

A silhouette of a person in profile, facing right, holding a rifle. The person is wearing a jacket and a cap. The background is a solid, vibrant red color. The overall image has a high-contrast, dramatic feel.

Coordinating Through Chaos: The State of the Islamic State Online in 2026

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Amman | Berlin | London | Paris | Toronto | Washington DC

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Executive summary

Year after year, the digital ecosystem of the Islamic State (IS) evolves with new technologies, modes and tactics to circumvent platform efforts to dismantle and disrupt its online presence. Supporters have experimented with artificial intelligence to turn written content into audio content, create newscasts and resurrect dead ideologues in new video content.

Supporters, including support outlets and groups,¹ continue to exploit popular platforms to recruit new members, spread content further, attack enemies and challenge “media lies” about the group. This report demonstrates how they adapt to and misuse platform features to disseminate—and potentially monetize—terrorist material.

Our analysis provides insights and recommendations based on the increasingly fragmented online landscape that IS exploits in 2026. Analysts monitored and tracked a network of hundreds of accounts, channels and groups across mainstream platforms, encrypted messaging services and fringe applications. The accounts, channels, pages and groups mentioned in the report were flagged using platforms’ reporting mechanisms.



Figure 1. An IS video with more than 111,000 views on Instagram that features scenes from Eid under the Islamic State. The video used a still shot as its primary thumbnail for the first three seconds of the video before transitioning to the IS content.

Introduction: A perpetual state of regeneration

As reports of IS detainees escaping from detention camps in Syria spread online in late January, the IS digital ecosystem sprang into action. Accounts across social media platforms, messaging and fringe applications began coordinating amongst their followers on how to support escapees. At the same time, these accounts gleefully celebrated the standoff between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian government as an impending collapse into chaos that would fuel a resurgence.

Voice notes from “our sisters” were shared across platforms asking for the “lions of jihad” to take action. IS Supporters forwarded phone numbers for escapees to call in case they managed to make it out of the camps. Other IS supporters asked for “brothers with pickup trucks” to assist with potentially spiriting detainees away. The cacophony of calls for action not only highlighted how supporters wanted to take advantage of the chaos at the camps, but it also exposed the interconnectedness of the online ecosystem of support for IS across platforms, messaging and fringe applications, as well as the openness with which pro-IS “influencers”² and support groups and outlets continue to operate. In early 2025, researchers at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) produced a multiplatform landscape assessment of the IS online ecosystem a decade after its emergence, underscoring the persistence of IS networks of accounts, groups, pages, channels and websites despite pressure from social media platforms, internet regulatory bodies and law enforcement action.

The mechanics of the IS ecosystem online remain relatively simple. Their tactic is described in an infamous IS video: “If they close one account, open another three. And if they close three accounts, open another 30.”³ The IS ecosystem’s goal is not only to sustain itself under pressure, but to regenerate, significantly complicating disruption efforts.

ISD researchers have catalogued 94⁴ defunct, partially defunct and functional unofficial IS support outlets and groups that are part and parcel of this ecosystem in 2026, many of which often reinvent themselves to stave off moderation and takedowns.⁵ These unofficial IS support outlets and groups constitute one segment of the broader online ecosystem supporting IS and represent part of the challenge. IS influencers are also a challenge to platforms, as they operate under personal brands

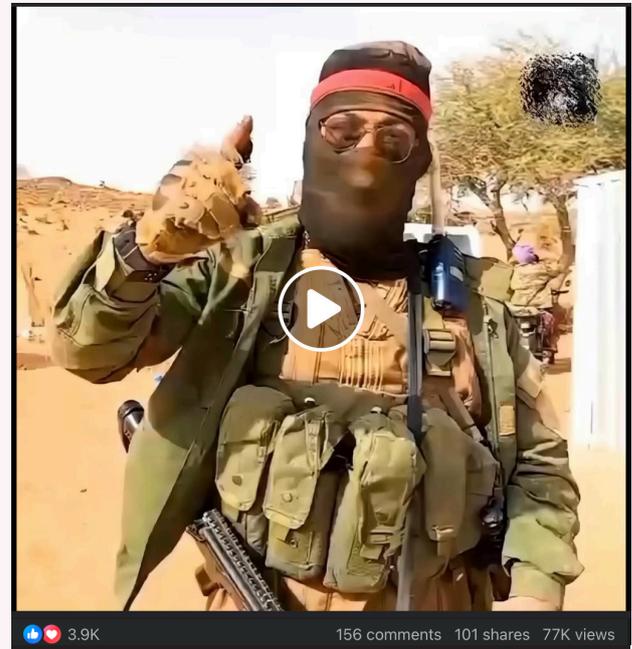


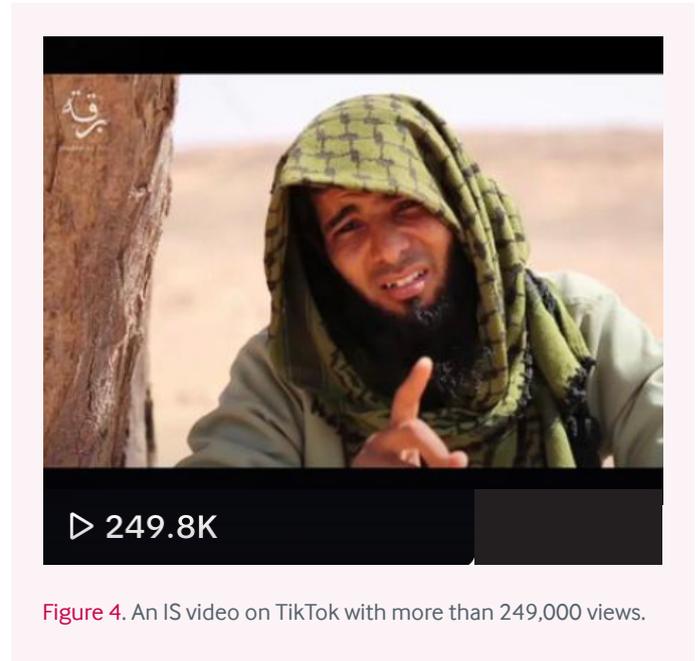
Figure 2. An IS fighter points to the camera in a video found on Facebook with more than 77,000 views. The IS branding in the corner has been blurred by the account to get around platform moderation.



Figure 3. A video clearly branded Al-Hayat Media Center generates more than 8,000 views on Facebook.

framed around supporting the group. IS influencers are distinct from support outlets and groups in that they use their online personas to both share content from official and unofficial support outlets and groups, and distill central IS ideological precepts in a simplified manner to reach wider audiences. Together, pro-IS support outlets, groups and influencers, make up a sizable portion of the online ecosystem, heeding another call by the group in its official newsletter al-Naba in 2022 that read “may the soldiers of the mujahid media⁶ know that on their shoulders is a great responsibility in confronting this huge mass of the media waging war on the faith.”

As part of ISD’s continuing research into the IS ecosystem online, researchers tracked hundreds of accounts across Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, while also monitoring channels and groups on WhatsApp, Telegram, Element, SimpleX and the revolving stand-alone IS website network. The goal of this research is not just to highlight the narratives and content of the group and its supporters online, but to provide policymakers, practitioners and platforms with an understanding of how the ecosystem is evolving and exploiting moderation gaps to their own ends.



Key findings: Scale of the network

Facebook

- **Facebook remains a key hub for IS supporters to spread news and content and coordinate cross-platform activities.** ISD researchers found 350⁹ IS support accounts on Facebook, generating tens of thousands of views. These included influencers and unofficial outlets operating in Arabic, Pashto, Bengali, Amharic, Somali and Swahili. Using simple key word searches linked to IS, researchers located pro-IS accounts on Facebook, and then mapped other users engaging with this content, revealing connections across the broader ecosystem. Many of these accounts directed followers via the comments section to other pro-IS groups and channels on Telegram, WhatsApp and SimpleX groups, as well as standalone sites.
- **Pro-IS accounts are using “Professional mode,” potentially allowing IS supporters and outlets to monetize content in some locations.** Of the 105 accounts in the dataset, many used professional mode, but researchers could not confirm whether they were monetizing content. The [Facebook website](#) states users leveraging “professional mode” can monetize content depending on their locations.
- **Pro-IS accounts on Facebook appeared to have significant engagement in terms of views and likes.** Researchers found a profile belonging to a Bengali-language IS supporter with more than 13,000 followers. Of the content analyzed, we found the account generated 359,000 views using eight snippets of official IS videos over just one month. From the same influence, one specific IS video of an elderly suicide bomber generated 71,000 views in just 18 hours. Another IS account using “professional mode” had 4,200 followers and posted a video of an infamous execution video and received 7,000 views. Another video, including scenes of killing, generated 82,000 views. The videos did not receive a warning label and were publicly available.
- **Researchers found that Bengali-language accounts had the highest engagement on unaltered IS videos on Facebook, with individual posts generating tens of thousands of views.** Dynamics on each of these platforms and messaging applications differed widely depending on the language of given users.

- **Supporter-led outlets/groups created their own branding and made use of “digital creator” pages to spread content to larger audiences.** One support outlet found solely on Facebook branded itself as a “digital creator” and posted 126 videos stripped predominately¹⁰ from official IS content, as well as other support outlets and groups. These posts generated more than 600,000 views between October 2025 and January 2026.

TikTok

- **ISD found 50 IS support accounts on TikTok.** These accounts appear to be an amalgamation of news accounts sharing official IS news, media munasireen (supporters) and [alt-jihadists](#) who merge videogame aesthetics with jihadist propaganda. These accounts are also a microcosm of the overall ecosystem of IS support on the platform.
- **A subset of IS supporters on TikTok produce video game versions of IS videos in Roblox or Minecraft, extolling the virtues of a virtual caliphate in an appeal to younger audiences.** Videos include gamified depictions of attacks on US military personnel, assassinations of rivals and, in some cases, Roblox-based creations of previously released IS propaganda. Users also create specialized audio in Arabic promoting the so-called caliphate in the videogame.
- **Unofficial groups manage accounts on TikTok.** One example, “The Knights of Translation”¹¹ specializes in translating IS content into multiple languages.



Figure 6. A Roblox video posted to TikTok featuring a gamified IS executioner.

Researchers found two accounts that claimed to be “The Knights of Translation,” which reproduce official IS content in Kurdish. The accounts had more than 3,000 and 800 followers respectively.

- **IS legacy content has found new life on TikTok: IS content from 10 years ago had hundreds of thousands of views.** An IS support account dedicated to posting snippets of official videos from the founding of the IS generated more than 283,000 views.

Instagram

- **ISD found 50 IS support accounts on Instagram. Many of these belonged to the same outlets, groups and influencers on Facebook.** This finding represented the synergy and ease of access between the two platforms (both owned by Meta; in addition to WhatsApp explained below).
- **Accounts linked to the IS ecosystem on Instagram generated tens of thousands of views on content.** One account, which managed a mirror account linked in its bio, posted 90 videos supporting IS and other Salafi-jihadist groups. These videos generated more than 709,000 views collectively. The most popular of the 90 videos, featured audio recordings of now-dead ideologues such as Abu Muhammad al-Adnani and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, generated 77,600 views.
- **IS supporters maintained backup accounts in the event of a takedown and often signposted them in bios.** Analysts observed a number of accounts linking to backups in their bios in the event of a takedown. In some instances, IS supporters promoted the backup accounts in posts well before a takedown.
- **IS groups involved in “social media raids” were present on Instagram, enhancing their ability to coordinate.** Raid groups allow disparate supporters to come together and target news outlets, government entities and nongovernmental organizations with content supporting group (often in their comment sections).

WhatsApp

- **ISD analyzed 15 WhatsApp channels and groups supporting IS.** This included a news channel with more than 5,000 subscribers, channels that post official IS bulletins, videos and audio, and groups that produce content to spread across social media.

- **An IS support outlet had more than 5,000 subscribers and provided official updates from the group.** The channel was the largest channel found during the period of analysis. The outlet shared breaking news, newly released videos, the group’s al-Naba weekly newsletter and other official content. The channel has been operational since July 2024 and also runs a backup channel in the event its primary channel is taken down.
- **IS WhatsApp channels and groups were often linked to accounts found on Facebook.** This connection illustrates the symbiotic nature of the IS online ecosystem and the critical role played by Meta products (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp).
- **Administrators of IS WhatsApp channels and groups were often found to be administrators of other IS groups and channels on the messaging application.** These ‘sister’ groups are often public and signposted to in the application’s primary groups.

Telegram

- **ISD analyzed 15 Telegram channels and groups linked to the wider ecosystem of IS online.** These channels and groups were promoted by users on Facebook, TikTok and Instagram and include archive channels, alternative news outlets, bot-managed channels for official content, support groups dedicated to coordinating social media dissemination, “raids” and attack operations channels.
- **One of the largest Telegram channels identified belonged to a pro-IS alternative news channel focused on rebranding official IS news as “objective” reporting.** The outlet had more than 287,131 subscribers. ISD documented these alternative news outlets in a [2022 report](#). Although the outlets have repeatedly been taken down since then, they continually reappear and regenerate on platforms such as Facebook, X and Telegram.
- **IS groups recruit supporters on Telegram to conduct “raids” on platforms such as X, Facebook and YouTube, as well as forums.** These groups organize supporters into platform-specific “battalions” to spread official IS news, attack enemies online and promote the group’s ideology.

SimpleX and Element

- **ISD analyzed 15 channels and groups on SimpleX and Element, each with distinct communities**

and mirrored versions on different platforms.

Many of the groups are linked to unofficial IS support outlets and groups. However, there are also specific Element and SimpleX groups that allow for secure communications between individual supporters. They often featured operational security tips about safety online and conversations related to rooting out potential malware and “spies.”

- **Both Element and SimpleX¹² have highly active sets of IS supporters and support outlets and groups.** ISD researchers found channels providing attack planning materials, as well as support groups and outlets that specialize in IS news. Recruitment into media groups was also found on both applications. There is highly limited existing analysis of the IS ecosystem on Element and SimpleX ecosystem.
 - **Thousands of users are active across Element and SimpleX channels and groups.** They appear to face little risk of takedowns, making the services a lifeline for groups, outlets and supporters when Telegram or WhatsApp groups and channels are banned. These platforms provide a critical function in allowing supporters, groups and outlets to respawn and regenerate.
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Qualitative analysis: platform specific dynamics

The state of the IS's influencers on Facebook

A profile feature called “professional mode” allows IS supporters, outlets and groups to tag themselves as “digital creators,” “photographers,” “public figures,” “religious organizations” and “bloggers.” ISD researchers found 105 of these “professional mode” accounts; 96 of these were predominately self-labeled as “digital creators” with more than 338,000 collective followers. According to Facebook, users utilizing professional mode could be eligible for content monetization depending on location and size of an account’s audience. Professional-mode users also receive access to more in-depth metrics about user engagement. It was unclear if the IS accounts functioning on the platform were being paid for the content they were posting.

One “digital creator” who appeared to use professional mode had a cover photo referring to wiliayat Bengal (“province of Bengal”) and more than 13,000 followers. The account posted nine videos supportive of IS, as well as snippets of official IS videos, generating hundreds of thousands of views.

Another “digital creator” account linked to a Bengali-language Facebook-specific IS outlet dubbed “Loyalty and Disavowal” Media.¹³ The account had more than 7,300 followers and produced content including a video featuring audio of the deceased Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, former spokesman for the IS in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); in the clip, he denounces the process of voting as fundamentally opposed to Islam. The video generated 17,000 views and was liked 1,100 times.

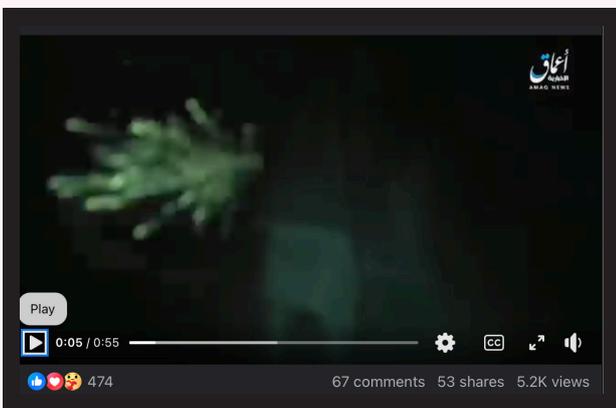


Figure 7. A clearly branded official IS al-Amaq video of an attack with more than 5,200 views on Facebook.

The nature of these accounts (one belonging to a personality, the other to an outlet dedicated to producing IS content in Bengali) illustrated the role of both outlets and singular personalities in using the Facebook feature to spread their content further.

Other pro-IS accounts using what appeared to be professional mode promoted Arabic-language content. One such account specialized in posting pro-IS meme videos and had 4,200 followers. The account used a meme format to post content from an IS video featuring the execution of prisoners in Yemen via artillery fire. The meme read “an eye for an eye in wilayat al-Yemen” with the embedded execution video underneath the text. The video generated 7,800 views and did not come with any warning labels suggesting it was violent and restricted content.

Another meme-style video from the same account featured a still from an infamous official IS video in which prisoners are executed inside of a slaughterhouse. The text reads “how is this guy carrying them like that?” and features an image of an IS executioner carrying a bound man in each arm. The video generated 74,000 views and elicited mostly praise for the group in the 261 comments on the video.

Other accounts using the “digital creator” function posted full-length videos. A user with more than 6,000 followers posted five official videos in their entirety. One of these, from IS’ Mozambique province, did not even blur the group’s branding and generated 2,300 views.

The apparent use of professional mode accounts represents a new tactic for IS supporters and outlets/groups. ISD researchers have previously noted how IS supporters on Facebook built out phalanxes of accounts, cloaked content and used coded language to skirt moderation. The content clearly violated platform’s policies related to support for dangerous organizations and individuals but some of the accounts stayed active for months.

TikTok: Gamified jihad or elaborate LARP?

The idea of IS on the gaming platform Roblox seems asinine, but for some users on TikTok, a Roblox caliphate is a central part of their online existence. Over the past five years, these accounts have been uploading “Robloxed” versions of well-known IS videos to TikTok and gaming-adjacent platforms such as Discord to promote the ideals and the aesthetics of the group. During this

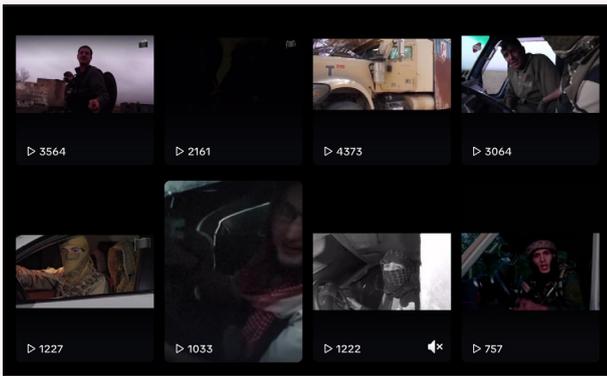


Figure 8. A series of IS videos posted to TikTok.

analysis, ISD researchers were able to surface these accounts with simple key words, unlocking a subset of the ecosystem often geared to younger audiences.

One of those accounts created specialized Arabic audio overlaid on what appeared to be a digital representation of a jihadist fighter in a video. The audio mimicked the inflection of an IS spokesperson and called on Muslim Roblox players to not “associate with kuffar (“disbelievers”), but instead to “eliminate them.” The video generated 26,700 views. A video posted by the same user shows them executing a captured rival in Roblox, demanding “do you want the knife or the bullet?” in what appears to be a mirror of official IS execution videos. Ideological elements such as the disassociation with “disbelievers” and the use of violence through the promotion of gamified executions appear to be part roleplay (in the game). Comments under the Roblox execution video featured memes with images from real IS execution videos where people begged for their lives before being murdered.

ISD also found replicates of infamous IS videos such as the “[Flames of War](#)¹⁴” (with a voiceover that mirrored the English narration from the video), and scenes of fighters firing mortars and in battle. We identified four accounts on Roblox that were apparently connected as part of an elaborate game play as jihadists.

The accounts produced content mimicking the precursor of the IS, using a sepia tone to denote the age of the videos. Researchers at the Team for Security, Terroristic Issues & Managing Emergencies, a research center in the Department of Sociology at the Catholic University of Sacred Heart in Italy, produced an [in-depth report on the pro-IS Roblox ecosystem on TikTok](#). The report noted a network of accounts linked to the wider ecosystem of IS on TikTok involved in the production of Roblox jihad content, and that it was “a starting point for the radicalization process.”

TikTok also hosts a growing body of support outlets and groups. [An umbrella group](#) for more than a dozen pro-IS outlets and groups was found during the monitoring period and appeared to be manning two different TikTok accounts in Kurdish. The accounts primarily republished official content from the group’s weekly newsletter al-Naba, as well as official al-Amaq content. The accounts appeared to have survived moderation efforts by specifically using Kurdish language content as compared to Arabic or English. Linked to the accounts were two more distinctly branded Kurdish language unofficial IS support outlets also publishing unofficial and official IS outlet content. In total, analysts found four interlinked Kurdish language accounts on TikTok sharing both unofficial and official IS content. This dynamic illustrates how unofficial IS support accounts across platforms are highly networked and understand platform moderation dynamics as it relates to underrepresented languages.

Instagram: FOMO for the so-called Caliphate

A slow-motion video of the IS flag waves as a reverbed and sped down version of an IS support nasheed (a vocal chant) blares on. The video, posted by an IS influencer on Instagram, had more than 231,000 views, 22,900 likes and 23,000 reposts.

Like Facebook, pro-IS influencers on Instagram use “digital creator” functions to unlock features which could help expand their reach and impact. ISD researchers observed 50 accounts on Instagram: some tied to Facebook accounts collected for this report, and some part of highly active propaganda networks focused on seeding IS content on the platform.

The connection between Instagram and Facebook is being exploited by IS influencer and support groups/outlets. The Instagram accounts are often almost a mirror image of their presence on Facebook: they engage in similar actions on the platform (such as spreading official news or promoting support outlets and groups) and have adopted platform functionalities such as “professional mode.”

An IS ‘raid group’ found across Facebook, Instagram and Telegram illustrates that dynamic with clarity.¹⁵ The group is one of several observed by researchers that exploited the full range of platform affordances and applications for IS. The group previously translated al-Naba newsletter articles into English, reformatting the graphic design in the process. It also put out monthly infographics detailing attacks it has launched on government, media and nongovernmental organizations’ social media accounts across the open web: these consisted of comment bombing other social media accounts with

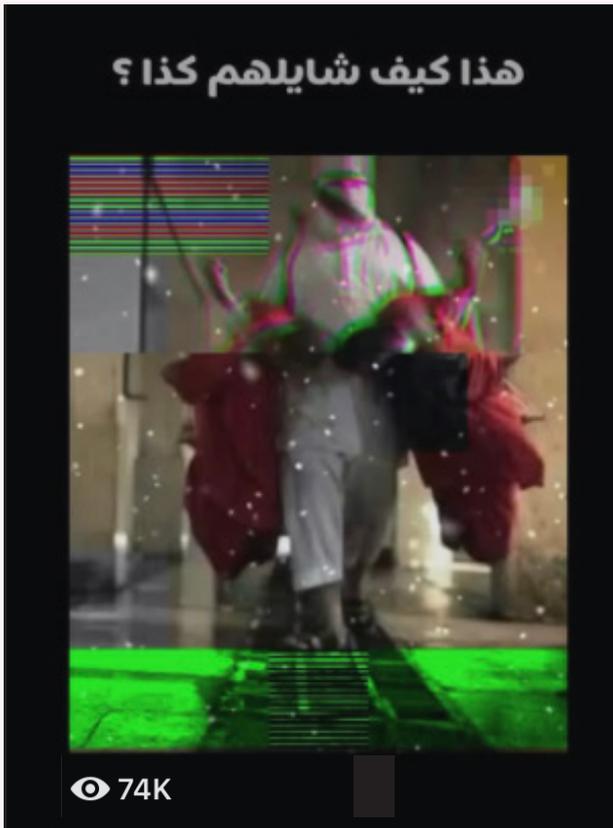


Figure 9. A pro-IS meme video featuring a scene from an infamous execution video

content from the IS. This is performed by specialized “battalions” recruited from followers ranks and inducted into groups that are then target specific platforms.

The group’s Facebook and Instagram presence mirror each other. Due to user reporting, the group has continually changed accounts to stave off the effects of takedowns. On Instagram, the group primarily engages in promoting its “successes” by highlighting its monthly infographics of attacks on “enemy” pages and accounts (broken down by country). The group also shares al-Naba articles to spread across the platform. On Facebook, the group operates as a “digital creator” using “professional mode” to enhance its reach on the platform. On Instagram, it uses specialized hashtags affiliated with its name to enhance its reach on the platform. The accounts work in synergy: the Facebook account promoting its next series of targets while the Instagram focuses on relaying its “successes.”

WhatsApp: All the IS news that’s fit to forward

The WhatsApp ecosystem linked to IS supporters consists of channels and public groups dedicated to spreading news and new releases. Part and parcel of this ecosystem are unofficial groups such as the “Lion Network,”¹⁶

a WhatsApp-specific pro-IS group that specializes in delivering official news releases to supporters. It runs a public channel with more than 5,000 subscribers where it shares new official video releases, links to the IS website ecosystem and IS news bulletins.

The group also links to a series of Telegram channels dedicated to sharing official news from the IS in languages such as English, Arabic, Kurdish and French. These channels are operated by bots and link to a SimpleX channel that provides similar updates from official IS outlets. The connection to these channels through a primary channel on WhatsApp highlights the intertwined nature of the IS ecosystem across messaging applications.

“Lion Network” utilizes much of the same playbook as other IS channels and accounts online. The group not only runs a singular channel but effectively runs another back up in case of takedowns, which has another 2,000 subscribers. At one point the “Lion Network” claimed to have both a presence on Facebook and X, but the channels’ accounts appear to have been removed.

“Lion Network” was one of 15 channels and groups ISD researchers found through users on Facebook and Instagram. While news channels on WhatsApp provided official news and content from the IS, groups supportive of the IS on the messaging application appeared to mix their content with religious knowledge and content from the unofficial ecosystem of groups and outlets. One such group with 251 members appeared to provide audio daily affirmations for Muslims who may have lost their way. However, videos in support of IS were interspersed with daily affirmations and motivational posts: they included snippets from IS videos of fighters, waving IS flags and computer setups with the IS flag as desktop background. Much of the WhatsApp ecosystem linked to the IS relied on networks on other platforms to ensure they could survive.

Telegram: An IS alternative news outlet runs through it

The IS ecosystem may be spread across platforms, but Telegram continues to be a key stronghold for IS outlets and groups linked to both official and unofficial IS ecosystems. Like clockwork, every Thursday, new stand-alone channels are created to distribute the official al-Naba weekly newsletter. The same dynamic occurs when longer-form official videos are released from one of the IS provinces globally. Analysts found these links to channels dedicated to new official releases throughout the monitoring period.

The unofficial ecosystem of support linked to “influencers,” outlets and groups, would similarly link to Telegram channels in their names or under their respective



Figure 10. An IS video with more than 38,000 views found on Facebook.

brands. Analysts found one Telegram channel linked to a Bengali language account on Facebook, and featured in the account's posts, with more than 389 legacy IS videos with Bengali subtitles, which were posted from December 2025 through February 2026. The channel had its own distinct logo and had connections to at least three other Bengali language channels and groups on Telegram. Another IS group on Telegram, with a distinct name referencing IS supporters, used its channels to distribute links to automated channels on the messaging application to distribute the official al-Naba newsletter.

The intersection of both the unofficial and official IS ecosystems on Telegram are similarly where analysts found alternative online news outlets functioning as unofficial support groups for IS. Using distinct branding such as "Worldwide News,"¹⁷ these outlets promoted the virtues of IS and belittled its enemies while sharing the latest attacks all under the guise that they were objective news outlets. These outlets also provided IS supporters with a list of 47 emojis functioning as code symbols: these could be used to skirt moderation efforts for key words such as "kill" or "bomb." ISD research first delved into in these outlets in 2022, when analysts found that they were spread across numerous platforms.

Based on a review of 15 public channels and groups on Telegram, one of the largest channels found during the monitoring period belonged to an alternative news outlet analysts named "Worldwide News."¹⁸ The channel had more than 286,000 subscribers, an astronomical number of subscribers for any IS-linked outlet or group on any platform. A content review suggests that the channel was repurposed from an existing account that used the channel to document the life of two married Muslims. The channel was taken over by the alternative news outlet as of October 2025 through unclear methods.

The outlet made quick use of the channel, sharing content it had copied from official news releases by the IS under its own news brand. "Worldwide News" built out its X and Facebook presence between October and December 2025, linking to its Telegram channel in its X bio. In its first post, the outlet said that it was "back" after an "outage" had affected its channels.

"Worldwide News" has reconstituted itself consistently by building duplicate pages to funnel followers prior to takedowns. These new channels typically have little to no content. "Worldwide News" has also used multiple individual profiles to provide backstop measures while it reconstitutes lost channels. This tried and tested modus operandi has allowed "Worldwide News" to continue to exploit social media platforms, while delivering IS updates.

SimpleX and Element: Inspiration and tactical attack advice

Ammar Abdulmajid-Mohamed Said flew a drone over a Michigan military facility before being arrested for allegedly plotting an attack in the name of IS. Shamsud-Din Jabbar wore Meta glasses to record his route on Bourbon Street before he plowed through a crowd on New Year's Day in support of IS. Kyse Abushanab allegedly prepared instructions for IS supporters on how to make suicide belts or vests, detonators and timers, improvised bombs and other explosives and incendiary devices and distributed them online.

All these cases seem like disparate instances of attack preparations in support of the IS. However, they have all been touted, thoroughly examined and shared as examples by an unofficial IS support outlet preparing the "next generation of lone wolves" on SimpleX and Element. The outlet, one of more than 94 that ISD has tracked as part of its mapping project of unofficial IS support ecosystem online, had one of the most extensive online footprints of pro-IS outlets, including a presence on a password-protected forum for IS content on the open web as well as at one point operating accounts on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Element, SimpleX and Telegram¹⁹.

The outlet, which analysts are not naming to avoid amplifying its reach, illustrates how the IS ecosystem spans both encrypted and open-source messaging applications, as well as popular platforms. These outlets do more than disseminate just IS propaganda: they circulate detailed accounts of past and attempted attacks, highlighting tactical and operational elements intended to inspire supporters globally.

By branding its own material, the outlet is one of several specializing in operational security as well as attack-planning and instructions. It is more than an aggregator of IS content, but an active instigator in the unofficial ecosystem of the IS online. Other outlets and groups observed on SimpleX and Element provide online “lessons” learnt from attacks globally (not necessarily linked to IS) to “train” their supporters about tactics and methods to build weapons and avoid authorities. The use of SimpleX by these groups appears to go beyond official news and is meant to function as a backup in case channels on other fringe platforms or messaging applications are taken down. By using these newer niche messaging applications, and having a constant presence, IS supporters, outlets and groups are ensuring the survival of their online communities.

Conclusion and recommendations: Making sense of the ecosystem

More than a decade after IS' emergence—and despite sustained efforts to restrict its presence on platforms—IS influencers, outlets and groups continue to not only bounce back from mass takedowns, but in some cases outpace mitigation efforts by drawing on an interlinked network of supporters, outlets and groups across the open web. Compared with previous ISD research, the ecosystem appears to be growing in reach, while continuing to develop workarounds to barriers limiting content dissemination and account proliferation.

The interconnectedness of this ecosystem indicates that the 'state of the IS' online is still substantial. While the threat is constantly shifting, ISD has consistently made four central recommendations for platforms and messaging services to address this challenge sustainably, which are as salient now as ever:

- There is a clear need for more expert moderation and human-led tracking and removal of accounts and channels. This should include greater investments in trust and safety divisions, especially in smaller or less profitable markets and languages, with an increased focus on strategies to combat account recidivism. Bengali-language IS supporters found on Facebook appeared to face less moderation than counterparts from other language communities for instance. Negating the ability of these outlets to survive takedowns requires both the in-depth tracking of IS support networks on all the platforms in question, and the proactive use of subject, linguistic and contextual expertise in several regions.
- A model of cross-platform network coordination should replace piecemeal takedowns that focus on single actor or account behaviors online. Europol demonstrated this ability in 2019, and again in 2024, when it targeted IS channels in a wide ranging, multiplatform takedown effort, which should be repeated on a continual basis. The pro-IS ecosystem has very clearly demonstrated their coordination, and technology companies can demonstrate the same coordination through cross-industry entities such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.
- Enhance the capabilities of automated approaches to recognize simple workarounds like “broken text” posting, a format used by influencers, groups and outlets in the IS ecosystem to evade moderation mechanisms.

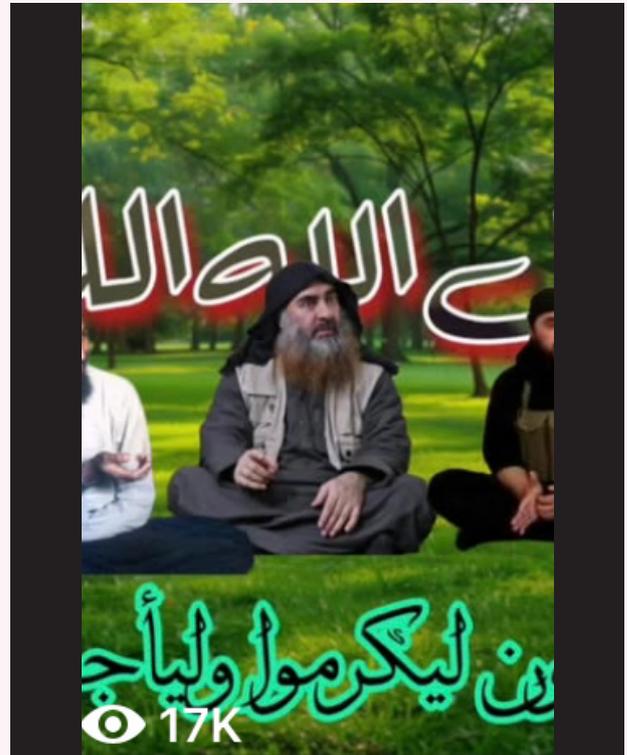


Figure 11. An IS video on Facebook featuring prominent ideologues. The video had more than 17,000 views.

While AI-based approaches to moderation still have issues, such as the over moderation of legitimate, legal content, creating mechanisms by which companies can detect obfuscating variations in language is an important endeavor. IS supporters and the ecosystem around them are increasingly aware of the mechanisms used to both detect and to takedown content linked to the group.

- Pro-IS influencers, outlets and groups provide a narrative bank that should be leveraged by national governments for enhancing strategic communications and building out engagement programming globally. The strategy of these influencers, outlets and groups remains to create a rift between Muslim populations and governments. They similarly highlight global injustices faced by Muslims in Africa and Asia and provide solutions that can only be attained by joining and fighting for IS. Strategic communications campaigns should address these issues and combat them using concrete actions.

Endnotes

- 1 Support outlets and groups are distinct in that outlets are focused on media production in support of IS, while groups can have multiple functions beyond media production.
- 2 IS “influencers” function as independent pro-IS personalities online, providing their followers with news from the group. IS “influencers” content that comes from both official IS outlets as well as support outlets and groups. They often use avatars specific to them, so if their accounts are taken down, they could repurpose another account on the same platform with the same avatar and rebuild their communities around their specific brand of IS support.
- 3 This phrase has become so well-known that it is now used in memes.
- 4 The catalogued unofficial support outlets and groups have been collected from IS forums as well as social media platforms. Unofficial support outlets and groups are continually being launched or rebranded. The 94 unofficial support outlets and groups noted in the report are likely higher.
- 5 New outlets and groups are continually being launched across platforms. There are likely well over 100 unofficial outlets and groups that have been, and continue to be, part of the IS ecosystem online. ISD analysts are cataloging the unofficial IS outlets and groups as part of a larger project that will both map and track these groups and outlets as they continue to respawn and spread content online.
- 6 “Mujahid media” is a reference to the media ecosystem supporting the IS.
- 7 ISD capped the accounts, channels, and websites at 500, which is a broadly representative sample of the ecosystem. Researchers analyzed publicly accessible accounts, channels and websites. The accounts, channels and websites, appear to be a fraction of the overall size of the ecosystem across platforms, messaging applications, and the open web.
- 8 Alexa Corsa. “Social Media Companies Decide Content Moderation is Trending Down,” Wall Street Journal, (January 7, 2025).
- 9 Analysts capped ethnographic analysis of accounts at 350, despite the ecosystem appearing much larger, based on followers and friends of connected accounts. The accounts represented are a sample of IS influencers and unofficial support outlets and groups.
- 10 The outlet also posted mixed “jihad”- related and religious video content not linked to IS.
- 11 “The Knights of Translation,” also known as Fursan al-Tarjama, function as an umbrella group for a number of pro-IS outlets that produce content in numerous languages. This was well detailed in a [Global Network on Extremism & Technology \(GNET\) article](#) produced by Lucas Weber and Daniele Garofalo in 2023. There has been subsequent analysis of the group and its network [since](#).
- 12 Element is a decentralized, encrypted and open-source messaging application, and SimpleX is open-source and encrypted messaging application that does not require an email or phone number for signing up.
- 13 The outlet’s name has been adjusted and translated.
- 14 “Flames of War” was a two-part film series produced by IS.
- 15 We have chosen not to name the group as it is actively recruiting members online.
- 16 The names of groups and outlets in this report have been changed to ensure users could not link back to groups or outlets mentioned.
- 17 The name of the outlet has been changed.
- 18 The name of the outlet has been changed.
- 19 Accounts on these platforms were flagged and taken down.



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