

Tweeting the Quran: Israel's surprising religious turn in Arab outreach

New research highlights that a Jewish Israeli military spokesperson extensively employs Islamic religious messaging to address Arab and Muslim audiences.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The ongoing war in Gaza is shaping a new communicative strategy on the Israeli side, particularly in its outreach to Arab and Muslim audiences.

Central to this evolving narrative is the deliberate use of Islamic religious expressions, including verses from the Quran, the Muslim holy book.

This development is highlighted in a recent study published in the journal *Media, War & Conflict*, which explores the Arabic-language messaging of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson.

The research reveals a notable reliance on Islamic sayings and Quranic citations, especially in statements shared on X (formerly Twitter), suggesting a calculated effort to resonate with cultural and religious sensibilities in the region.

The study examines 154 tweets posted between June 2023 and November 2024 by Avichay Adraee, the Jewish Israeli military spokesperson who is fluent in Arabic and widely recognized across the 22 Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Adraee frequently appears on prominent 24-hour Arabic news channels, including the Qatari-funded Al Jazeera and the Saudi-financed Al Arabiya and Al Hadath.

His tweets often feature Quranic verses, sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic greetings for occasions such as Ramadan, Eid, and Friday prayers – references deeply embedded in Islamic tradition.

"At first glance, this may seem surprising or even contradictory," says Dr. Omar Daoudi, a researcher at the University of Sharjah's College of Communication and the study's author. "However, as the research reveals, it is part of a calculated communication strategy aimed at shaping public perception in the Arab world during times of conflict."

Dr. Daoudi's analysis of Adraee's tweets identifies four key communication strategies employed

by Israel to engage Arab audiences.

1. Religious Legitimization: Adraee's use of Islamic references, such as Quranic verses and Prophetic sayings, is intended to legitimize Israel's actions while simultaneously undermining its adversaries.
2. Dual Moral Narrative: The study highlights a recurring moral framing in which Israel's actions are portrayed as ethical and principled, whereas its opponents are depicted as corrupt and hypocritical.
3. Cultural Resonance: Adraee strategically aligns his messaging with significant Islamic events like Ramadan and Eid, aiming to evoke emotional and cultural familiarity among Arab viewers.
4. Inclusive Representation: His tweets emphasize the presence of Muslim soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), promoting an image of cultural inclusivity and attempting to normalize Israel's role in the region.

"The findings suggest that this practice represents an innovative strategy in which Islamic expressions function as both provocative and persuasive texts," Dr. Daoudi explains. "In doing so, they operate as propaganda tools, embedding carefully crafted messages within religious and cultural frameworks to advance broader military communication objectives."

Religious discourse, especially when infused with Quranic citations and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, holds deep sway in Arab and Muslim societies, shaping not only daily rituals but also broader social and political interactions.

Islam and its teachings play a central role in the everyday lives of many Muslims, serving as a moral and ethical compass that guides personal behavior and public discourse.

"This profound cultural and spiritual significance underscores the importance of examining how religious language is strategically employed in various contexts, including media and state-sponsored communication," according to the study.

Dr. Daoudi presents numerous examples from his corpus of 154 tweets, some of which include extended quotations from the Quran. One such tweet reads: "Look at the 'heroes' in Jenin firing from inside mosques. Didn't God Almighty say: 'Who is more unjust than he who prevents God's name from being mentioned in mosques?' For them is disgrace in this world and great punishment in the Hereafter."

When asked about the broader rationale behind Israel's use of religious expressions in messaging directed at Arabic-speaking audiences, Dr. Daoudi explained:

"The IDF operates in seven different languages to advance and frame their digital narratives on X, but it seems that employing religious expressions is unique to the Arabic IDF account, which operates on the principle of 'speaking the language' of its target audience, going far beyond simple translation to influence the audience."

In his findings, Dr. Daoudi writes: “The strategic deployment of Islamic religious expression by Avichay Adraee in his Twitter communications reflects a deliberate effort to engage Arabic-speaking Muslim audiences. The analysis of his tweets reveals a nuanced framework in which religious references and Islamic cultural symbols are employed not only as instruments of moral persuasion, but also as tools for shaping perceptions and influencing ideological viewpoints.”

Dr. Daoudi’s study contributes to the growing literature on digital diplomacy, military communication, and the role of religion in conflict by foregrounding a rarely examined dimension—the use of faith-based rhetoric not for religious devotion, but as a strategic communicative device in wartime.

“Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for scholars and practitioners exploring how military actors deploy soft power in digital environments. They reveal how religious and cultural codes are tactically mobilized to influence public opinion across linguistic and ideological boundaries,” he writes.

“In sum, this research demonstrates that religion can function not only as a marker of cultural identity, but also as a strategic rhetorical tool in contemporary digital warfare. By embedding Islamic references into military messaging, Adraee’s communication exemplifies an emerging form of digital diplomacy—one that blends cultural familiarity with political intent to advance national and ideological objectives.”

The significance of Dr. Daoudi’s research lies in its demonstration of how religion can be strategically repurposed in digital warfare, revealing that religious expressions are not solely spiritual in nature.

By invoking religious discourse on powerful social media platforms like X, such messaging transforms faith-based language into a tool for persuasion, legitimacy-building, narrative control, and, to a certain extent, direct propaganda, Dr. Daoudi emphasizes.

“This reflects a new dimension of digital diplomacy, where cultural familiarity is interwoven with political messaging,” he explains. “As the study shows, the use of Islamic symbols by a non-Muslim military spokesperson raises important questions about authenticity and audience reception.”

Dr. Daoudi concludes by noting that further research is needed to explore how Arab audiences interpret and respond to such messaging, as the current study focuses primarily on the communicator rather than the recipients.

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