

The Islamic Caliphate

By Fred Farrokh



June 29, 2014 marked a significant day in Islamic history – and indeed in human history. On that day, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of ISIS announced something that even Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda were unable to achieve. Al-Baghdadi announced that the Islamic Caliphate had been re-established with himself as its head, the Caliph. Indeed, the Caliphate had been abandoned since the Ottoman Empire collapsed nearly a century ago.

Frequently asked questions include: What is ISIS? Why do some call it ISIL? Is ISIS really Islamic? It is impossible to answer these questions without understanding the institution of the Caliphate within the historical context of Islam.

It is my hope that the summarizations required by the brevity of this article will aid praying Christians in their understanding, discernment and intercession. For those interested in a deeper study of these topics, I include a few resources at the end of this article.¹

The Meaning of Caliph and Caliphate. The term “Caliph” is an Anglicized version of the Arabic word *khali-fah* (kha-LEE-fuh). The Caliph is the Islamic head of state. The term “Caliphate” comes from the Arabic *khilaafah*, (khee-LA-fuh). The Caliphate is the institution signifying the rule of the Caliph over all Muslims.

The term Caliph is usually translated “successor,” or “steward.” In Islam, Adam, as the first human being, is known as a *khalifah* since God appointed him as a steward over earth. By the time of his death, Muhammad had expanded his military, political, and religious dominance to the entire Arabian Peninsula. Though Muhammad would not see it with his own eyes, his desire was that Islam would rule the world. Thus, a military/political successor was needed to further advance the spread of Islam. The political/military successor to Muhammad would be known as the Caliph. The Caliph would not have a role as prophet, since prophecy was considered sealed with the death of Muhammad.

continued on page 4

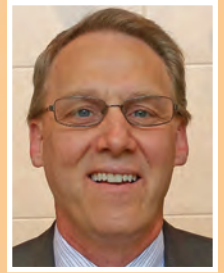


Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Brink

International Director
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples




I recently viewed a website article showing refugees armed with iron poles pushing their way through a barbed-wire fence as security personnel in riot gear tried to stop them. A second story spoke of refugees sleeping in public squares and parks. They had no money for lodging and were begging for food. The refugee crisis that is enveloping Europe is being mirrored in several other places around the world. Desperate people are fleeing from war, political oppression, economic distress, and religious persecution. The human devastation is on the news every day. The majority of those fleeing are young men and children who are vulnerable to exploitation and radicalization.

Representatives from Global Initiative have just returned from the front lines of this refugee crisis. They've shared stories of how emotionally broken the refugees are and how open they are to the message of hope found only in the gospel of Christ. The overwhelming majority of refugees are coming from Muslim countries where they

have limited access to hearing the gospel, or receiving a copy of the Bible. The church now has an open door to reach Muslim refugees with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must enter the open door in a timely manner or the opportunity will be lost. Will you pray for the refugee situation in Europe and specifically for the nations of Greece and Germany? Greece is the main entry point for refugees and Germany has received the highest number of refugees.

This issue of *Intercede* deals with the religious ideology that is driving radical Islamic movements such as ISIS; an ideology that is behind much of the upheaval in the Muslim world. It is important to understand the ideology and spiritual darkness behind current events such as the spread of radical Islam, the upheaval in Syria and Iraq, and the resulting refugee crisis. Otherwise, we tend to relegate these events to just political and regional problems.

I want to challenge you to watch world events through the discerning eye of the Holy Spirit, especially what is happening in the Middle East. Why? So that we may be able to understand the spiritual battle that is going on for the souls of humanity. This will lead us to respond with pinpoint intercession and discernment of how we might be involved in reaching the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our vision statement at Global Initiative is "Every Muslim must hear the truth about Jesus Christ." This is what thrusts us forward in our quest to equip the church to reach Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul admonishes to "be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of (redeeming) your time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16 NASB).

Radical Islam has an agenda for world domination! But the good news is that there are many Muslims who are now open to receive the message of Christ. Our challenge is to engage them with love and boldness. Jesus said, "I will build my kingdom and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). It is upon this confession of Christ that we boldly proclaim His salvation and intercede to bind the forces of darkness. Please stand with us in intercession and financial support as we partner together to take the message of salvation to the Muslim world. 





Muslim World News

Pastor Arrested Without Charges

South Sudan

Sudanese authorities detained another church leader in the Khartoum area without charges. The whereabouts of pastor Philemon Hassan of Baptist Church Hai El Esbah-Khartoum North were unknown after personnel from Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) arrested him.

The pastor's wife urged Christians to pray for her husband as she does not know why he was detained. "Pray for him and our family," she said.

Several sources told *Morning Star News* that, prior to arresting the pastor, NISS officials had raided his home, scattered his belongings about the house and confiscated his laptop and documents. — *Morning Star News*

Hundreds Die in Attacks

Nigeria

On the night of Feb 21, at least 500 people were killed in the mainly Christian area of Agatu in the central Benue state of Nigeria. The figure could rise higher – due to continuing violence and the fact that locals and relief workers cannot get full access to the area due to security concerns.

Eleven days after bands of Muslim Fulani nomads launched systematic attacks, they still occupied at least six villages they'd seized, confirm relief and media workers – the first who managed to reach the area. Local media report that spokespeople for the herdsmen's association told the police chief their action was provoked by the Agatu people killing "10,000" cows. — *World Watch Monitor*

Apostate Beaten, Ostracized

Uganda

After Mohammed Nsera graduated from high school last year, his Muslim family built a small house for him on their homestead in eastern Uganda. They burned it down this year after he put his faith in Christ.

It took a week for his father, 47-year-old Abdu Nsera, to hear his son had become a Christian. The young man's father and uncle went to the house they had built for him about 200 yards from the family home to confirm the allegation that he had left Islam. "I could not deny Christ when my father asked me whether I had joined Christianity," Nsera told *Morning Star News*. "With a lot of joy I answered him affirmatively, with a yes. My uncle, who had a walking stick, hit me on my back, and my father tried to get hold of my shirt, but I managed to escape with a tattered shirt and a bleeding back." — *Morning Star News*

Security Increased for Asia Bibi

Pakistan

Fears are growing over the security of the first Christian woman in Pakistan sentenced to death for "blasphemy" following the execution of Mumtaz Qadri, who assassinated her biggest advocate. Qadri was executed by hanging on Feb. 29 for the Jan. 4, 2011 assassination of Punjab Gov. Salman Taseer, who had criticized Pakistan's blasphemy laws and advocated for the release of Asia Bibi. She has been on death row since she was convicted in 2010 of blaspheming during an argument with a Muslim woman over a bowl of water. — *Morning Star*



Who Succeeds Muhammad? Muhammad died somewhat suddenly in Medina (now in Saudi Arabia) in A.D. 632, without an agreed-upon plan of succession. His followers immediately disputed who would lead the Muslim community. The majority, led by Abu Bakr, favored choosing a new leader by consensus. The minority, led by Ali, felt that only a blood relative should succeed Muhammad.

The majority view prevailed (referring to themselves as “Sunnis” – *people of the right way*) - and Abu Bakr became the first Caliph. The minority “party of Ali” (Arabic: *Shi’ites*) rejected the promotion of Abu Bakr. The Shi’ites ultimately moved their headquarters to modern-day Iraq. The Sunnis and Shi’ites fought each other frequently in the first Islamic century. Thus, the Sunni-Shi’ite split produced parallel lines of succession – and to this day ‘the succession controversy’ remains. The ‘succession controversy’ explains much of the fighting in the Middle East today (though non-militant Sunnis and Shi’ites have co-existed peaceably).²

The First Caliph as “The Commander of the Faithful”. The early Caliphs were all companions of

Muhammad. Each of them took on the military title, “The Commander of the Faithful.” The second Caliph, Umar, spearheaded the conquest of the Holy Land, a large swath of North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. Subsequent Caliphs continued in this military role.

Based on their Quranic worldview, early Caliphs saw the world divided into the “House of Islam” (*Dar al-Islam*) and the “House of War” (*Dar al-Harb*). Their desire was to bring the entire world under Islamic governance, under the laws of *shariah* which were based on the teachings of Muhammad.

Islamic History and the Abolition of the Caliphate. In Islamic history, Caliphates typically operated as dynasties. The most famous and enduring Caliphates were: the Umayyad Caliphate based in Damascus, Syria (A.D. 661-750); the Abbasid Caliphate based in Baghdad, Iraq (750-1258) and the Ottoman Empire, the seat of the Caliph based in Istanbul, Turkey (1362-1924). Most of the Caliphs passed rulership from father to son. Many were simply corrupt politicians – a reality that has raised the ire of pious Muslims throughout the centuries. Though all Caliphs were theoretically required to implement *shariah*

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from Page 1

(Islamic/Quranic law), some were more tolerant toward Christians and Jews than is ISIS.

During the latter part of the Ottoman Dynasty, the Muslim world fell largely under European colonial rule. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, elected as the first president of the newly-formed Turkish Republic in 1923, formally abolished the Caliphate in 1924. The abolition of the Caliphate carried a significant symbolic meaning – since without it, there was no one political banner under which Muslims could rally. Muhammad’s dream of a worldwide “House of Islam” – a house without borders – seemed dead for the time being. Militant Muslims would later bemoan the abolition of the Caliphate as an unmitigated tragedy and humiliation for Muslims.

Caliphate Versus Nation-State. The world at the dawn of this millennium is divided up into approximately 200 countries, or nation-states. Modern nation-states, including Muslim countries, are political units with geographical borders. Leaders of nation-states, regardless of their religious affiliation, seek to maintain their political power and geographical territory.

The Islamic Caliphate denies the legitimacy of all modern nation-states, along with their respective borders. According to the Islamic paradigm, all peoples should come under the government of Allah, as directed by the Caliph, who is the successor to Muhammad, the example for all mankind. The infidels who reject God, his government and his prophet, constitute the *House of War*, the bastions of unbelief. While some Islamic political movements have sought to bring change from within established governments, the Jihadist/Caliphate movement seeks to abolish these governments, and all borders, bringing the conquered territories and peoples under God’s government – the Caliphate. Therefore, “ISIS” prefers not to describe itself as the Islamic State *in Iraq and Syria*, but simply as “IS” – the Islamic State.

Why the Caliphate is a Bigger Potential Threat Than Any Individual Muslim Country. Though ISIS may have fewer soldiers than even its neighbor Turkey, it is a bigger threat than any individual Muslim country for several reasons. First, the ISIS Caliphate seeks the abolition of all other governments, while other Muslim countries do not. Second, most Muslim governments and their leaders merely seek *regional* domination, while ISIS

seeks *world* domination. Third, while most Muslim governments operate according to political pragmatism, ISIS operates more according a deceptive spiritual ideology, driven by a warped, end-times eschatology.

Whereas Muslim nation-state leaders, such as the Saudi kings, have little basis upon which to “call” Muslims to come join their cause as brothers in arms, the story with ISIS is different. ISIS, in lifting the banner of the Caliphate, has declared itself to be the authority for all Muslims. Thus, ISIS invites all Muslims worldwide to join it as brothers (and sisters) in arms. Muslims may do this by coming to ISIS controlled-areas in Iraq and Syria through emigration (known as *Hijra*). The alternative for Caliphate-sympathetic jihadists is to fight against infidels on the home turf of the infidels themselves. In so doing, they hope to weaken these nations, with the ultimate goal that they will be overthrown and incorporated into the Caliphate. For example, the San Bernardino terrorist, Syed Farooq, conspiring with his wife Tashfeen Malik, left behind a successful job and newborn baby for the sake of Jihad. This is the call of the Caliph to rally behind the banner of the Prophet Muhammad. The call is to bring about Islamic world domination. This call is powerful and deceptive and should not be underestimated.

Given the vast potential threat ISIS poses to world peace, it is foolhardy of Western powers to not immediately crush this Caliphate while it is young and weak. Though ISIS does not have a large standing army, it is likely they would use nuclear weapons if they could obtain them. They might either detonate them or threaten to do so. By threatening to use weapons of mass destruction, the ISIS Caliphate could terrorize nation-states to relinquish their sovereignty to the Caliphate. In the meantime, ISIS continues to set up its infrastructure in the areas it has conquered.

Muslims Are Fleeing the Caliphate. Those following the news have witnessed that non-Muslims living under ISIS’ rule have suffered loss of religious freedoms, beheadings, crucifixions, subjection to sex slavery, and genocide. Yet, even Muslims have sought to flee the Caliphate once they have seen ISIS’ barbarism up close. This includes some disillusioned Jihad fighters, as well as Muslims in Syria who took a wait-and-see approach to ISIS’ rule.³ Since ISIS controls a relatively small area –

continued on page 6


The Islamic Caliphate

continued from page 5

parts of two countries – many refugees have escaped. If ISIS were to expand its rule, it might become harder for refugees to find routes of escape. The blame for the current Middle Eastern refugee crisis must be placed squarely upon ISIS, due to the terror it has instilled upon helpless civilians. Many Muslims worldwide would prefer *not* to live under the Caliphate. Yet they will have to live under the Caliphate – and serve it if they are conquered by it – as their forefathers were centuries ago.

The Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. In stark comparison to Muhammad, Jesus needed no military or political successor upon His ascension to heaven. Jesus merely commanded His disciples to go into all the world preaching the Gospel – armed only with love, filled with the Holy Spirit, and dependent on the protection of God. Instead of ISIS’ command to kill others, Church history recounts all of Jesus’ original disciples, except for John (and Judas) were martyred, laying down their lives so others could receive the message of salvation.

Muhammad sought to set up a temporal, earthly kingdom, based on force and manipulation. Jesus sought to set up an eternal, heavenly kingdom, with its primary initial location in the hearts of His followers. Jesus clearly told His disciples, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world then my servants would be fighting...but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm” (John 18:36, NASB). Indeed, Jesus’ kingdom is an eternal and borderless kingdom, of which the “government will rest on His shoulders” (Isa. 9:6).

A Time for Harvest. Many Muslims who have suffered under the iron grip of ISIS are now open to the gospel. While ISIS uses fear and force to enslave millions, Jesus came to set people free. It is our golden opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with Muslims. There is no more promising time to reach out to Muslims than now. And for all Christians who intercede, now is the strategic hour to pray for the salvation of all caught in the spiritual deception behind the ISIS Caliphate. 

Prayer Profile:
Tausug, Moro Joloano, Philippines



The Tausug are the most dominant of all South Philippine Muslim groups. Most reside on the island of Jolo. 98% of the Tausug are Sunni Muslims, with a 2% Christian minority.

1. Pray that God will protect and use the Tausug believers as bold witnesses to their own people.
2. Ask God to raise up more prayer teams to intercede for the Tausug.

*For more information, see joshuaproject.net

¹ See for example: “ISIS and Islam,” al-Hayat TV, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1VktFanXj0>; *God’s Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, by Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003; *The Arabs in History*, by Bernard Lewis, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate>, with associated links.

² The Shi’ites, having lost the battle for the Caliphate, set up a rival system to the Sunni Caliphs. Shi’ites call this the rule of the Imams—*Imamate*—among Ali and his descendants. (Ali was also a first cousin and son-in-law to Muhammad). Therefore, the Shi’ite leaders of today’s Islamic Republic of Iran see themselves as the legitimate leaders of the Muslim world. Though they do not describe themselves as Caliphs, they see their movement as a *de facto* Caliphate. Instead, they call their governance the “Guardianship of the Righteous Clerics.”

³ See, for example, “Muslims are Fleeing in Drove: ISIS Suddenly Has a Caliphate Problem,” <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-propaganda-videos-on-europe-refugees-2015-9>, and “ISIS Women and Enforcers in Syria Recount Collaboration, Anguish and Escape,” <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/world/middleeast/isis-wives-and-enforcers-in-syria-recount-collaboration-anguish-and-escape.html>.



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Friday, May 6, 2016. Please pray for

*...more Arabic speakers to assist in ministry to refugees in Greece.
...Institute of Islamic Studies classes at an Asian Seminary during May 9-13.
...protection for 'Abed', an Afghan follower of Jesus, who oversees humanitarian ministries in majority-Muslim areas of India.*

Friday, May 13, 2016. Please pray for

*...the Xinjiang province of China, home to 15 million Muslim Uyghurs.
...Sudan, where leaving Islam is punishable by death. 98% of Sudan's population of 36 million are Muslims.
...refugees continuing to arrive in Europe. Most are dealing with the after-effects of war, including the loss of family and home.*

Friday, May 20, 2016. Please pray for

*...Institute of Islamic Studies classes in El Salvador during May 26-28.
... 'Yunis' in Tunisia, who is under pressure to recant his decision to follow Christ. His wife divorced him and he lost his job.
...Christian women and girls in some areas of Pakistan, who are vulnerable to rape and forced marriage to 'fundamentalist' Muslims.*

Friday, May 27, 2016. Please pray for

*...Institute of Islamic Studies classes in El Salvador during June 2-4.
...expatriates in Arabian Gulf countries, who seek to discreetly share their faith.
...for Muslim women and children who seek encouragement at the 'Peace Center' in Iraqi Kurdistan.*

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. – 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



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Friday, June 3, 2016. Please pray for

*...Muslims during the fasting month of Ramadan, beginning on June 6.
...equipping classes being conducted by Global Initiative in Cuba during June 6-10.
...Institute of Islamic Studies classes at a seminary in Brussels during June 6-17.*

Friday, June 10, 2016. Please pray for

*...protection for national church planters in Muslim-majority areas of Bengal, India.
...new followers of Jesus from Muslim backgrounds in Mindanao, Philippines.
...small groups of Muslim Kazakh-background believers in Jesus in Olgii, Mongolia. Nearly all have been arrested by police at one time or another.*

Friday, June 17, 2016. Please pray for

*...Institute of Islamic Studies classes in Venezuela during June 20-24 and June 27 - July 1.
...for Muslims in the midst of their month of Ramadan fasting, which began on June 6 and lasts until July 5.
...children of Syria, especially Aleppo, traumatized by years of suffering and war.*

Friday, June 24, 2016. Please pray for

*...the few Libyan converts from Islam. 97% of Libya's population of 6.4 million are Muslims.
...followers of Jesus in Mauritania, Africa, where apostasy is constitutionally forbidden. 99.9% of Mauritania's population of 4.1 million are Muslims.
...the spiritual eyes of ISIS and other Islamic militia group members to be opened to the truth of Jesus Christ.*

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