



Iran: US Sponsoring Islamic State in Afghanistan

OE Watch Commentary: Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has in his public speeches repeatedly embraced and amplified the conspiracy theory that the United States created the Islamic State. Prior to the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq, Khamenei and other Iranian officials used both the presence of the Islamic State and supposed American complicity to justify sponsorship and control of militias and the presence of Iranian advisors.

In the excerpted speech posted on Khamenei's website, Khamenei accuses the United States both of transferring the Islamic State to Afghanistan and being responsible for a rash of major terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. While such accusations are false, they could both signal Iranian intentions to augment their own presence or that of their proxy militias inside Afghanistan and also a desire in Tehran to foment anti-Americanism among the Persian (Dari) speaking-population inside Afghanistan.

Iran has been engaged in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime and participated in the Bonn conference which determined the shape of the post-2001 Afghan government. It has also dominated the western Afghan provinces of Farah, Herat, and Nimruz economically, culturally, and increasingly politically. In addition, Iran has long sought to preserve and increase its influence in both Kabul and the Pushtun-dominated eastern provinces where Pakistani influence remains significant.

Should the Islamic Republic of Iran decide to engage more militarily inside Afghanistan, it has greater capacity to do so than at any time since the early 1980s: In recent years, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has helped create the *Liwa Fatemiyoun*, an Afghan Shi'ite militia which has also gained battlefield experience in Syria. While the Islamic State does pose a threat inside Afghanistan, an augmentation of *Liwa Fatemiyoun* and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps activity might further destabilize Afghanistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

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Supreme Leader Khamenei meets with families of martyrs.

Source: Khamenei.ir, <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/photo-album?id=38794>, Public Domain.

Source: “Biyanat-e Rahbar-e Enghelab dar khasus Koshtar-e Mardam dar Havades-e Terroristi Afghanistan” (“Statement by the Leader of the Revolution on the Killing of People in the Terrorist Attacks in Afghanistan”), *Khamenei.ir*, 30 January 2018. farsi.khamenei.ir/news-content?id=38809

His Excellency, Ayatollah Khamenei, leader of the Islamic Revolution, this morning at the beginning of a lesson on jurisprudence, expressed deep regret at the killing of innocent people in the recent terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, and said, “The United States aims to transfer Islamic State terrorists to Afghanistan in order to justify its continued presence in the region and to establish security for the Zionist regime.”

His Excellency Ayatollah Khamenei with reference to the murder of hundreds of people in recent months in Afghanistan, added, “The same hands that created the Islamic State and used it as a means of brutality against the people in Syria and Iraq are today, following its defeat in those areas, trying to relocate the Islamic State to Afghanistan, and the recent killings are actually the beginning of this plan.”

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution added, “For U.S.-backed terrorists, there is no difference between Sunnis and Shi'ites; both Sunni and Shi'ite civilians are their targets.” He considered the occupation of the regional nations to be the first objective of the United States, and said, “The United States seeks to ensure that this region will not experience a good life and the governments and peoples of the region will be so busy with their own problems that they will not think of confronting the evil factor of arrogance, that is to say, Zionism.”