

ISIS releases video of barbaric execution of Jordanian pilot

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The execution by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) of captive Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh, depicted in a video published by the terrorist outfit and widely circulated on social media on Tuesday, is a barbaric and heinous act. The grisly 22-minute video, which shows al-Kasasbeh doused in gasoline kneeling in a cage then set alight, has provoked revulsion among ordinary people around the world.

ISIS captured al-Kasasbeh on December 24 when his plane crashed over northern Syria during a bombing sortie as part of the US air war. In exchange for his release, ISIS had demanded the release of Sajida al-Rishawi, an Iraqi woman imprisoned for her role in a 2005 bombing attack in the Jordanian capital Amman. Jordan's government signalled its willingness to make the trade, but demanded proof of life.

In response to the killing of al-Kasasbeh, the despotic Jordanian regime of King Abdullah II announced today that it had carried out its own barbarities—hanging al-Rishawi and one other prisoner at dawn. Other executions could follow. Armed forces spokesman Mamdouh al-Ameri declared that “the revenge will be as big as the calamity that has hit Jordan.”

The execution of the Jordanian pilot has again exposed the reactionary character of terrorism. The methods employed by ISIS express the fact that it does not represent the strivings of the oppressed masses of the Middle East for a way to end imperialist domination. Rather it represents sections of the Arab elite who are seeking a more favourable accommodation with the major powers.

As with previous ISIS killings, including the beheadings of American journalist James Foley and Japanese journalist Kenji Goto, the murder of al-Kasasbeh directly plays into the hands of imperialism. The US and its allies are already using the atrocity to

justify the further expansion of their war in Iraq and Syria.

US President Obama told a press conference on Tuesday that the execution, if verified, would “redouble the vigilance and determination on the part of our global coalition to make sure that they [ISIS] are degraded and ultimately defeated.”

In reality, ISIS is the direct product of the illegal US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the subsequent regime-change operation in Syria. ISIS and its forerunner, Al Qaeda in Iraq, which did not exist in Iraq prior to the 2003 occupation, gained support among the country's Sunni minority due to the savage repression unleashed by the invasion and the sectarian atrocities carried out by the US-backed Shiite puppet government in Baghdad.

Washington and its allies provided funds, arms and training to ISIS as part of the US-backed efforts to oust the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. The US turned a blind eye to ISIS's atrocities as long as it was part of the “democratic revolution” against Assad. Only when its militias moved into western and northern Iraq and threatened US interests did the Obama administration use ISIS as the pretext for a renewed intervention in Iraq and Syria.

Obama is facing mounting criticism within the American political and military establishment over his administration's policy in Iraq and Syria and demands for an escalation and widening of the Middle Eastern war.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham (South Carolina), who is a possible presidential nominee, used an appearance on last Sunday's CBS show “Face the Nation” to call for a major increase in US troops on the ground from 2,300 to 10,000. Former Republican presidential candidate John McCain had earlier called

for such an increase.

Graham bluntly declared that the real target of the expansion of US military forces would be the Assad government in Syria. “You cannot successfully defeat ISIL [ISIS] on the ground in Syria... until you deal with Assad,” he said. Both McCain and Graham have also called for the imposition of a no-fly zone over Syria, which would mark a further step toward the initiation of open war against the Assad government.

These comments followed a speech last week by Michael Flynn, the recently-retired director of the Defence Intelligence Agency, in Washington DC. According to the *Daily Beast*, Flynn denounced Obama’s strategy against ISIS as “paralysed,” and called for a decades-long US-led war against it. Flynn reportedly received a standing ovation from the assembled crowd of intelligence officers.

General Martin Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared in an interview on January 23 that the Authorisation for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) being sought by the Obama administration for its war in Iraq and Syria, should be unlimited in scope and duration.

“I think in the crafting of the AUMF, all options should be on the table, and then we can debate whether we want to use them,” he said. He added that “it shouldn’t constrain activities geographically, because ISIL knows no boundaries.” Moreover, any constraints on time, or a so-called “sunset clause,” were unnecessary.

Yesterday, Marine Lt. Gen. Vincent Stewart testified before the House Armed Services Committee, declaring that the threat of ISIS was growing and that the war in Syria “is trending in the Assad regime’s favour.” The implication of his remarks is that the war in Syria must not only be extended against ISIS, but openly targeted against Assad as well.

The US and its allies are already stepping up the war in Iraq and Syria. The Combined Joint Task Force announced yesterday that 14 airstrikes had taken place over a 24-hour period, following another 34 strikes during the weekend. On the ground, Al Jazeera reported yesterday that Iraqi government forces, led by the Badr Brigade—a Shiite militia notorious for sectarian atrocities—had recaptured the province of Diyala, killing unarmed civilians in the town of Barwana.

The Obama administration also announced yesterday

that it would increase its annual aid to the Jordanian regime from \$660 million to \$1 billion for 2015–2017. Jordan has been a key ally in the US-led wars in the Middle East. The country has hosted bases used by the CIA to train Islamist fighters being sent to fight against the Assad government in Syria.

The escalating US-led war in Iraq and Syria is not about fighting terrorism but is aimed at securing American domination over the energy-rich Middle East, in the first instance through the ousting of the Assad regime. The military intervention, which has already destabilised the region, threatens to trigger a wider conflict with Assad’s backers—Iran and Russia—and to draw in other powers.



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