



Spotlight on Global Jihad
(October 28–November 2, 2016)



Main events of the week

- About two weeks after the beginning of the campaign to take over the city of Mosul, the situation is as follows: The **Iraqi army, advancing to the city from the south**, is running into difficulties due to ISIS's strong resistance, although it has enjoyed some local achievements. **The Kurdish Peshmerga forces** and Iraqi forces have reached Mosul from the north and the east and have completed cleansing the eastern rural area of the city. The forces are now at the eastern outskirts of Mosul, but they still haven't entered it. **The Iranian-supported Shiite militias** are advancing toward the city of Tal Afar, 55 km west of Mosul. Their intention is to complete the encirclement of Mosul and cut off ISIS's supply lines between Mosul and Al-Raqqah in Syria.
- ISIS continues its **guerrilla warfare and terrorist activity**, with the aim of stalling the advancing forces. At the same time, it engages in **propaganda activity**, stressing the importance of the attacks behind the lines of the forces advancing to Mosul. **ISIS's media campaign calls on the supporters of the organization around the world, including in the United States and Turkey, to initiate attacks whose aim is to assist the Islamic Caliphate.** During the week, ISIS claimed responsibility for a number of attacks in Kenya, Germany, Russia and Algeria, allegedly carried out by its operatives ("soldiers of the Islamic State") in response to its calls.
- **In Syria, the Syrian rebel organizations**, led by the Fateh al-Sham Front (the former Al-Nusra Front), opened **an attack on the city of Aleppo.** **During the attack, they occupied a number of neighborhoods in the west and south of the city.** Their aim is to **break the siege imposed by the Syrian forces on the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo.** The Syrian army, with Russian air support, is trying to restore the control in the occupied areas. Fighting still continues in those neighborhoods.

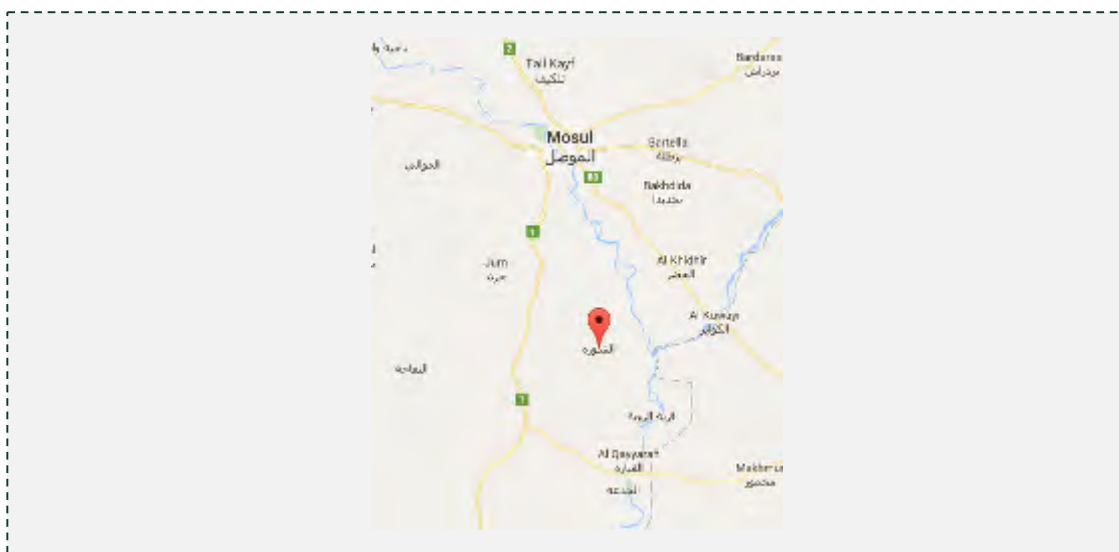
The campaign to take over Mosul

Overview

■ **The campaign to take over Mosul, which started on October 17, 2016, continues.** The attacking forces continued their advance in the various sectors and **had a number of achievements.** Reportedly, **they are situated now only a few kilometers from the city.** The planes of the US-led coalition continued to provide the land forces with air support.

■ **Following are the main developments in the various sectors:**

- **The Iraqi army continued to attack Mosul from the south and the east. From the south, the Iraqi army advances slowly.** On October 30, 2016, it announced that it took over the **town of Al-Shura** (about 35 km south of Mosul), which had been an ISIS stronghold. At the same time, **the quick advance from the east continued.** The Iraqi army liberated this week several villages east of Mosul and announced the surrender of the last village controlled by ISIS. The Iraqi forces announced that, for the first time, battles are being waged on the outskirts of Mosul. According to an Iraqi officer, the counterterrorism force has entered the industrial zone situated east of Mosul, and it is now at a distance of one kilometer from the city (Reuters, October 31, 2016). However, the ITIC believes that the media reports about the Iraqi forces' entry into the city of Mosul are incorrect.



The town of Al-Shura (about 35 km south of Mosul) taken over by the Iraqi army (Google Maps)



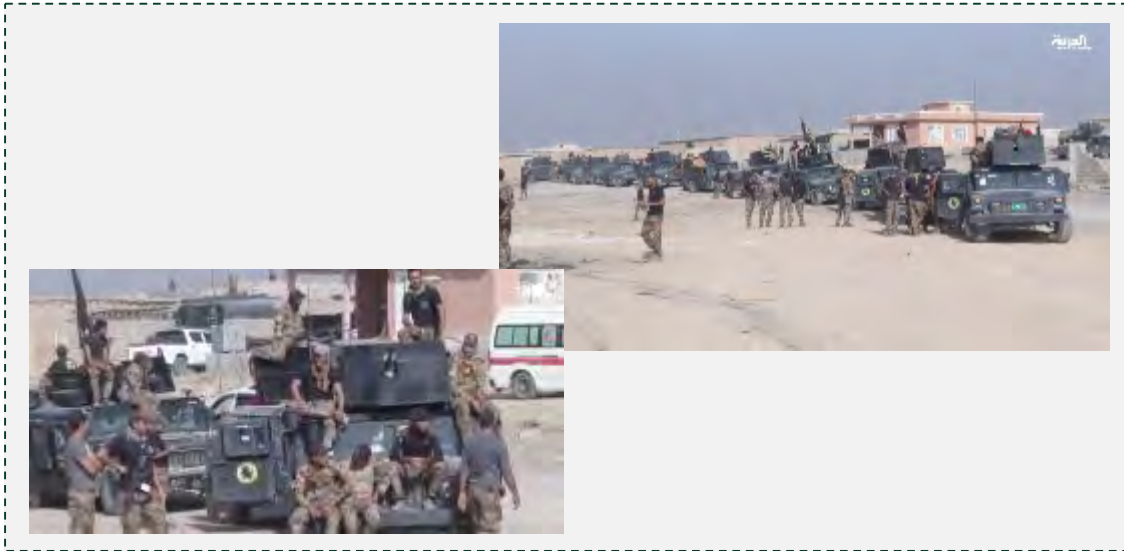
The Iraqi army at the town of Al-Shura (Al-Sumaria, October 29, 2016)



Photos released by ISIS, documenting the campaign on Al-Shura (Haqq, October 30, 2016)

- **The Kurdish Peshmerga forces continued to cleanse the area around the town of Ba'shiqah** (about 13 km northeast of Mosul). During the past week, they liberated additional villages in this area (Al-Sumaria, October 30, 2016). According to the commander of the Kurdish forces, **his forces are now situated 5-6 km from Mosul** (Sputnik, October 31, 2016).
- **The Shiite militias opened an attack from the west of Mosul, with the aim of completing the encirclement of the city and cutting off ISIS's supply**

lines between Mosul and Al-Raqqah in Syria. A spokesman on behalf of the Hezbollah Battalions (an Iraqi Shiite militia supported by Iran) said that the organization had opened an attack on the city of Tal Afar (55 km west of Mosul), with the assistance of Iranian advisers and Iraqi planes (AP, October 29, 2016).¹ The Shiite militias have taken over a number of villages west of Mosul and they are now advancing toward the city (Al-Alam, November 1, 2016). A spokesman on behalf of the Hezbollah Battalions has announced that **the Shiite militia forces will not enter the city of Mosul** (Al-Arabiya, October 29, 2016).



Shiite militia operatives near Tal Afar (Al-Arabiya, October 29, 2016)



The city of Tal Afar, situated on the road leading from Mosul to Syria (Google Maps)

- According to a senior Iraqi Army commander, after 14 days of fighting in the campaign to take over Mosul, **the attacking forces have taken over more than 60**

¹ There are currently 150,000-200,000 inhabitants in Tal Afar (in 2010, there were over 280,000 inhabitants in the city). The population is of Turkmen origin, and the inhabitants speak a Turkish dialect. About 75 percent of them are Sunni Muslims while 25 percent are Shiites.

villages. According to him, **ISIS has sustained more than 700 fatalities.** Furthermore, more than 300 operational vehicles belonging to ISIS have been destroyed. Army Gen. Joseph Votel, head of US Central Command, said that ISIS had so far sustained **800-900 fatalities** (CNN, October 28, 2016). In the ITIC's assessment, such an number of casualties constitutes a major blow to ISIS, whose operatives in Mosul are estimated at 5,000-6,000.

ISIS's military and media response

- **ISIS on its part continued its guerrilla warfare against the attacking forces in order to stall their advance.** ISIS operatives blew up car bombs, carried out suicide bombing attacks against the Iraqi forces and the Shiite militias, with the latter sustaining fatalities. It seems that the main guerrilla activity is carried out south of Mosul, where ISIS has managed to stall the advance of the Iraqi army. It has also been reported that ISIS operatives abducted about 8,000 civilians from the areas surrounding Mosul and transferred them into the city to use them as a human shield (Al-Arabiya, October 28, 2016). In Baghdad, ISIS's suicide bombing attacks against (mainly Shiite) crowded sites continued.

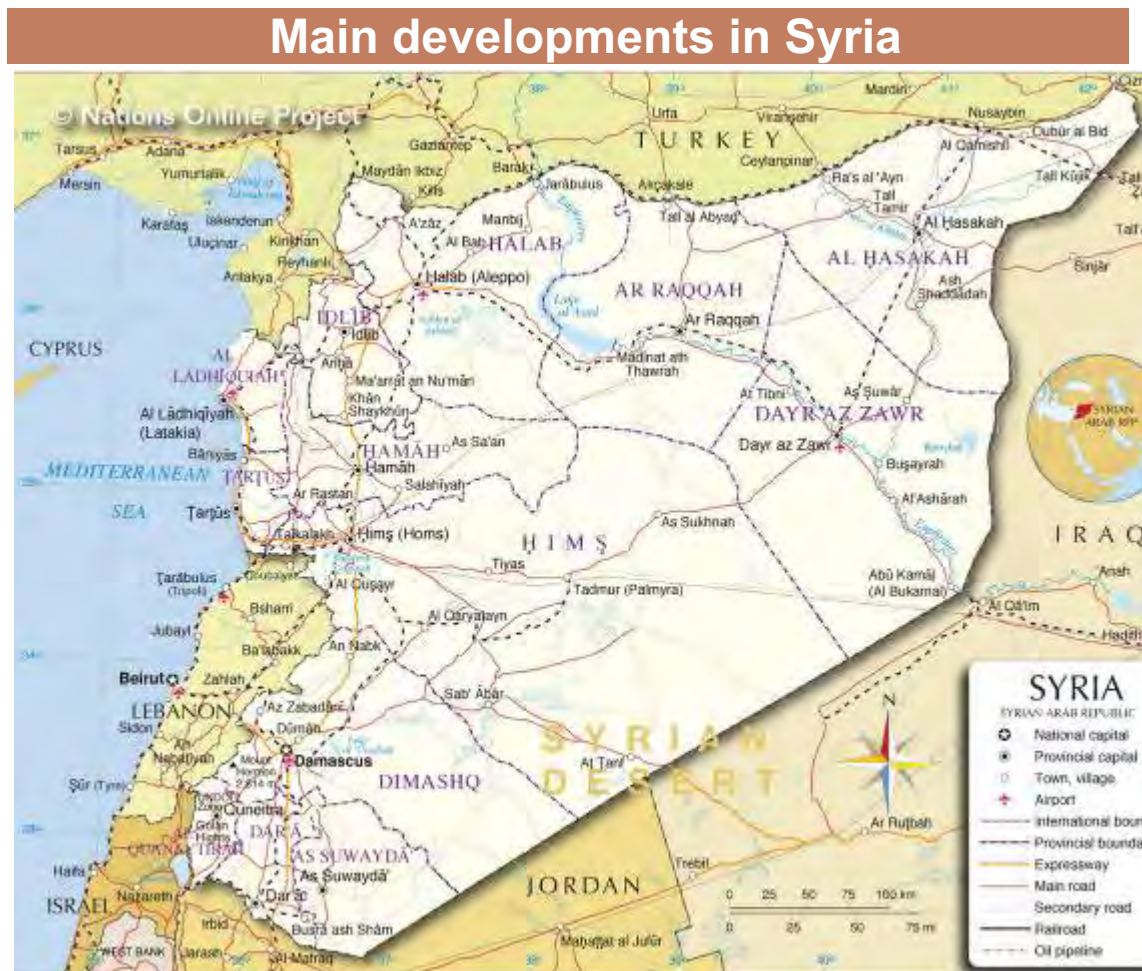
- The Iraqi media reported that during the activity in east Mosul, the Iraqi forces uncovered a large number of mines activated by remote control. They also uncovered a 3-kilometer tunnel equipped with electricity and a cooling system (Al-Sumaria, October 28, 2016). A correspondent of the Lebanese Al-Mayadeen channel, having visited the tunnel, said that it had been used by ISIS operatives to move around the city and even allowed them to exit into the suburbs. The entrance to the tunnel was dug in one of the houses in Mosul (Al-Mayadeen, October 27, 2016).

- ISIS continues its media campaign with the aim of raising the morale of its operatives and encouraging operatives overseas to carry out terrorist attacks:

- An editorial published in ISIS's weekly Al-Naba **stressed the importance of a war of attrition behind enemy lines during the Mosul campaign.** According to the article, the military operations carried out by ISIS operatives in Kirkuk, Rutba and Sinjar prove that a war should be conducted with strategies and tactics and that "an attack in the rear is preferable to a frontal attack" (Al-Naba, October 27, 2016).

- The Haqq News Agency affiliated with ISIS **published yet another call on ISIS supporters everywhere in the world to initiate attacks against the armies fighting against ISIS.** It brought up the argument that the Caliphate belongs to the entire Islamic nation, including those who cannot dwell in its territory. According to it,

the campaign should be transferred to the United States and, in addition, it is required to take revenge on the Turkish army, which supports the Iraqi army (Haqq, October 26, 2016).

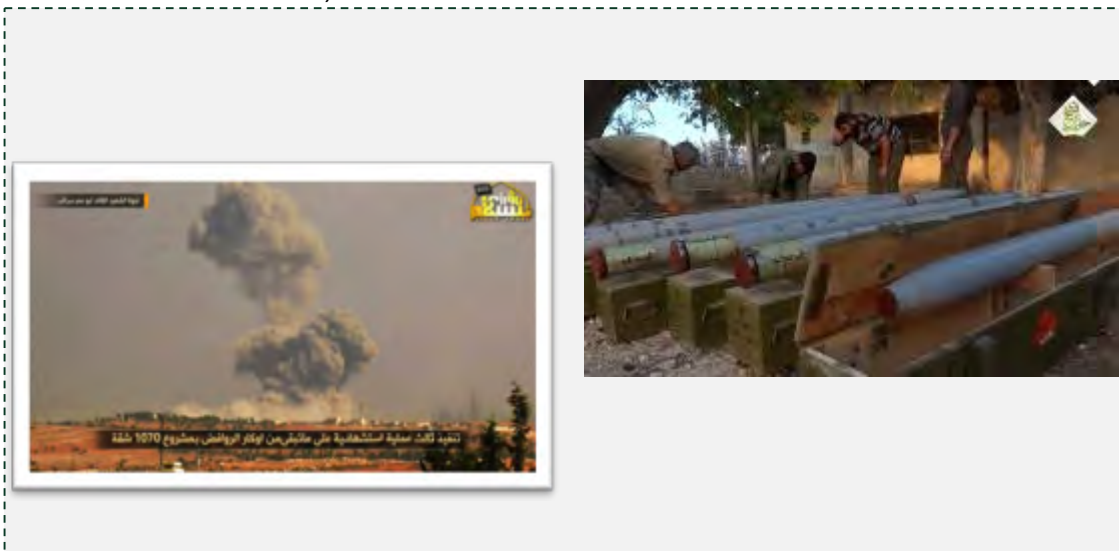


Map of Syria (www.nationsonline.org)

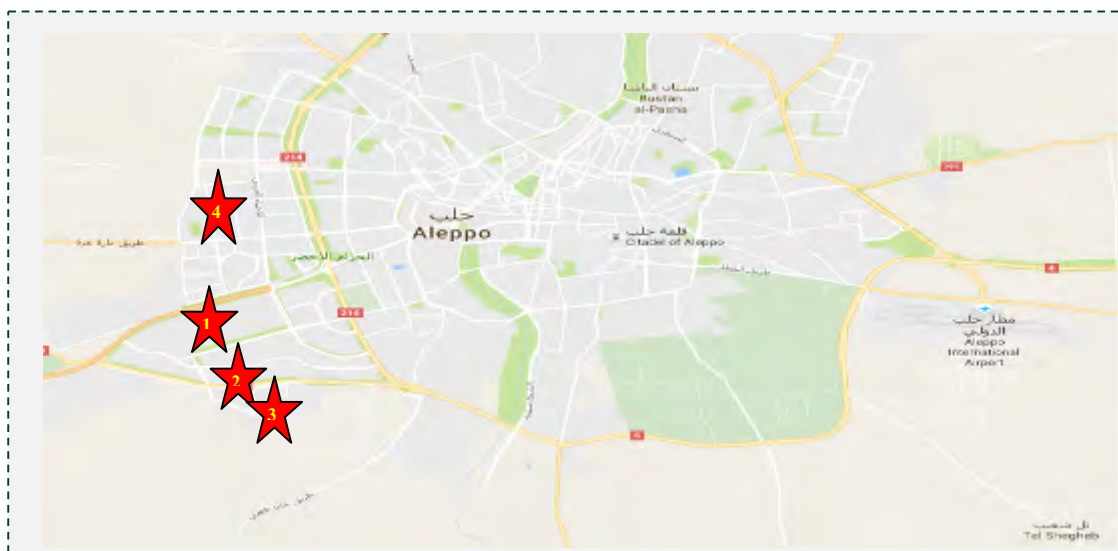
Aleppo and its environs

- This week, the rebel organizations have opened a counter-attack in the west and south of the city of Aleppo, aiming to break the siege imposed by the Syrian regime forces on the city's eastern neighborhoods. Prominent among the attacking forces is the Fateh al-Sham Front. The rebel organizations had a number of achievements and took over several neighborhoods in the west and south of the city. However, fighting in these neighborhoods is still going on.
- On October 30, 2016, Jaysh Al-Fateh (an umbrella organization of the rebels composed mainly of the Fateh al-Sham Front) announced that **the first stage of lifting the siege on the city of Aleppo had ended**. The rebel forces had taken over once again a number of areas in the south and west of Aleppo, including the Al-Assad district, Project 1070, Project 3000, the New Aleppo Neighborhood, and Al-Assad

Military Academy. Jaysh al-Fateh declared a number of neighborhoods in the city as military zones and their residents were required to remain in their homes (Zaman al-Wasl, October 30, 2016).



Right: Preparations to launch missiles at Al-Assad Military Academy in southwest Aleppo (YouTube account, October 30, 2016). Left: Detonation of a car bomb against Syrian army soldiers at Project 1070 (Twitter account, October 30, 2016)

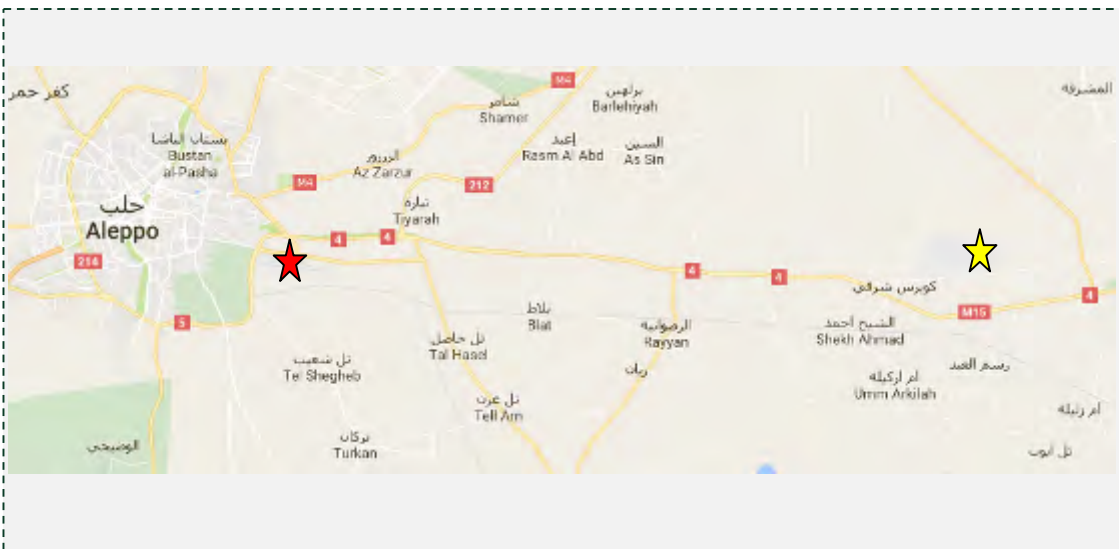


Neighborhoods in west Aleppo attacked by the rebel organizations: Al-Assad Military Academy (asterisk no. 1); Project 3000 Housing Units (asterisk no. 2); Project 1070 Housing Units (asterisk no. 3); the New Aleppo Neighborhood (asterisk no. 4) (Google Maps)

■ At the Aleppo rural areas, clashes took place in a number of scenes, including the Al-Nayrab military airfield (which is part of the Aleppo International Airport situated east of the city). ISIS has also reported that its operatives attacked Syrian army positions in the **village of Rasm al-Aboud, east of the Kuweyres military airfield**, about 33 km east of Aleppo (Haqq, October 29, 2016). It is possible that the rebel organizations are **making an effort to detract** the Syrian army's attention from the fighting in Aleppo and render it difficult to use the military airfields.



An ISIS operative firing a machine gun at Syrian army positions in the village of Rasm al-Aboud east of the Kuweyres military airfield (Haqq, October 29, 2016).



The Al-Nayrab military airfield, part of the Aleppo International Airport (marked by a red asterisk). 32 km east of it is the Kuweyres airfield (marked with a yellow asterisk) (Google Maps)

The area west of the Euphrates River

■ Syrian rebel organizations, with the assistance of the Turkish army, continue to advance toward the city of Al-Bab, situated about 38 km northeast of Aleppo. Al-Bab is the last important stronghold remaining in the hands of ISIS west of the Euphrates River. Reportedly, there are clashes between the advancing rebel organizations and ISIS operatives in the rural area near the city.

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

■ ISIS's Sinai Province continues its intensive activity against the Egyptian security forces, despite the blow it has recently suffered. This week there were several prominent showcase terrorist attacks in North Sinai:

■ **Col. Rami Hassanein, commander of the 103th Commando Battalion in the northern Sinai Peninsula, was killed on October 29, 2016 in a targeted roadside bomb attack outside Sheikh Zuweid.** Another officer was killed along with him, and four people were wounded (Egyptian Armed Forces Facebook page, October 29, 2016). The 103th Commando Battalion is a unit composed of Sinai tribesmen, established by the Egyptian army. It is fighting against ISIS along with the Egyptian security forces.



Col. Rami Hassanein, Commander of the 103th Commando Battalion, killed in North Sinai
(Egyptian Army Spokesman Facebook page, October 29, 2016)

■ On October 30, 2016, a **car bomb exploded on the international road near Al-Arish.** The car exploded while an Egyptian security forces' IED detecting vehicle was driving by. A passing taxi was damaged. Three civilians were injured (Al-Watan, October 30, 2016). **Another car bomb exploded near the VIP room at the Al-Arish airport.** Four civilians were injured. Three houses were destroyed as a result of the explosion (Al-Watan, October 30, 2016).

The global jihad in other countries

Libya

■ The forces of the Libyan Government of National Accord entered the Marine neighborhood (ISIS's last stronghold in the city of Sirte) on October 27, 2016, and managed to take over parts of it. The forces of the Government of National Accord used loudspeakers to address ISIS operatives and neighborhood residents calling

them for the last time to leave the place before they break into it (Alarabiya.net, October 30, 2016).

■ In a series of interviews granted by the spokesman for the campaign over Sirte on behalf of the Government of National Accord, he expressed his belief that Sirte would be completely liberated within a few days. According to him, the airstrikes against ISIS operatives in the Marine neighborhood are ineffective and therefore, the attacking forces must wage face-to-face fighting against ISIS operatives (Alarabiya.net, October 27, 2016; Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, October 29, 2016).

Mali

■ ISIS's media foundation released a video **where the Al-Murabitun Battalion in northern Mali, under the leadership of Abu al-Walid al-Sahrawi, pledges allegiance to Abu Bakr Baghdadi and declares that it is joining ISIS** (Amaq, October 31, 2016). The pledge of allegiance is indicative of the rift in the Murabitun organization (the establishment of which was announced on Aug 23, 2013, in northern Mali). While part of the organization pledged allegiance to ISIS, the other part, headed by Belmokhtar, joined Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb already back in December 2015.



Abu al-Walid al-Sahrawi, commander of the Al-Murabitun Battalion in northern Mali, pledges allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and declares that he is joining ISIS (Amaq, October 31, 2016).

Claiming responsibility for terrorist attacks worldwide

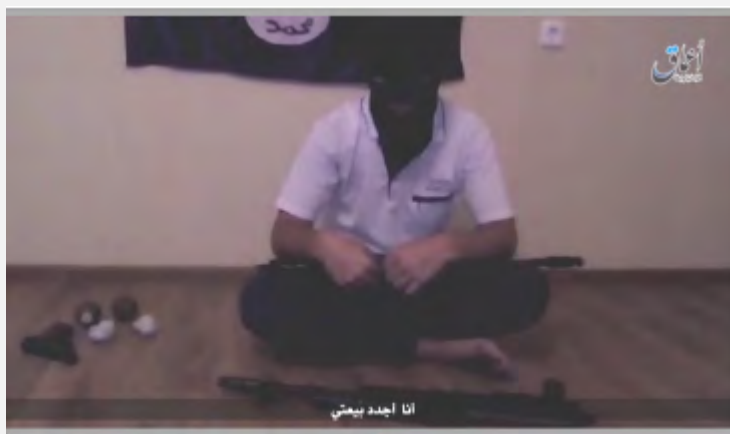
■ During the week, ISIS's Amaq media foundation released a number of announcements in which **ISIS claimed responsibility for carrying out stabbing, shooting and killing attacks in Kenya, Germany, Russia and Algeria**. According to some of the announcements, the attacks were carried out in response to ISIS's call on

its operatives to attack the coalition countries. Following is a breakdown of those attacks:

- **Stabbing attack in Kenya: A Kenyan citizen stabbed a police officer who served as a security guard at the visa department in the US embassy in Nairobi.** The assailant was shot dead by another the police officer. The assailant was identified as a Kenyan citizen from Wajir, an area bordering Somalia, where the Somali Al-Shabab organization is trying to recruit new operatives (New York Times, October 27, 2016; CBS News, October 27, 2016). **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.** The claim of responsibility stated that "the person who carried out the stabbing attack against one of the security guards of the US embassy in Nairobi is a soldier of the Islamic State who carried it out in response to the calls to attack the Crusader coalition countries" (Amaq, October 29, 2016).²
- **Germany:** On October 30, 2016, it was reported that an unknown assailant in the city of Hamburg stabbed a 16-year-old boy a number of times and pushed a 15-year-old girl toward the river. **The boy died of his wounds.** The girl managed to escape. According to the Hamburg police, the assailant, probably 23-25 years old, had a Middle Eastern appearance, with a beard. The announcement refrained from ascribing the event to ISIS (Reuters in Arabic, October 30, 2016). On October 30, 2016, **ISIS announced that a "soldier of the Islamic State" stabbed two people in Hamburg.**
- Shooting attacks in Russia:
 - ✓ According to media outlets in Russia, **two terrorists were shot and killed by the police in the city of Nizhny Novgorod.** The event started when a police car stopped a suspicious car. **The two passengers in the car started shooting at the policemen.** Both terrorists were killed in the exchange of fire. Searching the car, the police found an explosive device. Two policemen were lightly wounded (New York Times, October 23, 2016).
 - ✓ **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.** The claim specified that "Two soldiers of the Islamic State carried out an armed attack against a

² It is not the first time ISIS carries out a terrorist attack in Kenya. On September 13, 2016, three women entered a police station in Mombasa, Kenya, ostensibly to report a theft. Upon entering the station, they shouted "Allahu Akbar", stabbed two policemen and threw an incendiary bomb. The three were killed by policemen. Police searched the house where the three women were staying and reportedly found a handwritten document pledging allegiance to ISIS. According to the police, two of the women were Kenyan. One of them was wearing an explosive vest that did not explode.

military base in the city of Nizhny Novgorod in western Russia" (Aamaq, October 26, 2016). **Aamaq News Agency also released a video showing one of the operatives pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and swearing to carry out jihad against the "infidels", as a soldier of the Islamic State.** The name of the operative who appeared on the video was Ajand Bayati (Aamaq, October 27, 2016).



Ajand Bayati, one of ISIS operatives who carried out the attempted attack in Nizhny Novgorod, pledging allegiance to ISIS leader (Aamaq, October 27, 2016)

- **Killing an Algerian police officer:** ISIS claimed responsibility for killing a high-ranking officer of the Algerian police, in the city of Constantine, on October 28, 2016 (Aamaq, October 29, 2016). The Algerian authorities confirmed that the police officer was killed by an unknown terrorist group but did not refer to ISIS's claim of responsibility (gulfnews, October 31, 2016).



The gun of the Algerian police officer killed by ISIS operatives (Aamaq, October 29, 2016)

Counterterrorism and preventive activity

Exposing ISIS terrorist squads in Saudi Arabia

■ Saudi security forces exposed an ISIS squad which planned to detonate a car bomb in a parking lot in Jeddah. The parking lot is located in front of the Al-Johara stadium in King Abdullah Sports City. The attack was supposed to be carried out on October 11, 2016, while a soccer game took place in the stadium between the Saudi and the Emirates soccer teams. The four squad members were a Sudani, a Syrian and two Pakistanis (Al-Arabiya, October 30, 2016).



Four ISIS operatives arrested for planning a bombing attack at a soccer game in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Al-Arabiya, October 30, 2016)

■ In addition to the above, another ISIS squad was exposed in Saudi Arabia, in which there were four operatives of Saudi citizenship. The squad members were planning to attack Saudi security guards. The squad members were in contact with one of ISIS commanders in Syria, who provided them with the instructions on how to carry out the attack (Al-Arabiya, October 30, 2016).