The ISNAD Campaign in the Israel–Iran War

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The ISNAD campaign is a sophisticated foreign intervention effort, presented as a grassroots movement aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood. Its objective is to assist Hamas in its war against Israel in the Gaza Strip through extensive influence operations on social media. The campaign employs psychological warfare techniques and the use of fake Israeli profiles to create the impression of authentic internal criticism of the state and to undermine public legitimacy in Israel for the war. Following the outbreak of the war between Israel and Iran in June 2025, the ISNAD campaign deliberately recalibrated its messaging to erode public morale and weaken Israeli society. It emphasized themes of despair, intimidation, and harsh criticism of the government while simultaneously seeking to undermine trust in state institutions by exploiting existing divisions within Israeli society. In light of such threats, a systemic response is needed, one that includes raising public awareness of hostile online activity, alongside close cooperation between the government, civil society, technology companies, and the general public to identify and block malicious content from infiltrating the public discourse.

ISNAD is a civil-Islamist foreign interference campaign launched in December 2023 by Azeddine Dawidar, a former Egyptian opposition activist in exile and supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood. The campaign presents itself as an "independent, grassroots volunteer movement" and claims to include thousands of volunteers from many countries. According to its Telegram channel, its goal is "to support Palestine by blogging in different languages and breaking media censorship restrictions." ISNAD describes itself as the "psychological arm of the resistance," positioning its activity as complementary to Hamas's violent struggle. ISNAD makes use of digital tools, including social networks, AI tools, data-tracking and analysis systems, and VPN services. While it outwardly operates as a civic organization, its persistence over time and pursuit of additional strategic objectives (for example, against Egypt) suggest the possible backing by an unidentified strategic actor. ISNAD exemplifies the strategic challenge known in the West as Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), for which many democratic states, particularly the European Union, are working to formulate systemic responses.

Operating primarily through social media, the campaign employs psychological warfare tactics and mobilizes thousands of volunteers posing as Israelis who disseminate messages in Hebrew. Its primary objective is to increase public pressure within Israel to end the war in Gaza by exploiting political divisions in Israeli society, undermining the public sense of security, and encouraging civic resistance around political and social issues on the national

agenda. Following the outbreak of the 12-day war between Israel and Iran, ISNAD intensified its activities, distributing content designed to sow fear and confusion, erode trust in the government and the security establishment, damage Israel's social resilience, and weaken public support for the war effort.

To analyze the activity of the ISNAD network, recurring phrases were identified in social media posts beginning on June 13, 2025, the start of the war with Iran. Using advanced AI tools and close examination, patterns characteristic of inauthentic profiles were detected. By clustering similar or nearly identical content, accounts engaged in coordinated behavior were flagged as potential impostors. In this way, hundreds of fake profiles were uncovered on the X platform (formerly Twitter), along with dozens more on Facebook and TikTok.

ISNAD's Operational Strategy

Impersonation of Israelis: The dominant component of the ISNAD campaign is the impersonation of Israelis, which makes the messages appear as if they originate from Israelis themselves. Volunteers operate fake social media profiles with Hebrew names, biographies, and credible-looking profile pictures. To overcome linguistic errors in Hebrew caused by translation software, the campaign relies on short texts copied from authentic Israeli posts. These are relayed to the activists through a Telegram bot, which provides ready-made responses in Hebrew, along with translations into Arabic.

Flooding the Discourse: A central strategy of the campaign is "flooding the discourse," based on the idea that repetition of messages influences public perception. The goal is to saturate Israeli social media discourse with thousands of daily posts to influence public opinion in line with Hamas's objectives. Thousands of ISNAD volunteers reply to Israeli social media accounts that have high visibility, such as those belonging to media outlets, journalists, politicians, and protest leaders.

Radicalizing the Discourse: To increase the impact, ISNAD's activists often adopt the personas of anti-government protestors, attempting to push them toward more extreme rhetoric, including calls to refuse service in the IDF.

Adaptation and Learning: The campaign shows flexibility and ongoing adaptation. Following the large-scale removal of accounts in the past year, ISNAD quickly recovered and launched new profiles while also expanding to Facebook and TikTok. It also shifted from a centralized to a decentralized mode of operation, reducing the risk of detection. Impostors now avoid reciprocal follows and retweets, which are common practices in other influence networks. In addition, ISNAD employs artificial intelligence to generate near-identical but not identical content, thus making detection through recurring text patterns more difficult.
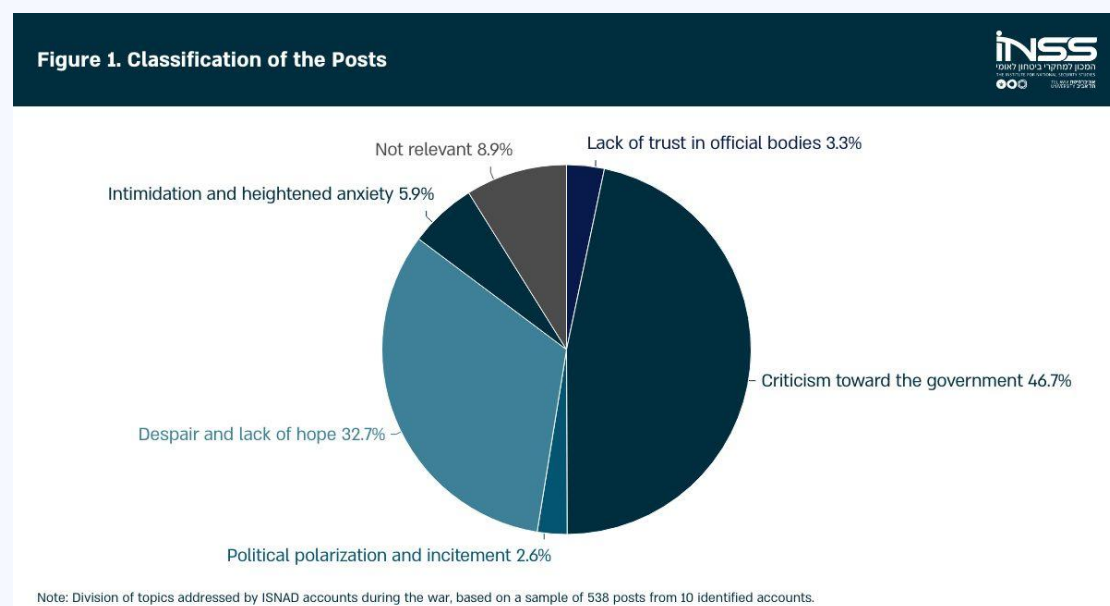
Structure and Concept of Operation of the Network

The ISNAD campaign is based on an operating model that combines a management team of several dozen coordinators who run the network, together with experts who support thousands of volunteers from various countries (mainly Turkey and Egypt). The volunteers, who require no prior knowledge of Hebrew or technical expertise, receive instructions on creating fake Israeli profiles and undergo a short trial period. Those who manage the campaign

study Israeli society in depth, monitor daily events, and draft Hebrew content (texts, illustrations, videos) in quick response to developments. They analyze Israeli reactions to these messages to improve operations. The volunteer activists receive a continuous flow of updated messages for distribution in Hebrew, which they disseminate across different platforms as replies to Israelis on social networks, in Israeli Facebook groups, and more. The activists also regularly mask their activities on their social media profiles to appear more authentic by sharing Israeli news, content from prominent protest leaders, and non-political material.

ISNAD's activity on X is well known in Israel among relevant civil society actors and security bodies, and suspicious inauthentic users have been removed many times over the past year and a half. However, the network's activity on Facebook and TikTok is more difficult to identify, and its presence on these platforms has gradually taken root. Many of the network's profiles are now significantly involved in Israeli discourse on these platforms, thereby advancing the campaign's goals.

ISNAD's Main Activities During the War

When ISNAD began its activity in Hebrew, it focused on sharp criticism of Israeli government policy regarding the management of the war in Gaza, the failure to release the hostages held by Hamas, and even made claims that Prime Minister Netanyahu prioritized his political survival over national security. Later, with the outbreak of the war with Iran (Operation Rising Lion), the network began amplifying messages of fear, helplessness, frustration, and concern for personal safety (see Figure 1). Through these fake profiles, ISNAD sought to damage morale and spread feelings of despair among the public, helping to undermine social cohesion within Israeli society. The network's leader, Azeddine Dawidar, declared in a [recorded statement](#) on June 19 that "ISNAD's role is to foil Israel's attempts at intimidation on the one hand and to increase the damage inflicted on Israel on the other, in order to undermine its image as invincible."

Figure 1. Classification of the Posts

Not relevant 8.9%
Lack of trust in official bodies 3.3%
Intimidation and heightened anxiety 5.9%
Criticism toward the government 46.7%
Despair and lack of hope 32.7%
Political polarization and incitement 2.6%

Note: Division of topics addressed by ISNAD accounts during the war, based on a sample of 538 posts from 10 identified accounts.

Criticism of the Government and Its Leader

Many of the campaign's messages express distrust in the Israeli government's performance and accuse its leader of failing to protect civilians and being incapable of managing the security crisis. These include:

- Allegations of negligence in meeting the essential needs of Israeli citizens, such as providing adequate shelters, especially for people with disabilities: "The population is left without fortified rooms, shelters, or protection, while Iranian targets are located inside major cities."

- Accusations that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prioritizes his political standing over state security: "He drags us all into war just to clear his name in court. He doesn't care how many people die, get injured, or lose everything."

- Calls for introspection regarding the lack of progress in the war against Hamas in Gaza, as well as the absence of progress on the hostage issue and in ending the fighting: "It's insane and intolerable that soldiers are still in Gaza . . . The whole Gaza issue is now on hold, including the matter of the hostages . . . and this is unacceptable."

A Sense of Despair and Hopelessness

The ISNAD messages convey an image of despair and hopelessness among the Israeli public. They portray the situation as unpredictable and impossible, depicting Israel as a country where citizens have no control over their fate. These include:

- Depicting the conflict as a "crazy war" in which civilians have become soldiers, living under constant pressure and helplessness: "People here have accepted as a given that they must be harmed, destroyed, and killed."

- Warning of widespread destruction: "There isn't a city or settlement that won't be hit," and "Iran will turn our lives into hell!"

- Highlighting the emotional toll of the war, such as children's trauma and a lack of personal security: "We are raising a generation of traumatized children," and "Our lives will become a complete nightmare."

Distrust Toward Official Israeli Institutions

The messages also highlight distrust of official bodies, such as the Home Front Command and even the Israeli media, including:

- Complaints that the government fails to update the public with vital information and details about war damages in Israel: "You can't understand what's happening from Israeli media: total devotion to covering an American surgical strike in Iran. The streets that were wiped out this morning across the country in a missile barrage? Disappeared between commercial breaks. Police brutality? Not important. The hostages? They'll have to wait."

- Claims that the government remains silent about rumors regarding the hostages, the Iranian attack, and so forth, thereby deepening the public's sense of insecurity and reinforcing feelings of abandonment among citizens.

Fragmentation and Calls for Violence

To weaken support for the war, ISNAD spreads messages that emphasize the existing political rifts within Israeli society and accuse the government of failing to preserve national unity. These include:

- A direct call for violence against the prime minister, as well as expressions of support for a protest activist who reportedly tried to obtain an RPG missile in an attempt to attack him.

- A divisive message calling on Iran to target only government supporters.

Against the backdrop of the war, several ISNAD network accounts have adopted a "right-wing" stance—contrary to the network's previous practice, which focused on opposition groups. These accounts disseminated videos of missile strikes and conveyed messages expressing sorrow over war damages and casualties among Israelis, alongside rhetoric of support and sympathy for the prime minister. It is possible that this pattern signals an infrastructure for action on both sides of Israel's political and social spectrum.

Alongside its covert domestic Israeli activity, ISNAD also seeks to challenge Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Jordan, both externally and internally. It has called on citizens to rise up against the regimes that, according to the campaign's operators, are aiding Israel. Most of the accusations are directed at Egypt for what is perceived as assistance to Israel, a lack of pressure on Israel, and the suppression of public protest within the country. Among other things, Egypt's President el-Sisi is depicted as the "bodyguard" of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. However, the network's messages draw a distinction between the Egyptian people and the regime, calling on the people to disseminate relevant materials online. This is coupled with calls for Arab citizens outside Egypt to protest against their own regimes. On the network's Telegram channel, expressions of support were also given to protests in the West directed against Egyptian and Jordanian embassies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The ISNAD campaign, which had been developing into a continuous influence operation by December 2023, shifted with the outbreak of the 12-day war between Israel and Iran in June 2025. The transition from general anti-Israel messaging to systematic psychological warfare against the Israeli public indicates a strategic shift: rather than emphasizing pro-Palestinian messaging, the campaign focused on undermining Israel's internal cohesion, sowing fear and distrust, and even encouraging violence against the prime minister.

Although it is difficult to assess the campaign's precise impact, it appears to have failed to penetrate Israeli media discourse during the war with Iran. This was largely because the public's attention was focused on the missile attacks against Israeli cities, which caused

significant damage, and on the espionage campaign that Iran was conducting at the same time.

Nevertheless, the accumulation of impersonation tactics and covert message dissemination by malicious foreign actors seeking to undermine Israel internally could endanger the structural, institutional, governmental, and social fabric of Israeli society or any democratic society. The challenge of confronting this threat lies in the open and free arena of social media. In this arena, which is unregulated and unsupervised, the public has almost no ability to prevent "impostors" from misleading many users, and herein lies the greatest danger.

To confront the challenge of hostile influence and foreign intervention on social media, of which ISNAD is a concrete example, the following measures are required:

1. Recognition of the threat of foreign online interference as a strategic threat, which is expected to pose a danger to Israel in the coming years, especially during election years;

2. Establishment of a dedicated inter-ministerial body to monitor cognitive warfare, conduct assessments, and engage in counter-dissemination of information;

3. Regulation of platforms distributing foreign propaganda by creating a legal framework that mandates identity transparency in online political activity;

4. Involvement of civil society by supporting grassroots initiatives that harness the wisdom of the crowd to monitor hostile foreign influence operations and by promoting digital education and media literacy programs among the Israeli public.

Editors of the series: Anat Kurtz, Eldad Shavit and Ela Greenberg