

# *The K.F. Stone Weekly*

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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## Criminal Intent?

[Audio Link to "Criminal Intent?"](#)

Over the past ten days or so, I've been spending a lot of time preparing for a major lecture on ISIS - the "Islamic State." This lecture, which is part of the Foreign Policy Association's "Great Decisions 2016" series, is a comprehensive, exhaustive investigation encompassing the group's earliest days; Abu Musab al-



Zarqawi, his mentor Abu Muhammad al-Maqqdisi, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; the on-again, off-again relationship with al-Qaeda and their eventual break; Abu Mohammed al-Jawani and the al-Nusra Front in Syria; Isis' unique top-down structure, the stupefying level of its very public violence, its monomaniacal

apocalypticism, and its obsessive adherence to the Salafist concept *al-wala' wal-bara* - "Love and hate for Allah's sake." (*Al-wala' wal-bara*, which can also be understood to mean "association and disassociation," is the hard-core belief that one should only associate with "true believers," and disassociate - i.e. conquer, subjugate, enslave, murder - everyone else. For ISIS, the latter category includes virtually every Shi'a on the planet, and most of their Sunni coreligionists as well. This is the tenet - although never referred to by name - which most if not all - Islamophobes claim is strictly adhered to by virtually every Muslim on the planet. Although the concept definitely does exist, in truth, it shapes the lives and actions of a tiny *minority* of Muslims.)

All the research, reading and contemplation has led to a couple of inescapable conclusions: first, that there is simply no silver bullet to the overwhelming problem that ISIS presents; second, that the group did not arise overnight and will not - despite what those currently running for president of the United States may proclaim - that it will not be defeated overnight. Airstrikes, no-fly zones and support for various groups on the ground are, at best, a holding strategy, designed to prevent ISIS from further growth; and even this modest goal may be too much for the current policy. For the truth of the matter is that the threat posed by Islamic terrorists is pretty much unprecedented in world history; the strategies and goals of groups such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, al-Nusra, Boko Haram and others are next to impossible to defeat if we persist in using muscular rhetoric and twentieth century vision.

In the midst of all this study and preparation, I received a most troubling email -- the kind which says IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU SHARE WHAT FOLLOWS WITH EVERYONE IN YOUR ADDRESS BOOK. The email - which I have now received more than a dozen times - begins with the question (in bright bolded red:

**How many new Churches and Synagogues have you seen being built lately?**

and then proceeds to list the name, address and phone number of 144 mosques and Muslim community centers here in Florida. While looking over the compendious list, I wondered aloud *What in the hell is the purpose of this information? To what end has it been assembled?* If it was compiled and sent out by a group like the Council on American-Islamic Relations ([CAIR](#)) one could easily understand it being a way of connecting fellow Muslims with one another, just as one might understand a listing of every synagogue and Jewish community center put together by the [Jewish Federations of North America](#). Then again, one could easily understand the purpose of an email listing the addresses and phone numbers of every golf course, Starbucks or Babies Are Us in a particular city, county or state. It's a great way to increase traffic and sales. But it is highly likely that the intent behind listing all the mosques and Islamic centers is not so "user friendly." The list of all the mosques and Islamic centers, which was originally compiled by [Salatomic](#), an organization which connects Muslims with places to pray, shop and find *halal* products - is being pushed out by such devoutly,



rabidly anti-Muslim groups as the [Clarion Project](#), [Islamic Threat.com](#), or [Bare Naked Islam](#) to name but three.

Toward what end, one asks in all sincerity, are they providing this information to non-Muslims? What is the intent? For what purpose do the various senders hope the data will be employed? In the hope that non-Muslims will want to visit these mosques and Islamic centers in order to make new friends? Or to send flowers and gift baskets for [Eid al-Fitr](#)? Although either of these are possible, somehow one has the sense that the intent in sending out the addresses and phone numbers of all these Muslim houses of worship and places of communal gathering is likely quite different . . . and quite disturbing. In questioning one of the people who sent me this email, I was told *There is no evil or criminal intent in sending everyone this list; we merely want to provide folks with useful information. What they chose to do with it is their business. I mean, knowledge is power. . .*

Imagine that the email contains an exhaustive database not of mosques and Islamic centers but rather of, say synagogues and Planned Parenthood locations. Wouldn't one wonder to what end this information was being disseminated? Especially if the list was being emailed to white supremacists or militant pro-birth advocates? Wouldn't one get the idea that perhaps the purpose behind sending out the information was for it to be used - and likely in a nefarious, illegal manner?

The reality of Isis, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and the rest of the Islamic terrorist world is indeed both mind-numbing and frightful. But to suggest, as an increasing number are, that our response should include identifying, tagging and marginalizing every single practicing Muslim in America is beyond heinous; it is both criminal and unconstitutional . . . not to mention a great recruiting tool for the very forces we seek to ultimately destroy. For if ISIS - which, quite frankly scares the living daylights out of a vast majority of the world's Muslims - is ever to be extirpated, it will take a force which includes both Sunnis and Shi'as, Christians and Kurds, cyber wonks and diplomats. Don't get me wrong: I fully understand just how dangerous and driven the men and women of ISIS and other terrorist groups are; I do comprehend how terribly difficult it is to come up with a strategy for eliminating them. But I also know that treating every Muslim as a potential terrorist recruit is both wrong-headed and dangerous.

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