



Further support to Kosovo institutions in the fight against organized crime, corruption and violent extremism

An EU funded Project managed by the European Union Office in Kosovo

# NEW BATTLEGROUNDS

## EXTREMIST GROUPS' ACTIVITY ON SOCIAL NETWORKS IN KOSOVO, ALBANIA AND FYROM

November 2017



**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

**B&S**   
EUROPE

Implemented by a  
consortium led by B&S Europe





Further support to Kosovo institutions in the fight against organized crime,  
corruption and violent extremism

An EU funded Project managed by the  
European Union Office in Kosovo

# NEW BATTLEGROUNDS

## EXTREMIST GROUPS' ACTIVITY ON SOCIAL NETWORKS IN KOSOVO, ALBANIA AND FYROM

November 2017



**KCSS**  
Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

**B&S**  
EUROPE

Implemented by a  
consortium led by B&S Europe

**Publisher:** Kosovar Center for Security Studies

**Author:** Vesë Kelmendi and Shpat Balaj

**Internal review:** Skender Perteshi and Florian Qehaja

**External review:** Shpend Kursani

**Note:** This report was originally drafted in Albanian language

---

© All rights reserved by the Kosovar Center for Security Studies. Intellectual property rights are protected by Law No. 04.L-065 on Copyright and Related Rights, and by Law No. 05/L-047 on amending and supplementing Law No. 04.L-065 on Copyright and Related Rights.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any storage system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

The views expressed in this publication are of the Kosovar Center for Security Studies and do not necessarily reflect those of its partners or donors.

# CONTENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
KEY FINDINGS	8
OVERVIEW	9
EXTREMIST GROUPS' USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS	10
TRENDS DURING THE RESEARCH PERIOD	16
MOST ACTIVE PAGES OF EXTREMIST GROUPS	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	25

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1, Channels that distribute content about participation in the Syria and Iraq conflict (Al-Muwahhidun Shqip and Tehuidi.com) Accessed on: 05 January 2017	11
Figure 2, Al Hak Media channel used by extremist groups Accessed on: 07 May 2017	12
Figure 3, Direct reports from battlefields from Facebook profiles and pages, accessed on 01- 05 June 2017	15
Figure 4, Their attitudes towards elections, state and religious leaders Accesed on 16 February 2017	17
Figure 5, Their attitude towards imams of the Islamic and Muslim Communities Accesed on 26 March 2017	17
Figure 6, Most followed imams with profiles analyzed in the report Accesed on: 30 May 2017	19
Figure 7, Their attitudes towards terrorist attacks Accesed on 03 June 2017	20
Figure 8, Support to Albanian leaders within ISIS Accesed on 08 June 2017	21
Figure 9 Most active / followed pages from the analyzed profiles Accesed on June 2016 till June 2017	23

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Online platforms are used extensively as a propaganda tool to convince young people to support the various groups fighting in Iraq and Syria. Many individuals outside of the conflict partake in propaganda efforts on social media, using their profiles to provide electronic support to ISIS and other extremist groups. An analysis of various profiles indicates that those engaged in the Syria conflict use their profile to disseminate information about the conflict, which can be used for propaganda. The typical feature observed across these profiles is the virtual association between them.

Websites and profiles that share the online propaganda of extremist groups have been identified in Kosovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Albania. The distribution of this propaganda in the Albanian language by ISIS and other organizations has increased support for the so-called "Islamic State". Research on the social network activities of these various groups aims to explain the discourse of online sites that primarily promote ISIS, the content of these pages, their attitudes towards democratic processes such as elections and employment in secular state institutions, other religious communities, and state security institutions, as well as sermons on jihad and support for prominent members of various violent extremist groups.

The methodology employed during the course of the research for this report involved the analysis of data and information gathered from within 'closed' websites and social media groups/networks that are only accessible by invitation. The interactions within these 'closed' groups are more honest and less guarded than would be the case with an unrestricted, publicly viewable page. A precise description of the methodology has deliberately been avoided in order to prevent counter-measures being taken by the administrators of these closed groups. As will be made clear, this report is intended to mark the beginning on an ongoing process of monitoring of online radicalization in the Albanian language.

The research is primarily based on three categories of online content: (i) extremist groups that are pro-violence; (ii) propaganda material, such as calls for jihad or for support for imprisoned imams; and (iii) trends and attitudes towards the state, institutions and society in general. To understand the importance of the Internet, namely of social network sites such as Facebook, YouTube and others, we have also analyzed some of the interviews of individuals formerly engaged in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. According to the interviewees, most of them used Facebook and YouTube to become informed of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, which is different compared to the online propaganda which was spread in EU member

states, where twitter was used mostly.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the distressing images of civilians in Syria, the idea of assuming protagonism in “creating Caliphate” to fight for Jihad” led to a number of individuals having an active role in the media. Their narrative echoes protection of Islam by repeatedly referring to what they call ‘crusaders’ as well as prioritizing their enemies such as Jews, Alewite communities and traditional preachers of Islam.

Kosovo Prosecution files on individuals charged with criminal offenses, such as participation and recruitment in ISIS and other organizations, reveal that the defendants charged with participation in the wars in Syria and Iraq would communicate primarily through the Facebook chat app, as well as via different Vala and IPKO numbers.<sup>2</sup>

In their communications they have used different code words to signal their engagement in Syria. This includes coordination over the time of departure, and informing family members via SMS or Skype.<sup>3</sup>

The Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) has created a database that includes Facebook pages, YouTube channels and other sites promoting violence or propaganda about ISIS and other terrorist organizations. These pages represent calls to join fights in Syria and Iraq and make “jihad” and to be “soldiers of Allah”. The analysis of these Albanian language sites was conducted from December 2016 until May 2017. 60 Facebook pages, 4 closed groups and over 120 individual profiles and 6 YouTube channels were analyzed.

- 
- 1 Berger.J & Jonathon.M “The ISIS Twitter Census – Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter” Center for Middle East Policy at BROOKINGS, March 2015. Accessed on June 2017. Available at: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/isis\\_twitter\\_census\\_berger\\_morgan.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf)
  - 2 Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo / Serious Crime Prosecution Department: Indictment PPS. No. 25/2015, Prishtina, 04 December 2015

- 
- 3 Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo / Serious Crime Prosecution Department: Indictment PPS. No. 25/2015, Prishtina, 04 December 2015 and the Judgment of the Basic Court of Ferizaj, Serious Crime Prosecution Department, PKR No. 54/15, 20 May 2016

# KEY FINDINGS

- Facebook and YouTube are the most used platforms by recruiters and violent extremists in Albanian speaking countries;
- The most common words in the analyzed profiles are: *Tawhid, Tāghūt, Kafir, Munafiqun, Kufr, Islamophobe, Jihad, Shahid, Real Imams, Lions, Mujahid and Crusader, Shias, Islamic State, Soldiers of Allah, Islam under Attack, Asad Regime, protectors of islam, Al Sham, Jews, Join the Caliphate, jihadi bride, loyalty towards allah, support jihad, attack west, caliphate lions and non-believers,*
- These individuals propagandise against participation in secular system of governance in Kosovo and Balkans by usually referring but not limited to the electoral system in which, according to them, people should boycott because it is against Islam faith;
- The narrative of individuals prioritizes Jewish, Alewite communities and crusaders as one of their primary enemies. Their narrative is illustrated in a number of pictures implying, what they call, Westoxification of Albanian societies;
- Some of the analyzed profiles are affiliated with ISIS and report directly from the battlefields. During this analysis, it was also observed that some of those who have returned from the conflict in Syria and Iraq continue to share posts of these pages and profiles;
- Most of the activity of individual profiles of violent extremists relates to supporting imams convicted of terrorist offenses for recruitment in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM, as they disagree with and agitate against the imams officially adhering to the Islamic Communities in Kosovo and FYROM and the Muslim Community in Albania.
- There is content martyrizing the prisoned extremists saying it is an honor and service to Allah to be there. They share this idea also in social media to embrace sympathy from others which have the same ideology;
- The aim of online propaganda is to reach different individuals, groups and places that can not be engaged in direct communication. Most of them openly support extremist groups, but we have been unable to collect data that indicates whether these individuals want to join the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Some of the individual profiles use online communications to gain supporters;
- Due to the policies of platforms like Facebook, pages featuring extremist content are closed, but most of these pages will re-open under the same names or with the same features as the previous pages;

# OVERVIEW

Most used platforms



FACEBOOK



TELEGRAM



YOUTUBE

Number of analyzed pages **60+**

Type of sites



**PUBLIC PAGES**  
(FACEBOOK)



**CLOSED GROUPS**  
(FACEBOOK)



**PUBLIC CHANNELS**  
(YOUTUBE)



**PUBLIC CHAT**  
(TELEGRAM)

Most used words

TAWHID | TĀGHŪT | KAFIR | MUNAFIQUN | KUFR |  
ISLAMOPHOBE | JIHAD | SHAHID |  
REAL IMAMS | LIONS | MUJAHID | CRUSADERS

Facebook platform users<sup>4</sup>



KOSOVO  
**860.000**

ALBANIA  
**1.400.000**

FYROM  
**1.000.000**

Number of analyzed profiles **150+**

Type of distributed content

CALLS AND DIRECT SUPPORT FOR JIHAD

SUPPORT FOR JIHADISTS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

HATE SPEECH

POSTS AGAINST DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES AND COUNTRIES

SUPPORT FOR TERRORIST ATTACKS

Locations where they operate

**KOSOVO ALBANIA FYROM**

4 Internet World Stats "Usage and Population Statistics" <http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa2.htm#kv> Accessed on: 25 May m2017

# EXTREMIST GROUPS' USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Unlike propaganda from the official channels of extremist groups around the world, such as ISIS sites, a lack of professionalism in the creation and editing of propaganda content is the common feature of active profiles/pages. Distributed content has no visual sophistication, but in most cases the postings contain messages, citations and trends similar to official propaganda. Some profiles/pages share content with Albanian subtitles of the official media outputs of extremist groups, which gives the illusion of direct involvement with their official channels<sup>5</sup>. These pages have a considerable number of likes and followers, while many them are successors of previously closed pages. "Hilafeti" (Caliphate) was one of the principal pages<sup>6</sup>, which was closed, and according to our analysis of its activity, most of the followers have moved to other sites which are also described in this report. The report cannot make any estimate of the number of people involved in the social media because it is very likely that majority of them participate in most of the identified social media. As a result, one cannot multiple the number of followers from all identified groups and come up with the results. It is even more difficult to estimate number of Kosovar members or cluster them based on their country.

The type of posts on the analyzed pages/profiles is primarily the same: doctrines oriented on the legitimacy of "holy war"<sup>7</sup>, calls against Western countries,

life style, crusaders, Shias and other who do not share the same ideology of the terrorist organizations. However, it is worth pointing out that these groups have also called for attacks on countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey - since these Muslim-majority states are viewed as Western collaborators, and are assessed as a traitor of Islam. An example which was hugely mention in the social media by the terrorists is the visit of US President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia and the weapons' sale deal. This was heavily discussed and criticized by ISIS activists and sympathizers on social networks<sup>8</sup>. They also feature graphic images from the countries affected by war, support for Albanian foreign terrorist fighters and foreign *jihadis*<sup>9</sup> and direct reports from ISIS conflicts.<sup>10</sup>

Much of the distributed posts in the radicalized profiles/sites are religiously-oriented teachings in the proclamation of the "call to jihad". In principle, the distribution of such content is not necessarily related to violent extremism, but given the overall activity of the analyzed pages/profiles, their hate speech and the general promotion of their propaganda give a negative connotation to their postings, and indirectly is a motivation for participation in foreign conflicts in Syria and Iraq.<sup>11</sup> The purpose behind the usage of religious content is to justify violence through their

5 See for example On YouTube: Al-Hak Media <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8wxJLU3r-U>

6 Hilafeti Page <https://www.facebook.com/hilafeti/>

7 "Bota Islame" (Islamic World) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/damirtirana/>

8 "Bota Islame" (Islamic World) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/damirtirana/>

9 "Eja në Islam" (Come to Islam) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/EJA-NE-ISLAM-603805896481591/>

10 "Agimi i Vërtetë" (True Dawn) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/Agimi-i-V%C3%ABrtet%C3%AB--342087872860883/>

11 "Minberi i Teuhidit" (Tawhid Minber) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/minbermedia/>

version of "legitimate means", as well as to balance and hide behind religious sites.<sup>12</sup> These YouTube channels and Facebook pages are an outlet for different sermons about the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. One of the most important channels that promotes jihadis is the "Al-Muwahhidun Shqip" (Al-Muwahhidun Albanian). While this was closed, there is also "Shpata e Mëshiruesit" (Sword of the Most Merciful),<sup>13</sup> "Shpata e Mëshiruesit" and YouTube videos such as "Shehidat e Ballkanit"<sup>14</sup> (Balkan Shahids), or "Ke durim o shpirti im"<sup>15</sup> (Have patience my soul), amongst others.

The "*Thirja në Tehuid*" (Call to Tawhid) site was used to release content about "holy war" and to denounce democracy. This site was closed, but we have secured images of the site prior to closure (see Figure 1).

Such posts are more liked and distributed by their audience, making it easier to target potential fighters based on the likes, comments or sharing of those posts.

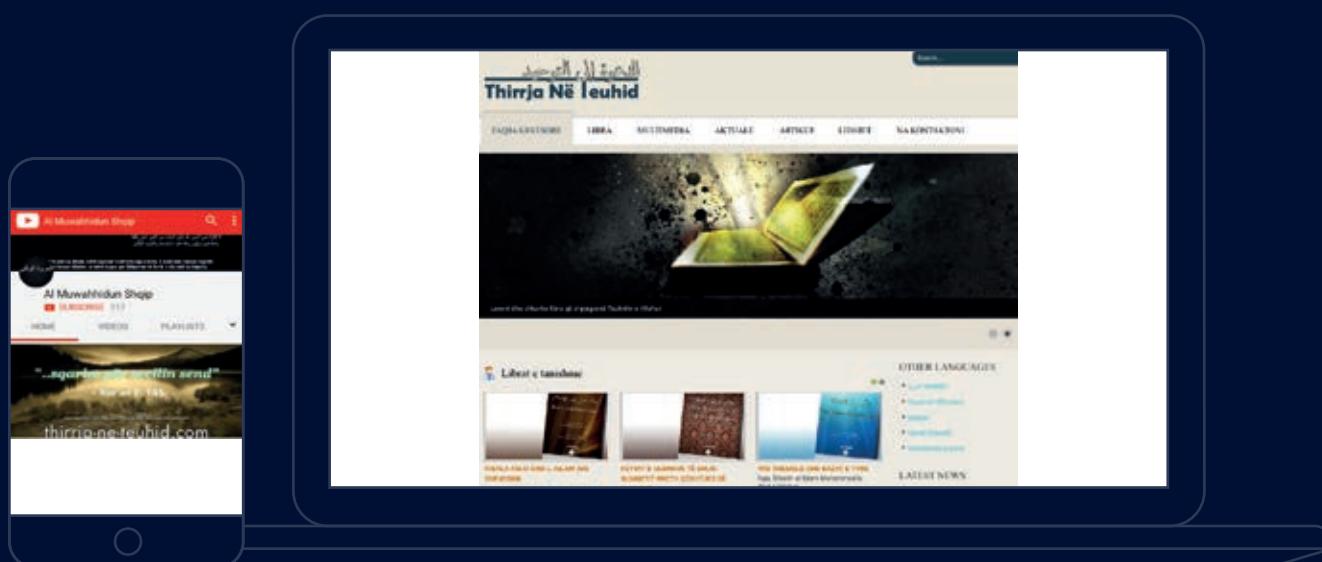


Figure 1, Channels that distribute content about participation in the Syria and Iraq conflict  
(Al-Muwahhidun Shqip and Tehuidi.com) Accessed on: 05 January 2017

12 See photos in Figure 1

13 See on YouTube: "Shpata e Mëshiruesit" (Sword of the Most Merciful) <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOJWUls7vtq7uzkzqNsjtFw>

14 See on YouTube: "Shehidat e Ballkanit" (Balkan Shahids) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfE6fGxY65E>

15 See on YouTube: "Ke durim o shpirti im" (Have patience my soul) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qamyNkbxOMM&t=97s>

Meanwhile, "Al Hak Media"<sup>16</sup> is one of the most sophisticated channels used by extremist groups, sharing different videos that promote warfare, show combat footage from Syria and Iraq, offer images of jihadis performing religious rituals, as well as include video propaganda against those they regard as enemies. *Al Hak Media* is a relatively new channel that was launched at the end of 2016, with a total of 105 followers and about 18,000 views of their videos (see Figure 2).

During the research we encountered certain profiles of individuals who are likely to be engaged in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. These profiles are characterized by their small number of friends, fake names and privacy, with little or no posts, and no information provided about profile users. These profiles are occasionally activated by some of the analyzed groups and share different messages or information about the death of jihadis and other information concerning the conflict. This form of communication was also confirmed by the returnees interviewed by the KCSS, who explained that they contacted Albanians within ISIS to help them join the Syrian and Iraqi conflict.

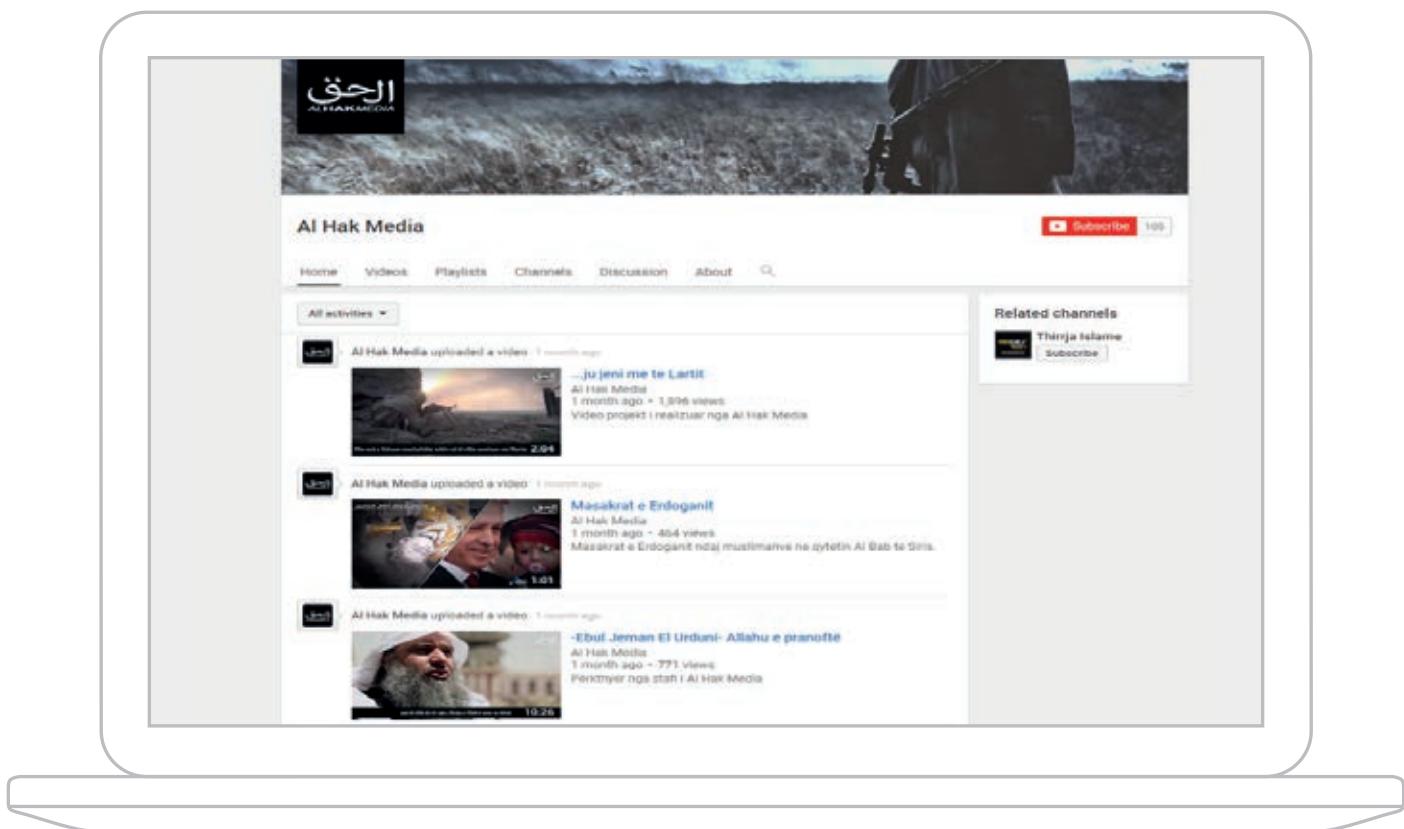


Figure 2, Al Hak Media channel used by extremist groups Accessed on: 07 May 2017

<sup>16</sup> See on YouTube "Al Hak Media" <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKmEVbNeJD7BpXvHffNZ3gA>

Such was the case of B.B. who stated that "one of the main reasons why I joined the conflict were the videos and murders of civilians in Syria that I watched on YouTube. Via Facebook I communicated with an Albanian who was there, who told me whom to contact in Kosovo, and then I got a ticket and traveled to Syria and Iraq."<sup>17</sup>

During the analysis of transcripts of the Kosovo Prosecution on cases of individuals participating in the conflict in Syria and Iraq, it was observed that former foreign fighters have communicated via domestic mobile phone operators, Vala and IPKO, and have occasionally asked their family members in Kosovo to provide credit for their phone accounts. For example, they have send updates to family members if they were injured or if someone died in the conflict.<sup>18</sup> One of the respondents stressed that he was forced to have his picture taken, armed and in uniform, so that the leaders inside the camp would be able to post that picture on Facebook to appeal and motivate other young people from Kosovo to join the conflict and be future jihadists. He stated further: "I had my picture taken, but I was forced to, because otherwise my request to return to Kosovo would have been refused. That photo was aimed at attracting young people to join the Syrian and Iraqi conflict."<sup>19</sup>

Online propaganda of extremist groups has turned into the main source of information on events occurring in areas controlled by ISIS. These sources accuse the international media of "fake news", which creates confusion among people who follow the trend of extremist groups. The media campaign of terrorist organizations, such as ISIS and others has created forums for radicalized individuals who refuse to re-

ceive information that features narratives against ISIS and other groups that they consider to be fair in their purpose, cause, and action. Through social networks, these groups and individuals have created their own community, which seems to be quite isolated. Within this community, they use various nicknames which consistently begin with prepositions such as Abu, Ibn, AL, EL, Isa, which are placed before adjectives or the names of their countries of origin, such as "Abu Al-Kosovi", "Ibn Isa Islami", "Ibn Al Arnaut" and others. Through this established community, they recognize each other on the basis of the activities they display in their posts on social networks and their reports on the situation created in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Likewise, in the analyzed pages and profiles, they also feature narratives about rules on women within the so-called Islamic State, while some of them open profiles under names of women or with various propaganda photographs representing women isolated from their original settings. KCSS researchers have noticed the relocation of public chat communications on closed chats on platforms such as Telegram and Signal. Simultaneously, the following images (see Figure 3) reveal part of the narratives used by individuals to report on the fighting in Syria and Iraq, as well as the false propaganda they employ.<sup>20</sup> We have also identified 4 closed groups that usually post news releases from the Amaq News Agency, but this news is posted or translated into Albanian. The primary types of post are photographs, sites, or infographics and videos through which they want to keep their followers informed of the situation in the Syria.<sup>21</sup>

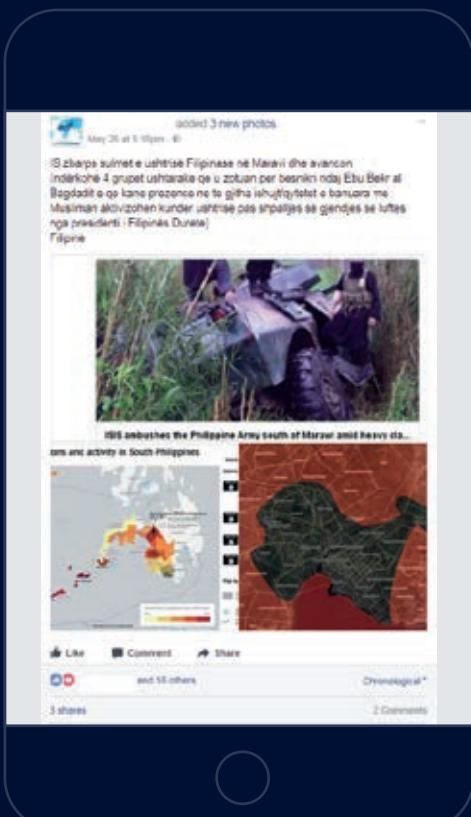
17 Interview with returned former fighter B.B. 05/09/2016

18 Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo / Serious Crime Prosecution Department: Indictment PPS. No. 25/2015, Prishtina, 04 December 2015

19 Interview with returned former fighter C.D. 06/07/2016

20 "Lugina Al-Afyah" (Al-Afyah Valley) Page: <https://www.facebook.com/LuginaAlAfyah/>

21 Data collected by the social networks database / KCSS (2016-2017)



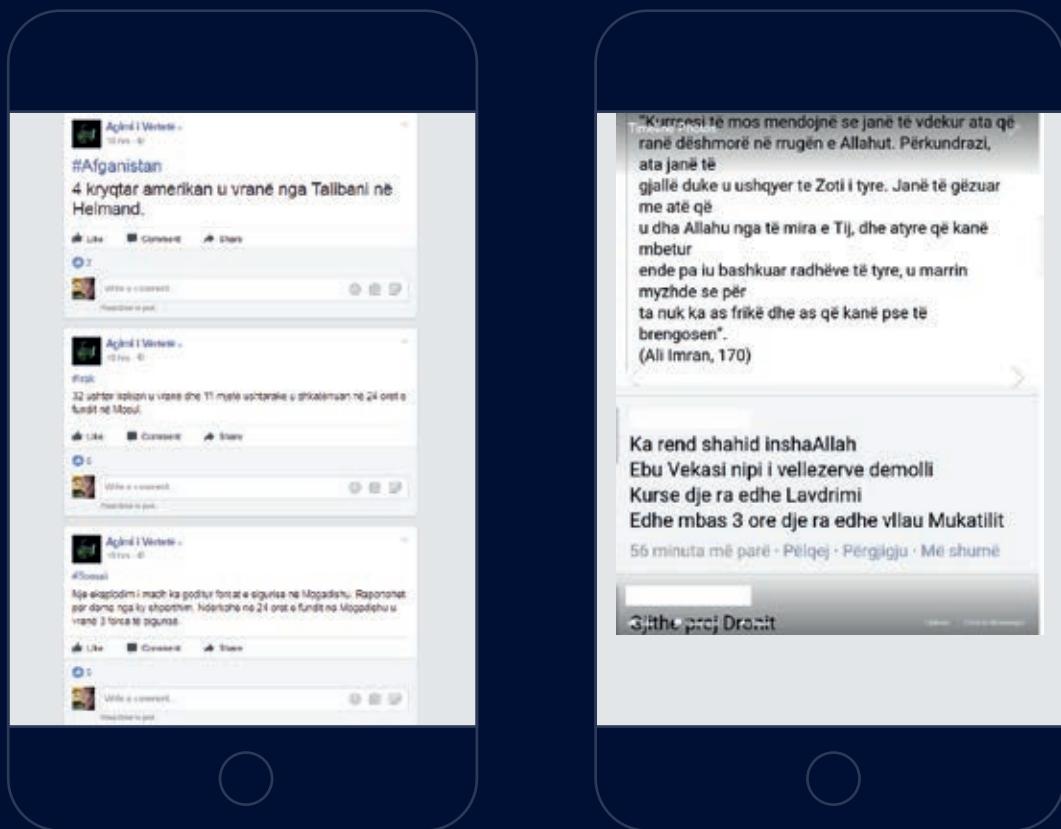
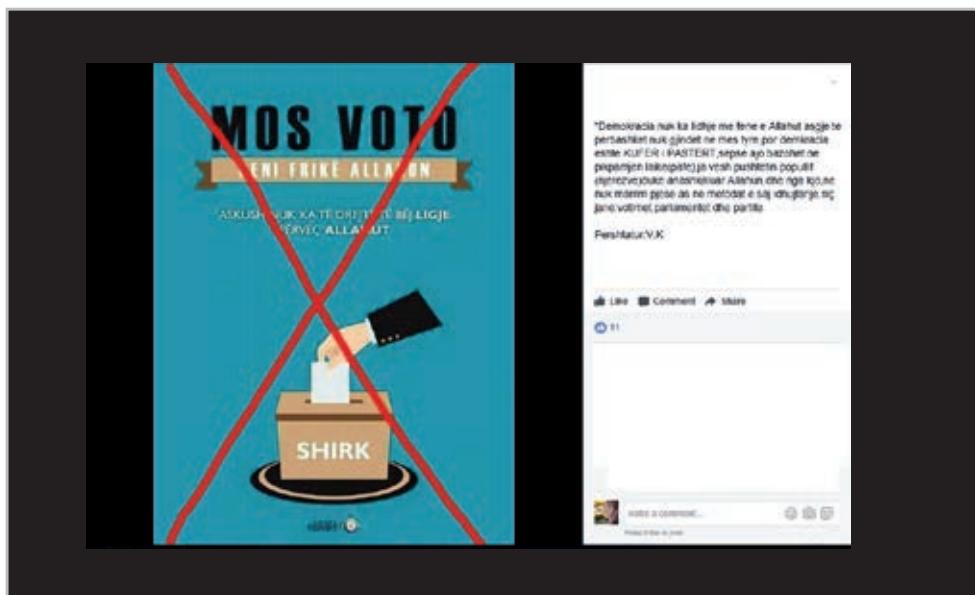


Figure 3, Direct reports from battlefields from Facebook profiles and pages, accessed on 01- 05 June 2017

# TRENDS DURING THE RESEARCH PERIOD

An interesting phenomenon in recent months from supporters of extremist groups on social media was their call not to vote in elections in Kosovo and Albania. Moreover, their discourse is also aimed against political parties which are considered to have a religious base, because as they claim, participation in democratic processes contradicts their principles (see Figure 4). They proclaim the idea that the active muslim believers and practitioners should not play any role or contribute to the selection of a Prime Minister, mayor or president of institutions which do not belong to the Islam, but belong to the secular state.

According to them the muslim believers should not be governed by non believers. They go even further and promote the idea that the muslims believers should not pay taxes for the secular state; children of muslim believers should not go to the public schools managed by the state institutions; there is a prohibition on working for the institutions of secular state such as: Kosovo Police, Kosovo Security Force, public administration and other institutions which are part of the secular state authorities.



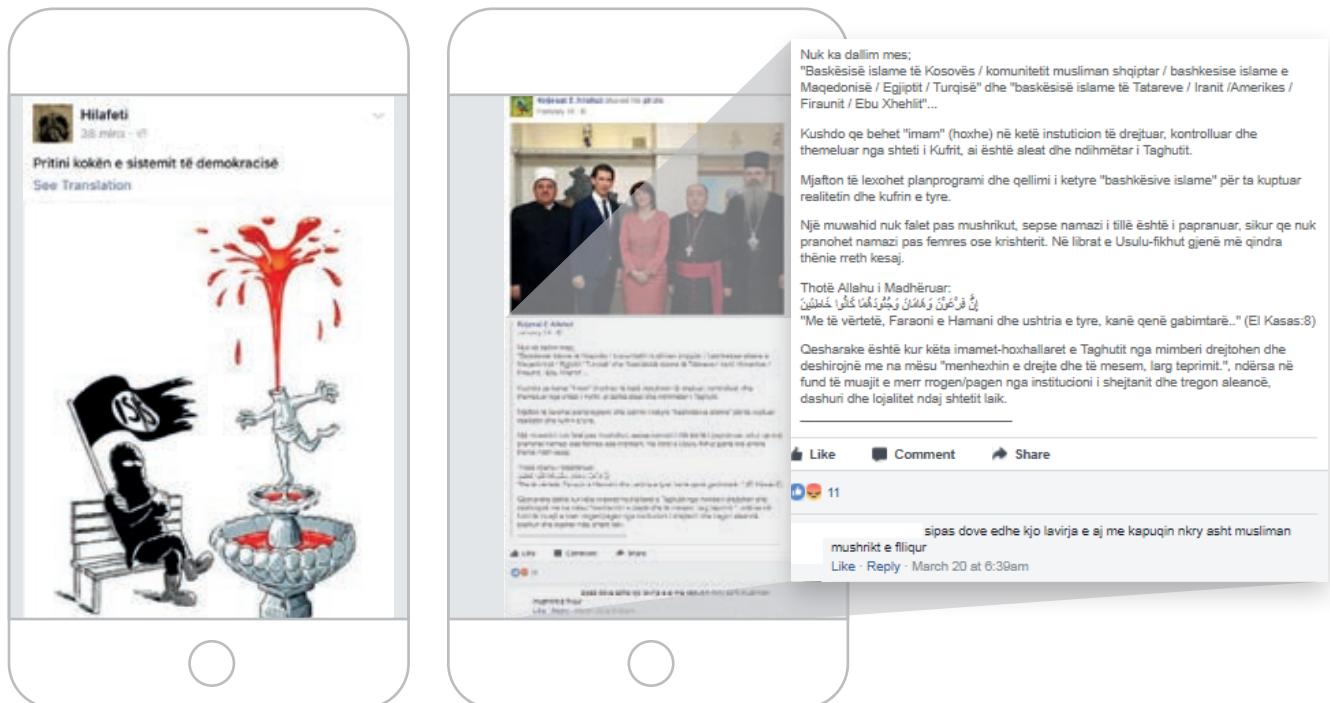


Figure 4, Their attitudes towards elections, state and religious leaders Accesed on 16 February 2017

In addition, according to the analysis, all these pages and individual profiles know each other and support the idea that only the imams who are in prisons are “real imams”<sup>22</sup> (See Figure 5).



Figure 5, Their attitude towards imams of the Islamic and Muslim Communities Accesed on 26 March 2017

22 See on YouTube “Burgu është për burra” (Prison is for Men) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9d4N\\_gAm4Os](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9d4N_gAm4Os)

Most individual profiles are active in support of imams from Kosovo, FYROM and Albania who are convicted of terrorist activities including recruitment and hate speech. Often, they share content where they compare imams whom they consider deceitful with imams who are in prison. For example, Enis Rama, a Kosovo imam from Mitrovica, where supporters of extremist groups in social media posted a propaganda video in which they compared him with, radical/takfiri imam Rexhep Memishi, a Skopje imam charged with terrorist recruitment activities.<sup>23</sup> They make this comparison to portray the imam from Skopje as “pious”, while calling for caution against following the imam from Mitrovica. In this sermon, imam Enis Rama talks about the election/voting process, explaining that in principle no muslim should consider being against the election/voting process or fail to participate in elections, instead they should organize for an effective participation that benefits their community. We must not permit any misuse of our votes. While the views of the Imam from Skopje are such that, according to him, voting in the elections is a denial of the Islamic religion.

During his sermon he addresses all those “imams who engage in propaganda about voter turnout and wish to push other brothers into these tāghūt elections. These elections are not otherwise named in Shari’ah terminology, except for tāghūt and kufr elections. Because democracy is a religion and it is kufr and tāghūt, and anyone seeking any religion other than Islam, shall not be accepted. The aqida of democracy states that “the majority rules the minority”, so the elections are about making laws, and legislation is tāghūt.”

Such attitudes are directed towards virtually all the imams who follow the Islamic Communities in FYROM and Kosovo and the Muslim Community in Albania - and who cooperate with and support state institutions.

The following figure (see Figure 6) lists the Facebook pages of imams who are imprisoned on terrorist offense charges in Kosovo, FYROM and Albania, and whose sermons are primarily distributed in the profiles analyzed in this report. This graph displays the number of likes and followers of these pages on Facebook. We can’t prove who stands behind these pages after the imams’ arrests.

---

23 See on YouTube “Zbulimi i mashtrimeve të Enis Rama-s rrëth Votimeve” (Debunking Enis Rama’s deception about voting)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPC4jAVPI80>

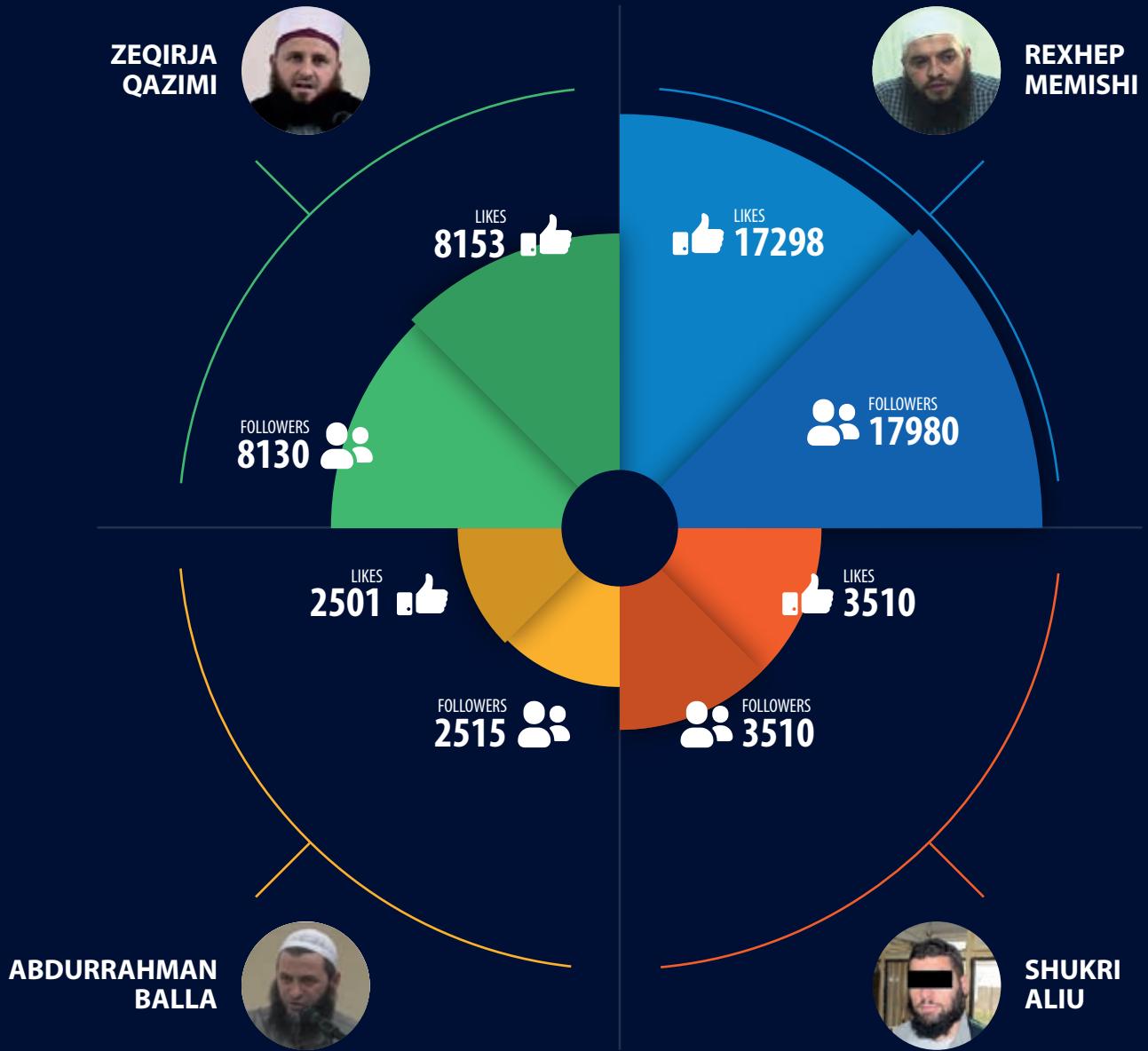


Figure 6, Most followed imams with profiles analyzed in the report Accesed on: 30 May 2017

The individuals who maintain these sites engage in ongoing activities that promote violent extremism and *jihadis*. Site activity surges when terrorist attacks are committed around the world, sharing posts in support of such attacks. This was also observed during the recent attacks in May and June 2017 in the United Kingdom, following the Manchester Concert

attack and the London Bridge attack, when most profiles and some Facebook pages pledged support to the attackers (see Figure 7). According to them, such acts must be supported because innocent muslims are being killed in Syria and Iraq, while the West, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are to blame for all these killings.

While analyzing profiles and groups on social media, we encountered in the distribution of materials that encourage hate speech towards Christian community, the Jews and the Shi'a. The arguments which extremist groups use to justify their hate speech are different from each other. The problem they consider with the Shi'a has a religious background and according to profiles and extremist groups analyzed, Shi'a are rejected by the Islamic faith. Their approach to the Christian community and to Jews has an avenging character because these two are considered to be causing the problems of Muslims in the world. Furthermore, they believe both Christians and Jews are more privileged by Western world and according to them, these countries have the goal of spreading Christianity all over the world, including the Middle East countries. In the case of Kosovo, Albania and FYROM they have raised the debate about the

discrimination of Muslims, the decline of the voice of adhan, the issue of headscarves, the demolitions of mosques, the lack of mosques etc. The extremist groups used the debates to push their agendas aimed at recruiting and promoting hate speech against other religions. The purpose of using propaganda by extremist groups was the proclamation of "equal life" in the so-called "Islamic State", which they can not find in their own countries. The anti-Jewish and anti-Shia narrative lead to construction of new enemies for Albanians because such narrative was never present before, with religious tolerance being a feature of during Ottoman Empire. Our assessment indicates that wherever there is such narrative against Jewish and shiia communities, there is potential for violent extremism, hence use of force against these communities.



Figure 7, Their attitudes towards terrorist attacks Accesed on 03 June 2017

The latest trend observed during our analysis was the sharing of the news of the death of Lavdrim Muhamxheri, after it was reported that he had been killed. He received great praise from groups that are listed

in this research. His death was also hailed by 3 profiles of people who have returned from the conflict in Syria and Iraq and who are currently under court proceedings (see Figure 8).

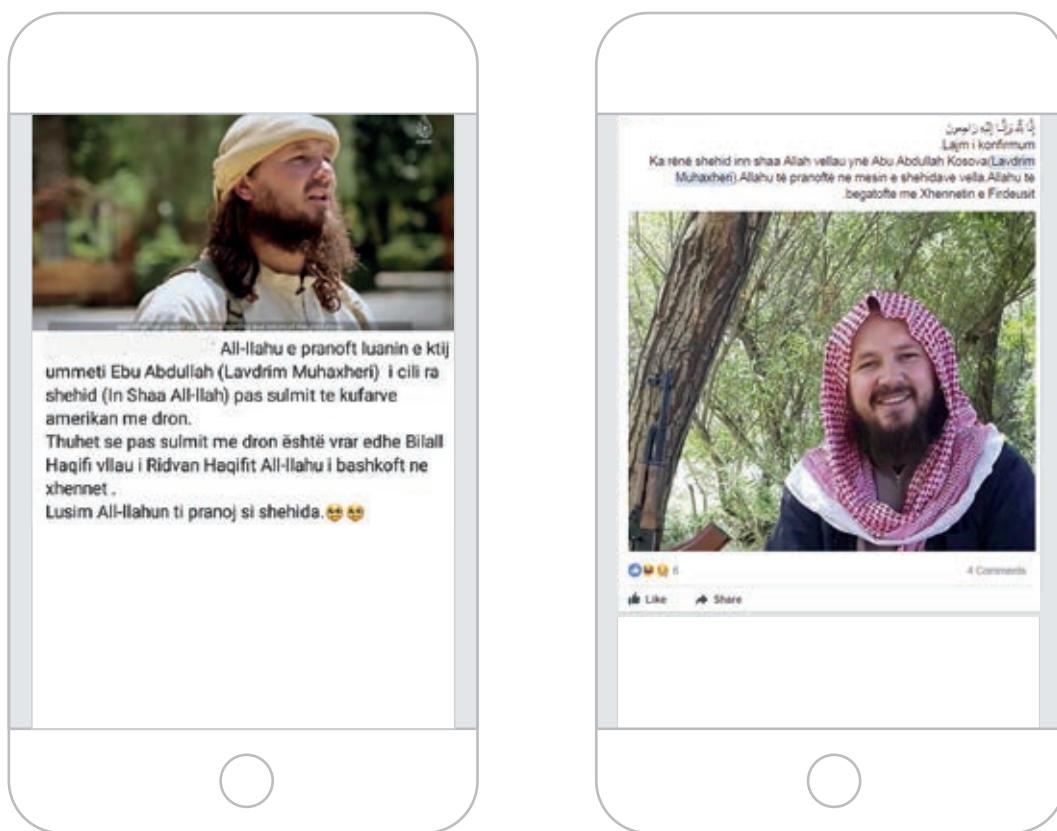


Figure 8, Support to Albanian leaders within ISIS Accesed on 08 June 2017

# MOST ACTIVE PAGES OF EXTREMIST GROUPS

The following graphs feature the most popular pages deployed as propaganda tools for extremist ideas. These pages openly support the “Islamic State” and make calls to join what they regard as a holy war. The attitudes and followers of all these pages are largely the same. If we compare the total number of Facebook users in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM, we notice that such pages are followed by a very small percentage of Facebook users.

These pages contain:

- Translated texts of Amaq, the ISIS official media agency;
- Calls to jihad;
- Support for arrested imams;
- Footage of massacres in Syria;

- Support for terrorist attacks in the West;
- Incitement of hate against Western countries, Turkey and Saudi Arabia;
- Opposition to imams of Islamic and Muslim Communities in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM;
- Regular reports from Der'a Mosul, Raqqa and Afghanistan;
- Names of those killed in the conflict;
- Video of jihadis in various services and activities;
- Opposition to Kurds, the US and Arab countries;
- Texts translated by foreign radicalized persons;
- Hate speech against other religions

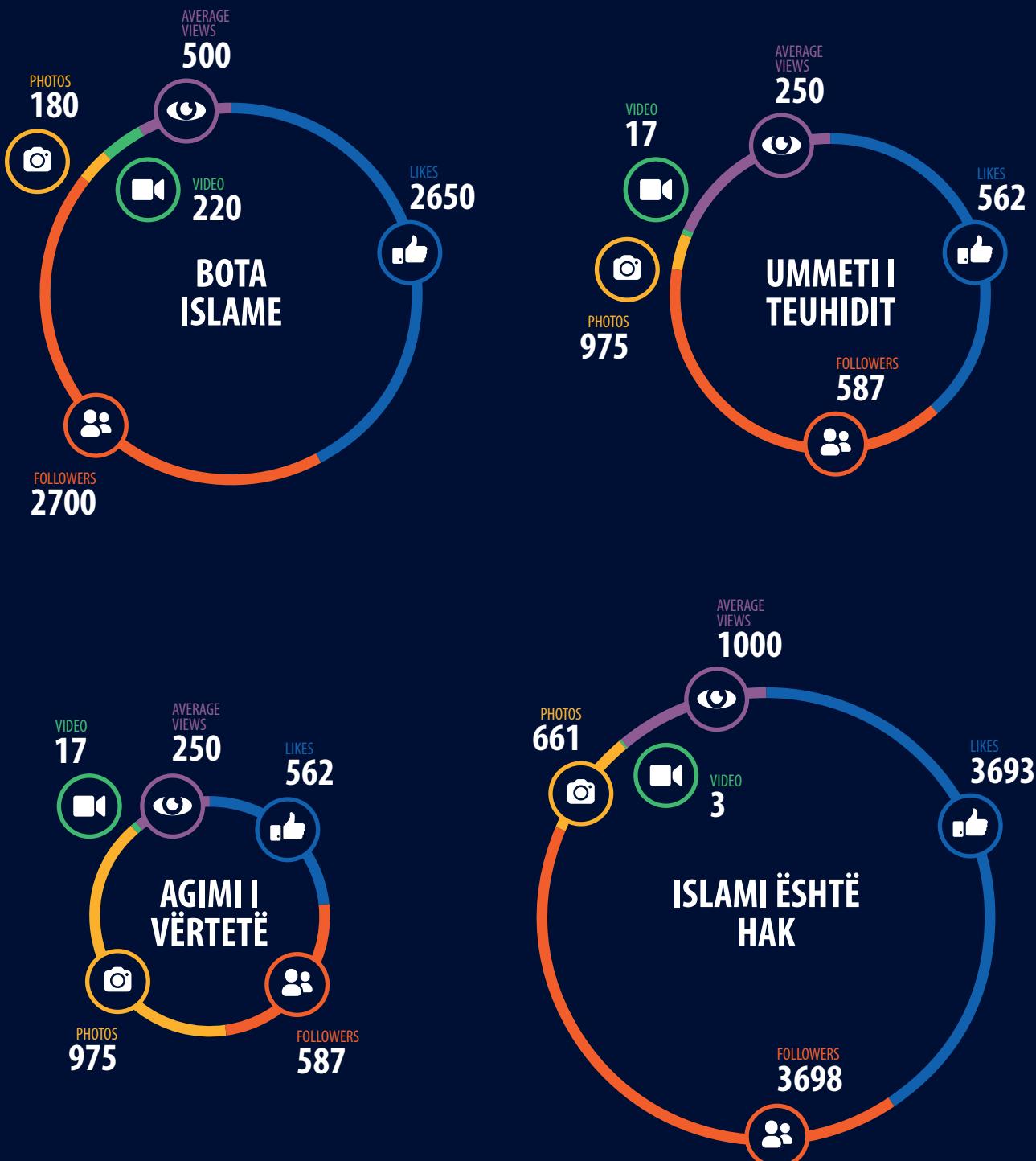


Figure 9 Most active / followed pages from the analyzed profiles Accesed on June 2016 till June 2017

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Religious scholars should encourage religious institutions (Kosovo, Albania, FYROM) to engage more actively in social networks, to target groups managed by extremist circles and to provide religious arguments to counter online propaganda;
- The Islamic communities in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM do not have well-established online platforms that would simultaneously contribute to the religious education of young people, and help combat violent extremism through communication. The Muslim communities in Kosovo, Albania and FYROM should build proper online platforms and channels (YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) in order to strategically counter the arguments used by extremist groups for recruitment purposes;
- The establishment of a regional network for an ongoing monitoring process and identification of extremist groups in social media that propagate about the Syria and Iraq conflict and other issues related to violent extremism. The regional network should cooperate closely with religious communities and security institutions in the respective countries (Kosovo, Albania and FYROM) in the production of counter narratives to the discourse of extremist profiles/groups;
- The methodology of this report can be used as an example for continuous monitoring of extremist groups' trends in social media especially by security institutions;
- State institutions and civil society should organize trainings on the use of social networks, the verification of the accuracy of information and the identifi- cation of propaganda within their communities for youth at the municipal level throughout Kosovo;
- The narrative against specific communities, namely Shia and Jewish community should be considered a priority by the security institutions because the potential for violence is very likely;
- Former violent extremists must publicise that there is nothing heroic about joining the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Such campaigns can successfully rely on short videos, targeting the audience which may be affected by online propaganda;
- The country's institutions should increase focus on social networks and must create platforms where citizens can address problems or report profiles that are related to violent extremists or propaganda within their communities;
- Radicalized individuals believe it is "us" against "them", and the approach of the Government and religious leaders must focus on rejecting this narrative. They must find the right messages to challenge these peoples' negative beliefs about democracy, laws and institutions;
- It is essential to establish helpful civic initiatives, through cooperation between security institutions and the families of known extremists. Community leaders can also engage in counter-narratives addressing the problems of violent extremism;

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Special Prosecution of the Republic of Kosovo / Serious Crime Prosecution Department: Indictment PPS. No. 25/2015, Prishtina, 04 December 2015
2. Judgment by Basic Court Ferizaj, Serious Crime Prosecution Department PKR No. 54/15, 20 May 2016
3. Interview of B.B. 05/09/2016
4. Interview of C.D. 06/07/2016
5. Berger.J & Jonathon.M "The ISIS Twitter Census – Defining and describing the population of ISIS supporters on Twitter" Center for Middle East Policy at BROOKINGS, March 2015.  
Available at: [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/isis\\_twitter\\_census\\_berger\\_morgan.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/isis_twitter_census_berger_morgan.pdf)

## YouTube:

6. Al-Hak Media <https://www.youtube.com/take?v=e8wxJLU3r-U>
7. "Shehidat e Ballkanit" (Balkan Shahids) <https://www.youtube.com/take?v=GfE6fGxY65>
8. "Ke durim o shpirti im" (Have patience my soul) <https://www.youtube.com/take?v=qamyNkbxOMM&t=93s>
9. Zbulimi i mashtrimeve të Enis Rames-rreth Votimeve (Debunking Enis Rama's deception about voting) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPC4jAVPI80>
10. "Shpata e Mëshiruesit" (Sword of the Most Merciful): <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOJWUIs7vtq7uzkzqNsjtFw>

## Facebook:

11. Hilafeti Page, <https://www.facebook.com/hilafeti/>
12. "Bota Islame" (Islamic World) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/damirtirana/>
13. "Ummeti i Teuidit" (Tawhid Ummah) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/UmmetiiTeuhidit/>
14. "Eja në Islam" (Come to Islam) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/EJA-NE-ISLAM-603805896481591/>
15. "Agimi i Vërtetë" (True Dawn) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/AgimiV%C3%ABrtet%C3%AB3420878728608/>
16. "Minberi i Teuhidit" (Tawhid Minber) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/minbermedia/>
17. "Rexhep Memishi" Page, <https://www.facebook.com/RexhepMemishi01/>
18. "Gjithnjë me Hoxhallarët" (Always with the Imams) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/Gjithnj%C3%AB-me-Hoxhol-lar%C3%ABt-235246293293449/>
19. "Imam Abdurahim Balla" Page, [https://www.facebook.com/HoxheAbdurahimBalla/?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/HoxheAbdurahimBalla/?ref=br_rs)
20. Imam "Zeqirja Qazimi" Page, <https://www.facebook.com/Hoxh%C3%AB-Zekerija-Qazimi-220931798113728/>
21. "Islami është Hak" (Islam Is Hak) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/Islami-%C3%ABsz%C3%AB-Hak-1651904388408917/>
22. "Minarja e Bardhë" (White Minaret) Page, <https://www.facebook.com/minarja.eBardhe/>

## Individual encoded profiles:

23. Around 150 individual profiles with withheld identity
24. Photos from individual encoded profiles within the report
25. Closed groups on Facebook

Katalogimi në botim – **(CIP)**  
Biblioteka Kombëtare e Kosovës "Pjetër Bogdani"

351.746.1(497-15)  
343.3/7(497-15)

Kelmendi, Vesë

New battleground : Extremist groups' activity on social networks in Kosovo, Albania and Fyrom / Vesë Kelmendi dhe Shpat Balaj. – Prishtinë : Kosovar Center for Security Studies, 2017. – 28 f. : ilustr. ; 21 cm.

1.Balaj, Shpat

**ISBN 978-9951-679-70-1**



[www.qkss.org](http://www.qkss.org)

ISBN 978-9951-679-70-1

A standard one-dimensional barcode representing the ISBN number 978-9951-679-70-1.

9 789951 679701