

Chairman Johnson Opening Statement
“The Ideology of ISIS”

Tuesday, June 21, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Good morning. Thank you for joining us today.

On June 12, 2016, an ISIS-inspired terrorist carried out the deadliest attack in the United States since 9/11, killing 49 and wounding 53 other patrons of a nightclub in Orlando. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the victims and their families.

But we can do more. The purpose of this hearing is to examine ISIS’ poisonous ideology and how it results in the slaughter of innocents through executions and terrorist attacks. The most recent ISIS-inspired terrorist attack in Orlando continues the alarming trend of attacks on “soft targets” here in the U.S. and abroad. It was also an attack against the LGBT community, a community specifically targeted by the ideology that we will discuss today.

Our witnesses will provide first-hand accounts of the persecution they, and others like them, suffered at the hands of ISIS just for being themselves. ISIS’ brutality towards women, homosexuals, and other groups is overt, and these communities will continue to be vulnerable until ISIS is defeated. We have heard previous testimony that confirms that territorial control enables ISIS to overtly brutalize these communities, plan external operations, and inspire terrorist attacks.

In September 2014, President Obama articulated America's goal related to ISIS: "to degrade and ultimately destroy" it. That was 22 months ago. Last week, in testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee, CIA Director John Brennan stated that ISIS remains "a formidable, resilient, and largely cohesive enemy" and that “our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach." That is a sobering and depressing assessment.

As long as ISIS controls territory, the caliphate will survive and continue to inspire and direct the kind of barbarity we are regularly witnessing. America must lead the civilized world in assembling a committed coalition of the willing to defeat ISIS by denying it its territory and relentlessly hunting down and destroying Islamic terrorists wherever they have found safe haven.

The American people deserve a strategy to defeat ISIS. As a means to advance dialogue on that strategy, today we will examine key aspects of ISIS’ ideology and hear from its victims. You are courageous. Your willingness to share your harrowing life experiences today is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. I look forward to hearing your testimony.