



Spotlight on Global Jihad

February 17-23, 2022

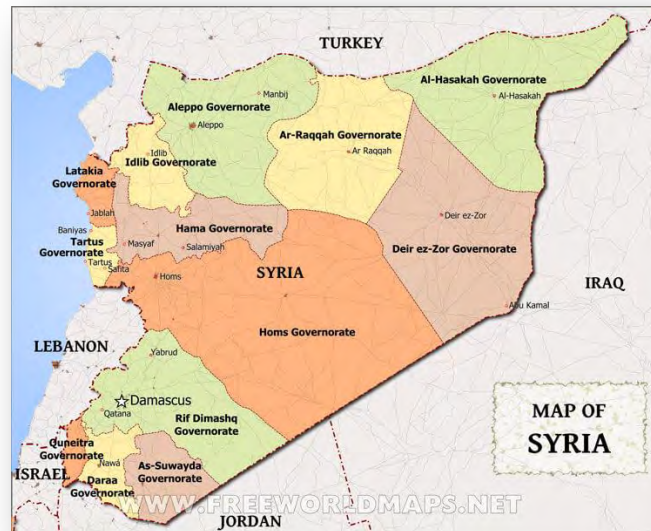


Main events of the past week

- **Syria:** ISIS continued to carry out relatively low-intensity activity. The focal points of the activity were the **desert region**, where ISIS operated mainly against the Syrian army, **and the Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region**, where the activity against the Kurdish SDF forces continued.
- **Iraq:** The decrease in the scope of ISIS's terrorist activity continued. An Iraqi Air Force aircraft targeted the commander of ISIS's Al-Anbar region, codenamed Abu Malouka. In Erbil, a counterterrorism force detained an ISIS operative who served as the general coordinator between ISIS's South Iraq Province and its Kurdistan Province.
- **The Sinai Peninsula:** Three residents were killed and two were wounded in two IED explosions in the Sheikh Zuweid region in northern Sinai.
- **Africa: There was an increase in ISIS activity this week, mainly against the Nigerian security forces in northeastern Nigeria.** One noteworthy attack was carried out on **February 21, 2022**, when a Nigerian army patrol force was ambushed and more than 30 soldiers were killed or wounded. **Somalia:** Operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab movement carried out several coordinated suicide bombing attacks against police stations and police checkpoints in the capital Mogadishu.
- **Mali:** French President Emmanuel Macron announced the pullout of French forces from Mali, after nearly a decade of activity in the region. Other members of the European Union and Canada also announced that they would withdraw their forces from Mali. A day after the French president's announcement, armed operatives killed eight Malian soldiers and wounded 14 others in an attack in the northeast of the country, not far from the border with Burkina Faso and Niger. In a retaliatory airstrike by the Mali Air Force, 57 terrorists were reportedly killed.
- **Afghanistan:** The decline in ISIS activity continued this week. The Al-Qaeda magazine published by its media arm was devoted mainly to articles supporting the Taliban and threatening the United States.

► **The battle for hearts and minds:** The lead article in this week's issue of Al-Naba' weekly was devoted to stressing the importance of the principle of sowing fear among the enemies of Islam.

The Syrian arena



Syrian provinces (freeworldmaps.net)

The Idlib region

► This week, exchanges of artillery fire continued between Syrian soldiers and forces supporting the Syrian army, and the rebel organizations in the Idlib enclave. On February 20, 2022, rebel forces in the enclave attacked Syrian army positions near Aleppo (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 20, 2022).

The desert region (Al-Badia)

► ISIS operatives continued to attack forces of the Syrian army and the militias supporting it. In response, Russian fighter jets attacked ISIS targets in the Al-Sukhnah Desert, about 120 southwest of Deir ez-Zor (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 21, 2022).

► Details follow:

- ◆ **On February 21, 2022**, ISIS operatives activated an IED against a bus carrying fighters of the Al-Baqer Brigade (a pro-Iranian militia supporting the Syrian regime) in the Ithriya Desert, about 100 km northeast of Hama. Five fighters were killed (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 21, 2022).

◆ **On February 20, 2022**, ISIS operatives attacked a Syrian army position in the desert region (the precise location was not mentioned). Two soldiers were killed (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 20, 2022).

◆ **On February 20, 2022**, ISIS operatives activated an IED against the vehicle of a Syrian officer in Jabal al-Omar, in the eastern Homs Province. The officer was wounded and his three escorts were killed (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 20, 2022).

Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

▶ **On February 20, 2022**, an armed man, apparently an ISIS operative, fired at an SDF roadblock in al-Harmoushiya, about 40 km north of Deir ez-Zor. There were no casualties (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 20, 2022).

▶ **On February 17, 2022**, ISIS operatives abducted a Deir ez-Zor resident. His body was later found in a deserted area on the outskirts of the city (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, February 18, 2022). He was probably identified by ISIS as an SDF fighter.

▶ **On February 17, 2022**, ISIS operatives fired at an SDF vehicle in Shahil, about 10 km north of Al-Mayadeen. Two SDF fighters were killed and an officer and a fighter were wounded (Telegram, February 17, 2022).

▶ **On February 17, 2022**, an SDF “spy” was targeted by gunfire in Dhiban, about 3 km east of Al-Mayadeen (Telegram, February 19, 2022).

The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

Attacks by province

Kirkuk Province

► On February 17, 2022, a joint patrol of the Iraqi army and police was ambushed and fired at in the Daquq region, in south Kirkuk. One of the patrol members was wounded. Forces arriving on the scene to provide assistance were targeted by gunfire. Six vehicles and an armored car were hit.

Counterterrorism measures

Al-Anbar Province

► An Iraqi Air Force aircraft attacked a car carrying ISIS's Al-Anbar commander, codenamed Abu Malouka. He and another operative on board the vehicle were killed (Twitter account of Iraqi Armed Forces Spokesman Yahya Rasoul, February 17, 2022).

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



**Documentation of the vehicle and the moment it was hit
(Iraqi Joint Forces Headquarters, February 18, 2022)**

Erbil Province

► **On February 19, 2022**, a force of the Iraqi government counterterrorism unit operating in Erbil detained **Mohammad Wahabi Fares al-Shujairi**, codenamed Abu Mohammad, who had served as the general coordinator between ISIS's South Iraq Province and Kurdistan Province (Twitter account of Iraqi Armed Forces Spokesman Yahya Rasoul, February 19, 2022).

Sinai Peninsula

ISIS's activity

► **On February 20, 2022**, one child was killed and two others were wounded in the explosion of an IED west of Sheikh Zuweid in the northern Sinai Peninsula (Akhbar Sinaa al-Aan Facebook page, February 20, 2022).

► **On February 19, 2022**, two members of the Sawarqa tribe were killed south of Sheikh Zuweid by the explosion of an IED probably planted by ISIS (Akhbar Sinaa al-Aan Facebook page, February 19, 2022; Sinai Tribal Union Facebook page, February 19, 2022).

► **On February 15, 2022**, a driver working for the Egyptian army was abducted by jihadi operatives (Akhbar Sinaa Al-Aan Facebook page, February 22, 2022).

► **On February 13, 2022**, a Sinai Tribal Union fighter was killed and another was wounded in an exchange of fire with armed men, apparently ISIS operatives, south of Rafah (Shahed Sinaa al-Rasmia Facebook page, February 14, 2022). ISIS claimed responsibility for firing at fighters of militias loyal to the Egyptian regime in the al-Ajraa region, south of Rafah, killing of one fighter and wounding several others (Telegram, February 16, 2022).

Counterterrorism measures

► On February 14, 2022, the Egyptian army and the tribal forces supporting it located a cache of IEDs, shells and RPG rockets (@AlsynawyMrad Twitter account, February 14, 2022).



The weapons found (@AlsynawyMrad Twitter account, February 14, 2022)

Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

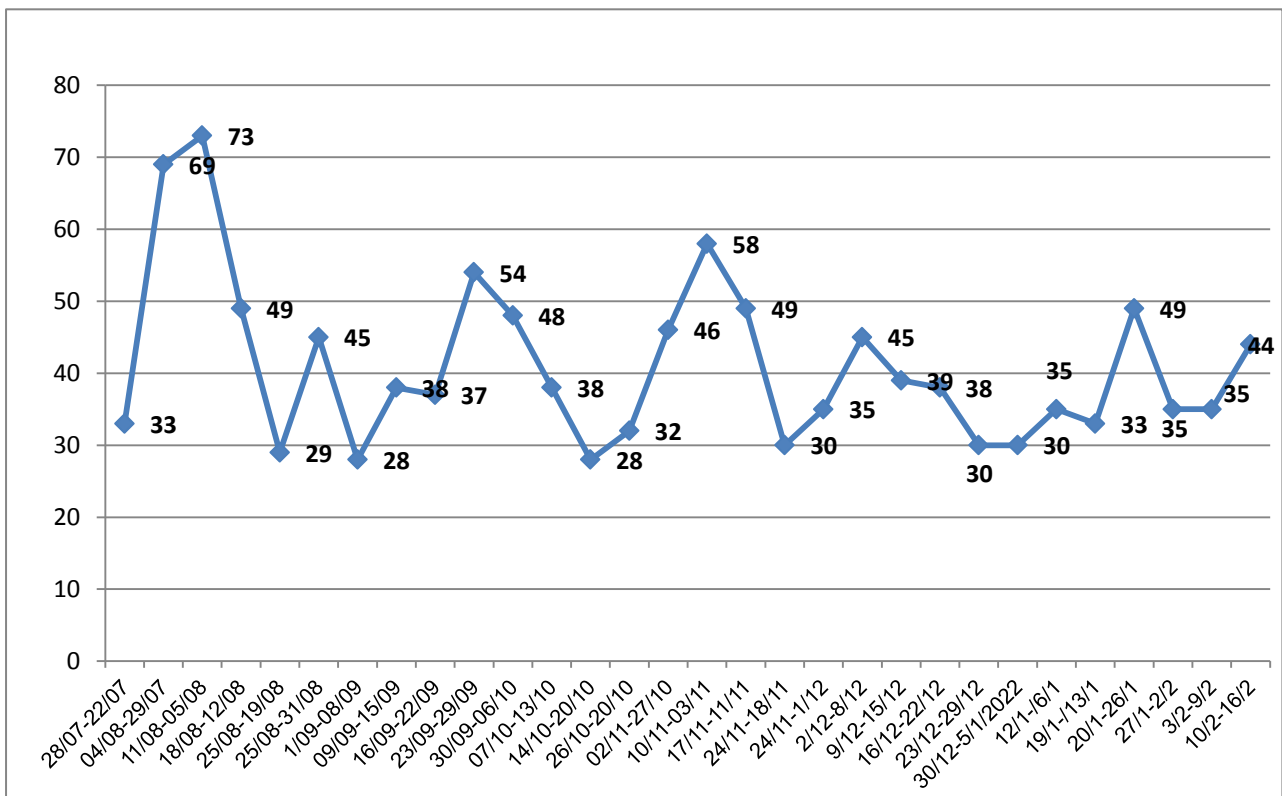
Weekly summary of ISIS's activity

► An infographic published by ISIS summing up its activity around the world in the period between February 10 and February 16, 2022, indicates that in this period, **ISIS carried out 44 attacks in its various provinces in Asia and Africa**, compared to 35 last week. **The largest number of attacks was carried out by ISIS's West Africa Province** (24). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Iraq (9); Syria (4); Central Africa (3); Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan) (2); Sinai Peninsula (1); East Asia (1). **A total of 105 people were killed or wounded in the attacks**, compared to 134 in the previous week. **The largest number of casualties was in the West Africa Province** (61). The other casualties were in the following provinces: Iraq (14); Central Africa (14); Syria (11); Sinai (3); and Khorasan (2) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022).



Summary of ISIS's attacks (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022)

ISIS attacks in recent months (according to ISIS data)



ISIS activity in Africa²

► ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly published an infographic summing up the activity of ISIS's West Africa Province between February 9 and February 15, 2022. According to the infographic, ISIS's West Africa Province **carried out 24 attacks** in the period in question, as follows: 12 IED attacks, 5 assaults and exchanges of fire, 2 ambushes, and 5 other attacks. In these attacks,

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

61 military personnel were killed and wounded, 56 Nigerian soldiers and 5 Cameroonian soldiers. Three people were abducted. Seven vehicles were destroyed or put out of commission and one vehicle was seized. ISIS also seized weapons and ammunition (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022).



Summary of attacks by ISIS's West Africa Province (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022)

Nigeria

- **On February 21, 2022**, a Nigerian army patrol was ambushed near its base in Malam Fatori, in northeastern Nigeria, on the border between Nigeria and Niger. Over 30 soldiers were killed or wounded. At the same time, mortar shells were fired at the base. Definite hits were identified. An IED was also activated on the same day, killing three soldiers.
- **On February 21, 2022**, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army convoy in Jiri, in northeastern Nigeria. One vehicle went up in flames and the passengers on board were killed or wounded.
- **On February 20, 2022**, a Nigerian army roadblock was targeted by gunfire in Gamboru, in northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were killed or wounded. The roadblock was set on fire. In addition, a mortar shell was fired at a Nigerian army camp in the town. One soldier was killed.
- **On February 19, 2022**, a Nigerian army patrol was targeted by gunfire in Malam Fatori. Five soldiers were killed and wounded.
- **On February 19, 2022**, Nigerian soldiers were targeted by gunfire near Ajigin, in northeastern Nigeria. Several soldiers were killed and wounded and a vehicle went up in flames.
- **On February 19, 2022**, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army patrol between Katafila and Mararaba, in the border area between Nigeria and Niger. One vehicle was

destroyed, and the soldiers on board were killed or wounded. The day before, there was an exchange of fire in Mararaba with a Nigerian army force. Several soldiers were wounded.

► **On February 18, 2022**, mortar shells were fired at a Nigerian army camp in Gamboru. Definite hits were identified.

► **On February 16, 2022**, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army armored vehicle on the Damboa-Wajiroko road, in northeastern Nigeria. The vehicle was destroyed and the passengers on board were killed or wounded.

► **On February 16, 2022**, mortar shells were fired at a Nigerian army base in Burati, in northeastern Nigeria. According to ISIS, definite hits were identified.

► **On February 16, 2022**, a Nigerian army convoy was targeted by gunfire on the Lomani-Gadan Bulu road, in northeastern Nigeria. One soldier was killed and another was wounded.

► **On February 15, 2022**, a Nigerian army patrol was targeted by gunfire in Baga, in northeastern Nigeria. The patrol soldiers fled the scene.

► **On February 15, 2022**, IEDs were activated against a Nigerian army patrol numbering over 100 soldiers near a base in Malam Fatori. In addition, the patrol soldiers were targeted by gunfire and rockets. According to ISIS, at least 30 soldiers were killed or wounded. Two vehicles were put out of commission and a third was damaged. The soldiers' barracks in the base were damaged. The day after, mortar shells and rockets were fired at the base. Definite hits were identified.

► **On February 15, 2022**, mortar shells were fired at a Nigerian army base in Wulgo, on the border between Nigeria and Cameroon, in northeastern Nigeria. According to ISIS, a definite hit was identified.



Right: The army base in Wulgo. Left: The mortar shells being fired (Telegram, February 17, 2022)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

► **On February 15, 2022**, a convoy of “Christian infidels” was ambushed and fired at on the Beni-Kasundi highway, near the Congo-Uganda border. Five people were killed, a truck was damaged and a motorcycle went up in flames.

► **On February 14, 2022**, Congolese and Ugandan army forces were targeted by gunfire in the Rwenzori region in eastern Congo, not far from the border with Uganda. Ten fighters were killed or wounded.

► **On February 14, 2022**, a Congolese army camp was targeted by gunfire in Makumo in eastern Congo, about 50 km from the Congo-Uganda border. The soldiers fled and ISIS operatives seized military equipment.

Somalia

► Operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab movement simultaneously attacked several police stations and police checkpoints in the capital Mogadishu. In one attack, operatives detonated a car bomb near a police checkpoint and fired at it. Two guards and three policemen were killed and 16 others were wounded. The Al-Shabaab movement claimed responsibility for the attacks. According to the claim of responsibility, they carried out three coordinated attacks against army bases in Mogadishu. Two of the attacks were carried out by suicide bombers. At the same time, the operatives attacked several other posts, camps and bases of the local security forces, which sustained many casualties (Reuters, February 16, 2022; Africa News, February 16, 2022; the Al-Shabaab Movement’s Al-Shahada Agency, February 16, 2022). It should be noted that the attacks were carried out during the parliamentary elections currently taking place in the country.

Mali

► On February 17, 2022, following a meeting of European and African leaders at the Élysée Palace, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that he would withdraw the French forces (about 5,000 troops) from Mali, after nearly a decade of operation in the region. According to President Macron, the withdrawal of the forces will take several months. He noted that France would remain committed to fighting the Islamist uprisings in the region and that Niger had agreed to host some of the forces. Other members of the European Union and Canada, whose contribution was more modest than that of the French army, also announced that they would withdraw their forces from Mali.

► In **light of the announcement, the violence is continuing and even increasing.** A day after the French President's announcement, armed operatives killed eight Malian soldiers in northeastern Mali, not far from the border with Burkina Faso and Niger. Fourteen other soldiers were wounded and an unknown number of soldiers are missing in action. A total of 57 terrorist operatives were killed in a retaliatory airstrike carried out by the Malian Air Force in the northeast of the country (France 24, February 19, 2022). The identity of the armed operatives is unknown, but they are probably elements affiliated with Al-Qaeda or ISIS operating in the region.

Libya

► Libyan security forces detained members of an ISIS squad operating in the Sabha region, in the south of the country. Squad members who fled the region due to activity by the security forces in the city were detained in Tripoli (Sky News, February 20, 2022).

Asia

Afghanistan

► On **February 20, 2022**, a Taliban member was targeted by gunfire in the Nad Ali region of the Helmand Province in central Afghanistan. The day before, a Shiite civilian was targeted by gunfire in the region (Telegram, February 21, 2022).

► On **February 15, 2022**, a Taliban commander's vehicle was ambushed and targeted by gunfire in Hazarnou, in the Nangarhar Province. Seven Taliban members were killed and two others were wounded. The casualties included the commander (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022).

Al-Qaeda expresses support for the Taliban and threatens the United States

► The latest edition of **Umma wahida**, published by the Al-Sahab Media Foundation, Al-Qaeda's propaganda arm, was devoted mainly to articles in support of the Taliban. For example, the cover photo was that of former Taliban leader Mula Muhammad Omar Mujahed, who sponsored Osama bin Laden, under the caption "Emir of the Believers," a title reserved for the Caliph. The issue included two articles in support of the Taliban. Inter alia, it states that Al-Qaeda is no longer active in Afghanistan but will continue to target the "Crusader-Zionist" United States elsewhere (Al-Shahab Media Foundation, February 20, 2022).



Picture of former Taliban leader Mula Muhammad Omar Mujahed on the cover of Al-Qaeda's Umma wahida magazine (Al-Shahab Media Foundation, February 20, 2022)

The Philippines

► ISIS operatives activated IEDs against a high-voltage pylon supplying electricity to the Lanao del Sur region in the southern Philippines. The destruction of the pylon caused a power outage in the region (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022).



Right: The IEDs attached to the electricity pylon. Left: The report published by ISIS about the destruction of the electricity pylon (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022).

Turkey

► On March 8, 2021, the Turkish government's Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK), which is part of the Turkish Ministry of Finance, published a document which was recently leaked to the media. The document reveals how ISIS used Turkey as a base for transferring funds and purchasing military equipment, including equipment and parts for assembling drones and making explosives. The activity in Turkey was carried out through companies that were set up there, through the use of currency exchange offices, jewelry stores, post offices and banks (www.al-monitor.com, February 15, 2022).

Europe

Sweden

► The Swedish telecommunications company Ericsson admitted to serious violations of the company's rules of compliance and code of business ethics during its activity in Iraq. An in-house investigation carried out by the company in 2019 found evidence of inappropriate and corrupt behavior. In order to gain access to transportation routes in Iraq, cash was apparently transferred from the company to ISIS, via a third party. According to **Company CEO Borje Ekholm**, the company identified irregular expenses starting in 2018, and transportation routes were purchased in regions controlled by terrorist organizations, including ISIS. According to Ekholm, the investigation is still underway and the precise recipient of the funds has not yet been determined (Technology News Live, February 16, 2022).

Germany

► Verena M., a German citizen, was convicted of membership in a foreign terrorist organization by a German court. According to the indictment, she traveled with her son to Turkey in 2015, from where they went to Mosul, Iraq, where she joined the ranks of ISIS. She later moved to Al-Raqqah, in Syria. She married an ISIS fighter there and raised her son according to ISIS's ideology. She was also charged with possession of two assault rifles. She was captured by Kurdish forces in 2019 and returned to Germany two years later (AP, February 18, 2022).

Serbia

► Igor Distotovich, a Serbian national, was arrested on February 18, 2022 on suspicion of setting up numerous social media accounts and using them to disseminate propaganda material praising ISIS and encouraging terrorist activity (BalkanInsight, February 21, 2022).

United States

► A video was recently circulated on a file-sharing website by someone identifying himself as an ISIS squad, calling on the public to join the ranks of an ISIS province in North America. The video, which is not an official ISIS video, includes a written message in English: "To my brothers following in the path of the Khilafa in America, I urge you to come join our group").

The message states that a new group, which will be called ISIS-NA (ISIS – North America), will begin operating in the United States³.

The battle for hearts and minds

► The lead article in this week's issue of Al-Naba' weekly was entitled "Weapons [sowing] Fear" and is devoted to stressing the importance of the principle of sowing fear among the enemies of Islam. The author also notes that the source of this principle is in the Quran and that according to Islamic tradition (*hadith*), this is also how the Prophet Muhammad treated his enemies. The author stresses that ISIS implements the concept of intimidating its enemies, as is reflected in the recent Ghwayran prison break-in, and in previous terrorist attacks in the West that intimidated and exhausted the enemies, while causing loss of life and economic damage. The author stresses that intimidation is a key weapon in modern warfare, that jihad fighters and media personnel must take care to develop and disseminate it (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022).



The article advocating the imposition of terror and sowing of fear (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, February 17, 2022)

³<https://www.hstoday.us/featured/isis-supporters-in-the-united-states-urged-to-join-isis-north-america/>