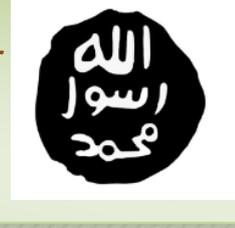




## Spotlight on Global Jihad (July 13-19, 2017)



### Main events of the week

- **After the liberation of Mosul, displaced persons began to return to the city**, mainly to its eastern part (which was less affected by the battles). There are serious problems in the city, i.e., a housing shortage and problems with the supply of water and electricity, since many infrastructures have been destroyed. At the same time, the Iraqi security forces are busy detonating booby-traps and explosives, gathering explosives and detaining suspects.
- **ISIS's propaganda response to the loss of Mosul** was characterized by two messages: the **first message** is that the battle in Mosul has not yet been decided and the soldiers of the Caliphate will prevail. The **second message** is that ISIS operatives demonstrated fierce resistance and caused the Iraqi forces many losses and severe damage. At the same time, **ISIS operatives continued to carry out guerrilla operations** in various locations in Iraq, **showing that they still had considerable operational capabilities**.
- **In the campaign to take over Al-Raqqah**, ISIS's stronghold in Syria, **the US-backed SDF forces are encountering fierce resistance from ISIS operatives**. Most of the fighting this week took place in the Old City of Al-Raqqah, but battles were still being waged in a few neighborhoods that had ostensibly been taken over by the SDF. American spokesmen said that ISIS operatives were displaying fierce resistance and that the campaign over Al-Raqqah would not be easy.
- After the fall of Mosul, ISIS is conducting a **propaganda campaign instigating its operatives and supporters to carry out terrorist attacks in Muslim countries** (Turkey is in its sights), **Arab countries** (Egypt and Tunisia) **and the West**. **In this context, it is urging its supporters to carry out attacks that will harm the economies of the "infidels"** (with a picture of the headquarters of the European Central Bank in the background).

### Russia and the Coalition countries

#### De-escalation agreement in southwestern Syria: update

- In general, **the de-escalation agreement in southwestern Syria**, which went into effect on July 9, 2017, was maintained, **with the exception of isolated violations on a daily basis**. The situation in the de-escalation zones in Syria is described by the Russians as "stable" (Russian Defense Ministry website, July 11-17, 2017). According

to the Russian Coordination Center in Hmeymim, most of the violations are in areas under the control of ISIS and the Fateh al-Sham Front (formerly the Al-Nusra Front) (TASS News Agency, July 12, 2017).

**Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said during his visit to France that Israel opposes the agreement to prevent escalation in southern Syria because it perpetuates the Iranian presence in Syria and hardly takes any Israeli security interest into account** (Haaretz Israeli daily, July 16, 2017<sup>1</sup>). **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that as part of the agreement, the United States and Russia are doing their best to ensure that Israel's security interests are fully taken into account** (TASS News Agency, July 17, 2017). **White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said that the US and Israel shared a common interest to prevent the entrenchment of Iranian military forces in southern Syria** (White House website, July 17, 2017).

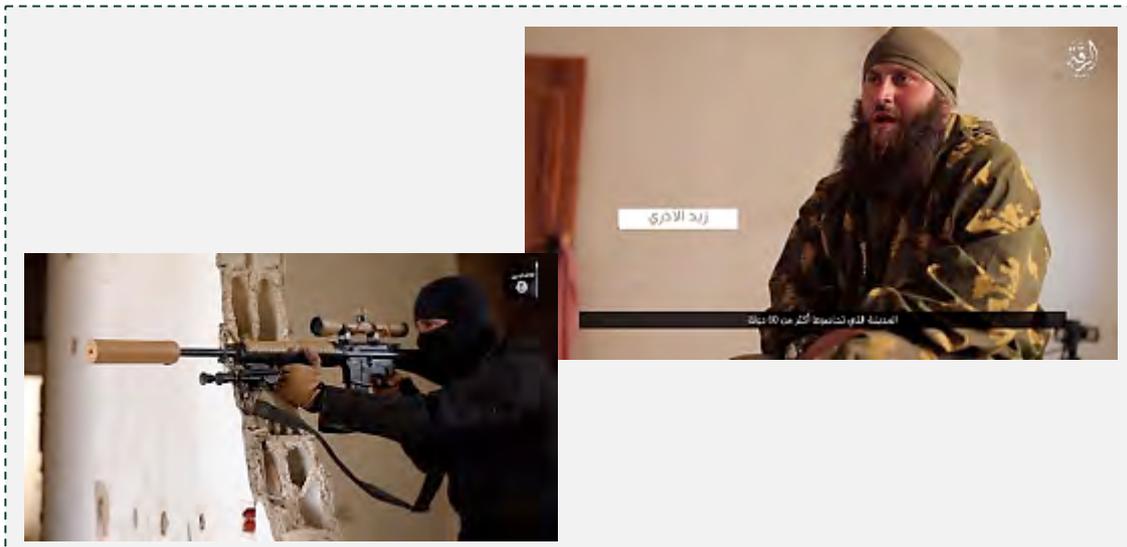
## Main developments in Syria

### The campaign to take over Al-Raqqah

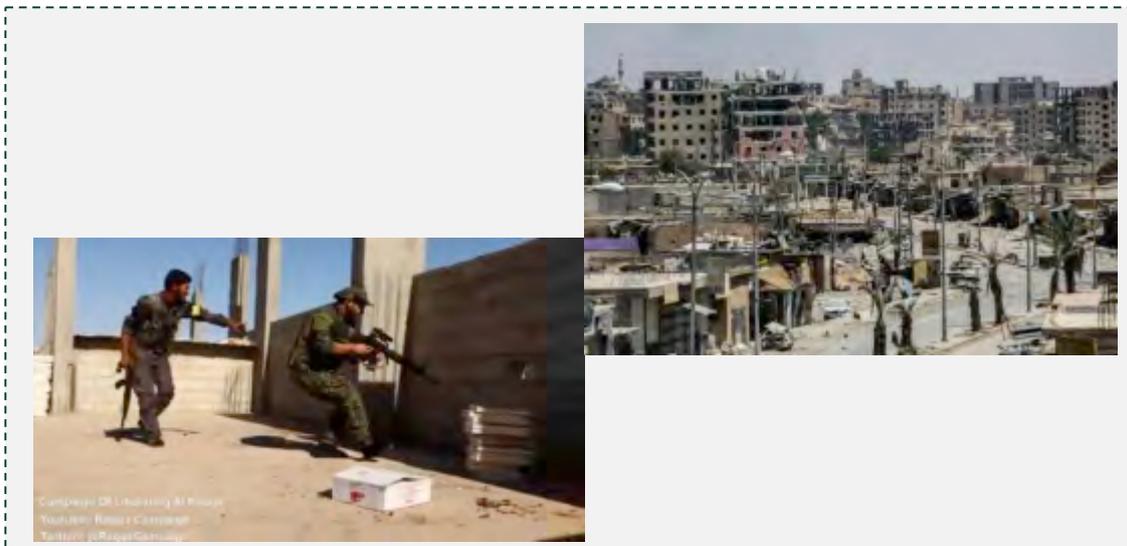
Fighting continues in Al-Raqqah between the SDF forces, with US air support, and ISIS operatives (who now number about 2,000 fighters, according to American estimates). **The SDF forces are facing fierce resistance** (this week, they sustained dozens of fatalities) **the more they advance toward the center of the city**. The battles focused on **the Old City**, but in several neighborhoods (which ostensibly had already been taken over by the SDF), mainly in south and northeast Al-Raqqah, **fighting still continues**.

■ ISIS media outlets addressing the battles in Al-Raqqah report that ISIS operatives are in control on the ground, stressing the many losses incurred by the SDF forces. In an ISIS video documenting a snipers course held in Al-Raqqah, **a sniper codenamed Zayd the Azeri appears, saying in Russian** (with subtitles in Arabic) that **operatives have arrived from all around the globe to fight in Al-Raqqah**. He says that **the volunteers split into various designated units**, such as suicide bombers, storming operatives, sappers, and snipers. According to Zayd the Azeri, since the beginning of the campaign in Al-Raqqah, a total of about 250 SDF fighters were killed and wounded (Haqq and a file-sharing website, July 15, 2017).

<sup>1</sup> A senior Israeli official, who asked to remain anonymous, added that Israel was aware of Iran's significant expansionist intentions in Syria. He said that Iran was interested not only in sending advisers to Syria but in sending significant military forces to the country, including the establishment of an air base for Iranian aircraft and a naval base for Iranian naval vessels (Haaretz, July 16, 2017).



Right: A sniper codenamed Zayd the Azeri appearing in the video (Haqq and a file-sharing website, July 15, 2017). Left: An ISIS sniper prepares to shoot at the SDF forces (Haqq and a file-sharing website, July 15, 2017).



Right: Scenes of destruction in Al-Raqqah (Twitter, July 17, 2017). Left: An SDF commander directs one of the fighters toward a firing position dominating ISIS outposts in the Old City (Twitter, July 16, 2017).

## US statements about the fighting in Al-Raqqah

■ American sources said that **the campaign for the takeover of Al-Raqqah would become more difficult** as the forces entered into the heart of the city. According to **Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, Commander of the US-led Coalition**, ISIS had more than three years to prepare for the battle for Al-Raqqah. He added that despite the good opening that the SDF enjoyed at the beginning of the fighting, **ISIS's resistance subsequently increased** (US Department of Defense website, July 11, 2017).

■ At a press conference in the US State Department, **Brett H. McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL**, said that the fighting

by the SDF forces in the city of Al-Raqqah **was continuing intensively**. According to him, the SDF forces have entered the city center, **overcoming defensive barriers, explosive belts, snipers, tunnels, and suicide bombers**. He noted that the forces **sustained many losses** and were expected to sustain additional losses as the fighting progressed (US Department of State website, July 13, 2017).



**Special Presidential Envoy for the Coalition Brett H. McGurk at a press conference  
(US Department of State website, July 13, 2017)**

■ According to US Army estimates, **there are still around 2,000 ISIS fighters in Al-Raqqah, compared to around 2,500 when the attack on the city began**. Coalition Spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon noted that during the first stages of the fighting, the SDF forces advanced quickly. Now, however, as the forces approach the city center, they encounter fierce resistance from ISIS, which uses **explosive belts and armed drones against them**, causing many losses (CNN, July 12, 2017).

## **US involvement in the fighting in Al-Raqqah**

■ According to **Coalition Spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon**, Coalition artillery and aircraft continue to support the SDF forces in the fighting. Dillon noted that **the American military advisers** who are advising the SDF forces fighting against ISIS in Al-Raqqah **are more exposed to contact with the enemy** than were the advisers who operated in the battles in Iraq. According to him, the increased exposure of American soldiers stems from the fact that they advise the local forces directly, **very close to the front line** (CNN, July 12, 2017).

## Idlib area

■ Local clashes continue in the Idlib area between the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham, a coalition of several organizations led by the Fateh al-Sham Front (formerly known as the Al-Nusra Front), and ISIS. **The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham** reported on 11 fatalities and several wounded in the wake of a suicide bombing attack near one of its outposts in the city of Idlib (Dimashq Al-Aan, July 12, 2017). The Ahrar Al-Sham movement reportedly detained 21 ISIS operatives in Idlib (Sham Network, July 12, 2017).

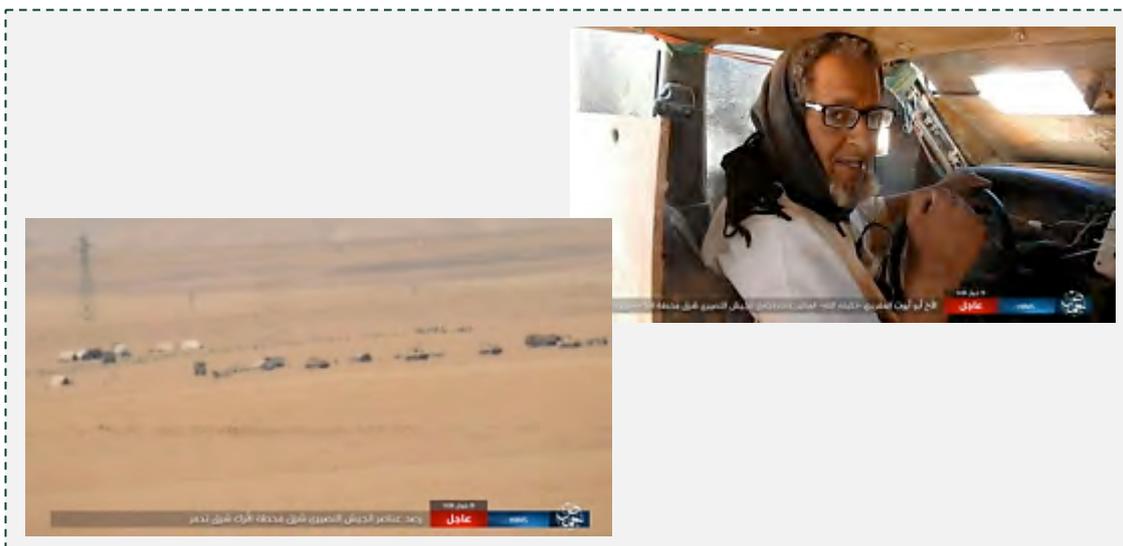
## Palmyra area

During the week, **the Syrian forces under Suheil Hassan's command continued to advance towards the city of Sukhnah**. The Syrian troops reportedly intend to encircle ISIS operatives in the area west of Sukhnah (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 15, 2017).

■ This week, fighting continued in the area of the Aarak and Al-Hail oil and gas fields northeast of Palmyra. It was reported that the Syrian forces **had taken full control of the Al-Hail field** (Sham Network, July 14, 2017). A total of 36 ISIS operatives had reportedly been killed in battles in the area of the Al-Hail field (Dimashq Al-Aan, July 14, 2017). According to another report, the Syrian forces sustained 14 dead and wounded due to explosions of mines east of the Al-Hail field (Sukhnah News Agency, July 17, 2017).

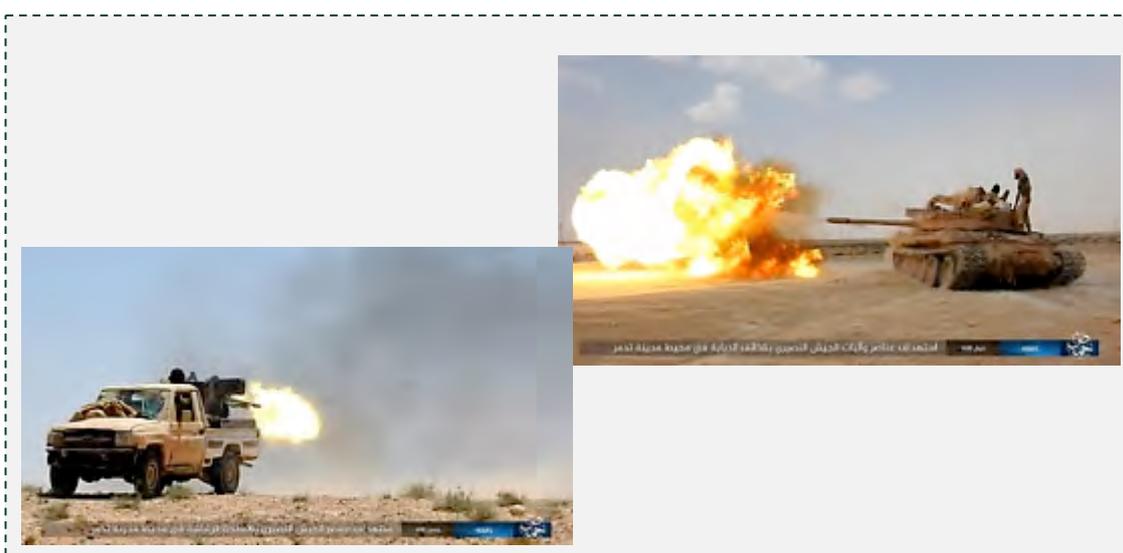


Palmyra (1), Aarak field (2), Al-Hail field (3), Sukhnah (4), Deir ez-Zor (5) (Google Maps)



Photos released by ISIS, showing a suicide bomber codenamed Abu Ayyub the Moroccan carrying out a suicide bombing attack against a Syrian Army force in the Aarak area. According to ISIS, eleven Syrian soldiers were killed in the attack. Right: The suicide bomber. Left: The staging area of the troops before the attack (Haqq, July 14, 2017)

The continued takeover of oil and gas fields by the Syrian forces in the areas of Palmyra and Al-Raqqah **causes further damage to ISIS's economy**, which was based in the past, to a large extent, on revenues from oil and its products. Currently, ISIS has lost most of its oil and gas fields and is liable to lose more fields in view of the pressure exerted on it.



Right: ISIS tank attacks the Syrian forces and their vehicles in the area of Palmyra. Left: ISIS operative fires an anti-aircraft gun at the Syrian forces in the area of Palmyra (Haqq, July 14, 2017)

## Senior Iranian commander killed

■ ISIS reported the killing of **Bahram Mehrdad**, commander of the Ali Rida forces, a pro-Iranian force operating in Syria under the guidance of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, in the rural area east of Homs (Haqq, July 14, 2017). Iranian media reported

that the commander who was killed had served in the past as a Basij area commander in Tehran.



ISIS announces the killing of the Iranian commander (Haqq, July 14, 2017)

## Main developments in Iraq

### The situation in Mosul after its liberation

After the liberation of Mosul, **residents began returning to the city from the displaced person camps**, mainly due to the poor conditions in the camps. The displaced persons **return mainly to the eastern part of the city**, which sustained less damage than the western part. **There is a housing shortage in the city because many houses were destroyed, and the prices of apartments for rent rose.** In addition, there is a problem with the **water supply, since the water infrastructure has been destroyed.** The problem of electricity has been temporarily solved by generators (Al-Khaleej, July 17, 2017).

- At the same time with the return of the residents, the Iraqi security forces are working **to remove booby-traps, mines, and weapons which ISIS operatives left behind.** The Iraqi security forces carry out controlled explosions and detain ISIS operatives according to lists prepared in advance. According to the Iraqi security officials, **there is no fighting in Mosul.** They say the sounds of explosion that can be heard around the city are the result of controlled explosions of IEDs and explosives left on the ground by ISIS operatives (Nineveh Information Center, July 16, 2017).

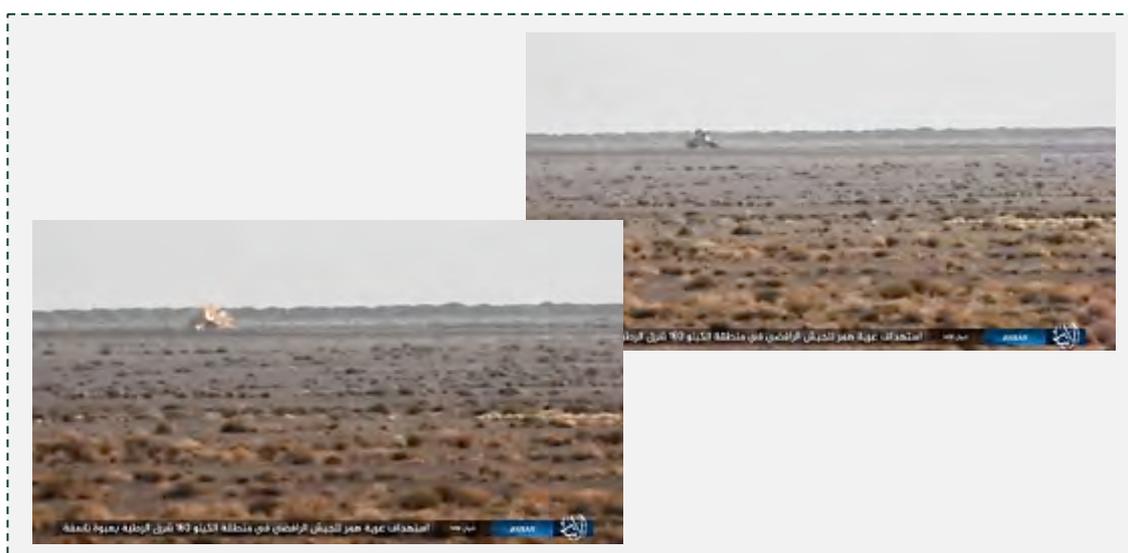


Right: Controlled explosions in Mosul. Left: Detention of someone suspected of being an ISIS operative (Nineveh Information Center, July 16, 2017)

## Reactions by ISIS propaganda to the loss of Mosul

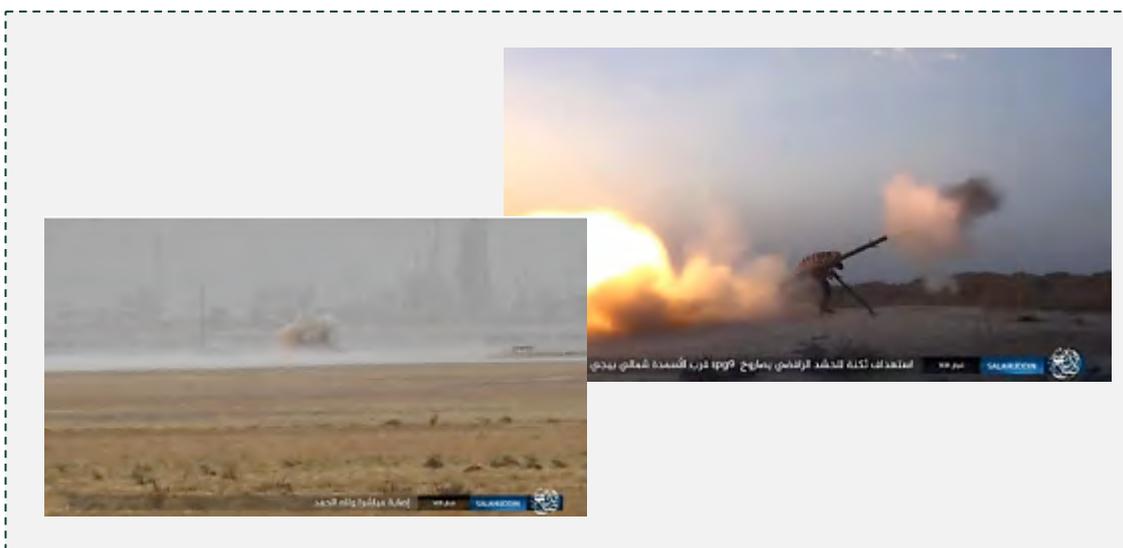
- **ISIS does not admit that it lost the campaign for Mosul.** In an editorial that appeared in issue No. 89 of the Al-Naba weekly, published by the Islamic State's Information Office, ISIS mocks the Shiites and claims that **the campaign in Mosul has not been decided yet**. Among other things, the editorial says that while the soldiers of the Caliphate recorded new pages of glory in Mosul, the "Shiite dictators" throughout the world are praising themselves for their victory, **"a victory which is yet to be achieved, in a campaign that is yet to be decided"** (Al-Naba, July 14, 2017).
- At the same time, **ISIS's propaganda machine is making an effort to glorify the fighting of ISIS operatives in Mosul by releasing figures (which are exaggerated, in the ITIC's assessment) on the many losses and the heavy damage sustained by the Iraqi forces:** ISIS released an infographic **summing up the losses incurred by the Iraqi security forces during the campaign for Mosul**. According to ISIS, during the nine months of fighting in the city, a total of 11,700 members of the Iraqi security forces were killed, including 1,629 as a result of sniper shooting; Tens of thousands were wounded and became disabled; 2,622 items of military equipment were destroyed or put out of commission; ISIS carried out 482 suicide bombing attacks; A total of 15 helicopters and 103 drones were downed (Haqq, July 14, 2017).
- Even after the fall of Mosul, **ISIS continued carrying out guerrilla operations against the Iraqi forces and the Popular Mobilization Units (the Shiite militias), demonstrating once again its operational capabilities:**

- **The Mosul area:** On July 15, 2017, ISIS operatives attacked a Popular Mobilization force about 70 km south of Mosul. A total of 23 operatives were killed in the exchanges of fire, some of them by ISIS's snipers (Haqq, July 15, 2017).
- **Rawa:** The Iraqi Army announced that it had killed by an airstrike three ISIS operatives who were trying to plant IEDs on the road east of the city, which is held by ISIS (Al-Sumaria, July 16, 2017).
- **Rutba:** ISIS reported that its operatives had planted an IED which damaged an Iraqi Army vehicle east of Rutba (Haqq, July 15, 2017).



**Hitting the vehicle east of Rutba (Haqq, July 15, 2017)**

- **Baiji:** ISIS announced on July 15, 2017, that it had fired a rocket at a staging area of Iraqi Army soldiers north of Baiji. According to ISIS, it scored a direct hit (Haqq, July 15, 2017).



Firing a rocket at a staging area of Iraqi Army soldiers north of Baiji (Haqq, July 15, 2017).

## Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

### The Sinai Peninsula

- In the Sinai Peninsula, the Egyptian security forces' activity against ISIS operatives continues:** the Egyptian Air Force attacked ISIS operatives who stayed in a house in a village west of Rafah. Twenty operatives were reportedly killed (Al-Bawaba News, July 13, 2017). The Egyptian security forces reportedly thwarted a suicide bombing attack on July 13, 2017, at a military border crossing in the central Sinai Peninsula (Twitter account, July 15, 2017). In an airstrike carried out by the Egyptian Air Force in the central Sinai Peninsula, six terrorist operatives were killed, and a vehicle with large amounts of explosives was destroyed (the official Facebook page of the spokesman of the Egyptian Armed Forces, July 16, 2017).



An ISIS vehicle destroyed by an airstrike in central Sinai (the official Facebook page of the spokesman of the Egyptian Armed Forces, July 16, 2017)

■ ISIS operatives killed the sheikh of the Rumeilat tribe at his home in Ismailiya because they suspected he was collaborating with the Egyptian security services. Due to threats on his life, the sheikh left his home in Rafah and moved to Ismailiya. Five masked operatives broke into his house and killed him (Al-Masry Al-Youm, July 14, 2017). Egyptian security forces in Ismailiya killed four “terrorist operatives” who were involved in killing the sheikh (Twitter account, July 15, 2017).

■ **In Hurghada**, a resort village on the Red Sea coast (southwest of Sharm El-Sheikh), a **stabbing attack was carried out. Two German tourists were killed.** Four other tourists were wounded (Al-Masry Al-Youm, July 14, 2017). The perpetrator was reportedly **Abd al-Rahman Shams al-Din**, 28, from the village of Al-Sheikh (Al-Youm Al-Sabea, July 14, 2017). For the time being, no organizations assumed responsibility for the stabbing. **Official sources in Egypt and Germany believe that the attack was inspired by ISIS.** According to the German Foreign Ministry, the terrorist planned to attack foreign nationals. One of the eyewitnesses, a shopkeeper at the hotel, noted that the assailant cried that he did not intend to harm Egyptian citizens. According to an Egyptian “security source,” **the assailant was in contact with ISIS operatives through the Internet and received a mission to attack foreign tourists** (Deutsche Welle, July 15, 2017).

## Egypt proper

■ On July 16, 2017, sources in the Egyptian Army reported that the Air Force had destroyed 15 vehicles carrying weapons, ammunition and explosives, which attempted to infiltrate Egypt **through the western border, between Egypt and Libya** (the official Facebook page of the spokesman of the Egyptian Armed Forces, July 16, 2017). At the same time with their activity in the Sinai Peninsula, **the Egyptian security forces also operate against terrorist operatives along the border with Libya.** Egypt, in cooperation with the Libyan Army, monitors the activity on the Libyan border using technological means such as drones (Al-Gomhuria, July 16, 2017).



Video documenting the attack on the vehicle convoy near the border between Egypt and Libya (the official Facebook page of the spokesman of the Egyptian Armed Forces, July 16, 2017)

## The conduct of the Islamic State

### Evaluation of ISIS's activity following the loss of its territories

- An article published by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti deals with **the future of ISIS**. The article notes that until now there have been two hypotheses about the future of ISIS: according to the first hypothesis, **Al-Qaeda will succeed ISIS**. According to the second hypothesis, **operatives from both of these organizations will manage to reach an agreement and establish some sort of common front**. **All the commentators agree that the ISIS brand is not expected to disappear even after the loss of its territories in Syria and Iraq**. They claim that ISIS will make use of the experience that it has acquired in areas related to state administration, such as tax collection, commercial operations and business management, which will enable it to finance terrorism in Iraq and Syria, and even to transfer it to the West.
- The Russian commentators claim that although the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has weakened ISIS, it will not lead to the cessation of its activity. Moreover, in their opinion, it may even create new difficulties in the struggle against ISIS. According to them, choosing a new leader in place of Al-Baghdadi will be a difficult task for the organization's members **and could even lead to a split in the organization**. In their assessment, such a split would make it difficult to fight the organization because the fighting would not be against one organization, but against a number of rival organizations (RIA Novosti, July 11, 2017).

**It should be emphasized that the reports of the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, which originally appeared in the Russian media, have not yet been verified.** A senior member of the Kurdish counterterrorism forces said he believed that Al-Baghdadi was alive and staying in the area south of Al-Raqqah. According to him, Al-Baghdadi is constantly moving along the Iraqi-Syria border and avoiding the use of electronic means of communication (Reuters, July 17, 2017).

## ISIS's leader in Afghanistan killed in an airstrike

■ **The US Department of Defense reported the death of an ISIS leader in Afghanistan codenamed Abu Said.** Abu Said was killed on July 11, 2017, along with other operatives, **in a US airstrike against the ISIS headquarters in the Kunar Province** in eastern Afghanistan (near the Pakistani border). **Abu Said is ISIS's third leader killed in Afghanistan since July 2016** (Reuters, July 14, 2017).

## Counterterrorism

### Turkey

■ **The wave of detentions of operatives suspected of being ISIS operatives in Turkey continues.** According to Turkey's chief of security, **the Turkish security forces have detained 233 people suspected of involvement in ISIS** as part of an operation in the country's 29 provinces. **The detainees include 25 foreign operatives**, who will be dealt with by the Department of Immigration (Sputnik, July 12, 2017). Five operatives suspected of being ISIS operatives were killed in the Konya Province in an exchange of fire with Turkish police. The next day, Turkish security forces detained five other operatives suspected of having been in contact with the five operatives who were killed (Hürriyet, July 13, 2017).

### Britain

■ As part of the war against terrorism financing, the British government has conducted a **study attempting to trace the sources of financing for radical Islamic activities in the country.** On July 12, 2017, **British Home Secretary Amber Rudd** presented the main findings of the report to Parliament. **The most significant finding is that most of the financing comes from anonymous, small, private donations from people in Britain.** It was also found that **in many cases the donors do not understand the extremist nature of the groups that they support.** The British government has decided not to publish the complete study for security reasons and because of the large quantity of personal information that it contains.

■ According to the British Home Office, the study provides a good picture of the ways in which extremist elements in the country establish themselves financially, and has improved the understanding of how extremist Islamic elements are financed in Britain. According to British government officials, there is no one specific step that should be taken, and therefore the British government and its allies **will continue to carry out the activities that they have carried out to date, including, among others** (British Home Office website, July 12, 2017):

- Conducting campaigns to raise public awareness about the nature and goals of the organizations that people donate to
- Increasing supervision of organizations suspected of being extremist, while increasing the number of organizations subject to supervision
- Conducting an in-depth examination of the misuse of charities for the purpose of terrorism financing
- Increasing and expanding international cooperation in the fight against terrorism

## The battle for hearts and minds

### Incitement to carry out terrorist attacks and harm Western countries

■ In view of ISIS's defeats in Syria and Iraq, it is **inciting its operatives and supporters to carry out terrorist attacks in Muslim, Arab and Western countries:**

- In early July 2017, **ISIS's Turkish branch released a 66-page Turkish-language guide containing many pictures and infographics detailing various methods for carrying out attacks in the West.** The methods mentioned include: burning parked cars, burning forests, vehicular attacks, making bombs, carrying out suicide bombing attacks against passersby by means of truck bombs, blowing up buildings and more. The guide appeared on a Telegram channel which also released a 25-minute video **calling on so-called lone wolves worldwide to carry out various types of attacks** (The Washington Times, July 10, 2017).
- ISIS called on **fighters from Egypt and Tunisia returning to their home countries** after fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Iraq **to carry out attacks against**

**tourists during the summer.** The call was published mainly in jihadi forums (Al-Bawaba News, July 15, 2017).

- A feature article in the 11th issue of the magazine Rumiya, published by ISIS's Al-Hayat media foundation on July 14, 2017, in 11 languages, deals with looting from the infidels. The article focuses on Islamic law permits on the subject and emphasizes **that the property of the infidels is free for the taking.** The article also quotes a fatwa from Ibn Taymiyyah **permitting the abduction of infidel children.** The article is accompanied by photos, including a photo of the **headquarters of the European Central Bank,** with the caption **“Muslims Must Attack the Infidel Economies”** (Rumiya, July 14, 2017).



The cover of Issue 11 of ISIS's organ Rumiya