



Spotlight on Global Jihad

January 3-9, 2019



Main events of the week

► Following is an overview of the situation on the ground in Syria, against the backdrop of President Trump's announcement of the pullback of US military personnel:

- ◆ **In the enclave controlled by ISIS on the east bank of the Euphrates River**, fierce fighting continues between ISIS and the SDF forces (with US and Coalition air support). **The city of Hajin**, ISIS's stronghold, has not yet been mopped up, and fighting is still ongoing there. Fighting also continued **in the town of Al-Sha'fah, north of Albukamal**. According to reports, the SDF forces took over half of the town and the fighting was still ongoing.
- ◆ **The Kurdish forces began evacuating the city of Manbij**, apparently as part of an agreement to withdraw their forces from the area west of the Euphrates River. **So far, no alternative force has entered the city**. It is possible that a Syrian force will enter Manbij and administer the city in cooperation with the Kurds. Another possibility is that the Turkish army and the rebel organizations supported by Turkey will enter the city. In the meantime, **a Russian Military Police force began to patrol**, apparently on one of the roads leading to Manbij and possibly also in its suburbs.
- ◆ **In the Idlib area**, incidents continued between the Syrian army and the jihadi rebel organizations, although the intensity was relatively low. In the ITIC's assessment, this is because most of the Syrian regime's attention is directed at the city of Manbij and the Kurdish enclave west of the Euphrates River. At the same time, **the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham is establishing its dominance in the Idlib area by taking control of areas where Turkish-backed rebel organizations operate**.
- ◆ **In southern Syria**, local clashes broke out once again between the Syrian army and ISIS operatives **in the area of Al-Safa (northeast of As-Suwayda)**. This was after the Syrian regime announced nearly two months ago that the Syrian army had taken

control of the ISIS enclaves in Al-Safa, thereby completing the mopping up of southern Syria from terrorism.

► **While the US began the pullback of its military personnel from Syria, US senior officials and media continued to convey messages to the allies of the United States, in order to address their concerns.** The messages, especially those expressed by US National Security Advisor John Bolton, were: the pullback of American troops will be carried out gradually and in a controlled manner; the United States will ensure that ISIS is defeated before leaving Syria; the United States demands that Turkey commit itself not to harm its allies; the United States will continue to operate from Iraq after the pullback of its troops from Syria. In addition, the United States is considering its position regarding the American force in Al-Tanf, which is of great importance in preventing Iran from gaining control of the Iran-Iraq-Syria-Turkey land route.

► These messages, mainly the demand from Turkey not to harm the Kurds, **gave rise to concern among the Turks.** The Turkish regime fears possible American commitments to the Kurds, seeing the American pullback as a lever to deepen its influence in northern Syria while harming the military force that the Kurds established during the civil war. The issue currently on the agenda is **the struggle for influence in the city of Manbij**, from which the Kurdish forces have begun to withdraw, and all the area west of the Euphrates River in northern Syria.

President Trump's announcement of the pullback of US forces from Syria (update)

While the Arab media reported the beginning of the pullback of US troops to Iraq, US officials, only some of whom identified themselves by name, continued to convey **reassuring messages.** These messages were intended to make clear to the allies of the United States in Syria (the Kurds) and in the region (Israel, pro-Western Arab countries) that **their vital interests will not be harmed by the American pullback.**

► Following are some notable statements:

◆ **US National Security Advisor John Bolton, while visiting Israel,** reiterated the US administration's commitment to Israel's security in light of the pullback from Syria. According to him, **the US will withdraw in a way that will guarantee that ISIS is defeated.** It will also ensure that the security of Israel and the security of "other friends

in the region” is guaranteed, as well as the security of those who fight against ISIS alongside the US (i.e., the Kurds) (Israeli daily Haaretz, January 7, 2019).

◆ **John Bolton also said that the United States would not pull back its forces from northern Syria until Turkey gives a firm commitment not to harm the Kurds**, the allies of the United States. According to him, President Trump told Turkish President Erdoğan that the pullback depended on guarantees that Turkey would protect the Kurdish fighters, who provided the United States with solid support in the campaign against ISIS (NBC; The Wall Street Journal, January 6, 2019).

◆ **“Senior US officials”** told The Wall Street Journal (January 6, 2019) that Turkey had asked the United States for significant military assistance, which would take the form of airstrikes and logistics attacks, among other things. This is in order to enable the Turkish forces to assume maximum responsibility for fighting against ISIS in Syria. It was reported that the Turkish requests were so extensive that the US was liable to deepen its involvement in Syria instead of reducing it. The officials made it clear that **they did not believe that the Turkish army possessed the logistical ability to transfer its forces to the middle of the Euphrates Valley in order to fight thousands of ISIS operatives operating there.**

◆ **John Bolton also noted that the American base in Al-Tanf is of strategic importance because it prevents Iran from gaining control** over the Iran-Iraq-Syria-Lebanon land route. According to the NBC reports, it is not clear whether the United States has the legitimacy that would enable it to **leave its forces in Al-Tanf**, but in Bolton’s opinion, the US Constitution makes this possible, since it grants the US president full authority to defend the interests of the United States and its allies around the world. According to a senior government official, **the US wants to hear the positions of Israel and Jordan regarding the importance of the Al-Tanf base before deciding on its next steps** (NBC, Jerusalem, January 6, 2019).

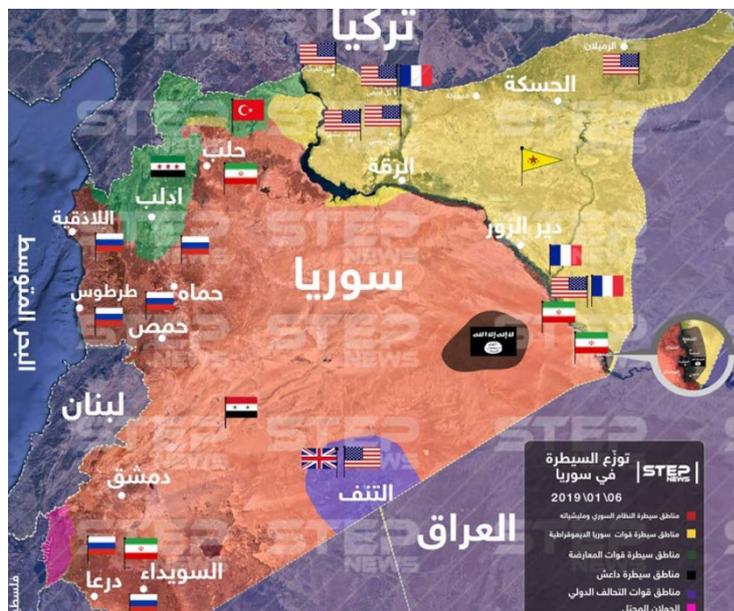
Turkey’s response

► These messages, which mentioned the US commitment to protect its Kurdish allies, **aroused the anger of the Turks.** In an op-ed in The New York Times (January 7, 2019), **Turkish President Erdoğan** presented **his own strategic alternative** with regard to Turkey’s place in northern Syria in the era after the pullback of US troops:

- ◆ Erdoğan called on the United States to plan its pullback from Syria carefully and to cooperate with “the right partners” to protect its interests. **He referred to the Kurdish forces (YPG) as terrorists**, constituting the Syrian arm of the PKK organization, which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and Turkey.
- ◆ Erdoğan noted that Turkey would supervise the **transfer of control in the areas controlled by the Kurds or ISIS to “popularly elected councils,”** with the cooperation of Turkey and its friends and allies [**Note:** by designating the Kurdish forces as terrorists, and failing to make a distinction between them and ISIS, Erdoğan sends a **threatening message about Turkey’s intentions** after the pullback of the US troops].
- ▶ During John Bolton’s visit to Turkey, the Turks angrily dismissed his demand that Turkey protect the Kurds, the allies of the US. President Erdoğan, who refused to meet with Bolton, said that it was impossible for Turkey to “swallow” this message. Instead of meeting with Erdoğan, Bolton and the US delegation met with the President’s advisor **Ibrahim Kalin**. It was reported that the main Turkish condition for supporting the US pullback was for the US to stop supporting the Kurdish YPG (Reuters; The New York Times, January 9, 2019).

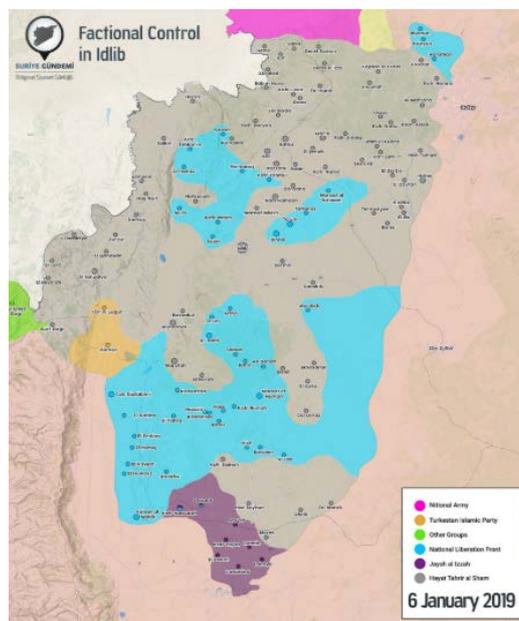
The areas of control in Syria (early January 2019)

On January 6, 2019, the Khotwa website, which is affiliated with the Syrian opposition, published a map of the areas of control in Syria. This map is consistent with the information in the hands of the ITIC, as follows: **the Syrian regime** controls most of the country; **the Kurds** (still with the presence of US troops) control northeastern Syria (east of the Euphrates River), apart from an enclave west of the Euphrates River in the area of Manbij (from which they are currently withdrawing their forces); **Turkey and the rebel organizations under its protection** control the area south of the Syrian-Turkish border in northwestern Syria; **the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham** is the dominant organization in the Idlib region, but Turkish-sponsored rebel organizations are also operating there; **the United States and the rebel organizations under its protection control the Al-Tanf enclave** near the Syrian-Jordanian-Iraqi tri-border area; and **ISIS (still?) controls the Lower Euphrates Valley** (in an enclave north of Albukamal), **in the desert area west of the Lower Euphrates Valley and in a small pocket that remained in the area of Al-Safa, northeast of As-Suwayda.**



Map of the areas of control in Syria according to the Khotwa website (updated to January 6, 2019): The Syrian regime and the forces supporting it (red); the Kurdish forces (yellow); the rebel forces (green); the United States and Coalition (purple); ISIS (brown) (Khotwa, January 6, 2019).

The Idlib area



Control areas for the organizations in the Idlib area: the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham (grey); “The National Liberation Front,” affiliated with Turkey (light blue)¹; the Army of Glory (Jaysh al-Izza) (purple); The Turkistan Islamic Party (the Chinese Uyghur operatives) (light brown) (suriyegundemi.com, Turkey, January 6, 2019)

Incidents in the Idlib area

► This week as well, incidents in the Idlib area continued between the Syrian army and the jihadi organizations, albeit in lesser intensity. Following are prominent incidents:

- ◆ The Syrian army fired artillery at targets of the Turkistan Islamic Party (the Chinese Uyghur operatives in Syria) about 9 km west of Jisr Al-Shughur. The Syrian army also fired artillery at “terrorist organizations” in the rural area south of Idlib (SANA, January 4, 2019).
- ◆ On January 2, 2019, the “Awaken the Believers” operations room (affiliated with Al-Qaeda) fired at Syrian army positions about 22 km south of Jisr Al-Shughur (“Awaken the Believers” operations room, January 2, 2019).
- ◆ The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham reported that Syrian army forces, with air support, attempted to advance towards its positions in the areas of Idlib and Aleppo. In response, the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham fired artillery at

¹ **“The National Liberation Front”** is an umbrella framework which was established by Turkey based on the Free Syrian Army and Islamic rebel organizations. The establishment of this framework was announced in Ankara after the meeting of the commanders of the various organizations, before the tenth round of the Astana talks (Enab Baladi, August 5, 2018).

Syrian army targets and at the Center for Scientific Research west of Aleppo² (Ibaa, January 5, 2019).



Right: Artillery fire by the Syrian army (SANA, January 4, 2019). Left: Artillery fire by the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham at Syrian army fortifications and positions in the vicinity of the Center for Scientific Research (Ibaa, January 5, 2019)

The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham establishes its control in the Idlib area

- ▶ The Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham, the dominant organization in the Idlib area, has made military moves to establish its control in the Idlib area at the expense of the rebel organizations enjoying Turkish support. In early January 2019, the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham attacked areas **west of Aleppo** (northeast of Idlib) held by the Nur al-Din Zenki Movement (affiliated with the National Liberation Front supported by Turkey).
- ▶ During the battles, the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham took over the town of Darat Izza northwest of Aleppo and additional areas. The Syrian regime reported that the Nur al-Din Zenki Movement had announced that it disbanded following its defeat by the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham (Syria TV, January 2, 2019; Russia Today, January 4, 2019). A media outlet affiliated with the Syrian regime reported that Syrian planes had carried out several airstrikes in areas taken over by the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham (Butulat Al-Jaysh Al-Suri, January 5, 2019).

² The site which targeted by artillery fire was the Scientific Studies and Research Center, known by its French name **Centre d'Études et de Recherches Scientifiques (CERS)**. This center is engaged, among other things, in the research, development and manufacture of surface-to-surface missiles and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons (Wikipedia).



Forces of the “National Liberation Front” (affiliated with Turkey) on their way to halt an attack of the Headquarters for the Liberation of Al-Sham against positions of the Nur al-Din Zenki Movement (Syria TV, January 2, 2019)

Eastern Syria

The campaign to take over the ISIS enclave

Clashes in Al-Sha'fah

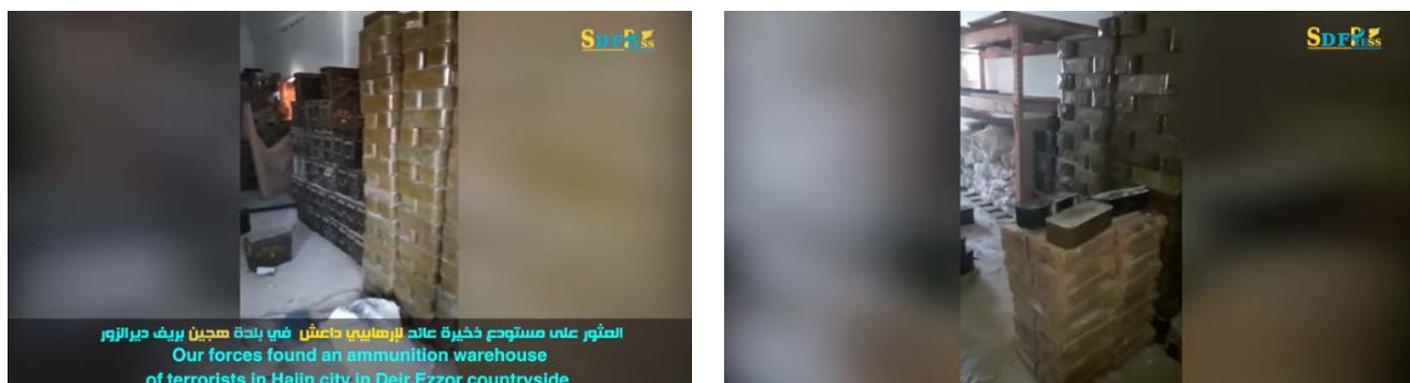
► On January 5 and 6, 2019, the SDF forces attacked ISIS operatives **in the village of Al-Sha'fah**, the largest village remaining in ISIS's control (about 11 km north of Albukamal). The SDF forces reportedly **took over about half of the village** (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, January 5, 2019; Al-Aan Channel, January 6, 2019; Deir ez-Zor 24 Twitter account, January 6, 2019). On the whole, ISIS maintains media silence in view of the disintegration of the enclave controlled by it, with the exception of a report on the killing of two SDF fighters by snipers (Amaq, January 6, 2019).



ISIS operative fires an anti-aircraft gun at SDF forces on the outskirts of Al-Sha'fah (Amaq, January 7, 2019)

Clashes continue in the city of Hajin and its environs

► **It seems that in spite of the SDF announcements on the takeover of the city of Hajin, the city has not been taken over yet.** The SDF forces announced that ISIS operatives had attacked their forces in Hajin after the latter had taken a tunnel and killed several ISIS operatives (SDF Press, January 5, 2019). The SDF forces announced that they had **located an ISIS weapons depot in Hajin**, where they found large quantities of weapons and ammunition (SDF Press, January 6, 2019). On January 7, 2019, the SDF forces announced that they had carried out a large-scale attack against ISIS positions in the city of Hajin and its environs. In addition, Coalition airplanes carried out airstrikes against ISIS positions and traffic routes (SDF Press, January 7, 2019).



An ISIS weapons depot located by the SDF forces in the city of Hajin (SDF Press, January 6, 2019)

Northern Syria

The departure of the Kurdish forces from Manbij

► The Syrian Ministry of Defense announced that on January 1, 2019, a convoy comprising over 30 vehicles of the “Kurdish combat units” **had left the city of Manbij**. The announcements stated that **over 400 Kurdish fighters had left Manbij, as part of the agreement reached with the Syrian regime to restore life to normal**. The vehicle convoy crossed towards the east bank of the Euphrates River, about 25 km northeast of Manbij (Facebook page of the Syrian Defense Ministry, January 2, 2019). At this stage, it is unclear who will replace the Kurdish control over Manbij. In the meantime, **a Russian Military Police force** began to carry out patrols on the road leading to Manbij and maybe also in the suburbs of the city (Rusiya Al-Youm, January 8, 2019).



Right: Convoy which has left Manbij, with vehicles carrying flags of the YPG Kurdish forces and the SDF. Left: Convoy of SDF vehicles crossing towards the east bank of the Euphrates River on the Kara Kozak bridge, northeast of Manbij (Facebook page of the Syrian Defense Ministry, January 2, 2019)



Turkish-affiliated forces on their way to the rural area of the city of Manbij (Syria TV, January 3, 2019)

► **At this stage, it seems that the evacuation hasn't ended yet and no other force has entered Manbij instead of the Kurdish forces.** The possible options are that when the evacuation is over, either **the Syrian army** will enter or **Turkish forces** and the Turkish-affiliated rebel organizations (the Syrian regime is against the latter option). According to **Ridor Khalil, a senior SDF official**, negotiations with the Syrian government still continue in order to agree on a modus operandi of [joint] administration of the city of Manbij. According to Khalil, such an arrangement can serve as a model for the other areas east of the Euphrates (Rudaw, January 5, 2019). On the other hand, Turkish sources claimed that they had received the green light from Syria for the advance of the Turkish army towards the city (Syria TV, January 3, 2019; Al-Hadath, January 6, 2019).



سوريا اليوم
ريف حلب - منبج
إعلام النظام يروج لانسحاب وحدات حماية الشعب من المدينة لصالح قواته



سوريا اليوم
ريف حلب - منبج
كاميرا تلفزيون سوريا ترمد الوضع في مدينة منبج بعد ترويج النظام لانسحاب "الوحدات" منها

Right: Checkpoint with an SDF soldier in central Manbij. Left: Kurdish police force in central Manbij (Syria TV, January 3, 2019)

- ▶ On January 8, 2019, the spokesman for the Russian Military Police in Syria, Yusup Mamatov, announced that **“the Russian Military Police units have started today to carry out patrols in the safe zones in the Manbij neighborhoods and its suburbs.”** A photo released shows a Russian Military Police vehicle carrying a Russian flag patrolling, apparently on the road leading to the entrance to the city (Butulat Al-Jaysh Al-Suri, January 8, 2019).



Vehicle of the Russian Military Police patrolling on the road apparently leading to the entrance to the city of Manbij (Butulat Al-Jaysh Al-Suri, January 8, 2019)

ISIS resumed its military activity in the pocket northeast of As-Suwayda

According to Syrian and Arab media outlets, **ISIS has recently resumed its activity in the southern part of the Safa pocket northeast of As-Suwayda**. This happens after the Syrian regime had announced, about two months ago, that the Safa enclave had been mopped up from ISIS operatives.³ The ISIS operatives take advantage of the rough terrain and hide in tunnels in the area (As-Suwayda 24, January 5, 2019).

► On January 1, 2019, battles reportedly took place in the Safa area between the Syrian army and ISIS squads. Three ISIS operatives and one Syrian army soldier were killed in those clashes. On January 7, 2019, the Syrian army located an armed ISIS operative and killed him. In addition, it uncovered an ISIS hideout where light weapons and ammunition were stored (As-Suwayda 24; Orient Channel, January 7, 2019).

Suicide bombing attack in Al-Raqqah, former ISIS capital

► ISIS announced that a terrorist codenamed Abu Abdallah al-Suri (i.e., the Syrian) wearing an explosive belt blew himself up among a concentration of SDF forces in central Al-Raqqah (ISIS's former capital). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that 17 SDF fighters were killed and wounded (Shabakat Shumukh, January 7, 2019). On the other hand, the SDF's version was different: according to them, their forces had thwarted an infiltration attempt of an ISIS squad into the city. The squad operatives used an old tunnel. There was an exchange of fire between the SDF fighters and the ISIS operatives, and one of them blew himself up. The suicide bomber was killed and two SDF fighters were wounded (SDF Press, January 7, 2019).

Main developments in Iraq

ISIS's terrorist and guerrilla activities

This week as well, ISIS continued **its intensive military activity against targets affiliated with the Iraqi regime**. Its activity focused on areas **populated by Sunni Muslims or those with a mixed population**. ISIS's activity focused this week on the Kirkuk Province. However, it also operated in other provinces (Nineveh, Diyala, Al-Anbar, and along the Tigris River).

³ On January 19, 2018, the Syrian General Staff announced that full control of the ISIS enclave in the Al-Safa area had been achieved, and thus, the Syrian army completed the mopping up of all of southern Syria from terrorism (SANA, November 20, 2018).

► Following are the main terrorist and guerrilla activities carried out by ISIS this past week (based on ISIS's claim of responsibility):

◆ **Kirkuk Province:**

- A hideout belonging to a Popular Mobilization operative west of Kirkuk was set on fire (Amaq, January 1, 2019).
- A vehicle of the Tribal Mobilization west of Kirkuk was blown up (Shabakat Shumukh, January 1, 2019).
- A policeman was shot dead southwest of Kirkuk (Shabakat Shumukh, January 3, 2019).
- An IED was activated against a Popular Mobilization vehicle (Amaq, January 6, 2019).
- The home of a Tribal Mobilization commander was blown up (Amaq, January 6, 2019).
- Wells and generators belonging to the Iraqi Police and the Tribal Mobilization were blown up (Amaq, January 6, 2019).
- Two policemen engaged in securing oil facilities were killed (Amaq, January 6, 2019).

◆ **Diyala Province:**

- A plant belonging to a Shiite resident in the Khanaqin area was destroyed (Shabakat Shumukh, January 1, 2019).
- An Iraqi army vehicle was blown up by an IED. Two Iraqi soldiers were killed and four others wounded (Shabakat Shumukh, January 1, 2019).

◆ **Dijla Province (the Tigris):**

- A Tribal Mobilization operative in the Shirqat area was killed and several others were wounded (Shabakat Shumukh, January 1, 2019).
- A Tribal Mobilization was killed and another one was wounded when an IED exploded southeast of Mosul (Shabakat Shumukh, January 1, 2019).

◆ **Al-Anbar Province:**

- Three Iraqi soldiers were killed when an IED was detonated against their vehicle in the Al-Rutba area (Shabakat Shumukh, January 1, 2019).
- Mortar shells were fired at an Iraqi army position in the Al-Qaim area (January 3, 2019).

◆ **Nineveh Province:**

- Three Iraqi intelligence operatives were killed northwest of Mosul (Shabakat Shumukh, January 3, 2019).



Photo documenting the killing of the three Iraqi intelligence operatives northwest of Mosul (Shabakat Shumukh, January 3, 2019)

◆ **Salah al-Din Province:**

- Three Tribal Mobilization operatives were executed (Iraqi – Salah al-Din Province, January 8, 2019).



The Tribal Mobilization operative before the ISIS operative slit his throat (Iraq – Salah al-Din Province, January 8, 2019)

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):

- ◆ Four tunnels, ten mortars and nine IEDs were destroyed in various sites **in the Nineveh Province** (Al-Sumaria, January 7, 2019).
- ◆ Three ISIS operatives were detained in the **city of Mosul** (Al-Sumaria, January 7, 2019).

◆ The Iraqi Air Force destroyed nine ISIS strongholds **in the Diyala Province**. The airstrikes destroyed tunnels, motorcycles, and other vehicles and equipment (Al-Sumaria, January 5, 2019).

Activity of the Guardians of Religion Organization in Iraq

► The Arab media reported that **the Guardians of Religion Organization** affiliated with Al-Qaeda (which is based in the Idlib area) **was trying to shift its activity also to Iraq**. Operatives of the organization are trying to establish a presence in the Muslim (and mixed) areas liberated from ISIS. During the past year, it tried to operate in the areas of Kirkuk, Al-Anbar, Mosul and Salah al-Din. The organization began to accept Iraqi commanders who left ISIS or armed operatives who left Al-Qaeda. In addition, there are reports that **the organization collaborates with the Naqshbandi Army operating in the northern Salah al-Din Province**⁴ (al-Arabiya; euroabia.com, January 2, 3, 2019).

► Recently, a “military source” in the Nineveh Province reported that a Military Intelligence force had detained senior commanders in the Guardians of Religion Organization who had planned to undermine security in the province. The source also reported that during a night operation within the province, **an Iraqi army force managed to kill and detain dozens of terrorists from the organization, who attempted to cross the border from Syria into Iraq** (Al-Ghad Press, December 31, 2019).

Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

ISIS’s activity in northern Sinai

► According to a report by “tribal sources,” at least two Egyptian soldiers were killed when an IED was detonated during a patrol in the southern part of Rafah. In addition, a military bulldozer was blown up in southern Sheikh Zuweid and its driver was wounded (Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, January 7, 2019).

President Al-Sisi confirmed in an interview with CBS that Egypt was cooperating with Israel in the fight against terrorism in Sinai

► In an interview with CBS TV, Egyptian President El-Sisi **revealed for the first time that the Egyptian army was cooperating with Israel in the fight against terrorist operatives in the**

⁴ The **Naqshbandi Army** is an organization comprising operatives of the Naqshabandiya Order, which is one of the largest in Islam. The organization was established in 2003 by Izzat al-Douri, Saddam Hussein’s deputy, to fight against the American forces and against the Iraqi government. It operates in northern Iraq and also has supporters in the Kurdish areas (Wikipedia).

northern Sinai region. When asked in an interview whether the cooperation between Egypt and Israel in Sinai is the deepest and closest cooperation (that Egypt has ever had), El-Sisi replied, **“That is correct. The Air Force sometimes needs to cross the Israeli side. And that’s why we have a wide range of coordination with the Israelis”** (CBS, January 5, 2019)⁵.

► The Egyptian media refrained from commenting on El-Sisi’s (unusual) statements. An exception was **a supportive article published in the Egyptian daily Al-Wafd by publicist Magdi Sirhan** (January 5, 2019). The article mentioned that there was coordination between Egypt and Israel in the war being waged by Egypt against the “terrorist gangs in Sinai.” According to the article, the military operations carried out by the Egyptian armed forces would not have been successful had there not been coordination based on the strategic and security agreements signed with Israel.

► The article further notes that the agreements with Israel and the coordination enabled the Egyptian forces to deploy in large areas in northern Sinai so that the Egyptian forces would be able to deal with the terrorist organizations with heavy weapons, armored forces, and airstrikes. This would not have been possible had it not been for the agreement with Israel. Otherwise it would have been a violation of the peace treaty and a declaration of war, which no one wants. The author of the article wondered: **how will the Egyptian leadership be harmed or humiliated if it speaks now about the existence of security or military coordination with the Israeli side in the context of the fight against terrorism in Sinai? This is a known and declared reality, and those who condemn the official announcement about this coordination are “trading” in the security of their homeland.**

ISIS supporters threaten the life of the Egyptian president

► On January 5, 2019, an ISIS-affiliated media foundation⁶ **published a poster threatening the life of the Egyptian president.** The poster states that El-Sisi is wanted by the Islamic State (ISIS). It calls El-Sisi “the infidel leader in Egypt – a fighter against the religion of Allah.” The poster calls for the killing of “those who deviate from Islam in Egypt,” and it includes a

⁵ El-Sisi was also asked why the terrorist operatives in Sinai have not yet been liquidated despite US military aid to Egypt in the sum of more than \$1 billion a year. El-Sisi responded by asking why the United States had not assassinated terrorist operatives in Afghanistan for a period of 17 years and spent \$1 trillion on it.

⁶ The poster was produced by an unknown media foundation, apparently operated by a supporter or supporters of an organization called the Constantinople Foundation (Constantinople was the name of Istanbul before the Muslim conquest).

verse from the Quran about punishments for those who deviate from the path of Allah (Telegram, January 5, 2019).



ISIS poster threatening Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
(Telegram, January 5, 2019)

ISIS reports its achievements in Sinai in December 2018

► ISIS's Mu'ta Agency published an infographic **detailing the achievements of the Sinai Province in December 2018**. According to the infographic, **Sinai Province operatives killed more than 40 people** among the organization's enemies, including two "spies" and six people who were hit by sniper fire. The most common modus operandi, according to the infographic, was **planting IEDs (18)**. ISIS's activity resulted in the destruction of 11 bulldozers, a tank, and vehicles belonging to the Egyptian security forces (Telegram, January 4, 2019).

Jihadi activity in other countries

Summary of ISIS attacks in the various provinces

► In its latest issue (January 3, 2019), ISIS's Al-Nabā' weekly published an infographic detailing the attacks that were carried out between December 27, 2018, and January 2, 2019. The organization's provinces carried out 72 attacks, **killing or wounding 302 people**. The greatest number of casualties was in **West Africa**, followed by **Syria and Iraq**. A small number of people were killed and wounded in **Sinai, Yemen, Khorasan (Afghanistan/Pakistan), and Somalia**. The infographic was entitled "The Harvest of the Fighters" and is based on the periodic videos of ISIS's Al-Hayat Media Foundation (Shabakat Shumukh, January 3, 2019).

Two terrorist operatives blew themselves up in an exchange of fire with a security force in Jilma, Tunisia

► The Tunisian Interior Ministry announced that a security force had broken into an apartment of terrorist operatives in the city of Jilma (approximately 180 km south of the capital Tunis). An exchange of fire ensued between the force and the terrorist operatives, during which the two operatives detonated their explosive belts. A Tunisian security officer was lightly wounded. **The Tunisian Interior Ministry claimed that ISIS was responsible** (Al-Jazeera, January 3, 2019). ISIS's claim of responsibility for the attack has not yet been found.



The scene of the event in Jilma (Mosaïque FM, a Tunisian radio station located in the capital Tunis, January 3, 2019)