

Baqiya – We will Endure Forever! ISIS Women Shout as they Attack those who Denounce the Group

<https://icsve.org/baqiya-we-will-endure-forever-isis-women-shout-as-they-attack-those-who-denounce-the-group/>

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by Anne Speckhard

“Baqiya!” is the battle cry of those who continue to believe in the resurgence of ISIS. It is also the battle cry of female [ISIS enforcers](#) in Camp al Roj, the camp in Syria housing women and children related to ISIS members. These women recently attacked and brutally beat Hoda Muthana, a woman who grew up in America—a girl who at age 19, had briefly believed the ISIS lies and joined the group only to find that it was not what she’d been told and who now strongly denounces ISIS. For these women, the battle cry of Baqiya means ISIS will remain and last forever. They firmly expect their ISIS brothers still free on the battle ground to come break the walls of the camp and bring them back into the ISIS Caliphate. This is not a completely unfounded hope, given the numbers of ISIS fighters still at loose is close to when the group first started. In 2022 the group successfully broke into the al Sina’a prison housing their male counterparts and prior to ISIS declaring a Caliphate they “broke the walls” in prisons in Iraq to free al Qaeda in Iraq fighters to rejoin them. These women have already drawn up kill lists for when that day happens and Hoda’s name is on it, along with the other women who now strongly and openly denounce ISIS.

Both [Camps al Hol and al Roj are known for violence](#), even murders, carried out by ISIS die-hard enforcers who take their ire out on those who have walked away from the group. Last year women dedicated to ISIS were even found to be [studding out teen boys to impregnate the ISIS die-hards](#), so they can increase the number of fighters for the group in preparation for their resurgence in the region.

In this recent attack, three women ganged up on and mercilessly beat, scratched, kicked and spat upon Hoda Muthana, a girl born in New Jersey and raised in Alabama, a girl who grew up believing she

was American. Hoda, falsely accused of spreading a rumor about Lamya, the daughter of Zakia Kacher, being pregnant by a camp guard, something which Lamya herself had reportedly jokingly said about herself. According to Hoda, “Zakia, Lamya and Rayana came together to beat me in front of my 7-year-old son and in front of all the people, with the guard watching and the administration not doing anything about it because they use them as their snitches.”

According to Hoda, the eldest, Zakia Kachar, holds German residency and is of Serbian ethnicity and is already known to be violent. Hoda states that Zakia “has broken the arm of a Dutch citizen named Tugba two years ago” and that even though, “she is violent and doesn’t stop, she gets let off a lot,” because the Kurds use her as an informant.

Hoda recounts, “Everyone was surrounding us while I was getting beaten but no one could help because Zakia was warding everyone off and even threatened them if they came to help.” Hoda included in her plea for help, pitiful voice messages of her young son telling how he was shaking and terrified but unable to do anything to stop them. Hoda also sent pictures of her scratched neck and arms, and bruised arms and legs, stating that they kicked her in the thigh at least 100 times, while beating her and also banged her head repeatedly on the cement. All of this while her young son looked on helplessly. As Hoda recounts, “Zakia also grabbed [my son] from the back and screamed at him to get out of the way.” The boy is now highly anxious and feels guilty for not having helped her.

There are so many disturbing themes in this story. One is that of a girl raised in America, having been issued two American passports and believing herself to be American, now standing accused by the Kurds of being an “American spy” because she doesn’t want to be a “snitch” for them. She is thus rendered unprotected by the Kurds from the ISIS women who just displayed their brutality as they beat her mercilessly in front of her son and the guards. Another theme is that of a young boy growing up among monsters with only his mother to steer him on the path of peace and continued hope that someday the country she once renounced, but now wishes desperately to return home to, will find pity for her plight. As a child

with only one healthy but highly distressed attachment figure he having a hard time growing up normal. And he's just one example of [thousands of ISIS-related children](#), completely innocent of any crimes, yet detained in the camps where they are continually exposed to, preyed upon and recruited by these die-hard ISIS women while the children's home countries refuse to repatriate them. This begs the question of why our countries are not returning these women and their children to their home countries rather than allowing an incubator of hate and violence to broil relentlessly, perhaps churning out even worse for the future?

Hoda's case is complicated. Since she was detained, Hoda's nationality has been under dispute with her American citizenship contested all the way up to the Supreme Court. It turns out Hoda was born in the U.S. to a former diplomat who had been fired from his job when civil war broke out in his home country of Yemen. He was on the seceding side and his embassy did not bother to inform the U.S. State Department that he was out of status before Hoda was born. If the embassy had properly informed U.S. authorities as required, Hoda would be a U.S. citizen. That a country in civil war would properly serve the needs of its former seceded employees is beyond reasonable expectation, but it became the basis of rendering Hoda stateless.

Despite this, Hoda has received two U.S. passports in her life. Unfortunately, the second one was applied for during a time when she'd become deeply brainwashed by ISIS recruiters and propagandists who were freely declaring on Twitter that ISIS was a Caliphate and stating that any Muslim who didn't come was doomed to hellfire. It's important to point out that Twitter, nor any other social media company, has ever been held criminally accountable for having allowed this platform of hate and deceit to operate. Yet youth that fell down the rabbit hole are held to a higher standard and were supposed to have discerned from afar that ISIS was lying to them over a mainline social media platform operating in the USA. Naïve, and wanting to escape troubled relations in her home, Hoda travelled to Syria believing she was following God's mandate. While she admits she was a true believer in the ISIS lies, she didn't remain one for long. After directly experiencing their corruption, brutality and unIslamic nature, Hoda began to look for a way out.

However, Hoda has been accused of being a propagandist and recruiting on behalf of the group—that is before she became disillusioned of it. Unable to find a viable escape, Hoda and her young son, then only one year old, finally ended up in Camp al Roj after surrendering to US forces in 2018. While she and her son are housed in a facility designated for political purposes as a refugee camp (which allows UNDP to supply it), the “camp” is essentially a prison, and increasingly a dangerous and toxic one.

While it's unclear if Hoda is guilty of propagandizing and recruiting, she is not currently charged by any country of any crimes. She claims it was others using her phone and social media. And now, since her surrender, she is clearly no fan of ISIS. When I interviewed her [in March of 2019](#), she gladly agreed to feature in a video for our *Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative* campaign aimed at exposing ISIS's corruption, brutality and unIslamic practices. [In it](#), she openly denounced the group, not hiding her face or name, and has continued to do so to this day, a practice which it appears is now placing her in grave danger as she lives among die-hard ISIS women who have murdered, assaulted, attacked children and burned the tents of women who denounce the group.

Whether or not Hoda is guilty of any crime, she should be able to face charges in a court of law within a reasonable amount of time. Likewise, she should not be rendered stateless, which taking away her American passport has done, as she does not have a Yemeni passport nor expects to be granted one given her father is negatively viewed by the state.

Hoda however, does have rights as an international prisoner of war held in detention camps run with the support of the U.S. and EU governments. International conventions, such as the [Geneva Conventions](#) and the [United Nations Standard Minimum Rules](#), have established rights for prisoners which under the Geneva Conventions prohibits prisoners of war being subjected to torture. According to the UN Standard Minimum Rules, prisoners should be treated with respect and dignity, and protected from torture, cruel, or degrading treatment. Clearly being accused as an American spy by camp guards who then, according to Hoda, left her unprotected while ISIS-die hard prisoners beat her, is cruel, degrading and a form of torture.

Hoda and her son need protection. Hoda has many times told me if she could only get back to the US, she knows she has to face justice and perhaps even serve time in prison, although she has already served 6 years in this camp/prison. She is deeply repentant and wants to be a strong and committed voice against ISIS. With her experiences she could well be one for youth like her that fall down the internet rabbit hole of online recruiting, deception and lies.

Everyone deserves a second chance, and no one should be subjected to torture and beatings because they stand up and denounce ISIS. Clearly Hoda's son, detained from infancy, like so many other ISIS children still in the camps, is guilty of no crimes. Given she was born in the USA, grew up in America believing she was American, has American passport-holding parents and wants desperately to repent and make up for mistakes, isn't it time to return Hoda and her son to America and let him live in safety while putting her to work for us to fight international terrorism?

Anne Speckhard, Ph.D., is Director of the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism ([ICSVE](#)) and served for over 2 decades as Adjunct Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine and also served as an Affiliate in the Center for Security Studies, Georgetown University.

She has interviewed over 800 terrorists, violent extremists, their family members and supporters around the world, including in Western Europe, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Former Soviet Union and the Middle East. Over the past five years, she has conducted in-depth psychological interviews with 273 ISIS defectors, returnees and prisoners, as well as 16 al Shabaab cadres (as well as family members and ideologues,) studying their trajectories into and out of terrorism, and their experiences inside ISIS and al Shabaab.

Speckhard developed the ICSVE [Breaking the ISIS Brand Counter Narrative Project](#) from these interviews, which includes over 250 short counter narrative videos that mimic ISIS recruitment videos but contain actual terrorists strongly denouncing ISIS as un-Islamic, corrupt and brutal. These videos have been utilized in over 200

Facebook and Instagram campaigns globally. Beginning in 2020, she launched the ICSVE *Escape Hate Counter Narrative Project*, interviewing dozens of white supremacists and members of hate groups, developing counternarratives from their interviews, and creating anti-recruitment videos. She has also conducted rare interviews with five Antifa activists (Antifa protestors rarely grant interviews.)

Dr. Speckhard is also an expert in rehabilitation and repatriation of terrorists and their families. In 2007, she designed the psychological and Islamic aspects of the Detainee Rehabilitation Program in Iraq to be applied to 20,000+ detainees and 800 juveniles. This work led to consulting with foreign governments on issues of terrorist prevention, interventions and repatriation; and the rehabilitation and reintegration of ISIS foreign fighters, wives and children. She has worked with NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), UN Women, United Nations Countering Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (UNCTED), United Nations Office of Drug and Crime (UNODC), the EU Commission and EU Parliament, and to the U.S. Senate & House, Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Homeland Security, Health & Human Services, and the FBI.

Today Dr. Speckhard actively trains key stakeholders in law enforcement, intelligence, elite hostage negotiation teams, educators, and other professionals in countering violent extremism, locally and internationally. Her focus is on the psychology of terrorism, the effective use of counter-narrative messaging materials produced by ICSVE, as well as studying the use of children as violent actors by groups such as ISIS. Her consultations and trainings include U.S., Canadian, German, British, Dutch, Austrian, Swiss, Belgian, Danish, Iraqi, Syrian, Jordanian and Thai national police and security officials, among others.

Dr. Speckhard is the author of five books: *Homegrown Hate*, *Talking to Terrorists*, *Bride of ISIS*, *Undercover Jihadi*, and *ISIS Defectors: Inside Stories of the Terrorist Caliphate*. She has appeared on CNN, BBC, NPR, Fox News, MSNBC, CTV, CBC, and in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *London Times*, *TIME Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Daily Beast* and more. She regularly writes a

column for *Homeland Security Today*. Her research has been published in *Global Security: Health, Science and Policy*, *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, *Journal of African Security*, *Journal of Strategic Security*, the *Journal of Human Security*, *Bidhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, *Journal for Deradicalization*, *Perspectives on Terrorism* and the *International Studies Journal*. Her academic publications are found at <https://georgetown.academia.edu/AnneSpeckhard> and www.icsve.org.

ICSVE's Breaking the ISIS Brand and Escape Hate Counternarrative videos and training seminars can be watched on [ICSVE's YouTube channel](#).

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