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## Black shahada flag for sale

The world is now used to seeing images of a steep black-and-white flag whose holders are threatening to re-make the Middle East and who have already claimed responsibility for numerous murders, massacres and ethnic cleansing across Iraq and Syria. But what does the self-proclaimed Islamic State standard, also known by its former name ISIS or the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria, tell observers about the goals of the organization and its supporters? Volumes, say experts from Islamic militant movements. Color, pattern, and choice of words on the flag all serve as the key to reading the group's history and opening a road map of where it sees itself going. The flag is black with the words La 'delighted 'illa-lah – there is no God but God – written over the top in white with a slightly coarse, handwritten Arabic manuscript. It is a very different type of font from, for example, the more complex caliphate of the Saudi flag, which also contains this same shahada, or Islamic statement of faith. Even rougher around the edges is a white circle in the middle of the ISIS flag, inside it are three words: God's messenger Mohammed. It is an interesting choice of word order considering that the second part of the shahada is and Mohammed is God's messenger. The reason for the circle and those words is that they are a copy of the so-known Mohammed seal that the prophet himself is believed to have used in his lifetime to seal letters he wrote to foreign leaders asking them to join him. A version of the sinet allegedly belonging to Othman, one of Mohammed's associates, is now permanently displayed at topkapi palace in Istanbul. Critics of ISIS say the use of the seal is intended to add a visa for historical authenticity to its mission. The power of the flag comes from the fact that it has the word Allah on it. Muslims themselves have seen the word sacred, which is why flag shaming becomes sacred, explains Hayder al Khoei, partner of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House in London. A week ago, for example, demonstrations were held in Beirut to burn ISIS flags, and an activist started a #BurnISIS campaign to compete with the ALS ice bucket challenge. Afterwards, Lebanese Justice Minister Ashraf Rifi asked for a ban on burning the flag and for violators to be severely punished because the burning of everything with the word Allah is considered an insult to Islam. The issue has aroused emotions throughout the Islamic world. Egyptian feminist Aliaa Magda Elmahdy recently staged a highly graphic protest aimed at desecrating the ISIS flag, sparking further controversy. Words make the flag so powerful, al Khoei says. The situation is very strange and embarrassing for Muslims because ISIS is an evil terrorist organisation with a real holy flag. The importance of the black and white flag remains that ISIS did not create the image it carries. Rather, it received a ticket from other jihadi-oriented groups, says Magnus Ranstorp, an expert on Islamic fundamentalist movements and director of research at the Centre for AsymmetricAI Threat Studies at the Swedish Academy of Defence. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (active in Yemen and Saudi Arabia) and the al-Shabab group in Somalia have all used the same flag, he says. The most important thing is the color. This raya, a solid black flag, was the war flag of the Prophet Mohammed, he explains. This flag squeezes time and space – it goes back to where they came from and where they're going. It is not only the color of jihad and the caliphate, but it represents what some believers see as the last battle and the day of resurrection. In other words, he explains, there is a kind of Islamic end-end element on the flag that pits the forces of Islam against the Christian West. For some Muslims, the choice of flag is worrying because of the symbolic weight of its lack of color. Looking at other Islamst militant movements in the region, they seem almost tame. The Hamas flag is green, Hezbollah's yellow. But like the flags of other jihadist groups, al-Nusra Front and Hizb ut-Tahrir – which are also seeking a global caliphate to replace the nation states imposed by western powers almost a hundred years ago – the ISIS flag is set in steep, unmountable black. The flag represents a lot of things that outside observers don't understand, but people in the Middle East understand the importance of colors, Ranstorp says. The purpose of the war flag is to demonstrate the desire to destroy the world order. If you understood it correctly, you could use it to identify who is really involved. He says, for example, that law enforcement and intelligence communities could be more grumpy in detecting who among young people in the West is attracted by ideology and may end up attracting to fight for Isis abroad. These symbols have meaning that could be exploited, but we are not really. In many places, they sell rings with the same Mohammed seal. You can find it on many Islamic State social media sites. This symbol tells us where they came from, the length of their mission and what they want – a caliphate. For safety reasons, we have sent a confirmation email to the address of your feed. Click the link to confirm your subscription and start accepting newsletters. If you don't get confirmation in 10 minutes, check your spam folder. Contact us at [letters@time.com](mailto:letters@time.com). Image copyrights from InternetPolice Have faced criticism for not arresting a man who walked through Westminster apparently displaying a black flag associated with the Islamic State group. Is such an act against the law, asks Finlo Rohrer. A man with a small child on his shoulders also with a flag in his hand walked near the Houses of Parliament. black flag, apparently similar to the one used by the Islamist militant group. The police said they stopped him, but then let him go. This man was spoken to by officers, taking into account relevant legislation, in particular the Public Order Act, and the decision was made by officers at the time the man was operating within the law. He wasn't arrested. The use, carrying or display of the logo or flag itself is not a criminal offence, unless the manner in which the logo is used, collected or displayed is such that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person is a limited supporter or member of the organisation. While it is illegal to support and membership [IS], it is not a crime to defend the establishment of an independent state. Other militant groups have used a black flag with a white shahada [Islamic religion] before Islamic State. It's possible that the episode was some kind of hoax. And met chief Bernard Hogan-Howe said further investigation was needed to determine whether the flag was one typically used by IS. One relevant point from the Public Order Act 1986, which covers England and Wales, says that someone is guilty of causing harassment, alarm or distress if they make a piece of writing, a sign or any other visible representation that threatens or violates the hearing or sighting of a person likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. The General Britain Terrorism Act 2000 is also relevant. A person in a public place commits an offence if (a) wears an item of clothing or (b) wears, carries or displays an item in such a way or in a situation where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that he or she is a member or supporter of a prohibited organisation. Islamic State affiversion has been banned in the UK since last year. This offence will result in up to six months in prison and a fine. I'm surprised the police didn't even arrest him, says Edward Elwyn Jones, senior associate attorney at Hodge, Jones &amp;amp; Allen. I've seen people who protest legally are arrested for less. Jones quoted the Rankin v Murray case as 2004, which confirmed that the tyre had been engraved with the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) sufficient for a conviction. But speaking with [the ticket user], they might have thought he did not genuinely support IS, Jones adds. Gary Watt, professor of law at the University of Warwick, says: The police may have had the right to conclude that it did not violate any strict legal wording. But despite the Terrorism Act and public order, Watt says it's interesting that the police didn't consider the flag a breach of the law of peace under general law. If this had been a naked person walking down the street, would the police have intervened? They probably would have intervened, even though they haven't, a strict letter of the law in which a nice thing would be unassisted in public. Key question Key question where the crime was felt, Watt says. In this case, the crowds of tourists who passed by the man apparently showed little reaction, possibly unaware of the significance of the flag by some or many. The real outrage has been the consternation of social media, Watt says. At the moment, no one has hinted that the police should take into account the global response to the event as it tries to maintain peace locally. Subscribe to BBC News Magazine's email newsletter to get articles in your inbox. Inbox.

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