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THE ISIS FILES

Women in the Islamic State:
Victimization, Support,
Collaboration, and Acquiescence

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Abstract

This paper examines the Islamic State's treatment of, and engagement with, women who lived under its control between 2014 and 2017. Focusing on both 'in-group' and 'out-group' women, this paper creates a framework for understanding the diverse day-to-day lives of women in the caliphate. This research explores the Islamic State's implementation of an elaborate theological-legislative gendered system of control in Iraq and Syria that sought to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources from local populations, and appropriate those resources for their own gain. This system of control was a product of the group's efforts to address a dilemma faced by many ideologically-driven rebel governing actors like the Islamic State - a constant balancing act between the ideology that drives the group in question, and the pragmatic issues that govern the actual application of its ideology. Drawing on hundreds of Islamic State administrative documents, this paper shows the interplay between ideology and pragmatism in the group's administrative approach, shaping its engagement with both in-group and out-group women to perpetuate its doctrine and entrench its rule.

Introduction

The Islamic State's mobilization of female supporters in recent years, both online and off, has sparked an abundance of research focusing on how women have participated—and been victimized—by the Islamic State movement. Much of this existing research frames women as either active participants or victims, resulting in a wide array of work often focusing on local women as victims of the group,¹ as well as the motivations of foreign female travelers to Iraq and Syria,² women's subsequent roles within the Islamic State's administration,³ the online community of supporters,⁴ and the means by which women engaged in propaganda work⁵ and combat on its behalf.⁶

To be sure, this body of research offers a useful and layered glimpse into the gendered ideology of the Islamic State, including the women attracted to, and victimized, by it. However, the field of literature as a whole is limited by the fact that most of these studies draw on propaganda and victim testimonies to support their arguments. Very few use internal Islamic State documents – which until recently had been harder to obtain – to enhance our understanding of the lives of women in its proto-state.

This study sets out to do just that, systematically examining a collection of hundreds of primary source materials to track the interplay between ideology and pragmatism in the Islamic State's administrative approach towards governance. This research uses two collections of source data, including a primary dataset comprised of never-before-seen documents drawn from the George Washington University's ISIS Files digital repository, and an accompanying secondary collection, composed of existing records already made public. These primary sources were collected from different places, at different times, and under different circumstances, and while not complete, they are comprehensive, affording a better understanding of women's lives under the Islamic State's rule between 2014 and 2017.

The analysis of these files provides insights into the lives of 'in-group' and 'out-group' women.⁷ While the active in-group, and victimized out-group, are relatively easy to conceptualize, the passive in-group, or subjects (i.e. women living in the Islamic State's caliphate considered members of the

in-group due to their religion and family background alone), is more complex and harder to define.

For the sake of this research, it is important to recognize that Sunni Muslim women who lived in the caliphate who were neither actively persecuted nor active perpetrators—but considered by the Islamic State to be part of the ‘in-group,’ complied with its governance for numerous reasons. Some were willing collaborators, others grudgingly acquiesced; some worked within the system, others benefited from the system. It is beyond the scope of this paper to decide the level of support, collaboration, or compliance of women in the in-group. Rather, this paper will explore both passive and active in-group women, as well as women in the out-group, to better understand the day-to-day lives of women in the caliphate.

When coupled with existing analyses of propaganda and survivor testimonies, exploration of these files allows us to better triangulate our sources and, in doing so, develop a more granular understanding of both how the Islamic State governed and what life was like under its administration. This paper seeks to create a framework for understanding the complexities of women’s lives under the Islamic State. It should not be viewed as the be all end all of their experiences, but rather an important starting point for better understanding the Islamic State’s gendered system of control, and its implications on the daily lives of women - both those considered by the organization to be in the in-group, as well as those deemed by the Islamic State to be part of the out-group.⁸

To study the experience of women navigating through life in the caliphate is to study a microcosm of the overarching society this movement sought to create, as well as women’s roles within it. However, the significance of this work is not just limited to the Islamic State; by seeking to understand more about how it regulated the lives of in-group and out-group women, this study highlights one of the principal struggles faced by ideologically motivated rebel actors today: the constant balancing act between ideology, which notionally drives the group in question, and pragmatism, which dictates the extent to which it actually applies this ideology.

In exploring this balancing act, this paper proceeds as follows. It begins with a brief overview of the existing literature regarding women's involvement in, and with, the Islamic State. This is followed by a description of the data and methods used in this research project. The next section describes the Islamic State's gendered system of control—that is, the theological-legislative system it forced upon women within its society and the creation of the in-group/out-group dichotomy. The paper then examines administrative documents to understand how this system impacted the day-to-day social and economic life for 'in-group' women, both those who willingly collaborated and grudgingly acquiesced. The following section examines what this system meant for 'out-group' women, or those considered enemies of the Islamic State on account of their religious identity or political inclinations; these women included Christian, Druze, Yazidi, and Shia Muslim communities, as well as Sunni Muslims that were deemed 'apostates' for not adhering to the Islamic State's version of Islam. Finally, we offer some concluding thoughts and resulting implications.

The Literature: Framing Women’s Involvement in the Islamic State

The conventional wisdom—at least, according to mainstream media discourse—is that women are at best unwitting and at worst passive when it comes to their participation in extremist movements like the Islamic State. This framing is rooted in long-standing narratives around the absence of female agency in the political sphere and the idea that women are ‘pulled into’ extremism because of their ‘love’ of boyfriends, husbands, sons, fathers, or brothers.⁹ It is a belief that stems from deeply held cultural norms that assert that women are more ‘compassionate and loving’ and less interested in politics and nation-building than men. Aside from a handful of unique, oft-cited cases, this idea has largely proven to be largely unfounded, with two decades of research on gender and extremism (and not just jihadist extremism)¹⁰ showing this line of thinking to be stereotype-laden, problematic, and dangerous.¹¹

However, despite these substantial advances in the research literature, much media discourse surrounding women’s involvement in extremism remains reductive and outdated, providing a false view of why women participate in movements like the Islamic State.¹² This has manifested most clearly in the context of rhetoric around so-called ‘ISIS brides’—i.e., women who left their countries of origin to join the caliphate in Syria and Iraq—who are generally seen as brainwashed fools that arrogantly rejected their position as ‘western women’ (and, therefore, as ‘equals of men’) supposedly with the primary goal of marrying Islamic State members and embracing a life of violence and perceived subservience. Whether positioned as ‘evil’ or ‘naïve,’ the ‘ISIS bride’ is thus dehumanized: she either has no heart because of her want for violence, or is ignorant because she willfully fell into the clutches of ‘evil’ men.¹³

This prevailing media frame—that extremist women have no agency—has been robustly and consistently challenged by the accounts of extremist women themselves.¹⁴ In interviews and on social media profiles, women that self-identify as jihadists routinely foreground their personal autonomy.¹⁵ Recent research focusing on women’s agency under the Islamic State has sought to highlight the complexities of this reality.¹⁶

However, in the specific context of the Islamic State, women's participation in and support for the group's project is framed as a rejection of dominant, disempowering cultural norms that have upended the 'essential' role of women. Conceived in this way, their participation, which revolves around child-bearing, child-rearing, and care-giving, is positioned as an active 'choice' or fulfillment of a duty to benefit the in-group.¹⁷

To structure and facilitate this 'choice' over the course of the last decade in particular, the Islamic State devised specific in-group and out-group identities that sought to establish and perpetuate a good-versus-evil mentality that continually demonized those considered 'the enemy' while imbuing its political agenda with cosmic significance.¹⁸ This saw women in the out-group being deliberately and systematically victimized through its system of governance, something that most clearly manifested in its revival of slavery (specifically in relation to its enslavement of Yazidi women),¹⁹ as well as in the less prominent context of its collective economic, corporal and capital punishment of Shia Muslim, Christian, and even some Sunni Muslim populations (among many others).²⁰ Crucially, the Islamic State justified all these actions on ideological grounds even when they were clearly motivated (at least in part) by pragmatism (e.g., a desire to accrue wealth).

While its impact on out-group communities was always plain to see, what this gendered system of governance meant in practice to female supporters of the Islamic State was not so obvious. Because extremism is conventionally understood through the lens of physical political action—whether violent or non-violent—less overt forms of support are often overlooked. As the literature demonstrates, a key component of a rebel group's governance success is its relationship with civilian populations.²¹ In fact, several recent studies found that rebel groups highlight women's participation in their organizations to garner positive perceptions of the group's legitimacy and support for their goals.²²

A disparity has arisen between what non-extremists consider to be 'active participation' in the in-group and what extremist women consider to be 'active participation' in the in-group.²³ The reality is that, even if women's

involvement in or acquiescence to the rule of the Islamic State looked inactive from the outside, it was considered active from within the movement, a choice to adopt the ‘fundamental role’ of the female Muslim.²⁴

While some parts of the literature have begun to account for this disparity surrounding the definition of the in-group, foregrounding the activities of women in the Islamic State without making gender-based assumptions about their agency, there are still major gaps in our knowledge. Specifically, there remains a dearth of information regarding how its ideology—as enacted through the array of legal, administrative, and bureaucratic structures it instituted in its proto-state—practically impacted women’s lives on a day-to-day basis. A better awareness of this is critical if we are to understand how the Islamic State views itself and conceptualizes its governance project more broadly. As the world continues to grapple with its menace in years to come, this knowledge will be critical to informing strategic counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism policy responses, as well as programs aimed at women’s disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Accordingly, this paper sets out to develop that understanding, using new source material to better evaluate the scope and variety of women’s roles and experiences in the caliphate, whether they were a part of the in-group or out-group.

Data and Methods

Two collections of source data feed into this analysis. The first, primary dataset, comprises never-before-seen documents drawn from the ISIS Files digital repository at George Washington University. The other, secondary collection, is composed of existing records curated by the likes of jihadism archivist Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi and the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. In total, over 200 ISIS Files documents were considered along with a further 150 or so documents contained in al-Tamimi’s and West Point’s collections.

In the context of the ISIS Files, which were not indexed like most of the other sources in the digital repository, we used an inductive approach to identify relevant documents from all 15,000 pages contained in the archive. Documents from any collection, with any reference to women, were pulled and tagged accordingly. They were then organized into three categories of reference: primary, secondary, tertiary.

Table 1: Women in the ISIS Files codified by theme

	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Totals
Police	25	10	6	41
Hisba	0	4	2	6
Dawa	0	7	0	7
Military	0	3	9	12
Judiciary	4	0	38	42
Zakat	53	1	0	54
Agriculture	17	23	0	40
Education	5	0	1	6
Miscellaneous	2	1	0	3
Real Estate	0	2	1	3
Women	2	0	0	2
Totals	108	51	57	216

‘Primary references’ include documents in which women are the main focus of the file. These comprise documents in which women are referred to as landowners, payers of *zakat*, claimants or defendants in police cases, or any other files where women are the main focus. They make up the largest collection of files related to women. ‘Secondary references’ relate to files in which women are only mentioned in passing in relation to men and their lives. For example, many documents request information on the number of wives, sisters, and sex slaves an Islamic State member has, and the extent to which they are financially responsible for their upkeep. In this context, women—either as individuals or as a collective subset of the caliphate citizenry—are brought up as indirect beneficiaries or objects of legislative and/or punitive policies. ‘Tertiary references’ are those in which women are mentioned, often by name, solely as a way to identify a man. These appear in most copies of Iraqi identification papers, which were excluded from the ISIS Files digital repository to protect personally identifiable information (PII). While only primary and secondary references are relevant to the present discussion, we decided to identify all references, even when merely tertiary, in order to ensure the completeness of our analysis.

Together with several relevant documents contained in al-Tamimi’s and West Point’s archives—both of which we systematically combed through in addition to the ISIS Files repository—these materials are used below to explore and understand the prevalence and significance of ideology in almost all aspects of the lives of women residing in the Islamic State between 2014 and 2017. This includes how women factored into the group’s governance efforts and organizational strategy, as well as how they were impacted by its penal activities and/or coercive and exploitative measures used to enforce obedience.

Considered together, these documents provide many insights into the lives of women under the Islamic State that go beyond the already-established perpetrator/persecuted framing. As such, they help to expand not only our understanding of women as victims or supporters of this movement, but also our understanding of how it set about balancing ideological and pragmatic concerns when it came to establishing its system of control in the aftermath of its caliphate declaration in 2014.

Before proceeding, a note on the limitations of these data. While comprehensive, they are not complete. These documents were collected at specific times, under specific circumstances, and in specific locations: the ISIS Files digital repository was collected by the New York Times in Nineveh province around 2015 and 2016,²⁵ the West Point's collection was obtained by U.S. military forces operating in Iraq and Syria and dated between December 2014 and October 2016,²⁶ and al-Tamimi's collection was collected by the researcher himself, with some files pre-dating 2014 (though most relate to the years since then).²⁷ With that in mind, what is explored below must be viewed at most as a comprehensive snapshot of life under the Islamic State, not a definitively holistic account. The following section will explore the gendered system of control implemented by the Islamic State and the creation of the organization's in-group/out-group dichotomy.

The Islamic State's Gendered System of Control

Between 2014 and 2017, the Islamic State implemented an elaborate theological-legislative gendered system of control in Iraq and Syria that sought to penetrate almost every aspect of society, regulating social relationships, extracting resources from local communities, and justifying the appropriation of material wealth and property for its own gain.²⁸ This system of control was a product of the group's efforts to balance ideology and pragmatism and, as such, it worked simultaneously to both perpetuate its doctrine and entrench its rule.

Essentially, the system was predicated on the idea that both individual and communal life should be governed in totality by what the Islamic State considered to be 'Islam.' This was, the group reasoned, something that could only be done through the complete implementation of Islamic law (*sharia*), as opposed to the secular or 'heretical' methods found in the 'abode of disbelief' (territories outside of the Islamic State). This 'law' it claimed to have been able to derive through an absolute reliance on the 'principles of proof' found in the Quran,²⁹ Sunna,³⁰ and the chronicles of the first three generations of Muslims from the time of the Prophet Muhammad.³¹ It was, the Islamic State held, as close as possible to the legal code established by the Prophet Muhammad himself when he established the first Islamic state in Medina, as well as that which was implemented following his death by the Rashidun Caliphate, which was led by the Prophet's 'rightly-guided' successors (the Rashidun).

This is what the Islamic State means when it claims to have established a 'caliphate on the prophetic methodology.' In its view, the success of Sunni Muslim society the world over, or what it deemed to be the in-group, is contingent on its full and unwavering implementation of its ideology. Deviation from this system in recent centuries, it holds, has led to the decline of Sunni Muslim *umma* (global community), something that can only be rectified through the violent restoration of 'Islam' and implementation of 'Islamic rule' as it once was.³²

While the in-group according to the Islamic State was the Sunni Muslim community that adhered to its ideology, the out-group was everyone else. In the specific context of the Islamic State's governance efforts in its

territories in Syria and Iraq, the out-group was comprised of Christian, Druze, Yazidi, and Shia Muslim communities. Furthermore, the out-group comprised Sunni Muslims that were deemed ‘apostates’ for not adhering to the Islamic State’s version of Islam.

The Islamic State’s creation of an in-group and out-group identity created a good versus evil mentality, seeking to demonize the out-group.³³ As research has demonstrated, after creating an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ typology, extremists ascribe negative attributes to the out-group, even classifying them as ‘sub-human.’ This dehumanization rationalizes violence against its perceived enemies.³⁴

For the Islamic State, this violent, totalizing ideology plays out globally, necessitating as it does the rejection of the very notion of the modern nation-state, which is regarded as a fundamentally heretical affront to Islam and God, and justifying the use of terroristic violence against civilians.³⁵ While it was still in control of territory in places like Syria and Iraq, it also played out ‘domestically’ within these lands, wherein it drove the movement’s conceptualization of ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ behaviors for both men and women. Among other things, this manifested in hyper-gender-segregated practices including, where possible, the total relegation of women to the private sphere unless it served the pragmatic interests of the group’s governance strategy.³⁶ It also manifested in stringent policies regarding how women, both those in the in-group and those in the out-group, could live, including regulations on anything from polygamy and underage marriage to the revival of sex slavery.³⁷

Ahead of any analysis, though, it is important to reiterate the fact that, while the active in-group and victimized out-group are relatively easy to conceptualize in this context, the lives of those in the middle, women considered as members of the in-group often due to their religion and family background alone, is trickier territory to navigate. As women residing in territories conquered by the Islamic State, they lived in a precarious balance. Openly defying the group could lead to them being charged and killed as apostates, and its harshly misogynistic approach towards governing private and public life meant that their ability to travel, work, or leave was severely inhibited. Their existence was regulated at

almost every level, including the finest details of their marital status and relationships.³⁸

Below, we explore how the Islamic State's system of control was implemented for both the in-group and out-group during its short-lived tenure as a proto-state.

Women in the ‘In-Group’

The Islamic State used its propaganda to frame those it considered to be in its in-group as willing and grateful participants in its creation of the caliphate. In one issue of its English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, the group once bragged about a local Sunni Muslim woman in the Yarmouk camp in south Damascus who at first asked the group to kill her and not enslave her. The text explains how the Islamic State fed and provided aid to her, and once doing so she returned to defend the group, even going so far as to claim that the Islamic State did more for locals than any other faction.³⁹

While the Islamic State’s propaganda may frame all Sunni Muslim women to be part of the in-group, the reality on the ground was often more complex. Generally speaking, in-group women fall within two categories, perpetrators and subjects, both of which are addressed below. While the former played an active part in the Islamic State’s day-to-day political, economic, and social regime, the latter were passive participants, and often on its receiving end. Crucially, the fact that they were considered subjects, not opponents, does not mean that they were proactive supporters of the Islamic State’s ideology and agenda—it just means that they were not, by definition, considered adversaries. Furthermore, it is vital to note that it is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt to definitively classify in-group women under the Islamic State as either subjects or perpetrators. For example, while it may seem easy to simply classify all foreign women who traveled to the Islamic State as active perpetrators and all local women as subjects, often these definitions were more convoluted. The distinctions created in this paper of active and passive in-group women are meant to highlight the complexities of women’s lives under rebel rule.

Furthermore, the authors of this paper would be remiss if they did not address the role of in-group women in enforcing, perpetrating, or being accomplices in gender-based violence against other women. Women in the out-group were systematically targeted, dehumanized, lost land, lost their lives, and were enslaved by the Islamic State. Some women in the in-group actively helped to perpetrate these crimes, with many others not actively resisting them and, in so doing, tacitly enabling them. As active, passive, or coerced accomplices to these crimes, in-group women rented

land taken from the out-group women, as well as turned a blind eye to slavery and sexual abuse, often due to their own precarious situations under the Islamic State's rule. Moreover, some in-group women actively encouraged the enslavement and sexual abuse of out-group women. As the above discussion highlights, the ability to distinguish the passive in-group, is more complex and harder to define.

Before delving into the two categories of in-group women, it is important to discuss the implementation of the Islamic State's gendered system of control.

Enshrining the System

As it expanded across Syria, Iraq, and Libya in 2014 and 2015 in particular, the Islamic State set out to instruct local communities on its ideology and, in doing so, stipulate how they needed to live in order to be in accordance with its 'prophetic' system of rule. Sometimes, it did this by issuing city charters;⁴⁰ on other occasions, it publicized directions through its Da'wa and Mosques Center.⁴¹ Another key tool was the fatwa; these were devised and issued in the hundreds by the central Diwan for Research and Fatwa-Issuing.⁴² While its guidance was not technically binding, the role of this entity was to clarify—for the general populace, the group's members, and even other departments—matters on which there might be ignorance, misunderstanding, or ambiguity. Once issued, these clarifications would subsequently be reviewed and integrated into local legal frameworks. On that basis, they performed a sort of meta-legislative function.

The full body of Islamic State fatwas is exhaustive and diverse. However, one of its most common themes is gender. Indeed, many of its rulings are geared towards establishing and entrenching an overarching framework for gender segregation as well as things like 'modesty policies' and other regulations around 'proper' in-group behavior.⁴³ These mechanisms were used to define and delineate—at scale—appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for both men and women living in the Islamic State in a manner that sufficiently and stably balanced ideological imperatives with material reality—i.e., its caliphal system of governance.

Entrenching Segregation

Over the course of the last two decades, the Islamic State movement has consistently held that women belong first and foremost in the private sphere.⁴⁴ Any exceptions to this rule were exactly that: exceptions that were necessitated by extenuating, and unavoidable, circumstances. These circumstances will be explored further below. This idea is prominent across both the English- and Arabic-language materials that were produced by the group over the course of the last few years. For example, all 23 of the articles specifically directed at women in English-language Islamic State magazines since 2014 talk about the home as an ‘ideal’ place for women.⁴⁵

This position was not, however, restricted to propaganda. Rather, it was enshrined in both fatwas and other formalized legal frameworks whenever the Islamic State meaningfully established control over a territory. For example, written in both the city charter of Sirte and the city charter of Mosul (which are very similar), the Islamic State wrote specifically “to the distinguished and noble women,” reminding them that

modesty, covering, loose garment and veiling the head and face, while remaining in the house, adhering to the curtain [i.e. seclusion] and not leaving except for need: this is the guidance of the mothers of the believers and the distinguished female companions (may God be pleased with them).⁴⁶

On the occasions that women were allowed into public life, the Islamic State strictly limited the basis on which this could occur. Among other things, it claimed that in order to protect women’s modesty, men and women needed to practice full gender segregation. This affected nearly all aspects of women’s engagement in public life including carrying out basic daily tasks, working, or even accessing healthcare.

Islamic State files originating anywhere from Syria and Iraq to Libya and even Yemen speak to systematic efforts to segregate genders and discourage women’s employment.⁴⁷ However, there is also evidence that the Islamic State compromised when the presence of female workers in public spaces was a matter of necessity: anything from female doctors

needing to see female patients to female staff working at women-only internet cafes.⁴⁸ Accordingly, the Diwan for Research and Fatwa-Issuing issued several clarifications on scenarios that had arisen due to ‘necessary’ roles for women in the workplace in which it tried to uphold the principle of gender-segregation as far as was possible (usually by stipulating that a *mahram*, or male overseer, had to be present). For example, it issued one fatwa prohibiting female nurses from being alone with male doctors in clinics unless she was with a mahram or a group of women.⁴⁹ In another, it ruled that women should always first try to see a female gynecologist before seeing a male doctor for the relevant illnesses.⁵⁰

Besides simple segregation, another of the principal ways it regulated ‘properly’ gendered behavior was through the policing of women’s bodies and dress. This included restrictions on women’s clothing, including the prohibition of tight or transparent garments,⁵¹ the enforcement of the hijab,⁵² and even the enforcement of the niqab on both Muslim and non-Muslim women.⁵³ Interestingly, one document noted that elderly women were not to be pressured on the issue of the hijab.⁵⁴ No reason was given for this, but it indicates, once more, a certain openness to compromise on the part of the Islamic State.

Aside from this, the Islamic State sought to regulate women’s movement, issuing numerous fatwas on the matter. As part of this, women required male escorts to carry out even the most menial of everyday activities. For example, male shopkeepers were forbidden from selling products to women that did not have an appropriate escort, and taxi drivers transporting female workers had to sign pledges to abide by Islamic State rules regarding women’s dress.⁵⁵

These restrictions also extended to travel within the Islamic State’s broader territories. One fatwa stipulates that women could not travel without a male escort because the Prophet Muhammad said, “[t]he woman is not to travel without the *mahram*.”⁵⁶ Similarly themed documents from Euphrates Province⁵⁷ and Raqqa Province⁵⁸ comprise permission forms and other regulations imposed by the Islamic State for women’s travel, requesting anything from reasons for travel to the destination location and biometric information about male escorts.

Travel outside of Islamic State-held territory was generally prohibited except for highly limited, temporary purposes such as access to medical treatment that could not be accessed inside the Islamic State, or some business and financial transactions.⁵⁹ The rules were strict for men but even stricter for women. For example, one piece of guidance from Raqqa Province stated that it was forbidden for women to travel to external territories except for serious medical conditions, and only then if it was approved by an Islamic State medical director and done in the company of a male escort.⁶⁰ Besides this, occasional permission seems to have also been granted for travel outside of the Islamic State for reasons other than medical necessity. One document from Khayr Province, for example, is a permission slip approving a woman's travel to Turkey to visit their sick father (or father-in-law);⁶¹ another features a handwritten note signed by an individual advising that the woman in question should be permitted to visit her mother in Tunisia even though it is considered outside the 'Abode of Islam.'⁶²

Penalizing Infractions

For those who did not comply with this system—whether it was in the context of segregation, dress, or movement—the Islamic State instituted an array of public and private punishments, with verbal warnings and fines at one end of the spectrum and executions at the other.

Its fundamental objective in doling these out was to deter any resistance to segregation, something towards which its legislators were extremely sensitive, including when men were seen to have broken the rules. For example, one prisoner handover document details arrestable offenses such as 'mixing with women not permitted to [the arrested individual],' 'being in seclusion against the *sharia* with women not permitted to [the arrested individual],' 'sitting near a woman not permitted to [the arrested individual],' and 'suspicion of adultery with a married woman.'⁶³

In another document released by the Diwan of Hisba, or moral policing, the punishments for crimes more explicitly related to female 'infractions' were set out.⁶⁴ For example, a woman who did not dress properly could be taken into custody, her male custodian flogged in front of her and forced to buy her an abaya. The same document also detailed punishments for

men who were seen to dress too effeminately or were accused of harassing women.

It is worth noting that, in 2015, the General Governing Committee of the Islamic State issued a blanket instruction to all provinces of the caliphate to forward on a copy of the case file of any woman that was detained for security reasons to its central bureaucracy.⁶⁵ This announcement implies that women's arrests for security reasons were relatively rare—if this was not the case, forwarding files like this would be a huge administrative burden for its justice system, not to mention a security risk.

Women as Perpetrators

Having established the broad parameters of the implementation of the gendered system of control that characterized the Islamic State during its years as a proto-state, we can now turn to what this practically meant for the society over which it ruled. As mentioned above, life for women within its caliphate was dictated by a set of penal and bureaucratic structures that, while open to some compromises, generally operated within strict ideological parameters. For women in the in-group, this meant their public movements were restricted and roles (professional and otherwise) strictly segregated. However, as this section explores, it did not mean they had no agency, nor did it mean they were entirely excluded from daily life.

Much has been written about the female Islamic State supporters that directly engaged in its proto-state administration. In the main, though, these accounts have focused on the issue of motivation—that is, they have tended to ask why women would want to join an organization like the Islamic State, not what they did, or should do, once they joined it, which is the focus of the present discussion.

The Islamic State's actualization of its particular reading of jihadism in Syria and Iraq between 2014 and 2017 was an unprecedented opportunity for it to test out, in earnest, the established jihadist conception of how Sunni Muslim women should 'be' in both public and private life. In the course of this period, it became clear that confining them to the home, as would 'ideally' be the case, was as impractical as it was unrealistic.

Instead, female supporters ended up playing a pivotal role in both domestic security and, later, conventional military operations.

Women in the Hisba

One of their principal theaters of activity as perpetrators was in relation to religious policing, otherwise known as *hisba*. The *hisba* were tasked with tracking violations of religious laws, something that often meant enforcing ‘Islamic’ morality over women. For such duties, the Islamic State had no choice but to enlist women (even if the ‘ideal’ women should be sedentary) because the ideological restrictions on which its system of control was predicated—i.e., segregation and propriety—meant that men were physically unable to enforce all its rules. In other words, policing women in a ‘*sharia*-compliant’ manner meant doing things that men simply could not, like smelling women’s clothing and breath in the event that they had been accused of drinking alcohol or smoking.

Several documents shed light on what women’s *hisba* activities looked like in practice. One of the most detailed, which is dated November 2014, describes the internal structure of the *hisba* itself.⁶⁶ Among other things, it states that each *hisba* office had an all-female unit that operated separately from the male *hisba* units. Women in it were tasked with all women’s *sharia* violations including issues regarding clothing and the use of perfume. Interestingly, these women were also charged with providing financial and material assistance to in-group women considered ‘in need,’ as well as giving counseling to women who had been arrested, touring women’s schools to stop *sharia* violations and offer advice, and accompanying male members for arrests and inspection raids when the targets were women. Moreover, in *hisba* roles, women were permitted to carry weapons, providing it was in a *sharia*-compliant manner.⁶⁷ This demonstrates one of the ways the Islamic State was willing to grant exceptions to women’s desired place in private spaces when it ensured the proper administration of its extensive bureaucracy.

These terms of reference are corroborated by, among others, one other high-level document, which was authored by the overarching *amir* of the Diwan of Hisba and directed to the *walis*, or governors, of several Islamic State provinces, including Euphrates, Khayr, Raqqa, and Aleppo.⁶⁸ The

letter set out a directive of the General Governing Committee for the establishment of a devoted women's division of the *hisba* to operate in the cities of Bukamal, Mayadin, Raqqa, and Manbij, specifically 'to deal with the female violators.' In doing so, it instructed each governor to ask the *amirs* of the Hisba Center in the provinces in question to refer the names of six women to work in the team.

Women in Combat Roles

When it came to women's involvement in military operations, there was less clarity. At its height between 2014 and 2016, the Islamic State's position on the active military deployment of women, as outlined in the Khansa' manifesto among other publications, speeches, and videos, was broadly in line with what most other jihadist organizations thought at the time: women were not obliged to fight, but they would be obliged to do so if circumstances required—i.e. if the *jihad* became overwhelmingly a war of defense.⁶⁹

This idea was specifically reiterated in several fatwas aimed at women. In Fatwa no. 397, for example, women are reminded,

As for *jihad* in the meaning of 'fighting and clashing,' it is not obligatory on her but it is permitted when there is need for her and when there is no risk of becoming a captive and *sabi* [sex slave], and the assessment of [when that need is present] goes back to the [caliph]. But if the enemy come and surprise the people and they cannot repel them without the participation of the women, then it is obligatory on the women. This is so and God knows best.⁷⁰

This was also noted in Fatwa no. 418, which stated that military *jihad* was not obligatory for women, although "it is permitted in her right in terms of the principle, and it has been established that a number of women of the companions went out for *jihad*."⁷¹

By mid-2017, after more than a year of territorial losses, the Islamic State all but abandoned its offensive campaigns across Iraq and Syria. It was at this point that it signaled it was going to start following through on its provisions regarding female combatants.⁷² The first time their deployment on the battlefield seemed truly imminent was in July 2017,

when an article in *Rumiyah* noted that the time had come for in-group women to take their support for the caliphate project to the next stage, calling women to

[r]ise with courage and sacrifice in this war as the righteous women did at the time of the Messenger of Allah, not because of the small number of men but rather, due to their love for jihad, their desire to sacrifice for the sake of Allah, and their desire for Jannah [paradise].⁷³

The article, while not explicitly calling for women to take up arms, was preparing its readership for the eventuality that women would at some point soon be called upon—or, at the very least, permitted—to volunteer to fight for the Islamic State. In the same month the article was released, reports emerged of female suicide bombers in Mosul.⁷⁴

In October of that year, the Islamic State released further clarification on the matter, this time in its newspaper, *al-Naba'*. In the essay, the author stated that women were now obliged to engage in *jihad* on behalf of the caliphate, noting:

And as we are today in the context of this war on the Islamic State and its intensity and tribulation, it is becoming obligatory on the Muslim women to undertake their obligation at all levels in supporting the mujahideen in this battle, in that they should reckon themselves female mujahideen in the path of God, and they should prepare to defend their religion with their lives in sacrifice for the religion of God the Blessed and Almighty, and they should incite their husbands and sons, so they should be like the mujahid women of the first group.⁷⁵

In early 2018, the first official footage appeared showing women seemingly engaging in combat against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alongside men in eastern Syria.⁷⁶ In the months that followed, no other visual accounts emerged. This media moratorium was, however, broken in the first three months of 2019 when the Islamic State's last holdout in Baghuz was on the brink of collapse, a period in which numerous video clips emerged—some official, others not—showing

women fighting to defend what they considered to be the last true territory of their caliphate.⁷⁷

Women as Subjects

To date, the active perpetrator (i.e., combat and policing) roles of in-group women have been researched far more intensively than the lives of that other, subtler category of in-group women—i.e., the women that acquiesced to or even supported the rule of the Islamic State without formally participating in its political project.

As in-group members but not active operatives, these women—who made up the vast majority of Sunni Muslim women living in the Islamic State—were by definition ‘subjects’ of the caliphate.⁷⁸ Importantly, their status as subjects should not be misconstrued as something that necessitated their being proactive supporters of its ideology and agenda—it just means that they were not, by definition, considered members of the out-group. Moreover, being subjects did not mean they were not victimized; as women living under its totalitarian rule, they were routinely exposed to brutal punishments and the harshest of restrictions. Accordingly, for many if not most of them, acquiescence to caliphate rule was simply a means to survive.

Below, we set out what the ISIS Files and other primary source documents can tell us about this under-researched segment of the Islamic State’s former populace. We show that many women, through both willing collaboration and grudging acquiescence, utilized—and were utilized by—its system of control. In this sense, women were seen as a resource to be used by the Islamic State for its advantage.

Women in the Workplace

When it came to employment, women generally worked within one of two ‘state’-backed institutions: medical care or schooling. In the context of the former, internal administrative documents from across Syria and Iraq indicate that the Islamic State’s deployment of female medical professionals was fairly sophisticated. Female nurses and doctors worked across its medical system, albeit in environments that were meticulously

gender-regulated in order to keep to the strictures of its system of control. This meant that, when women were being operated on in hospitals, for example, female nurses were meant to be a constant presence and, if ever they left the room, leaving a male surgeon alone with a female patient, the surgery was meant to stop.⁷⁹

Notwithstanding the array of ideology-born limitations that hospitals across the caliphate were technically bound by, positions for both male and female doctors and nurses were regularly advertised.⁸⁰ Often, these advertisements were more commands than calls for voluntary employment, meaning that many medical professionals were coerced into service. This coercion came in many forms, sometimes physical and at others legislative. As one such ‘ultimatum’ reads,⁸¹

Since the conquest [of Mosul], and the length of time elapsed, the Islamic State has been trying many ways to call these doctors, female doctors and health staff to their homes, hospitals, clinics, colleges and institutes in the realm of the Caliphate, many of them have continued to resist and oppose, so the following is decided:

1. This is the last warning to doctors, dentists, pharmacists, professors of the colleges of medicine and nursing, and health and administrative staff (affiliated with the Health department and higher education) who abandoned the land of the Caliphate, and they must return to their areas and take up their employment posts immediately.

The same document went on to warn that all those who had fled had thirty days from the date of issuance to return and take up their posts again, or their property would be confiscated by the Islamic State. Showing the desperation of the group for skilled workers in education and healthcare, the Islamic State declared that any of these individuals, should they return and show repentance, would be accepted back.

When it came to schooling, several documents establish detailed employment parameters for female teachers working in Islamic State-administered classrooms. For example, teachers, both male and female, were required to take mandatory *sharia* before being cleared to teach in schools.⁸² Four documents in the ISIS Files repository focus on the

responsibilities of specifically female teachers,⁸³ with a further 14 from the al-Tamimi and Harmony archives dealing either directly or indirectly with them. Taken individually, these documents tell us relatively few precise details about female-led education in the caliphate, but, when considered as a whole, they indicate that its administration saw the basic ‘education’ of girls as a necessity, not an option—provided, that is, female teachers were available (on at least one occasion, a girls’ school was shut down due to a shortage of female staff-members).⁸⁴

On that basis, the Islamic State filled teaching positions through a combination of voluntary and coerced employment, similar to what it did in the context of medical workers. The former is evidenced in advertisements for ‘new employment opportunities’ and statements announcing the establishment of ‘centers for application for positions in education.’⁸⁵ The latter can be seen in the numerous calls for ‘repentance’ that were leveled at teachers (usually both men and women but sometimes just women) across Iraq and Syria between 2014 and 2015 in particular. These calls were similar in tone to the abovementioned ultimatum leveled at medical practitioners; they stipulated that qualified individuals were obliged to participate in the Islamic State’s education system whether they liked it or not and that, if they did not, they would face penalties.⁸⁶

Besides education and medicine, the only other sphere in which women could work appears to have been agriculture.⁸⁷ While the evidence for this is relatively sparse, we identified several documents that speak of women as agricultural landowners and farmers.⁸⁸ The files themselves do not deal head-on with the gender of those named, but instead act as generic permission slips for (female-named) individuals to begin harvesting produce. Other documents, also produced by the Diwan of Agriculture, comprise formal rental agreements between female landowners and the ‘state’ administration, together evidencing that women could take over fallow land or be listed on rental contracts if their husbands had died.⁸⁹ As with male landowners, they were obliged to pay taxes through the system of *zakat* that was established in 2014, ultimately generating tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the Islamic State project.⁹⁰

Notwithstanding the fact that women could technically work under the Islamic State if they had the appropriate professional credentials or were faced by the ‘right’ circumstances (e.g., the death of their husbands), it is important to emphasize that their employment in these positions was an exception to the rule, not the rule itself. Indeed, rather like their involvement in policing or combat operations, it was something that the Islamic State only ever permitted begrudgingly as something that was necessary to uphold the undergirding principles of its system of control.

Women as ‘Beneficiaries’

As noted above, the vast majority of in-group women living under the rule of the Islamic State were not in gainful employment. However, they still came into contact with its administrative practices on a day-to-day basis, its influence continually permeating both private and public life.

This influence manifested in both positive and negative ways. Women, for example, were often expressly granted resources or other forms of material support. Sometimes this came indirectly in the form of material assistance provided to husbands and fathers, who were instructed to list family members in military expense and salary forms,⁹¹ on real estate forms,⁹² gas distribution forms,⁹³ and on wills and last testaments.⁹⁴ (Often these same forms would also request details about sex slaves.) In other cases, women received support directly from the Islamic State. For example, numerous documents show that women could be active recipients of monetary and nutritional support if they had been widowed or divorced,⁹⁵ or had lost their husbands on account of other reasons like enemy imprisonment.⁹⁶ Female orphans were also demarcated as specific recipients of *zakat*-derived aid.⁹⁷

Besides material assistance, female members of the in-group were also ‘beneficiaries’ of Islamic State-provided education. The ISIS Files repository is replete with examples of references, direct and indirect, to what the education of girls and female adolescents looked like. They indicate that the caliphate invested a significant amount of time and energy in cultivating its youth support base—what it called the ‘generation of the caliphate.’ Generally speaking, male children and youth living under the Islamic State were meant to attend both military training

academies as well as more conventional ‘schools’ wherein a curriculum (of sorts) was the basis of learning. Female children were precluded from attending training camps but encouraged to attend school up to at least the primary level. At these institutes, lessons in anything from history and geography to Arabic and English were delivered, imbued with jihadist readings of the world, and religious science was enforced at every level.⁹⁸

A number of documents announce new school terms and give stipulations around what girls’ attendance (and/or lack thereof) would result in.⁹⁹ Some track how women and their idealized roles in society are conceptualized in the pages of school textbooks.¹⁰⁰ Others provide logistical information about how girls’ schools were actually run— anything from printing costs to the distribution of sports equipment¹⁰¹ — with yet more describing the processes by which Islamic State officials regulated them.¹⁰² One document, written from the perspective of a school inspector, notes that,

Until now, there are (34) girls’ schools in the sector of Nineveh Plain (al-Nimroud) that have not been visited by educational supervisors due to lack of (a female educational supervisor) in the sector. Given the need of girls’ schools to supervision and follow-up and that I have found myself qualified, scientifically competent and creative in supervision. I kindly request your approval to be assigned as a supervisor on girls’ schools along with the brothers in the al-Sahl Office in order to follow-up on girls’ schools teaching methods, to give directives and to visit the classrooms for scaling up the knowledge standard and ensuring the success of the educational process.¹⁰³

At the level of higher education, information is harder to come by, although we do know that at least some women attended universities in Mosul and Sirte.¹⁰⁴ This is because, with the notable exception of medical students, in-group females were discouraged from continuing their studies at university. This saw some subjects, like engineering, being restricted to males only, even when the prior experiences and background of female students made them good candidates for the material sciences.¹⁰⁵

From the perspective of religious education, in-group women were also perpetually exposed to theological and ideological training at the hands of the Islamic State's Center for *Da'wa* and Mosques.¹⁰⁶ Such activities were at the heart of its community outreach efforts; after all, they enabled it to work to entrench the ideological basis for its system of control. This took the form of anything from women-only seminaries on creed and methodology to Quran memorization competitions for young girls.¹⁰⁷

Besides material assistance and education, in-group women would also be afforded 'protection' by the Islamic State's police and judiciary. This saw them raising agriculture disputes, making claims against male family members, calling on the Islamic State for support in accessing monies owed to them by husbands, fathers, and brothers-in-law, as well as requesting legal interventions in the context of incidents of physical and mental abuse.¹⁰⁸ While these interventions were invariably grounded in misogyny—for example, men were reprimanded only if they beat their wives 'without good reason'¹⁰⁹—they indicated that the Islamic State's ideological positioning did not preclude it from taking the side of women, provided of course that they were part of its in-group.¹¹⁰

As the above section has explored, the lives of women deemed by the Islamic State to be part of the in-group were not singular. A disparity exists between those who actively participated in the Islamic State's system and those who acquiesced or complied with their new reality. The following section will explore the lives of women framed by the Islamic State as the out-group.

Women in the ‘Out-Group’

Intrinsic to the success of the Islamic State’s system of control was its creation of an opposition between those that were considered part of its in-group and those that were considered part of its out-group. This it did with a view to establishing and normalizing a good versus evil mentality, one that demonized the out-group and rationalized violence (both physical and non-physical) against them.¹¹¹ In the specific context of Syria and Iraq, the principal out-groups of the Islamic State comprised of Christian, Druze, Yazidi, and Shia Muslim communities, as well as Sunni Muslims that were deemed ‘apostates’ for not adhering to the Islamic State’s version of Islam. These groups were split into one of three categories: (i) ‘original disbelievers’ entitled to a *dhimmi* pact (Jews and Christians); (ii) ‘apostates’ (e.g. Shi’a Muslims and other groups it did not consider to be ‘Muslim’); and (iii) ‘original disbelievers’ not entitled to a *dhimmi* pact (e.g. Yazidis). The first two categories could not be enslaved and, per its judiciary, should always be offered chances for ‘repentance’ and an opportunity to join the group and follow its ideology. The third category, however, could be enslaved; indeed, per the Islamic State, there was no alternative but to enslave them.

This identity-based conceptualization of its enemies meant that, as the Islamic State expanded across Syria and Iraq in 2014 and 2015, it could justify the collection and distribution of ‘war spoils’ through ideological argumentation.¹¹² In the context of out-group women living in the region, ‘war spoils’ could either mean the seizing of their money, property or possessions, or it could mean they were forced into slavery. There were, of course, limitations to this; the possessions of those deemed to be Sunni Muslims were protected, and so too were the possessions of protected communities that had entered into a *dhimmi* pact with its administration.¹¹³ However, given that it was up to the Islamic State to define who was deemed an enemy and who was not, this framework afforded a high degree of flexibility when it came to selectively establishing its system of control.

As part of this—and just as was the case with how it sought to appeal to and exercise control over in-group women—its treatment of out-group

was dictated by a combination of ideology and pragmatism, something that was meticulously codified over the course of its proto-state tenure.

Shia Muslims, Christians, and ‘Murtaddin’

Shia Muslims, Christians, and *murtaddin* (‘apostates’) who remained in Islamic State-held territories after their conquest were subjected to an array of violent and non-violent punitive measures that were justified on ideological grounds. For example, Jews and Christians could be forced to make *jizyah* [head tax] payments, a tax paid by non-Muslims under Muslim rule, while people accused of slandering the Prophet Muhammad could be executed.¹¹⁴ Moreover, while religious groups such as the Alawites and Druze could not be taxed, they could be killed if they did not convert to Islam.¹¹⁵

Such rulings did not apply only to men. Rather, women were also subject to these punishments.¹¹⁶ When it came to the confiscation of property, for example, the Islamic State was liberal in its definition of what did and did not constitute ‘fair game.’ Dozens of documents in the ISIS Files track how the Islamic State systematically expropriated the land of those who opposed (or were assumed to oppose) its caliphate project, including Shia Muslims,¹¹⁷ Christians,¹¹⁸ and Yazidis.¹¹⁹ Among other things, these files detail how it confiscated land from Christian women¹²⁰ and Shia Muslim women.¹²¹ It also seized the property (including farmland) of women who were members of communities it deemed to be undesirable for other, non-religious reasons, including people it considered tied to the Turkish state¹²² and Iraq’s government.¹²³ Generally speaking, seized lands were transferred to either the Diwan of Agriculture or the Diwan of Real Estate, either of which would rent it to in-group farmers (including under specific circumstances to women).¹²⁴

In the context of Sunni Muslim women who were deemed to be ‘apostates,’ and, therefore, to have foregone their in-group privileges, the Islamic State conducted itself in a similar manner, confiscating property and occasionally doling out death sentences. One document from 2016, for example, recounts a judgment in Raqqa that certified execution of an ‘apostate’ woman, ruling that she should be killed on account of her ‘apostasy without [being offered an opportunity for] repentance’ and that

her wealth should be confiscated ‘as booty for the Bayt Mal al-Muslimin [the Islamic State’s central treasury].’¹²⁵

Several courses of action could lead to a woman being accused of apostasy, anything from espionage (or accusations thereof) to indifference or subversion.¹²⁶ Whichever it was, the Islamic State was on constant lookout for possible infractions. Personnel documents within the ISIS Files ask male members to provide confidential personal information about their wives and sisters. These forms ask questions such as, ‘Does your wife have apostate siblings?’; ‘Do you have apostate sisters? What are their names and where are they now?’; and, after asking for the number of sisters, ‘Is anyone of them married to an apostate?’¹²⁷ Through even the most basic of human resources processing, then, the Islamic State actively tried to root out those who subverted it, not only asking neighbors to tell on each other, but encouraging its own members to turn in the families.

While these practices were only ever engaged in on purportedly ideological grounds—after all, the Islamic State always claimed it was seeking to identify and persecute only those it deemed to be non-Muslims or ‘apostates’ — they reaped innumerable material rewards for the movement and its supporters, and, in that sense, were likely driven as much by pragmatic considerations as they were anything else. As the next section shows, a similar argument can be made in relation to its mass enslavement of Yazidi women.

Yazidis

While it is true that the Islamic State’s policy of enslaving Yazidi women and children was ideologically facilitated—rendered justifiable through selective use of religious texts—this was another aspect of how it treated out-group communities that ended up working to its advantage from a pragmatic perspective.¹²⁸ These women were enslaved on purportedly religious grounds, but the act of their enslavement was something that enticed true (and usually male) believers in the caliphate project.

The Islamic State’s justification for this practice was relatively simple. It framed Yazidi women as just war spoils and held that their subsequent

sexual abuse was ‘good’ for them. Moreover, it claimed that this was exactly what a ‘caliphate on the prophetic methodology’ should be doing.¹²⁹ For example, in one of its more extensive explanations of the practice, it argued,

Saby (taking slaves through war) is a great prophetic Sunnah containing many divine wisdoms and religious benefits, regardless of whether or not the people are aware of this. The Sīrah [prophetic biography] is a witness to our Prophet’s (*sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) raiding of the *kuffār*. He would kill their men and enslave their children and women.¹³⁰

It also held that its approach to mass enslavement was always limited and carefully targeted at Yazidis, something that was done to ensure that it stayed within the confines of *sharia* law.¹³¹ In another detailed discussion of slavery, ‘The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour,’ it explained that,

After capture, the Yazidi women and children were then divided according to the Shari’ah amongst the fighters of the Islamic State who participated in the Sinjar operations, after one fifth of the slaves were transferred to the Islamic State’s authority to be divided as *khums* [tax].¹³²

On this ideologically grounded basis, the Islamic State worked to codify out-group slavery into everyday life, normalizing it as much as was possible. In doing so, it created clear rules and regulations which were aimed at guiding the ‘legitimate’ treatment of sex slaves. For example, a memorandum issued by one of its highest authorities, the Delegated Committee, set out a number of rules relating to the ownership of female slaves.¹³³ They included, for example, provisions that female slaves had to be kept in private homes, rather than in bases or guest-houses. The memorandum even noted that the Diwan of Real Estate would not grant a house to a member of the Islamic State just so they could house a female slave. The document also clarified that slave owners should register their slaves with the court system, which in turn would regulate their sale and transfer.

In 2015, just months after the Delegated Committee regulations were published, the Islamic State’s Diwan for Research and Fatwa-Issuing release more guidance on the matter, this time seeking to regulate sexual

intercourse with female slaves.¹³⁴ The fatwa listed 15 injunctions, including banning fathers and sons from having sex with the same female slave, and an owner from having sex with both a mother and daughter if he had enslaved both.¹³⁵ Other documents from around the same time further noted that it was prohibited to take and distribute pictures of female slaves.¹³⁶ While they did not state the rationale for such this prohibition, one concluded with the following text: “we ask our brothers and sons to fear God (Almighty and Exalted is He) and embrace obedience to Him and avoid causes of suspicion and temptations.” This insinuates that such behaviors were deemed to violate the ‘appropriate’ treatment of female slaves.

Beyond simply issuing rulings to delineate ‘proper’ and ‘improper’ behavior, the Islamic State meticulously documented, and regulated, the sale of slaves within its lands.¹³⁷ Among other things, it kept records of how and where they were held and being sold,¹³⁸ and it even provided official transaction receipts and proof of ownership documents.¹³⁹ These also pertained, where relevant, to the sale of child slaves.¹⁴⁰

Like the other systems it put in place to ‘limit’ how the practice of slavery panned out in reality, these rules and regulations were framed as a way to ensure its commitment to *sharia* law—or, at least, what the Islamic State considered to be *sharia* law. However, the movement’s permissive attitude to mass enslavement was not born solely of ideological fervor. Rather, its slaves were treated as a commodity, something else that it could offer in-group members to entice support and sustain commitment. This is evident in how slaves were distributed preferentially to its rank and file soldiers and military officers, something that is detailed in a military administration document titled, ‘Referral of Sponsorship.’ In it, fighters are asked to report their full name, alias, name of their female slaves and children if applicable.¹⁴¹ The form, which was a means with which to apply for extra funds from the military administration, requested specific information on female slaves in order to ensure that appropriate compensation could be provided to fighters with more dependents. This form—or close equivalents of it—were found throughout the caliphate (in Aleppo,¹⁴² Homs,¹⁴³ Kobani,¹⁴⁴ Qaryatayn,¹⁴⁵ and even Sirte in Libya¹⁴⁶), something that indicates the practice was conducted on an organization-wide basis.

Conclusions

Understanding the implications of the Islamic State's treatment of, and engagement with, women who lived under its control is an important part of understanding how the Islamic State views itself and its governance, providing much needed insights into the overarching society the Islamic State sought to create and women's roles within it. As this paper has explored, the Islamic State implemented an elaborate theological-legislative gendered system of control in Iraq and Syria that sought to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources from local populations, and appropriate those resources for their own gain.

In the out-group, Yazidi, Shia, Christian, and even some Sunni women were demonized and dehumanized by the Islamic State's 'us' versus 'them' narrative. While driven by its ideological definitions of the out-group, the Islamic State's implementation of its scorched earth policy against non-Muslims and 'apostates' allowed the group to reap innumerable material rewards for the movement and its supporters. The confiscation of land and wealth, along with the mass enslavement of Yazidi women and children, on purportedly religious grounds, had practical implications, bringing about financial wealth for the organization and serving as a recruitment tool for many of its supporters.

Furthermore, as this research has shown, even within the Islamic State's conceptualization of the in-group, there exists a diversity, with a disparity between active and passive participants. These files offer a glimpse into what life was like for Sunni Muslim females in the caliphate, highlighting that many women, through both willing collaboration and reluctant acquiescence, utilized—and were utilized by—its system of control. Specifically, for this case, the files examined in this paper show that while the Islamic State ideology preferred in-group women to be in the home, the group's governance and adherence to gender segregation forced it to begrudgingly create exceptional circumstances in which women could enter public life, under strict guidelines, in order to uphold the underlying principles of its system of control.

This paper systematically examined primary source documents, tracking the Islamic State's day-to-day bureaucracy and administration, both

through its gendered system of control, and the application of this ideological governance on its subjects. Specifically, this paper adds to our comprehension of in-group and out-group women as perpetrators and victims, as well as contributes to our understanding of the passive in-group who complied with or acquiesced to the Islamic State's system of governance. This paper demonstrates the precarious balance for women considered to be part of the in-group, but who were not active supporters of the Islamic State.

This research suggests that the Islamic State's system of control was a product of the group's efforts to address a dilemma faced by many ideologically motivated rebel governing actors like the Islamic State; a constant balancing act between the ideology that drives the group in question and the pragmatic issues that govern the actual application of its ideology. As the hundreds of administrative documents examined in this paper demonstrate, the interplay between ideology and pragmatism in the Islamic State's administrative approach manifested in its engagement with what it deemed to be both in-group and out-group women and has highlighted how the Islamic State used its system of control to both perpetuate its doctrine and entrench its rule.

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⁸ This paper will not focus on the dynamics between local and foreign women. While the authors agree that this is an important relationship to study, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

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¹⁴ See quotes from extremist women: Bowman, Emma, and Ian Stewart. “The Women Behind The ‘Alt-Right’.” *NPR*. NPR, 20 Aug. 2017. Web. 07 Nov. 2018.; Darby, Seyward. “The Rise of the Valkyries.” *Harper’s Magazine*. Harper’s Magazine Foundation, Sept. 2017. Web. 07 Nov. 2018.; Davenport, Cecelia. “The Women That Feminism Forgot.” *Altright.com*. Altright.com, 2016. Web. 07 Nov. 2018.; Musial, Julia. “My Muslim Sister, Indeed You Are a Mujahidah’ - Narratives in the Propaganda of the Islamic State to Address and Radicalize Western Women. An Exemplary Analysis of the Online Magazine Dabiq.” *Journal for Deradicalization*, vol. 9, no. Winter, 2016, pp. 39–100., ISSN: 2363-9849. <http://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/73>.

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²⁴ For more on this, see Chapter 9 in: Ingram, Haroro, Craig Whiteside, and Charlie Winter. 2020. *The ISIS Reader: Milestone Texts of the Islamic State Movement*. Oxford University Press, USA.

²⁵ Ingram, Haroro and Devorah Margolin. 2020. "Inside the Islamic State in Mosul: A Snapshot of the Logic & Banality of Evil". *The ISIS Files*. <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/report/4j03cz64w>.

²⁶ Vale, Gina. 2020. "Piety Is in the Eye of the Bureaucrat: The Islamic State's Strategy of Civilian Control." *CTC Sentinel: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 13 (1): 34–40.

²⁷ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents>.

²⁸ As this paper examines the governance of women's lives, the authors of this paper turned to Migdal's understanding of the four capacities of governance. Migdal argued that in order to achieve changes in society, states need the "capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways." While Migdal wrote on states' governance capacities, this framework of control remains relevant to the understanding what the Islamic State sought to do. For more details, please see: Migdal, Joel S. 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton University Press.

²⁹ The *Quran* is the core religious text of Islam. Muslims believe the *Quran* was verbally delivered to the Prophet Muhammad from God via the angel Gabriel.

³⁰ The *Sunnah* is the compilation of the verbally transmitted teachings, deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

³¹ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "This is our aqeeda and this is our manhaj," 2015, *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/10/this-is-our-aeqeeda-and-this-is-our-manhaj-islam>.

³² Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2006. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (3): 207–39.

³³ Ingram, Kiriloi. 2017. "IS's Appeal to Western Women: Policy Implications." *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague*, 1–12.

³⁴ Braddock, Kurt. 2020. *Weaponized Words: The Strategic Role of Persuasion in Violent Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*. Cambridge University Press.

³⁵ The Salafi-Jihadist movement has five fundamental features: *tawhid* (the oneness of god), *hakimiyya* (the rule of God – the combination of God and political system), *al-wala wa-l-bara* (loyalty and disavowal for the sake of God), *jihad* (to struggle – this also has a legal connotation to fight for Islam), and *takfir* (pronouncing disbelievers to be disbelievers, including those who claim affiliation with Islam). See: Maher, Shiraz. 2016. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*. New York, Oxford University Press.

³⁶ Margolin, Devorah. Forthcoming. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. King's College London.

³⁷ Several primary source documents dictate the Islamic State's policy of underage marriage. These were excluded in order to protect the personally identifiable information of these minors. More information on the group's policy of underage marriages can be found in its propaganda: Rumiya Issue 5 (6 January 2017) "Sisters: I will outnumber the other nations through you." al-Hayat Media.

³⁸ The Islamic State was able to control local populations by controlling weddings and registering the marriages of both its supporters as well as those that lived under its control. Marriage contracts often asked women about their families, virginity, and required a 'pre-marital examination' and copies of local ID's. Marriages were witnessed by only men, and a special section on the contract asked if a woman consented or remained silent. For examples, see: The ISIS Files 36_001648_74.; The ISIS Files 33_001520.; The ISIS Files 32_001506.; Harmony Program. "Contract of Nikah: Islamic Court, Euphrates Province." *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-207234. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/contract-nikah-islamic-court-euphrates-province/>; Harmony Program. "Marriage Confirmation Document: Islamic Court, Raqqa Province." *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-113628. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/marriage-confirmation-document-islamic-court-raqqa-province/>; Several files were also found as part of Al-Tamimi's collection: Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.)," 2016, including Specimen 13H, 22M, and 22N in *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents-1>; "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again)," 2016, including Specimen 23R, 23S, 23T, 23U, 23V, 23W, 36H, and 36I in *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/09/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents-2>; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV)," 2016, Specimen 42G: Request to agree to a marriage, Rutba area, Anbar. *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2016/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrative-documents-3>.

³⁹ Dabiq Issue 9 (21 May 2015) "Interview with the Amir of the Yarmuk Camp Region." al-Hayat Media.

⁴⁰ "New statement from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham: 'Charter of the City.'" 2014. Jihadology. <https://jihadology.net/2014/06/12/new-statement-from-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-al-sham-charter-of-the-city/>; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, Specimen 11L: City charter, Sirte.

⁴¹ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, Specimen 10: Directions for Prayer on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha: Fallujah.

⁴² This body later became the Fatwa Issuing and Research Commission, and then the Office of Research and Studies, though at all stages the body issued fatwas.

⁴³ For example, fatwas outlined and reiterated rules on women's dress, including the requirement for women to wear an (uncolorful) hijab, a prohibition on the wearing of western-style clothing, and even spoke about the appropriate amount of eye women should expose. Fatwas also discussed diverse issues such as how women could pledge allegiance to the group. For more information on the fatwas issued by the Islamic State see: Harmony Program, "Fatwa 39 – Question: What is the ruling with regards to wearing different colors of the lawful hijab such as (blue or brown)?" *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-203984_FATWA39. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-39-question-ruling-regards-wearing-different-colors-lawful-hijab-blue-brown/>; Harmony Program, "Fatwa 40 – Question: What is the ruling on exposing the eyes of the females to the level that part of her cheek appears as well?" *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-125621_FATWA40. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-40-question-ruling-exposing-eyes-females-level-part-cheek-appears-well/>; Harmony Program, "Fatwa 44 – Question: What are the characteristics of the shari'i hijab? What are the characteristics of immodesty?" *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-125621_FATWA44. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-44-question-characteristics-sharii-hijab-characteristics-immodesty/>; Harmony Program, "Fatwa 56 – Question: What is the ruling on wearing western clothing that incorporates 'images of human beings' and clothing that exposes private parts?" *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-203984_FATWA56. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-56-question-ruling-wearing-western-clothing-incorporates-images-human-beings-clothing-exposes-private-parts/>.

⁴⁴ Ingram, Kiriloi. 2021. "An Analysis of Islamic State's Gendered Propaganda Targeted Towards Women: From Territorial Control to Insurgency." *Terrorism and Political Violence*.; Lahoud, Nelly. 2018. "Empowerment or Subjugation: An Analysis of ISIL's Gendered Messaging." *UN Women*.; Margolin, Devorah. Forthcoming. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. King's College London.

⁴⁵ Margolin, Devorah. Forthcoming. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. King's College London.; See also: Rumiyah Issue 3 (11 November 2016) "Abide in your homes." al-Hayat Media; Rumiyah Issue 9 (4 May 2017) "Sisters: The woman is a shepherd in her husband's home and responsible for her flock." al-Hayat Media.

⁴⁶ "New statement from the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham: 'Charter of the City.'" 2014. *Jihadology*. <https://jihadology.net/2014/06/12/new-statement-from-the-islamic-state-of-iraq-and-al-sham-charter-of-the-city/>; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, Specimen 11L: City charter, Sirte.

⁴⁷ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, Specimen 7Y: Prohibition on gender mixing, Manbij, Aleppo Province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, Specimen 1G: Warning against certain customs on Eid al-Adha: Hasakah Province (October 2014).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.)," 2016, Specimen 12T: Statement on imposing Shari'a regulations in Aden University, Aden Province, Yemen [c. October 2015].

⁴⁸ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents," 2015, Specimen 9Y: Conditions for opening a new hall [for internet], Raqqa [October 2015].; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.)," 2016, Specimen 18V: Further Internet restrictions in Mosul.

⁴⁹ Harmony Program, “Fatwa 42 – Question: What is the ruling on the presence of a nurse in the office of a doctor by themselves without the mahram present in the city and in some villages?” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-125621_FATWA42. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-42-question-ruling-presence-nurse-office-doctor-without-mahram-present-city-villages/> ; see also: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 2L: Fatwa on Nurses with Doctors.

⁵⁰ Harmony Program, “Fatwa 43 – Question: What is the ruling on the presence of male OB-GYNs who treat women when there is a possibility of having female OB-GYNs, although they are few?” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-125621_FATWA43. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-43-question-ruling-presence-male-ob-gyns-treat-women-possibility-female-ob-gyns-although/> .

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⁵² Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 5P: Imposition of Hijab Shari'i on Women, Jarabulus, November 2013.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 6J: Prohibition on shaving beards.

⁵³ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 10M: Early rulings imposed in Mosul (June 2014).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 12V: Imposition of the niqab in Raqqa (January 2014).

⁵⁴ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen M: On Movement of Women and the Garages: Raqqa Province.

⁵⁵ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,’ 2015, Specimen 8F: Regulations for clothes shop owners imposed by Diwan al-Hisba (Albukamal area): September 2015.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,’ 2015, Specimen 10R: Regulations for shops in Raqqa province.; Harmony Program. “Written Pledge, Raqqa Province.” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-110372. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/written-pledge-raqqa-province/>

⁵⁶ Harmony Program. “Fatwa 45 – Question: What is the ruling when a woman travels without her mahram (if she has a mahram and does not go out with him)?” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-125621_FATWA45. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-45-question-ruling-woman-travels-without-mahram-mahram-not-go/> ; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 1Y: Fatwa on Women's Travel: Al-Buhuth wa al-Eftaa' Committee.

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- ⁵⁷ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 14N: Travel slip from 'Euphrates Province' to Damascus.
- ⁵⁸ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen M: On Movement of Women and the Garages: Raqqa Province.
- ⁵⁹ Harmony Program. “Fatwa 37 – Question: What is the ruling on travel to areas controlled by the regime out of necessity?” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-203984_FATWA37 <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/fatwa-37-question-ruling-travel-areas-controlled-regime-necessity/>; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 6G: Conditions for travel outside Mosul.
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- ⁶¹ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 27H: Permission to facilitate someone's family to enter Turkey.
- ⁶² Harmony Program. “Letter from Abu Fahd al-Tunisi.” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2015-311501. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/letter-abu-fahd-al-tunisi/>.
- ⁶³ The ISIS Files 25_001347.
- ⁶⁴ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 13S: Reprimand penalties for various offences, Mosul (2014).
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- ⁶⁶ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi. 2018. “The Internal Structure of the Islamic State's Hisba Apparatus”. *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/21246/the-internal-structure-of-the-islamic-state-hisba>.
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- ⁶⁸ Harmony Program. “Subject: The Reactivation (of the Female Division) in Some Cities of the Islamic State: Department of the Hisba.” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-406558. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/subject-reactivation-female-division-cities-islamic-state-department-hisba/>
- ⁶⁹ Winter, Charlie, and Devorah Margolin. 2017. “The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State.” *CTC Sentinel: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 10 (7): 23–28.
- ⁷⁰ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi. 2021. “Islamic State Fatwas on Women and Jihad,” *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's Blog*, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2021/03/islamic-state-fatwas-on-women-and-jihad>.
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⁷² Margolin, Devorah. 2019. “The Changing Roles of Women in Violent Islamist Groups.” *The Program on Extremism*, 40–49.; Winter, Charlie, and Devorah Margolin. 2017. “The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State.” *CTC Sentinel: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, 10 (7): 23–28.; Winter, Charlie. 2018. “ISIS, Women and Jihad: Breaking With Convention.” Tony Blair Institute.

⁷³ Rumiya Issue 11 (13 July 2017) “Sisters: Our journey to Allah.” al-Hayat Media.

⁷⁴ Moore, Jack. 2017. “ISIS Unleashes Dozens of Female Suicide Bombers in Battle for Mosul.” *Newsweek*, 5 July 2017, <https://www.newsweek.com/isis-female-suicide-bombers-battle-mosul-631846>.

⁷⁵ “The Obligation on Women to Engage in Jihad against the Enemies.” 2017. Naba issue 100. p. 11.

⁷⁶ Inside the Caliphate 7 (7 February 2018) al-Hayat Media.

⁷⁷ For example, “Footage from the ongoing battles between the fighters of the Islamic State and the PKK in the village of Baghuz in the Susa district of Deir Ezzor,” *A'maq News Agency*, 18 March 2019.

⁷⁸ For recent research on this topic, please see: Revkin, Mara and Ariel I.Ahram. 2020. “Perspectives on the rebel social contract: Exit, voice, and loyalty in the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.” *World Development*, 132.

⁷⁹ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 2L: Fatwa on Nurses with Doctors – segregation of the sexes.; Harmony Program. “Administrative Order from al-Tabqa Hospital to Female Section Nurses.” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-111984. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/administrative-order-al-tabqa-hospital-female-section-nurses/>.

⁸⁰ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 1S: Advertisement of Services for Umm al-Mu'mineen A'isha Hospital, Aleppo Province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 3I: Reopening of applications for medical school in Raqqa.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 6N: Opportunities in Midwifery Courses, Health Department.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 11S: Notice to doctors who leave Islamic State territory, Deir az-Zor Province (2015).

⁸¹ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 5I: Ultimatum for Medical Professionals and Academics to return to IS-held areas, Ninawa Province (May 2015).

⁸² Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen L: Shari'a Session for Teachers, Raqqa Province.

⁸³ The ISIS Files 19_001084.; The ISIS Files 37_001656.; The ISIS Files 05_000450.; The ISIS Files 30_001478.

⁸⁴ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 26A: Closing schools for girls that do not have female staff, Dijla province.

⁸⁵ The ISIS Files 30_001478.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 4O: New employment opportunities for teachers.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 5F: Centres for application for positions in education, Mosul.

⁸⁶ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 1V: Call for repentance of teachers in IS-controlled parts of Syria: February 2015.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 3C: More on repentance programs in Manbij, Aleppo Province, Aleppo 2015.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 4U: Call for Repentance of Female Education Workers, Al-Basira, Deir az-Zor Province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 5N: Repentance for Female Employees in Schools, Raqqa.

⁸⁷ For example, women working in internet halls or factories. See: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 9Y: Conditions for opening a new hall [for internet], Raqqa [October 2015].; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 18V: Further Internet restrictions in Mosul.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 23H: List of employees at a tailoring factory, Shirqat area.

⁸⁸ The ISIS Files 35_001606.; The ISIS Files 35_001614.; The ISIS Files 35_001616.; The ISIS Files 35_001621.; The ISIS Files 35_001622.; The ISIS Files 35_001622.; The ISIS Files 35_001615.; The ISIS Files 35_001629.

⁸⁹ In one rental contract, the Islamic State noted, “A rental agreement cannot be made with a wife if the husband is still alive.” The ISIS Files 36_001651_07. Please also see: The ISIS Files 35_001627.; The ISIS Files 10_000760.

⁹⁰ For more on this, see: Margolin, Devorah, Mathilde Becker Aarseth, Hans Christensen, Tati Fontana, and Mark Maffett. 2021. “You Reap What You Sow: The Importance of Agriculture to the Islamic State’s Governance Strategy.” The ISIS Files.; For examples see: The ISIS Files 23_001251.; The ISIS Files 06_000511.; The ISIS Files 06_000489.; The ISIS Files 06_000479.; The ISIS Files 05_000447.

⁹¹ The ISIS Files 34_001556.; see also: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 14U, 15M, 19N, 19S, 21S, 21X, 21Y, 22A, 22B, and 22D.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 36L, 33P, 33K, 33L, and 36L.

⁹² The ISIS Files 36_001651_02.; The ISIS Files 37_001655.

⁹³ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 4R: Gas Distributions in Deir az-Zor Province.

⁹⁴ The ISIS Files 16_001043.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),” 2016, Specimen 40Q: Records of slain personnel in Kobani area, al-Qadisiya Battalion.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),” 2016, Specimen 42K: List of slain fighters, Wilayat al-Baraka.

⁹⁵ The ISIS Files 30_001483.

⁹⁶ Harmony Program. “Untitled [Memorandum from the Office of the Wali, Raqqa Province].” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-115525. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/untitled-memorandum-office-wali-raqqa-province/>.

⁹⁷ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 13I: Opening of office for the share of the orphans in spoils and booty, Raqqa.

⁹⁸ For a more in-depth discussion into the Islamic State’s education system, please read: Zeiger, Sara, Farangiz Atamuradova, Lilah Elsayed, and Muna Chung. 2021. “Planting the Seeds of the Poisonous Tree: Establishing a System of Meaning Through ISIS Education.” *The ISIS Files*. <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/concern/reports/j3860694x?locale=en>.

⁹⁹ The ISIS Files 35_001584.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen H: Announcement of Beginning of School Term with List of Schools (Raqqa Province).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 3G: Registration Form at Shari’a Institute for Girls in al-Bab, Aleppo Province [c. May 2014].; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 8V: Opening of schools for registration for the new school year, Raqqa.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 28V: Certificate to female student for passing Shari’i session, A’isha institute, Saluk, Raqqa province.

¹⁰⁰ The ISIS Files 19_001087.; The ISIS Files 19_001088.; The ISIS Files 27_001373.; The ISIS Files 37_001654. See also, Zeiger, Sara, Farangiz Atamuradova, Lilah Elsayed, and Muna Chung. 2021. “Planting the Seeds of the Poisonous Tree: Establishing a System of Meaning Through ISIS Education.” *The ISIS Files*. <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/concern/reports/j3860694x?locale=en>.

¹⁰¹ The ISIS Files 30_001480.; The ISIS Files 30_001482.; The ISIS Files 31_001487.; The ISIS Files 35_001586.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 10E: Prices for printing Islamic State 1st grade secondary school textbooks (Mosul area).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 30T: Distribution of balls for schools, Ninawa centre (school).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 39S: Request for books from Diwan al-Ta’aleem, Ninawa.

¹⁰² Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 3F: Educational Regulations Notification Distributed in Aleppo Province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 15A: Education regulations, Salah al-Din province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 27K: Report on a student for local education administration.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 27L: Report on a student for local education administration.

¹⁰³ The ISIS Files 35_001583.

¹⁰⁴ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,’ 2015, Specimen 9G: Admission statistics for Mosul University: 2015-2016.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,’ 2015, Specimen 12C: Announcement for the colleges of Sirte University.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 8X: Structure of Islamic State-controlled Mosul University.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 9M: Timetable of classes, Mosul Medical College.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “The Archivist: Stories of the Mujahideen: Unseen Islamic State Biographies of Outstanding Members,” 2016, *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi’s Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/19132/the-archivist-stories-of-the-mujahideen-unseen>.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Islamic State Internal Files on Dr. Imaan Mustafa al-Bagha,” 2020, *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi’s Blog*, <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2020/05/islamic-state-internal-files-on-dr-imaan-mustafa>.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 6Z: Teaching and Memorization of Qur’an, Deir az-Zor Province (Dept of Dawa).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 7Q: Session in ‘Ilm, Manbij, Aleppo Province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 10H: Prohibition on music, song and displaying photos on shops (Raqqa: January 2014).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Women’s Dawa in the Islamic State: Internal Files,” 2020, *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi’s Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2020/04/women-dawa-in-the-islamic-state-internal-files>

¹⁰⁸ The ISIS Files 01_000052.; The ISIS Files 01_000056.; The ISIS Files 01_000067.; The ISIS Files 01_000076.; The ISIS Files 01_000081.; The ISIS Files 01_000126.; The ISIS Files 01_000128.; The ISIS Files 01_000129.; 01_000154.; The ISIS Files 01_000157.; The ISIS Files 01_000182.; The ISIS Files 01_000186.; The ISIS Files 02_000260.; The ISIS Files 02_000277.; The ISIS Files 25_001343.

¹⁰⁹ The ISIS Files 02_000263. Also see: The ISIS Files 02_000297.

¹¹⁰ The ISIS Files 01_000051.; The ISIS Files 01_000074.; The ISIS Files 01_000155.; The ISIS Files 01_000156.

¹¹¹ Braddock, Kurt. 2020. *Weaponized Words: The Strategic Role of Persuasion in Violent Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*. Cambridge University Press.

¹¹² For example, see: Dabiq Issue 4 (11 October 2014) ‘The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour.’ al-Hayat Media.; Dabiq Issue 9 (21 May 2015) ‘From our sisters: Slave-girls or prostitutes by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah.’ al-Hayat Media.; Dabiq Issue 10 (13 July 2015) ‘From the Pages of History: The Expeditions the Prophet Dispatched in Ramadān.’ al-Hayat Media.; Rumiya Issue 5 (6 January 2017) ‘Collateral Carnage.’ al-Hayat Media.

¹¹³ A *dhimmi* pact refers to an agreement between Muslim rulers and non-Muslim inhabitants who live in an Islamic State with legal protections. In exchange for loyalty to the state, these protected groups were required to pay a jizyah tax. Historically this referred to ‘Religions of the Book,’ or Abrahamic religions, such as Christianity and Judaism.

¹¹⁴ Dabiq Issue 4 (11 October 2014) “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour.” al-Hayat Media.

¹¹⁵ Dabiq Issue 10 (13 July 2015) “The Allies of A-Qa’idah in Sham Part III.” al-Hayat Media.

¹¹⁶ For example, one document found in al-Tamimi’s collection shows a Wilayat al-Raqqa judge certifying a judgment of execution against an ‘apostate’ woman. See: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),’ 2016, Specimen 42X: Certifying judgement of execution for apostasy, Raqqa.

¹¹⁷ See for example: The ISIS Files 07_000531; The ISIS Files 07_000533; The ISIS Files 07_000535; The ISIS Files 07_000538; The ISIS Files 07_000559; The ISIS Files 07_000572; The ISIS Files 07_000586.

¹¹⁸ The ISIS Files 07_000537; The ISIS Files 07_000542; The ISIS Files 07_000576; The ISIS Files 07_000600.

¹¹⁹ The ISIS Files 07_000553; The ISIS Files 07_000569; The ISIS Files 07_000572; The ISIS Files 07_000573; The ISIS Files 07_000579.

¹²⁰ The ISIS Files 35_001641.

¹²¹ The ISIS Files 07_000531; The ISIS Files 07_000535; The ISIS Files 35_001639; The ISIS Files 35_001640; The ISIS Files 35_001641; The ISIS Files 35_001642.

¹²² The ISIS Files 07_000543; The ISIS Files 07_000575; The ISIS Files 07_000577; The ISIS Files 07_000582

¹²³ See for example: The ISIS Files 07_000544; The ISIS Files 07_000545; The ISIS Files 07_000547; The ISIS Files 07_000548; The ISIS Files 07_000549; The ISIS Files 07_000552; The ISIS Files 07_000555; The ISIS Files 07_000565.

¹²⁴ Margolin, Devorah, Mathilde Becker Aarseth, Hans Christensen, Tati Fontana, and Mark Maffett. 2021. “You Reap What You Sow: The Importance of Agriculture to the Islamic State’s Governance Strategy.” The ISIS Files.

¹²⁵ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. ‘Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),’ 2016, Specimen 42X: Certifying judgement of execution for apostasy, Raqqa.

¹²⁶ The obligation and duty of Sunni Muslim women to support the group is clearly outlined in several publications, including in a Dabiq article titled “From our sisters: They Are Not Lawful Spouses for One Another By Umm Sumayyah al-Muhājirah.”

¹²⁷ The ISIS Files 34_001556; The ISIS Files 37_001655.

¹²⁸ Revkin, Mara and Elisabeth Jean Wood. 2020. “The Islamic State’s Pattern of Sexual Violence: Ideology and Institutions, Policies and Practices.” *Journal of Global Security Studies*.

¹²⁹ For example, see: Dabiq Issue 4 (11 October 2014) ‘The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour.’ al-Hayat Media.; Dabiq Issue 9 (21 May 2015) ‘From our sisters: Slave-girls or prostitutes by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah.’ al-Hayat Media.; Dabiq Issue 10 (13 July 2015) ‘From the Pages of History: The Expeditions the Prophet Dispatched in Ramadān.’ al-Hayat Media.; Rumiyah Issue 5 (6 January 2017) ‘Collateral Carnage.’ al-Hayat Media.

¹³⁰ Dabiq Issue 9 (21 May 2015) “From our sisters: Slave-girls or prostitutes by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah.” al-Hayat Media.

¹³¹ For example, see: Dabiq Issue 4 (11 October 2014) “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour.” al-Hayat Media.; Dabiq Issue 9 (21 May 2015) “From our sisters: Slave-girls or prostitutes by Umm Sumayyah al-Muhajirah.” al-Hayat Media.

¹³² Dabiq Issue 4 (11 October 2014) “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour.” al-Hayat Media.

¹³³ Harmony Program. “Guidelines on the Possessions of One’s Right Hand: Delegated Committee.” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-111958. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/guidelines-possessions-ones-right-hand-delegated-committee/>

¹³⁴ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 22R: Fatwa on rules regarding intercourse with sex slaves.

¹³⁵ See also: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2021, Question and answer pamphlet on slavery and slave-women. *Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi’s Blog*, <https://www.aymennjawad.org/2021/03/islamic-state-question-and-answer-pamphlet-on>.

¹³⁶ Harmony Program. “Statement for Distribution No. 399: Office of the Wali, Ninawa Province.” *Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point*. Reference Number: NMEC-2017-113845. <https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/statement-distribution-no-399-office-wali-ninawa-province/>.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents,” 2015, Specimen 5E: General notification, Aleppo Province, Jumada al-Awal 1436 AH (February/March 2015).

¹³⁷ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 13Y: Notice on buying sex slaves, Homs province.

¹³⁸ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 25J: Summary of various general administrative decisions from the Delegated Committee in late 1436 AH (c. mid-August to October 2015 CE).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 20T: Note from the wali of Homs on housing, slaves and excavation.

¹³⁹ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 22G: Transaction receipt, Sirte (3).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),” 2016, Specimen 44B: Transactions for sabaya, Wilayat al-Jazeera.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 36L: Proof of ownership of a sex slave, Mosul.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),” 2016, Specimen 44C: Regulations on sale of child sabaya with prices, Wilayat al-Jazeera.

¹⁴¹ The ISIS Files 36_001648_36.

¹⁴² Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 33K: Monthly expenses for an Islamic State squadron in Aleppo province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (continued...again),” 2016, Specimen 33L: Monthly expenses for an Islamic State battalion, Aleppo province.

¹⁴³ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 15M: Personnel form, Homs province.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 19N: Personnel list, Homs.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.- IV),” 2016, Specimen 40Q: Records of slain personnel in Kobani area, al-Qadisiya Battalion.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 19S: Personnel form from the Qaryatayn area.

¹⁴⁶ Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 21S: Personnel list, Sirte.; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 21X: Personal details form for muhajireen, Libya (form).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 21Y: Personal details form for muhajireen, Libya (2).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 22A: Personal details form for muhajireen, Libya (3).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 22B: Personal details form for muhajireen, Libya (4).; Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. “Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (cont.),” 2016, Specimen 22D: Personal details form for muhajireen, Libya (5).