



Spotlight on Global Jihad

December 16-22, 2021



Main events of the past week

► **This week, there was a slight decrease in the scope of ISIS's activity compared to last week. Most of ISIS's activity this week focused on Iraq.**

► **Afghanistan:** ISIS continued its activity, targeting **mainly Taliban members and Shiite residents**. The presidential election campaign, which began on December 18, 2021, is a new target for ISIS. This week, at least two attacks were carried out against election-related targets.

► **Syria:** This week, there was a decrease in ISIS's activity. **In the desert region (Al-Badia)**, two Syrian soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in an attack carried out by ISIS operatives west of Al-Raqqah. **In the Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region**, ISIS operatives continued to attack the Kurdish forces.

► **Iraq:** **This week, the epicenter of activity was in the Diyala Province.** Most of the activity was concentrated in the region south of Al-Azim. **One noteworthy attack was carried out in the Qara Tapa region, north of Baqubah**, where ISIS operatives attacked Iraqi army forces, killing three soldiers and wounding four others.

► **The Sinai Peninsula:** Two ISIS commanders were killed in a joint operation by the Egyptian army and the Sinai Tribal Union in the Al-Ajraa region south of Rafah.

► **Africa:** This week, there was a decrease in ISIS's activity in the various countries. The Moroccan government announced that an ISIS operative had been apprehended near Rabat, thereby thwarting an attack. Summing up the fight against ISIS in 2021, the **President of Mozambique** noted that important achievements were made after **all of ISIS's bases in the country were put out of commission**, and there has been a significant decrease in the number of attacks.

► **The battle for hearts and minds:** The editorial in this week's issue of ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly was devoted to the survival of the Islamic State, four years after the member countries of the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS announced that it had been eliminated.

Afghanistan

Aid to Afghanistan

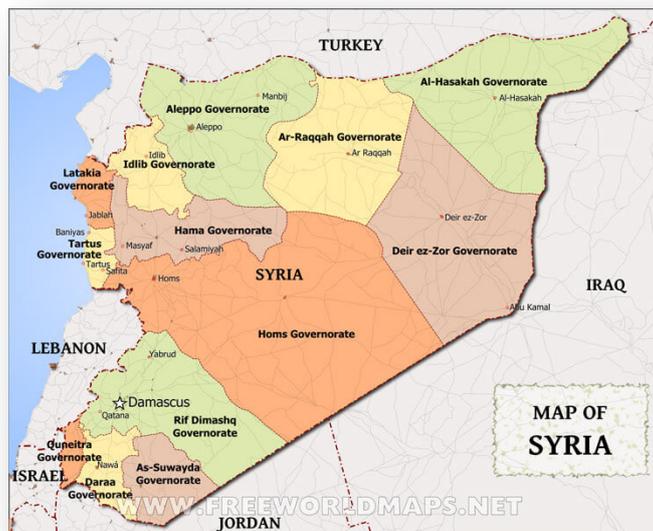
► The Organization for Islamic Cooperation held a meeting of foreign ministers in Pakistan, with the aim of finding ways to support Afghanistan in order to prevent its economic collapse. During the conference, **Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud** said that the organization must guarantee stability and security in Afghanistan and ensure that the country does not become a haven for terrorists and terrorist organizations. He condemned ISIS's attacks in Afghanistan and called on the Afghan nation to take action to prevent the humanitarian situation in the country from deteriorating (Al-Arabiya, December 19, 2021).

ISIS activity

► This week, ISIS continued its activity in Afghanistan, **targeting mainly Taliban members and Shiite residents**. The presidential election campaign, which began on December 18, 2021, is a new target for ISIS. The following are the main incidents (mostly according to ISIS's claims of responsibility on Telegram):

- ◆ **On December 19, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of a candidate in the Bajaur region. The passengers were killed or wounded (Telegram, December 20, 2021). In addition, a polling station in the region in the Karak region in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was targeted by gunfire. Two people were killed (Telegram, December 20, 2021).
- ◆ **On December 18, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of Shiite residents in Kabul. All five passengers were killed or wounded (Telegram, December 19, 2021).
- ◆ **On December 18, 2021**, the vehicle of a Taliban intelligence operative was targeted by gunfire in Kabul. He was killed (Telegram, December 19, 2021).
- ◆ **On December 17, 2021**, there was an attempt on the life of a "sorcerer" in Farah, western Afghanistan (Telegram, December 18, 2021).
- ◆ **On December 15, 2021**, a hand grenade was thrown at a group of Taliban members in the Ghani Khel region in Nangarhar. Four Taliban members were wounded (Telegram, December 16, 2021).

The Syrian arena



Syrian governorates (freeworldmaps.net)

The desert region (Al-Badia)

► **On December 18, 2021**, two Syrian soldiers were killed and three others were wounded in an ISIS attack while they were riding a car south of Maskana, about 85 km west of Al-Raqqah (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 18, 2021).

Deir ez-Zor and Al-Mayadeen

► **On December 17, 2021**, ISIS attacked an SDF roadblock between Al-Tiana and Diban, about 20 km southeast of Al-Mayadeen. One SDF fighter was killed and two others were wounded (Telegram, December 18, 2021).

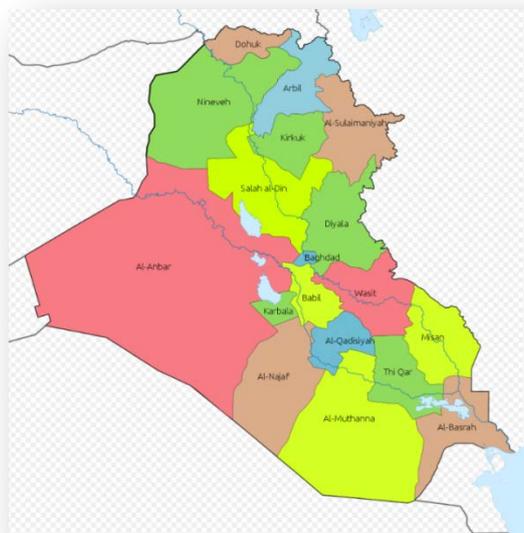
► **On December 17, 2021**, ISIS attacked an SDF roadblock in Al-Jaradi al-Sharqi, about 3 km east of Al-Mayadeen. Several SDF fighters were wounded (Telegram, December 18, 2021).

► **On December 17, 2021**, ISIS attacked positions of the National Security forces, which operate alongside the Assad regime forces, west of Al-Mayadeen. Four fighters were wounded (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 18, 2021).

Al-Raqqah region

► **On December 17, 2021**, ISIS operatives infiltrated a post of forces supporting the Assad regime and trained by Russia, east of Al-Raqqah, and abducted three fighters (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 18, 2021).

The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

Evacuation of Ayn al-Assad base

► **Major General Tahsin al-Khafaji, spokesman for the Iraqi Army Joint Operations Command**, announced that the American forces had completed the evacuation of Ayn al-Assad base in Iraq, leaving only advisers. According to Al-Khafaji, all combat forces will leave Iraq by December 31, 2021 (Sputnik, December 20, 2021).

Attacks by province¹

Diyala Province

► The epicenter of activity this week was in the southern Al-Azim region, about 60 km north of Baqubah. **On December 19, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi army foot patrol. Several soldiers were wounded. **On December 18, 2021**, an Iraqi army foot patrol was targeted by gunfire. A soldier was killed and two others were wounded in the exchange of fire. ISIS operatives seized the dead soldier's weapon. **In another incident, on December 17, 2021**, two Iraqi army posts were targeted by gunfire. One soldier was killed and another was wounded.

► **On December 18, 2021**, according to an Iraqi security source, ISIS operatives shot and killed a man in charge of a government medical center in the Diyala Province (no specific location was mentioned) (Anatolia News Agency, December 18, 2021).

¹ Mostly according to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

► **On December 16, 2021**, a joint post of the Iraqi army and the Popular Mobilization forces was targeted by gunfire. The post was in Albu Moussa, in the Miqdadiya region, about 40 km northwest of Baqubah. Two of the post fighters were wounded.

► **On December 16, 2021**, ISIS operatives fired at Iraqi army forces operating west of Qara Tapa, about 75 km north of Baqubah. Three soldiers were killed and four others were wounded. The operatives seized their weapons.



Soldiers' weapons seized by ISIS (Telegram, December 16, 2021)

Senior Iraqi officer abducted

► **Colonel Yasser Ali al-Jourani**, director of passports in the Adhamiya area in Baghdad, was abducted by ISIS in the northern Hamrin region, southwest of Kirkuk. He was executed several days later (Telegram, December 16, 2021). An Iraqi security source denied his death, but confirmed that he had been abducted in the region of Lake Hamrin while he was on a hunting trip (Baghdad al-Youm, December 17, 2021).

Kirkuk Province

► **On December 17, 2021**, an Iraqi police post was attacked in the Riyadh region, about 50 km southwest of Kirkuk. One policeman was killed and a vehicle was damaged.

► **On December 16, 2021**, an Iraqi army vehicle was targeted by gunfire near Al-Kawamat, in Kirkuk's rural area. One soldier was wounded.

Nineveh Province

► **On December 18, 2021**, an Iraqi army post was attacked in the Makhmur region, about 70 km southeast of Mosul. Several soldiers were killed or wounded (Telegram, December 19, 2021).

Counterterrorism measures

Diyala Province

► **On December 18, 2021**, a Peshmerga force located an ISIS weapons cache in the Qara Tapa region. The cache contained mines, IEDs and explosives (Kurdistan24, December 18, 2021).

Al-Anbar Province

► **On December 17, 2021**, Iraqi army forces combing the desert region destroyed several hiding places and tunnels used by ISIS (Khaliyat al-I'lam al-Amni, December 17, 2021).

Erbil Province

► **On December 16, 2021**, the Kurdistan government's counterterrorism unit arrested two weapons smugglers working in the service of ISIS (Rudaw, December 16, 2021).

Salah al-Din Province

► A Peshmerga force operating **in the Duraji region in northern Iraq** found a mass grave with at least 11 bodies of Iraqi policemen. They are believed to have been executed after having been abducted by ISIS, apparently in 2018. In the Duraji region, there are many caves previously used by ISIS as hiding places (Sky News, December 16, 2021).

Al-Anbar Province

► **Abd al-Ilah al-Naili, chairman of the Martyrs Foundation** which commemorates martyrs killed in acts of hostility in Iraq, said that an examination of the list of those receiving government pensions in the Al-Anbar Province reveals that 300 of them are ISIS operatives. Al-Naili demanded to stop paying pensions to ISIS operatives out of respect to the martyrs (Al-Jazeera, December 20, 2021). It is possible that former Iraqi army officers who were among the founders of ISIS are still listed among the pension recipients.

Sinai Peninsula

► **On December 18, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle carrying fighters of tribes supporting the Egyptian army south of Rafah. The vehicle was destroyed and the passengers on board were killed or wounded (Telegram, December 20, 2021).



The ATV on fire (Telegram, December 20, 2021)

► **On December 17, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Egyptian army vehicle in the Balaa region west of Rafah. The soldiers reportedly suffered casualties (Al-Jazeera, December 17, 2021; Shahed Sinaa al-Rasmia Facebook page, December 17, 2021).

Counterterrorism measures

► During operational activity in the Al-Ajraa region south of Rafah, forces of the Egyptian army and the Sinai Tribal Union killed two commanders of ISIS's Sinai Province (Al-Arabiya, December 18, 2021). The names and positions of those killed were not mentioned.

Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

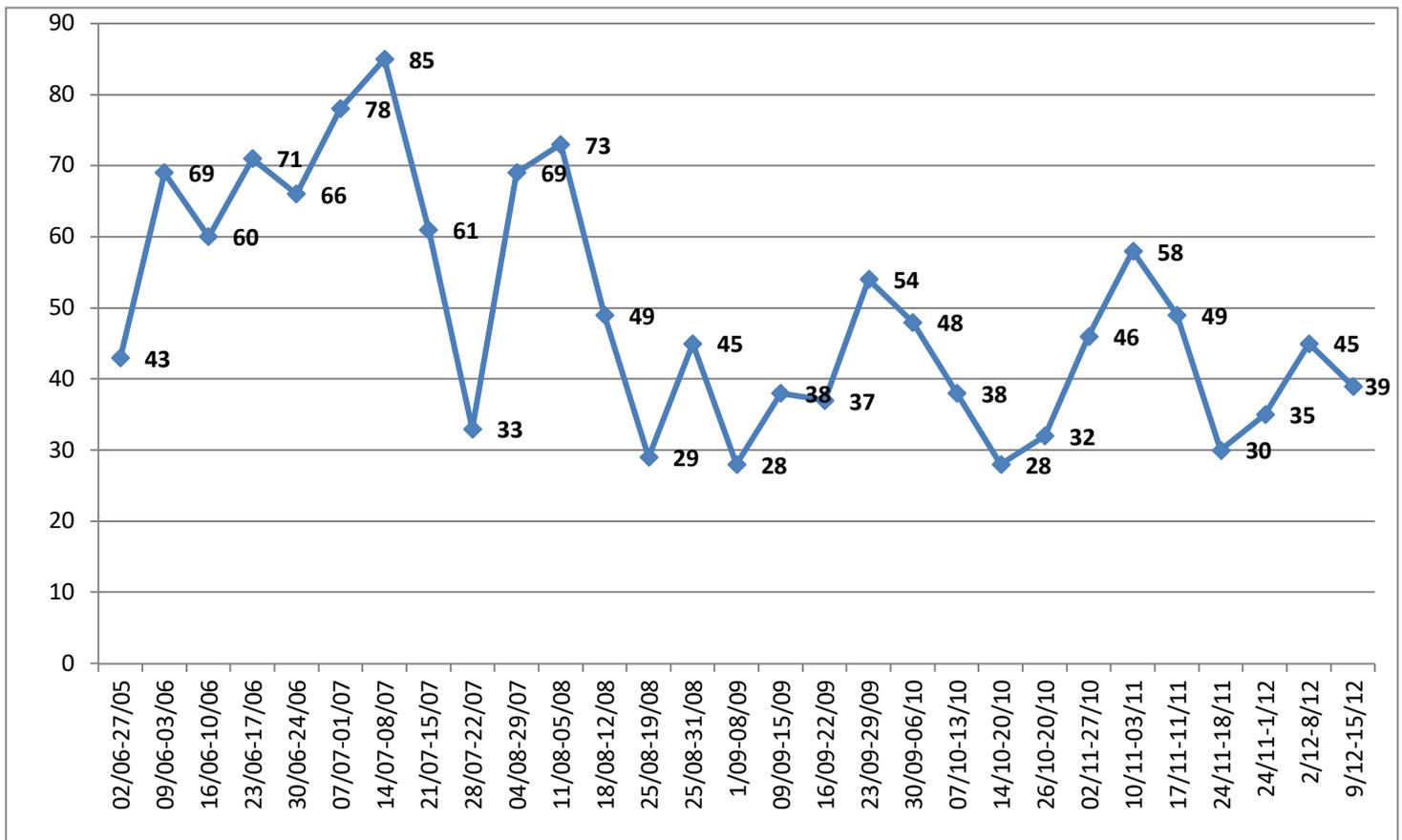
Weekly summary of ISIS's activity

► An infographic published by ISIS summing up its activity around the world in the **period** between December 9 and December 15, 2021, indicates that in this period, **ISIS carried out 39 attacks in its various provinces in Asia and Africa**, compared to 45 in the previous week. **The largest number of attacks was carried out the West Africa Province** (12). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan) (9); Iraq (9); Central Africa (4); Syria (3); Sinai (1); and Pakistan (1). **A total of 152 people were killed and wounded in the attacks**, compared to 110 in the previous week. **The largest number of casualties was in the Khorasan Province** (63). The other casualties were in the following provinces: West Africa (50); Iraq (25); Syria (8); Pakistan (3); and Central Africa (3) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, December 16, 2021).



The infographic summing up ISIS’s attacks around the globe (Telegram, December 16, 2021)

ISIS attacks in recent months (according to ISIS data)



Infographic summing up ISIS’s use of IEDs

► ISIS’s Al-Naba’ weekly published an infographic summing up ISIS’s’ use of IEDs in its provinces around the world over the past four months (August 9 – December 4, 2021). According to the infographic, **ISIS activated 224 IEDs during the period in question. The**

largest number of IEDs was in the Iraq Province (95), followed by: Khorasan (56); West Africa (38); Central Africa (9); Sinai (9); Syria (8); Somalia (7); Libya (1); and East Asia (1) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, December 16, 2021).

► **A total of 631 people were killed or wounded in these attacks, including 18 officers and commanders.** The casualties included **202 Taliban members** and former Afghan government officials, and 199 Iraqi soldiers and fighters of the militias supporting the Iraqi army; 79 Nigerian soldiers; 40 Shiites from Afghanistan; 32 Egyptian soldiers; 26 Somali policemen; 15 military personnel and Christian residents in Mozambique; 14 military personnel and Christian residents in the Congo; 10 government officials and residents in Uganda; 7 Syrian soldiers; 4 SDF fighters; and 3 members of the Pakistani government security force. In addition, ISIS **destroyed 149 vehicles**, 20 high-voltage lines, 5 oil and gas lines, and 3 communications pylons (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, December 16, 2021).



Data on the IEDs that were planted (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, December 16, 2021)

ISIS activity in Africa²

Nigeria

► **On December 19, 2021**, a Nigerian army position was attacked in a village in northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were killed.

► **On December 16, 2021**, an IED was activated against a patrol of militias loyal to the Nigerian army on the Komashi-Banki road in the northeast of the country. Seven militia fighters were killed.

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

Mozambique

The President of Mozambique presented the achievements of the Mozambican government against ISIS

► Summing up the fight against ISIS and operatives of other jihadist organizations in the country in 2021, **Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi** said that the Mozambican government had made important achievements in the war against ISIS. According to the President, **all of ISIS's bases in Mozambique have been put out of commission**, stability has been achieved in the country and residents have been able to return to their homes. According to him, **there was a decrease in the number of attacks carried out by jihadist elements in the Cabo Delgado Province** (ISIS's epicenter in Mozambique) in 2021, with about a third of the number of attacks carried out last year. He further noted that 245 fighters and commanders of jihadist elements had been apprehended by the security forces (Bloomberg, December 16, 2021). It should be noted that this year, Mozambique received aid from several countries in its war against jihadist elements, which probably helped it to make the aforementioned achievements.

ISIS activity

► **On December 17, 2021**, a priest was executed in a Christian village in the Cabo Delgado Province in northeastern Mozambique (The Daily Mail, December 17, 2021).

Niger

► **On December 15, 2021**, a joint patrol of the Nigerian and Nigerien armies was targeted by gunfire in the Diffa region, on the Niger-Nigeria border. Several soldiers were wounded.

The killing of a senior ISIS official

► According to an announcement by the French army, a French force, operating in cooperation with the Nigerien army, killed a senior official of ISIS's branch in the Sahara (The Islamic State in the Sahara) who was responsible for the murder of six French humanitarian aid workers in the Giraffe Park in Niger. His name was not disclosed, but it was noted that he was killed north of Tillabéri, in southwestern Niger, about 100 km from the Niger-Burkina Faso border (www.military.com, December 21, 2021). The six aid workers were murdered on August 9, 2020. Several terrorist operatives arrived at the reserve by motorcycle and killed the six aid workers and two local residents (Fox News, August 9, 2020; BBC, August 9, 2020).

Somalia

► **On December 18, 2021**, a hand grenade was thrown at a Somali police checkpoint in south Mogadishu. Two policemen were killed and another policeman was wounded (Telegram, December 19, 2021).

Morocco

► The Moroccan government announced the arrest of an ISIS operative in Salé, about 5 km northeast of Rabat. Equipment for making explosives was found in his possession. His arrest was reportedly carried out in cooperation with US intelligence. According to the government, his arrest prevented an attack planned by ISIS operatives in the country (Russia al-Youm, December 18, 2021).

Europe

Russia

► Russian security forces detained an ISIS operative from one of the Central Asian republics, a student at a Moscow university who had attempted to recruit students from the university he was attending into the ranks of ISIS. He also expressed support for ISIS on social media (Russia al-Youm, December 17, 2021).

The United States

► A US court is hearing the case of **Mirsad Hariz Adem Ramic**, a 31-year-old Kentucky resident who holds dual Bosnian and US citizenship, on suspicion of providing material assistance to ISIS. Ramic and his two comrades traveled from the United States to Syria via Turkey in June 2014, a year in which ISIS was at the height of its power. After joining ISIS, he spent time at an ISIS training camp where he learned to use various weapons, including anti-aircraft weapons. He was recently deported to the United States after being incarcerated in Turkey. Upon arrival in the United States he was arrested and brought to trial (US Department of Justice website, December 20, 2021).

► **Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi**, a Canadian citizen and former resident of San Diego, was convicted of helping ISIS operatives buy plane tickets. The defendant admitted that between 2013 and 2014, he transferred money to four of his cousins and two other Americans in order to help them travel to Syria and join the ranks of ISIS (CTV, December 18, 2021).

The battle for hearts and minds

► This week’s editorial in ISIS’s Al-Naba’ weekly was entitled “The world belongs to Allah” and was devoted to the statement made some four years ago by the Global Coalition to defeat ISIS, to the effect that ISIS had been eliminated. According to the author, the assertion that ISIS has been eliminated is unfounded. The author also raises the question of what was the benefit of the elimination of the Islamic State during the past four years. He answers that they did not gain anything. Moreover, they were even harmed because they lost their way and they are now ruled in Iraq by the Shiites controlled by Iran (the Zoroastrian), and in Syria they are ruled by the Alawites, who gave Russia the resources of the land in exchange for hope that it would rescue them from their plight. According to the author, after the elimination of the Islamic State, ISIS operatives, unlike others, continue to maintain their small communities under the same belief and adherence to Allah and His commandments, implementing Sharia and preparing for jihad (Al-Naba’ weekly, Telegram, December 16, 2021).



The article on the elimination of the Islamic State (Al-Naba’ weekly, Telegram, December 16, 2021)