



Global Islamism Monitor No. 64

April 29, 2019 Ilan I. Berman, Jacob McCarty, Ritika Bhat

Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; NATO; Afghanistan; Southeast Asia

BRUNEI'S BRUTAL NEW SEX LAW

The government of Brunei has implemented new and draconian punishments for behavior deemed sexually deviant under *sharia* law. Under changes to the national penal code just implemented by the Sultanate, LGBT individuals would face death by flogging if found engaged in same-sex intercourse. The Islamic law-based punishments would now allow authorities in the Asian nation to stone and whip to death individuals who are caught violating the country's already-existing prohibitions on homosexuality.

The measure has generated outrage from international observers and human rights campaigners. Amnesty International has termed the new punishments "heinous" and "inhumane," while others have warned that the measures could have adverse international consequences, including precipitating a "brain drain" of talent from the Asian nation as those affected by the punishments begin to depart the country. (London *Independent*, March 27, 2019)

ONE STEP FORWARD FOR PHILIPPINE COUNTERTERRORISM

Abu Dar, the last surviving leader of the Philippines-based ISIS affiliate known as the Maute Group, has been confirmed dead. Abu Dar, whose real name was Benito Marohombsar, was believed to have been responsible for the group's training and recruitment of fighters, as well as masterminding the bloody 2017 siege of Marawi. A DNA test has confirmed that he was killed last month during clashes between extremists and Philippine authorities in the Tuburan region of Cebu.

In the wake of Dar's death, officials in Manila are proclaiming victory over the Islamic State. "It means that the self-proclaimed Isis leader is dead," the country's Defense Secretary, Delfin Lorenzana, has said. "His group is leaderless in the meantime and also they are scattered after that successful operation by the army." Others, however, are not so sanguine. "I fundamentally disagree with any counter-terrorism strategy that is based on decapitation," says Zachary Abuza of the National War College, pointing to the persistence of the broader Islamist movement that has long dominated the country's southern regions. "You are not going to kill your enemies out of a long-running insurgency." (London *Guardian*, April 14, 2019)

NATO TRIES TO BROADEN THE AFGHAN DIALOGUE...

As the United States actively seeks a way out of Afghanistan, NATO is trying to turn up the heat on the Taliban. In a recent interview with *Radio Free Afghanistan*, British diplomat Nicholas Kay - the Alliance's senior civilian representative in the country - outlined that the bloc is seeking a true "inter-Afghan dialogue" that involves "all Afghan stakeholders" as a prerequisite for Western forces leaving the country. Currently, however, these conditions aren't currently being met; the Taliban has met under Russian auspices with some segments of the Afghan political elite, but those discussions have pointedly not included the Afghan government itself. That, Kay notes, is unacceptable. "In the end, the Afghan government will need to agree on a peace deal. The Afghan government is the sovereign, elected government of this country." (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 8, 2019)

...AS THE TALIBAN WAGES WAR ON MODERN MEDICINE

The Afghan Taliban has announced a ban on the activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and World Health Organization (WHO) in areas of Afghanistan that it controls. The relief organizations "have not stuck to the commitments they had... and they are acting suspiciously during vaccination campaigns," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has said. ICRC representatives have confirmed that the organization has suspended activities in Afghanistan, though it remains committed to providing aid and assistance to Afghans. (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 12, 2019)