



Spotlight on Global Jihad

July 21-27, 2022



Main events of the past week

- ▶ **This week has witnessed an increase in ISIS's activity in Syria and Iraq and a decrease in its activity in West Africa and Afghanistan.**
- ▶ **A report published by the United Nations states that Al-Qaeda will position itself in the long term as the most prominent terrorist organization in the world and as the greatest threat to the West, thereby overshadowing ISIS.**
- ▶ **The Sinai Peninsula:** There has been an increase in ISIS's activity against the Egyptian security forces. This is apparently in light of the intensive counterterrorism activity carried out by the forces.
- ▶ **Syria:** ISIS operatives attacked checkpoints and positions of the Syrian army and the forces supporting it in the Palmyra desert region. The Syrian army and the forces supporting it sustained casualties. Concurrently, ISIS resumed its activity against the Kurdish SDF forces in the Al-Raqqah region. The Coalition forces operated in the Al-Hasakah region and captured a man suspected of carrying out activity for ISIS.
- ▶ **Iraq:** ISIS operated mainly in the Salah al-Din and Diyala provinces. One noteworthy attack was carried out against an Iraqi police compound northeast of Samarra. Six policemen were killed and seven others were wounded.
- ▶ **Africa:** 14 policemen and three civilians were killed in an attack carried out by the Al-Shabaab organization in southern Ethiopia. A total of 63 ISIS operatives were also killed. **This is unusual activity on the part of the Al-Shabaab organization, which generally operates in Somalia.** An Al-Qaeda-affiliated organization has claimed responsibility for an attack on a Malian army base near the capital Bamako. At least one soldier was killed and six people were wounded. Seven of the attackers were killed and eight were detained.

The UN report on the threats posed by Al-Qaeda and ISIS

► A UN team (The Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team) published a report on the latest developments in Al-Qaeda and ISIS¹. The findings of the report indicate that **Al-Qaeda is much stronger today than it was after the killing of Osama bin Laden on May 2, 2011, and that it is expected to position itself in the long term as the most prominent terrorist organization in the world and as the greatest threat to the West.**

► The report lists several reasons for this process: the stability of its leadership, which manages to communicate more easily with its operatives and supporters; the freedom of action that it enjoys under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan; and its media network, which has developed in a way that allows it to better compete with ISIS as the leading organization when it comes to inspiring and influencing jihadi perpetrators around the world. At the same time, the authors estimate that Al-Qaeda will probably refrain from carrying out attacks around the globe. This is in order not to embarrass the Taliban leaders and also because Al-Qaeda still lacks operational capability outside Afghanistan.

► As for ISIS, **it has an estimated 6,000-10,000 operatives in Syria and Iraq and remains a sustainable and ongoing threat due to its decentralized structure and ability to carry out complex attacks.** The report notes that despite the counterterrorism activity carried out by the US against its leadership, the intelligence agencies of the UN member states see an immediate threat posed by ISIS.

► ISIS has cross-border regional networks operated out of designated offices in Iraq and Syria, where its leadership is located (the office in Syria also manages ISIS's activity in Turkey). Regarding the other offices: the Afghanistan office manages ISIS's activity in South Asia and apparently in Central Asia as well. The Somalia office manages ISIS's activity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique; the Lake Chad office; the Libya office manages ISIS's activity in North Africa and the Sahel; the Yemen office manages ISIS's activity in Saudi Arabia; and the Sinai Peninsula office coordinates ISIS's activity in Sudan and Egypt². In this manner, ISIS attempts to preserve its capabilities at the international level.

► With regard to the identity of the new leader, the intelligence agencies of the member states estimate that **Abu al-Hassan al-Hashemi al-Qurashi** is one of the following three people:

¹United Nations website

²It is likely that in light of the intense activity of the Egyptian security forces in Sinai, ISIS's Sinai office is either inactive or is active at a lower level than previously.

Bashar Khattab Ghazal al-Sumaidai, an Iraqi national; Juma Awad Ibrahim al-Badri, the brother of former ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; and Abd al-Ra'uf al-Muhajir, who formerly managed various ISIS provinces.

► With regard to the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab organization in Somalia, it reportedly numbers an estimated 7,000-12,000 fighters. The organization has an annual income of USD 50-100 million, part of which is transferred to support Al-Qaeda's leadership, and the sum of USD 24 million, which is earmarked for financing Al-Shabaab.

The Sinai Peninsula

ISIS attacks

► In light of the intensive counterterrorism activity by the Egyptian army, ISIS stepped up its activity this week in the northern Sinai Peninsula. Following are highlights:

◆ On the night of July 22-23, 2022, ISIS attacked an Egyptian police ambush in the Al-Masa'id region, north of Al-Arish. Several policemen were wounded. During the attack, a suicide bomber activated his explosive belt, wounding several other policemen. Medical sources at Al-Arish Hospital reported that three wounded men and one body, apparently of the suicide bomber, had arrived at the hospital (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, July 23, 2022). It should be noted that for a long time, there have been no terrorist attacks in Al-Arish, probably due to Egyptian forces operating in the area.

◆ Around that time, an ISIS squad exchanged fire with a force of the Egyptian army and the Sinai Tribal Union south of Bir al-Abd. According to tribal sources, both sides sustained casualties. The Egyptian army imposed a media ban on the incident (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, July 23, 2022).

Counterterrorism activity

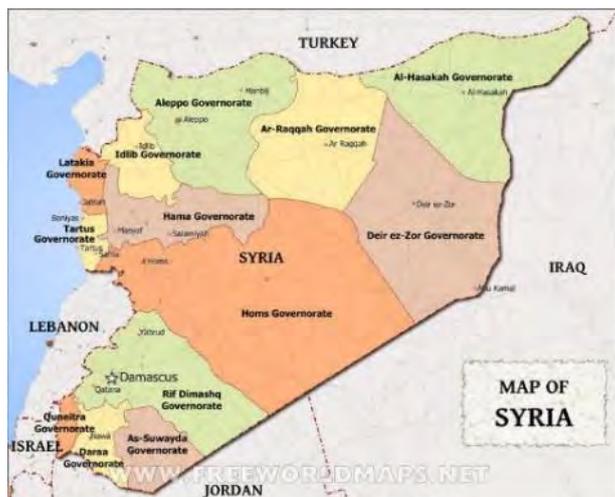
► The Egyptian army and the forces supporting it continued their intensive counterterrorism activity against ISIS, mainly in the Rafah region. Four ISIS operatives were killed and another turned himself in (Akhbar Sinaa al-Aan Facebook page, July 21, 2022). Sinai Tribal Union fighters detained two terrorist operatives, apparently ISIS operatives, in the Jalbana region, in the northwestern Sinai Peninsula, not far from the Suez Canal. Two fighters were wounded during the arrest (Shabab Qatiya Sinaa, July 21, 2022).



ISIS operative who turned himself in (Akhbar Sinaa al-Aan Facebook page, July 21, 2022)

► On July 27, 2022, the Egyptian forces reportedly detained a commander (emir) of ISIS's Sinai Province in Bir al-Abd (Akhbar Sinaa al-Aan Facebook page, July 27, 2022). No details have been provided on the detainee and it is still unclear whether this was ISIS's Sinai Province commander or a junior commander.

The Syrian arena



Map of the Syrian provinces (freeworldmaps.net)

The Idlib region

► This week, there was an increase in the scope of artillery fire between the Syrian army and the rebel forces (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 21-25, 2022).

The desert region (Al-Badia)

► In the morning hours of July 23, 2022, ISIS operatives attacked checkpoints and positions of the Syrian army and the forces supporting it near the T3 oil pumping station, about 40 km

east of Palmyra. The forces suffered casualties, who were evacuated to Palmyra National Hospital (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 23, 2022).

Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

► On July 25, 2022, ISIS operatives fired at an SDF checkpoint in the village of Al-Sabha, about 20 km north of Al-Mayadeen. Two fighters were wounded (Telegram, July 25, 2022).

Al-Raqqah region

► On July 23, 2022, ISIS operatives abducted and killed an SDF fighter in Al-Raqqah (Telegram, July 23, 2022).

► On July 22, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against an SDF patrol in the town of Karamah, about 20 km east of Al-Raqqah. Two fighters were killed and another was wounded (Telegram, July 23, 2022).

► On July 22, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against an SDF patrol on the Al-Mankhar road, north of the town of Karamah, about 20 km east of Al-Raqqah. The passengers on board were killed or wounded (Telegram, July 22, 2022).

Al-Hasakah region

► US-led Global Coalition forces and the SDF forces operating in the village of Sarajiya, about 8 km west of the Syria-Iraq border and 80 km southeast of Al-Hasakah, apprehended a resident suspected of affiliation with an ISIS squad (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 22, 2022). No additional details have been provided on the detainee.

The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

ISIS attacks by province³

Salah al-Din Province

- ▶ According to an Iraqi military source, on July 20, 2022, about 10-15 ISIS operatives attacked an Iraqi police post in the Al-Jalam region, southeast of Samarra. Six policemen were killed and seven others were wounded (Asharq al-Awsat, July 20, 2022). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, noting that it was ISIS operatives who attacked the post and that six policemen were killed and four others were wounded. Three other policemen were wounded when a force arriving on the scene to provide assistance was caught in an exchange of fire (Amaq, Telegram, July 20, 2022).
- ▶ On July 25, 2022, ISIS operatives attacked a force of the Peace Battalions (a Shiite militia led by Muqtada Sadr) in the city of Samarra. Two fighters were killed and three others were wounded. Two ISIS operatives were killed (Al-Sumaria, July 25, 2022).
- ▶ According to an Iraqi security source, on July 24, 2022, armed men, apparently ISIS operatives, shot and killed two brothers in the village of Albu Kadhim, in the Tarmiyah district, about 30 km north of Baghdad (Al-Sumaria, July 24, 2022).

³ According to ISIS claims of responsibility and the Iraqi media

► On July 24, 2022, a Popular Mobilization patrol was targeted by gunfire in the Al-Khwaysh region, about 6 km west of Samarra. Two fighters were killed and three others were wounded. Two vehicles were put out of commission (Telegram, July 25, 2022).

► On July 22, 2022, Iraqi soldiers were targeted by gunfire in the Tarmiyah region, about 30 km north of Baghdad. According to ISIS, one soldier was killed and another was wounded (Telegram, July 24, 2022). According to an Iraqi military source, one soldier was wounded in the incident (Al-Sumaria, July 22, 2022).

Diyala Province

► On July 24, 2022, Shiite civilians were targeted by gunfire in the Shiite village of Sayyid Nasser, in the Al-Khales region, about 12 km northwest of Baqubah. A total of 12 people were killed and wounded, including an Iraqi soldier. Two vehicles were damaged (Telegram, July 25, 2022).

► On July 21, 2022, armed men, apparently ISIS operatives, killed three soldiers and a minor who was with them near Baqubah (Al-Sumaria, July 21, 2022).

Kirkuk Province

► On July 19, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against an Iraqi police minesweeper near the village of Rbeyda, in the Daquq region, south of Kirkuk. The vehicle was put out of commission (Telegram, July 20, 2022).

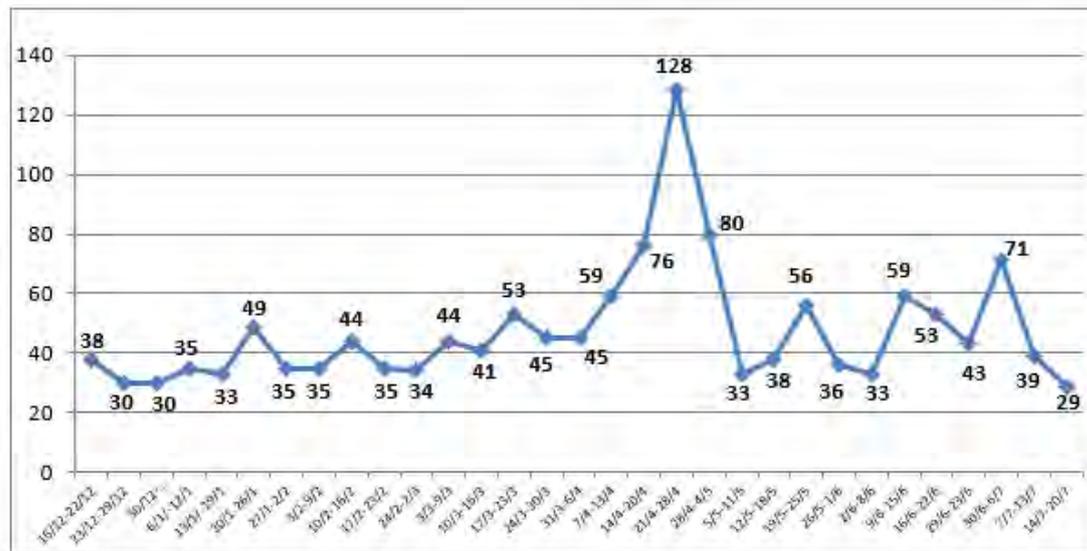
Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

► An infographic published by ISIS, summing up its activity around the world in the period between July 14 and July 20, 2022, indicates that the organization carried out 29 attacks in its various provinces around the globe (compared to 39 in the previous week). The largest number of attacks was carried out in the West Africa Province (7). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Khorasan, i.e. Afghanistan (4); Iraq (3); Sinai (3); Central Africa (3); Mozambique (3); Syria (2); Sahel (2); Somalia (1); and Pakistan (1). A total of 83 people were killed or wounded in the attacks, compared to 108 in the previous week. The largest number of casualties was in the West Africa Province (39). The other casualties were in the following provinces: Iraq (13); Khorasan (12); Sinai (9); Mozambique (4); Syria (2); Central Africa (2); Pakistan (1); and Sahel (1) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 21, 2022).



Summary of ISIS attacks (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 21, 2022)

ISIS attacks by week (according to ISIS data)



Africa

Nigeria

- ▶ On July 24, 2022, mortar shells were launched at a Nigerian army camp in the town of Goniri, about 45 km southeast of Damaruru, the capital of Yobe State in northeastern Nigeria. No casualties were reported (Telegram, July 25, 2022).
- ▶ At least four Boko Haram operatives and a Boko Haram commander surrendered to the Nigerian army in the northeastern part of Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria (dailypost.ng, July 23, 2022).
- ▶ A total of 13 metal collectors were killed in the Bama region, about 70 km southeast of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria in the explosion of an IED. The

IED was apparently planted by Boko Haram or ISIS operatives as part of the struggle for control of the mines (Al-Jazeera, July 26, 2022).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

- ▶ On July 20, 2022, a Congolese soldier was targeted by gunfire in the village of Idoho, in the Komanda region, about 80 km west of the Congo-Uganda border (Telegram, July 21, 2022).
- ▶ On July 20, 2022, ISIS operatives broke into the home of a former Congolese army officer in the village of Bulambo, about 25 km west of the border with Uganda. The officer was stabbed to death (Telegram, July 21, 2022).

Mozambique

- ▶ On July 22, 2022, an attack was carried out against the Christian village of Mitoba, in the Mocímboa da Praia region of the Cabo Delgado Province, in the northeast of the country. Dozens of residents' homes were set on fire (Telegram, July 23, 2022).



One of the homes of Christians which were set on fire (Telegram, July 25, 2022)

- ▶ On July 17, 2022, ISIS operatives attacked the Christian village of Mahican, in the Ancuabe region of Cabo Delgado Province. Five civilians were murdered and two motorcycles were set on fire (Telegram, July 22, 2022).

Mali

- ▶ On July 22, 2022, two car bombs were activated and armed fighters stormed a Malian army base near the capital Bamako. At least one soldier was killed and six people were wounded. Seven of the attackers were killed and eight were detained. The Al-Qaeda-affiliated Katiba Macina organization claimed responsibility for the attack (France24, July 22, 2022; Al-Jazeera, July 23, 2022).

Ethiopia

► On July 20, 2022, operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab organization attacked two villages in the Bakool region of southern Ethiopia. **A total of 14 policemen and three Ethiopian civilians were killed.** The Ethiopian security forces surrounded the attacking force, which included dozens of Al-Shabaab operatives, killing 63 Al-Shabaab operatives. It should be noted that the attack was carried out just days after an Al-Shabaab commander who had intended to set up an Al-Shabaab unit in Ethiopia was killed on the Ethiopian side of the border with Somalia. The Shahada Agency, Al-Shabaab's media arm, claimed responsibility for the attack (Reuters, July 22, 2022; AFP, July 24, 2022). **This is an unusual attack on the part of the Al-Shabaab organization, which generally operates in Somalia.**

Asia

India

► On July 21, 2022, four farming families in the village of Anwa, in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northern India, received threatening letters warning them of a sarin gas attack and a “major conspiracy” that would take place in 2024. In addition, the families were threatened with murder if the flash drive and map which, according to the letter, are in the hands of the families, are not returned to the people who sent the letters. According to the families, they know nothing about these items and none of the family members serves in the army or is connected to an Indian intelligence agency. The Indian police, which suspects that ISIS operatives are behind the threat, stationed guards outside the homes of the four families (The Times of India, July 23, 2022).

Turkey

► On July 22, 2022, acting on intelligence, Turkey's counterterrorism forces raided several neighborhoods in Istanbul, detaining 10 people suspected of carrying out activity for ISIS. Many documents and large quantities of digital information were confiscated (Nedaa Post, July 23, 2022).

► On July 20, 2022, Turkish police in Izmir arrested two individuals suspected of funding ISIS-affiliated operatives detained in camps in northeastern Syria, which is controlled by the Kurds (Nedaa Post, July 23, 2022).

► On July 19, 2022, Turkish counterterrorism forces detained five people suspected of carrying out activity for ISIS in the city of Adana, in southern Turkey. Efforts to detain another suspect are reportedly underway. The six detainees are suspected of fighting in the ranks of ISIS in Syria and Iraq (Asharq al-Awsat, July 20, 2022).

Europe

Ireland

► On May 30, 2022, **40-year-old Lisa Smith, a former officer in the Irish Army who converted to Islam**, was convicted by a Dublin court of membership in ISIS and fundraising for the organization. According to the verdict published on July 22, 2022, she was sentenced to 15 months in prison, thus becoming the first person to be convicted by an Irish court of membership in a terrorist organization in a different country. Smith arrived in Syria in 2014 and joined the ranks of ISIS. In 2015, she transferred EUR 800 to ISIS (Irish Mirror, July 24, 2022; The Independent, May 30, 2022).

The battle for hearts and minds

► ISIS’s Al-Naba weekly published an article entitled “Don’t alienate yourselves from one another” (“*wala tadabaru*”), claiming that Islam instructs to avoid dissent and rift among Muslims and calls for strengthening the bonds among the believers. This is because dissent is detrimental to ISIS, inhibits victory, and allows ISIS’s enemies to prevail (Al-Naba, Telegram, July 21, 2022). It is possible that by publishing the article, ISIS is admitting the existence of internal dissent.



Article advocating the avoidance of dissent (Al-Naba, Telegram, July 21, 2022)

►An article published on July 24, 2022, in issue number 9 of the Voice of Khurasan, the magazine of ISIS's Khorasan Province, praises the suicide bomber who attacked the Sikh temple in Kabul on June 18, 2022, and emphasizes the Taliban government's helplessness against ISIS. The article also mentions the visit to Afghanistan by a delegation from the Indian government, which coordinated with representatives of the Taliban government on how to operate against ISIS. The article criticizes the Indian government for the insulting remarks about Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, made by both representatives of the ruling party, and India's attitude towards Muslims in India. The article justifies violence against the Indian government and criticizes the Taliban government for hosting the members of the delegation (Telegram, July 24, 2022).



The cover page of the Voice of Khurasan magazine (Telegram, July 24, 2022)