

Beat: Miscellaneous

Al-Qaeda offshoot declares `caliphate` in Iraq and Syria

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USPA News - An al-Qaeda splinter group that seized much of northeastern Syria and made huge gains in parts of Iraq in recent weeks formally declared itself an Islamic "caliphate" on Sunday, calling on all Muslims around the world to pledge allegiance to its leader. The announcement was made in an audio tape from Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the chief spokesman of al-Qaeda offshoot the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS/ISIL).

He said the decision to declare a caliphate - an Islamic state - was made after the group's council determined sufficient gains had been made. "In light of the fact that the Islamic State has no legal constraint or excuse that can justify delaying or neglecting the establishment of the caliphate, ISIS - represented by its people of authority - resolved to announce the establishment of the Islamic caliphate, the announcement of a caliph for all Muslims, and the pledge of allegiance to the sheik," al-Adnani said. The declaration, hailed with parades by militants fighting in Syria and Iraq, is seen as a further victory for the group that secured massive territorial gains in recent weeks. ISIS - seen by analysts as a credible threat to regional stability - appointed its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as head of state, referring to him as Caliph Ibrahim. "He is the imam and caliph for the Muslims everywhere," al-Adnani said. "We clarify to the Muslims that with this declaration of caliphate, it is upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance to Caliph Ibrahim and to support him. The legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organizations becomes null by the expansion of the caliph's authority and the arrival of its troops to their areas." The spokesman added: "Caliph Ibrahim has fulfilled all the conditions for caliph mentioned by the scholars. ... His authority has expanded over wide areas in Iraq and Syria. The land now submits to his order and authority from Aleppo to Diyala. So fear Allah, O slaves of Allah. Listen to your caliph and obey him. Support your state, which grows everyday - by Allah's grace - with honor and loftiness, while its enemy increases in retreat and defeat." The Islamic State, condemning democracy, secularism, and nationalism as "garbage and ideas from the West," vowed to erase national boundaries to return the region to a medieval-style caliphate. "Rush, oh Muslims, and gather around your caliph so that you may return as you once were for ages: kings of the earth and knights of war," al-Adnani said, adding that the east and west would eventually submit to the caliph. As part of Sunday's declaration, the group said it would no longer call itself the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS/ISIL) but simply the "Islamic State" (IS). "The `Iraq and al-Sham` in the name of the `Islamic State` is henceforth removed from all official deliberations and communications, and the official name is the Islamic State from the date of this declaration," the spokesman added.

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