



Spotlight on Global Jihad

October 14-20, 2021



Main events of the past week

- **Afghanistan:** ISIS operatives once again carried out an attack on a Shiite mosque in the Kandahar Province during Friday prayers. More than 60 people were killed in the attack and a similar number were wounded. The attack was carried out at the Bibi Fatima Mosque, the largest Shiite mosque in the Kandahar Province. According to ISIS, the attack was carried out by two suicide bombers. At the same time, ISIS operatives continued to carry out attacks against Taliban military operatives.
- **In Syria, relatively low ISIS activity was recorded this week. In the desert region:** ISIS operatives carried out an extensive attack against Syrian army positions, inflicting many casualties. According to a military source, this was the deadliest attack carried out by ISIS operatives against the Syrian army in the region in a long time. **In the Al-Hasakah region:** Kurdish forces detained a source of funding for ISIS in the Al-Hawl camp. **In the Idlib region:** The Syrian army continued firing artillery at the rebel enclave in Idlib.
- **In Iraq as well, the number of attacks continued to drop.** Iraqi security forces detained **Ghazwan al-Zoba'i, codenamed Abu Obeida Baghdad, an ISIS operative** who was responsible for a car bomb blast in the Al-Karadah neighborhood of Baghdad at the end of Ramadan 2016. Around 300 people were killed in the attack, and 200 others were wounded.
- **Africa:** The Nigerian chief of staff reported the death of **Abu Mus'ab Al-Barnawi, commander of ISIS's West Africa Province.** ISIS did not confirm the report. At the same time, ISIS operatives continued to attack targets of the Nigerian army and the militias that support it in the northeast of the country.
- **Britain:** A British MP was stabbed to death during an election rally at a church. British security officials determined that this was a terrorist attack. The perpetrator of the attack is a British citizen from Somalia who underwent a process of Islamic radicalization.
- **The battle for hearts and minds:** This week's lead article in ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly was devoted to an argument with those who oppose the war against the Shiites (implicitly the

Taliban). The author emphasizes that the Shiites have severely harmed members of the Sunni community and pose a danger to Islam.

Afghanistan

Multi-casualty attack on a Shiite mosque in Kandahar

► On Friday, October 15, 2021, an attack was carried out on a Shiite mosque in the city of Kandahar, in southeastern Afghanistan. Over 60 people were killed and a similar number were wounded. The attack took place during Friday prayers at the Bibi Fatima Mosque, the largest Shiite mosque in the Kandahar Province. About 3,000 worshippers were at the mosque during that time. According to official Afghan sources, the attack was carried out by three suicide bombers who detonated their explosive vests. Another terrorist was shot and killed at the entrance to the mosque before he managed to detonate his vest (Al-Jazeera, October 15, 2021; Reuters, October 15, 2021; AP, October 16, 2021; TRT, October 16, 2021). According to **Sardar Mohammad Zaidi, imam of the mosque**, four people took part in the attack, two of them blew themselves up at the entrance, allowing the other two to enter the mosque and detonate their explosives (The Jerusalem Post, October 16, 2021). The attack took place one week after a similar attack in the Shiite mosque in Kunduz, in northern Afghanistan.



Right: The mosque where the attack took place. Left: The interior of the mosque after the attack. The damage is clearly evident (Al-Jazeera, October 15, 2021).

► ISIS's Khorasan Province claimed responsibility for carrying out the attack. The statement indicated that the attack was carried out by two ISIS operatives, **Anas al-Khorasani** (i.e., from Khorasan) and **Abu Ali al-Balushi** (i.e., of Baloch descent¹). First, one of them shot and killed the guards at the mosque entrance. Then, the two operatives detonated their vests, the one

¹ The Baloch people mainly live in southern Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and some of them live in India, Turkmenistan and the Arabian Peninsula.

at the front of the mosque and the other at the center. ISIS's statement noted that the attack was proof that jihad fighters keep their promises and adhere to their commanders' oath to strike the Shiites everywhere. Amaq News Agency, ISIS's propaganda arm, noted that the Taliban was trying to hide the real number of casualties from the media in order to cover up its failure (Telegram, October 16, 2021).

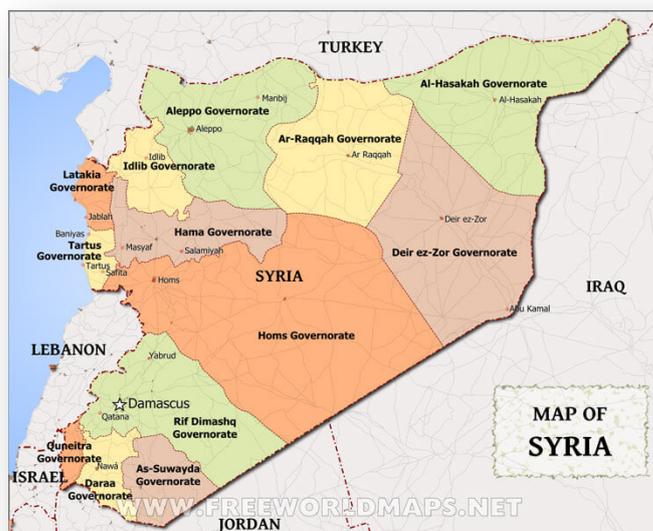


The two ISIS operatives who carried out the suicide bombing attack in Kandahar (Telegram, October 16, 2021)

► Following are other prominent attacks carried out by ISIS in Afghanistan (according to ISIS's claims of responsibility on Telegram):

- ◆ **On October 16, 2021**, a Taliban commander and a Pakistani intelligence operative in Jalalabad were targeted by gunfire. The intelligence operative was killed and the military commander was wounded.
- ◆ **On October 16, 2021**, a Taliban commander was targeted by gunfire in southern Waziristan, on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He was killed and his weapon was seized.
- ◆ **On October 14, 2021**, an IED was activated against the vehicle of a Taliban commander in Asadabad, in the Kunar Province, in eastern Afghanistan, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The commander was killed and six other people were wounded.

The Syrian arena



Syrian governorates (freeworldmaps.net)

- This week as well, the number of ISIS attacks in Syria continued to decrease.

The Idlib region

- Exchanges of artillery fire continued between the Syrian army and the forces supporting it, and the rebel forces in the rebel enclave in Idlib. **On October 16, 2021, the Syrian army fired artillery at Sarmada**, in the northern part of the rebel enclave, **killing over 20 people, many of them civilians** (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, October 16, 2021).

The desert region (Al-Badia)

- ISIS operatives carried out an attack against the Syrian army and the forces supporting it in the Al-Rasafah region, about 40 km southwest of Al-Raqqah. There were massive exchanges of fire for several hours. At least 8 Syrian soldiers and fighters of the forces supporting them were killed. According to a military source, this was ISIS's deadliest attack against the Syrian army in the area for a long time. After the attack, ISIS took control of some parts of the region. According to the source, the Syrian army and the forces supporting it had dozens of casualties and some of them were taken prisoner (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, October 15, 2021; Khotwa, October 15, 2021). During the exchange of fire, Russian fighter jets carried out several dozen airstrikes, killing 15 ISIS operatives (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, October 14-15, 19, 2021).

Al-Hasakah region

► As part of an anti-ISIS operation in the Al-Hawl camp by the SDF forces with the support of the Global Coalition, they arrested a source of funding for ISIS (www.kurdistan24.net, October 14, 2021).

The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

Attacks by province²

Kirkuk Province

► **On October 17, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi police vehicle in the Daquq region, in south Kirkuk. The passengers were killed or wounded.

Al-Anbar Province

► **On October 15, 2021**, IEDs were activated against Iraqi army vehicles in the desert adjacent to the city of Kabisa, about 60 km northwest of Ramadi. Two vehicles were damaged and the passengers on board were killed or wounded.

Diyala Province

► **On October 18, 2021**, an Iraqi police vehicle was targeted by gunfire in the Bahraz region, about 2 km southeast of Baqubah. Two policemen were wounded.

► **On October 17, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi army bulldozer in the western Azim region, about 60 km north of Baqubah. Several people were wounded.

² Mostly according to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

Salah al-Din Province

► On **October 17, 2021**, a joint post of the Iraqi police and the Tribal Mobilization was attacked on the Haditha-Baiji highway. Another force, arriving on the scene to provide help, was attacked by IEDs and gunfire. Two vehicles were damaged and passengers on board were killed or wounded.

► On **October 14, 2021**, ISIS set fire to the house of a “spy” of the Iraqi National Security Apparatus in the Tarmiyah region, about 30 km north of Baghdad.

Counterterrorism measures in Iraq

► **Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi** announced that the Iraqi security forces had arrested **Ghazwan al-Zoba’i, codenamed Abu Obeida Baghdad**, an ISIS operative. He was responsible for the detonation of a car bomb in the Karadah neighborhood in Baghdad, at the end of Ramadan 2016. About 300 people were killed in the attack and about 200 were wounded. The detainee confessed to the crime. After the attack, he fled Iraq and passed through several countries. Recently, he was tricked into entering Iraq, where he was arrested (Al-Sumaria, October 18, 2021).



The detainee during his interrogation (Al-Sumaria, October 18, 2021)

Summary of ISIS’s activity in the various provinces

Weekly summary of ISIS’s activity

► An infographic published by ISIS summing up its activity around the world in the period between October 7 and October 13, 2021, indicates that during that period, **ISIS carried out 38 attacks** in its various provinces in Asia and Africa, compared to 48 in the previous week. **The largest number of attacks was carried out by the Iraq Province (11)**. Attacks carried out in the other provinces: West Africa (10); Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan) (8); Central Africa (6); Syria (1); Sinai (1); East Asia (1). **A total of 377 people were killed and wounded in the**

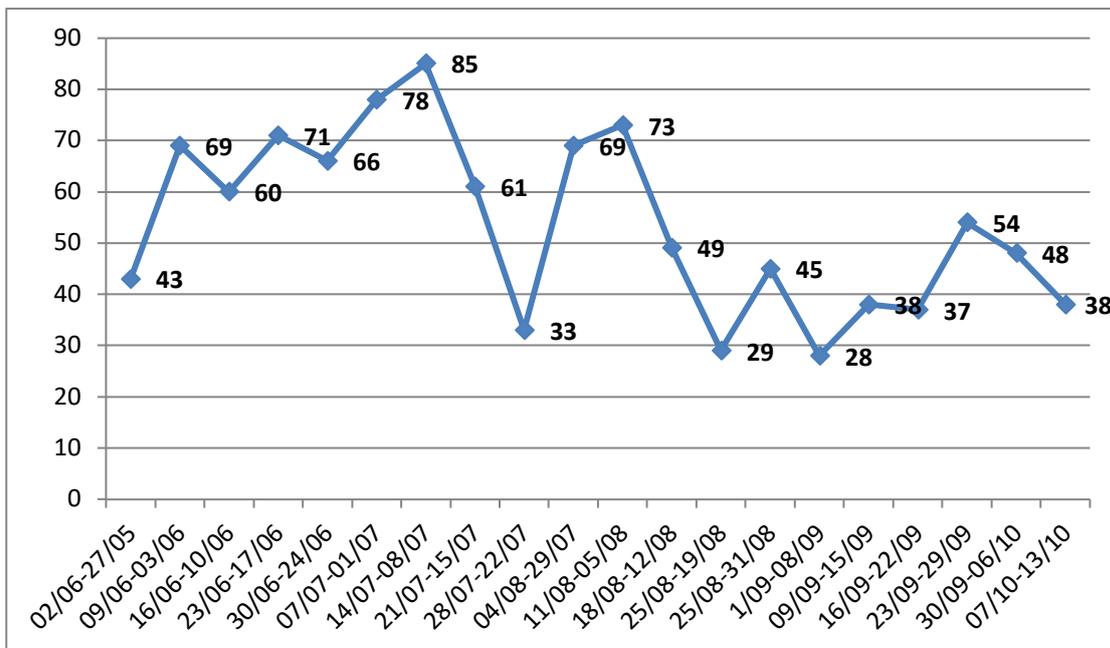
attacks, compared to 174 in the previous week. **The largest number of casualties was in the Khorasan Province**, i.e., Afghanistan (312). The other casualties were in the following provinces: West Africa (21); Iraq (20); Central Africa (17); Sinai (4); and Syria (3) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 14, 2021).

► The infographic indicates a continued decrease in the number of attacks carried out by ISIS in the various provinces, except for Khorasan where, since the Taliban takeover, there has been an increase in the number of attacks, especially multi-casualty attacks.



The infographic of ISIS’s attacks (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 14, 2021)

ISIS attacks in recent months (according to ISIS data)



Africa

Confirmation of the death of Abu al-Walid al-Sahrawi

► ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly confirmed the death of **Abu al-Walid al-Sahrawi, ISIS's leader in the Sahara region**. The confirmation came about a month after French President Emmanuel Macron announced that Al-Sahrawi had been killed by French forces in Mali. Al-Sahrawi's name was mentioned in an article in the weekly, which included an interview with him. In the interview, Al-Sahrawi notes that **the Sahara region is characterized by tribalism, sectarianism and ethnicity** and that local governments have discriminated against the region's residents and behaved like an arm of the West. According to him, the West set up regimes loyal to it in the Sahara region to act on its behalf, taking advantage of tribalism and ethnicity for its own needs. In the interview, Al-Sahrawi surveyed the situation in several countries (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 14, 2021):

- ◆ **Burkina Faso:** Christian missionary activity was carried out in the country, distancing the inhabitants from Islam. Jihad fighters are working in the region to protect Islam from the infidels. As early as the first decade of the 21st century, Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (the Salafist-jihadi organization in the Sahara from which ISIS evolved) began to establish itself in the region.
- ◆ **Niger:** There is a struggle between ISIS and Al-Qaeda over dominance in the country, which is reflected, inter alia, in the fact that Al-Qaeda is clashing with ISIS on the grounds that it is composed of foreign operatives. According to Al-Sahrawi, these are local operatives, from the Flan tribes, which also include immigrants (*muhajireen*) who have settled in the region.
- ◆ **Mali: The Ansar al-Din movement, Al-Qaeda's branch in Mali,** is negotiating with local regimes against ISIS.



ISIS admits that Al-Sahrawi was killed (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 14, 2021)

Nigeria

Rumors of the death of ISIS's Africa Province commander

► Nigerian Chief of Staff Lucky Irabor announced that **Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi, commander of ISIS's West Africa Province**, had been killed. ISIS did not confirm the report.

It should be noted that in the past, the Nigerian authorities issued notices of the deaths of senior ISIS figures in the province which were later found to be incorrect, so the information at this time is uncertain. Al-Barnawi is the son of **Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram**. Following disputes with **Abubakar Shekau, who succeeded his father as the leader of Boko Haram**, he and several of his supporters left the organization and joined ISIS (Reuters, October 14, 2021; Al-Jazeera, October 14, 2021).



Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi (www.thenigerianvoice.com, July 5, 2021)

Counterterrorism

► According to a report by a senior Nigerian security source, Nigeria's security forces killed 16 Boko Haram operatives near Maiduguri (Reuters, October 19, 2021). It should be noted that

the Nigerian government sometimes uses the name Boko Haram in reference to operatives of ISIS's West Africa Province.

ISIS activity

► The following are attacks carried out by ISIS operatives according to claims of responsibility published on Telegram:

- ◆ **On October 17, 2021**, an attack was carried out on a joint base of the Congolese and Cameroonian armies in Wulgo, on the Nigeria-Cameroon border. Ten soldiers were killed in the exchange of fire and eight others were wounded.
- ◆ **On October 17, 2021**, a Nigerian army position was targeted by gunfire in a village in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were wounded.
- ◆ **On October 15, 2021**, a Nigerian army position was targeted by gunfire in a village in Borno State. Four soldiers were killed and several others were wounded.
- ◆ **On October 14, 2021**, mortar shells were fired at a Nigerian army base in Goniri, in northeastern Nigeria. According to ISIS, definite hits were identified.
- ◆ **On October 14, 2021**, a Nigerian army convoy was ambushed and an IED was activated against it on the road between Monguno and Gajiram, in northeastern Borno State. At least 10 soldiers were killed and several others were wounded.
- ◆ **On October 14, 2021**, mortar shells were fired at Nigerian army forces at a base in Malam Fatori, in the Nigeria-Niger border area. Several soldiers were wounded. Two days earlier, mortar shells were fired at a Nigerian army base. Several soldiers were killed or wounded and the base sustained material damage.
- ◆ **On October 12, 2021**, a Nigerian army checkpoint was targeted by gunfire in a village about 90 km west of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Five soldiers were killed and several others were wounded.
- ◆ **On October 12, 2021**, a Nigerian army base was targeted by gunfire in Ngamdu, about 100 km west of Maiduguri. An exchange of fire took place at the scene, during which an armored vehicle was destroyed and soldiers' quarters were set on fire.

Democratic Republic of the Congo³

► **On October 19, 2021**, a truck carrying Christian residents was attacked on the Kasundi-Beni road on the Congo-Uganda border. The truck went up in flames. A Congolese army patrol that

³Mainly according to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

arrived on the scene exchanged fire with ISIS and the Congolese soldiers' vehicle was put out of commission.

► **On October 14, 2021**, a Congolese army patrol was targeted by gunfire in the Basho region, near Beni, about 50 km west of the Congo-Uganda border. One soldier was killed.

► **On October 13, 2021**, an attack was carried out against a Congolese army post in the Rwenzori region, about 50 km east of Beni. Two soldiers were killed and several others were wounded in the exchange of fire.

Somalia

► **On October 14, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle carrying Somali policemen in Mogadishu. Five policemen in the vehicle were killed or wounded (Telegram, October 14, 2021).

Libya

► ISIS's Libya Province released photos documenting some of its operatives who had completed a military training course in Libya. The photos were taken in what appears to be an improvised training camp in one of Libya's desert regions (Telegram, October 18, 2021).



Course participants during training (Telegram, October 18, 2021)



ISIS operatives who completed a military training course (Telegram, October 18, 2021)

Asia

Pakistan

► **On October 13, 2021**, a Pakistani policeman was shot dead in the Peshawar region, near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border (Telegram, October 13, 2021).

India

► **On October 16, 2021**, a Hindu citizen was targeted by gunfire in the city of Srinagar in Kashmir (Telegram, October 16, 2021).

Europe

Britain

► **British Conservative MP David Amess** was stabbed to death at an election rally in a church in Leigh-on-Sea, Sussex, east of London. The suspected stabber, **Ali Harbi Ali, 25, a British citizen from Somalia**, was arrested near the scene of the stabbing. British police called it a terrorist incident and estimated that the suspect had undergone a process of Islamic radicalization (BBC, October 15-17, 2021; Reuters, October 16, 2021).



David Amess (Boris Johnson's Twitter account, October 15, 2021)

Germany

► Following the arrest of a 16-year-old Syrian boy involved in planning an attack on a synagogue in the city of Hagen last Yom Kippur (September 16, 2021), the investigation in Germany revealed that **an ISIS operative codenamed Abu Harb** used WhatsApp to teach at least two Syrian boys in Germany how to make IEDs. Although no explosives were found, correspondence indicating that this was the intention was found. The boy was exposed to a large quantity of ISIS propaganda material and received instructions on how to make IEDs from Abu Harb. The boy's father has connections in the Salafi world. In August 2021, German authorities in the Berlin area arrested another 16-year-old Syrian boy handled by a man

codenamed Abu Harb, apparently the same ISIS operative (www.tagesschau.de, October 14, 2021).

The battle for hearts and minds

► This week's main article in ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly was entitled: "The Loyalists of the Objectors [i.e., the Shiites] are crying." The author argues with those who have expressed opposition to the war against the Shiites, alluding to the Taliban (the article includes a picture of Taliban Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid). According to the author, since the beginning of Islam, when the war of the Muslims (members of the Sunni community) with the Shiites took place, there were groups and organizations among the members of the Sunni community who expressed opposition to harming them. On the other hand, when members of the Shiite community established state frameworks throughout history, they severely harmed the members of the Sunni community, killing, imprisoning and deporting them and violating their rights. According to the author, this is because the Shiites have strayed from the faith, along with disregard for the fact that Shiites' hostility towards the Sunni community is increasing day by day, as is reflected, he claims, in their fight against ISIS. **The author notes that Shiites pose a danger to Islam and should therefore be fought, as ISIS is doing. Therefore ISIS will continue the war to the death that it has declared against the Shiites** (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 14, 2021).



Article in Al-Naba' weekly: The top picture shows Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid (Al-Naba', Telegram, October 14, 2021)