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How ISIS is Getting its Adolescent Fresh Blood



According to various studies, an ever increasing number of teenagers is being exposed to the aggressive militant propaganda. It comes as no surprise that "Islamic State" (ISIS) recruiters have been the most active agents in this field, searching for inexperienced young people all across the globe.

The Children of Islamic State [report](#) that has been endorsed by the UN shows that minors and teenagers are generally considered the best fighters an extremist group can get. ISIS militants are often letting children watch them murder victims only to later force them into playing football with severed heads. Some of the videos distributed by ISIS on the Internet show children killing innocent people, while obeying the orders of senior militants.

The process of religious radicalisation can be started as early as at the age of 9-10 years, but it largely depends on the family and the environment that a child is found in. ISIS recruits are generally trying to find and target older children, those at the age of 14-15 years. The radicalisation usually takes less time in adolescents.

According to experts, most ISIS recruiters are hunting for bored teenagers that receive little to no attention from their family members and spend a lot of time on the Internet. Along with gaming sites that they visit they often browse other Internet resources that might attract their attention.

Psychologists say that bored children and teenagers are among the easiest targets a recruiter can find. For these purposes, ISIS has created a series of apps and pictures just for kids to be distributed via the Internet. Children are also told that they can learn Arabic for free. Such practices are often used by Al-Nusra Front recruiters as well, who are promoting a large number of free educational programs. Militant recruiters also pay an extensive amount of attention to orphans that had their parents killed in various armed conflicts along with young people who crave an opportunity to join training camps in order to earn some money as militants. It's been reported that there's been a number of special training programs in various mosques and madrassas in Afghanistan, Pakistan and other countries designed by militant recruiters. Those trainers that are at the head of these programs are then selling their students to various militant groups, receiving pay in return.

The "substitution techniques" that ISIS recruiters use often allow them to obtain a staggering amount of influence over a targeted child. To use it, recruiters choose young men and women who face difficulties in life such as problems in school, parents divorcing, personal dramas, etc. Recruiters approach those children on the street to show their sympathy and compassion, only to provide them with a hashtag of an encrypted channel in a messenger application. When a teenager is hooked, the recruiter starts to contact him regularly to begin indoctrination. It's been reported that they can send a hundred messages a day. It's been already admitted that such strategies have become [widespread](#) in recruiting French teenagers.

According to the study of the [Institute Montaigne](#) that was conducted by journalists of [Le Figaro](#), recently, recruiters have been paying an increasing amount of attention to young girls (in particular, in France - where more than 60% of identified militant minors are female). Experts attribute these facts to a large variety of excuses to lure a young woman abroad: a future marriage to a man living in accordance with Wahhabism, humanitarian work; and even military activities. While men, they can be offered a chance to participate in "holy war" as well as the status of a martyr in the event of his death.

In order to prepare teenagers for future terrorist attacks, "instructors" are employing the same motivational strategies that they use with adult militants. However, the internal psychological mechanisms that force a human being to ignore the prospects of his own death is stronger in adolescents than in adults. A different perception of life and death along with a rebellious spirit - makes a teenager the perfect fighter for militants. Teenagers often do not

recognise the authority of elders and reject the values of the society that they live in, they have crises that are typical for puberty and they are more than willing to become engaged in “risky business” to prove themselves.

It goes without saying that recruiters are paying a considerable amount of attention to the "theological" education of teenagers, which leads to large number of teenagers who are versed in the Salafi or Wahhabi interpretations of classical Islamic texts, therefore the pace with which radical ideology is spreading among adolescents is 3 times higher than among adults.

While recognising the growing damage to society from the radicalisation of adolescents, politicians across the globe have recently increased funding for various programmes that are designed to fight this phenomenon.

In particular, France allocated 42 million euros back in 2015 to combat the spread of such ideology among teenagers. The Ministry of Justice has hired 88 educational experts, 83 psychologists and 70 “supporters of secularism.” However, no comprehensive methodology has been developed so far, which means that no one knows how to approach the problem and what has to be done. The best the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education can offer is to hand over young radicals to French anti-terrorism agencies. As a result, the maximum impact that those can achieve is to persuade a young, aspiring militant that they can achieve nothing. However, according to many experts in France, such youth will remain radical both from a religious and political perspective after being transformed into a highly dysfunctional human being.

Under these circumstances, it’s imperative that political circles across the globe start paying urgent attention to the educational matters and the need of young people to prevent them from falling in the hands of armed terrorist organisations.

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