



# Spotlight on Global Jihad

## October 28 – November 3, 2021



### Main events of the past week

- ▶ **Afghanistan: The most prominent incident of the week was a combined attack carried out by ISIS operatives at the Taliban-run military hospital in the capital Kabul.** Several dozen people were killed or wounded. This is the fourth mass-casualty attack carried out by ISIS operatives in Afghanistan since the US forces left the country (August 2021). During the week, it was reported that dozens of ISIS operatives had surrendered to Taliban forces in Nangarhar Province. On the other hand, **it was reported that a number of intelligence personnel and members of special units trained by the United States in Afghanistan had joined ISIS's Khorasan Province.**
- ▶ **Syria: The downtrend in ISIS's activity in the various provinces continues. In the Idlib region this week,** there was a minor uptrend in the scope of the Syrian army's artillery fire at the rebel enclave. At the same time, clashes continued in the enclave between several jihadi organizations and the Al-Qaeda-affiliated HTS. Many fatalities were reported.
- ▶ **Iraq: In general, the number of attacks carried out by ISIS operatives has continued to drop. The most prominent incident of the week was the abduction and execution of six Shiites** affiliated with the Iraqi security forces in the region northeast of Baghdad. Rescue forces arriving on the scene were also attacked. According to ISIS, at least 15 Shiite militia fighters were killed and about 20 others were wounded in the attack.
- ▶ **Africa: In general, the downtrend in ISIS's activity in the various provinces in Africa continues. A video released by ISIS's West Africa Province calls for attacks on Jews, Christians and "those who desert Islam."**
- ▶ **The battle for hearts and minds:** The lead article in this week's issue of ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly calls on the foreign fighters ("the immigrants") in Syria to join the ranks of ISIS. The call appears to have been made in view of the prevailing tension between several jihadi organizations in the rebel enclave in Idlib, many of whose fighters are foreign immigrants, and also in view of ISIS's current manpower shortage.

## Afghanistan

### ISIS operatives surrendered to the Taliban forces

► According to an "intelligence source" in the Taliban administration, **35 ISIS operatives in Nangarhar Province surrendered to the Taliban authorities** (ANI, October 31, 2021). A few days earlier, the Afghan TOLO channel, citing an intelligence source in the Taliban administration, reported that 50 ISIS operatives had surrendered in the province and were granted pardons (Al-Arabiya, October 26, 2021). The intelligence source in the Taliban administration noted that since the Taliban takeover of the country, **nearly 200 ISIS operatives in Nangarhar Province have surrendered to the Taliban authorities** (ANI, October 31, 2021).

### Several Afghans trained by the United States have joined ISIS

► On the other hand, according to a report in The Wall Street Journal, after the United States withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban took over the country, several Afghan intelligence personnel and members of special units trained by the United States joined ISIS's Khorasan Province (The Wall Street Journal, October 31, 2021).

### ISIS activity

► This week, ISIS continued its attacks against the Taliban forces and Taliban members. The most prominent incident of the week was a **combined attack against the Saradar Muhammad Daoud Khan military hospital, which is run by the Taliban, in the capital Kabul**. According to press reports, the attack was carried out by several terrorists, including at least one suicide bomber. According to **Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid**, the attack was carried out by several ISIS operatives, one of whom detonated his explosive belt at the hospital gate. A car bomb exploded outside the hospital, killing and wounding dozens of people, including Taliban members (Reuters, November 2, 2021; The New York Times, November 2, 2021).



**Photo of the hospital gate before the attack, as published by ISIS's Amaq News Agency (Telegram, November 2, 2021)**

► **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack.** According to ISIS's claim of responsibility, the attack was carried out by **five operatives** at the Taliban-run military hospital. The attack began when one of the operatives detonated his explosive belt among a group of Taliban members standing near the hospital gate. Another operative entered the inner gate of the hospital and fired at the guards. One of the guards was killed, and the operative took his rifle and opened fire while breaking into the hospital. The three remaining ISIS operatives opened fire on Taliban members inside the hospital building. The operatives barricaded themselves inside the hospital. When reinforcements arrived on the scene, the ISIS operatives detonated a car bomb that had been parked outside the hospital. Many of the Taliban reinforcements were wounded in the explosion. The exchange of fire continued until the Taliban forces managed to kill the ISIS operatives. According to ISIS, dozens of Taliban members were killed or wounded in the attack, including a senior commander in charge of the forces in Kabul (Telegram, November 2, 2021).

► It should be noted that the Taliban did not report the death of a senior Taliban commander. Opposition sources confirmed this, noting that the victim was **Hamdullah Mukhles** (Khaama Press, November 3, 2021).

► The following are other attacks carried out by ISIS operatives in Afghanistan (most of them according to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram):

- ◆ **On November 2, 2021**, there were several targeted killings of Taliban members in Jalalabad. One of the fatalities was a judge.
- ◆ **On November 1, 2021**, a Taliban vehicle was targeted by gunfire in Jalalabad. Both of those on board were killed.
- ◆ **On October 30, 2021**, a Taliban member was killed in Kabul.

- ◆ **On October 28, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle belonging to a senior Taliban administration official in the Narhanak region of Kunar. The official and his escorts were wounded and the vehicle was damaged.
- ▶ **On October 27, 2021**, in two separate incidents, Taliban intelligence personnel were targeted by gunfire in Jalalabad.

## The Syrian arena



Syrian governorates (freeworldmaps.net)

### 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. This week, there seems to have been an increase in the scope of Syrian artillery fire at the rebels in the enclave (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, October 29-31, 2021). Four civilians were reportedly wounded by Syrian army artillery, and four Syrian soldiers were killed by sniper fire (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, November 2, 2021).

### Clashes between jihadi organizations in the Idlib region

- ▶ Clashes continued between Al-Qaeda-affiliated HTS and jihadi organizations headed by Jund al-Sham and Jund Allah (organizations whose fighters mostly originate from Eastern Europe, mainly the Caucasus) in Jabal Turkman, in the southwestern rebel enclave in Idlib. There were reportedly dozens of casualties. As part of an agreement between the sides, HTS operatives reportedly had to withdraw from the Jabal Turkman region (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, October 25-29, 2021).

## The desert region (Al-Badia)

► During the week, Russian fighter jets continued to carry out airstrikes against ISIS targets in the desert region (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, October 28 – November 2, 2021).

## Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

► The house of a “spy” affiliated with the US-led Global Coalition against ISIS was targeted by gunfire in the Basira region, about 15 km north of Al-Mayadeen. He was killed (Telegram, October 27, 2021).

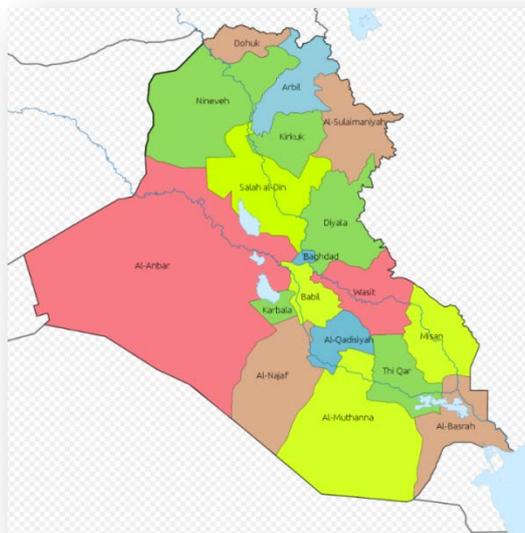
## Al-Hasakah region

### ISIS prisoners rioting in jail

► On October 27, 2021, ISIS prisoners began rioting in the Sina’ah Prison run by the Kurdish forces (SDF) in southern Al-Hasakah. This was in protest against the intention to transfer some of the prisoners to the Shadadi Prison. In response, Global Coalition forces sent reinforcements to the prison area and fired flares to thwart escape attempts by prisoners.

**About 5,000 ISIS operatives are incarcerated in the Sina’ah Prison, out of about 12,000 ISIS operatives held by the SDF forces in various prisons.** The prisoners include about 4,000 Syrians, 4,000 Iraqis, 1,200 Arabs from other countries, most of them from Tunisia and Morocco, 1,000 from Turkey, East Asia, Russia and Africa, and about 800 Western nationals from 54 countries (Asharq Al-Awsat, September 27, 2021; @HussamHamoud Twitter account, October 27, 2021).

## The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

## Attacks by province<sup>1</sup>

### Diyala Province

- **The most prominent incident was the abduction and execution of six Shiite residents** in Rashad, about 40 km northeast of Baqubah. The six men who, according to ISIS, “had been involved in activity against the Muslims,” were abducted, interrogated, and then executed.
- After executing them, ISIS operatives called their families telling them they could come to collect the bodies of their loved ones. The families, arriving with Popular Mobilization reinforcements, were ambushed and attacked by ISIS operatives. The reinforcement fighters were killed and two of their vehicles were put out of commission. Other reinforcements of individuals and groups of Shiites arriving at the area were also attacked by the operatives. According to ISIS, at least 15 of the Shiite militia fighters and those supporting them were killed and about 20 were wounded (Telegram, October 27, 2021). Local sources reported that eight people had been killed and 10 wounded. Later, a “source in the Iraqi health system” reported that 12 had been killed and 15 wounded (Al-Sumaria, October 26, 2021; Anatolia News Agency, October 26, 2021).
- According to an infographic on the attack published in ISIS’s Al-Naba' weekly, this was yet another serious blow to the Iraqi security forces, which proves the failure of their military activity against ISIS in recent years. It was further stated that ISIS would continue fighting against the Shiites on all fronts and in all arenas, in their places of worship and elsewhere, against their soldiers and commanders (ISIS’s Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 28, 2021).



The infographic on the attack (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, October 28, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> Mostly according to ISIS’s claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

► **On October 28, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi army vehicle in the Al-Azim region, about 60 km north of Baqubah. The vehicle was destroyed and all the passengers on board were killed or wounded.

### Salah al-Din Province

► **On October 30, 2021**, a group of residents was attacked in Jabal Makhoul, north of Baiji. Two residents were killed and two others were wounded (Khaliyat al-'lam al-Amni, October 30, 2021).

► **On October 29, 2021**, a rocket was fired at Tribal Mobilization forces in Al-Dara'at in the north of the Salah al-Din Province. A definite hit was identified.

► **On October 27, 2021**, an Iraqi police headquarters was attacked on the Haditha-Baiji highway. Three policemen were killed. ISIS operatives set fire to the headquarters and seized a machine gun and ammunition.

### Al-Anbar Province

► An Iraqi army vehicle was ambushed and attacked near the Iraqi-Saudi border. The passengers were killed or wounded. Another Iraqi army vehicle arriving on the scene was targeted by gunfire. One soldier was killed (Telegram, November 1, 2021).

### Kirkuk Province

► **On October 31, 2021**, ISIS fired at a Kurdish Peshmerga camp on the Kirkuk-Erbil highway, killing three fighters and wounding several others (Telegram, November 1, 2021). According to official Iraqi sources, two Peshmerga fighters were killed. **Iraqi Military Spokesman Yahya Rasool** noted that following the incident, six ISIS operatives involved had been arrested (Al-Monitor, November 1, 2021; Yahya Rasool's Twitter account, November 1, 2021). The day before, Peshmerga fighters had also been attacked northwest of Kirkuk. Two fighters were killed (Al-Hurra, October 30, 2021).

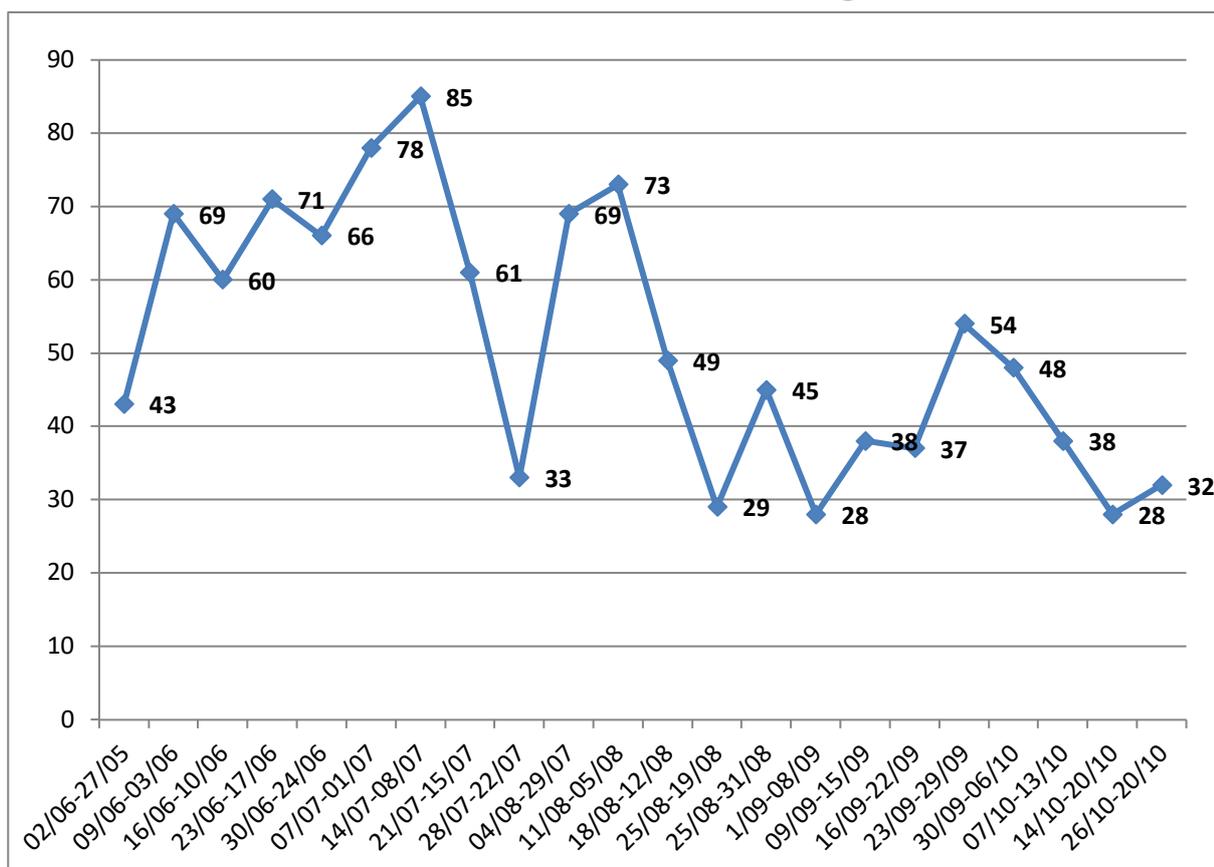
► **On October 30, 2021**, Tribal Mobilization fighters were ambushed and shot at in the Al-Abbasi region, about 70 km southwest of Kirkuk. Three fighters were killed and two others were wounded.

► **On October 29, 2021**, an Iraqi police post was attacked in Al-Qahara, south Kirkuk. One policeman was killed.

► **On October 27, 2021**, an Iraqi army post was attacked in the Daquq region, south Kirkuk. One soldier was killed.



## ISIS attacks in recent months (according to ISIS data)



## Africa

### Nigeria

#### ISIS activity<sup>2</sup>

- ▶ **On November 1, 2021**, a Nigerian army camp was targeted by gunfire near Bama, about 70 km southeast of Maiduguri, in northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were wounded.
- ▶ **On November 1, 2021**, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army vehicle on a highway in Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria. The vehicle was destroyed and the passengers were killed or wounded.
- ▶ **On October 29, 2021**, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army vehicle on a highway in northeastern Nigeria. The passengers on board were killed or wounded.
- ▶ **On October 28, 2021**, a Nigerian army position was targeted by gunfire in Rann, about 7 km from the Nigeria-Cameroon border. Several soldiers were wounded.
- ▶ **On October 28, 2021**, a Nigerian police compound and positions of militias loyal to the Nigerian army were targeted by gunfire in Damboa, about 80 km southwest of Maiduguri, in

<sup>2</sup>Mainly according to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

northeastern Nigeria. The policemen and militiamen fled the scene. ISIS operatives set fire to the compound, one of the positions, and five vehicles.

► **On October 27, 2021**, a Nigerian army position was attacked in Kawada, in northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were killed or wounded. ISIS operatives set fire to the position and a tank, and seized a vehicle equipped with a heavy machine gun, weapons and ammunition.

### Video released by ISIS's West Africa Province

► **ISIS's West Africa Province released a video calling for attacks against Jews, Christians and “deserters of Islam.”** The video also warns Nigerian soldiers, calling on them to cease their actions and join the ranks of ISIS. The 17-minute video includes documentation of attacks carried out by ISIS operatives against the Nigerian army. The video shows a masked man speaking a local language. He addresses ISIS's leader Abu Ibrahim Al-Qurashi, assuring him that ISIS's fighters in Africa will stand by him and that they are awaiting his instructions. As he speaks, two Nigerian soldiers sitting next to him can be seen. They are handcuffed in preparation for their execution (Telegram, October 30, 2021).



**Right: The speaker in the video (in the center, masked) calling on ISIS's supporters to take action against Jews, Christians and those who desert Islam. Left: ISIS operative calling on Nigerian soldiers to change their minds and join ISIS (Telegram, October 30, 2021)**

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

► **On October 30, 2021**, IEDs were activated against a Mozambican army patrol in the Beni region, about 50 km west of the Congo-Uganda border. Two soldiers and two Christian civilians were wounded.

► **On October 28, 2021**, in exchanges of fire with a Congolese army patrol force in Kokotama, in the Beni region, three soldiers were killed and several others were wounded.

► **On October 27, 2021**, a Christian resident's truck was targeted by gunfire in the Beni region. The truck went up in flames.

## Somalia

► On October 27, 2021, an IED was activated against a Somali army vehicle in northern Mogadishu. Two soldiers were killed and three others were wounded. The vehicle was put out of commission (Telegram, October 28, 2021).

## Tunisia

► Tunisian security forces arrested a squad comprising several ISIS operatives in the city of Tatawin, in southern Tunisia. They had planned to carry out attacks against the security forces. Weapons in the possession of the squad members were seized (Reuters, November 1, 2021).

## Asia

### The Philippines

► In an operation carried out by the Philippine security forces in the **Cotabato region in the southern Philippines, Salahuddin Hassan, the leader of the Dawlah Islamiya group**, one of the ISIS-affiliated groups in the Philippines, was killed in an exchange of gunfire. The leader and his wife, who was killed along with him, were involved in terrorist activity in the south of the country since 2007 (even before pledging allegiance to ISIS). At least 20 armed operatives who were with him fled. Documents and weapons of the organization were seized (AP, November 1, 2021).

### The United States

► A court in Ohio convicted **Naser Almadaoji** of supporting ISIS. He is a US citizen from Iraq who lives in Ohio. Almadaoji pledged allegiance to ISIS's leader, intending to travel to Afghanistan and join the ranks of ISIS. According to the indictment, in 2018 he arranged with an ISIS operative to travel to Afghanistan via Azerbaijan, where he intended to train at a training camp of ISIS's Khorasan Province and then join ISIS and fight in its ranks. Since the person he had made contact with was actually an FBI agent, he was arrested at Columbus Airport in Ohio before leaving the country. The indictment further states that Almadaoji had previously stated that he intended to park a car bomb near a federal building, but noted that he must first undergo training (AP, November 1, 2021).

## The battle for hearts and minds

► The lead article in this week's issue of ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly was devoted to ISIS's call on foreign fighters ("the immigrants") in Syria to join the ranks of ISIS. In the article, entitled

"Isn't there a new Umar among you?!"<sup>3</sup> The author notes that those foreign fighters who did not join the ranks of ISIS find themselves prisoners of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated HTS in the rebel enclave in Idlib, are executed on the streets of Idlib, or become targets of airstrikes by various elements. He emphasizes that their activity as “lone wolves” only weakens them, and calls on them to join the ranks of ISIS (Al-Naba’ weekly, Telegram, October 28, 2021). ISIS appears to be attempting to take advantage of tension between the jihadi groups in the rebel enclave in Idlib in Syria, many of whom are immigrants from Eastern Europe, and HTS. The article also reveals ISIS's weakness and its need to urgently recruit fighters, including foreigners.



**Umar the Chechen (left), in a video released by ISIS, announcing the establishment of the Caliphate (YouTube, June 29, 2014)**

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<sup>3</sup> This is a reference to Umar al-Shishani (i.e., the Chechen), a Chechen jihadi fighter who came from Georgia to Syria to fight against the Assad regime. Al-Shishani later joined the ranks of ISIS, becoming ISIS's commander in the Aleppo region and its war minister. He met his death in a US attack in Syria in March 2016. On July 13, 2016, ISIS's Amaq News Agency issued an official announcement of his death.