

# What the Death of ISIS Means for Us

On October 26th, Abu Bakhr Al-Baghdadi, leader of ISIS was killed. President Trump later reported that [Al-Baghdadi's successor has also been "terminated."](#)

President Trump gave a press [address Sunday morning](#) confirming Al-Baghdadi's death, and his killing himself and three of his children.

Strangely, the Washington Post decided to change its headline from "Islamic State's 'terrorist-in-chief' dies" to "[austere religious scholar at helm of Islamic State.](#)"



As offensive as this was, the subsequent corrections were not much better. [The Twitter storm that followed was hilarious.](#)

Instead of accounts [extolling the "gutsy call" like that made by President Obama in the death of Osama bin Laden](#), many outlets are featuring editorials questioning whether this death is a cause for celebration, or whether President Trump should receive primary credit for the move.

This concern among American journalists mirrors that of world leaders responding to Al-Baghdadi's death. Many of these leaders hold mixed views on ISIS, some viewing it as an [ideological transnational political movement](#) and others viewing it [as a common religious belief system](#).

Given these mixed views, did Western society act virtuously in opposing Al-Qaeda or ISIS? Furthermore, what does it mean to consider the aims of the West and the aims of Islam concentrated in Islamic State?

Noted atheist Sam Harris considers "Islamism," but not

individual Muslims, as [an undervalued threat to liberal ideals and Western civilization](#). As he said in an [interview with Dave Rubin](#):

*Of course, there are millions and millions of Muslims who do not take the barbaric passages in the Qur'an and the Haddith seriously. They are not wanting to kill apostates... the problem is that many of them don't want their religion linked to core tenants like jihad, paradise or martyrdom.... If you're going to defend your religion by saying, 'Islam is a religion of peace, and the Islamic State has nothing to do with Islam,' you're being intellectually dishonest, and that kind of denial of obvious reality is irresponsible and dangerous.*

Thus, it may be right for our media to question the impact that killing Al-Baghdadi will have on the ideology of violent Islam.

We don't know [how culture or ideology is impacting individual cultural behaviors](#). [Much of that information is difficult to find](#) due to statistical philosophies used by organizations that are often, in the name of ending discrimination, not collecting information needed to evaluate the impact of ideology on action.

Thus it seems the West needs roots which go beyond believing that simple and unquestioning acceptance of one another will solve the issue of competing worldviews. A respect for a common dignity in mankind means we can look at individual worldviews and critique them. We can all agree that understanding the ideas which motivate violence matters.

What does this mean for us? Perhaps it means taking the time to actually read a translation of the Qur'an and various hadiths, allowing ourselves to carefully consider which of its ideas motivate ISIS. Or perhaps it means talking with our neighbors about what they believe and engaging in friendly, but well-reasoned conversation with them.

Above all, perhaps ISIS's death just means we should begin [the hard work of educating ourselves](#).

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[Image Credit: flickr-the White House]