



Main events of the week (as at September 21)¹

- As part of the pressure exerted by the Al-Nusra Front and ISIS on the Syrian Air Force's military airbases, the Al-Nusra Front managed to take over the **Abu al-Duhur military airbase**, southeast of Idlib. The Al-Nusra Front published photos of Syrian fighter planes and a helicopter that allegedly fell into its hands. **The Al-Nusra Front claims to have seized 20 fighter planes and 15 helicopters at the airbase. This information requires verification.**
- ISIS continues to exert pressure on the **Deir al-Zor military airbase**. This week, the Syrian Army thwarted an attempt to take over the base. ISIS, on its part, claims that its operatives managed to enter a number of places at the airbase. The Deir al-Zor military airbase is of major importance because it is the Syrian forces' lifeline to the city of Deir al-Zor, which is besieged by ISIS. According to Arab media reports, ISIS operatives control most of the city's neighborhoods.
- ISIS began a media campaign, featuring operatives and clerics from Syria, Iraq and Yemen, **severely criticizing Muslim residents who flee to European countries**. ISIS's main argument is that according to Muslim law, migration to countries where Islam does not rule is a sin. The campaign warns those who flee about the bitter fate awaiting them in Europe and against the loss of their Muslim identity. **In the ITIC's assessment, the campaign expresses the profound concern of ISIS, which relies on foreign fighters, regarding the dwindling population in the territories under its control.**

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

¹ Because of the Jewish holidays, the publication of the full English version of Spotlight on Global Jihad was postponed. A new up-to-date information bulletin in English will be issued within several days.

by means of fighter planes, attack aircraft and UAVs. The main airstrikes are as follows (US Department of State website):

- **Syria** - this week the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Abu Kamal (the Syrian-Iraqi border), Al-Hasakah, Al-Raqqah, Kobani, Marea (north of Aleppo) and Deir al-Zor. The targets included an oil field, a crude oil collection point, ISIS tactical units, battle positions, motorcycles, an ammunition supply point and a car bomb, among other things.
- **Iraq** - this week the airstrikes were concentrated in the areas of Baghdadi, Baiji, Kisik (west of Mosul), Habbaniyah, Mosul, Ramadi, Rawa (east of Ramadi), Sinjar, Tal Afar, Tuz Khormato (east of Tikrit), Kirkuk, Sultan Abdullah (southeast of Mosul), Fallujah and Haditha. The airstrikes targeted ISIS battle positions, tactical units, buildings, vehicles, rocket firing positions, launchers, an APC, anti-aircraft weapons, a command and control center and bunkers, among other things.

Statements regarding the coalition airstrikes

■ Following are a number of statements by senior coalition members regarding the air campaign against ISIS:

- **The spokesman for the US Defense Department said that the US intended to deploy additional air troops** at its military base in southern Turkey to help Turkey in its fight against ISIS (Sputnik, September 19, 2015).
- **French President François Hollande** said that France would not be able to refrain from carrying out airstrikes against ISIS in Syria. Hollande said a decision over whether France would join coalition airstrikes in Syria would depend on information from surveillance flights which he ordered to begin (The Guardian, September 14, 2015).
- **Australian Defence Minister Kevin Andrews** confirmed that the Australian Air Force carried out its first successful airstrike against ISIS targets on Syrian territory. He said they hit an ISIS APC armed with guided missiles (The Guardian, September 16, 2015).
- In response to a query in Parliament, **British Secretary of State for Defence Michael Fallon** said that the RAF killed 330 ISIS operatives in Iraq in airstrikes (during the period between September 2014 and August 2015). According to

Fallon, these figures are based solely on estimates (The Independent, August 17, 2015).

US failure in training “moderate” Syrian forces

■ In his testimony before Congress, **Lloyd Austin, commander of the Central Command of the US Army (CENTCOM)**, addressed the issue of training the so-called moderate Syrian forces by the US Army. He said that **only four or five out of the 54 combatants** trained by the US were now fighting in the campaign against ISIS. This is despite the training program for which Congress approved a budget of USD 500 million (USD 42 million of which has already been spent). According to him, the US is currently considering more effective ways to deploy the Syrian forces on the ground. **This is because they will not reach the government’s planned goal of training 5,400 combatants in the near future** (The Daily Beast, September 16, 2015).

■ On the other hand, according to Turkish media reports, 75 combatants trained by the US Army, Britain and Turkey, entered the Aleppo province on the night of September 18-19, 2015. The combatants entered Syria through the Bab al-Salama crossing, north of Aleppo (Hürriyet, September 20, 2015).

American statements regarding Russia’s involvement in the fighting in Syria

■ This week, the United States commented on Russia’s growing involvement in the fighting in Syria:

- **US Secretary of State John Kerry** said that Russia had offered to hold talks between the two countries regarding the situation in Syria (The Independent, September 19, 2015).
- **According to White House Spokesman Josh Earnest**, Russia’s interests in Syria are not much different from those of the United States and Russia, like many other countries, fears the spread of ISIS’s influence in the region (Sputnik, September 16, 2015). However, he said that the United States wanted to see Russia integrated into the fighting within the international coalition against ISIS rather than increasing its military presence in Syria (Reuters, September 16, 2015).

- Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Christine E. Wormuth said that there was no expectation of military cooperation between Russia and the United States. She added that the issue would be considered if the need arose for tactical cooperation in the Syrian arena (Sputnik, September 16, 2015).

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

Aleppo province

The area of Marea

- This week as well, fighting continued between rebel organizations and ISIS around the town of Marea, north of Aleppo (the area designated to become an “ISIS-free” buffer zone). ISIS has intensified its attacks in the region by detonating car bombs and bombs containing mustard gas. According to Arab media reports, **ISIS operatives have taken over the town of Marea**, thereby cutting off an important major supply artery of the rebels (Al-Arabiya al-Hadath, September 15, 2015).



The town of Marea, site of battles between ISIS and the rebel groups (Google Maps)

Kuweyres military airbase

■ Clashes continued in the area of the **Kuweyres military airbase, east of Aleppo**, as part of **ISIS's efforts to take over the airbase**. Syrian security forces have carried out several attacks against ISIS operatives in the area. There have been reports of deaths among the ISIS operatives (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), September 15, 2015).



The Kuweyres military airbase, east of Aleppo (Google Maps)

Damascus province

■ During the week, **clashes continued in southern Damascus**. The Army of Islam rebel organization announced that its operatives were able to take control of several areas in the eastern rural area of Damascus (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, September 13, 2015). According to additional reports, **ISIS operatives withdrew from the stronghold in Al-Hajar al-Aswad**, south of Damascus, after clashes with other rebel organizations (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, September 20, 2015).

Al-Zabadani

■ Fighting continued in the city of Al-Zabadani after the collapse of the second ceasefire. The Syrian security forces and Hezbollah reportedly advanced from the western neighborhood that they had taken over towards the city center (Syrian News Agency, September 13, 2015). Hezbollah reportedly sustained many losses in the battles. According to an announcement by the Al-Nusra Front, 18 Hezbollah operatives and 12 Jaysh al-Islam operatives were killed in an attempt to break through a checkpoint in Al-Zabadani (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, September 11, 2015).

Idlib province

The Abu al-Duhur military airbase

■ **On September 9, 2015, Al-Nusra Front operatives managed to take over the Abu al-Duhur military airbase**, southeast of Idlib, taking advantage of the dust storm there. Syrian security forces evacuated the area. A senior officer in the Syrian Army, who was not identified, claimed that the Syrian Army had managed to remove all the weapons from the airbase (Al-Jazeera September 9, 2015).

■ On the other hand, a Twitter account affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front posted a number of photos **showing Al-Nusra Front operatives taking over the Abu al-Duhur military airbase**. Other photos show the operatives **near a Syrian fighter plane and a helicopter**. **One of the photos shows seven Syrian fighter planes next to a hardened aircraft shelter** (Twitter account affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front, September 10, 2015).



Left: Al-Nusra Front operatives next to a Syrian helicopter at the Abu al-Duhur military airbase.
Right: Al-Nusra Front operatives next to a Syrian fighter plane at the Abu al-Duhur military airbase
(Twitter account affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front, September 10, 2015)

■ **Abu al-Walid**, one of the Al-Nusra Front commanders at the site, said that during the clashes at the airbase, **over 100 members of the Syrian security forces were killed and 95 were taken prisoner**. In addition, the Al-Nusra Front seized **20 fighter planes, 15 helicopters and a large quantity of artillery and machine guns** (Aljazeera.net, September 19, 2015). A few days after the takeover of the airbase, Al-Nusra Front operatives reportedly killed more than 65 Syrian Army personnel who had been captured during the fighting (SOHR, September 20, 2015).

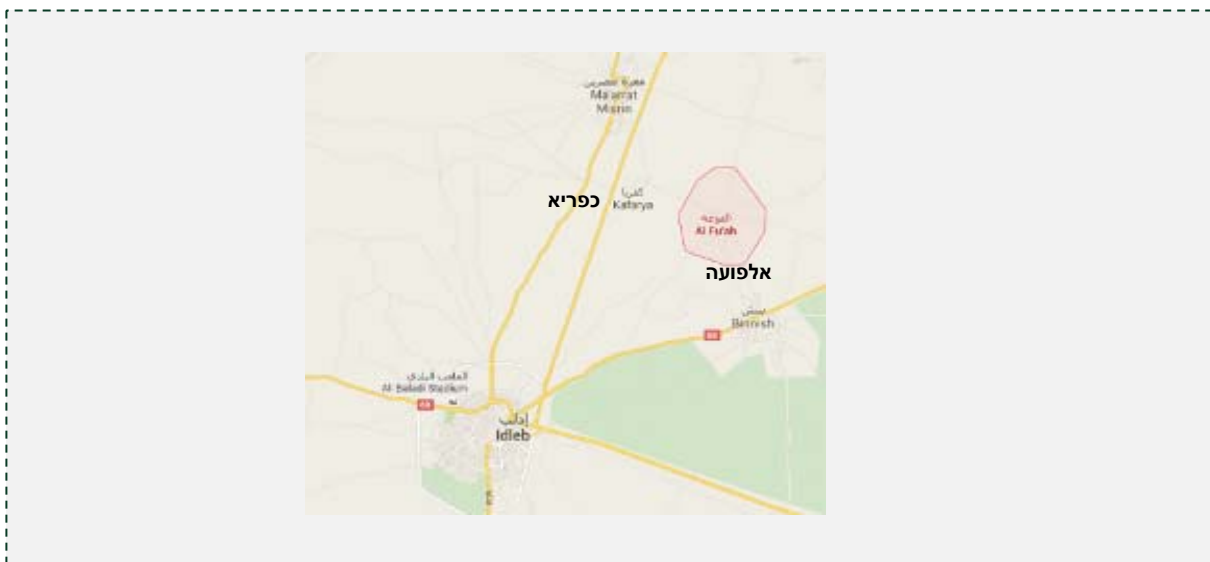
The Abu al-Duhur military airbase was taken over after being besieged by Al-Nusra Front operatives for approximately two years. With the takeover of the airbase, the Syrian regime lost control of an important military airbase, further weakening its hold of the Aleppo region.



The Abu al-Duhur military airbase southeast of Idlib (Twitter account affiliated with the Al-Nusra Front, August 20, 2015)

The Shiite villages of Kafraya and Fu'ah

■ **Fighting continued around the Shiite villages of Kafraya and Fu'ah, northeast of Idlib, so far inconclusively.** Jaysh al-Fatah operatives, led by the Al-Nusra Front, reportedly took over areas dominating the villages. According to additional reports, Syrian Air Force planes attacked the rebel organizations' main supply routes from the Turkish border to the two villages (Facebook, September 20, 2015). Several dozen people on both sides were killed in these battles (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), September 21, 2015).



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

- On September 18, 2015, a Twitter account posted photos documenting the attack on the village of Fu'ah. On his Twitter account, the Al-Nusra Front reporter posted a report about the entry of the operatives into Fu'ah after two suicide bombings and after hundreds of mortar shells were fired at the area (Twitter, September 18, 2015).



Left: Tweet by the Al-Nusra Front reporter announcing the beginning of the entry of its operatives into Fu'ah (Twitter, September 18, 2015). Right: Tank shells being fired at the village of Fu'ah (Twitter, September 18, 2015).

- According to reports on jihadi social networks, a **former Al-Qaeda operative codenamed Abu al-Hassan al-Tunisi** was killed in the fighting in Idlib. **The operative who was killed had been one of Osama bin Laden's aides.** Abu al-Hassan al-Tunisi served in the ranks of Al-Qaeda in the 1990s in Sudan and later survived the battles in Tora Bora, in eastern Afghanistan, in 2001. He was sent to Syria to train Al-Nusra Front operatives (The Al-Nusra Front's Twitter pages, September 19, 2015).

Homs province

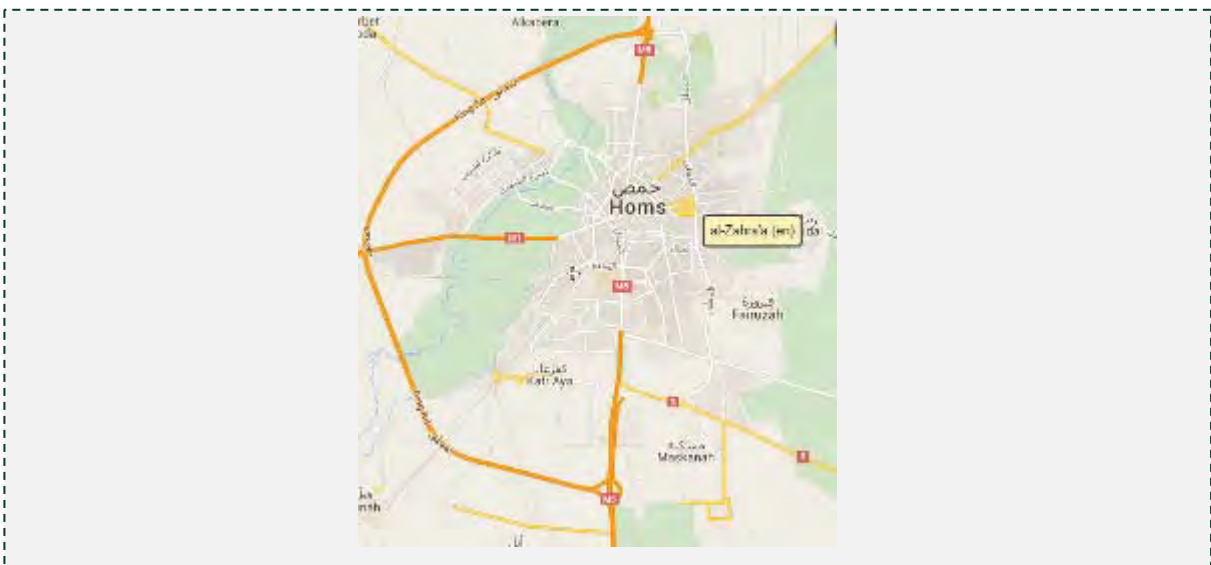
- **ISIS operatives continue to expand their control in the area of the Jazal oil and gas field, northwest of Palmyra.** On September 12, 2015, ISIS's media arm reported that its operatives had taken over the village of Jazal and an oil well in the rural area east of Homs. A video posted that same day on YouTube shows ISIS operatives near the oil well and in the village of Jazal (a3maqnews.tumblr; YouTube, September 12, 2015).
- On September 17, 2015, ISIS's Homs province published an announcement stating that its air defense operatives had managed to **shoot down a Syrian MiG-21 fighter plane in the area of Jazal** (Twitter, September 17, 2015). One of ISIS's

media arms posted a link to a video showing the wreckage of a fighter plane that ISIS claims to have shot down in the area of Jazal (A3maqnews.tumblr; yadi.sk file-sharing website, September 17, 2015).



The wreckage of a Syrian MiG-21 fighter plane that ISIS claims to have shot down in the area of Jazal (A3maqnews.tumblr; yadi.sk file-sharing website, September 17, 2015)

■ **In the city of Homs**, dozens were reported killed and wounded by a car bomb in the Alawite neighborhood of Al-Zahra (Syrian TV, September 16, 2015). ISIS's Homs province claimed responsibility for the car bombing, which was carried out by a suicide bomber codenamed **Abu Abdullah al-Homsi**. The explosion killed and wounded dozens (Isdarat website, September 16, 2015). In addition, the Al-Nusra Front claimed responsibility for the detonation of three IEDs in the Wadi al-Dahab neighborhood of Homs (The Al-Nusra Front's media foundation, September 19, 2015).



The Alawite Al-Zahra neighborhood, where a car bomb was detonated (Wikimapia, Google Maps)

Deir al-Zor province

■ Clashes continued between the Syrian security forces and ISIS operatives on the outskirts of the Deir al-Zor military airbase (Khatwa News Agency, September 16, 2015). The Syrian Army reportedly foiled an attempt by ISIS to take over the Deir al-Zor military airbase after five car bombs were detonated on the eastern side of the airbase (RT, September 10, 2015).

■ According to a report by ISIS's media foundation, 94 Syrian soldiers were killed in the battles in and around the airbase. ISIS's media foundation claimed that its operatives had managed to take over a number of sites at the airbase. According to a report on the SOHR website, over 40 Syrian soldiers were killed and ISIS operatives managed to advance on the ground. **The military airbase in Deir al-Zor has been the lifeline of the Syrian forces in this region ever since ISIS began to besiege the city six months ago** (Aljazeera.net Channel, September 10, 2015).



The Deir al-Zor military airbase (Google Maps)

■ According to Arab media reports, ISIS operatives control most of the neighborhoods in the city of Deir al-Zor. The Syrian security forces control the neighborhoods of Al-Qusour in the western part and Al-Jourah in the northwestern part (Aljazeera.net Channel; YouTube, September 10, 2015; SyriaHR.com website, September 15, 2015).

Al-Hasakah province

■ According to a report by the SOHR, **two explosions occurred in the city of Al-Hasakah** as a result of car bomb attacks in the northwest of the city. The explosions killed and wounded dozens, most of them Kurdish fighters. ISIS has claimed

responsibility for the attacks (Terror_monitor, September 14, 2015). On September 15, 2015, ISIS's media foundation reported that a suicide bomber had detonated a car bomb against the public relations headquarters of the Kurdish units in Al-Hasakah. The explosion killed about 30 operatives of the Kurdish forces (A3maqnews.tumblr, September 15, 2015). The attack was carried out by a suicide bomber codenamed **Abu 'Amru al Barka** (Twitter, September 15, 2015).

■ The day before (September 14, 2015), two ISIS suicide bombers detonated two car bombs in Al-Hasakah: the first at a meeting place of the Kurdish forces and the second against the headquarters of a local militia of the Syrian security forces. These two attacks killed over fifty people (A3maqnews.tumblr, September 15, 2015).

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (www.nationsonline.org)

Ramadi

- This week, battles were fought between the Iraqi Army and ISIS operatives. At a meeting with the commander of the US forces at the Iraqi Defense Ministry, the Iraqi defense minister said that the Iraqi Army was preparing a campaign to cleanse Ramadi from the control of ISIS (Jordanian News Agency, September 20, 2015).
- On September 18, 2015, an Iraqi Army convoy was harmed by IEDs that exploded southeast of the city of Ramadi. The explosion killed seven Iraqi soldiers and wounded eleven others (Al-Jazeera TV, September 18, 2015). On September 19, 2015, the Iraqi Army announced that its Air Force had attacked an ISIS convoy on its way to Ramadi (SANA, September 19, 2015).

Haditha

- On September 17, 2015, the Iraqi Army announced that its Air Force had foiled an ISIS suicide bombing attack near the city of Haditha. According to the announcement, a vehicle driven by a suicide bomber was blown up from the air (Al-Sumaria, September 17, 2015).

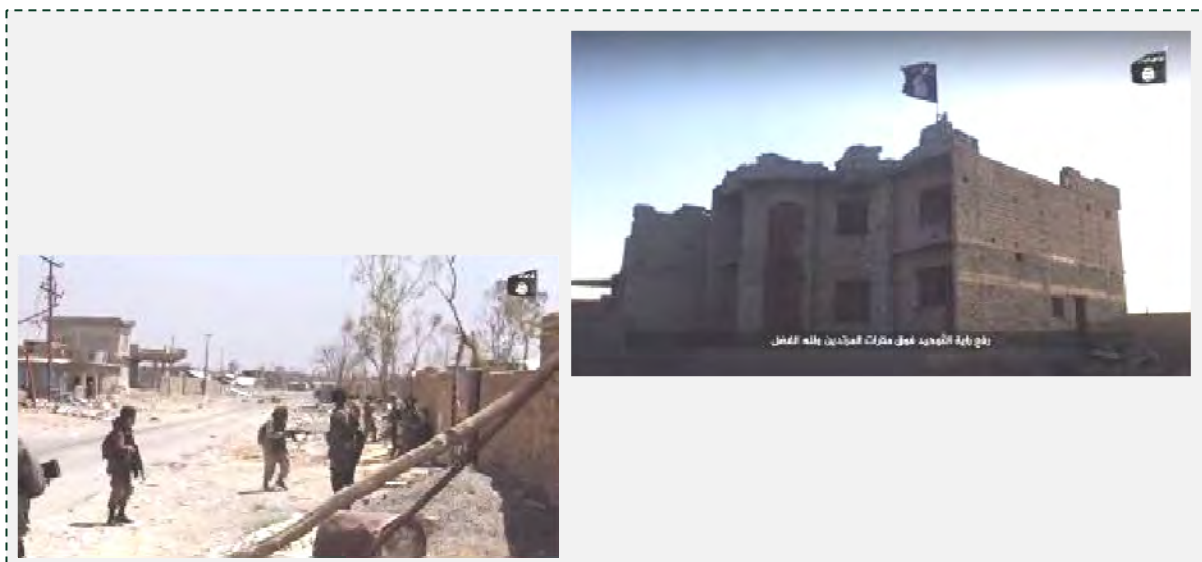
Baghdad

- According to a report by a senior Iraqi security source, a suicide bombing attack was foiled by the Iraqi security forces on the basis of intelligence. Four suicide bombers arrived at a gas station in the Al-'Amiriya neighborhood (in western Baghdad) wearing explosives belts. The four were arrested and their explosive belts were neutralized (Al-Hurra, September 20, 2015).

Salah al-Din province

Baiji

- ISIS's Salah al-Din province posted a video entitled "Baiji - the Steadfast Fortress," documenting its operatives taking over a base of the Shiite militias that assist the Iraqi Army in the city and its environs. The video also shows photos of various buildings in the city and its environs flying the ISIS flag (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, September 14, 2015). **The struggle over control of the city of Baiji has not yet been decided.**



Left: Fighting in the area. Right: A building in Baiji formerly used by the Iraqi Army, flying the ISIS flag (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, September 14, 2015).

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 activities against operatives of the Sinai province of the Islamic State. On September 7, 2015, **the Egyptian Army began a large-scale operation against ISIS terrorism centers in northern and central Sinai**. According to the spokesman for the Egyptian Armed Forces, during the operation, which began some two weeks ago, dozens of operatives were killed, IEDs were detonated, terrorist sites were destroyed, along with cars, motorcycles, tunnels and weapons stores. The Egyptian forces also confiscated many cars and a large amount of weapons and ammunition (Facebook page of the Egyptian Armed Forces spokesman, September 14, 2015).

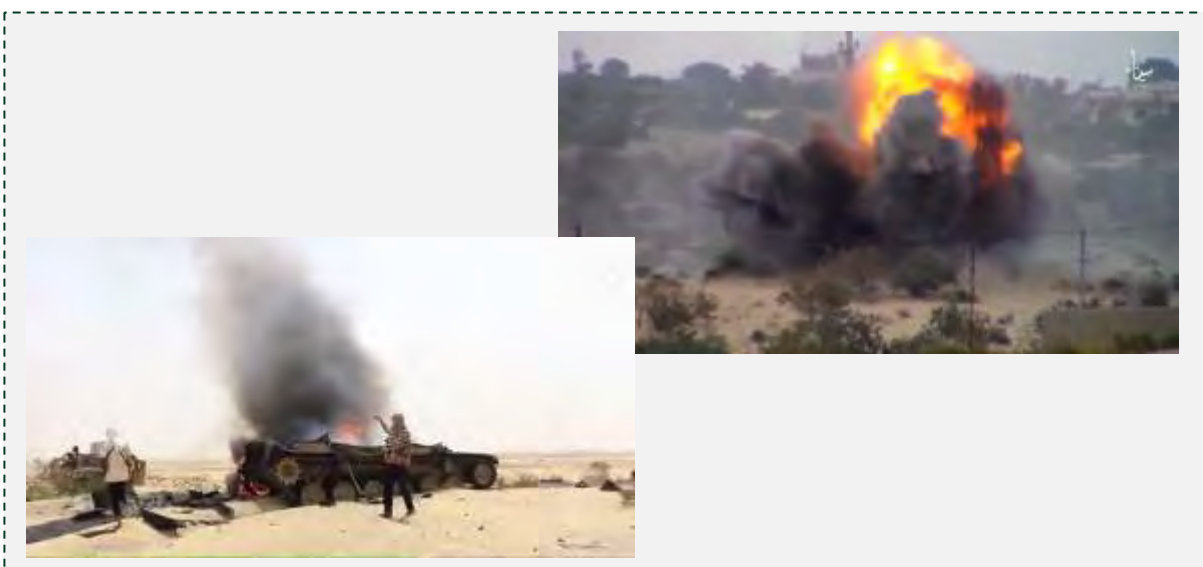
■ Concurrently, ISIS's Sinai province operatives **continued to carry out attacks against the security forces**. Following are a number of incidents:

- **On September 20, 2015**, ISIS's Sinai province claimed responsibility for an IED explosion near an Egyptian Army APC in the area of Al-Arish (ISIS's Twitter account, September 20, 2015).
- **On September 11, 2015**, a car bomb exploded near an Egyptian Army convoy in the Rafah area. An officer was killed and five soldiers were wounded. According to an announcement by the Sinai province, the attack was carried out

as part of a series of operations known as “hunting those who have renounced Islam” (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, September 11, 2015).

- **On September 10, 2015**, the Sinai province claimed responsibility for damaging an Egyptian Army M113 armored personnel carrier on the Sheikh Zuweid to Al-Jura highway (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, September 10, 2015).

- On September 16, 2015, ISIS’s Sinai province published a video documenting damage to Egyptian Army vehicles caused by machine gun fire and IEDs. The video also documented damage to an Egyptian tank by a **Kornet anti-tank missile**. At the end of the video, an operative from ISIS’s Sinai province is shown threatening the rulers of Egypt and accusing them of collaborating with Israel (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, September 16, 2015).



Egyptian Army armored vehicles being blown up (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, September 16, 2015)

Expansion of ISIS’s operations into Egypt itself

- Two policemen were injured when an IED exploded **at the office of the Foreign Ministry in Giza, Egypt** (Ahrām Online, September 20, 2015). **ISIS in Egypt** claimed responsibility for the bomb blast (Twitter, September 20, 2015).

- According to jihadi sources, **ISIS’s Sinai Province has begun to organize squads of operatives who were recruited outside of the Sinai Peninsula, to man ISIS’s branches throughout Egypt**. Such squads, which were established recently, were responsible for carrying out recent attacks in Egypt such as the attack at the Italian Consulate in Cairo. According to the same sources, the reason behind the

establishment of the branches is **to expand the activity of ISIS's Sinai province beyond the Sinai Peninsula to the area of the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt**. According to the reports, ISIS is working to open two fronts with Egypt simultaneously, from the Sinai Peninsula and from Libya (Al-Watan, September 16, 2015).

Palestinians and Israeli Arabs

Gaza resident killed in the fighting alongside ISIS in Iraq

■ Palestinian websites reported the death of **Hamza Mahmoud Miqdad**, 18, resident of the Shati refugee camp in Gaza. He was killed on September 19, 2015, fighting in the ranks of ISIS in the city of Baiji (Al-Risala Net, Gaza Alan's Twitter account, September 19, 2015). Iran's Al-Alam TV reported that **Hamza Mahmoud Miqdad**, aka **Abu Mahmoud al-Ghazawi**, was killed fighting in the ranks of ISIS in the vicinity of Mosul (Al-Alam TV, September 19, 2015).



Hamza Mahmoud Miqdad, 18, resident of the Shati refugee camp in Gaza, who was killed fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Iraq (Gaza Alan's Twitter account, September 19, 2015)

The conduct of the Islamic State

ISIS criticizes the phenomenon of refugees fleeing to Europe

■ Against the backdrop of the current wave of refugees in Europe, **ISIS criticized the refugees fleeing from Syria and Iraq. ISIS's main claim is that the migration of residents to foreign countries where Islam does not rule is a sin.** ISIS's various provinces in Syria, Iraq and Yemen have produced videos criticizing the phenomenon of refugees. The videos include interviews with various civilians and with ISIS operatives, who expressed their resolute stance against the phenomenon of fleeing, stressing that the refugees are trying to reach countries where "infidels" live. They claim that these refugees are expected to lose their Muslim identity and some of them may even convert to Christianity (Akhbardawlatalislam.wordpress blog, September 17, 2015).

- Following are some of ISIS's comments on the refugee problem:
 - **ISIS's Salah al-Din province in Iraq** posted a video in which a cleric criticizes those who leave the Islamic State for other countries. The cleric calls on them to return. He claims that their departure is religiously unacceptable, and that those who leave will have no peace of mind and will be taken advantage of in the countries they go to (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, September 16, 2015).



The cleric who criticized those who leave the Islamic State (Isdarat al-Dawla al-Islamiyya, September 16, 2015)

- A video produced by **ISIS's AI-Furat province in Iraq** shows an ISIS operative preaching a sermon at a mosque. The sermon praises migration to territory controlled by the Muslims and criticizes the emigration of Muslims from Syria to Western countries (Akhbardawlatalislam.wordpress blog, September 17, 2015).
- A video **produced by ISIS's Homs province in Syria** shows an ISIS operative praising Muslim immigration to "Dar al-Islam," the area controlled by the Muslims according to Islamic law (Sharia). On the other hand, he criticizes "Dar al-Kufr," the area inhabited by infidels. This video shows a refugee camp where pamphlets on Christianity were distributed to refugees from Syria. Later in the video, there are scenes of police brutality against the refugees at border crossings in Eastern Europe (archive.org file-sharing website, September 17, 2015).
- The latest issue of **Dabiq, ISIS's English-language organ**, includes an article about the refugees who go to Europe. **The article calls migration to Europe a sin** because the refugees left the Islamic State, which is supposed to be a home for all Muslims. The issue also includes a picture of the Kurdish baby whose body was washed up onto the coast of Turkey as a warning of the fate that awaits anyone who emigrates from the territory of the Islamic State.
- A video produced by **ISIS's Hadramawt province in Yemen** shows an ISIS operative preaching a sermon at a mosque. The operative notes that Muslims must emigrate from the lands of the infidels to *Dar al-Islam* and not vice versa. According to him, those who live in the lands of the infidels live in accordance with their laws and are exposed to immorality (Akhbardawlatalislam.wordpress blog, September 17, 2015)



Operative of ISIS's Hadramawt province preaching a sermon in praise of migration to Islamic countries and against migration to Western countries (Akhbardawlatalislam.wordpress blog, September 17, 2015)

In the ITIC's assessment, **ISIS's campaign against the phenomenon of refugees** expresses its profound concern about the dwindling population in the territories under its control. **ISIS depends largely on the flow of foreign fighters from Western countries and the Arab world** to the territories of the Islamic State under its control. These operatives ("migrants") are the backbone of ISIS's military forces and administrative infrastructure. In practice, it is not known whether ISIS is taking practical steps on the ground to prevent the flight of residents from the areas under its control and from the battle zones in Syria and Iraq.

ISIS has begun enrollment to the University of Mosul

- ISIS has begun enrollment to the University of Mosul for the school year. To this end, it has set up an admissions committee consisting of lecturers and ISIS operatives. Enrollment began after ISIS made changes in the curriculum, decided on the programs of study and established several new departments (Al-Khaleej Online, September 15, 2015).

Criticism of ISIS by the leader of Al-Qaeda

- On September 9, 2015, **Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri** published an audio tape in which **he publicly criticizes ISIS, in an unprecedented attack**, for the first time since the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate. **In his sermon**, Ayman al-Zawahiri **claims that the Islamic Caliphate led by ISIS is not legitimate under Islamic law**. He explains that up to now he has exercised restraint in his attitude

toward ISIS in the hope of future reconciliation, adding that when ISIS's leader publicly called on Al-Qaeda's operatives to cancel their pledge to Al-Zawahiri, he was left with no choice but to criticize ISIS. Al-Zawahiri notes, however, that despite ISIS's erroneous ways, **he is prepared to cooperative with it against "the enemies of Islam," out of the understanding that the interests of jihad are more important than the battle with ISIS.**

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

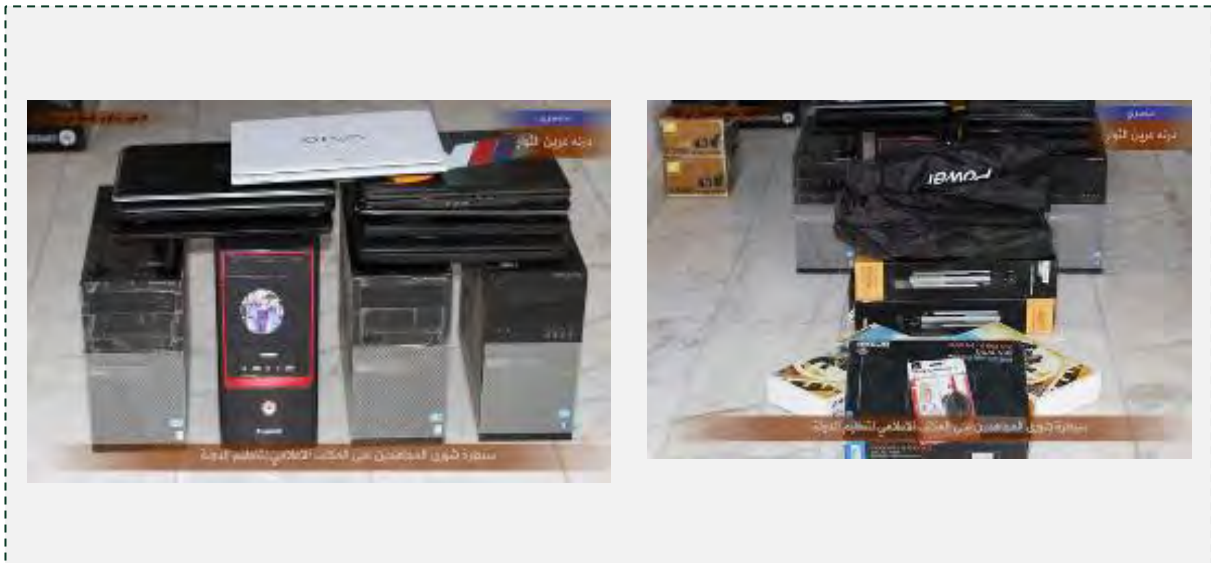
Sirte

- **Hassan Karami, the Mufti of the city of Sirte, which is controlled by ISIS, warned the residents of Sirte that those who did not repent before the beginning of October were liable to die.** The Mufti addressed all those who formerly served the previous regime in the various government systems: the Army, the Civil Service, law, banking and more. He called on them to hurry and repent before the opening of the Islamic court at the beginning of October; otherwise there would be no choice but to kill them.

- On September 10, 2015, **ISIS announced the closure of all commercial banks in the city of Sirte.** This is because, according to ISIS, they are acting in a manner contrary to Islamic law because they charge interest. ISIS operatives demanded that the officials working at these banks repent, and threatened to hunt them down and punish them if they go work for banks in other cities in Libya (Akhbar Libya, September 12, 2015).

Derna

- In the city of Derna, eastern Libya, **the battle for control between ISIS and a local jihadi organization affiliated with Al-Qaeda** (The Shura Council of the Rebels of Derna) continued. The information office of the Islamic State's Barqa province published photos documenting the organization's operatives seizing weapons and ammunition in Derna (Akhbar Libya, September 10, 2015). On the other hand, the jihadi organization reported that its operatives had taken control over an ISIS media center and seized a large quantity of media equipment (Akhbar Libya, September 13, 2015).

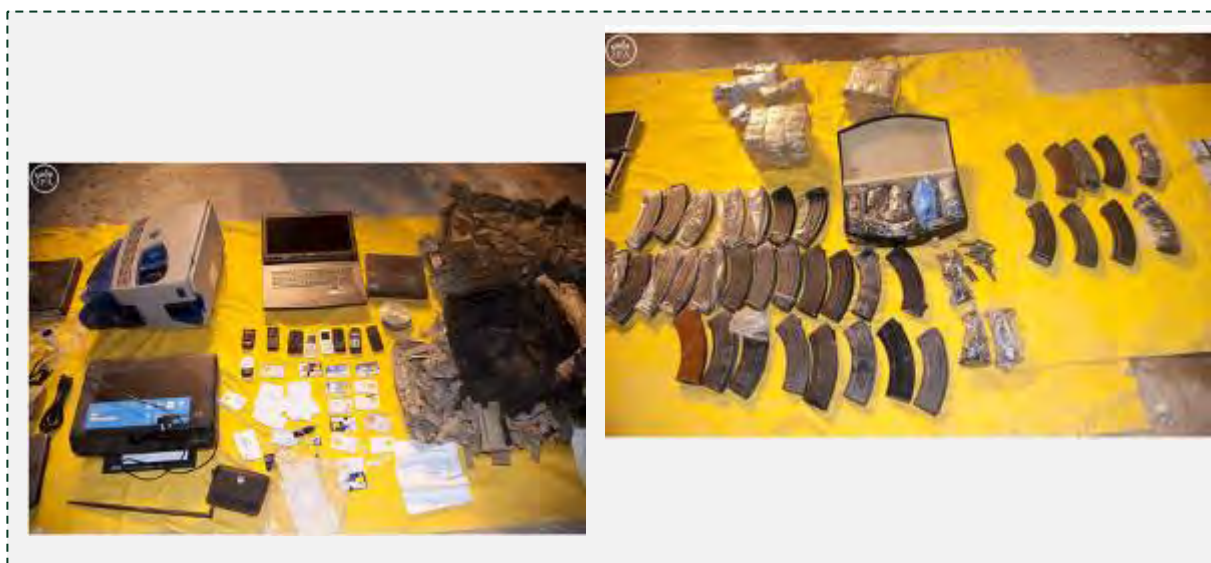


A large quantity of media equipment seized at an ISIS media center in Derna (Akhbar Libya, September 13, 2015)

Counterterrorism and preventive activity

Saudi Arabia

■ During a security operation in the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabian security forces detained two people suspected of belonging to an ISIS network. The suspects are Ahmed Mohammed Saeed Zahrani, 21, and his brother Mohammed, 19. After the security forces besieged the house, the two men opened fire and threw hand grenades at the forces. In another operation that took place near Riyadh, suspects were detained after attempting to flee in a car with false license plates (Al-Arabiya, September 16, 2015).



Weapons, money and other means seized in Saudi Arabia in an operation against ISIS operatives (Al-Arabiya, September 16, 2015)

Kuwait

■ On September 15, 2015, the criminal court in Kuwait imposed the death penalty on seven of those charged with blowing up the Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque in June 2014 (the explosion near the mosque killed 26 people and injured more than two hundred). The court also imposed prison terms on eight other defendants and acquitted 14 other defendants. **Fahd Faraj Mihrab**, one of the defendants who was sentenced to death, **was presented in court as the head of ISIS's local branch** (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, September 16, 2015).

Russia

■ CIA officials estimate that **around 30,000 fighters from more than eighty countries are fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq**. According to Sergei Smirnov, First Deputy Director of the Russian Federal Security Service, **around 2,400 of them are Russian nationals** (ARA News, September 18, 2015).

ISIS's battle for hearts and minds

New issue of the organ Dabiq

■ On September 9, 2015, ISIS published a new edition, number 11, of Dabiq, its monthly English-language periodical. Most of the issue deals with ideological topics. The main article deals with the coalition's activity against ISIS, with an emphasis on Turkey joining the coalition. The article expresses a direct threat to Turkey. Additional articles in the issue:

- An interview with **Abdul Mughirah al-Qahtani**, who was identified as **ISIS's leader in the Libya province**. In the interview, he reviews ISIS's activities in Libya and the organizations that support ISIS in the country.
- **Documentation of destruction of antiquities in Palmyra** after it was taken over.
- An article about **the September 11 attacks** in the United States.
- An article about the **Lion Cubs of the Caliphate**, ISIS's youth organization.
- The issue ends with an ad **offering two prisoners being held by ISIS for sale to highest bidder**. The two prisoners are a **Norwegian citizen and a Chinese citizen**.



The Norwegian citizen and Chinese citizen “offered for sale” (Dabiq, September 11, 2015)

Threats against the United States on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the September 11 attacks

- September 11, 2015, was the 14th anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center in the US. Praise of Al-Qaeda’s terrorist attack appeared on social networks affiliated with the global jihad. A hashtag in Arabic and English entitled “We will burn America” appeared on Twitter. On September 11, 2015, an ISIS-affiliated Twitter account shared a poster showing the World Trade Center after it was hit, under the inscription: “September 11 - what is coming is more bitter and harder.” This poster appeared as the title of an article **praising** Osama bin Laden **and the attack on the World Trade Center**.
- One of the articles on social networks says that **jihadists are everywhere, waiting for an opportunity to get to heaven** (i.e., to carry out suicide bombings). The author later warns the Americans that they have a choice between converting to Islam, paying a poll tax or expecting to be attacked by jihadi operatives. The article quotes ISIS spokesman **Abu Mohammad al-Adnani**, who threatened the Americans and Europeans, saying that they will not feel secure in their homes, in the streets and in the countries where they live (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; Justpaste.it, September 11, 2015).



Banner of the article - "September 11 and what is coming is more bitter and harder" (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account; Justpaste.it, September 11, 2015)



A poster that appeared on Twitter (ISIS-affiliated Twitter account, September 11, 2015)