Spotlight on Global Jihad
July 28 – August 3, 2022

Main events of the past week

- **The main event of the week was the killing of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri by the US in Afghanistan.**
- **This week there was a decline in the scope of ISIS's activity around the globe. Most of the activity was concentrated in Africa.**
- **The Sinai Peninsula:** The Egyptian army and the Sinai Tribal Union continued to carry out searches in northern Sinai. An Egyptian captain was killed and several soldiers were wounded when an IED planted by ISIS exploded in Rafah.
- **Syria:** ISIS concentrated on fighting against the Kurdish SDF forces in the Al-Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor region.
- **Iraq:** ISIS carried out very few attacks.
- **Africa:** Several ISIS attacks on a limited scale against Nigerian army targets in the northeast of the country. Ethiopia: An attack by the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab organization near the border with Somalia. Over 100 Al-Shabaab operatives were killed.

The killing of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri by the US

- On August 1, 2022, US President Joe Biden announced that Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri had been killed on July 31, 2022, by an American UAV in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. Biden noted, "I authorized a precision strike that would remove him from the battlefield once and for all... Now justice has been delivered, and this terrorist leader is no more. We never give in." and that the assassination sends a clear message that the US knows how to remove threats against its citizens. He said, "No matter how long it takes, no matter where you hide, if you are a threat to our people, the United States will find you and take you out. " (White House Twitter account, August 1, 2022).
- According to information provided on US media, Al-Zawahiri was killed on the balcony of a house in a prestigious neighborhood in central Kabul, in the late evening of July 31, 2022. He was killed by two Hellfire missiles fired from a UAV. The house where Al-Zawahiri was killed

apparently belongs to a senior Taliban member, which raises the possibility that he had enjoyed the protection of the Taliban administration. His family members who were in the house emerged unscathed. The killing was preceded by prolonged intelligence gathering (CNN, August 2, 2022).

- President Biden noted that Al-Zawahiri "was deeply involved in the planning of 9/11, one of the most responsible for the attacks that murdered 2,977 people on American soil. For decades, he was a mastermind behind attacks against Americans." (CNN; The Guardian, August 2, 2022).
- The main candidate to replace him is Muhammad Salah al-Din Zidan, codenamed Saif al-Adel, a senior Al-Qaeda figure specializing in sabotage and the man responsible for the attack against the United States Embassy in Kenya in 1998. He is believed to serve as a member of Al-Qaeda's Leadership Council (Majlis al-Shura) and is responsible for its Military Committee, the Al-Qaeda entity in charge of carrying out terrorist attacks. Saif al-Adel is believed to be in Iran.

Al-Zawahiri, from a slide that accompanied his audiotape from June 14, 2022 (Telegram, June 14, 2022)

The Sinai Peninsula

ISIS attacks

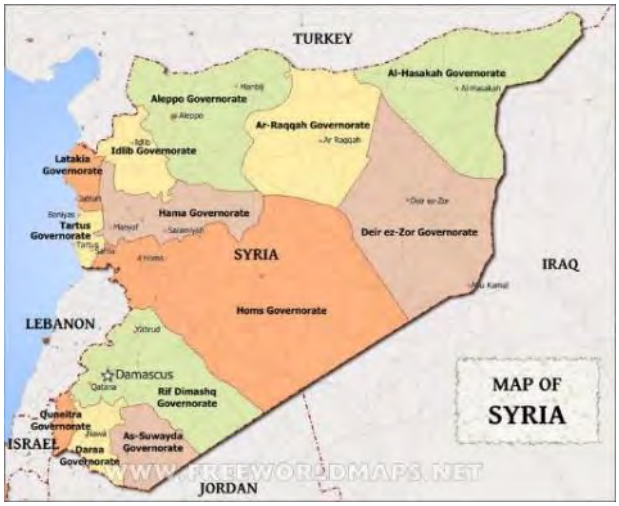
- This week, ISIS continued to operate against the Egyptian security forces in northern Sinai. Following are highlights:
  - On July 27, 2022, ISIS attacked an Egyptian army force in Rafah. A captain was killed and several other soldiers were wounded (Al-Quds al-Araby, July 27, 2022). ISIS claimed responsibility, noting that its operatives had activated an IED against a joint patrol of the Egyptian army and the Sinai Tribal Union west of Rafah, killing the officer and wounding other soldiers (Telegram, July 27, 2022).

Counterterrorism activities

▶While the Egyptian army was operating in northern Sinai, an ISIS commander was killed.

- ◆A commander (emir) in ISIS's Sinai Province blew himself up with an explosive belt while the Egyptian security forces were after him, probably in the Rafah region (Sinai Tribal Union's Facebook page, July 30, 2022).

The Syrian arena



Map of the Syrian provinces (freeworldmaps.net)

The Idlib region

▶This week, there were intensive exchanges of artillery fire between the Syrian army and the rebel forces in the Idlib enclave. On August 2, 2022, it was reported that a Syrian soldier had been killed by gunfire in the southern region of the rebel enclave (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 29 – August 2, 2022).

The desert region (Al-Badia)

▶ISIS's Syria Province released photos documenting operatives of the Al-Badia Province (the desert region) in Syria in July 2022. The photos show the organization's operatives preparing food, being trained in the use of weapons, preparing for fighting, riding motorcycles, and cleaning their weapons (Telegram, July 29, 2022).

ISIS operatives in the desert region cleaning their weapons and being trained in the use of weapons (Telegram, July 29, 2022)

ISIS operatives in the desert region gathering before an attack and leaving to carry out their mission (Telegram, July 29, 2022)

Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

- On July 30, 2022, ISIS operatives abducted and executed an SDF fighter in the town of Dhiban, about 5 km east of Al-Mayadeen (Telegram, July 31, 2022).
- On July 30, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against an SDF vehicle in the region of Hawi al-Hissan, on the east bank of the Euphrates, about 4 km north of Deir ez-Zor. The passengers on board were killed or wounded (Telegram, July 30, 2022).
- On July 29, 2022, ISIS operatives shot a Global Coalition “agent” near Al-Jabal, in the Al-Basira region, about 14 km north of Al-Mayadeen. He was severely wounded (Telegram, July 29, 2022).

Al-Hasakah region

- ISIS operatives set up a roadblock on the road leading to Al-Hawl, about 35 km east of Al-Hasakah, and fired at an SDF vehicle. The passengers on board were wounded. Subsequently, there was an exchange of fire with an SDF rescue force arriving on the scene. A total of 10 SDF fighters were killed or wounded (Telegram, July 27, 2022).

The Iraqi arena

Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

ISIS attacks by province[1]

Kirkuk Province

▶On July 31, 2022, ISIS operatives fired at an Iraqi police compound near the village of Tar al-Baqal, in the Riyad region, about 40 km southwest of Kirkuk. One policeman was wounded (Telegram, July 31, 2022).

Salah al-Din Province

▶On July 30, 2022, ISIS operatives fired at an Iraqi police compound near the village of Maftul, about 140 km north of Baghdad. One fighter was wounded (Telegram, July 31, 2022).

Diyala Province

▶On July 29, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against a vehicle carrying a Tribal Mobilization fighter in the Al-Mansouriya region, about 45 km northeast of Baqubah. He was wounded (Telegram, July 29, 2022).

▶On July 27, 2022, ISIS operatives fired at an Iraqi police compound in the village of Al-Dawaleeb, in the Al-Mansouriya region, about 45 km northeast of Baqubah. Two policemen were wounded and two thermal cameras were destroyed (Telegram, July 27, 2022).

[1] According to ISIS claims of responsibility and the Iraqi media

Al-Anbar Province

▶On July 24, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against an Iraqi army armored vehicle in the desert region on the outskirts of the city of Hit, about 135 km northwest of Baghdad. The passengers on board were wounded (Telegram, July 27, 2022).

Counterterrorism activity

Nineveh Province

▶Iraqi Air Force F-16 planes carried out two airstrikes against one of the tunnels in the Adaya Mountains, about 30 km southwest of Mosul. According to intelligence, ISIS operatives were hiding there. After the airstrikes, an Iraqi ground force belonging to the 15th Division combed the area. It turned out that 8 ISIS operatives were killed in the tunnel, which was completely destroyed (Al-Sumaria, July 28, 2022).

Tunnel where ISIS operatives were hiding
(Iraqi Defense Ministry's YouTube channel, July 28, 2022)

Diyala Province

▶According to an Iraqi security source, on July 30, 2022, an ISIS hiding place was attacked about 20 km northeast of Baqubah. An ISIS commander and two of his escorts were killed in the Al-Waqf basin, about 15 km northeast of Baqubah. He was a second-echelon commander who was in charge of planning numerous attacks against civilians and security forces in the Al-Waqf basin (Baghdad al-Youm, July 30, 2022).

Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

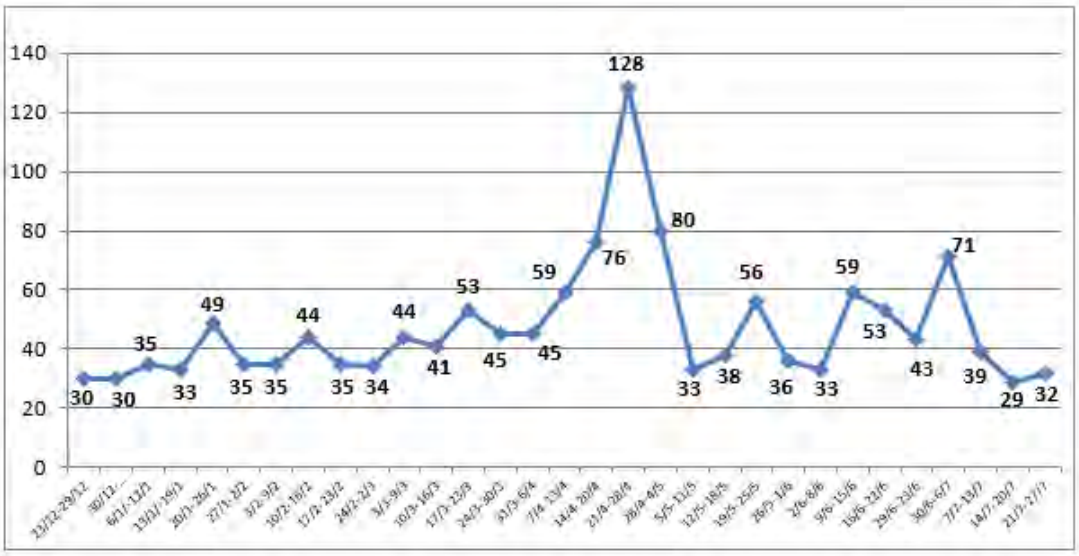
▶ An infographic published by ISIS, summing up its activity around the world in the period between July 21 and July 27, 2022, indicates that the organization carried out 32 attacks in its various provinces around the globe (compared to 29 in the previous week). The largest number of attacks was carried out in the Iraq Province (13). Attacks carried out in the other

provinces: Syria (7); West Africa (6); Mozambique (3); Central Africa (2); and Sinai (1). A total of 65 people were killed or wounded in the attacks, compared to 83 in the previous week. The largest number of casualties was in the Iraq Province (30). The other casualties were in the following provinces: Syria (21); Mozambique (8); Sinai (3); Central Africa (2); and West Africa (1) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 28, 2022).

▶The infographic indicates an increase in the number of ISIS attacks in Syria and Iraq, compared to the organization's activity in Africa and Afghanistan. It also indicates a moderate increase in the scope of ISIS's activity in the period in question compared to last week.

Summary of ISIS attacks (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 28, 2022)

ISIS attacks by week (according to ISIS data)



Africa

Nigeria

Boko Haram and ISWAP are planning attacks in five states in Nigeria

According to a memo of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) which was leaked to the media, the terrorist organizations Boko Haram and ISIS's West Africa Province (ISWAP) plan to carry out attacks in five states in Nigeria: Lagos in southwestern Nigeria; Kaduna in central Nigeria and north of Abuja; Kogi south of central Nigeria and Abuja; Katsina in northern Nigeria; and Zamfara in northwestern Nigeria. The leaked memo was sent to various commanders in Nigeria on July 26, 2022. **This could indicate that the two organizations are striving to expand their activity throughout Nigeria.**

ISIS attacks in Nigeria

On July 30, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against a vehicle of forces supporting the Nigerian army on the road between the towns of Dikwa, about 75 km northeast of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, and Ajiri, about 15 km south of Maiduguri. Four fighters were killed and three others were wounded (Telegram, July 31, 2022).

On July 28, 2022, ISIS operatives launched two mortar bombs at a Nigerian army camp in the town of Goniri, about 45 km southeast of Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State. According to ISIS, definite hits were identified (Telegram, July 29, 2022).

On July 28, 2022, ISIS operatives attacked a Nigerian army checkpoint near Zuma Rock, about 17 km west of Abuja. Several soldiers were killed or wounded and the rest fled (Telegram, July 30, 2022).

On July 27, 2022, ISIS operatives ambushed a convoy of cars belonging to a local government official and shot at him. The convoy was on the road between the towns of Gajiram (about 70 km north of Maiduguri) and Gajiganna (about 40 km north of Maiduguri), in Borno State. A policeman was killed (Telegram, July 28, 2022). The target of the attack apparently survived.

On July 27, 2022, ISIS operatives attacked fighters supporting the Nigerian army in the town of Buni Yadi, about 50 km south of Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State. One fighter was killed and the rest fled (Telegram, July 27, 2022).

On July 25, 2022, ISIS operatives activated an IED against a Nigerian army patrol on the road between the towns of Damboa, about 80 km southwest of Maiduguri, and Bulabulin, about 50

km southwest of Maiduguri in Borno State. Those on board an armored vehicle were killed or wounded. The armored vehicle was destroyed (Telegram, July 29, 2022).

▶On July 24, 2022, ISIS operatives activated a large IED against a foot patrol of the Nigerian army and forces supporting it in the village of Aga Mundari, near the town of Bama, about 60 km southeast of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria. Three soldiers were killed and 13 fighters were killed or wounded (Telegram, July 28, 2022).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

▶On July 29, 2022, ISIS operatives fired at a Christian citizen's motorcycle on the road between Beni (about 50 km from the Congo-Uganda border) and Kasindi. He was killed and his motorcycle was set on fire (Telegram, July 29, 2022).

Mozambique

▶On July 26, 2022, ISIS operatives attacked the Christian village of Shitonda, in the Nangade area of the Cabo Delgado Province. Three Christian citizens were beheaded. Over 20 homes of villagers were set on fire (Telegram, July 27, 2022).

Ethiopia

▶According to an announcement by the commander of an Ethiopian force operating near the border with Somalia, over 150 operatives of the Al-Shabaab organization who attacked a paramilitary force in the Aato region, about 3 km south of the Somalia-Ethiopia border, on July 29, 2022, were killed in the fighting between the sides. A total of 14 fighters of the Ethiopian force were also killed. On the other hand, the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab organization announced that 103 Ethiopian policemen had been killed in the incident. According to a resident of Aato, Al-Shabaab operatives launched a car bomb and mortar shell attack against his city in the morning and then retreated (Reuters, July 29, 2022). This was the third round of fighting in the region in nine days, which indicates that the border area between Ethiopia and Somalia is heating up.

▶On July 25, 2022, operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab organization attacked the Ethiopian security forces in Ferfer in southeastern Ethiopia, near the border with Somalia. A heavy exchange of fire ensued, and the highly efficient Ethiopian security forces killed 85 Al-Shabaab operatives and wounded and captured others (Reuters, July 27, 2022). This is the second attack in a week by Al-Shabaab operatives in Ethiopia. On July 20, 2022, Al-Shabaab operatives 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 comprised dozens of Al-Shabaab operatives, killing 63 of them (Reuters, July 22, 2022; AFP, July 24, 2022).

Somalia

▶The Al-Shabaab organization claimed responsibility for the activation of IEDs in two towns in southern Somalia on July 27, 2022. In the first incident, two IEDs were activated at a livestock market in the town of Afgoye, about 20 km northwest of Mogadishu. Four people were killed. The second incident was the killing of local administration official, which took place in the coastal town of Marka, about 60 km south of Mogadishu (Reuters, July 27, 2022).

▶According to an announcement by ISIS's Somalia Province, on July 28, 2022, its operatives activated an IED against a Somali police foot patrol on the road between Mogadishu and Afgoye, about 20 km northwest of Mogadishu. One policeman was killed and two others were wounded (Telegram, July 28, 2022).

Mali

▶According to an announcement by the Malian army, on July 27, 2022, three coordinated attacks by terrorist operatives affiliated with Al-Qaeda and ISIS were carried out against three army bases throughout the country, claiming the lives of at least 15 soldiers, and three civilians were killed in two coordinated attacks in central Mali. The first attack was against the army base in Sokolo, about 85 km south of the border with Mauritania. Six soldiers were killed and 25 others were wounded, and 48 terrorist operatives were killed. Nine soldiers and three civilians were killed in another attack against the army base in Kalumba. No casualties were reported in the attack on the third base in the city of Mopti, in central Mali and about 450 km northeast of the capital Bamako (DW; France 24, July 28, 2022).

Asia

Afghanistan

▶On July 27, 2022, an IED was activated near a Sikh temple in the Karte Parwan area of central Kabul. There were no casualties (NDTV, July 27, 2022). On June 18, 2022, ISIS operatives fired at this temple and threw hand grenades at it. According to the Taliban government, a member of the Sikh community and a Taliban member were killed and seven civilians were wounded in the incident, but the number of casualties was apparently much higher (Khaama Press, June 18, 2022; Reuters, June 18, 2022).

According to the announcement by Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, when the Taliban took over Kabul (in August 2021), 1,800 ISIS operatives were released from the prison in Bagram, about 40 km north of Kabul, and from the Pul-e-Charkhi Prison in northeast Kabul. It should be noted that when the Taliban took over Kabul, amnesty was granted to all the prisoners in all the detention facilities and prisons throughout Afghanistan, and thus they were completely emptied (Khaama Press, July 27, 2022).

Pakistan

A 24-year-old Pakistani citizen by the name of Rizwan Ashraf, who belongs to the Islamic organization Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), was detained in Rajasthan, in northwest India. He was on his way to assassinate Nupur Sharma, former spokeswoman for India's ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), because of her statements against Islam and its prophet. The detainee claimed that he wanted to respond to the November 21, 2020 call by TLP leader Saad Hossein Rizvi to go to India and behead Sharma in the name of the love of the Prophet Muhammad and Islam (The Print, Indian news website, July 28, 2022).

India

According to an announcement by the Indian police, 11 people were arrested on July 28, 2022, in the state of Assam, in northeastern India, on suspicion of affiliation with Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-continent (AQIS) and the jihadi terrorist organization Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), which operates out of Bangladesh. One of the detainees is Mustafa alias Mufti Mustafa, a madrasa teacher in the state of Assam and the man in charge of Ansarullah Bangla's financial activity in India (The Print, Indian news site, July 29, 2022).

The United States

Muhammad Khalifa, a 39-year-old Canadian citizen who was born in Saudi Arabia and grew up in Toronto, was sentenced to life in prison by a Virginia court. Khalifa pleaded guilty to charges of assisting ISIS, by traveling from Canada to Syria in 2013 and working there in ISIS's media network. While operating in the ranks of ISIS, Khalifa killed two Syrian soldiers and was captured by the SDF forces in 2019. In October 2021, he was handed over to the FBI, and on December 10, 2021, he admitted to providing material support and resources to a foreign terrorist organization (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, July 29, 2022).

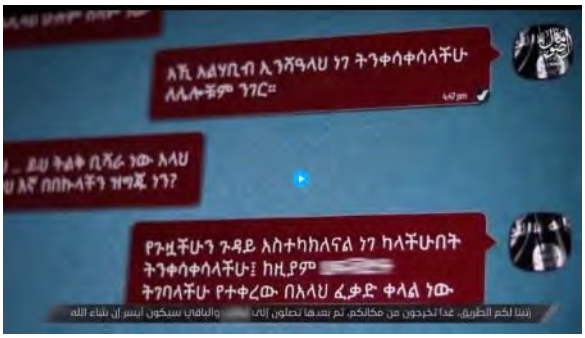
The battle for hearts and minds

▶To mark the end of the year 1443 of the Hijrah (which ended on July 29, 2022), ISIS's Al-Naba weekly published an infographic listing its 20 biggest attacks during this year. The major attacks were carried out in the following provinces: Syria, Iraq, Khorasan (Afghanistan), Central Africa, West Africa, Mozambique, the Sahel, Sinai, Yemen, and East Asia. The infographic ends with a quote from a recording by ISIS spokesperson Abu Umar al-Muhajir threatening those who will fight against ISIS and stressing that its jihad against the infidels is eternal and its motive is purely religious (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 28, 2022).

The wording of the infographic summing up the year 1443 of the Hijrah (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 28, 2022)

▶On July 30, 2022, ISIS's Somalia Province released a video clip approximately 25 minutes long, addressing Muslims in general, and especially those in Somalia, to join its ranks. According to the video clip, historically the Christians, and especially the Christians of the Kingdom of Abyssinia (currently Ethiopia), opposed Islam and persecuted the Muslims since the beginning of Islam. Later, Christian European colonialism caused suffering for the Muslims to this very day. A senior official in ISIS's Somalia Province, codenamed Abu Hafsa al-Ithioubi (i.e., the Ethiopian), appears in the video clip and calls on the viewers to join ISIS, stating that its training camp provides both religious and military training. Towards the end of the video clip, there is documentation of the process of recruiting operatives through social media, as well as documentation of training at the camp in Somalia. At the firing range, pictures of US President Joe Biden and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed are affixed to the targets, in order to indicate who ISIS's main enemies are (Telegram, July 30, 2022).

According to the video clip, ISIS is apparently carrying out a campaign to recruit operatives in order to intensify its activity in Somalia.



Documentation of correspondence on social media between an ISIS recruiter and recruits, and the arrival of the recruits at a cave in order to be picked up (Telegram, July 30, 2022)

Abu Hafsa al-Ithioubi (i.e., the Ethiopian) talking about the religious and military training at ISIS's training camp; preparing a target at a firing range with the picture of US President Joe Biden (Telegram, July 30, 2022)

New recruits at ISIS's training camp (Telegram, July 30, 2022)