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Introvigne on Iraq: “Western military intervention is what ISIS wants”

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(©Fotosede)

(©Fotosede) Islamic guerrilla fighters of ISIS

The analyst explains that this way the caliph will recruit followers by presenting the war as the final showdown between Islam and Christian crusaders, when the reality is that the conflict is internal to the Muslim world as well

ANDREA TORNIELLI
Vatican City

Professor Massimo Introvigne, founder of the CENSUR (Centre for Studies on New Religions) says that “to talk about a clash between Islam and Christianity is an oversimplification, I believe that the Secretary of State Cardinal Parolin and Pope Francis are right. It is essential that the international community intervenes with the involvement of Muslim countries. Otherwise we end up acting out the script of the self-proclaimed caliph al-Baghdadi, who is doing all he can to present the war as the final showdown between crusaders and Islam”. [In this article on the *Nuova Bussola Quotidiana*](#) the professor analysed a multilingual publication promoted by ISIS, the Islamic extremist group of throat-cutters that proclaimed the caliphate in Iraq. And he came to the same conclusions that were suggested and reiterated by the Holy See. Conclusions that substantially diverge from those of the advocates of the clash between Christianity and Islam.

Why is it an oversimplification to present the events in Iraq as a clash between Islam and Christianity?

“The aggression by the ISIS militias against the Shiite Turkmen minority, after assaulting the Christians and the Yazidis, lets us know that the Sunni caliphate attacks other Muslims as well, namely the Shiites. We need to understand the strategy and ideology of ISIS, on which the West often circulates imprecise or oversimplified information. We can do this thanks to the caliphate’s magazine that is issued both in hard copy and online in numerous languages, such as English, and is entitled *Dabiq*. It is a publication of Muslim propaganda, a refined magazine with pictures. Even if the website is often blacked out, it is not hard to come by and study it”.

What do we learn from reading it?

“The ideological market of Islamic ultra-extremism is flooded. And the enemies of ISIS are the groups headed by the Muslim Brotherhood, the mother house of Islamic extremism, as well as al-Qaeda. Reading it, we find that ISIS deems the death of international Jordan terrorist Abu Musa al-Zarqawi in Iraq in 2006 as its foundation. Zarqawi distanced himself from Bin Laden, who considered throat-cutting methods, that culminated in the decapitation of American hostage Nicholas Berg, counterproductive for al-Qaeda. Zarqawi theorised instead the massacre of all non-Sunnis: Christians, followers of other religions but also all “heretic” Shiite Muslims. His militias destroyed entire Shiite villages in Iraq, killing all inhabitants. ISIS today wants to create fully Sunni areas, killing followers of all other religions, including Shiite Muslims.”

What does “Dabiq”, the name of the magazine, mean?

“It is the name of a town in Syria where, according to a well-known “hadith” – a saying attributed to Mohammed -, the last showdown between Muslims and Christians will take place at the end of times, that will open the way to Rome for Islam. It is an apocalyptic ideology. We then understand why ISIS does not only fear but also desire an intervention in its territory from Americans, Europeans and also Russians: that is why they are increasing anti-Russia provocations in Syria.”

Why does the self-proclaimed caliph push for a Western intervention?

“the so-called Christians (Europeans, Americans, Russians), who are identified with the crusaders, must be drawn into a war in Islamic territory and defeated there, after a ‘Christian’ invasion has shown the Islamic world that al-Baghdadi is the true caliph, thus attracting Muslims from all over the world to enlist under his banner. By reading *Dabiq*, we understand that among the enemies of ISIS there is the al-Qaeda faction that fights against Assad in Syria (Jabhat al-Nusra), as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, including the direction of Hamas in Palestine and the leaders of the Brotherhood who are imprisoned in Egypt at the moment. They are considered enemies because they maintain relationships with the Shiites and they do not shy away, at least in Palestine, from collaborating with Christians, as long as they are anti-Israel. Another sworn enemy of ISIS is Erdogan’s Turkish political Islam, who promised the European Union freedom and equality for religious minorities: this explains al-Baghdadi’s fury against the Iraqi Turkmens in these weeks”.

So not all Muslims are the same...

“Of course not. These events show that not all Islamic extremists are the same, and not even the violent ultra-extremists are. Between the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda and ISIS there are real differences. They are not limited to discussions on theology, they kill one another. The caliphate is a danger not only for non-Muslims but also for non-Sunni Muslims and the nearby Islamic states, whom al-Baghdadi considers illegitimate and heretical”.

What should be done, then, to stop the massacres from ISIS?

“If we want to stop the caliphate and protect the minorities it threatens to exterminate, we need to consider its ideology. A military intervention from Americans alone, or even Americans and Europeans, fits with the cliché that the self-proclaimed caliph has predisposed so that he can present the war as the final showdown between assaulted Islam and Christian crusaders. That is why Pope Francis’ words on the involvement of the United Nations are important: the intervention to halt the unjust aggressor of minorities must be multilateral and involve the countries of the area, the other Muslim countries. I believe that it is essential not to give the impression of sticking to the script dictated by ISIS”.