion of democracy,

demonstrating that they weren't upon the correct methodology of jihad." The Muslimeen are then apostates as they in the aftermath of their jihad surrendered to the West by adopting, embracing and taking part in the taghut (3) of democracy. As apostates the Muslimeen are outside the pale of Islam justifying the pronouncement of the fatwa of Takfir and being put to the sword by IS. IS has then for the first time in its engagement with T&T made a statement on its position on the state of Islam in T&T a statement which calls for action. Sa'd further states on the Muslims of T&T as follows: "In Trinidad, about 7-10% of the population ascribes to Islam, although many of them are apostates having nothing to do with Islam except its name. When I was living there, there were Murjiah, modernists and Tabligh, with a few pockets of pro-Saudi Salafi 'deviants.' There are very few people upon the sound creed now, especially as most of them have performed hijrah." All the existing organisations within Islam in T&T today are branded apostates by IS based on the IS position of Takfir where a Muslim judged to be sinful is no longer a Muslim therefore outside of the Islamic prohibition on Muslims murdering Muslims. Since they are all apostates IS has indicated that one possible action called for in T&T for its supporters is putting apostates to the sword by any means necessary.

Sa'd in his message to the Muslims of Trinidad states: "The first part of my message is to those who claim Islam and yet blindly follow the muftis and imams: in calling you to vote for the taghut leaders they are calling you to commit kufr, yet you obey and follow them, thereby apostatising. I say to you, fear Allah and return to the religion. Do not become deluded and allow yourselves to follow these evil leaders." Muslims in T&T who take part in the democratic process are apostates and merit the retribution of the IS. Sa'd then deals with those Muslims of Trinidad who have accepted the teachings of IS and have the means to undertake the hijrah to IS but have failed to embrace hijrah by condemning their refusal to act upon their belief because this weakness, this failure to act can result in their condemnation to Hell on the Day of Judgement. But Sa'd presents a course of action for the followers of IS in Trinidad who failed to undertake hijrah. Sa'd states: "I also say to you, my brothers, that you now have a golden opportunity to do something that many of us here wish we could do right now. You have the ability to terrify the disbelievers in their own homes and make their streets run with their blood. Therefore, terrorise the disbelievers and make them

feel fear everywhere, even in their own bedrooms. Due to their mere disbelief, their blood by default is lawful to spill.” Those who fail to undertake hijrah can only redeem themselves by mounting violent attacks on the unbelievers/kaffir/kaffirun of T&T. Disbelief merits slaughter and slaughter of the kaffir/kaffirun is rewarded with redemption from the Hell fire. Binary duality with an overwhelming bloodlust. Sa’d then presents another target for followers of IS in T&T seeking redemption as follows: “Attack the interests of the Crusader coalition near you, including their embassies, businesses, and ‘civilians.’ Burh down their government institutions just as they try to bomb our buildings where Allah’s law is upheld.” This is a telling statement for the economic reality of T&T as the major energy players of the T&T energy sector are headquartered in countries that belong to the Crusader coalition. What then is the methodology of attack pinpointed by Sa’d? Sa’d states: “Follow the examples of the lions of France and Belgium, the example of the blessed couple in California, and the examples of the knights in Orlando and Nice.” The range of selected operations include multi persons in cells mounting attacks, couples and lone-wolves intent on slaughter. The reward for such attacks is clear and the punishment for failure to act is also apparent the choice made is entirely in the hands of the follower of IS in T&T. IS has then in this article declared T&T an operational zone of graphic violence against the apostates, the kaffirun and the Crusader coalition. T&T we have been warned.

The article textually comprises statements of the discourse of IS addressed to the Muslims of T&T and selections from the life history of Abu Sa’d especially in Trinidad which are very revealing in their own right. One such revelation is his answer to the question posed by Dabiq on the mujahidin from T&T in the IS as follows: “Are they mostly converts, or do they mostly come from Muslim families?” Sa’d’s reply is: “About 60% of the mujahidin from Trinidad here in the lands of the Caliphate come from Muslim families, with the remaining 40% or so being converts. The converts are overwhelmingly converts from Christianity.” Those in the T&T national security apparatus charged with building profiles I hope they understand what is the reality of this statement. A convert did not grow up in a Muslim home, has no Muslim parents that raised her/him in the way of Islam, has no experience and exposure to the praxis of Islam and came to Islam via the process of leaving ignorance/Jahiliyyah for Islam. A follower of IS that came from

a Muslim family is the extreme opposite. Sa'd has then revealed that the overwhelming majority of the followers of IS from Trinidad came from established Muslim families with at least their parents being the first generation of Muslims and others stretching back over multiple generations. This then illustrates the realisation of a process of exposing the children to Salafi Jihadi discourse from a tender age over an extensive period of time. Build a profile of that! Can you build a predictive profile of a reality you cannot understand and don't want to? The strategic reality is that those who left for IS and there is no record of having done so can return and easily blend into the extended families they are part of unlike the converts and simply become sleepers if they want to. Glib reassurances will not handle this reality.

In the biographical information Sa'd gives in the article insights into realities of criminal activity on the ground in T&T and questions of the adequacy of the security apparatus arise. In response to the question: "Tell us about your jihad endeavour in Trinidad and Tobago?" Sa'd replies as follows: "I, along with my brothers in Islam Abu 'Abdillah (another convert from Christianity), Abu Isa, and a number of other brothers from Trinidad that later made hijrah after us formed a group and would deal with some of the issues of the Muslims that people were afraid to deal with." Abu Sa'd and Abu 'Abdillah and Abu Isa are then the core leadership of this group bent on action in the T&T social order in favour of Muslims. Sa'd and 'Abdillah are converts to Islam whilst Abu Isa is not and in the text Abdillah and Isa both receive the salutation given to Shahids hence they are dead. This group formed and led by Sa'd, Abdillah and Isa eventually undertook the hijrah to IS. Sa'd continues: "so whenever the disbelievers in Trinidad would kill or harm a Muslim, we would take revenge. We would work to accumulate money in order to buy weapons and ammo. Alhamdulillah, we were successful in many operations, and this was only by Allah's grace." A group involved in murder was able to purchase the instruments of murder locally and exterminate with impunity then leave for Syria. Sa'd states that Abu 'Abdillah, Abu Sa'd and his wife were arrested by the police and charged for possession of arms and ammunition. Then with the declaration of the state of emergency they were arrested again but again freed. Sa'd states: "They were unable to make a case against us and we were freed, by Allah's permission, and despite being placed under surveillance, we went back to doing what we knew we had to do, commanding the good and

prohibiting the evil.” IS is pouring scorn on our security apparatus to embolden their assets in T&T to follow the example of Sa’d, ‘Abdillah and Isa presented to them for they are the ideal mujahids and hence Shahids of IS. Sa’d continues: “As painful as it was, we decided to delay our hijrah, and soon came an opportunity to exact revenge on two kafir criminals we were hunting. The operation was carried out in the middle of the city in broad daylight and was caught on camera. Abu ‘Abdillah and Abu ‘Isa were arrested, and I went into hiding. Once more, Allah bestowed a tremendous favour on us as Abu ‘Isa was released pending investigation. Abu ‘Abdillah was also released and we left Trinidad one by one.” Again questions arise of the quality of the much vaunted surveillance of persons involved in a criminal murder enterprise. From what is presented it is apparent that the actions of this group escalated the engagement that was raging on the ground at the time in the so-called Muslim vs Rasta City war the fallout from which was used as one justification for the state of emergency and the detention of individuals subsequently freed. Was this a murder for hire enterprise? A potent message of impunity for the assets of IS in T&T. When asked to relate the trials faced since making hijrah Sa’d reveals the reality of the impact the war is having on the T&T contingent as follows: “I think the hardest thing for me was losing many close friends. Besides that, I’m now on the fourth house that I’ve had to leave because they keep getting bombed or damaged by the airstrikes, but praise is due to Allah in all circumstances.” The halcyon days of IS hegemony are now over and the need for a post caliphate strategy is apparent which IS insists is already formulated.

The information Sa’d narrates in the Dabiq article reveals a glimpse of the IS’s order of battle involving chosen units of fighters from T&T. Abu ‘Abdillah was the leader of a unit of 5 snipers including ‘Abdillah all from T&T where at the battle of the village of Maghribtayn 4 members of the sniper unit were killed including its leader ‘Abdillah with Abu Samir wounded. Sa’d is also a member of a sniper unit whose unit was present at the battle of Maghribtayn and was in radio contact with ‘Abdillah until his death as the position of ‘Abdillah and the unit was overrun. We can therefore expect that at minimum two sniper units manned by fighters from T&T were at the battle of Maghribtayn if not more. Highly trained and motivated killers as the high attrition rate for IS sniper units on the battlefield is only surpassed by their battlefield suicide units. Imagine those so bloodied back

in T&T! The information revealed by Sa'd in the article unlocks the imagery of the second of the second video released by IS on their T&T foreign fighters. This was a video of 'Abdillah leading and training his sniper unit with interviews of specific members of the unit and this is supported by the photo in the article of the said unit of five T&T fighters with 'Abdillah at the centre of the group. 'Abdillah, Sa'd and members of the sniper unit are models of rectitude and devotion to the cause of the only true creed/methodology/manhaj in Islam today: The Islamic State and it's the model followers of IS in T&T are challenged to emulate. What then qualified 'Abdillah, 'Isa and Sa'd for this special trust placed in them by the IS. It was much more than their hijrah and their acceptance of the manhaj of IS it was the jihad the three waged against the kaffirun in T&T and their escape from the clutches of the kaffirun. The discourse of the article rooted in the examples set by the Shahids and Mujahids of the IS of T&T is the basis of the challenge to the followers of the IS in T&T to dare to emulate. This then is a discourse of motivation to action that is underpinned by and thrives on the emulation of Shahids of IS. Two of the three featured: Abu 'Abdillah and Abu 'Isa are already Shahids and one expects in a future issue of Dabiq a further announcement of another Shahid from the T&T contingent.

The discourse of the article addressed to the Muslims of T&T and especially the followers of IS in T&T is the same as that used to address the Muslims of Europe and North America in Dabiq 12 and 13 (4). T&T is now an operational theatre for IS as North America and Europe and the reason for this is connected to the number of Muslims from T&T that have made and continue to attempt to undertake hijrah to IS. IS views T&T as a beachhead in the Western hemisphere other than the Muslim population of North America and as a jump off point to North America. The volume of returning Muslims to IS influenced the first video from IS on T&T, then the second was much more complex and sophisticated and now we have a call to jihad in their premier English online publication Dabiq as the engagement escalates and IS clearly wants a home grown attack but especially attacks in their name and to their glorification in T&T. To this strategic end the article presents a range of accepted targets for an attacker or attackers to choose from. The range is: apostate Muslims, unbelievers/kaffirun of all types and the personnel and assets of members of the Crusader coalition in T&T. The softest target are the apostate Muslims as Muslim on Muslim violence is intra-communal

violence even intra-family violence based on a common belief system and rules of etiquette thereby ensuring easy access to targets. The issue now is the willingness of followers of IS in T&T to act upon the call of IS to violence and the response of the government and wider society to this call. Already the signs are not encouraging as the fundamental issue is if an overwhelming majority of the population are assured that the security apparatus can ensure their safety especially in light of the failure to pre-empt the jihad of July 27th, 1990. The politicisation of the threat has now resulted in politicians resorting to glib statements which focus on political sustainability rather than public safety. Sections of the media have attempted to spin a mythic version of the threat in the hope of boosting ratings and in doing so the public consumers of media have been bombarded with a mythic version which masks the reality and expanse of the threat. A most potent example of this spin is the story of Shane Crawford. Media houses have insisted that Crawford is Abu Sa'd at-Trinidad the interviewee in the article in Dabiq 15 and have printed a picture allegedly of Crawford insisting that he is Sa'd. But in the Dabiq article there is a picture of fighters from T&T comprising five males with the male at the centre of the group a spitting image of the alleged photo of Crawford. The IS caption of this photo is Abu 'Abdillah centre with the salutation in Arabic for the Shahid following the name. Abu 'Abdillah Shahid/martyr/deceased is then Crawford and in the article Sa'd states where and how 'Abdillah died on the battlefield of Syria. Why then print a fabrication? Why then create a news line that is in fact trivialising the threat posed to T&T by IS in the article? For market share? To serve a political agenda?

NOTES

<http://bookstore.iuniverse.com/Products/SKU-000464869/Salafi-Jihadi-Discourse-of-Sunni-Islam-in-the-21st-century.aspx>

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