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Zawahiri: Iraqi Sunnis Should Prepare for ‘Long Guerrilla War’

By Jason Ditz
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leader Ayman al-Zawahiri urged Iraq’s Sunni minority to prepare to engage in a “long guerrilla war” against the Shi’ite-dominated government as ISIS continued to lose ground.

“The Sunnis of Iraq should not just surrender upon the fall of their cities into the hands of the Shi’ite Safavid Army,” Zawahiri insisted, saying they need to organize themselves to re-defeat the Shi’ites that had already been expelled from their cities before.

Iraq doesn’t have an existing al-Qaeda affiliate. The previous one, “Al-Qaeda in Iraq,” split with the group and renamed itself ISIS. Zawahiri faulted ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for being too hardline, and claimed he had given “Safavid Iran and its subservient government” a pretext to eradicate all of Iraq’s Sunnis.

Al-Qaeda appears to have hope for reasserting itself in the country. ISIS is losing ground, and the Shi'ite purges against the Sunni minority in "liberated" cities seems to ensure that there will still be sectarian unrest for them to capitalize on in those post-ISIS regions.