



## Spotlight on Global Jihad (May 28 – June 3, 2015)



### Main events of the week

- ISIS continued to consolidate its control over the region of Palmyra and the Syrian Desert, after taking over the city. ISIS took over Palmyra Prison (after the prisoners had been transferred elsewhere by the Syrian regime), took over two phosphate deposits south of Palmyra (causing further loss of income for the Syrian regime) and blew up a pipeline in a gas field east of Homs (disrupting the electricity supply to the city of Homs).
- At the same time, ISIS mounted a military operation in the **northern Aleppo province**, taking over several cities, including the town of Soran, and came close to the **Bab al-Salameh crossing**, one of the eight crossings on the border **between Syria and Turkey**. Its achievements are liable to expand its presence in northwestern Syria, near the Turkish border, and enable it to control the main road leading from the crossing to the city of Aleppo.
- This week, there were no significant changes in the other combat zones in Syria. **The Al-Nusra Front** and its allies continue to expand their control of the **road from Idlib to Latakia, increasing the threat to the city of Latakia, the Alawite community** and the strongholds of the Syrian regime along the coast. **In the Al-Qalamoun Mountains**, the focus of the fighting has been moved from the south, where Hezbollah recorded achievements, to the ridges dominating the Sunni Lebanese town of Aarsal, in the northern Bekaa Valley.

### The international campaign against ISIS

#### US and coalition airstrikes

- This week, the US and coalition forces continued their airstrikes against ISIS targets. During the week, dozens of airstrikes were carried out in Syria and Iraq. The airstrikes were carried out using combat aircraft, attack aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles. Following are the main airstrikes (CENTCOM website):

- **Syria** - the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Al-Hasakah, Deir al-Zor, Al-Raqqah and Kobani. The airstrikes damaged ISIS tactical units and fighting positions, weapons, vehicles and heavy machinery, as well as an air field that belongs to ISIS in Al-Raqqah.

- **Iraq** - the airstrikes were carried out in the areas of Al-Baghdadi, Baiji, Fallujah, Makhmur, Tal Afar, Hawija, Haditha, Hit, Mosul, Ramadi, Rawa and Kirkuk. The airstrikes damaged ISIS tactical units and fighting positions, weapons, vehicles, armored vehicles, heavy machinery, buildings, weapons and an explosives workshop.

■ **The takeover of the city of Ramadi by ISIS** continued to give rise to questions among US defense and military officials regarding the Iraqi Army's competence and its ability to hold its own in the battle against ISIS. Senior US officials also spoke about the continuation of the campaign in Iraq and US policy in view of the fall of the city:

- On May 26, 2015, **US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter** reported that in light of ISIS's successful takeover of the city of Ramadi, several senior US Army officials met to discuss how the US could better train and arm the Iraqi military forces. According to Carter, recent events have highlighted the utmost importance of the Iraqi ground forces' capability. Carter also stressed the importance of the involvement of Sunni tribes in the Al-Anbar province in the struggle against ISIS, although he noted that the US was not considering arming these tribes directly (Reuters, May 28, 2015).

- **John Allen, US coordinator of the international coalition against ISIS**, noted that although the takeover of Ramadi is perceived as a failure, one must remember that previously there were many achievements. He noted that the campaign against ISIS was still in its early stages. He said that ISIS was incurring significant loss of manpower and equipment. He added that the United States was not fighting ISIS alongside Iran and was not supporting the (implicitly pro-Iranian) Shiite militias (apart from supporting the so-called "moderate" Shiite militias such as those in the city of Tikrit). With regard to sending American ground forces into the combat zone, according to Allen, this action will result in a short-term advantage only, and therefore the US will not send ground troops. Instead, it will train the local forces and provide them with the necessary support (US Department of State website, May 28, 2015).

## UN Secretary-General warns of an increase in the number of jihadi foreign fighters

- Speaking before the UN Security Council, **UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** noted that since mid-2014, there had been an increase of around 70% in the number of foreign fighters around the world who joined the ranks of ISIS and other terrorist organizations. **An estimated 25,000 operatives from over a hundred countries have gone to Syria and Iraq, as well as Afghanistan, Yemen, and Libya** [Note: In the ITIC's assessment, most of these operatives, more than half, are in Syria and Iraq, fighting in the ranks of ISIS and other jihadi organizations].
- According to the Secretary-General, this means the creation of **a more extensive pool of available terrorist operatives in the home countries to which these operatives will return**. Ban Ki-moon called on the countries of the world **to increase cooperation and information-sharing between them and to monitor their borders effectively**. This should be accomplished in compliance with the law and the principles of human rights (UN website, May 29, 2015)

## Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (Google Earth)

### Homs province

#### Palmyra and its environs

- ISIS continues to establish itself in and around Palmyra and in key sites located in the Syrian Desert. After taking over the city of Palmyra, ISIS announced that it had **taken over Palmyra Prison, located in the old city**, and that Syrian security forces had withdrawn from it (Amaq News Agency, May 28, 2015). ISIS operatives planted explosives around the prison and blew it up. Apparently the prison was empty after having been evacuated by the Syrian forces before being taken over by ISIS (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), May 30, 2015).



**Left: Photo taken from inside the prison. Right: The entrance to Palmyra Prison with an ISIS flag waving (Al-Minbar al-Jihadi al-Alami, May 28, 2015)**

The notorious Palmyra Prison is one of the symbols of the Syrian regime's tyranny. For decades, the Syrian regime used to imprison and torture its opponents in this prison. On June 27, 1980, the prison was the site of a massacre of around a hundred prisoners after a failed attempt on the life of former Syrian President Hafez Assad, Bashar's father. The takeover of the prison by ISIS has a propaganda advantage but no practical value, since the prisoners were evacuated well in advance.

- ISIS announced **the takeover of two phosphate deposits located south of Palmyra**. It is likely that ISIS will not be able to make use of the phosphates. However, the takeover of these deposits means that **the Syrian regime has lost yet another of the last sources of income at its disposal after having lost the majority of its oil and gas production resources**. According to reports, the Syrian security forces still control the Sha'er gas field and part of the Al-Hail gas field (The Daily Telegraph, May 28, 2015).
- On May 30, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account reported that the Al-Furqlus gas pipeline was blown up in two places. According to reports, the explosion was intended to stop the operation of the gas company **that supplies electricity to residents under the control of the regime** (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, May 30, 2015). The pipeline transfers gas from a field which is located about 110 km east of Homs. The gas is piped to a plant in the city of Furqlus (about 35 km southeast of Homs) and is used to generate electricity that is supplied to the city of Homs.



The city of Furqlus, located about 35 km east of Homs (Google Maps)



Tweet on Twitter about blowing up the Al-Furqlus gas pipeline (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, May 30, 2015)

## Idlib province

- On May 28, 2015, media affiliated with the rebel groups reported that Jaysh al-Fatah had mounted a campaign to take over several areas in the Idlib province, including the **city of Ariha**. After the attacks, which lasted for six days, **the city of Ariha fell** and hundreds of families fled. On May 29, 2015, a video uploaded to YouTube by Jaysh al-Fatah shows an operative declaring that his men captured the city of Ariha and the villages along the road leading to Latakia (Jaysh al-Fatah-affiliated Twitter account, May 29, 2015).



Jaysh al-Fatah operative talking about the areas taken over in and around Ariha, south of Idlib (Jaysh al-Fatah-affiliated Twitter account; YouTube, May 29, 2015).

■ The campaign in the area of Idlib, and the threat that it poses to the Alawite community and to the strongholds of the Syrian regime, were discussed at length by Al-Nusra Front leader **Abu Mohammad al-Julani** in a rare interview on Al-Jazeera TV. According to Al-Julani, **the Al-Nusra Front and its allies (Jaysh al-Fatah) have managed to take over towns and villages in the region of Idlib, Ariha and Jisr al-Shughur, which constituted the “first line of defense” of the Syrian regime’s strongholds and the Alawite population along the coast.**<sup>1</sup> According to Lebanese media reports, the Al-Nusra Front’s recent takeovers have led to a situation in which **most** of the Idlib province is now outside the control of the Syrian regime (Al-Akhbar, May 29, 2015).



The cities of Idlib, Ariha and Jisr al-Shughur and Mount Nabi Younes, which dominates the area (Google Maps)

<sup>1</sup> An Information Bulletin which analyzes Al-Julani’s view is available in Hebrew on the ITIC’s website. Soon it will also be available in English.

## The Al-Qalamoun Mountains (the Syrian-Lebanese border)

■ This week as well, fighting continued between Hezbollah and Syrian forces and the Al-Nusra Front and its allies in the Al-Qalamoun Mountains. After most of the southern Al-Qalamoun region was taken over by Hezbollah and the Syrian forces, **fighting spread northward towards the ridges dominating the Sunni Lebanese town of Arsal**. According to Lebanese media reports, in view of the possibility of the fighting spreading into Lebanon, several Lebanese Army units have been deployed in Arsal and have set up checkpoints and carried out patrols (Al-Jourhouria, May 29, 2015). At the same time, clashes continued in the Al-Qalamoun Mountains **between the Al-Nusra Front and its allies and ISIS** which, according to media reports, has reinforced its operatives in the area (Zaman al-Wasl, May 28, 2015).

■ On May 27, 2015, Hezbollah forces attacked the Al-Nusra Front operatives on the ridges that dominate Arsal. Hezbollah forces reportedly used unmanned aircraft to collect intelligence on the deployment of the Al-Nusra Front forces and in order to target its attacks (As-Safir, May 28, 2015; The Daily Star, May 29, 2015).

■ According to “Lebanese sources,” there are an **estimated 2,000 armed jihadists** in the Al-Qalamoun region, **of whom 1,200 belong to the Al-Nusra Front and 700-800 to ISIS**. There are also Free Syrian Army operatives and operatives from other opposition organizations in the area. The sources said that Hezbollah was planning to purge the ridges (which dominate Arsal) before the beginning of the month of Ramadan (mid-June 2015). They said that by May 27, 2015, the Al-Nusra Front had lost almost all the territory that it had previously controlled [apparently in the southern Al-Qalamoun Mountains] (Al-Akhbar, which reflects the position of Hezbollah, May 27, 2015).

■ Although Hezbollah has recorded achievements in the battles in the Al-Qalamoun Mountains, it has lost **scores of operatives in the battles**. The South Lebanon news website published death notices for 21 Hezbollah operatives killed between May 15-26, 2015. The notices include photos of operatives killed “while carrying out their jihadi duty” and some even invite the public to attend the funerals (South Lebanon website, May 27, 2015). The previous collection of death notices, published by the South Lebanon website on May 15, 2015, included 26 dead operatives. Hence, according to the website, **47 Hezbollah operatives were killed** in the current campaign in Al-Qalamoun. **On the other hand, we do not have data on the number of operatives of the Al-Nusra Front and its allies who were killed in battle in Al-Qalamoun.**



The battle zone in the southern Al-Qalamoun Mountains (Google Maps)

## Aleppo province

- This week was marked by a **military effort by ISIS in the northern Aleppo province**, in which its operatives managed to take over several towns and villages **in the north of the province, near the Turkish border**. In the ITIC's assessment, this effort may be in response to the achievements of the Al-Nusra Front and its allies in the Idlib province in northwestern Syria.
- According to a report from May 31, 2015, ISIS operatives have taken over **the city of Soran** and two other villages nearby. ISIS announced that it was advancing towards **the city of Marea** in the northern province of Aleppo. The battles for the control of the area still continue (syriaahr.com, May 31, 2015). These battles took place **about 10 kilometers from the Bab al-Salameh crossing**, on the border between Turkey and Syria.



**The cities of A'zaz, Soran and Marea, and the Bab al-Salameh border crossing, in the northern province of Aleppo, which have been taken over by ISIS (Google Maps)**

The **Bab al-Salameh** crossing is one of the eight crossings between Syria and Turkey. On March 9, 2015, the Turkish authorities closed the crossing “until further notice,” probably as part of Turkey’s policy of increasing its supervision of the border with Syria (Al-Monitor, March 18, 2015). **ISIS’s achievements in the northern Aleppo province** are liable to **expand its presence near the Syrian-Turkish border** and enable it to control the main road leading from Turkey to Aleppo.

## Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (Google Earth)

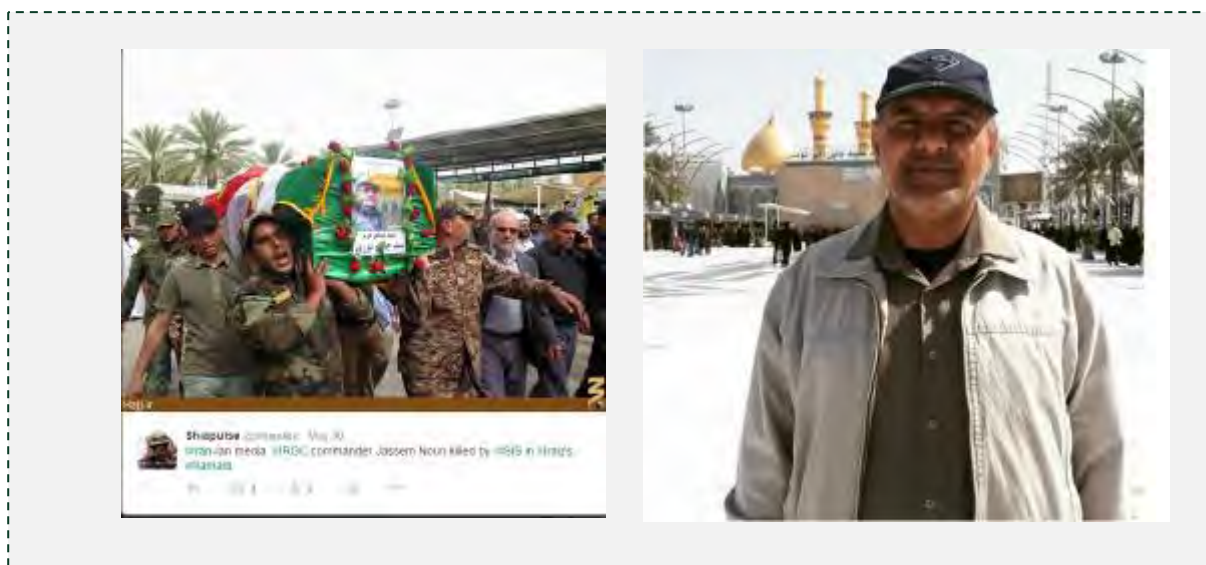
### Al-Anbar province

#### The area of the city of Ramadi

■ On May 26, 2015, the Iraqi Defense Ministry announced the commencement of an operation aimed at restoring its control over the Al-Anbar province. **The ITIC feels that the announcement is pretentious**, since it is highly doubtful whether the Iraqi security forces are capable of taking over the province, ISIS's stronghold. The Iraqis claim that they have made achievements, including the takeover of part of the city of Ramadi and its environs, cutting off roads leading to the Al-Anbar province, detaining dozens of ISIS operatives and killing dozens of other operatives (Reuters, May 26, 2015; Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, May 31, 2015). **At this stage, the ITIC cannot verify these Iraqi reports.**

■ **Jassem Nouri**, one of the senior commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), was reportedly killed in the fighting **against ISIS** (Digarban, May 29, 2015). According to the Iranian press, he was killed on May 28, 2015, while fighting against ISIS near the city of Ramadi. Jassem Nouri was from Khuzestan (southern Iran) and was said to have participated in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. When

presenting his role in Iraq, the Iranian press reported that he was a “defender of the shrines” (The Long War Journal, May 30, 2015).



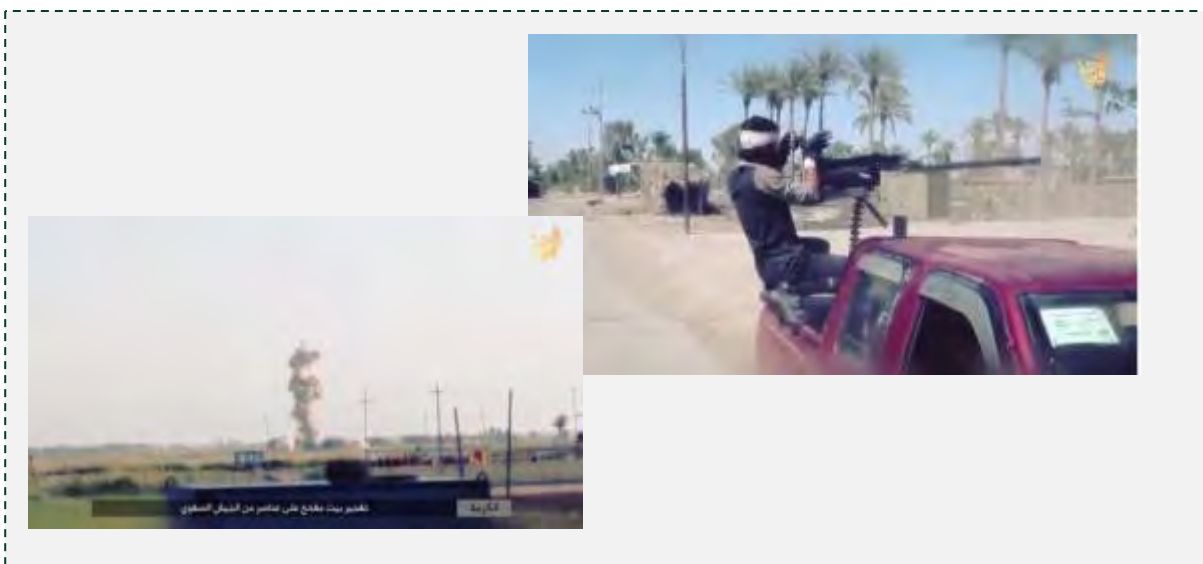
**Left: Jassem Nouri’s funeral. Right: Photo of Jassem Nouri (Iran Military Facebook page, May 30, 2015)**

■ Over the past few days, photos have been published showing **Qassem Soleimani, Commander of the IRGC’s Qods Force**, on a patrol in the Al-Anbar province alongside Shiite militiamen. It is difficult to verify the authenticity of these photos but, according to a number of US Army and intelligence officials, Soleimani actually visited Iraq recently (The Long War Journal, June 1, 2015).

## Fallujah

■ In the area of the city of Fallujah controlled by ISIS, ISIS has been attacking Iraqi military forces. In this context:

- **On May 28, 2015**, ISIS published photos documenting an attack carried out by its operatives against an Iraqi army camp near the city of Fallujah. The photos show an attack that included machine-gun fire, RPG fire and a suicide bombing attack by means of a car bomb (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 28, 2015).
- **On May 30, 2015**, ISIS published a video documenting an attack carried out by its operatives against Iraqi military forces near the city of Fallujah (controlled by ISIS). The attack included machine-gun fire from an SUV and a suicide bombing attack by means of a car bomb. At the end of the attack, ISIS allegedly took control of Iraqi Army trucks, Humvees and tanks (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 28, 2015).



Left: Car bomb detonated in a building where Iraq Army forces were staying. Right: Machine-gun fire from an SUV (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 28, 2015)

## Salah al-Din province

### Baiji

■ **Battles continue between Iraqi forces and ISIS operatives over the control of the refinery compound in the city of Baiji, north of Baghdad.** On May 30, 2015, the Iraqi Defense Ministry reported a mass exodus of ISIS operatives from Baiji (Iraqi Defense Ministry's Facebook page, May 30, 2015). It was also reported that several villages and towns around Baiji were liberated by the Iraqi forces (Baghdad Times, May 31, 2015). On May 30, 2015, the Iraqi Defense Ministry announced the liberation of the city of Dujail and nearby towns from the hands of ISIS (south of Samarra, in the Salah al-Din province). **The ITIC cannot verify these Iraqi reports.**

### Baghdad province

■ On May 31, 2015, ISIS published a video documenting an attack **by means of three car bombs, carried out by three suicide bombers in an Iraqi Army camp in Nebai (north-west of Baghdad).** One of the terrorists, a German-speaker codenamed **Abu Mus'ab al-Almani** (i.e., Abu Mus'ab the German), called on Muslims to adhere to jihad and accused the Shiite Iraqi government of killing Sunnis under the auspices of the US. After him, a suicide bomber codenamed **Abu Hamza al-Shami** (apparently a Syrian) appeared, and threatened the Shiites with detonation of IEDs. The third suicide bomber was probably an **Uzbek** (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 31, 2015).

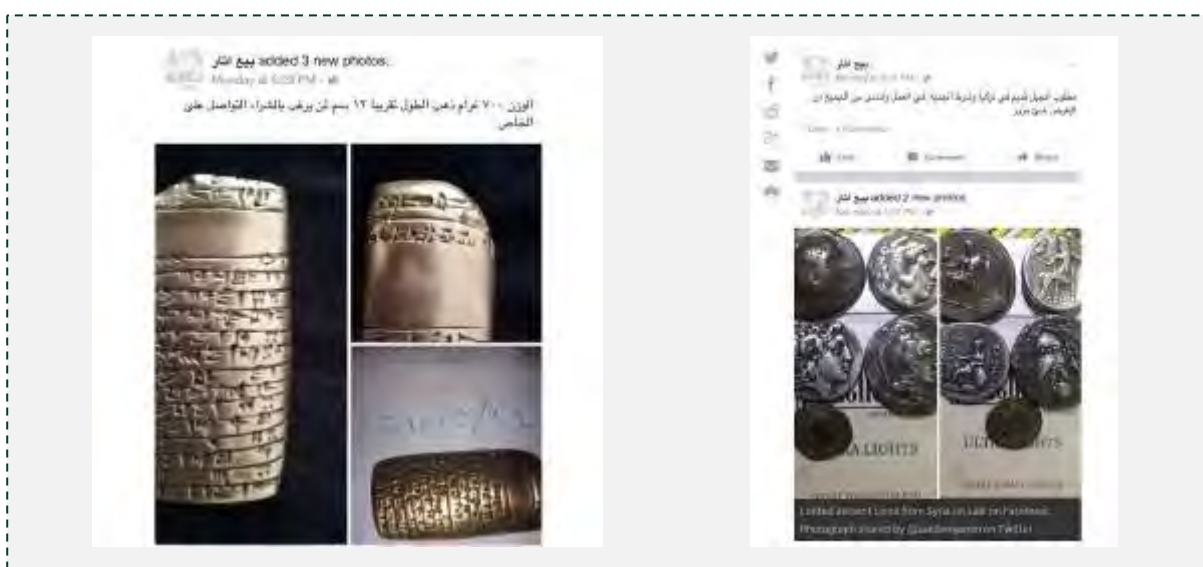


Left: Detonation of the car bombs. Right: The three suicide bombers (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 31, 2015)

## The conduct of the Islamic State

### The antiquities business

■ **ISIS has reportedly set up a consolidated office of antiquities in place of several local antiquities offices which had existed until now.** The establishment of the office is designed to maximize ISIS's profits from the sale of antiquities that were seized in the territories that it has taken over in Syria and Iraq. Trading in antiquities has yielded ISIS millions of dollars in profits. The new office also issues archaeological excavation licenses in return for payment. A satellite photograph taken of the ancient city of Mari (which was part of Mesopotamia) identified more than 1,300 pits dug in recent months (telegraph.co.uk, May 30, 2015).



Antiquities from Syria offered for sale on Facebook

## Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

### Egyptian security activity

■ **The Egyptian security forces continued their intensive security operations against the global jihad operatives in the Sinai Peninsula.** Inter alia, jihadi operatives were detained and houses and motorcycles were destroyed. Egyptian forces uncovered explosives planted on the main routes used by the Egyptian security forces (Al-Masry al-Youm, May 28, 2015).

### Jihadist activity

■ **On the other hand, intensive jihadist activity against the Egyptian security forces in the northern Sinai Peninsula continued.** Here are some of the activities:

- **On May 29, 2015**, mortar shells were fired at a camp of the Egyptian security forces in Rafah. There were no casualties (Al-Masry al-Youm, May 29, 2015).
- On the morning of **May 31, 2015**, the main gas pipeline of Al-Arish was blown up by means of IEDs planted under the pipe. According to the reports, this was the 29th time that gas pipelines in Sinai have been blown up. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis claimed responsibility for blowing up the pipeline. An Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis-affiliated Twitter account holder said that “Allah willing, a drop of gas will not reach Jordan, until the Emir of the Believers [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi] approves it” (Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis-affiliated Twitter account, May 31, 2015).



Right: The gas pipeline being blown up (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, May 31, 2015).

- **On June 1, 2015**, ISIS published photos allegedly documenting the graduation ceremony of a training course for its operatives, held in the Sinai Peninsula. The photos of the ceremony show armed men in uniform (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, June 1, 2015).



Photos from the graduation ceremony of a course for operatives of ISIS's branch in the Sinai Peninsula (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, June 1, 2015).

## Israeli Arabs

- **On May 28, 2015**, **Mohammad Jamal Suleiman (Abu Raad)**, 22, from the city of Umm al-Fahm, was charged with **supporting ISIS through Facebook**. According to the charge sheet, he had a Facebook account by the name of Mohammed Abo Raed IS, which had 300 friends. On his personal profile, he presented himself as a “hired killer” who works as a “murderer of the infidels, enemies of God” and claimed that he used to work as a terrorist. Between February and April 2015, on several occasions, he posted statements praising and identifying with ISIS and its activities on his Facebook page. He also uploaded ISIS flags and photos of operatives. This is the first time that an Israeli citizen has been charged with supporting ISIS via the Internet (Ynet, May 28, 2015).

## The global jihad in other countries

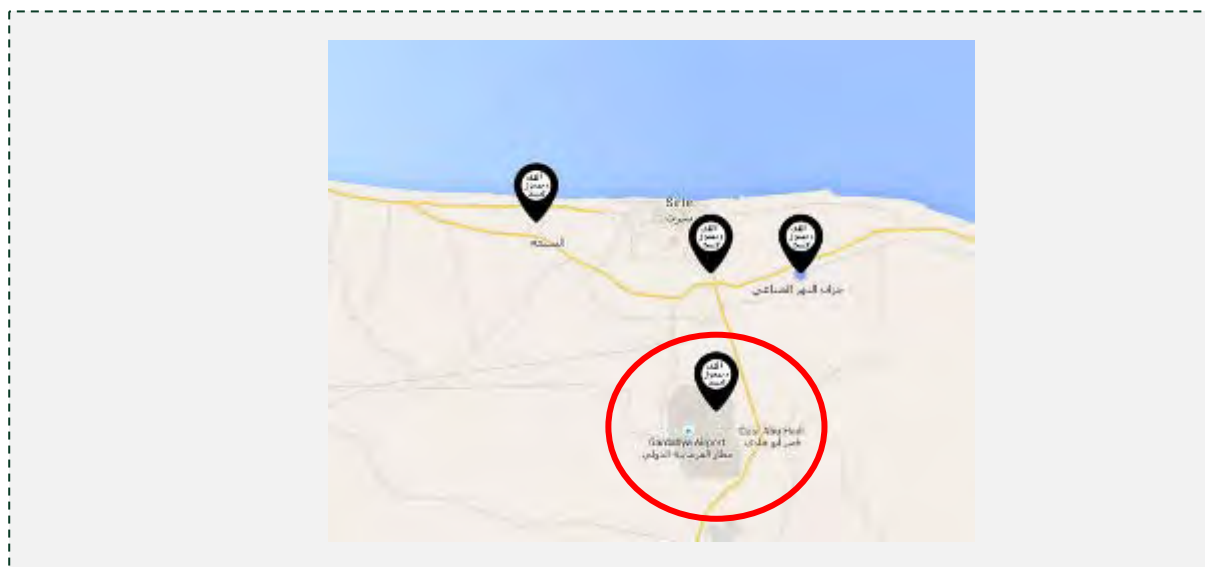
### Tunisia

- The Tunisian authorities detained **Nur al-Din al-Naibi**, of Moroccan descent, on suspicion of participation in the attack on the Bardo Museum in the capital, Tunis (AFP, May 28, 2015). A number of other suspects in the attack, including a woman, were detained about a week after the attack.

On March 18, 2015, several armed men carried out a mass terrorist attack in the Bardo National Museum, near the parliament building in the capital, Tunis. The attack killed 23 people, at least twenty of them tourists. According to reports, the attackers initially tried to break into the Parliament compound, but after an exchange of fire with the security guards there, they fled to the museum building near the Parliament building. At the museum, they held several dozen hostages for a few hours. The incident ended when the Tunisian security forces overcame the terrorists, cleared the museum and released the hostages.

## Libya

- ISIS continues to establish itself in Libya and expand its areas of control:
  - On May 29, 2015, the branch of the Islamic State (ISIS) in Libya took over the **Al-Qardabiya civilian airport in the city of Sirte, in the north of the country**. The takeover of the airport occurred after the Tripoli regime abandoned the airport, located in an area where fighting is taking place between ISIS and other armed groups (Kanat Libya; AFP, May 29, 2015).



Bottom: Al-Qardabiya Airport, located south of the city of Sirte (Kanat Libya, May 29, 2015)

- According to a New York Times report, based on senior sources in the Libyan Army, the branch of ISIS that controls the city of Sirte has **expanded** its control **to the neighboring city of Misrata**, after a battle waged with local militia fighters. According to Libyan media reports, in the jihadists' attack, a suicide bomber killed four militia fighters who were guarding the checkpoint west of Misrata, on the coastal road leading to Tripoli.

- On May 30, 2015, ISIS forces reportedly entered **the area of Al-Jufra, in the center of the country, where there are oil fields**. According to reports posted on social networks by ISIS-affiliated elements, ISIS's branch in Libya has absolute control of the Al-Jufra area. In contrast, ISIS's opponents have claimed that although ISIS has a presence on the ground, control of the area remains in the hands of the network known as **Fajr Libya** (Libyan Dawn), an alliance of Islamic organizations<sup>2</sup> (Al-Dustour, May 30, 2015; Two ISIS-affiliated Twitter accounts, May 30, 2015).



Al-Jufra province in central Libya (Google Maps)

## Saudi Arabia

- On May 29, 2015, during afternoon prayers, a car bomb driven by a suicide bomber exploded near the Imam Hussein bin Ali Shiite mosque **in the city of Dammam**, eastern Saudi Arabia. The attack killed at least three people. **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack** (Reuters and AFP, May 29, 2015). The attack occurred a week after the attack carried out by ISIS on a Shiite mosque **in the city of Qatif**, in which over twenty civilians were killed and around fifty were wounded.

<sup>2</sup> **Fajr Libya** (Libyan Dawn) is a Libyan coalition comprising a number of local Islamic organizations. According to estimates, the coalition numbers around 20,000 people. It began as an organization that objected to the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya. Since then they have continued to exist in the form of an armed group under the command of Islamic leaders. In August 2014, along with other organizations, they took over the capital of Tripoli and forced the newly elected government to flee. They then took over other major cities. The Fajr Libya militias are opposed to other Islamic organizations operating in Libya and fight against them.

## Yemen

■ On May 30, 2015, ISIS-affiliated elements in the **Shabwah province**, in southern Yemen, posted a video threatening the government leaders in the Arabian Peninsula, led by the “tyrannical” leaders of the Saudi government. In the video, they threaten to topple the Saudi regime, implement Islamic law, cleanse Mecca and Medina and remove the idol-worshippers from the Arabian Peninsula. At the end of video, the operatives are shown **renewing their pledge of allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 30, 2015).



**Left: Operatives renewing their pledge of allegiance to ISIS. Right: A masked spokesman threatening the heads of the Saudi government (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, May 30, 2015)**

## Khorasan

■ A video distributed by ISIS’s branch in Khorasan (Afghanistan / Pakistan) includes **a show of strength by ISIS operatives**. The video shows ISIS operatives riding in vehicles and waving ISIS flags. It also shows a gathering with a preacher speaking to the operatives. The preacher says that Allah commands Muslims to carry out jihad on the soil of Khorasan, preferring that “we fight the infidels on this soil and implement Sharia [...] We can now serve as a tremendous example of an Islamic caliphate.” He adds that with the help of Allah, ISIS flags will wave in Jerusalem and on the White House (YouTube, May 31, 2015).



Show of strength by ISIS operatives in Khorasan (the exact location is unknown). On the left is a preacher calling for jihad and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate on the soil of Khorasan (YouTube, May 31, 2015).

## Russia

■ **Gulmurod Khalimov**, former commander of an elite unit in the **Tajikistan police force**, with the rank of colonel, posted a video on social networks showing him holding weapons, with bearded armed men standing behind him. In the video he says (in Russian) that he went to Syria due to the violation of the rights of Muslims **and that he is willing to die for ISIS**. He says that ten civilians went to Syria with him. Gulmurod Khalimov disappeared in Tajikistan around two weeks before the video was posted. He apparently went to Moscow, flew to Turkey and from there crossed into Syria. According to reports, **around two hundred Tajiki civilians are fighting in the ranks of ISIS and around forty of them have been killed in battle** (Interfax, May 28, 2015).

## The battle for hearts and minds conducted by ISIS

### ISIS's Russian-language journal

■ According to a report by **the Al-Hayat Media Center (HMC)**, ISIS's media platform, it has begun to publish a new journal by the name of **Istok ("The Source" in Russian), in Russian**. The first issue was published on May 26, 2015 (ISIS forum, May 26, 2015). The first issue includes around 12 pages of articles about **Russian operatives serving in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq**. The issue ends by calling on readers to go to Syria and Iraq in order to establish an Islamic

caliphate and to support ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (rt.com, May 27, 2015).



The cover of the first issue of ISIS's Russian-language journal (Twitter, May 27, 2015)

## ISIS's call on Muslims in Algeria

■ On May 30, 2015, ISIS's media arm in Damascus posted a video on YouTube entitled “**Message from the Damascus Province to our Brothers in Algeria**”. The video shows a masked speaker who says that the Islamic State of ISIS is spreading to the east and to the west and will not stop operating until it liberates the Muslims, **including the Muslims in Algeria**. He promises that **ISIS will liberate Jerusalem and spread to Rome and the United States, where “we will pray in the White House, with the help of Allah”** (YouTube, May 30, 2015).



Photos from the ISIS video addressing the “brothers” in Algeria (YouTube, May 30, 2015)

## **ISIS-affiliated network calls for Muslims to refrain from flying on the Tunisian airline**

■ On May 28, 2015, in a posting on Twitter, the **Uqba ibn Nafi Battalion**, a **network that has announced its loyalty to the Islamic State**, warned Muslims not to fly on the Tunisian airline as of June 2, 2015 (when the airline will reportedly begin marketing flights to the European Union). The announcement read: “Warning to the Muslim public: Out of concern for your lives, we ask you to avoid flying on Tunisian Airlines as of June 2, 2015.” Following the threat, the Tunisian interior minister ordered the airline to increase security on its flights (Al-Arabiya TV, May 28, 2015).