



Spotlight on Global Jihad

December 20-26, 2018



Main events of the week

- ▶ The most important event of the week was the **US announcement that it intended to pull out its military personnel from Syria**. The pull-out will reportedly be slow and coordinated and will take several months. According to “senior US officials,” as part of the decision to pull out from Syria, the airstrikes will also cease. The decision was tweeted by President Trump, who stated that the US had defeated the Islamic State in Syria, and therefore there was no reason for the continued military activity of the American forces.
- ▶ An ITIC analysis of ISIS’s situation in Syria, Iraq, and the various provinces abroad **shows that the organization has not been defeated**, even though it was weakened following the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate. After the Caliphate collapsed, **ISIS once again changed its methods and adapted itself to the changing realities**. During 2018, a process began in which **ISIS turned itself into an international terrorist and guerrilla organization based in Syria and Iraq, which operates in a decentralized manner and no longer has to defend a territorial sphere of control** (see the ITIC’s document: “The impact of the withdrawal of the American troops from Syria on the campaign against ISIS”).
- ▶ A week after President Trump’s announcement, the situation on the ground in the Euphrates Valley is as follows:
 - ◆ ISIS, encouraged by the US announcement, **carried out a number of counterattacks in the important city of Hajin** (which had been taken over from ISIS by the SDF before President Trump’s announcement). The SDF forces announced that they had repelled ISIS’s attacks and that their forces controlled most of the city.
 - ◆ According to the SDF statements, the SDF enjoys Coalition airstrikes, which support it in repelling ISIS’s counterattacks.
 - ◆ **The Syrian army and the forces supporting it sent reinforcements to the Euphrates Valley** following the US announcement. The reinforcements are reportedly concentrated in the cities of Albukamal and Al-Mayadeen, west of the Euphrates River.

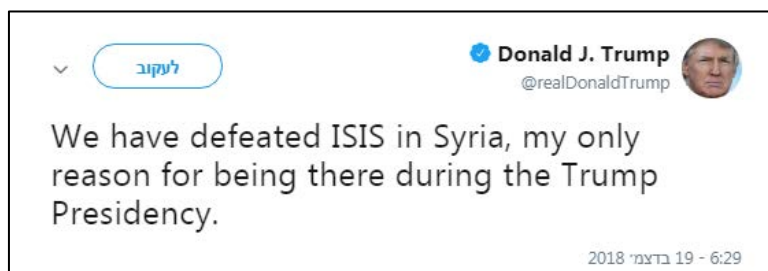
◆ A spokesman for one of the Iraqi Shiite militias affiliated with Iran (the “Hezbollah Battalions”) **offered the Kurdish forces assistance by his organization and the Syrian army in defending the Syrian-Iraqi border** (an indication of Iran’s ambition to expand its influence in the Albukamal area).

◆ At the same time, **ISIS intensified its guerrilla and terror attacks throughout Iraq** (planting IEDs on roads, suicide bombing attacks, car bombs, attacks on positions of the Iraqi security forces, sniper fire, and more).

► Concurrently, the intensive activity of ISIS provinces abroad continued. The main event this week was a **suicide bombing attack carried out by three suicide bombers at the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli**. According to ISIS’s claim of responsibility, dozens of people were killed and wounded in the attack, and the building was set on fire. Another attack was the **brutal murder of two Scandinavian tourists in Morocco** carried out by a group of young people who had pledged allegiance to ISIS. In addition, ISIS is waging a **propaganda campaign calling for ISIS-inspired attacks in Western countries against the backdrop of the Christmas season** (deadly attacks in crowded places, ramming attacks and stabbing attacks were expressly mentioned).

President Trump’s announcement of the withdrawal of the US forces from Syria

On December 19, 2018, US President Donald Trump announced on his official Twitter account that the US had defeated the Islamic State in Syria. According to him, ISIS was defeated and the US won (“We won”). Therefore, Trump noted, there is no reason to leave the American military personnel in Syria. Spokesman for the Department of State and the Department of Defense said that the United States had begun the process of removing American military personnel from Syria, but stressed that it would continue to work with its partners wherever ISIS operates (Reuters, December 19, 2018). **The announcement by the US President was widely opposed by the US administration and led to the resignation of US Secretary of Defense James Mattis (December 20, 2018) and American Special Envoy to the International Coalition, Brett McGurk (December 21, 2018).**



**President Trump's first tweet about the withdrawal of the US forces from Syria
(President Trump's official Twitter account, December 19, 2018)**

- ▶ "Senior US officials" noted that **the withdrawal of some 2,000 US troops in Syria would take between 60 and 100 days**. The US President tweeted that it would be a slow and highly coordinated pullout of US troops from the area (President Trump's official Twitter account, December 23, 2018). "Senior US officials" said that **as part of the decision by the US to withdraw from Syria, the airstrikes against ISIS would also cease** (Reuters, December 20, 2018). On the other hand, a **senior Pentagon official said that the Trump administration had not yet decided** whether the US would continue the air campaign against ISIS after the US military personnel leave Syria (The Washington Post, December 21, 2018). The US President tweeted on his Twitter account that Iran, Russia and other countries were ISIS's local enemies and that **the US, on its part, had ended its activity against ISIS in Syria** (President Trump's official Twitter account, December 20, 2018).
- ▶ Senior US and Turkish officials claimed that the background for President Trump's decision **was a conversation between him and Turkish President Erdoğan on December 14, 2018**. During their conversation, Erdoğan claimed that Turkey could handle what was left to be done in the campaign against ISIS on its own, and asked Trump why the Americans were present in Syria (AP, December 21, 2018; Hürriyet Daily News, December 21, 2018). Following President Trump's announcement, **Turkish President Erdoğan said that the Turkish operation (against the Kurds) in the eastern part of the Euphrates would be suspended for the time being** (Daily Sabah, Turkey, December 21, 2018). Erdoğan also said that **Turkey would take over the fight against ISIS in Syria** (Reuters, December 21, 2018).

In the ground campaign against ISIS in the Syrian arena, the Americans played a secondary role. The brunt of the burden of the fighting was borne by the Syrian army (in central and southern Syria) and the Kurdish SDF (in eastern Syria). **In the ITIC's assessment, the main contribution of the Americans to the Syrian campaign was the intensive air support that they provided to the Kurdish forces fighting against ISIS on the east bank of the Euphrates River.** In addition to the air support, some 2,000 American advisors operated in the Kurdish region, contributing to the enhancement of the (already high) military capabilities of the Kurdish forces. This is in addition to the **American political backing**, which helped the Kurds withstand the heavy pressure exerted on them by Turkey. **In the ITIC's assessment, from a military perspective, the SDF campaign against ISIS east of the Euphrates will suffer if the air support does indeed cease.** In addition, the Kurds will suffer a severe blow at the **morale and political levels as they will be exposed to increasing pressure on the part of Turkey** (and therefore they will be forced to seek a new strategic support in the form of the Syrian regime and Russia).

Initial responses of the Kurds to the US announcement

► **SDF Spokesman Mustafa Bali** announced that the Kurds **would be forced to withdraw their fighters from the campaign against ISIS, in order to defend their borders** (i.e., the Syrian-Turkish border) if they are attacked by the Turks. Speaking in Paris, **İlham Ehmed, former co-chairperson of the Syrian Democratic Council** (the SDF's political wing) also announced **that the Kurdish forces are liable to withdraw from the Deir ez-Zor front and take positions along the border with Turkey, in order to curb any attack** (Reuters, December 21, 2018).

► **SDF Spokesman Kino Gabriel** announced that **ISIS had stepped up its attacks over the past few days, in the wake of the American decision to remove US troops from Syria** (for further details of ISIS's intensified attacks in the city of Hajin, see below). He added that the American decision would undermine the stability and security prevailing in northern and eastern Syria. The spokesman called on the international community and the International Coalition to adhere to their responsibilities towards the Kurds (SDF Press, December 24, 2018).



SDF Forces Spokesman Kino Gabriel (SDF Press, December 24, 2018)

The Idlib area

Incidents in the Idlib area continue

► This week as well, incidents in the Idlib area continued, mainly between the Syrian army and the jihadi organizations:

- ◆ **Squads of the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham** tried to infiltrate into and attack Syrian army positions about 25 km north of Hama. **The Syrian army** fired machine guns with direct hits at the squads (SANA, December 23, 2018).
- ◆ On the night of December 22-23, **the Syrian army** fired artillery in the north of Al-Ghab Plain at positions and command posts of the **Turkestan Islamic Party** (a jihadi organization consisting of members of the Muslim minority in China). Many operatives of the organization were either killed or wounded, and fortifications and launching facilities were destroyed (SANA, December 23, 2018).



Syrian army artillery fire at an area controlled by the rebels in the Idlib Province (Butulat Al-Jaysh Al-Suri, December 23, 2018)

◆ On December 19, 2018, a **force of the Glory Brigades** (affiliated with Al-Qaeda) carried out a sudden attack against a Syrian army checkpoint north of Hama. Dozens of soldiers were reportedly killed or wounded (Zaman Al-Wasl, December 19, 2018).

Northern Syria

► On December 23, 2018, an IED was activated against an SDF patrol in southern Manbij, on the highway to Aleppo. **ISIS claimed responsibility**, alleging that three of the passengers were either killed or wounded in the explosion (Al-Sham – Aleppo Province; Amaq, December 24, 2018). It should be recalled that the Turkish president recently threatened to launch a military campaign in Manbij, the main stronghold of the Kurdish forces (with US presence) west of the Euphrates River.

Eastern Syria

The campaign over the city of Hajin (updated to December 25, 2018)

► On December 14, 2018, five days before President Trump's announcement, the SDF forces took over most of Hajin's territory. **Following President Trump's announcement, ISIS stepped up its counterattacks against the SDF forces.** According to the SDF's Information Office, their forces managed to repel those counterattacks. According to the SDF's statement, **their forces still control most of Hajin's territory** (about 90%). The ISIS attacks were repelled **with intensive Coalition air support** (SDF Press, December 20, 22, 2018).

► On December 20 and 22, 2018, following President Trump's announcement, **ISIS carried out additional counterattacks against Hajin.** In these counterattacks, ISIS operatives used motorcycles and bullet proof vehicles, with dozens of suicide bombers. According to the SDF reports, these attacks were repelled with Coalition air support, According to these reports, ISIS sustained dozens of fatalities (SDF Press, December 20, 22, 2018). Coalition airstrikes against ISIS targets were continued also the following day (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 25, 2018).



Right: ISIS's ATVs and motorcycles moving in the open area during the attack on the SDF (ISIS's Al-Sham – Baraka Province, December 21, 2018). Left: Smoke clouds after Coalition airstrikes in the city of Hajin (SDF Press, December 20, 2018).

► **On December 24, 2018**, an ISIS force carried out a large-scale counterattack on the city of Hajin and its environs, using various weapons. According to an SDF statement, the attack was repelled, with dozens of ISIS operatives killed or wounded. A communications center used by ISIS was destroyed, as well as a workshop for making IEDs and car bombs. The SDF repelled the attack with Coalition air support (SDF's Information Office, December 24, 2018).



Right: SDF fighters in the city of Hajin. Left: Destruction in Hajin (SDF's Information Office, December 20, 2018)



Smoke cloud after a Coalition airstrike in the village of Abu al-Hassan, south of Hajin. This village was attacked by the SDF forces (Furat Post Facebook page, December 24, 2018)

Civilians fleeing from the ISIS enclaves

- ▶ On December 23, 2018, in the evening, **over thousand civilians, including women, children and elderly people, left the ISIS enclave on the east bank of the Euphrates River towards areas held by the SDF forces.** The refugees were transferred to the Al-Omar oilfield, about 48 km southeast of Deir ez-Zor, in preparation for sending them to refugee camps east of the Euphrates River. Thus, on December 23, 2018, the number of refugees from the ISIS enclave rose to 5,000 people, many of them Iraqi citizens. Since November 30, 2018, at least 7,400 civilians including women, children and elderly people had left the ISIS enclave (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 24, 2018). The specific reason for the departure on December 23, 2018, is still unclear to us.
- ▶ The large-scale flight of the civilians possibly stems from **increasing concerns and fears from ISIS.** Civilians who managed to flee reported that ISIS was planning on executing anyone stopped by it during a flight from the area, on account of a “flight to the infidel countries.” On December 19, 2018, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that ISIS was planning to execute three of its operatives on account of “smuggling civilians” out of the enclave (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 24, 2018).

Sending reinforcements to the Euphrates Valley

► Syrian and Russian media outlets reported that following the announcement of President Trump, **the Syrian army and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards sent reinforcements to the Euphrates Valley, as a preparation for a military move in the area.** According to the various reports, reinforcements belonging to the “Tiger” forces, under the command of Suheil Hassan, arrived in the area. Security personnel of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah, as well as a Russian military force, also arrived in the area. **The reinforcements were directed to the cities of Albukamal and Al-Mayadeen,** south and north of the ISIS enclave in the Euphrates Valley (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights; Deir ez-Zor 24; Enab Baladi; Khotwa; Sputnik, December 22-24, 2018).

Unconfirmed report on the SDF discussing the release of thousands of ISIS detainees

► The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported (November 20, 2018) that the SDF’s political and military leadership on the east bank of the Euphrates held a discussion on the release of thousands of ISIS operatives and their family members held in prisons and detention camps of the Kurdish forces. According to “reliable sources,” the discussion in question **concerns about 1,100 fighters from 31 countries and about 2,080 women and children from 44 countries.** The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that it had been decided to release them because all the countries of origin, save one, refused to take them back. Therefore, they will be released on Syrian soil in the near future.

Reactions by Hezbollah Battalions to Trump’s announcement

► Following the announcement by President Trump, **Ja’far al-Husseini, the military spokesman for the Hezbollah Battalions,** an Iraqi-Shiite militia affiliated with Iran, **announced that the Battalions were ready to take part, along with the Syrian army, in defending the Syrian-Kurdish civilians along the border between Syria and Iraq.** He added: **“We have a long-standing, intense contact with Kurdish command posts in northern Syria.** We are aware of the full picture regarding what is going on in northern Syria, including the movements of the American [forces]” (Al-Mayadeen, Lebanon, December 22, 2018).

► Hezbollah Battalions is one of the Iraqi-Shiite militias affiliated with Iran. They are deployed in the Albukamal area **in order to create a control area of pro-Iranian forces near the**

border crossing between Syria and Iraq. This is intended, among other things, to secure the overland logistic route between Iraq and Syria.¹ In the ITIC's assessment, the announcement of the spokesman for the Hezbollah Battalions is an indication **for Iran's intentions to extend and increase its influence on the Albukamal area through the Shiite militias affiliated with Iran, in the era after the departure of the US military personnel and the expected weakening of the SDF.**

Main developments in Iraq

► During the week in which President Trump announced the pull-back of the US troops from Syria, **ISIS stepped up its guerrilla attacks in Iraq.** Its activity included **planting IEDs on the roads** (still the most common modus operandi), **suicide bombing attacks, detonation of car bombs, attacks against outposts of the Iraqi security forces, rocket fire, sniper fire, and the execution of an Iraqi "intelligence agent."**

Documentation of an ISIS suicide bombing attack

► On December 25, 2018, Iraq – Salah al-Din Province released a video **documenting a suicide bombing attack against a command post and a position of the Popular Mobilization and the Iraqi security forces southwest of Tikrit.** A terrorist driving in a car bomb blew himself up near a position of the Iraqi security forces. Another terrorist, wearing an explosive belt, also took part in the attack. ISIS claims that 17 members of the security forces were killed in the attack and 12 others were wounded (Al-Ghurabaa, December 25, 2018).



Right: The suicide bomber on his way to carry out the attack. Left: Both terrorists before leaving for the suicide bombing attack (Al-Ghurabaa, December 25, 2018)

¹ See the ITIC's publication from July 15, 2018: "Increasing the Iranian control of the Albukamal border crossing area – part of Iran's strategy of establishing an overland supply route connecting Iran with Iraq, Syria and Lebanon (in collaboration with ImageSat International – ISI)."

► The video also documented a night attack of ISIS operatives on an Iraqi army position in the Samarra region. The operatives were equipped with night vision aids. Also documented were **sniper shooting**, killing an Iraqi soldier, **and an execution** of an Iraqi intelligence agent. It seems that all of the above took place this past week, although no date appears on the video.



**Execution of an intelligence agent in the desert, Salah al-Din Province
(Al-Ghurabaa, December 25, 2018)**

► Following are additional activities carried out by ISIS this past week (based on ISIS's claim of responsibility):

- ◆ **Kirkuk Province:** On December 19, 2018, ISIS attacked a position of the Iraqi police in the Alas oilfield, Kirkuk area. Two policemen were killed. The ISIS operatives fled the scene after setting fire to the position and seizing weapons (Iraq – Kirkuk Province, December 20, 2018).
- ◆ **Salah al-Din Province:** On December 20, 2018, ISIS claimed responsibility for firing two rockets at Iraqi army and Popular Mobilization targets in the city of Tikrit (Iraq – Salah al-Din Province, December 20, 2018). No casualties were reported.
- ◆ **Baghdad Province:** On December 20, 2018, ISIS announced that its operatives had blown up a house with an IED south of the city of Fallujah. According to ISIS, the man who lived in the house had collaborated with the Iraqi army (Iraq – Fallujah Province, December 20, 2018).
- ◆ **Al-Anbar Province:** On December 20, 2018, ISIS announced that it had hit eight Iraqi soldiers, some of them were wounded and others killed, with an IED which was activated on their truck, west of Haditha (Amaq, December 20, 2018).
- ◆ **Diyala Province:** ISIS announced that on December 22, 2018, its operatives had killed two members of the Iraqi security forces in the Khanaqin area, Diyala Province. The

same day, ISIS announced that a Peshmerga fighter was killed and others were wounded in the explosion of an IED planted in the area (Amaq, December 23, 2018).

◆ **Al-Anbar Province:** ISIS claimed responsibility for hitting four Iraqi soldiers and destroying their vehicle with an IED in the entrance to the city of Al-Qaim, on the border between Iraq and Syria. Several soldiers were killed and others were wounded (Amaq, December 23, 2018).

◆ **Nineveh Province:** ISIS claimed responsibility for killing two Iraqi soldiers and destroying their motorcycle with an IED which was planted in Mosul (Amaq, December 23, 2018).

◆ **Nineveh Province:** ISIS claimed responsibility for detonating a car bomb among a Shiite concentration in the city of Tal Afar (about 65 km west of Mosul). According to ISIS, three Shiites were killed and two were wounded (Shabakat Shumukh, December 25, 2018).

◆ **Diyala Province:** ISIS activated an IED against the Iraqi army in the rural area south of Baqubah. According to ISIS, two Iraqi soldiers were killed and three were wounded (Shabakat Shumukh, December 25, 2018).

The activity of the Iraqi security forces

► Following are the main activities carried out by the Iraqi security forces this past week (according to the Iraqi media). **These activities focused on the Mosul area:**

◆ After having attacked an Iraqi force, four ISIS operatives were killed in a Coalition airstrike about 20 km west of Mosul (Iraqi News, December 22, 2018).

◆ Based on intelligence received, the Nineveh Province Intelligence Directorate exposed a terrorist cell comprising five operatives, in the city of Mosul (Al-Sumaria, December 22, 2018).

◆ The Iraqi security forces located two IEDs and ten mines in various areas of the city of Mosul (Al-Sumaria, December 21, 2018).

◆ The Iraqi security forces in the Mosul area detained a woman, an ISIS operative which was described as extremely dangerous by the Iraqi Military Intelligence. The terrorist was a family member of ISIS operatives and occupied a security position in ISIS. Her name was not disclosed (Al-Sumaria, December 20, 2018).

► The Iraqi Interior Ministry announced that it had **closed 88 social media accounts affiliated with “terrorist elements,”** i.e., mainly with ISIS (December 24, 2018). Apparently,

the accounts were closed after the ministry approached the managements of the relevant social media, most of them in the United States.

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

Terrorist attacks against the Egyptian security forces

► ISIS's Sinai Province announced that it had carried out several terrorist attacks against the Egyptian security forces in northern Sinai:

- ◆ **December 22, 2018:** The Sinai Province claimed responsibility for killing two officers and an Egyptian soldier, and wounding another soldier, by sniper shooting at a military camp in Rafah (Amaq, December 22, 2018).
- ◆ **December 21, 2018:** An Egyptian policeman was killed by a sniper while standing at a checkpoint in Rafah (@omar_hatem1 Twitter account).
- ◆ **December 19, 2018:** The Sinai Province detonated an IED against an Egyptian army bulldozer and destroyed it (ISIS's Sinai Province, December 20, 2018).

Thwarting terrorist attacks by the Egyptian security forces

► The Egyptian Interior Ministry announced that on December 23, 2018, it had killed 14 “terrorist operatives” who **planned to carry out terrorist attacks against Egyptian security targets in the city of Al-Arish**. The terrorist operatives were killed in the exchange of fire with members of the National Security Apparatus, which is subordinate to the Interior Ministry. One of the photos released by the ministry shows an explosive belt found with the terrorist operatives (Facebook page of the Egyptian Interior Ministry, December 23, 2018).



Explosive belt found with the “terrorist operatives”
(Facebook page of the Egyptian Interior Ministry, December 23, 2018)

Jihadi activity in other countries

Murder of two Scandinavian tourists in Morocco

- ▶ On December 17, 2018, **the bodies of two tourists from Denmark and Norway** (one aged 24 and the other aged 28) were found in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. The two women were on their way to the highest mountain peak in North Africa, which is a popular travel site. The body of one of them was found inside the tent where she was staying and the other outside it (Reuters, December 21, 2018). The murderers apparently raped them and then slit their throats with a knife.
- ▶ The Moroccan authorities announced that **four suspects who had been arrested on suspicion of committing the murders had pledged allegiance to ISIS. A video of the allegiance ceremony was posted on social media before the murders.** On December 21, 2018, Morocco's Central Bureau of Investigation announced that nine more people had been arrested in Morocco on suspicion of being connected with the murderers (Reuters, December 21, 2018).



Right: Louisa Vesterager Jespersen from Denmark (Louisa Vesterager Jespersen Facebook page, which was set up in memory of the murdered woman, December 20, 2018). Left: Maren Ueland from Norway (Maren Ueland Facebook page, which was set up in memory of the murdered woman, December 19, 2018).



Three ISIS operatives suspected of murdering the two Scandinavian tourists in Morocco (Hamdi el@hamdulf Twitter account, December 20, 2018)

Suicide bombing attack at the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli

► **On the morning of December 25, 2018, three terrorists attacked the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli.** The offices in the building were set on fire. The attack began with the explosion of a car bomb near the Foreign Ministry. A suicide bomber then entered the building and blew himself up on the second floor. Another terrorist was killed in the building after a bag that he was carrying exploded. The Libyan security forces reportedly killed a third operative outside the building. The operative was unarmed but was wearing a protective vest. According to a report by the Libyan Ministry of Health, at least three people were killed in the attack, one of them a Foreign Ministry department director, and 10 others were wounded (Akhbar Libya; France 24, December 25, 2018).



Right: Smoke rising from the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli (Akhbar Libya, December 25, 2018). Right: At least two cars on fire at the scene of the combined attack at the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli (Akhbar Libya, December 25, 2018).



Right: The body of one of the ISIS operatives who took part in the terrorist attack at the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in Tripoli (Akhbar Libya, December 25, 2018).

► **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.** According to ISIS's claim of responsibility, **the attack was carried out by three terrorists wearing explosive belts and armed with machine guns.** The three terrorists broke into the headquarters of the Libyan Foreign Ministry in central Tripoli, killing and wounding 31 members of the security forces and Foreign Ministry officials. The assailants took control of the headquarters for several hours and then set it on fire. The claim of responsibility ends with a threat that **the campaign, which began in the city of Sirte, has not ended but actually has expanded** (ISIS's Libya – Tripoli Province, December 25, 2018).

Killing attack in Kabul

► On December 24, 2018, a car bomb exploded next to a compound in Kabul where government agencies that provide social assistance are located. According to the spokesman for the Afghan deputy interior minister, there were prolonged exchanges of fire between three "terrorist operatives" and the Afghan security forces. According to the spokesman of the Afghan Ministry of Public Health, **at least 43 people were killed and 25 were wounded** (Khaama Press, December 24, 2018). ISIS's claim of responsibility for the attack has not yet been found. Based on the modus operandi, it can be assumed that the attack was carried out by ISIS or the Taliban.



Scene of attack at the government compound in Kabul (Khaama Press ,24 December 2018)

The battle for hearts and minds

► In the past week, there has been an increase in the dissemination of propaganda material (posters, video) by ISIS and the elements supporting it, **threatening to carry out attacks against Western countries and Western leaders** (to whom they have added Russian President Putin and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu). **The posters and the video encourage ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks** and call for attacks on President Trump and other leaders (Putin, Macron, Netanyahu, and the Pope).

► One of the posters threatens to carry out attacks in the West **using drones**. The inscriptions and subtitles in the posters and in the video are in **English** (the video that was distributed by ISIS is **Spanish**-speaking and includes subtitles in English and Arabic, and also includes messages in **French**). A video posted by ISIS on its website **calls for attacks against a background of photos of a Christmas party**. The perpetrator (or perpetrators) of the attacks **are called upon to mingle with the partygoers, dress appropriately in order to conceal their identity as well as the explosives in their possession, and then to detonate them**. The video explicitly calls for **ramming and stabbing attacks**.

The ITIC's impression is that this is an organized campaign. It should be taken into account that this campaign is liable to increase the motivation of ISIS supporters around the world, **especially in Western countries**, to carry out attacks. This **is liable to lead to attacks**, which will be carried out during the holiday season, including deadly attacks such as **ramming, stabbing, and shooting attacks**².

² See the ITIC's Information Bulletin from December 24, 2018: "ISIS and ISIS Supporters' Campaign Threatens Christmas Terrorist Attacks."



Right: Poster reading: “Your holidays are approaching, and so are the [dates] of your funerals” (Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, December 24, 2018). Left: Poster which was disseminated on Telegram by ISIS supporters, reading: “Just terror – Your holidays are approaching, and so are the [dates] of your funerals” (Al-Abd al-Faqir Media Foundation, December 24, 2018).



Right: poster encouraging attacks on Christian holidays (ISIS-affiliated Maharrir al-Ansar Foundation, December 24, 2018). At the top it says Al Andalusia Publicaciones, i.e., Andalusian Publications. The ones behind this name are apparently ISIS supporters from Spain who translate material into Spanish and distribute it. Left: Poster in Spanish calling on the “Soldiers of Allah” to “get ready,” with Christmas celebrations in the background (ISIS’s Muntaser Media Foundation, December 24, 2018).



Spanish-language poster encouraging attacks on Christmas (Telegram, December 24, 2018)