



Definition: This word means “a member of ISIL,” for which the Arabic acronym is Daesh. The context in which it is used is key to understanding how this term is applied as inflammatory speech. Used dispassionately, it can simply describe someone who is actually a member of the extremist group; however, in sensitive contexts in Libya, it is often used to describe anyone who is seen as politically or religiously radical or extremist in comparison to the speaker’s own views. As one respondent in Benghazi stated, “Any person that fights freedom in general is called a Daeshi.” It is an accusation that is not necessarily based on the accused person’s actions or role in an extremist organization; rather, it may be based on the accused person’s appearance (e.g., dressing conservatively) or political opinion. It is used as both an insult and provocation that may lead to violence. Widespread use of “Daeshi” in Libya began sometime between 2013 and 2015, when the Islamic State began carrying out operations in the country. In its current usage, it is often employed against anyone who opposes General Haftar and the LNA, falsely conflating any opponents with Islamist extremists.

Why it’s offensive and inflammatory: “Daeshi” is inflammatory because it is used in certain contexts to accuse individuals of belonging to ISIL or to associate them with the related extremist ideology and its extreme actions, thus justifying violence against the accused. According to a focus group participant in Kufra, “This term creates incitement. It is used to criminalize anyone who is intellectually or politically different. Like, if you have a different view on something, people can label you this term even when of course you do not support them [ISIL].” It is reportedly used frequently in political disagreements, around elections and in everyday disputes, associating political opponents with terrorist actors. In relation to the term’s connection with violence, one focus group participant in Benghazi said, in what appeared to be a joking manner, “If I heard that the person next to me is an ISIS member, it may lead me to kill him!”

This term was extensively politicized after the civil war in 2014 and, as mentioned above, it is often used to describe political opponents. For example, if someone lives in the east and is vocal against the LNA, people might describe them as “Daeshi,” stigmatizing them and putting them under the potential threat of being killed or imprisoned. Even if a person is not a member of any Islamist groups, if they are not explicit in their rejection of Islamists, others may label them as