



Senior ISIS Sinai Province Figure Surrenders

Event and Implications

September 20, 2021

- ▶ On the night of September 10, 2021, Muhammad Sa'ad Kamel al-Sa'idi, aka Abu Hamza al-Qadi ("the judge")¹ surrendered to a tribal militia cooperating with the Egyptian army after promises that he and his family would not be harmed.
- ▶ Information that reached the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center revealed details about al-Qadi and the conditions in the Sinai Province.
- ▶ Al-Qadi is considered the second or third most important in the Province after the Emir ("commander") and possibly one other person, making him the most senior figure in the Sinai Province to surrender to the Egyptian authorities so far. His surrender will have implications and consequences for the activities of the Sinai Province. It is currently in difficulty, suffering from a lack of funds and equipment, the result of the Egyptian army's operational successes and cooperation with the tribal militias.

¹ *Qadi* in Arabic means judge, especially Islamic judge, but in this context it refers to a person who has knowledge of Islamic law and is authorized to give judgments about important religious issues. Al-Qadi headed the Sharia (Islamic religious law) in the Sinai Province. The fact that he had studied at al-Azhar University apparently consolidated his status as an authority in Sharia issues.



Top row, left: al-Qadi's wife and children. Top row right and bottom row left: al-Qadi. Bottom row right: al-Qadi (encircled in red) and Sinai Province operatives (Twitter account of the Union of Sinai Peninsula Tribes, September 11, 2021).

Al-Qadi and the Possible Implications of His Surrender on the Sinai Province

- ▶ Abu Hamza al-Qadi was born in Egypt 1986 and arrived in the Sinai Peninsula in 2015, after having joined the ranks of ISIS in Syria. He was apparently in charge of enforcing the Sharia (Islamic religious law) in the Sinai Province, deciding important issues and promoting activity in the field. He authorized the attack on the al-Rauda mosque in the Bir al-Abd region at the end of 2017, in which 300 Sufi Muslims were killed, attacks on truck drivers from the al-Husna cement factory in the middle of the Sinai Peninsula and on other civilians.
- ▶ As head of the Sharia in the Sinai Province, he was known as a suspicious and cruel commander, who ordered the execution of operatives in the organization on suspicion of cooperation with the enemy, regularly abused his subordinates, and executed injured operatives to prevent their capture and interrogation by the Egyptian army.



- ▶ He apparently surrendered because of the ongoing hardships of ISIS's Sinai Province, as its operatives suffer from severe hunger and rarely receive decent food. They lack weapons and ammunition and therefore attack using simple weapons, especially IEDs, instead of wide scale attacks and raids. Their morale is low and there is no solution in sight, leading to tension among the operatives.
- ▶ The Egyptian army, on the other hand, maintains stability in the security in the northern Sinai Peninsula, invests both funds and efforts in developing the infrastructure; in addition, its counterterrorism activities against the Sinai Province have been successful. The army's success is evident: roadblocks have been removed from the main roads, ISIS operatives have been killed, and the civilians kidnapped from the village of Baluza were returned to their families during the past month. The Egyptian army recently announced it had killed more than a hundred ISIS Sinai Province operatives and confiscated large quantities of money and weapons, including dozens of machine guns, rifles, IEDs and vehicles. That led to the surrender of dozens of ISIS operatives to Egyptian army forces.
- ▶ In ITIC assessment, the surrender of al-Qadi, who was a central figure in ISIS's Sinai Province, will severely damage the organization, because he will give valuable information and intelligence to the Egyptian authorities and because his surrender will be a blow to the operatives' morale. Abu Hamza will probably be interrogated by the Egyptian army and then moved to an Egyptian jail. His successor is unknown so far, but regardless of who is chosen, the activities of ISIS's Sinai Province will be seriously affected.