



## ISIS confirms the death of its leader and announces Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi as the new leader

March 15, 2022

### Overview

► On March 9, 2022, ISIS's media arm Al-Furqan Foundation released an audiotape entitled "Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow [to the death – as shaheed]"<sup>1</sup>. The 12-minute audiotape consists of a statement by **Abu Omar al-Muhajir**, ISIS's new spokesman. He officially confirms the death of **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi**, ISIS's (second) leader, and its spokesman **Abu Hamza al-Qurashi**, and announces that **Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi** is ISIS's new leader (Telegram, March 9, 2022).



Picture accompanying the audiotape (Telegram, March 9, 2022)

► In the audiotape, the spokesman notes that **ISIS's leader and spokesman died "over the past few days,"** although the two men were killed over a month ago, on February 3, 2022, in a US military operation in Syria. Thus, it took ISIS over a month to officially publish their deaths and the names of their successors<sup>2</sup>.

► **As for the new leader's identity, the spokesman does not reveal much, except for the fact that his nom de guerre is Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi.** The spokesman notes that he is one of ISIS's founders, but he deliberately does not reveal any other details.

► There are several hypotheses regarding the identity of the new leader:

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Surat al-Ahzab, 23 (Sahih International translation), where it is stated that loyal believers who adhered to the path of Allah after meeting their obligations towards Allah end their lives as shaheeds.

<sup>2</sup> For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from February 9, 2022, "The killing of ISIS's leader in an operation by US forces in Syria and possible implications"

◆ According to the UAE website Al-Ain al-Ekhbariya and New Lines Magazine, the new leader is **Bashar Khattab Ghazal al-Sumaidai**, an Iraqi born in 1975, who is also codenamed **Zaid al-Iraqi, Abu Khattab al-Iraqi, Ustadh Zaid or Ustadh Daesh**. He was the organization's official in charge of the Education Bureau when ISIS ruled vast territories in Syria and Iraq. He is considered one of the first generation commanders who were close to ISIS's founder and first leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and one of the sole figures among them who is still alive. Over the years, Zaid al-Iraqi held several positions in the ranks of ISIS, including the emir of the Law and Complaints Bureau, the official in charge of the Central Bureau for Overseeing the Sharia (i.e., Islamic religious law) Bureaus (*Dawaween Shar'iyah*), and also served as the emir of education. He is referred to as an Islamic law figure in ISIS. About a year ago he reportedly arrived in Iraq from Turkey (Al-Ain al-Ekhbariya, March 10, 2022; New Lines Magazine, February 16, 2022).

◆ According to Iraqi security sources and a Western security source, the new ISIS leader is **Jumaa Awad al-Badri, the brother of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS's founder and first leader**. He is apparently al-Baghdadi's older brother, but very little is known about him, except for the fact that he is close to ISIS's founders and had operated in Salafist-jihadist frameworks against the US forces in Iraq during the American invasion of Iraq (2003). He was a close companion of al-Baghdadi, served as an advisor on Islamic law issues and was a member of ISIS's Shura Council, a leadership body that guides ISIS's strategy and also decides who takes command when the organization's leader is killed or captured. One of the Iraqi security officials noted that al-Badri had recently moved to Iraq across the border from Syria (Reuters, March 11, 2022).

► **Although Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi** led the organization in times of crisis (since 2019), the spokesman praises his activity, noting that he managed to stabilize the organization and lead it to success. He also portrays him as the one who managed to win the recognition of ISIS's members, unite the ranks under his leadership, and carry out actions against the "infidels" and "renegades of Islam." His most memorable accomplishment, according to ISIS's new spokesman, was the liberation of ISIS's prisoners in his last act of heroism (referring to the break-in at the Al-Hasakah prison, January 20, 2022).

► **Immediately after the announcement of the appointment of the new leader, the new spokesman calls on operatives of ISIS's various provinces around the world to pledge**

**allegiance to the new leader, and they do so. ISIS's media outlets were quick to post pictures documenting pledges of allegiance in the various provinces.** The pledge of allegiance of the operatives around the world may allow the leader to reunite the ranks around him, confront power struggles, and encourage the organization's operatives to carry on their activity and even enhance it, restoring their morale after the death of their previous leader.

► **As for the new leader's character and scope of activity, it is still difficult to assess.**

According to the little information known to us, **it seems that both figures mentioned have virtually no military experience** and have served in ISIS mainly in Islamic religious law posts. The fact that al-Sumaidai is Iraqi may indicate that ISIS will continue to concentrate on the core countries of Syria and Iraq. He may act to increase the activity in those regions, where there has been a recent decrease, and may also resort to a different approach from that of his predecessor as to the type and scope of activity.

► **In the audiotape, the spokesman stresses the need to continue liberating prisoners,** which may indicate a possible course of action, mainly in view of the January 2022 takeover of the prison in Al-Hasakah, which ISIS perceived as a success. In this context, it has been reported that one of al-Badri's brothers has been held for years by the Iraqi security services (NDTV, March 11, 2022), which may indicate the extent to which the new leader (if he is indeed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's brother) is sensitive to the issue of liberating prisoners. **The spokesman's call for avenging the death of ISIS's leaders may instigate acts of revenge and arouse the operatives' motivation to carry out attacks, also in Western countries, mainly the United States.**

## Pledges of allegiance to ISIS's leader in the various provinces

► Following the release of the audiotape and after the Shura Council members had pledged allegiance to the new leader, ISIS released photos from its various provinces around the world documenting the operatives' pledge of allegiance to the new leader. Following are photos documenting the pledges of allegiance around the world, as posted on ISIS's Telegram channel (March 12, 2022).

# Iraq



Operatives in the Salah al-Din Province pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader



Operatives in the Al-Anbar Province pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader



Operatives in the Kirkuk Province pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader

## Syria<sup>3</sup>



Operatives in Syria pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader



Operatives in Syria pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader



Operatives in Syria pledging allegiance to ISIS's new leader

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that with regard to Syria, the various provinces were not mentioned (as was the case with regard to Iraq).

## West Africa Province



Operatives of ISIS's West Africa Province pledging allegiance to the new leader



Right: Operatives of ISIS's West Africa Province pledging allegiance to the new leader. Left: ISIS operatives in the Lake Chad region

## Somalia



Operatives in Somalia pledging allegiance to the new leader

## Yemen



Operatives in the Yemen Province pledging allegiance

## Afghanistan (Khorasan Province)



Operatives of the Khorasan Province pledging allegiance



Operatives of the Khorasan Province pledging allegiance

## East Asia



Operatives of the East Asia Province pledging allegiance to the new leader



# Appendix

## The content of the audiotape

► In the beginning of the audiotape, the new spokesman confirms the death of ISIS's leader **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi** and ISIS's spokesman **Abu Hamza al-Qurashi**, noting that both died "over the past few days."<sup>4</sup> He prays to Allah to receive both of them in paradise.

► He notes that **Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi** was appointed after the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (ISIS's founder and first leader, who was killed in October 2019). He says that although al-Qurashi received the leadership in times of crisis for ISIS, he managed to stabilize the organization, make it successful and meet the challenges Allah put in his way. He enumerates al-Qurashi's achievements: he managed to win the recognition of ISIS's members and unite its ranks under his leadership; he also managed to strike the "infidels" and "renegades of Islam." His most recent act of heroism and greatest achievement was the attempt to take over the al-Sina'ah-Ghuwayran Prison in Al-Hasakah, in late January 2022, during which he managed to liberate operatives held in the prison and expose the weakness of the Kurdish forces (the "renegades of Islam")<sup>5</sup>.

► As for **ISIS's spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurashi**, he praises his activities, noting that he was the "champion of covert media activity... whose voice reached the entire world. With his words, he made tyrants feel the earth shake under their feet, and with his messages, he strengthened the believers." He also notes that Abu Hamza al-Qurashi served as a minister and the leader's best aide.

► ISIS's Shura Council hurried to pledge allegiance to **Abu al-Hassan al-Qurashi**, as *emir* of the believers and caliph of the Muslims,<sup>6</sup> as recommended by Sheikh Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi (the previous leader). The spokesman notes that **the new leader belongs to the founders of ISIS, but for the time being he cannot disclose his name and other details**

---

<sup>4</sup> As stated above, the two men were killed on February 3, 2022. See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from February 15, 2022, "The killing of ISIS's leader in an operation by US forces in Syria and possible implications"

<sup>5</sup> For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from February 8, 2022, "ISIS's takeover of the prison in Al-Hasakah, which it presents as an achievement, may bring about additional such actions"

<sup>6</sup> The term "emir of the believers" is used for the leader of the Muslim community, i.e. the caliph. The term "caliph" indicates that he is the successor of the Prophet Mohammad as the leader of the Muslim nation.

**that can identify him.** He expresses hope that Allah will assist the new leader, guide him on his way and enable him to conquer countries. Addressing ISIS's operatives and supporters wherever they are, he calls on them to pledge allegiance to the new leader as quickly as possible.

► The spokesman addresses all the “infidels, polytheists and renegades of Islam,” calling on them not to rejoice over the death of ISIS’s leaders since even when the United States kills the organization’s leaders and its fighters, it still cannot announce the liquidation of [ISIS’s] Islamic State; on the contrary, every such attempt contributes to greater unity among the Muslims and jihad fighters and enhances their adherence to their faith.

► Finally, the spokesman calls on ISIS’s operatives and supporters to carry out jihad, obey, stay united, and help downtrodden Muslims everywhere. In addition, he calls on them to liberate ISIS’s operatives who are held prisoner since this is an instruction of the Prophet Mohammad and a recommendation of the previous leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi. He also calls on ISIS’s operatives to avenge the death of ISIS’s leaders, its operatives, and their wives. Victory, he says, will only be attained if they demonstrate patience, for difficulty is part of the way and the reward will eventually be obtained.