

Islamic State’s religious perspectives on Iran



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This short briefing reviews IS’ newsletter, *al-Naba’*, and the three magazines *Dābiq*, *Rumīyyah* and *Dār al-Islam*, to analyse the group’s religious perception of Iran and the Iranian state’s “*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*”, Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist, system.

In the database surveyed, IS depicts Iran as a rejectionist, *Rafidhī*, a tyrannous, a sacrilegious and Magian state. *Al-Naba’* (Arabic language) published a series of articles, which were reprinted in *Rumīyyah* (English language), to disgrace the religious authorisations of the regime.

An article of *Rumīyyah* magazine states, “The Safawi state [Iran] is perhaps the first of the [Rafidi] states in which the Rafidi tawaghit [tyrants] exercised their authority as deputies of the alleged Mahdi” (*Rumīyyah*, 10, p. 26). Another article from the same magazine states “The [Rafidah] fabricated most of their religion during the period of *ghaybah* [occultation] that came after the death of al-Hasan (al-‘Askarī) when they claimed that his invented son Muhammad (al-Mahdi) went into hiding”. The article continues, “We will see how they added to their religion and took away from it during these long centuries” (*Rumīyyah*, 9, p. 41).

IS uses the “*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*” doctrine as the main vehicle to delegitimize Iran’s religious leadership. “*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*” advocates a guardianship-based political system, which relies upon a just and capable jurist (*faqīh*) to assume the leadership of the government in the absence of an infallible Imam, Mahdi. The Iranian political system is based on this doctrine.

According to a long article published in the *Rumīyyah* magazine, the “*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*” is “the most recent of the lies and deceptions” put forth by the Khomeini himself, and proof that “the [Rafidah] nullify the foundation of their own religion” (11, p. 23). The article ironically argues that this doctrine is not only contradictory to Sunni Islam but also to Shi‘sm. It continues, “*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*” “is a means of discreetly revolting against the foundation of their false religion by taking all the authority which they had confined to their alleged imams and granting it to men who do not possess the characteristics which they had previously claimed were mandatory for the ruler to have” (*Ibid*, p. 24).

IS, like many Salafī theologians, related Shi‘sm to Judaism. An Issue of *Dābiq*, for example, published an article linking Judaism with Shi‘sm. *Dābiq* magazine cited Shi‘a scholars who said that al-Mahdi, the Imam who will come at the end of life, will be speaking Hebrew, and will rule in accordance to the laws of David and Torah (*Ibid*, p. 17).

Another issue of *Dābiq* argues that the Jews and the Shi‘a have more in common than any other religious groups. The article claims that both “wait for the Savior whom they allege will wipe out the followers of Allah’s messenger [Mohamad]” (12, p. 46).

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In the same vein, *Dār al-Islam* (3, p. 7) and *Al-Naba'* (69, p. 8) argue that Ibn Saba', a Jew from Yemen, who deceptively converted to Islam, established Shi'ism in order to attack Islam from within. Ibn Saba' claimed that the fourth Caliph of Islam, Ali, is God incarnate. Ali ordered to burn Ibn Saba' and his followers. Ibn Saba', the story says, succeeded to escape. When Ali was killed, Ibn Saba' refused to accept it and claimed that Ali was God, and that he could not be killed. Thus, some of the Shi'as believe in the *Raj'a*, the return of Ali in some form at the end of life.

The articles surveyed also call for the conquest of Iran. *Al-Naba'* indicated that "[T]he thorns of the [Rafidah] [Iran] ... will only be broken until it is conquered again" (69, p. 3). The same article concluded, "we are sure that naṣr Allah [the victory of God] is ours ... and that God will open their homes to us, and will enable us to take their land, and aid us to establish his religion ... in Persia again" (69, p. 3). Another article of *al-Naba'* calls for the destruction of Iran and its proxies in the region and for stopping Iran from financing and supporting Shi'ism projects in the world (86, pp. 8-9).

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