



Spotlight on Global Jihad

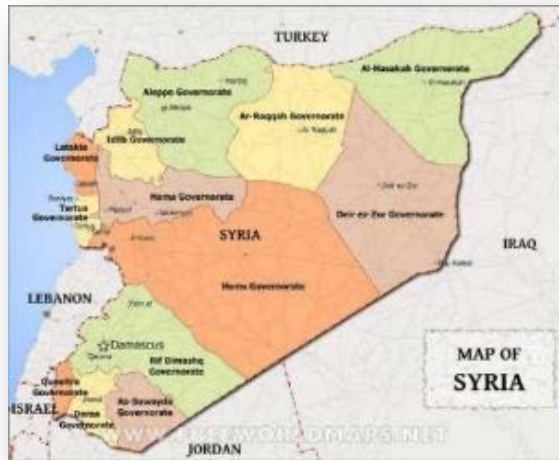
March 23-29, 2023



Main events of the past week

- ▶ **This week, ISIS continued its relatively moderate activity around the world. Its center of activity was in Nigeria.**
- ▶ **In Syria, ISIS operatives continue to attack people who collect truffle mushrooms in the desert region.** About 100 people were killed and several dozens were kidnapped.
- ▶ **Iraq:** ISIS operatives carried out several attacks against the Iraqi security forces in the western Al-Anbar Province, in the Iraq-Syria border area, and the Iraq-Saudi border area.
- ▶ **Africa:**
 - ◆ **Nigeria:** ISIS continued to carry out attacks mainly against security forces in the northeast of the country. The Nigerian army continued its counterterrorism activity. Dozens of ISIS operatives were killed.
 - ◆ **The Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Ten Christian citizens were killed by ISIS in the east of the country.
- ▶ **In Afghanistan,** at least six people were killed in an ISIS suicide attack near the Foreign Ministry building in Kabul. The acting leader of ISIS's Khorasan (Afghanistan) Province and two other senior ISIS members were killed by the Taliban in counterterrorism activity in the north of the country.

The Syrian arena¹



Map of Syria's provinces (freeworldmaps.net)

ISIS activity

The desert region

► This week, ISIS operatives continued to attack civilians and fighters who were collecting truffle mushrooms:

- ◆ On March 28, 2023, ISIS operatives killed three civilians in the rural area of Al-Salamiyah, about 30 km southeast of Hama. There were also reports of missing people in that attack (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 28, 2023).
- ◆ On March 26, 2023, gunmen attacked several civilians in the area of the Shaer gas field, about 150 km northwest of Palmyra. Four civilians were killed and two were kidnapped (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 26, 2023).
- ◆ On March 23, 2023, ISIS operatives killed seven civilians and eight tribal fighters east of Ithriya, about 95 km northeast of Hama. Over 40 other people were declared missing after being kidnapped by ISIS (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, March 24, 2023).

Al-Hasakah region

► On March 23, 2023, an IED was activated against an SDF vehicle in the Al-Dashisha area, about 80 km south of Al-Hasakah. Four fighters were wounded (Telegram, March 24, 2023).

¹ According to ISIS claims of responsibility and international media.



**Documentation of ISIS operatives shooting at a Popular Mobilization vehicle
(Telegram, March 27, 2023)**

► On March 25, 2023, an Iraqi army compound was targeted by medium and heavy weapons fire on the road between Al-Nekheib and Arar, near the border between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The compound was damaged. On the same day, an Iraqi army vehicle in the area was also targeted by gunfire. Several soldiers were wounded (Telegram, March 25, 2023).

Counterterrorism

Nineveh Province

► On March 27, 2023, the Iraqi security forces arrested four ISIS operatives in the Nineveh Province (Al-Sumaria, March 27, 2023).

Diyala Province

► Iraqi security forces, acting on intelligence, arrested three wanted ISIS operatives. Two of them were in possession of explosives, weapons, and ISIS flags (Al-Sumaria, March 28, 2023).

► On March 27, 2023, the Federal Intelligence and Investigations Agency, which operates within the framework of the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, announced the arrest of three wanted ISIS operatives on suspicion that they had provided logistical assistance to ISIS operatives in the Diyala Province and passed on information about the movements of the Iraqi security forces in the province (Iraqi News Agency, March 27, 2023).



The three ISIS operatives who were arrested (Iraqi News Agency, March 27, 2023)

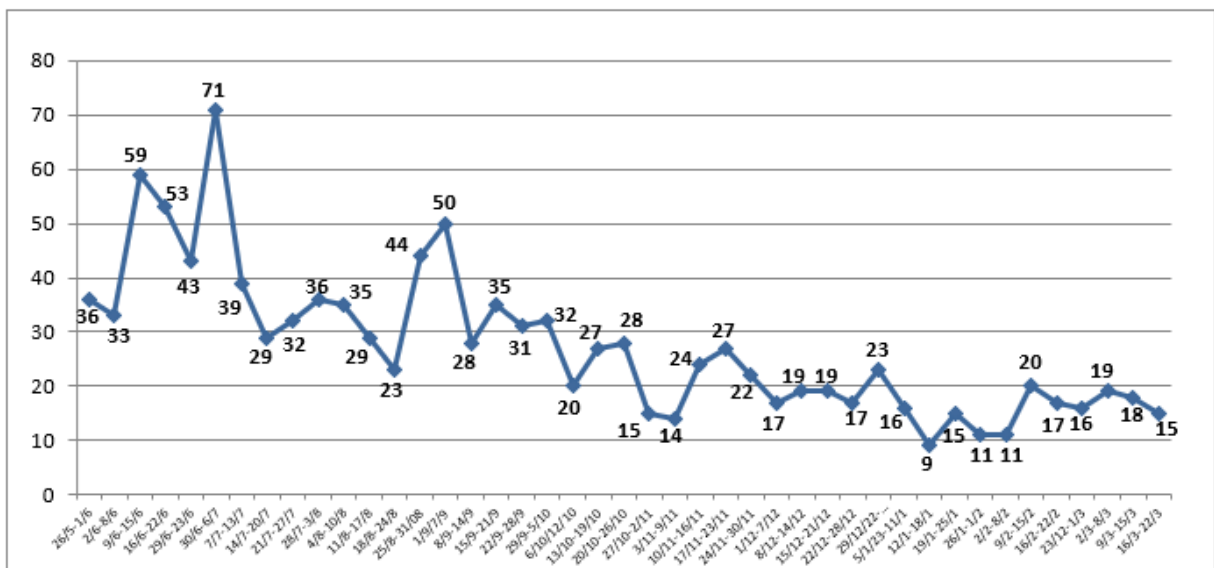
Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

► An infographic published by ISIS's Al-Naba weekly, summing up ISIS's activity around the globe on March 16-22, 2023, indicates that the organization carried out 15 attacks in its various provinces (compared to 18 in the previous week). The largest number of attacks was carried out by the West Africa Province (8). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Iraq (2); Khorasan, i.e. Afghanistan (2); Central Africa (2); and Mozambique (1). A total of 39 people were killed and wounded in the attacks, compared to 191 in the previous week. The largest number of casualties was in the West Africa Province (14). The other casualties were in the following provinces: Central Africa (13); Iraq (6); Khorasan (Afghanistan) (5); and Mozambique (1) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, March 23, 2023).



Summary of ISIS attacks (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, March 23, 2023)

ISIS attacks by week (according to ISIS data)



by the Nigerian army force, two ISIS operatives were located and killed in the exchange of fire. One Nigerian soldier was wounded (Zagazola, March 27, 2023).

► Following are additional incidents:

- ◆ On March 26, 2023, an attack was carried out against a checkpoint of militias supporting the Nigerian army in the town of Yamtage, about 85 km southeast of Maiduguri. Two fighters were killed (Telegram, March 27, 2023).
- ◆ On March 25, 2023, an attack was carried out against a Nigerian army checkpoint near the town of Kawauri, about 30 km southeast of Maiduguri. According to ISIS, the soldiers manning the checkpoint fled. One vehicle caught fire. A medium machine gun was seized (Telegram, March 26, 2023). In this context, a local source reported on March 25, 2023, that a Nigerian army force had repelled ISIS's attack and killed several operatives of the organization (Zagazola, March 25, 2023).
- ◆ On March 24, 2023, an attack was carried out against a checkpoint of militias supporting the Nigerian army in the town of Monguno, about 100 km northeast of Maiduguri. The fighters manning the checkpoint fled. One assault rifle was seized (Telegram, March 25, 2023).
- ◆ On March 23, 2023, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army foot patrol on the road between the towns of Sabon Gari and Wajiroko, southwest of Maiduguri. One soldier was killed. Another IED was activated in the area against a motorized patrol. An armored vehicle was destroyed and the passengers on board were killed or wounded (Telegram, March 25, 2023)
- ◆ On March 23, 2023, three mortar shells were fired at a Nigerian army camp in the town of Wajiroko, about 100 km southwest of Maiduguri. No casualties or material damage were reported (Telegram, March 24, 2023).
- ◆ On March 22, 2023, an attack was carried out against a Nigerian police headquarters in the town of Gajiram, about 70 km north of Maiduguri. Policemen manning the headquarters reportedly fled. The police headquarters and a police vehicle were set on fire (Telegram, March 23, 2023).
- ◆ On March 20, 2023, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army vehicle in the town of Malam Fatori, about 200 km north of Maiduguri. The passengers on board were killed or wounded. On the same day, an IED was also activated against a Nigerian army foot patrol. Several soldiers were killed or wounded (Telegram, March 23, 2023).

Counterterrorism

- ▶ On the night of March 25-26, 2023, a Nigerian army force operated with the assistance of local fighters³ against an ISIS hideout in the Dikwa region, about 80 km northeast of Maiduguri, in northeastern Nigeria. Forty ISIS operatives and a commander in the organization were killed. Others fled (Zagazola, March 26, 2023). The day after, on March 27, 2023, it was reported that an ISIS commander named Abu Muhammad executed his deputy, Abu Dardaa, after holding him responsible for the failure to stop the Nigerian army's attack as well as the failure of an ISIS attack on March 19, 2023, in the Mafa region, about 45 km east of Maiduguri. Dozens of ISIS operatives were killed in these attacks (Telegram, March 27, 2023).
- ▶ On March 25, 2023, a Nigerian army force operated with the collaboration of local fighters against six Boko Haram camps on the edge of the Sambisa Forest, about 60 km southeast of Maiduguri. An unknown number of Boko Haram operatives were killed (Zagazola, March 26, 2023).

Senior Boko Haram operative killed

- ▶ **Awana Gaidam, 39, a senior Boko Haram operative and the organization's main manufacturer of IEDs**, was killed while traveling in a vehicle in the Sambisa Forest. He was killed in a "work accident" after stepping on one of his own IEDs that was part of many IEDs planted by him in strategic places to fortify Boko Haram's positions in the Sambisa Forest. It was noted that Gaidam had planned many attacks against Nigerian army troops that moved on the main roads in Borno State, and that his death is a serious blow to Boko Haram's operational capabilities. In this context, it was reported that **since 2022, Boko Haram and ISIS have activated over 90 IEDs in northeastern Nigeria** (Zagazola, March 28, 2023).

³ Civilian Joint Task Force – CJTF.



Awana Gaidam, a senior Boko Haram operative (Zagazola, March 28, 2023)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

ISIS activity

► On March 23, 2023, an attack was carried out against a Christian village in the Beni area, about 50 km west of the border with Uganda. Ten Christian citizens were kidnapped and executed. Over 15 houses and seven motorcycles were set on fire (Telegram, March 25, 2023).

Mozambique

ISIS activity

► On March 24, 2023, an IED was activated against a Mozambican army patrol between the villages of Namakul and Mandaba, in the Muidumbe region, in the province of Cabo Delgado, in the northeast of the country. Soldiers on board an armored vehicle were killed or wounded (Telegram, March 27, 2023).

Cameroon

ISIS activity

► On March 21, 2023, a large IED was activated against a Cameroonian army patrol on the road between the towns of Kolofata and Amchide, southwest of the Cameroon-Nigeria border. Ten soldiers were killed or wounded. One vehicle was destroyed (Telegram, March 24, 2023).

Somalia

ISIS activity

► On March 22, 2023, there was an exchange of fire with a foot patrol of the Puntland Security Force (PSF)⁴, who tried to advance towards the ISIS positions near the town of Balli Tiddin, about 135 km to the southeast of Bosaso, in northeastern Somalia. One officer was killed and two fighters were wounded. One assault rifle was seized (Telegram, March 25, 2023).

Asia

Afghanistan

ISIS activity

► On March 27, 2023, at approximately 15:00 (local time), an explosion occurred on the road leading to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Kabul. Taliban Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Nafi Takoor announced that members of the security forces spotted a suicide bomber and shot at him while he was in front of a business center near the Foreign Ministry building. As a result of the shooting, a charge he was carrying on his body was activated. At least six civilians were killed and others were wounded, including three Taliban fighters. According to another local source, 12 people were evacuated for medical treatment (The Muslim News, March 28, 2023).



**The suicide bombing attack near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in Kabul
(TOLO News YouTube channel, March 28, 2023)**

► ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. According to its statement, a suicide bomber codenamed **Abdel Hamid al-Khorasani** (i.e., from Afghanistan) arrived on March 27, 2023, near the main entrance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building in central Kabul. He activated his explosive belt near a checkpoint against Foreign Ministry employees, including

⁴ Puntland Security Force, PSF: active in the fields of enforcement, counterterrorism, and internal security.

diplomats and security guards who exited the building. According to ISIS, about 20 people were killed or wounded in the explosion, including diplomats. ISIS said that this was the second suicide bombing attack carried out against the Taliban Foreign Ministry. The first attack was carried out on January 11, 2023, in which 20 people were killed⁵ (Amaq, Telegram, March 27, 2023).



The terrorist who carried out the suicide bombing attack (Telegram, March 27, 2023)

Counterterrorism

► The Afghan General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) announced that on March 26, 2023, a special operation was conducted against ISIS in Balkh Province, in the north of the country. Three senior ISIS operatives were killed:

- ◆ **Mawlawi Ziauddin**, also known as Mawlawi Muhammad, acting leader of ISIS's Khorasan Province (Afghanistan) and number two in this province, who was responsible for administrative and legal affairs.
- ◆ **Abu Omar Afridi**, who served as a senior member of ISIS's Khorasan Province Council.
- ◆ **Ustad Salman al-Tajikistani**, a citizen of Tajikistan, an expert in making IEDs and a combat instructor (GDI Twitter account, March 26, 2023; Khaama Press, March 27, 2023).

⁵ For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from January 19, 2023, "Spotlight on Global Jihad (January 12-18, 2023)," <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il>

Pakistan

ISIS activity

► On March 26, 2023, a Pakistani intelligence “spy” was targeted by gunfire in the Tarkho Bazar area, in Bajaur, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. He was wounded (Telegram, March 27, 2023).

United States

► On March 23, 2023, the Supreme Court of the State of New York in Manhattan sentenced Abdullah el-Faisal, a Muslim preacher from Jamaica, to 18 years in prison. He was convicted of terrorist activity (The New York Times, March 23, 2023; AP, January 27, 2023). El-Faisal, who operated in the UK and Kenya, was arrested in Jamaica in 2017, and extradited to the US. He was arrested after contacting a woman in New York via WhatsApp in 2016, when she expressed a desire to become a jihadist. He offered to help her join ISIS and introduced her to an ISIS operative. He did not know that the woman was actually an undercover New York Police Department police officer. Five indictments were filed against him, including conspiracy and support for ISIS terrorist activity (The New York Times, November 28, 2022).

Canada

► On March 23, 2023, it was reported that 19 ISIS women and their children, who are staying in detention camps run by the Kurdish forces in northeastern Syria, are to arrive in Canada in the coming days, after the Canadian federal government agreed in January 2023 to repatriate them to its territory. The fate of 10 additional children, born to four non-Canadian mothers but who are of Canadian citizenship, is unknown since they were given the option to give them up and send them to Canada or leave them in their custody under harsh living conditions in the detention camps (CBC, March 23, 2023).

Belgium

► The Office of the Chief Prosecutor in Belgium reported that the Federal Police had arrested eight people, jihad operatives, in a counterterrorism operation carried out throughout the country, as part of an operation designed to thwart possible attacks. It was reported that suspects were arrested in Brussels and Antwerp who were planning to carry out terrorist attacks in Belgium. Reportedly, there was a connection between the two squads and this is under investigation (CBS News, March 28, 2023).