



## Iraqi security forces arrest senior ISIS official who had been in charge of ISIS's finances

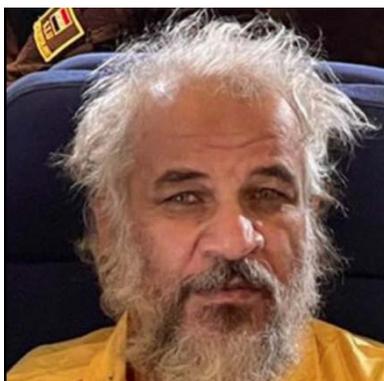
October 13, 2021

### Overview

- ▶ The Iraqi authorities announced that as part of a complex special operation carried out by the security forces, the Iraqi National Security Apparatus had arrested **Sami Jassem, a senior ISIS official who had been in charge of ISIS's finances**. He was one of the most prominent wanted operatives in the international arena, who had been part of ISIS's leadership and his name appeared at the top of the wanted list of the US Department of the Treasury. Jassem was **closely associated with ISIS leader Abdulla Qardash, AKA Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi**, and had been the **deputy of former ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**.
- ▶ **This is a major achievement of the Iraqi security forces**. His interrogation by the Iraqis will most probably yield important information on ISIS's activity in general and in Iraq in particular. It will most probably also yield information on Abdullah Qardash, the current leader of ISIS, with whom Jassem was closely associated. **For ISIS, this is a major blow in terms of morale**. The arrest may also have significant consequences on the continuation of ISIS's activity operatively and logistically, at least in Syria and Iraq.

### Senior ISIS operative arrested in Iraq

- ▶ On October 11, 2021, the day after the elections, **Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi** announced that the Iraqi security forces had arrested **Sami Jassem, ISIS's official in charge of finances**, and that he had been brought to Baghdad to stand trial. The Prime Minister noted that the operation was carried out "outside Iraqi borders" and involved the collection of intelligence in a foreign country. However, he has not disclosed any further details (Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's Twitter account, October 11, 2021).



**Jassem after his arrest (Khaliyat al-I'lam al-Amni Facebook page, October 11, 2021)**

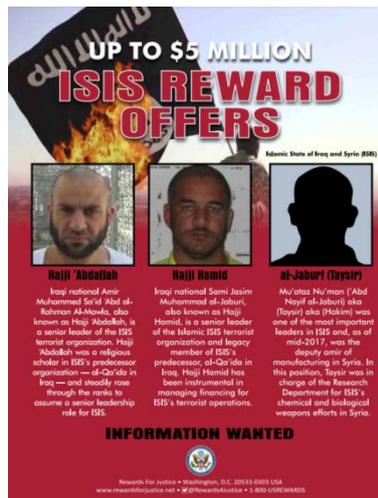
► At the same time, the Iraqi Defense Ministry released an official statement according to which the detainee **Sami Jassem Mohammad Ja'ata al-Ajouz al-Jabouri, AKA Abu Asia and Abu Abd al-Qader al-Zubaidi and Haji Hamed**, had been the “general overseer managing the organization’s [i.e., ISIS’s] portfolios of finance and economics,” i.e., the chief of finances. The arrest was carried out by the Iraqi National Security Apparatus as part of a “special operation across the border.” However, the name of the country in question has not been disclosed.<sup>1</sup> The statement further indicated that he was **one of the most senior wanted figures in the international arena**, who was closely associated with the Delegated Committee of ISIS’s leadership, the supreme body most closely related **to ISIS leader Abdullah Qardash, AKA Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi** (Khaliyat al-I'lam al-Amni Facebook page, October 11, 2021).

► “Security sources” inside Iraq and another regional “security source” outside Iraq reported that the Turkish intelligence had played a key role and helped the Iraqi security forces in the operation to apprehend Sami Jassem, who was hiding in northwestern Syria. Official sources in Turkey and Iraq refused to comment on the Turkish intelligence contribution to the operation. One of the two Iraqi security sources said that Iraqi intelligence agents had followed Sami Jassem in recent months, based on intelligence which they obtained from an ISIS detainee. The regional security source further added that the detainee had been transferred through the Turkish border and that he “had been caught with the assistance of local forces,” which may indicate assistance provided to the operation also by rebel forces in the area (Reuters, October 12, 2021). Fadel Abu Ragheef, an Iraqi security analyst, noted that Jassem had fallen into a trap after he was tricked into crossing the border into Turkey, where he had been arrested (www.al-monitor.com, October 12, 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> Apparently, in order not to disclose cooperation or coordination with intelligence officials in neighboring countries during the operation.

▶ Sami Jassem was **at the top of the US Department of the Treasury’s wanted list**, alongside ISIS leader Abdullah Qardash and Taysir al-Jabouri, who as of 2017 was ISIS’s deputy official in charge of manufacture in Syria; as part of his position, he was in charge of research and development of biological and chemical weapons for ISIS. The Americans promised the sum of up to \$5 million to anyone providing information about him (US Department of the Treasury website, October 10, 2021).



**Sami Jassem (center) as he appeared on the US Department of the Treasury’s wanted list (US Department of the Treasury website, October 10, 2021)**

▶ **US Pentagon’s Spokesperson Jessica McNulty** congratulated the Iraqi government on the arrest and added that she was unaware of any American involvement in the operation that led to the arrest. She noted that ISIS continues to constitute a significant threat to the residents of Iraq and that the US and the Global Coalition countries would continue to be present in Iraq, at the invitation of the Iraqi government, and continue to support the Iraqi efforts to prevent instability caused by “ISIS remnants” (Al-Arabiya, October 12, 2021).

## Appendix

### Details about Sami Jassem



**Jassem immediately after his arrest (Iraqi News Agency, October 11, 2021)**

► Not much is known about his childhood. According to Fadel Abu Ragheef, **Sami Jassem Mohammad Ja'ata al-Ajouz al-Jabouri** was born in 1973 in Shirqat, about 90 km south of Mosul. An Iraqi intelligence source noted that he was born in 1974, he is married and father of three. According to his name, he originates from Jabour tribe, one of the largest tribes in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> **His codename Abu Asia** could allude to his ties with ISIS's provinces in Asia, with East Asia, among other places. **His codename Abu Abd al-Qader al-Zubaidi** was probably intended to emphasize his origin from the Zubaid tribes, among the ancient tribes that arrived in Iraq from the Arabian Peninsula. The Jabour tribe is affiliated with the Zubaid tribes, which are actually a group of tribes.<sup>3</sup>

► Jassem operated from 2004 (or 2003, according to another version) as part of the Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, the organization of Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, ISIS's spiritual father. He was arrested by the American forces and in 2005-2010 held in the Bucca Prison detention facility in southern Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Upon his release, he resumed his jihadi activity as part of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which was later to become ISIS. In 2014, he was appointed ISIS's official in charge of security in Dijla (Tigris) Province and ISIS's deputy chief of Dijla Province. He then moved to Syria and served as the official in charge of ISIS's Nature Resources Bureau (*Amir Diwan al-Rikaz*), mainly overseeing ISIS's oil and gas resources. Subsequently, he was appointed as Al-

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the members of the Sunni Jabour tribe converted into Shia during the 19th century. Jassem, who remained Sunni, operated as part of ISIS, a clearly anti-Shiite organization, a fact that could indicate that his religious affiliation overpowered his tribal one, if such existed at all in his case.

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zubaid>

<sup>4</sup> Possibly, this is where he got acquainted with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was held at the same detention facility. Many of the ISIS operatives who were held there had subsequently formed ISIS. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news>

Baghdadi's deputy and chief of the Treasury Bureau (*Amir Diwan al-Ma*). Upon Al-Baghdadi's demise, in October 2019, Jassem became the official in charge of ISIS's finances and acted in close collaboration with the new leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi (Khaliyat al-I'lam al-Amni Facebook page, October 12, 2021; Russia Al-Youm, October 11, 2021). One of the sources noted that during ISIS's heyday (2014-2015), Jassem had three Yazidi handmaids (www.al-monitor.com, October 12, 2021).

► **Fadel Abu Ragheef** pointed out to CNBC correspondent that after “the lands had been liberated” (from ISIS, in March 2019), Jassem managed to escape to East Europe, but returned to Syria after being unable to bring his family as well (CNBC, October 11, 2021).