



SUNNI OPPOSITION TO THE ISLAMIC STATE

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Spearheaded by the Islamic State (IS), a renewed Sunni Arab insurgency in Iraq has wrestled control of most localities in the Anbar, Ninawa, Salah ad-Din and Kirkuk governorates away from the central government over the course of 2014. While the question of exactly who controls what is still a matter of debate, it has become clear that IS has asserted its own authority at the expense of other factions in the main cities and towns, including Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah. IS's conduct--destroying shrines, detaining and killing opponents--has provoked resentment among locals, in some cases leading to the creation of new groups to take up arms against IS.

KATA'IB AL-MOSUL

The newly formed Kata'ib al-Mosul (the Mosul Battalions) was first announced in July 2014, followed by a statement from the Nujaifi family¹ that the movement would have their full support to combat IS in Mosul. Despite false local Iraqi media insinuations about Osama al-Nujaifi, there was no suggestion that members of Kata'ib al-Mosul were receiving training in Iraqi Kurdistan or Iran. The latter in particular would be highly implausible anyway. In any event, Kata'ib al-Mosul's affiliation with the Nujaifi family is shown by the fact that the official Facebook page for Kata'ib al-Mosul "Likes" the official Facebook pages of Atheel and Osama Nujaifi.²

Kata'ib al-Mosul consists of a number of sub-battalions, including one known as the "Revenge for the Martyrs Battalion,"³ which invokes as a grievance against IS the blowing up of the shrines of the Prophets Jonah and Seth, as well as the killing of innocents, forced displacement of Christians from Mosul and the attacks on Yazidis. Similarly the "Zalzal Battalion" of Kata'ib al-Mosul invokes IS's transgressions against holy sites and denounces IS as "khawarij"--a common allegation in present Sunni religious discourse which disparages IS for its extreme conduct.⁴ Likewise, the "Prophet Seth Battalion" denounces IS for blowing up holy sites and attacking Mosul's churches.⁵

It is difficult to determine the exact size of Kata'ib al-Mosul, but estimates indicate that all the pockets of this group total a few hundred fighters at most. One of the contingents, the Katiba al-Bawasil, claimed through its media representative to have approximately 100 fighters.⁶ The attacks claimed by Kata'ib al-Mosul are small-scale, ranging from gunfire assassinations to IED attacks.

Table 1. Sampling of claimed Kata'ib al-Mosul attacks from late August to early September 2014⁷:

Date of Attack	Description
September 2	9:00 p.m.: IED explosion targeting a group of IS operatives in the Nabi Yunis area, which led to the killing of two IS and wounding of others.
September 2	5:40 p.m.: Lances Brigades fired on one of the armed men of IS with silenced weapons and killed him inside his car on the road connecting between al-Mithaq and al-Kawkjli junctions.
September 2	4:05 p.m.: IED on a car carrying 4 members of IS on the main road in al-Nur quarter, killing one and wounding the rest with severe wounds. A number of IS trucks rushed to the scene immediately to take the wounded to hospital.
September 1	A number of IS armed men were killed at the hands of Kata'ib al-Mosul in an

Date of Attack	Description
	IED explosion that targeted their vehicle near Baghdad square opposite the German hospital on the right side (i.e., the western half of the city, on the right bank of the Tigris) of Mosul.
August 31	IED explosion targeting a group of IS in the al-Bi' al-Mubashar area. Killed two and severely wounded a third.
August 31	Katiba al-Bawasil within Kata'ib al-Mosul carried out an IED attack on an IS car on Baghdad street in west Mosul.
August 31	Killing of two armed IS operatives in al-Qusur area near Mosul University, using silencer weapons for the first time.
August 31	IS members killed at noon in front of the Allahu Akbar mosque in al-Nur quarter as a result of gunfire from the Kata'ib al-Mosul.
August 30	IS security officer (Wataban Muhammad al-Hadidi) killed in al-Aamel quarter as a result of gunfire from Kata'ib al-Mosul.
August 30	Two IS killed this afternoon in al-Kawkajli area on the left (ie, eastern half of the city) side of Mosul in armed clashes with Kata'ib al-Mosul.
August 29	IED explosion targeted an IS Hummer carrying heavy weaponry near Rafila village from al-Qayyara district. Vehicle was hit and its occupants killed.
August 28	IED attack by Katiba al-Bawasil on an IS vehicle at the entrance to al-Shuhada' quarter in Mosul.
August 27	IED attack by the Prophet Jonah Battalion, a Kata'ib al-Mosul formation, on IS members in the al-Faysaliya area; two were killed.
August 27	Katiba al-Bawasil kill an IS operative with knives in Abu Risa area on the right side of Mosul.

Along with the militant activity describe here, it seems that Kata'ib al-Mosul has an activist front known as the “Movement to Liberate Mosul the Dignified,”⁸ featuring as its symbol the leaning minaret of the Great Mosque of Mosul, which IS allegedly tried to destroy in the face of local opposition.⁹ On September 2, the group released a statement affirming the need for Mosul to be freed from IS control and, like Kata'ib al-Mosul's military affiliates, invoking IS's infringement on holy sites and its atrocities against the city's minority religions. That statement said, in part:

“Long has your silence endured regarding the greed of the strangers against you and their playing about with the fate of your city, for they have committed transgressions against your history, civilization, religion and your roots striking on the neck of culture and urban life. But your city, productive over the centuries, is capable of renewing itself through you and sending forth through your forearms new hope in a community coveting its vigor and dreaming of a life not disturbed by reactionary trends and intellectual stagnation...for you are the symbol of pride and courage...in the end Mosul will remain dignified, and in the end your dignified forearms will liberate Mosul.”¹⁰

At the same time, the group assured the people of Mosul that it was not seeking a return to the prior status quo: “And our movement rejects returning to what was before 10 June and the erroneous means of dealing with the people of Mosul and the absence of standards of human rights as well as the infringement on the rule of law.”¹¹ It also clarified its own links with the Nujaiifi family: “The movement affirms its commitment to respect the customs and traditions of the people, and preventing any force from dominating them. That will be through determination to coordinate with the governor of Ninawa [Atheel Nujaiifi], to secure real coordination with military ranks and protect Mosul from any attack.”¹²

Thus, politically, the Kata'ib al-Mosul and the wider activist network fall firmly within the camp of the Nujaiifi family's autonomist agenda for Sunni Arab-majority provinces, which would primarily call for the provinces to manage their own security forces—analagous to the Peshmerga in Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite rumors that Atheel in particular had initially placed his hopes on cooperation with the Ba'athist-Sufi organization Jaysh Rijal al-Tariq al-Naqshbandia (JRTN/Naqshbandi Army), led by Saddam Hussain's former right-hand man Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, to restore some form of government to Mosul,¹³ there is no evidence of cooperation between Kata'ib al-Mosul and JRTN. JRTN itself denies being part of the Kata'ib al-Mosul initiative and attacks federalist schemes as a malicious plot to divide Iraq.¹⁴ Further, Iraqi media reports put words in Osama al-Nujaiifi's mouth about supposed cooperation between Kata'ib al-Mosul and JRTN. He never in fact said such a thing. Similar insinuations about a connection between the Kata'ib al-Mosul and the Salafi nationalist Jaysh al-Mujahideen, which is anti-Shi'a in outlook and, like JRTN, aspires to overthrow the central government are similarly unfounded.¹⁵ Moreover, in an interview, a Katiba al-Bawasil media representative denied any alleged cooperation with JRTN. If Atheel was actually in contact with JRTN about a supposed "push back" against IS and setting up a working government in Mosul or elsewhere in Ninawa province, then it is clear that JRTN was "playing" him, invoking the prospect of potentially working together against IS in order to taunt him for his lack of real power in the province.

HARAKAT AHRAR AL-MOSUL

Translating to "The Movement of the Free Men of Mosul," this group officially describes itself as "heroic Mosul resistance," and takes as its slogan, "No to IS, no to khawarij, yes to Iraq."¹⁶ Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul issued a statement on August 31 announcing a military initiative under the name of "Kata'ib al-Mustafa," denying that a majority of the population of Mosul or Ninawa province support IS, saying,

"After the occupation of Mosul by the IS organization the majority of our beloved provinces have said that the people of Ninawa are the ones who helped IS to enter the town but the opposite is true...the IS guys, days after their entry, began to publish video clips showing the people of Ninawa in their majority supporting them but what actually took place was a gathering of their supporters from the ignorant and cells that were already working with them before their entry."¹⁷

In an interview, the group's media representative claimed that Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul has 350 fighters,¹⁸ and that it had joined forces with two prior local anti-IS formations--Kata'ib al-Ra'ad and the Free Officers Movement--under the banner of Kata'ib al-Mustafa. At the same time, Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul's media representative denied a link with the Nujaiifis' Kata'ib al-Mosul, but affirmed the group's similar goals and political outlook, namely, "[e]xpelling IS from Iraq completely, doing away with sectarianism and working for a free democratic Iraq."¹⁹ Further, when asked about the Nujaiifis' autonomist agenda, particularly regarding local security, the representative expressed approval on the grounds that local authorities know best how to deal with and expel IS. At the same time, as with Katiba al-Bawasil, the media representative denied any coordination with JRTN: "We will not clean our hands with the hands of those who have stained their hands in the blood of Iraqis and they must be held to account for their crimes against humanity."²⁰

Like the Kata'ib al-Mosul, Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul has only claimed small scale operations so far. On August 31, the group claimed an IED attack on the IS in the al-Swais area of Mosul, destroying an IS vehicle and killing all of its occupants. The following day, the group claimed a sniper attack killing two IS members. Among Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul's other activities has been publicizing names and photos of alleged local collaborators with IS in Mosul. These individuals are primarily said to have worked as local police and public service officials, with the former in particularly supposedly arranging "repentance" (*tawba*) of local police forces before IS.²¹ Local collaboration of

this type is hardly surprising: after all, in its propaganda messaging, IS has bragged about its speed at repairing damaged water infrastructure on the right (i.e., west) side of Mosul in the face of government forces' bombing.²² It would be almost impossible for IS to accomplish this without local collaboration from officials and other state employees working on Ninawa province's water system.²³

On the night of September 3, Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul announced that its military formations would now operate under the new name Fursan Ninawa ("The Knights of Ninawa").²⁴ This banner front still denies being part of Kata'ib al-Mosul, but the media representative for Fursan Ninawa affirmed that if Kata'ib al-Mosul were to request a merger, then it would do so, while denouncing JRTN on the other hand as "sectarian" and not a partner for cooperation.²⁵ Such sentiment is in keeping with the official anti-sectarian messaging of the group, which put out a statement on September 3 affirming its goals of expelling IS, restoring "normal life to the city [of Mosul]" and restoring the rights of the people, while declaring no difference between Sunni, Shi'i, Yezidi, Christian, Mandaen etc.²⁶ Operationally under the Fursan Ninawa banner, a few unique operations have been claimed so far, such as targeting an IS vehicle on the Nimrud Salamiya road on the night of September 3, destroying it and killing all of its occupants.²⁷

Fursan Ninawa claims that its attacks are the reason IS is now setting up additional inspection checkpoints in Mosul on both sides of the Tigris.²⁸ If true, then such a development will likely only increase local resentment of IS. One reason many in Mosul initially welcomed the IS takeover of the city was because the frequency of insurgent attacks in the Mosul area had caused daily life to be hampered by a large number of army checkpoints. When the city fell under IS control and the government lost power, the removal of those checkpoints was seen as a positive step.

KATA'IB AL-HAMZA IN IRAQ

The group Kata'ib al-Hamza ("The Hamza Battalions") was first rumored to be in the works in Anbar in mid-August by police colonel Ahmed Shufir. Speaking to Agence France-Presse, he suggested that the group was based in the western Anbar town of Haditha, which still remains in government control,²⁹ and that they were fighting to keep out militants to the west of the town. The group was then formally announced at the end of the month by Muhammad al-Dulaimi, acting as spokesman for Kata'ib al-Hamza. He explained to the local Iraqi media outlet al-Mada Press that "a number of Anbar tribes have formed today Kata'ib al-Hamza to make war on the IS organization and cleanse out the Western areas from al-Qa'im district on the border up to the town of Fallujah." He also clarified that the force was under the "control of the state and the law, with its obligation to support the forces of the army and the police in military operations and assaulting the dens of terrorism."³⁰

Like Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul, Kata'ib al-Hamza ostensibly professes an anti-sectarian line and does not necessarily identify with government policies. In an interview, a media representative affirmed: "We are a tribal force against the sectarian program the government practices and against what the takfiri IS practice... We are not affiliated with anyone. We are not affiliated with the government or Osama [Nujaiifi] but we stand with them against IS."³¹ At the same time, the representative was realistic about numbers and scale of operations: "Now the number of fighters is 180 and we have begun simple operations against IS." The representative dismissed the notion that Kata'ib al-Hamza was working with JRTN against IS: "They are the ones who deluded people with IS and began [working] with IS but afterwards disagreements arose between them and no one except IS has remained in the field."³²

From the evidence gleaned so far, Kata'ib al-Hamza's self-reporting on its activities corroborates the original account to Agence France-Presse of an outfit based in Haditha³³ (and fitting in with the small number of fighters claimed in the interview with this author), rather than one stretching across Anbar. Elsewhere in the west of Anbar--specifically the localities of al-Qa'im,³⁴ Anah,³⁵ Rawa,³⁶

Rutba,³⁷ the only identifiable armed group is IS. In Fallujah city, IS has gradually subsumed other factions--including Jaysh al-Mujahideen and JRTN, through a mixture of co-optation and coercion.³⁸ Further east of Fallujah, in the locality of al-Karma, IS forced Jaysh al-Mujahideen to withdraw from the urban area following an attack on the latter's positions and tribal mediation.³⁹ Where areas are still heavily contested with government-aligned forces (e.g. Ramadi), much of the fighting is with IS, though other groups seem to be involved as well, including the General Military Council for Iraq's Revolutionaries⁴⁰ and the Islamic Army of Iraq.

OTHER GROUPS

Some other local initiatives to push back against IS--whether tribal or under a group name--have been announced via media reports. Perhaps most notable is Kata'ib Sayf al-Haq ("Sword of Righteousness Battalions"), said to be composed of ex-military and intelligence officers from the Saddam-era army⁴¹ primarily in Salah ad-Din province in localities near Tikrit.⁴² Indeed, the group's composition and political orientation towards the prior Iraqi state--even as its purpose is to fight against IS--are illustrated by the use of the old Iraqi flag on its Facebook page.⁴³ On August 2, Kata'ib Sayf al-Haq announced it had expanded its presence into Mosul to fight IS,⁴⁴ though no evidence has emerged since that date of Kata'ib Sayf al-Haq operations against IS in that area. However, on August 21, it was reported that snipers affiliated with Kata'ib Sayf al-Haq had killed six members of IS in Baiji.⁴⁵ At the present time, there is no indication that this group is coordinating its efforts with government forces.

Elsewhere, talk has arisen of forming tribal forces with central government support to challenge IS, such as in the localities of al-Qa'im, Rawa, Baghdadi and Rutba.⁴⁶ The Kurdistan Regional Government also appears to be attempting outreach to northern Arab tribal locals to fight against IS in Ninawa province localities like Rabia.⁴⁷ However, these reports do not yet point to a wider organized tribal movement against IS.

CONCLUSION

Overall, resistance movements to IS are localized and do not yet constitute a wider, coordinated Sunni Arab rebel movement against IS. For the anti-IS movement to gain significant momentum, members of other insurgent groups--in particular, JRTN, which is second to IS in terms of overall influence over the Sunni Arab insurgency--will have to drop the agenda of "revolution"⁴⁸ and turn against IS across Sunni Arab areas. Yet they will likely only do this once they realize that the dreams of "liberating Baghdad"⁴⁹ are delusional and that an IS-dominated landscape outside of government control is only bringing economic and societal ruin to Sunni Arabs.

A major driving force behind the insurgent sentiments of "revolution" is the erroneous belief that Sunni Arabs constitute either a demographic plurality or majority in Iraq and should therefore be ruling from the center of power. Though the sectarian civil war centered around Baghdad ought to have corrected this perception, it is clear that it has at least seen a revival over the past year or so.

Further, a key aspect of the Sunni insurgent narrative is the characterization of the government as "sectarian" and "Safavid" (i.e. a client of Iran, referring to the Persian Shi'a Safavid Empire): this narrative is bolstered by the Shi'a "militiafication" of government-aligned forces, Iranian proxy or otherwise.⁵⁰

While JRTN has been recognized for the much-needed manpower it could lend any group to give it a more reasonable chance for pushback against IS, JRTN's inherently revolutionary ideology remains a significant problem for any potential collaborator. Without coordination either with the central government or an external force with troops on the ground, a Sunni Arab insurgent uprising against IS runs the significant risk of a Syria-style scenario in which IS, if forced out of some areas, could strategically withdraw and regroup, striking back and then gaining sole control of even more

territory. Yet for members of JRTN to “turn Sahwa,”⁵¹ they would have to change so completely as to no longer be JRTN. This is particularly true given that their agenda is completely at odds with mainstream pro-autonomist Sunni politicians who might otherwise be sympathetic to their cause (e.g. the Nujafis).

Where some Sunni Arab areas have still managed to keep IS out, it has only been because of cooperation between government forces and locals.⁵² Ali Hatem Suleiman, though much trumpeted in the media as the so-called “leader of the Dulaims”⁵³ in Anbar and acclaimed in the numerous interviews he gives in Arbil, has yet to show any real influence as leader of forces opposed to both IS and the government.

Of the IS resistance movements surveyed here, the evidence appears to show that they are amenable to working within the framework of the post-2003 Iraqi state on the condition that greater autonomy is permitted to Sunni Arab-majority provinces. Their potential demands also include reforms to de-Ba’athification along the lines that Nouri al-Maliki, then working with deputy premier Salah al-Mutlaq, proposed to parliament in the spring of 2013 in response to Sunni Arab protests. However, the Shi’a political spectrum is generally not amenable to meeting such demands. For example, the Sadrists take a harder line on de-Ba’athification than Maliki and the State of Law bloc, and considering the tensions between Baghdad and the KRG, there is reason for concern that further autonomy for provinces could lead to the fragmentation of Iraq.

The path towards a general “Sunni rollback of IS” is still heavily impeded. It seems that both sides--the overall insurgency and the central government--are essentially playing a zero-sum game that is ultimately locked in stalemate. Large swathes of the Sunni Arab insurgency have committed themselves to the notion of “revolution” but find themselves unable to advance beyond Sunni Arab majority areas that have already fallen out of government control. Consequently, they are unable to achieve the sought-after liberation of Baghdad. Meanwhile, the government finds itself unable to retake areas like Tikrit, Fallujah or Mosul. In short, we are looking at a war that could endure for years to come.

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APPENDIX: LOGOS AND BANNERS OF ANTI-IS GROUPS



Figure 1. Kata'ib al-Mosul logo



Figure 2. Katiba al-Bawasil, one of the contingents of Kata'ib al-Mosul.
The logo features the leaning minaret of the Great Mosque of Mosul that IS had allegedly tried to destroy amid local opposition.



Figure 3. Logo of Movement to Liberate Mosul the Dignified.
The banner reads: "Definitely." The graphic reflects local efforts to preserve the minaret of the Great Mosque of Mosul.



Figure 4. Movement to Liberate Mosul the Dignified graffiti Unspecified location.



Figure 5. Logo of Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul



Figure 6. Logo of Fursan Ninawa. Slogan reads: "Our Iraq is one."



Figure 7. Logo of Kata'ib al-Hamza in Iraq.
Slogan: "Peace, Justice, Nobility."



Figure 8. Kata'ib al-Hamza fighters reported to be in Haditha.

NOTES

¹ To clarify, the Nujaiifi family is a prominent Sunni Arab political family consisting of the brothers Osama and Atheel. Osama was the speaker of the parliament (in keeping with the de facto agreement in Iraqi politics that this position is allocated to a Sunni Arab) under the premiership of Nouri al-Maliki in 2010-2014 and headed the Muttahidun bloc in the 2014 parliamentary elections. Atheel is the de jure governor of Ninawa province and currently based in Arbil, having fled Mosul in the wake of the fall of the city in June 2014. The Nujaiifis are natives of Mosul.

² Kata'ib al-Mosul official Facebook page, screenshot September 3, 2014 (<http://justpaste.it/kataibmosulcreenshot>)

³ "Revenge of the Martyrs Battalion--one of the mujahid Kata'ib al-Mosul formations, threatens IS with retaliation," Kata'ib al-Mosul, August 18, 2014

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZoy7GZ0zbY>). Note as ever the term for IS used in these circles is the derogatory Arabic acronym *da3esh*

⁴ “Al-Zalzal Battalion--one of the armed wings of the Kata’ib al-Mosul,” Kata’ib al-Mosul, August 17, 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0H9SaJ8Wk9g>). The “khawarij” were Muslims in early Islam who ended up rejecting Muhammad’s cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib and his rival Mu’awiya as legitimate caliphs, and became renowned for extremism as those invoking takfir--that is, declaring non-Muslim--against Muslims who disagreed with him, and engaging in violence. See Encyclopaedia Britannica’s entry on ‘Kharijites’: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/316391/Kharijite>

⁵ “The Prophet Seth Battalion: one of the wings of the armed Kata’ib al-Mosul,” Kata’ib al-Mosul, August 16, 2014 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ESg8b43oVc8>)

⁶ Interview, Katiba al-Bawasil via Facebook (<http://justpaste.it/katibaalbawasilinterview>)

⁷ All of these operations via Kata’ib al-Mosul’s official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/MouslBrigade?fref=ts>)

⁸ A quick look at the group’s Facebook page Likes will demonstrate the link, including Kata’ib al-Mosul and Osama al-Nujaifi’s Muttahidun Movement: <http://justpaste.it/mosullikes>

⁹ e.g. “Islamic State defied over Iraq’s Crooked Minaret in Mosul,” Sydney Morning Herald, July 29, 2014 (<http://www.smh.com.au/world/islamic-state-defied-over-iraqs-crooked-minaret-in-mosul-20140729-zxwgz.html>)

¹⁰ Movement to Liberate Mosul the Dignified statement, September 2, 2014 (<http://justpaste.it/harakattahrirmosul2september>)

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ “Mosul, One Month On,” Asharq al-Awsat, July 14, 2014 (<http://www.aawsat.net/2014/07/article55334237>)

¹⁴ On denial of being part of the Kata’ib al-Mosul, see “Naqshbandi Army Statement--1 August: Translation and Analysis,” August 3, 2014 (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/naqshbandi-army-statement-1-august-analysis>)

¹⁵ See “Naqshbandi Army Statement--1 August: Translation and Analysis,” August 3, 2014 (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/naqshbandi-army-statement-1-august-analysis>). On rejection of federalism, see “Naqshbandi Army Statement--24 August: Analysis and Translation,” August 26, 2014 (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/naqshbandi-army-statement-24-august-analysis#continued>)

¹⁶ From the group’s title page on Facebook. See <https://www.facebook.com/Ahrar.almousell?fref=ts>

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Interview, Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul via Facebook (<http://justpaste.it/harakatahrarmosulinterview>)

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ e.g. Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul alleges that one prominent collaborator with IS in Mosul is Sabar al-Lahibi, who worked in the “Ninawa Water Directorate.” See <https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/504780178577301504>. Similarly on police collaborators: <https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/504782263771742208>. ‘Repentance’--in IS’ understanding--is asking for forgiveness before God for fighting against IS, then handing over one’s weapons in return for the sparing of one’s life.

²² “Ninawa Province: Return of suitability and functioning of the water project on the right side [of Mosul] a day after bombing,” IS Ninawa, July 17, 2014 (<http://alplatformmedia.com/vb/showthread.php?t=55496>)

²³ The existence of technical professionals in IS is not totally unheard-of: for example, the group has employed a Sudanese engineer who joined the group and operates a dam in Syria along the Euphrates. Further, Jamaat Ansar al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Bayt al-Maqdis--IS's Gazan network--had sent an engineer specialist for manufacturing explosives. However, if actual IS members had had the technical expertise to deal with the damage to water infrastructure in Mosul, this fact would likely have been advertised in the way the group showcased the Sudanese engineer. On the Sudanese engineer, see "The engineer Abu Ja'afar of Sudan shows us the control room for the al-Faruq dam," IS Wilaiat Halab (<https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/474511047916007424>). On Jamaat Ansar al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi Bayt al-Maqdis' engineer sent to Syria, see the group's August 11, 2014 statement (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/jamaat-ansar-al-dawla-al-islamiya-fi-bayt-al#continued>).

²⁴ To put it another way, Fursan Ninawa and Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul are mirror fronts for each other. There is nothing to suggest that new components joined the latter to form Fursan Ninawa.

²⁵ Interview with Fursan Ninawa via Facebook (<http://justpaste.it/fursanninawainterview>). It should be noted that the interviewee declined to give manpower numbers, contrasting with the figure of 350 from Harakat Ahrar al-Mosul. One purpose, of course, of having mirror fronts is to make a movement seem larger than it actually is.

²⁶ Fursan Ninawa Statement 01, September 3, 2014, (<http://justpaste.it/fursanninawa1>)

²⁷ "Military Wing of Fursan Ninawa," September 4, 2014 (<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=310224619182011>)

²⁸ Fursan Ninawa statement, September 4, 2014 (<http://justpaste.it/fursanninawa4september>)

²⁹ "Iraq Sunni Tribes Take Up Arms Against Jihadists," Agence-France Presse, August 15, 2014 (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/143445-iraq-sunni-tribes-take-up-arms-against-jihadists>). The main reason Haditha remains in government hands is the willingness of members of the local al-Jaghayfa tribe to work with government forces. See e.g. "Directorate of Tribal Affairs in the Interior Ministry honors Sheikh Daham Hussein, one of the sheikhs of al-Jaghayfa tribe in the town of Haditha in Anbar," al-Bayyana al-Jadida, September 1, 2014 (<http://albayyna-new.com/?p=673>)

³⁰ "Tribes of Anbar form Kata'ib al-Hamza to wage war on IS," al-Mada Press, August 31, 2014 (<http://www.almadapress.com/ar/news/36120/%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%84-%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%B2%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD>)

³¹ Kata'ib al-Hamza interview via Facebook: <http://justpaste.it/kataibhamzainterview>

³² Ibid.

³³ See e.g. Kata'ib al-Hamza statement on fighting IS in Haditha, September 5, 2014 (<http://justpaste.it/kataibhamzastatement>). See also appendix.

³⁴ Al-Qa'im, on the border with Syria, has been declared by IS to be part of a new province: Wilayat al-Furat (Euphrates Province), encompassing also the town of Albukamal on the Syrian side of the border (<http://justpaste.it/wilayatfurat>). A media wing was set up on August 31, 2014 but the entity had already existed on the ground for some time (e.g. <https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/505134957560209408/photo/1>)

³⁵ On this, see "Jaysh al-Mujahideen Iraq Statements: Clashes with the Islamic State: Translation and Analysis," August 26, 2014 (<http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/jaysh-al-mujahideen-iraq-statements-clashes-with>)

³⁶ Most of the major sites in Rawa have been draped in IS banners--e.g. al-Baldiya Square--which can be identified by comparison with Google Earth (<https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/501869940497207296>). Besides this photographic evidence, an

interview with a source with local contacts in Rawa confirmed that the town is under the control of IS.

³⁷ For example, a tax receipt from IS in Rutba, obtained via reporter Mitchell Prothero (<http://justpaste.it/istaxreceptrutba>). Incidentally, a JRTN-front group, “The Military Council for the Revolutionaries of the Tribes of Rutba” issued a statement on August 14, 2014 rejecting the new government formation under Hayder Abadi (<https://twitter.com/ajaltamimi/status/500088929169973248>), but there is no evidence that this claimed council has any meaningful influence over management of affairs in Rutba.

³⁸ Wael Essam, “IS seized Fallujah after it detained officers from the military council,” Al-Quds Al-Arabi, June 28, 2014 (<http://www.alqudsalarabi.co.uk/?p=112189>)

³⁹ “Jaysh al-Mujahideen Iraq Statements: Clashes with the Islamic State: Translation and Analysis.”

⁴⁰ E.g. General Military Council for Iraq’s Revolutionaries [GMCIR] statement, September 3 (<http://justpaste.it/gmc20>). There is some controversy over the exact nature of this group, but it appears overall to be a joint project between JRTN and Harith al-Dhari of the Muslim Scholars Association, whose linked military wing the 1920s Revolution Brigdes operates under the GMCIR framework. However, JRTN is openly admitted to be part of the political council and it is apparent that many of the local affiliates organized as “Military Councils for the Revolutionaries of the Tribes,” are JRTN fronts, having been announced via JRTN’s activist wing Intifada Ahrar al-Iraq. In any case, GMCIR and JRTN are united in the vision of restoring the pre-2003 Iraqi state.

⁴¹ For example, a statement entitled “Interior Ministry: We have not rejected the formation of Kata’ib Sayf al-Haq,” Iraq Press Agency, July 18, 2014 (<http://www.iraqpressagency.com/?p=76348&lang=ar>)

⁴² “Officers of the former army announce the establishment of Kata’ib Sayf al-Haq to fight against IS,” al-Youm al-Thamin, July 17, 2014 (<http://www.4.hathalyoum.net/iraqnews.php?action=sit&sid=370004>). The interviewee specifies a presence in al-Zab, the left side of al-Shirqat (120 km north of Tikrit) and Zowiya (40 km north of Tikrit). Operations began with a claimed killing of a local IS collaborator in Baiji.

⁴³ Kata’ib Sayf al-Haq screenshot 4 September 2014 (<http://justpaste.it/sayfalhaq>)

⁴⁴ Kata’ib Sayf al-Haq Statement, August 2, 2014 (<https://www.facebook.com/slahalden11/posts/253928658064308>)

⁴⁵ “Sniper fire kills six IS members in north Tikrit,” al-Sumaria News, August 21, 2014 (<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/108599/%D9%82%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B5-%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%AA%D9%84-%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%B4-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AA%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AA/ar>)

⁴⁶ e.g. “Anbar tribes form a force of their sons to cleanse the western areas of the province,” National Iraq News Agency, August 31, 2014 (http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=HGGKGF)

⁴⁷ “Arab tribal sheikhs in Rabia meet with Barzani and affirm their readiness to bear arms against IS,” al-Sumaria News, August 28, 2014 (<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/109259/%D8%B4%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%A6%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D9%8A%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8/ar>)

⁴⁸ e.g. “Naqshbandi Army Statement--24 August: Analysis and Translation.” Other groups also persist with the concept of *thawra* (“revolution”), such as an August 27, 2014 statement from the

political office of the 1920s Revolution Brigades, which indirectly attacks IS for tarnishing the “blessed revolution” (<https://justpaste.it/1920rev27aug1>). In a similar vein, the Islamic Army of Iraq--previously associated with greater “moderation” for its post-U.S.-withdrawal push of a Sunni federal region--attacks notions of a new Sahwa project to fight against IS as a mere attempt to “salvage the Safavid government” (August 3, 2014 statement <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2014/08/islamic-army-of-iraq-3-august-statement>)

⁴⁹ A theme widely echoed in JRTN circles and also advocated by the Islamic Army of Iraq. See *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Besides the Iranian proxies like Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq and Kata’ib Hezbollah that have endured for years and built up considerable influence, a whole new series of Shi’i militias have sprung up tied to differing ideological leanings or personalities. To compensate for the break-off of Badr Organization from the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), ISCI figures like Ammar al-Hakim and Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Saghir have formed their own militias (Saraya Ashura’ and Saraya Ansar al-Aqida respectively). There is also Muqtada al-Sadr’s Saraya al-Salam; and militia brands that first appeared in Syria (e.g. Iranian proxy Saraya al-Khorasani).

⁵¹ “Sahwa,” meaning “awakening” in Arabic, refers to the Sunni Arab tribal-insurgent pushback against what was then the Islamic State of Iraq from 2007 onwards, coordinated with U.S.-led coalition and government forces. The term is much maligned in Sunni Arab circles today.

⁵² Thus in parts of Ramadi, Ahmed Abu Risha and his followers cooperate with the government.

⁵³ He does not in fact have this status. See e.g. “The fake sheikh: Why the media repeat Ali Hatem’s false ‘claim,’” Sajad Jiyad, August 17, 2014 (<http://sjiyad.wordpress.com/2014/08/17/the-fake-sheikh-why-the-media-repeat-ali-hatems-false-claim/>)