Al-Qa'ida glossy advises women to cover up and marry a martyr - Asia - World - The Independent
Not content with launching an English-language magazine that debuted with a feature called "How to make a bomb in the kitchen of your Mom", al Qa'ida's media wing has followed up with a magazine for women, mixing beauty tips with lessons in jihad.

The 31-page glossy, Al-Shamikha, which translates loosely as "The Majestic Woman", features a niqab-clad woman posing...
with a sub-machine gun on its cover.

Much like Elle or Cosmopolitan, it includes advice on finding the right man ("marrying a mujahideen"), how to achieve a perfect complexion (stay inside with your face covered), and provides tips on first aid and etiquette.

Alongside sisterly advice such as "not to go out except when necessary" and to always wear a niqab for protection from the sun, the magazine runs interviews with martyr's wives and praises those who give their lives in the name of the editors' interpretation of Islam. "From martyrdom, the believer will gain security, safety and happiness," it says.

For those readers not quite ready for such a drastic step, it argues the pros and cons of honey facemasks and lobbies against "towelling too forcibly".

The magazine's editors explain their thinking in a launch issue preamble: "Because women constitute half of the population – and one might even say that they are the population since they give birth to the next generation – the enemies of Islam are bent on preventing the Muslim woman from knowing the truth about her religion and her role, since they know all too well what would
happen if women entered the field of jihad... The nation of Islam needs women who know the truth about their religion and about the battle and its dimensions and know what is expected of them.” Analysts say the idea is to market global jihad with the same slick feel as Cosmopolitan or Marie Claire push Western culture to young women. Al-Shamikha certainly isn’t the first jihadist magazine for women. It follows others such as The Granddaughters of Khansa, which launched in February 2010 only to fold after two editions. It bore a number of similarities to Al-Shamikha.

The US security establishment is reportedly concerned with al Qa’ida’s publishing ambitions, which are self-evidently intended to recruit followers among the wider Muslim world.

The launch of Al-Shamikha comes nine months after al Qa’ida launched an English-language glossy, Inspire, a magazine targeting young Muslims in the West whom it hopes to incite to acts of terrorism. Inspire is believed to be edited by a US citizen-turned-militant, Samir Khan, currently in hiding in Yemen. Before fleeing the US, Khan turned out a series of jihadi magazines called Jihad Recollections which, like Inspire, were trumpeted by cyber jihadis across the web.

Sophisticated media campaigns are a hallmark of Al Qa’ida's strategists, and although some of their ideas have an almost ludicrous resonance among a Western audience, they have been masterful at tapping into the disenchanted youth in many Islamic countries.
In 2008, 2009 and 2010, they reacted swiftly to natural disasters in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Pakistan, highlighting the different governments' lacklustre responses to floods, and their pocketing money intended for humanitarian purposes.

Ironically, for such a media-savvy movement, nearly all of al Qa’ida's offshoots have overtaken it on the public relations front. Even the Afghan Taliban, who ruled by a tyranny of ignorance during their stint in power, are consistently rolling out better narratives, berating the "puppet government" of Hamid Karzai and his Western supporters.

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