



Spotlight on Global Jihad

January 12-18, 2023



Main events of the past week

- ▶ **ISIS's activity around the world continued to be moderate this week.**
- ▶ **At the center of events:** A suicide bombing attack was carried out by ISIS near the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, Afghanistan. At least 20 people were killed; An IED was set off in a church courtyard in northeastern Congo, 14 people were killed.
- ▶ **The Sinai Peninsula:** The Prime Minister of Egypt and the Chief of Staff made (separate) visits to the Sinai Peninsula. The visits were apparently intended to underscore the Egyptian government's control over the peninsula after years in which ISIS ruled the region.
- ▶ **Africa: In Somalia,** operatives of Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab detonated several car bombs against security forces. Somali security forces took control of a port city northeast of Mogadishu, which had been under Al-Shabaab's control. **Nigeria** - The photo of Bakoura Buduma, the leader of Boko Haram, was published for the first time.
- ▶ **The battle for hearts and minds:** The editorial of ISIS's Al-Naba weekly called for joining the organization in light of the weakness of the West, in order to realize the domination of Islam in the world. In an article in ISIS's magazine Voice of Khurasan in Afghanistan, the new government in Israel was described in detail and it was said that the only way to solve the Palestinian issue is through jihad. Khalid Batarfi, the leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), called on Muslims to remove the American presence from the Arabian Peninsula and the pro-Iranian presence from Yemen.

The Sinai Peninsula

Visits of the Egyptian Prime Minister and the Chief of Staff to North Sinai

- ▶ On January 14, 2023, **Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly** visited an electricity generating facility in the city of Sheikh Zuweid and the recently built new city of Rafah. At a press conference held by the Prime Minister, he said that the security situation in North Sinai is stable and that the state institutions in the region are fully functional again. It should be

noted that this is the first visit by an Egyptian prime minister to the region since it was taken over by ISIS's Sinai Province.

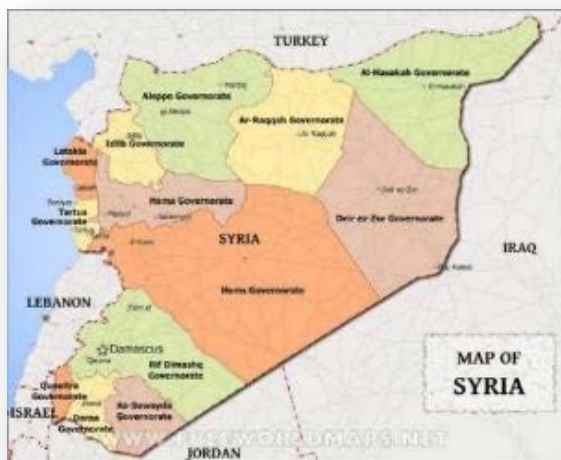
► Two days earlier, **Osama Askar, the Chief of Staff of the Egyptian Army**, visited the region, his first visit since taking office. During the visit, Askar asked the soldiers stationed in North Sinai to maintain the achievements of fighting ISIS and the stability achieved in the region. He praised them for the high morale they demonstrate and the willingness to sacrifice for their country.

► It should be noted that the Egyptian government has recently been investing a lot of resources in the Sinai Peninsula in the construction and establishment of infrastructures, including electrical, residential and tourism infrastructures, with the aim of benefiting the residents of the Sinai Peninsula, who have suffered for many years from neglect, and thereby alienating elements that support ISIS, who took advantage of the situation and the accumulated frustration of the local population for taking over the area (egyptian-gazette.com, January 14, 2023; Sinaa Mubasher Facebook page, January 15, 2023).

► In view of the recent attacks carried out by ISIS near the Suez Canal and in Egyptian territory, the Egyptian army reinforced its troops in the region and especially in the city of Ismailia, where ISIS carried out an attack on December 30, 2022.¹

¹ For details about the attack, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from January 3, 2023, "Third ISIS attack in 2022 in the vicinity of the Suez Canal"

The Syrian arena



Map of Syria's provinces (freeworldmaps.net)

Al-Raqqah region

► An IED planted by ISIS was activated against a patrol of the Syrian army and the forces supporting it on the Al-Thawra oil field road, about 60 km southwest of Al-Raqqah. Four fighters were wounded. It was stated that fighters of Iranian-backed militias are present in the area (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, January 17, 2023).

Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

► On January 12, 2023, an SDF fighter was shot and killed in the village of Hawi al-Hassan, about 4 km north of Deir ez-Zor (Telegram, January 12, 2023).

► On January 10, 2023, a vehicle belonging to a local official loyal to the SDF forces was targeted by gunfire in the town of Al-Azba, about 13 km northeast of Deir ez-Zor. It was damaged (Telegram, January 11, 2023).

Counterterrorism

Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

► On January 10, 2023, fighters of the Kurdish counterterrorism units, with the support of the US-led Global Coalition, surrounded a house where two ISIS operatives had barricaded themselves in the Al-Sabha area, about 20 km north of Al-Mayadeen. The two operatives, who refused to surrender and one of them even tried to escape, carried out terrorist activity in the Deir ez-Zor province. The two were killed in the exchange of fire. One of them was killed after activating an explosive belt (SDF Press, January 13, 2023).



Right: An ISIS operative attempting to escape from the house. Left: The explosion as a result of the detonation of the explosive belt (SDF Press, January 13, 2023)

The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

The Iraqi Prime Minister supports continued US presence in Iraq

► **Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammad al-Sudani** said in an interview with the Wall Street Journal that he supports the continuation of the American presence in the country and has not set a date for the evacuation of the American forces (Wall Street Journal, January 15, 2023). His statement is seen as defiance towards pro-Iranian elements in the country and especially the pro-Iranian militias, which threatened the United States that if it did not immediately withdraw all of its remaining forces in the country, they would act against them by force. The statement is also significant regarding the fight against ISIS, since the United States is helping the Iraqi government to fight the organization. In this context, Al-Sudani noted that it would take time to eliminate the presence of ISIS and that Iraq's main problem in dealing with ISIS is the spillover of its operatives from Syria.

ISIS attacks by province

Salah al-Din Province

► On January 11, 2023, a joint patrol of the Iraqi army and the counterterrorism unit was targeted by gunfire in the Al-Tarmiyah area, about 30 km north of Baghdad. Two soldiers were wounded (Telegram, January 13, 2023).

Counterterrorism

► Following ambushes by Iraqi security forces on January 14, 2023, a total of 32 ISIS operatives were arrested, including senior operatives who operated in the provinces of Al-Anbar, Nineveh, Kirkuk, Diyala and Baghdad (SecMedCell Facebook page, January 14, 2023).

Kirkuk Province

► On January 17, 2023, Iraqi security forces located an ISIS weapons cache containing about 30 IEDs near the Al-Riyad region, about 40 km southwest of Kirkuk (SecMedCell Facebook page, January 17, 2023).



Some of the IEDs that were found (SecMedCell Facebook page, January 17, 2023)

► An Iraqi intelligence force operating in the Hawija district, southwest of Kirkuk, detained an ISIS female operative who served in a high-ranking position in ISIS's morality police (Al-Hisba) in the Kirkuk Province (SecMedCell Facebook page, January 14, 2023).

Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

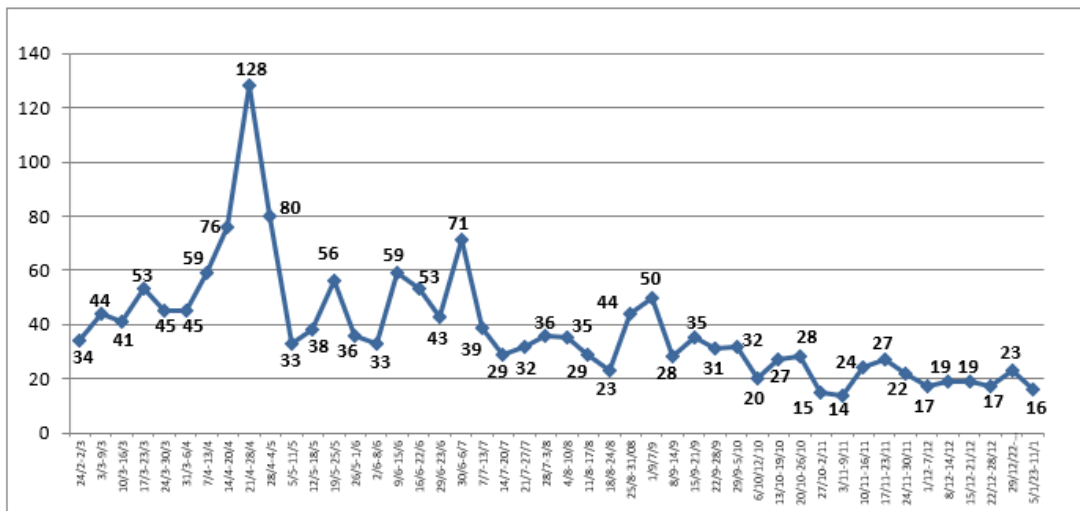
► An infographic published by ISIS, summing up its activity around the world on January 5-11, 2023, indicates that the organization carried out 16 attacks in its various provinces around the globe (compared to 23 in the previous week). The largest number of attacks was carried out by ISIS's Mozambique and West Africa provinces (5 in each). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Iraq (3); Khorasan, i.e., Afghanistan (1); Somalia (1); and Syria (1). A total of 93 people were killed and wounded in the attacks, compared to 101 in the previous week. The

largest number of casualties was in the Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan) Province (60). The other casualties were in the following provinces: West Africa (15); Iraq (9); Syria (8); and Somalia (1) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, January 12, 2023).



Summary of ISIS’s attacks (Al-Naba, Telegram, January 12, 2023)

ISIS attacks by week (according to ISIS data)



Africa

Nigeria

Boko Haram leader’s photo published for the first time

► On January 12, 2023, the photo of Boko Haram leader Bakoura Buduma, who is also known as Bakoura Doro or Abu Umayma, was first published by an expert on terrorism in the Lake Chad region. Bakoura Doro replaced Abubakar Shekau as the organization’s leader after the

latter was killed in May 2021. Bakoura Doro recently commanded a series of attacks against ISIS strongholds in the Lake Chad region (Zagazola, January 12, 2023).



Boko Haram leader Bakoura Buduma, known as Bakoura Doro (Zagazola, January 12, 2023)

ISIS activity

► According to military sources in Nigeria, on the evening of January 13, 2023, ISIS operatives attacked a Nigerian army camp in the village of Azri, about 80 km southwest of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria, using a relatively large force, which included three armored vehicles, four vehicles carrying machine guns, and an unknown number of motorcycles, as well as various ammunition. During the exchange of fire, the camp soldiers received air support from the Nigerian Air Force. Three soldiers were severely wounded and several ISIS operatives were killed (The Cable, January 14, 2023). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that a number of soldiers were killed or wounded and that ISIS operatives seized weapons and ammunition, without mentioning whether the organization suffered casualties in the attack (Telegram, January 14, 2023).



ISIS vehicle, weapons, and ammunition found at the scene of the fighting (The Cable, January 14, 2023)

► On January 12, 2023, four militia fighters supporting the Nigerian army were shot and killed in the town of Marte, about 90 km northeast of Maiduguri (Telegram, January 13, 2023).

Niger

► On January 10, 2023, ten operatives of ISIS's West Africa Province, who fled the battles between the organization and Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, surrendered to a force of the Nigerien army in the Tumour area, in the Diffa region, in southeastern Niger, about 3 km north of the Niger-Nigeria border (Zagazola, January 11, 2023).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

An ISIS IED set off in a church courtyard in Kasindi

► On January 15, 2023, an IED was set off in a church courtyard in the city of Kasindi, in northeastern Congo, about 2.5 km west of the Congo-Uganda border. At the time, hundreds of people gathered there for baptism ceremonies. Fourteen people were killed (Reuters, January 17, 2023). According to a local report, over 50 were wounded, including 35 women, 15 men, and three children (Beninipashe, January 17, 2023).



**Christian citizens in the church courtyard a few minutes before the IED was set off
(Georges Kisando Sokomeka Twitter account, January 16, 2023)**

► **ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack**, announcing that a powerful bomb, which was planted earlier by the organization's operatives, was set off inside a church. According to ISIS, at least 20 people were killed and dozens were wounded, and the church building was destroyed. ISIS further added that the attack "was carried out in order to prove the failure of the military establishment of the Congolese security forces and their partners to provide security for their Christian citizens" (Telegram, January 15, 2023).



**Destruction in the church courtyard after the detonation of the IED
(Georges Kisando Sokomeka Twitter account, January 15, 2023)**

Somalia

American aid to the Somali government

► The United States provided the Somali government with military aid in the amount of \$9 million to help it in its fight against the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab (northafricapost.com, January 11, 2023).

Al-Shabaab activity

► On January 12, 2023, the Mogadishu police announced that an IED consisting of a mine was detonated near a football stadium in the capital Mogadishu, while thousands of city residents gathered there in a protest rally against Al-Shabaab. The number of casualties was not reported. The protest rally was organized by the office of the President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud, who arrived at the scene after the IED was set off, and participated in the rally. The president called on the citizens to join the fight against Al-Shabaab and report any suspicious person (Horn Observer, January 12, 2023).



Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud during the rally (Al-Jazeera, January 13, 2023)

► **Three car bombs driven by Al-Shabaab suicide bombers were set off on January 14, 2023:**

- ◆ In the city of Buloburde, in the district of Hiran, in the center of Somalia, at the entrance to a police station and a military base. At least 11 people were killed and 50 were wounded (VOA, January 15, 2023).
- ◆ In the town of Jalalaqsi, about 160 km north of Mogadishu, near a military checkpoint. Another car bomb exploded almost simultaneously in the same area. Security personnel shot and killed the driver of the second car, which reduced the damage. At least four people were killed. There is a military base in the town and a large presence of military personnel and fighters from the African coalition (VOA, January 15, 2023).

Counterterrorism

The Somali security forces took over a port city which had been controlled by Al-Shabaab

► **Somali Minister of Defense Abdulkadir Mohamed Nur Jama** announced that Somalia's security forces had taken over the port city of Harardhere, about 400 km northeast of Mogadishu. The city was controlled by Al-Shabaab and was one of the organization's most important strongholds. In addition, the forces took control of the nearby town of Galcad (Reuters, January 16, 2023). This is a severe blow for Al-Shabaab, in terms of damage to its supply routes as well as damage to the morale of its operatives.



The port city of Harardhere (Google Maps)

ISIS's operations commander in Somalia killed

► On January 13, 2023, the Somali police announced that a Somali security force had repelled an ISIS attack on the night of January 12-13, 2023, against the town of Balli Tiddin, in

northeastern Somalia, and that during the exchange of fire between the sides, **ISIS's operations commander in the Somalia Province, Abu al-Bara al-Amani**, an Ethiopian citizen, was killed. Abu al-Bara was appointed to this position in July 2021 and played an important role in the recruitment of Ethiopians into ISIS's ranks (Anatolia News Agency, January 13, 2023; The Daily Somalia Twitter account, January 13, 2023). ISIS claimed responsibility, announcing that a shooting attack was carried out on January 11, 2023, at Somali government security personnel. According to ISIS, one member of the security forces was killed and another was wounded (Telegram, January 12, 2023).



Abu al-Bara al-Amani, ISIS's Somalia Province operations commander, who was killed
(The Daily Somalia Twitter account, January 13, 2023)

Burkina Faso

► On January 12-13, 2023, gunmen kidnapped 50 women in Soum district, in northern Burkina Faso. Elements affiliated with ISIS or Al-Qaeda, who are terrorizing the country's residents, are possibly behind the kidnapping (Al-Jazeera, January 16, 2023).

Mali

► On January 10, 2023, two IEDs were detonated in two separate incidents against Malian army vehicles in central Mali (the exact locations were not specified). A total of 14 soldiers were killed and 11 were wounded. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for carrying out the two attacks. On January 11, 2023, the Malian army announced that reinforcements sent to these areas killed 31 terrorist operatives (Al-Jazeera, January 12, 2023; africanews.com, January 13, 2023).

Morocco

Counterterrorism

► On January 11, 2023, Moroccan security forces, acting in coordination with a Spanish police force, arrested three members of an ISIS terrorist cell. One ISIS operative was arrested in

southwestern Morocco and two others were arrested at the same time in Almeria, about 270 km northeast of Gibraltar, in southern Spain. A preliminary investigation revealed that the three pledged allegiance to ISIS and worked to recruit more members. They also expressed a willingness to carry out terrorist attacks (Morocco World News, January 11, 2023).

Tunisia

Counterterrorism

► On January 12, 2023, Tunisia's Ministry of Interior announced that its men had arrested a dangerous ISIS operative in the Bir Ali Ben Khlifa area, in the Sfax Governorate in the east of the country. The detainee, who pledged allegiance to ISIS's leader, intended to carry out terrorist attacks in Tunisia against members of the army and the security forces. For that purpose, he took theoretical lessons on the preparation of poisons and the production of explosives. He also worked to obtain sharp tools and weapons, in coordination with terrorist operatives outside the borders of Tunisia. The detainee also spread ISIS propaganda material and used fake electronic accounts to create a false representation as if members of security and military organizations support Salafi-Jihadist ideology. He also hacked into the official website of a public institution in the country (Al-Arabiya, January 13, 2023).

Asia

Afghanistan

Suicide bombing near the Foreign Ministry in Kabul

► On January 11, 2023, at 16:00, an explosion occurred near the Taliban Foreign Ministry building in Kabul. A senior official in the Taliban's Information Ministry announced that at least 20 people had been killed in the attack (Al-Jazeera, January 11, 2023). ISIS claimed responsibility, saying that a suicide bomber, codenamed Kheiber al-Qandahari (i.e., from the Kandahar region of Afghanistan), arrived on January 11, 2023, at the main entrance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in the center of Kabul. He activated his explosive belt among the Taliban, Foreign Ministry employees, including diplomats, security guards and those in charge of security, when they left the building. According to ISIS, 20 Taliban members were killed in the explosion, including diplomats, and dozens were wounded (Amaq, Telegram, January 11, 2023). **This is the second ISIS attack since the beginning of**

2023 against the Taliban's government institutions. On January 1, 2023, ISIS carried out a suicide bombing attack at the entrance to the military airport in Kabul.



The ISIS operative who carried out the attack, near the scene of the attack (Amaq, Telegram, January 11, 2023; Telegram, January 11, 2023; Al-Naba, Telegram, January 12, 2023)

Europe

Germany

- ▶ On January 8, 2023, German police and prosecutors announced that a 32-year-old Iranian citizen and another person had been arrested on the previous night in the town of Castrop-Rauxel, northwest of Dortmund, on suspicion of planning to carry out an attack using the deadly poisons cyanide and ricin, which they purchased. It was noted that the German authorities received information from a fellow intelligence organization regarding plans to carry out a chemical attack (The Independent, January 8, 2023).
- ▶ On January 11, 2023, an indictment was filed against a 37-year-old woman, a German citizen who operated as part of ISIS in Iraq. In December 2014, the woman and her husband, who joined ISIS, traveled from Germany to Syria and from there to Mosul, in Iraq. She was a housewife, while her husband worked as a doctor, treating wounded ISIS operatives in a hospital in Mosul. The two established a center in Mosul to receive single women who joined ISIS, provided them with accommodation and also helped them get married or divorced before a Sharia court. In addition, according to the lawsuit, the two stored large quantities of explosives and weapons in their home, and employed a Yazidi girl who served as a slave for them. The woman was arrested upon entering Germany on March 31, 2022 (Sky News, January 11, 2023).

Spain

- ▶ On January 11, 2023, the Spanish Supreme Court ruled that the two wives of ISIS operatives, Yolanda Martinez and Luna Fernandez, who were repatriated on January 9, 2023, from Syria

to Spain together with their children, would be sent to prison until their investigation is completed, for fear of their escape. It was noted that the two women participated in ISIS activities before and after they moved to Syria and Iraq in 2014 with their husbands (Reuters, January 11, 2023).

The United States

Counterterrorism

► On January 12, 2023, a US citizen, Kevin Iman McCormick, 29, a resident of Hamden, Connecticut, pleaded guilty in court to the charge of attempting to provide material aid to ISIS. Between August and October 2019, McCormick made several statements to others expressing a desire to travel to Syria and join the ranks of ISIS and even pledged allegiance to the organization's leader. On October 12, 2019, he tried to board a flight from Connecticut to Jamaica and from there fly to Syria, but Homeland Security officials prevented him from doing so. In addition, it was stated that he wanted to obtain weapons. On October 19, 2019, he purchased a plane ticket from Toronto to Amman, Jordan, and two days later, on October 21, 2019, he was arrested at a Connecticut airport (US Department of Justice, January 12, 2023).

The battle for hearts and minds

► The editorial of ISIS's Al-Naba weekly was published this week under the title "Wait. We are waiting." It deals with the deep gaps between the believing Muslims and the "infidels" and calls on Muslims to join ISIS in light of the weakness of the West, in order to realize the domination of Islam in the world. According to the author, the division in the Christian ("Crusader") West is enormous, especially in light of the wars and internal struggles from which it suffers, and it is destined to become extinct. The author calls on Muslims to get closer to their religion and join ISIS, in light of the impending defeat of the West, and to bring about the phenomenal success of the Nation of Islam since it is, in his opinion, the most worthy nation to rule the world. The author concludes by claiming that the jihad fighters are the ones who charted the path that will lead to the victory of Islam over its enemies (Al-Naba, Telegram, January 12, 2023).



The article entitled “Wait. We are waiting” (Al-Naba, Telegram, January 12, 2023)

► The Al-Aza’im propaganda arm affiliated with ISIS in Afghanistan published on January 15, 2023, another edition of the Voice of Khurasan magazine (issue number 20). The cover page of the magazine was dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian issue under the title “The rise of the extreme right in Palestine [i.e., Israel] and the silence before the storm of the Muslims”. On the cover page, Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas is seen shaking the hand of US President Joe Biden, and in the background, Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir celebrating his victory on the election night. The main points of the article (consisting of 10 out of the 45 magazine pages):

- ◆ The Muslims are now indifferent to the Palestinian issue, while the “cursed Jews” are working to wipe out every trace of Islam in “Palestine.” Israel usurped the lands of the Muslim Palestinians with the help of the British government, in wars and occupation, in order to erase the Muslims from “Palestine.”
- ◆ The Jews feel animosity towards the Muslims, which is especially manifested under the new right-wing government in Israel, led by Benjamin Netanyahu. The article describes at length the biography of the Minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, and refers to him as a figure that represents the character of the current government in Israel.
- ◆ Allah casts fear on the Jews. The article cites anti-Semitic Islamic traditions which supposedly predict the extermination of the Jews by the Muslims.
- ◆ The solution for the Muslims in “Palestine” will not be through the current Palestinian leadership, but in “a pure Islamic way, which is jihad for the sake of Allah”.

► Other major articles in the magazine criticize the relationship being forged between the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Chinese regime and the attitude of the regime in India towards the Muslims in the country (Telegram, January 15, 2023).



Cover page of the Voice of Khurasan magazine (Telegram, January 15, 2023)

► On January 14, 2023, Al-Malahem, the propaganda arm of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), **published an audiotape of AQAP leader Khalid Batarfi** under the title “O people of faith and God’s sovereignty!²” In the audiotape, Batarfi says that as part of “defensive jihad” (originally, Jihad al-Dafa’), **the Muslims have the duty to remove the American presence from the Arabian Peninsula** and the pro-Iranian presence from Yemen (in the form of the Shiite Houthi movement in Yemen, which is loyal to Iran). In addition, Batarfi calls on the people of Yemen to fight the Saudi and Emirati forces operating in Yemen (Telegram, January 14, 2023).

² The sovereignty of God, in Arabic: Hakimiyya, is the absolute domination of Allah in the world, which is inter alia realized by Islamic religious law, Sharia. The term is used by Salafi-Jihadi Islam.



**AQAP leader Khalid Batarfi on the slide that accompanies the audiotape
(Telegram, January 14, 2023)**