



## Spotlight on Global Jihad (August 13-19, 2015)



### Main events of the week

- This week as well, **the fighting in Syria was concentrated to the north and east of Aleppo**. ISIS took the initiative in the rural area north of Aleppo, with local achievements around the town of A'zaz, near the Turkish-Syrian border. ISIS also continues to exert pressure on the Syrian Army in the area of the Kuweyres military airbase, east of Aleppo.
- In the various battle zones in Iraq, ISIS deployed suicide bombers and car bombs against the Iraqi security forces and the Shiite population. Of particular note **is the truck bomb attack in an open market in the Shiite Jamila neighborhood in Baghdad**. The attack reportedly killed over 76 and wounded over 200. Carrying out mass-casualty attacks against the Shiite population is a familiar modus operandi of ISIS in Iraq, the legacy of its founder, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi.
- **ISIS's branch in Libya is gradually establishing itself around the important coastal city of Sirte**, north-central Libya. This week, ISIS overcame a local Salafist militia and armed residents, and took over various government institutions in the city. It appears that the city of Sirte is currently in a process of establishing itself as ISIS's "capital city" in Libya (and North Africa), the kind of equivalent of Al-Raqqah in Syria and Mosul in Iraq.

### 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, many dozens of airstrikes were carried out in Syria and Iraq by means of fighter planes, attack aircraft and UAVs. On August 12, 2015, for the first time, ISIS targets in northern Syria were attacked by United States Air Force F-16 fighter planes that took off from a Turkish Air Force base in southern Turkey (AP,

August 13, 2015).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Turkish Air Force has not carried out airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since the end of July 2015.

■ Following are the main airstrikes (CENTCOM website):

- **Syria** - this week the airstrikes were concentrated mainly in the area of Al-Hasakah. Airstrikes were also carried out in the areas of Aleppo, Al-Raqqah and Kobani. The airstrikes damaged ISIS tactical units, battle positions, bunkers and vehicles, among other things.
- **Iraq** - the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Hawija, Baiji, Fallujah, Kirkuk, Habbaniyah, Makhmur, Mosul, Ramadi, Sinjar and Tal Afar. The airstrikes damaged ISIS tactical units, artillery, battle positions, vehicles and anti-aircraft weapons, among other things.



Anti-aircraft fire by ISIS operatives against coalition aircraft in western Baiji (Justpaste.it, August 15, 2015)

## Statements made by senior US officials

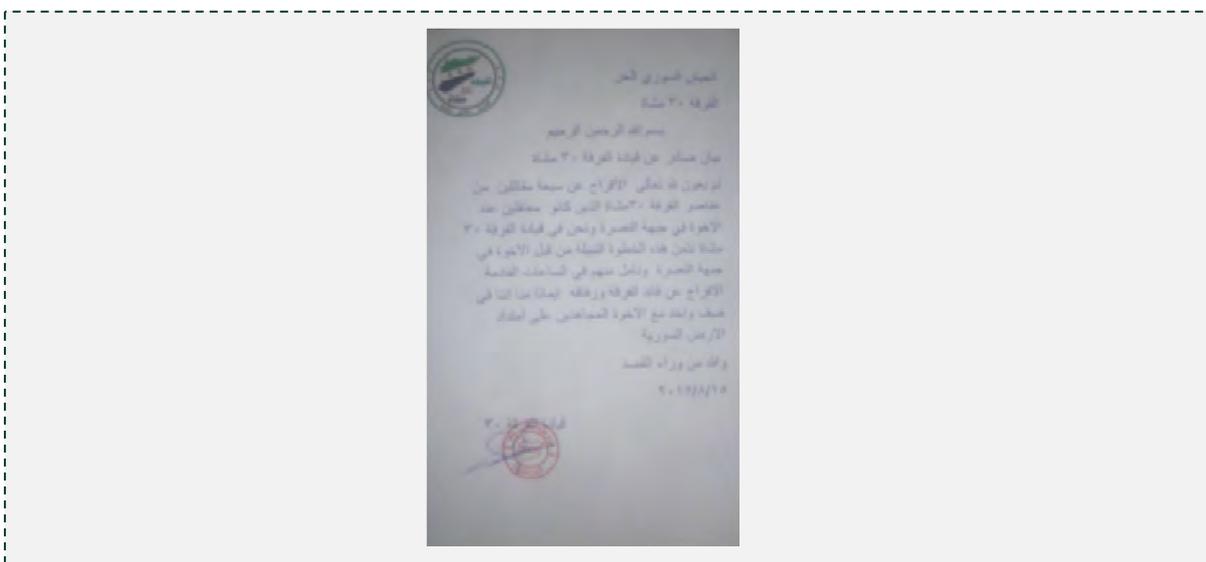
■ In an interview, General Raymond Odierno, outgoing Chief of Staff of the US Army, said: **“If we find in the next several months that we aren't making progress, we should absolutely consider embedding some soldiers [in Iraq].”** However, he expressed his opposition to the idea that the United States would lead the war against ISIS, because the region itself must solve its own problems and the

<sup>1</sup> In a Turkish-language video distributed by ISIS's Al-Raqqah province, ISIS attacks the President of Turkey and calls on the residents of Turkey to fight against the Crusaders, infidels and messengers of Satan (i.e., the Turkish regime and Western countries led by the US). The speaker in the video says that their fight against the Crusaders in Turkey will be a blessed Jihad.

US cannot solve them (CNN, August 12, 2015). In response to the statements made by the outgoing Chief of Staff, US Department of Defense spokeswoman **Alicia Smith** said that his statements would be considered, adding that the Department of State believes in a political solution (Sputnik, August 12, 2015).

## Difficulties in training Syrian combatants

■ Seven members of the rebel force trained by the US **were released from captivity by Al-Nusra Front operatives in Syria**. According to US media reports, this has prompted the **United States to reexamine how to conduct itself with regard to the Syrian fighters that it trained to fight against ISIS**. This is in light of the severe blows that these fighters suffered just days after being posted on the ground (Washington Post, August 13, 2015).



**Letter of thanks from Division 30 to the Al-Nusra Front for the release of seven captive soldiers (Al-Nusra Front-affiliated Twitter account, August 16, 2015). Division 30 is a rebel group, some of whose fighters were trained by the United States.**

**The project for training Syrian combatants by the US has so far suffered failures.** The failure of the project is due to several reasons, **including the failure to recruit a significant number of operatives** (so far only a few dozen operatives have completed their training) and difficulties in recruiting operatives to hold another round of training. In addition, these operatives apparently **suffer from a lack of motivation** and a low level of military fitness (which was reflected in their being captured shortly after entering Syria). Furthermore, **there appears to be a fundamental problem recruiting and setting up pro-Western military units in a country and combat environment hostile to the US and the West.**

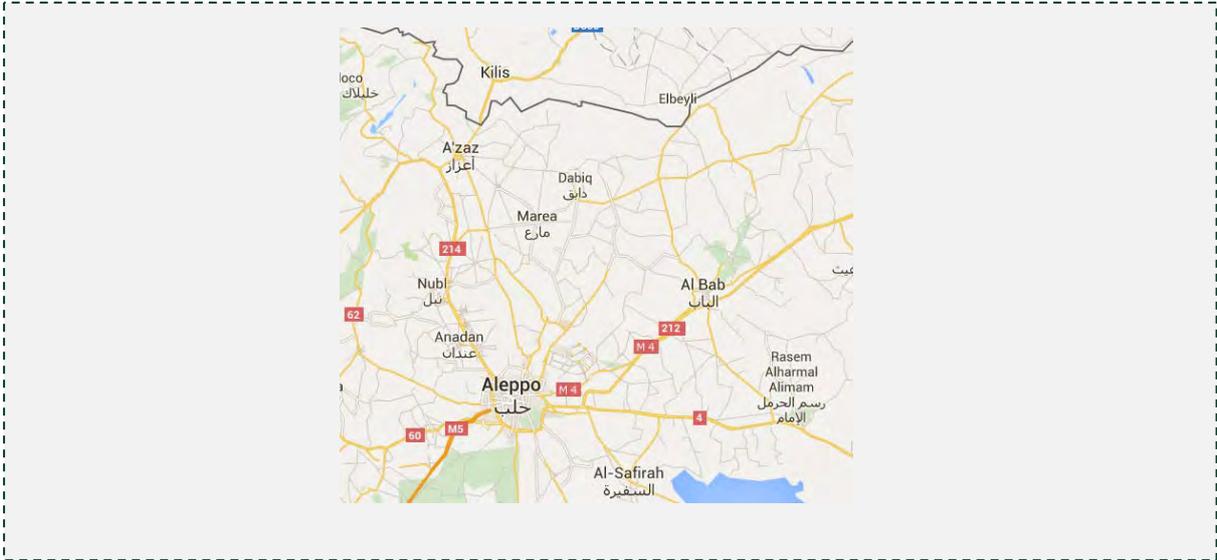
## Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (Google Maps)

### Aleppo province

■ In the rural area north of Aleppo, fighting continues between ISIS and the rebel organizations. ISIS forces, after suffering heavy losses, took the initiative this week and carried out attacks against rebel positions. ISIS operatives, along with reinforcements brought in from the town of A'zaz, took over the town of **Talalin**, about 35 km north of Aleppo. The rebel forces retreated towards the town of **Marea**, south of Talalin. According to the rebel organizations, they are now fighting on two fronts in Aleppo: one against the forces of the Assad regime and the other against ISIS (Ara News, August 16, 2015). There were also battles between ISIS and the rebel organizations in the **village of Khirbah**, near the town of A'zaz (SNN, August 13, 2015).



The area of the town of Talalin, north of Aleppo (Google Maps)

■ **At the same time, fighting continued in the area of the Kweyres military airbase**, east of Aleppo, in an attempt by ISIS to take over the military airbase. According to Arab media reports, Syrian Army soldiers and officers were killed in these battles. ISIS-affiliated Twitter account holders posted photos and names of Syrian soldiers and officers, including senior officers, who were killed in the fighting at the airbase (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 11, 2015; ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 15, 2015).

الرقم	الاسم	اللقب	الرتبة	التاريخ
0000001	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	1
0000002	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	2
0000003	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	3
0000004	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	4
0000005	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	5
0000006	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	6
0000007	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	7
0000008	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	8
0000009	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	9
0000010	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	10
0000011	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	11
0000012	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	12
0000013	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	13
0000014	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	14
0000015	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	15
0000016	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	16
0000017	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	17
0000018	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	18
0000019	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	19
0000020	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	20
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0000030	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	30
0000031	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	31
0000032	أحمد عبد الله	أحمد عبد الله	مجنون	32

List of Syrian officers killed in the Kweyres military airbase between August 1, 2015 and August 10, 2015, published by ISIS (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 11, 2015)



Kuweyres military airbase, east of Aleppo (Google Maps)

## The area of Idlib

■ In the morning of August 12, 2015, a **cease-fire went into effect between Hezbollah forces and the rebel organization Ahrar al-Sham** (which apparently represent other rebel organizations) for 24 hours. According to the reports, the ceasefire was in **the area of Al-Zabadani**, northwest of Damascus, and in the area of the Shiite villages of **Fu'ah and Kafraya**, northeast of Idlib. Three days later, **the ceasefire collapsed** and fighting resumed. Rebel forces fired rockets at the Shiite villages of Fu'ah and Kafraya, which are held by the Syrian forces (Ara News, August 16, 2015).



The villages of Fu'ah and Kafraya, northeast of Idlib (Google Maps)

## Homs province

■ According to media reports, three Syrian Army positions were taken over by ISIS operatives in the area of the Jazal oil and gas field, about 25 km northwest of Palmyra. ISIS operatives claim to have destroyed two tanks of the Syrian forces in these battles, using Kornet anti-tank missiles. They also reportedly seized four tanks, two APCs, a heavy machine gun and various types of ammunition (Isdarat.tv, August 11, 2015).



The Jazal oil and gas field, northwest of Palmyra (Google Maps)

## Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (Google Maps)

### Al-Anbar province

#### Ramadi

■ On August 17, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted a claim of responsibility for a car bomb explosion by a suicide bomber codenamed **Ramadan the Kurd**. The attack was carried out against a convoy of Iraqi Army forces west of Anbar University, located in southwest Ramadi. The attack reportedly killed and injured several dozen people and destroyed a number of vehicles (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 17, 2015).



The city of Ramadi and Anbar University, which is located in the southwest part of the city (Google Maps)

- On August 16, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted a claim of responsibility for the car bomb attack carried out by a suicide bomber codenamed **Abu Maryam the Moroccan**. The attack was carried out at a deployment zone of armored vehicles of the Iraqi Army north of Ramadi. ISIS claimed that the explosion destroyed the armored vehicles, along with their crews (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 16, 2015).

## Fallujah

- According to a report from August 15, 2015, nine Iraqi Army soldiers were killed and three were injured in a suicide bombing attack near an Iraqi Army outpost in the area of Al-Roufah, northeast of Fallujah. In another incident, 18 soldiers of the Iraqi security forces were killed and eight injured in an explosion of IEDs near the Samarra-Fallujah junction on the international highway, and in Al-Hamidhiyah, northeast of Ramadi. On August 16, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted a claim of responsibility for four suicide bombing attacks against the Iraqi Army northwest of Fallujah (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 16, 2015).

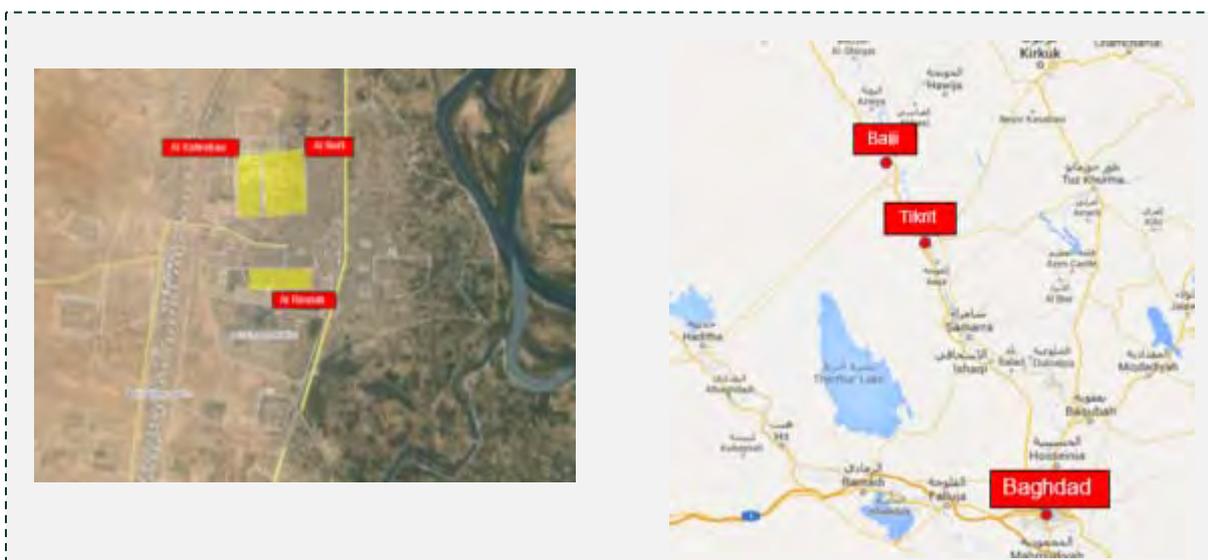
## Salah al-Din province

### Baiji

- **The fighting in the city of Baiji is still ongoing.** During the week, ISIS operatives reported that they had managed to take over Iraqi Army outposts and positions in Baiji, along with three neighborhoods in northwest Baiji (Isdarat.tv, August 14, 2015).



Left: The Iraqi Army armored vehicles that ISIS claims to have seized in battle in the area of Baiji (Isdarat.tv, August 14, 2015). Right: ISIS's claim to have taken over three neighborhoods in west Baiji and Tel Zaatar (Isdarat.tv, August 14, 2015).



Left: Three neighborhoods taken over by ISIS operatives in west Baiji (Wikimapia). Right: The city of Baiji (Google Maps).

■ On August 14, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated website posted a message from ISIS, stating that one of its suicide bombers, an operative codenamed **Abu Jandal the Tunisian**, had detonated a truck bomb at a deployment zone of Iraqi security forces southwest of Baiji. Many members of the Iraqi forces were reportedly killed and injured (Isdarat.tv, August 14, 2015). That same day, a suicide bomber codenamed **Abu Dharr the Turk** detonated another car bomb against an Iraqi Army position west of the city.



Right: The truck bomb on its way to an Iraqi Army position (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 16, 2015). Left: A second car bomb attack against Iraqi Army position in the Tel Abu Jarrad area, west of Baiji (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015)

## Baghdad

- On August 13, 2015, news websites reported that an attack was carried out **by means of a truck bomb** in an open market compound in the **Shiite neighborhood of Jamila**, in Baghdad. **The explosion reportedly killed at least 76 people and injured more than two hundred.** The market sustained considerable damage. According to “security sources” in Iraq, the attack was carried out by means of a refrigerator truck (Aljazeera.net and Assabeel.net, August 13, 2015; Alkhaleej.ae, August 14, 2015).
- An ISIS affiliated website claimed responsibility for a truck bomb explosion in an Iraqi Army post in Sadr City, in northeast Baghdad. According to **ISIS’s version, nearly ninety people were killed in the attack and around two hundred people injured** (Isdarat.tv, August 13, 2015).



The Shiite Jamila neighborhood of Sadr City, northeast Baghdad (Google Maps)

## Erbil province: reports of the use of mustard gas by ISIS

■ According to the **Kurdish press**, during the attack against Kurdish positions in the **town of Makhmur** (southwest of Erbil), shells were fired that might have **contained mustard gas**. This is because the injuries suffered by the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters as a result of these shells differ from injuries caused by conventional weapons. **US sources** noted that they were taking those reports seriously and might send their own independent investigators to investigate the matter (New York Times, August 14, 2015). On August 14, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account posted photos showing Kurdish Peshmerga fighters wearing gas masks inside a room protected with plastic sheets (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015).



Kurdish Peshmerga fighters defending themselves against NBC (Nuclear, Biological and Chemical) attacks in Makhmur (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015).

■ According to a senior official at the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs of the Kurdish regional government, **up to now, sixty Peshmerga fighters have been killed as a result of chemical weapon attacks** carried out by ISIS. **According to him, it has been proven that ISIS used mustard gas (and not chlorine gas) in its recent offensive in Makhmur.** The source of the mustard gas is apparently Syrian Army camps taken over by ISIS (Aawsat.com, August 15, 2015).

■ According to a report from August 15, 2015, **the Peshmerga forces have asked the international coalition for protection from chemical weapons used by ISIS.** They claimed that on two occasions, ISIS operatives had made use of chemical weapons against Peshmerga positions along the roads west of Mosul and west of Erbil. **Jamal Mohammad**, commander of the Peshmerga forces, reported that his forces had managed to remotely detonate an ISIS tanker **carrying chlorine gas**, which was being used as a truck bomb. He also stated that the fighters had received instructions on how to act during a chemical weapons attack, but noted that they did not have adequate means of protection.

■ Senior unidentified US officials confirmed that a few weeks ago, **ISIS operatives did indeed use mustard gas against the Kurds in the area of Al-Hasakah** (Washington Post, August 15, 2015). According to the Pentagon, the Americans are waiting for reports about **another possible mustard gas attack in Makhmur, northern Iraq.**

In the past, ISIS made use of **chlorine gas** against the Kurdish forces in Kobani (Ayn al-Arab) in northern Syria and against the Iraqi Army. According to recent reports (requiring verification), ISIS also used mustard gas against the Kurdish forces in northern Iraq and possibly also in the area of Al-Hasakah in northeastern Syria. It is reasonable to assume that **the chlorine gas** (and apparently the mustard gas as well) **in ISIS's possession comes from sites that it has taken over in Syria and Iraq.** Up to now, ISIS has used chemical weapons mainly against the Kurdish forces, on a small scale and mainly for tactical-local purposes.



The city of Makhmur, southwest of Erbil, where ISIS allegedly used mustard gas (Google Maps)

## Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

### ISIS's Sinai province's campaign against the Egyptian security forces

■ During the week, the Egyptian security forces continued their intensive counterterrorism campaign against operatives of the Sinai province of the Islamic State. As part of their campaign, the Egyptian security forces have carried out numerous airstrikes, mainly against terrorist bases in the area of Al-Arish, Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid. The Egyptian forces hit car bombs and motorcycles, blew up several houses, neutralized IEDs, killed several dozen operatives and detained several dozen suspects. Despite the intensive activity of the Egyptian security forces, the attempts by operatives of the Sinai province to carry out attacks against the Egyptian security forces have not ceased.

On August 9, 2015, operatives of **ISIS's Sinai province** attacked the home of **Sheikh Eissa al-Kharafin** in Rafah, on the grounds of collaboration with the Egyptian Army. ISIS posted a video showing the results of the attack (August 13, 2015). Sheikh Al-Kharafin is a former member of Egypt's People's Council, and one of the most influential people affiliated with the Egyptian regime in the Sinai Peninsula. He was recently seen alongside President El-Sisi at a ceremony marking the opening of the Suez Canal. As part of ISIS's Sinai province's attempts to gain a foothold in the area between Al-Arish and Rafah, it operates against the Bedouin sheikhs affiliated with the Egyptian authorities.

■ On August 14, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account holder posted a photo of a cargo helicopter allegedly shot down by ISIS operatives. According to the account holder, one crew member was captured by ISIS and the rest were killed (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015). The Egyptian Army reported the crash of an Egyptian military helicopter engaged in operations against terrorists in Marsa Matruh (approximately 409 km northwest of Cairo) due to a technical failure. Four members of the helicopter crew were killed and two were injured (Aljazeera.net, August 14, 2015).



The Egyptian helicopter that ISIS claims to have shot down in Sinai (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015)

## The execution of the Croatian national

■ The Sinai province announced that on August 12, 2015, it had executed the captive Croatian national. A Twitter account affiliated with the Sinai province posted a photo of the beheaded hostage. It also announced that the captive was executed after the ultimatum given to the Egyptian authorities to free female Muslim prisoners expired.



Photo of the execution of the abducted Croatian national (Twitter, August 12, 2015)

■ **Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry** spoke with his Croatian counterpart and told her that there was no evidence that the captive had been murdered. According to him, the security forces have not received proof of the death of the Croatian national and continue the search for the kidnappers (Al-Youm al-Sabea, August 13, 2015). In an interview, the Foreign Minister says that many efforts are made to locate the site of the abduction and that the Egyptian security forces are examining the photo of the dead Croatian captive posted on social networks. He says that this action was intended solely to intimidate, and warns against terrorist organizations that pose a danger to the international system through their demands (Al-Arabiya, August 13, 2015).

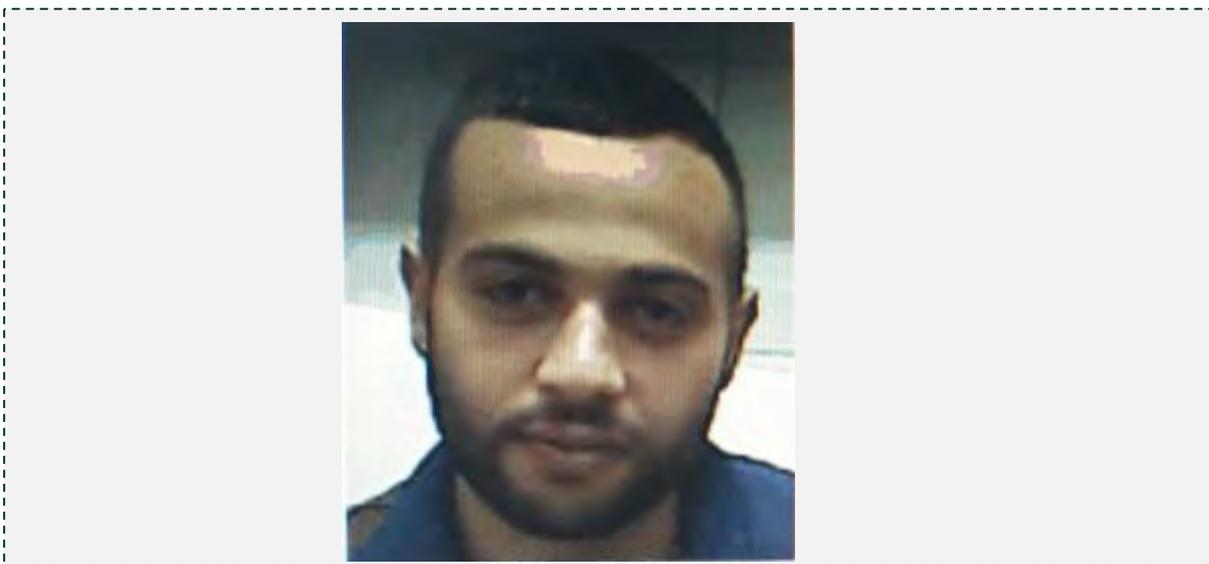
■ Egyptian security officials suspect that employees at the company where the Croatian worked collaborated with the kidnappers and told them what route he took. On the other hand, in the assessment of a security expert, the abduction and execution were not carried out by ISIS but by jihadi operatives belonging to the Ansar al-Sunna organization, who infiltrated into Egypt from Libya and returned to Libya with the captive (Alarabiya.net, August 13, 2015).

## Palestinians and Israeli Arabs

### Detention of an Israeli Arab who tried to join ISIS

■ On July 28, 2015, at Ben Gurion Airport, Israeli security forces detained Ramla resident **Khamis Adnan Khamis Salameh**, after he attempted to leave for Syria and join ISIS. Khamis Salameh, 21, an engineering student at Kinneret College, was **exposed to ISIS through a website** and was deeply influenced by it.

■ While surfing ISIS's websites, Khamis Salameh made contact with two of its operatives. One of them gave him a detailed explanation of ISIS and its ideology. When Salameh decided to join ISIS, he informed the operative that he was in contact with. After successfully passing a knowledge test, he was given instructions on how to join ISIS. He bought a plane ticket to Istanbul and from there for a connecting flight to the city of Adana near the border with Syria. He was told to spend the first night in a local hotel in the city, and was supposed to be picked up the next day. Turkish police arrested him at his hotel and he was extradited to Israel (Israel Security Agency, August 13, 2015).



Ramla resident Khamis Adnan Khamis Salameh, who tried to leave for Syria to join ISIS  
(Red Alert Facebook page, August 13, 2015)

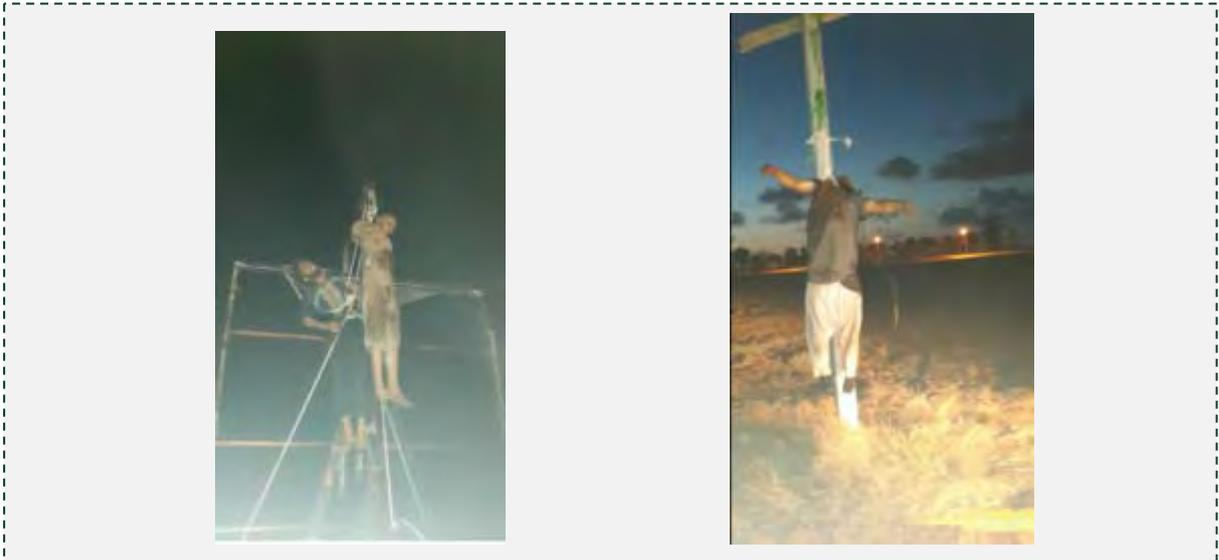
## The global jihad in other countries

### Libya

#### Sirte

■ **Fighting continues between ISIS and its opponents in the city of Sirte, with ISIS on the upper hand.** ISIS managed to suppress a rebellion attempt on the part of a group of armed residents and Salafist Muslims who tried to lift the siege on the city. ISIS operatives publicly displayed the bodies of local residents who had fought against ISIS **and were executed in the city center.** ISIS operatives later took over additional areas in the city, **including the radio and television stations, the hospital, the university and the internal security building** that became their headquarters. **The city of Sirte has apparently been designated as the “capital”**

**of ISIS in North Africa, the equivalent of Al-Raqqah in Syria and Mosul in Iraq**  
(Daily Star, L'Express, August 16, 2015).



**Public executions of the residents from the city of Sirte, posted on Twitter**

■ **The US and European countries have condemned ISIS's takeover of the city of Sirte.** The government of Libya (the Tobruk Government, which is recognized by the international community) called on Arab countries to carry out airstrikes against ISIS strongholds in Libya. According to the government, it is finding it hard to cope with ISIS due to the sanctions imposed on the supply of weapons to the Libyan Army. The Arab League has decided to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the demand (Financial Times, August 16, 2015).

Sirte is an **important city** located in north-central Libya on the Mediterranean coast (southeast of Tripoli). The city is important to the oil industry and serves as a governmental center. Due to it being the birthplace of former Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, and being controlled by his tribespeople, Sirte was the site of considerable development work during his reign, and many public buildings were erected and government institutions were established there. They have made it a sort of "secondary capital" in addition to Tripoli. After the fall of Tripoli into the hands of the rebels in August 2011, Sirte became the last stronghold of Qaddafi's loyalists and the site of fierce battles causing great destruction (Wikipedia). The takeover of the city provides ISIS with an **extensive governmental infrastructure** and a foothold in central Libya, in a major city **located on the Mediterranean coast**. The Gulf of Sirte contains two ports for the exportation of petroleum and its products, as well as an

airport that also serves as a military airbase. The airport fell into the hands of ISIS in May 2015, after all the aircraft there had been evacuated.

■ In recent weeks, ISIS operatives in Libya published wanted posters on several dozen websites. The wanted men have been designated as “enemies of the Caliphate”. Many of them are operatives of the Shura Council of Derna, a coalition of several jihadi groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda that oppose the idea of the Caliphate in Derna and are fighting against ISIS (The Long War Journal, August 18, 2015).

## Yemen

■ On August 14, 2015, a Twitter account posted a claim of responsibility by **ISIS’s Sanaa province** for the attack carried out on August 13, 2015. The car bomb attack was carried out against the headquarters of the Houthi forces in Al-Jarraf neighborhood, northeast of Sanaa (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015).



ISIS’s Sanaa province’s claim of responsibility for the attack against the Houthis in Sanaa (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, August 14, 2015)

## Afghanistan

■ In an audio recording uploaded to the Internet, Al-Qaeda leader **Ayman al-Zawahiri** is heard **pledging allegiance to Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour**, the new leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The recording, which was posted on August 13 2015, was produced on August 1, 2015, two days after the report confirming the death of former Taliban leader **Mullah Omar**. One day after the audio recording was posted, Mullah Akhtar posted an audio recording accepting Al-Zawahiri’s pledge of allegiance.



Acceptance of Iman al-Zawahiri's pledge of allegiance

## Counterterrorism and preventive activity

### Russia

■ **Magomed Suleimanov**, aka **Abu Usman Gimrinsky**, head of the so-called Caucasian Emirate, has been killed by the Russian security forces. Reports of his death first appeared on social networks. A photo of him taken after his death has been posted on Twitter. The website of the Dagestan province issued an announcement of his death. The Russian counterterrorism committee also issued a press release on his death, along with three other senior operatives during the course of its counterterrorism activity in Dagestan (The Long War Journal, August 11, 2015).



Abu Usman Gimrinsky

## Britain

■ **Three British 15-year-old girls** from northeast London recently went to Syria. The girls left without their parents' knowledge and were discovered by security cameras at the airport in Turkey while en route to Syria. **All three have married ISIS operatives.** Their departure to Syria revealed a disturbing phenomenon of young women who are attracted to the jihadi ideology. Up to now, an **estimated 4,000 people from Western countries** have traveled to Syria and Iraq to join the ranks of ISIS. This figure **includes around 550 young girls and women** (The New York Times, August 17, 2015)