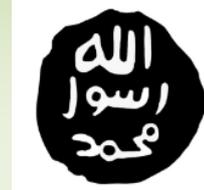




Spotlight on Global Jihad¹ (April 14-20, 2016)



Main events of the week

- The ceasefire in Syria entered its eighth week, with the familiar characteristics. The US secretary of state and the Russian foreign minister have reiterated their support for the agreement and stressed the need to maintain it.
- **In Syria**, clashes continued between the Syrian Army and its allies on the one hand, and organizations not included in the ceasefire on the other. ISIS is apparently trying to exert pressure on the Syrian regime **south of Damascus** (the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp) **and east of the city** (in and around the city of Dumayr). According to media reports, ISIS managed to take over some areas in the Al-Yarmouk camp, while, in Dumayr, an agreement was reached whereby ISIS operatives would withdraw from the city.
- **In Iraq**, the Iraqi Army completed its **takeover of the city of Hit**, located on the banks of the Euphrates River, about 70 km northwest of Ramadi. The takeover of Hit **represents an additional achievement, in military terms and in terms of public relations**. The takeover of the city is another step in the efforts of the Iraqi regime to cleanse the Sunni Al-Anbar Province from the presence of ISIS in preparation for the campaign over Mosul.
- **ISIS continues to threaten the West, particularly the United States, France and Britain**. This week, ISIS released a German-language video calling on its supporters to kill "infidels" in any way they can - if not by shooting or planting IEDs, then by running them over, slitting their throats and burning their homes and businesses.

The ceasefire agreement

- **The ceasefire has entered to its eighth week**, with characteristics similar to those of the previous weeks. According to the Russian coordination center in Hmeymim, there have been only a few violations of the ceasefire and other towns have joined the agreement, which now includes 63 towns (Sputnik, April 16, 2016).

¹ Due to Passover, Spotlight on Global Jihad will not appear next week. We wish all our readers a happy holiday.

The coordination center reported that three tons of equipment, mostly food, had been transferred to Homs and that the Syrian government, with Russian support, had airlifted 22 tons of food to Deir al-Zor (TASS News Agency, April 16, 2016).

■ **US Secretary of State John Kerry and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov** reiterated their support for the ceasefire and the need to maintain it. Kerry said that the United States expected Russia to pressure the Syrian regime to maintain the ceasefire. He promised that the US would act in a similar manner vis-à-vis the opposition in Syria (US Department of State website, April 15, 2016). Speaking at a briefing, **White House Spokesman Josh Earnest** said that the ceasefire had so far proved more durable than most US government officials had believed. He said that the ceasefire had resulted in the reduction of the scope of violence and enabled the transfer of humanitarian aid to areas under siege. He added that President Barack Obama opposed the idea of establishing a buffer zone between Syria and Turkey because it would require the deployment of thousands of soldiers and the deployment of American ground forces.

The international campaign against ISIS

■ The US-led international coalition continued to carry out attacks in Iraq and Syria against ISIS targets. During the week, aircraft of the coalition countries carried out many dozens of airstrikes, mainly against ISIS targets in Iraq. The airstrikes in Iraq were concentrated in the areas of Hit, Kisik, Mosul, Sinjar, Fallujah and Tal Afar. In Syria, airstrikes were carried out in the areas of Al-Raqqah and Marea.

■ According to **US President Barack Obama**, ISIS in Syria and Iraq is now on the defensive and the coalition countries are on the offensive. According to President Obama, the coalition forces continue to attack ISIS's leaders and operatives planning to carry out attacks. As an example, he cited the capture of **Abu Daoud, head of ISIS's chemical weapons program**. He also said that the United States would work with its partners in Europe and around the world to halt the flow of foreign fighters [to Syria] and prevent attacks (White House website, April 14, 2016).

■ **Steve Warren, Spokesman for Operation Inherent Resolve**, said that the international coalition against ISIS had completed the first phase of its struggle against ISIS. Now the second phase begins, i.e., the dismantlement of ISIS in Syria and Iraq. According to Warren, the United States will not deploy a large military force to fight against ISIS but will defeat ISIS by local forces from Syria and Iraq (Anatolia, April 13, 2016). In another statement, Steve Warren said that more than 25,000 ISIS operatives

had been killed since the international coalition commenced operation some 20 months ago. He said that ISIS's economic activity had also been impaired, mainly due to damage to the oil fields under its control (Daily Mail, April 16, 2016).

Russia's involvement in the fighting in Syria

- Russian Air Force planes continued their airstrikes throughout Syria against targets of ISIS and organizations that are not included in the ceasefire. The Russians attacked targets in and around Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and elsewhere. A Russian plane was reportedly shot down near Al-Mansoura (west of Al-Raqqah) and the pilot was taken prisoner. ISIS claimed responsibility for shooting down the Russian aircraft (Amaq News Agency, April 14, 2016). The Russian Defense Ministry denied these reports.
- Russia and China submitted a draft resolution to the UN Security Council, which aims to prevent extremist groups like ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front from developing or using chemical weapons in Syria. The draft resolution requires Syria's neighbors to report to the Security Council on any action of non-governmental elements related to the manufacture, purchase, transfer and use of chemical weapons (AP, April 14, 2016).

Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

Activity in Palmyra and Al-Qaryatayn

■ Engineering units of the Syrian regime forces and Russian experts continued to dismantle mines and IEDs left by ISIS in Palmyra and the surrounding areas (Dimashq al-Aan, April 14, 2016). According to a Lebanese newspaper, the Russian Ministry of Defense is going to build a hospital in Palmyra for the residents of the city and its environs (Al-Nashra, April 19, 2016). According to Syrian reports, dozens of ISIS operatives were killed in the desert area in Al-Qaryatayn during the cleansing of the area by the Syrian forces (Syrian TV, April 16, 2016).



Right: The Syrian Army fighting against ISIS in the desert area in Al-Qaryatayn (Syrian TV, April 16, 2016). Left: Antitank missile fire at Syrian Army vehicles (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 15, 2016).

Clashes throughout Syria

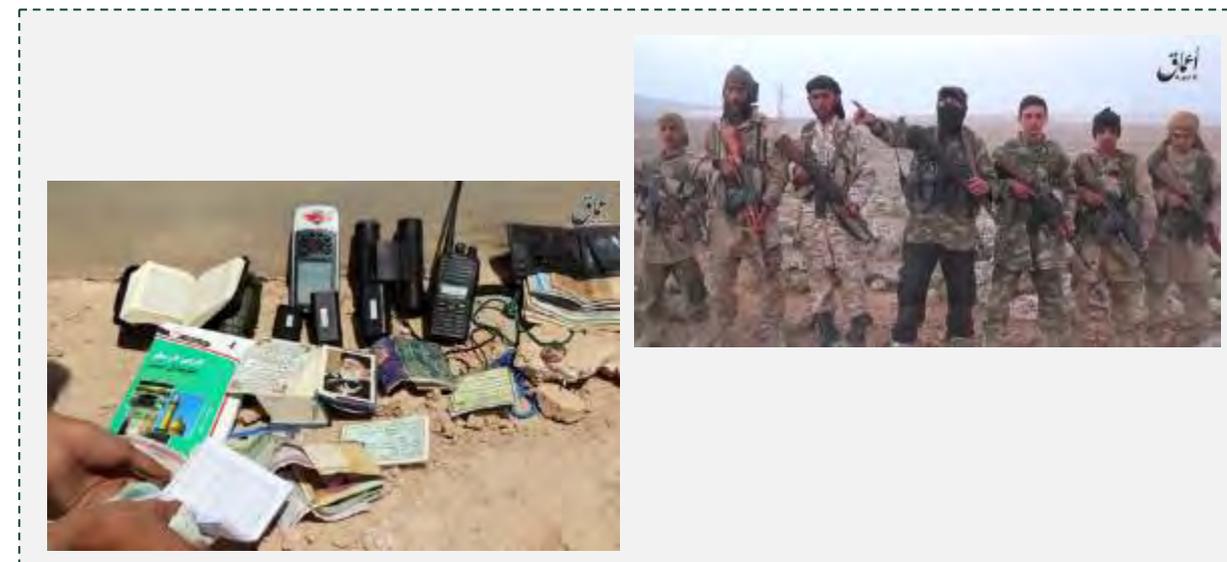
■ In other provinces throughout Syria, including provinces where the ceasefire applies and areas where it does not, **local clashes continued** between the various forces:

- **The area of Damascus** – This week, there were clashes **in the Al-Yarmouk refugee camp** between ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front and the other rebel organizations. According to Syrian and Arab media reports, ISIS took control of several neighborhoods in the camp after clashes with the Al-Nusra Front.
- **The Dumayr area (east of Damascus)** – Clashes continued in and around the city of Dumayr between the Syrian Army and ISIS. On April 19, 2016, **an agreement was reportedly reached whereby ISIS operatives would withdraw from the city and destroy their heavy weapons**. It was also agreed to appoint a committee on behalf of the Syrian regime, which would oversee the withdrawal and destruction of the weapons (Khatwa News Agency, April 19, 2016; Syria Mubasher, April 18, 2016).



Dumayr and Al-Yarmouk, two battle zones in the area of Damascus, where ISIS is trying to put pressure on the Syrian regime (Google Maps)

- The rural area of Aleppo** – Local clashes between the Free Syrian Army forces and ISIS continued in the rural area south of Aleppo. South of Aleppo there were clashes between the Syrian Army and its supporters on the one hand, and Al-Nusra Front operatives on the other. In the area of Khanaser, southeast of Aleppo, ISIS took over a number of villages and strategic areas, cutting off the Syrian Army's supply route to Aleppo (Orient, April 16, 2016). According to ISIS, its operatives have seized weapons, military equipment and documents, some of which belonged to the Shiite fighters that support the Syrian Army (Amaq News Agency, April 15, 2016).



Right: ISIS operatives in the area taken over by ISIS east of Khanaser (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 16, 2016). Left: Some of the communications equipment and documents of the Shiite forces, which fell into ISIS's hands east of Khanaser (Amaq News Agency, April 15, 2016)

- **The area of Deir al-Zor** – Clashes continued between ISIS operatives and the Syrian Army in the area of the military airbase and around the city. Syrian and Russian fighter planes have attacked ISIS targets in the city and its environs. There were also reports of dead and wounded in the ranks of ISIS, during its attempt to advance to the Al-Sina'ah neighborhood, in central Deir al-Zor (Media foundation of the Lebanese Resistance, April 17, 2016; Dimashq al-Aan, April 19, 2016).

Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq (nationsonline.org)

Al-Anbar Province Hit

- Iraqi Army Spokesman Sabah al-Numani said that the Iraqi Army had completed the liberation of the city of Hit and that its forces had completely

cleansed it from the presence of ISIS operatives. The liberation of the city was preceded by a month of fighting. Senior US and Iraqi Army officials believe that the takeover of the city **will aid in cleansing the whole of the Al-Anbar Province from the presence of ISIS operatives** (BBC, April 14, 2016).

The city of Hit is located on the banks of the Euphrates River, about 70 km northwest of Ramadi. Hit was an ISIS control center and an important logistical artery. **Its takeover represents a significant achievement for the Iraqi Army and the US-led coalition**, and another step in the efforts **to cleanse the Sunni Al-Anbar Province from the presence of ISIS**.



Right: The Iraqi Army cleansing the city of Hit and its forces entering the city (Al-Sumaria, April 16, 2016). Left: The beginning of the return of residents who had fled the city (Shabakat al-l'lam al-Iraqi, April 17, 2016)

Ramadi

■ According to Arab media reports, following the stabilization of the security situation in the Ramadi region, thousands of families are returning to the city every day despite the considerable destruction there. According to an Iraqi Army source, ISIS operatives in the area of Al-Baghdadi have **fled to the area of Al-Qaim**, near the border with Syria (Al-Sumaria, April 16, 2016).



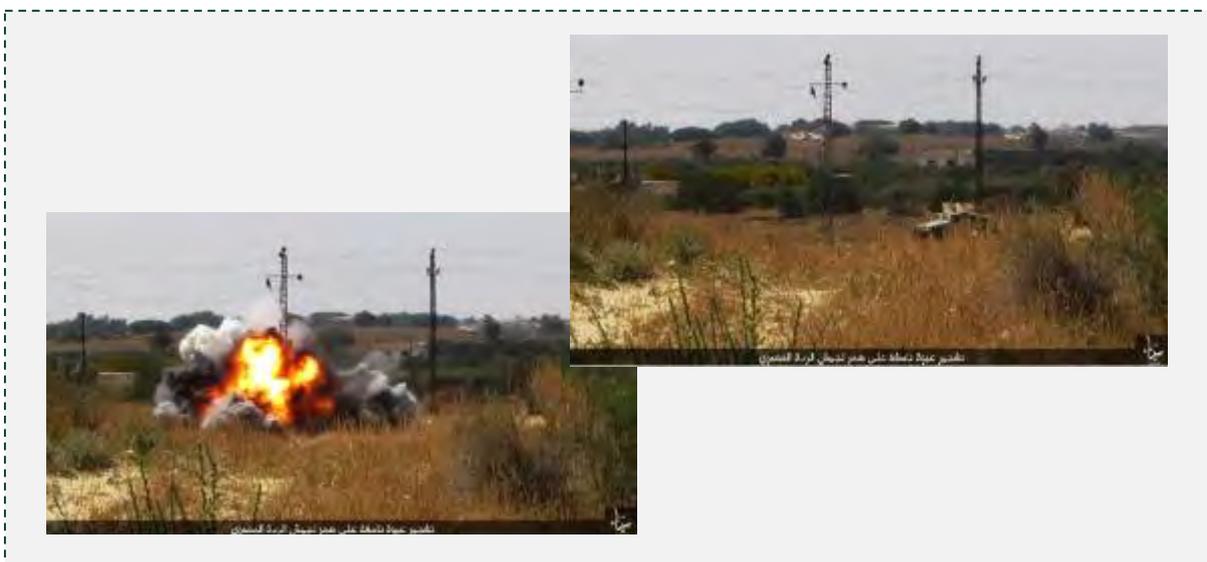
The destruction in Ramadi (SNG Iraqi News Agency, April 11, 2016). As it did in other cities, ISIS left behind scorched earth in Ramadi.

Nineveh Province

■ On April 17, 2016, the Iraqi Army announced that it had killed 30 ISIS operatives and destroyed equipment belonging to ISIS south of the city of Mosul. In addition, international coalition aircraft destroyed missile launchers and boats used by ISIS for transferring weapons south of Mosul (Al-Jazeera, April 17, 2016). The Iraqi Army announced that its aircraft had attacked ISIS targets in Mosul, including the headquarters of the morality police (*hisba*) and ISIS's communications centers. Dozens of ISIS operatives were reportedly killed in the airstrike (Al-Arabiya, April 17, 2016).

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

■ During the week, the Egyptian security forces continued their intensive activity against ISIS's Sinai Province, mainly in the areas of Sheikh Zuweid, Al-Arish, and Rafah. Dozens of suspects were detained and cars, motorbikes and weapons stores were seized. However, ISIS operatives continued their guerrilla activities against the Egyptian security forces, mainly by planting IEDs, some of which were neutralized by the Egyptian security forces.



IED explosion against an Egyptian Army Humvee. Right: A moment before the explosion. Left: After the explosion (Akhbar Dawlat al-Khilafah, April 15, 2016)

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

Statement by a senior American commander

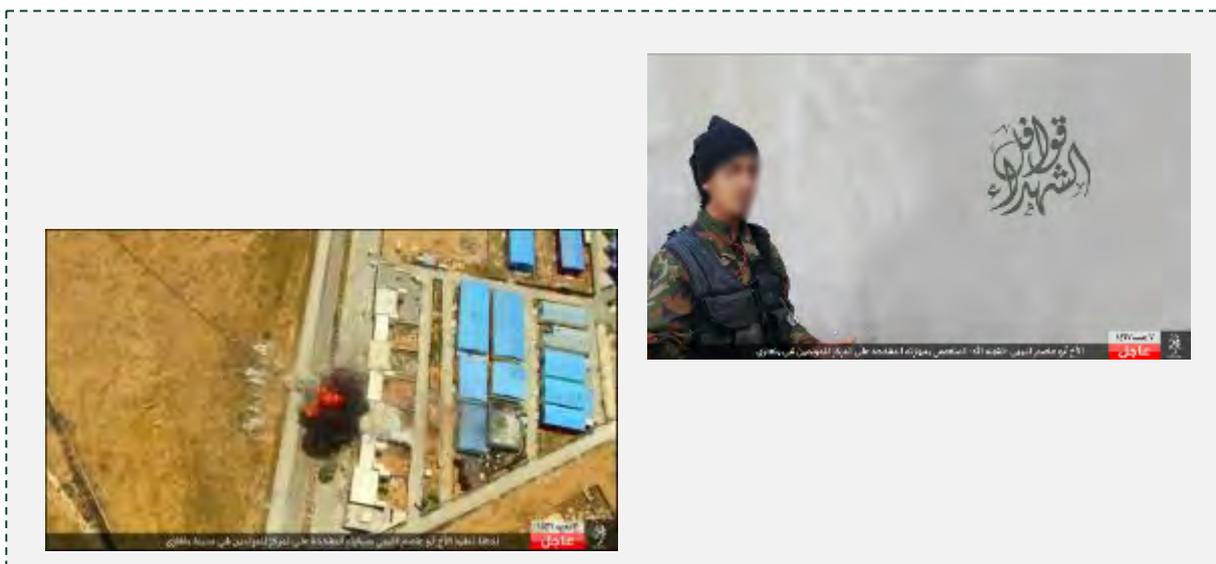
■ Speaking at a congressional hearing, **General David M. Rodriguez, Commander of the US Army Africa Command**, said that according to intelligence assessments, **the number of ISIS operatives in Libya had doubled over the past 12-18 months**. According to General Rodriguez, they now number **between 4,000 and 6,000**. He said the local forces had had some success in their attempts to halt ISIS operatives in Benghazi and were also fighting against them in Sabratah. He stressed that at that point, the US would continue to operate in Libya in the form of targeted killings in light of pinpoint threats based on precise intelligence, and would refrain from expanding its operations (Military Times, April 8, 2016).

Sirte

■ According to sources in Sirte, unidentified gunmen ambushed and fired at a convoy of ISIS vehicles en route from Sirte to the town of Ben Jawad. A senior ISIS operative in Sirte codenamed **Abu Hamza the Algerian** was killed in the ambush. Three other operatives, two Algerians and a Tunisian, were injured. According to one report, the Libyan Special Forces were behind the ambush (eremnews website, April 15, 2016; Bawabat Ifriqiya al-Ikhbariya, April 15, 2016; Al-Wasat Portal, April 15, 2016).

Benghazi

■ This week as well, clashes continued between the Libyan Army and ISIS and the Shura Council of the Benghazi Revolutionaries (which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda). The Libyan Army reported that it had managed to take control of several neighborhoods in the city where ISIS facilities were found. On the other hand, ISIS's Barqa Province reported a suicide bombing attack carried out by an ISIS operative codenamed **Abu Assem the Libyan**. According to ISIS, the attack killed 50 soldiers and destroyed 15 military vehicles. Libyan Army sources reported that two soldiers were killed in the attack and five others were injured (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 15 and 16, 2016).



Left: A moment before the car exploded (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 15, 2016). Right: Abu Assem the Libyan, who carried out the suicide bombing attack in Benghazi (justpaste.it)

ISIS training camp in Libya

■ ISIS's media foundation in the Barqa Province has released a series of photos documenting ISIS's training camp in Libya, which is named after **Abu Mughaira al-Qahtani**². The location of the training camp is unclear. According to one report, the camp is located near Benghazi. On the other hand, according to a Web surfer from Derna, the camp is located in the Al-Fataeh area south of Derna, which is controlled by ISIS (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 13, 2016).

² Abu Mughaira al-Qahtani served as Emir of the Islamic State's Libya Provinces. He was killed in a US airstrike in Derna in November 2015.



Photos from the training camp and the activity taking place there (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 13, 2016)

The conduct of the Islamic State

■ A recently released video reviews the various institutions run by ISIS in the Al-Raqqah Province, their responsibilities and how they are functioning. In the ITIC's assessment, this propaganda video was released because it is in ISIS's interest to present a picture of normal life in the area of Al-Raqqah, the core of its rule in Syria, in view of the increased threats against it. The following institutions were mentioned, among others (Akhbar al-Muslimeen, April 3, 2016):

- **Hisba Center:** Its function is to supervise religious morality and public order. The work of the center includes supervising markets and stores, preventing the counterfeiting of goods and profiteering, issuing travel permits to those who wish to travel outside the Islamic State, detaining and interrogating criminals, punishing criminals and administering prisons.
- **Traffic Police:** A police station has been set up in the city of Al-Raqqah. The station includes a traffic violation squad, a traffic accident squad, and a patrol squad.
- **Civil Police:** The police comprises four main squads and is engaged mainly in handling disputes and fights between civilians.
- **Islamic Court:** for inculcating Islamic law among the residents, among other things.
- **Education Center:** for training teachers for all stages of study, from elementary school to university.

- **Charity Center:** for collecting money and goods and distributing them to those eligible, thereby observing the commandment of charity.
- **Service Center:** for providing services in the city. It comprises water, electricity, communications and transportation departments, among others.

Drop in ISIS's revenues

■ According to a study conducted by HIS Inc. (an economic research company that monitors and analyzes conflicts around the world), **ISIS's revenues have dropped by around 30% since mid-2015**. This has forced ISIS **to collect new taxes from the population**. According to the study, in the second half of 2015, ISIS's revenues totaled around USD 80 million per month, **and they now total around USD 56 million per month**. For example, oil production has dropped from 33,000 barrels per day to 21,000 barrels. The drop in revenue is largely the result of the airstrikes by the US-led coalition and Russia. According to the study, 50% of ISIS's revenues comes from taxes and expropriation of businesses and assets, and 43% comes from oil. The rest of its revenues come from **drug smuggling, selling electricity** [from power plants in the areas under its control] **and contributions** (Al-Bawaba, April 18, 2016).

Counterterrorism and preventive activity

Belgium

■ Under interrogation, **Mohamed Abrini**, one of the perpetrators of the attack in Brussels (March 22, 2016) who fled the scene and was caught after a prolonged search, revealed that **he and the other operatives in the squad had wanted to detonate the IED in the departure halls for flights to the United States, Russia and Israel**. He said that the attack at the airport was planned and the target chosen by **Ibrahim al-Bakraoui**, who blew himself up during the attack in Brussels. Abrini noted that he himself had decided at the last minute to flee the scene and threw his IED in a trash can (French television network BFM as quoted by Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot, April 15, 2016).

■ According to an article posted on the NOW news website, the belief that ISIS's terrorist activity in Europe is the result of local initiatives is incorrect. An examination of the attacks from 2014 to the present indicates that **all the attacks, except for the attack against the newspaper Charlie Hebdo (January 2015), were carried out under the direction of ISIS's leadership in Al-Raqqah**. According to the article, most of the perpetrators **were trained and acquired operational experience fighting in Syria**. It was also found that **all the attacks** (apart from the Charlie Hebdo

attack) **were carried out by the same terrorist network**. According to the investigation, the perpetrators of the attacks were associated in one way or another with **Abdelhamid Abaoud, an ISIS operative from Belgium** who alternated between Syria and Europe and personally trained several recruits (NOW, April 1, 2015).

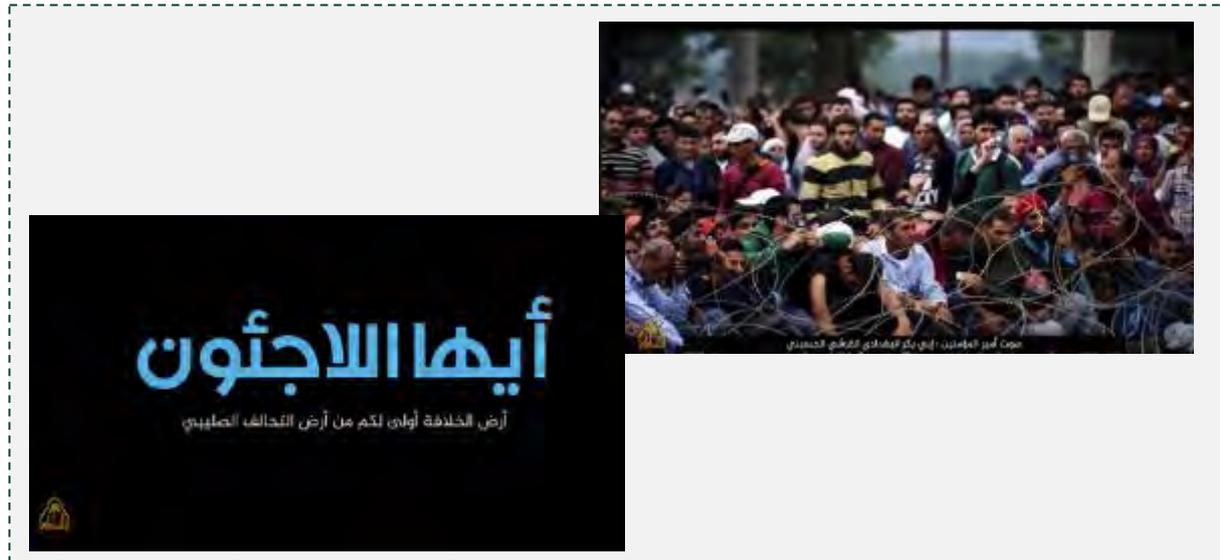
The Caucasus region

■ As part of a joint operation of the Russian security forces to identify terrorist operatives who fought in Syria, **a Russian citizen who had fought in the ranks of ISIS in Syria** was detained in Nalchik (the capital of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic). During his interrogation, he related that he had gone to Syria via Turkey in 2014, underwent training and joined ISIS to fight against the Syrian regime. According to him, he fought alongside Russian citizens from various provinces who had acquired terrorist skills and worked with him to organize subversive activities (TASS, April 15, 2016).

The battle for hearts and minds

ISIS leader calls on refugees who fled to Europe to return to the territory of the Caliphate

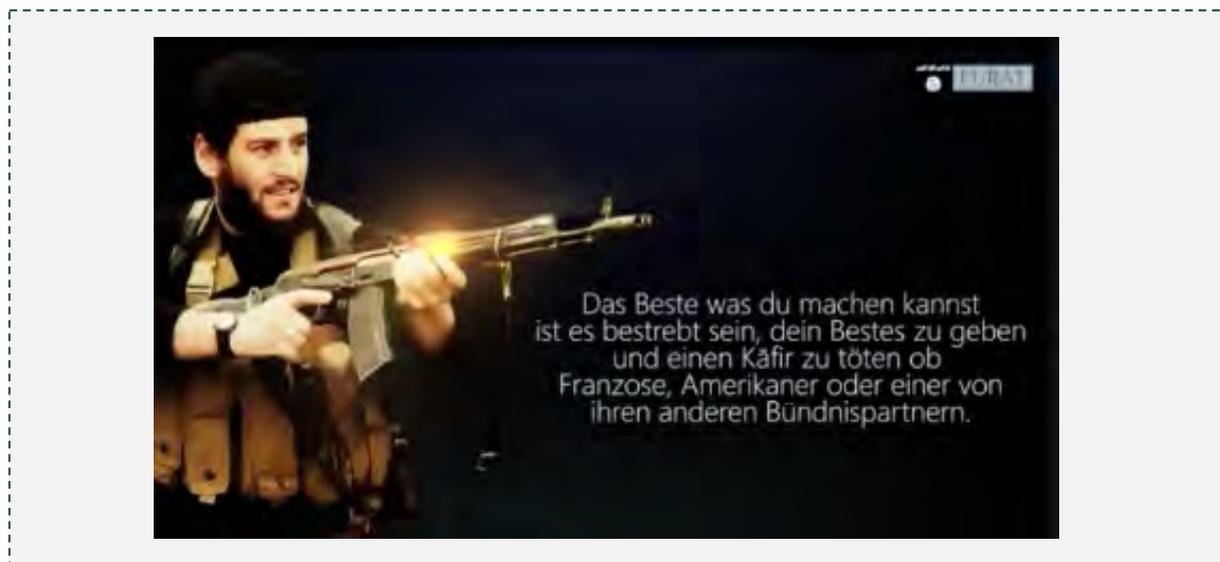
■ A video released by ISIS depicts the suffering of refugees from Syria and Iraq in **Western Europe** (“Crusader” Europe). In the background, **the voice of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is heard, calling on people who left the territory of ISIS’s Caliphate to return to their homes**. He says that the Islamic State will provide them with security and save them from the fire of hell [on Judgment Day] (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 17, 2016). **In the ITIC’s assessment, this call is intended for propaganda purposes, and in practice, it does not appear that Syrian refugees who fled the horrors of ISIS will return to the territory of the Caliphate.**



Left: Frame from the video that says: “Oh refugees, the land of the Caliphate deserves you more than the land of the Crusader coalition” (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 17, 2016). Right: Al-Baghdadi’s voice, with photos of migrants from Syria and Iraq who reached Europe, in the background (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 17, 2016)

ISIS continues to call for the killing of the Americans, the French and their allies

- ISIS released a German-language video of ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani calling on every devout Muslim to “kill the infidels: the Americans, the French and their allies.” He says that **those who cannot do so with an IED or by shooting should act in other ways, such as throwing stones, slitting throats, running over people, and burning homes and businesses** (Akhbar Dawlat al-Islam, April 16, 2016).



Call to kill the “infidels” – the Americans, the French and their allies – by every possible means. A photo of ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani appears on the left (Akhbar Dawlat al-Khilafah, April 16, 2016)