



Spotlight on Global Jihad

July 27 – August 2, 2023



Main events of the past week

- ▶ **This week, ISIS operatives carried out three noteworthy attacks: two attacks were carried out at the Al-Sayyida Zaynab Shrine, south of Damascus, a Shiite pilgrimage site. Another attack was carried out in Pakistan during a political gathering ahead of the elections.**
- ▶ **Iraq:** Security forces continued their counterterrorism activities against ISIS's infrastructure in the various provinces. One of ISIS's senior commanders, described as "dangerous," was detained.
- ▶ **Nigeria:** ISIS's activity against the military forces continued, although this week it was relatively moderate. **Somalia:** The Somali army reported that it had acted, in collaboration with the US army, against the Al-Shabaab infrastructure. According to Al-Shabaab, there was no military activity against it, and it was rather Al-Shabaab that acted against the Somali military forces.
- ▶ **Pakistan:** An ISIS suicide bomber carried out an attack during a political conference in Bajaur Province, east of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. At least 54 people were killed and about 200 were wounded.

The Syrian Arena



Provinces of Syria (Free World Maps)

ISIS's activity

Damascus area

► During the week, two terrorist attacks were carried out at the Shiite Al-Sayyida Zaynab¹ pilgrimage site, south of Damascus. Both attacks were carried out around Ashura Day,² which is marked by the Shiites.

- ◆ On July 25, 2023, a motorcycle bomb was detonated near a bus carrying pilgrims in the vicinity of Al-Rawda Square. Two people were wounded. Material damage was also caused (Akhbar al-Shia; Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 25, 2023).

¹ Al-Sayyida Zaynab (popularly called Al-Set Zaynab) was the beloved daughter of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib, founder of Shia and grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Her tomb, located in southern Damascus, is a pilgrimage site for Shiites from around the world.

² Ashura Day marks the day of the Battle of Karbala, which took place in 680 AD (61 H). On this day, Imam Hussein bin Ali and many members of the family of Ali bin Abi Talib, the worthy heir in the eyes of the Shiites to succeed the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Islamic nation, were killed. For Shiites, the battle became a symbol of sacrifice, martyrdom, and a cause of frustration and anger against the Sunnis, who took the supremacy from Ali's family, deprived them and persecuted them over the years.



Right: The scene of the attack (Akhbar al-Shia, July 25, 2023); Left: The bus that was hit (@FA6969Di Twitter account, July 25, 2023)

◆ On July 27, 2023, a motorcycle bomb was detonated near a taxi on Kou' al-Sudan Street, opposite the Sayyidat al-Sham Hotel. Six people were killed and 23 others were wounded (SANA, July 27, 2023). Two days later, the death toll reportedly rose to ten. Five children, a woman, a man, a member of the security forces, and two non-Syrians were killed (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 29, 2023).



Right: The scene of the attack (@Hatmi1Salim Twitter account, July 27, 2023). Left: The wreckage of the vehicle (SANA, July 27, 2023)

► On July 28, 2023, ISIS issued an announcement claiming responsibility for the two attacks in Al-Sayyida Zaynab, in which, according to ISIS, a motorcycle bomb was detonated near a bus carrying Shiite pilgrims and near a taxi. At the end of its statement, ISIS threatened, “Let the objectionists [i.e., Shiites] know that our war against them continues everywhere” (Telegram, Amaq, July 28, 2023).

Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen

► On August 1, 2023, an SDF fighter was shot and killed in the village of Al-Dahleh, about 10 km southeast of Deir ez-Zor (Telegram, August 1, 2023).

► On July 31, 2023, an SDF vehicle was targeted by gunfire in the town of Al-Shheil, about 10 km north of Al-Mayadeen. The passengers were wounded. The vehicle was put out of commission (Telegram, August 1, 2023).

Hama Province

► On July 28, 2023, an IED was activated against a Syrian army vehicle east of the 'Aqirbat area, about 60 km east of Hama. The passengers were killed or wounded. The vehicle was destroyed (Telegram, July 31, 2023).

Counterterrorism

Al-Hasakah Province

► On July 28, 2023, SDF special units operated against ISIS operatives in the Al-Hol camp, where family members of ISIS operatives are being detained. Five operatives in ISIS terrorist cells were detained (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, July 28, 2023).

Iraq



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

ISIS's activity by province³

Salah al-Din Province

► On July 31, 2023, an Iraqi police compound was targeted by gunfire in the Jallam al-Dour area, about 100 km northwest of Baghdad. Three policemen were wounded, and a thermal

³ According to ISIS's claims of responsibility and the global media.

camera was destroyed. In an exchange of fire that took place with an aid force arriving at the scene, a vehicle was put out of commission (Telegram, August 1, 2023).

Kirkuk Province

► On July 28, 2023, an Iraqi police vehicle was targeted by gunfire near a hospital in the city of Kirkuk. A police officer was wounded (Telegram, July 31, 2023).

Counterterrorism

Baghdad Province

► On July 27, 2023, a force of the National Intelligence Agency detained Muthanna Mohammad Jabbar 'Ifrit, aka Abu Harith Baghdad, one of ISIS's commanders who was described as "dangerous." Jabbar 'Ifrit joined the ranks of ISIS in 2009 as commander of the Al-Qadisiya Division and operated in the Nineveh Province. After ISIS's defeat in 2017, reports of his death were circulated to stop the searches for him and the attempts to bring him to justice (Iraqi News Agency, July 28, 2023).



ISIS commander detained in Baghdad (Iraqi News Agency, July 28, 2023)

Nineveh Province

► On July 27, 2023, a force of the Federal Intelligence and Investigations Agency detained four ISIS operatives (the exact location was not specified). The four admitted their affiliation with ISIS and their activities in various frameworks within the organization (Iraqi News Agency, July 27, 2023).



The four ISIS operatives detained in the Nineveh Province (Iraqi News Agency, July 27, 2023)

Al-Anbar Province

► On July 28, 2023, an Iraqi Military Intelligence force detained two ISIS operatives (the exact location was not specified) (SecMedCell Facebook page, July 28, 2023).



Two ISIS operatives detained in Al-Anbar Province (SecMedCell Facebook page, July 28, 2023)

► On July 26, 2023, a military intelligence force operating in coordination with a ground force located an old ISIS workshop for manufacturing IEDs in Al-Nu'aimeyah Al-Hayakil in southern Fallujah, about 40 km west of Baghdad. A large quantity of equipment used to make various IEDs and more than 200 IEDs were found in the workshop (Iraqi News Agency, July 26, 2023).

Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

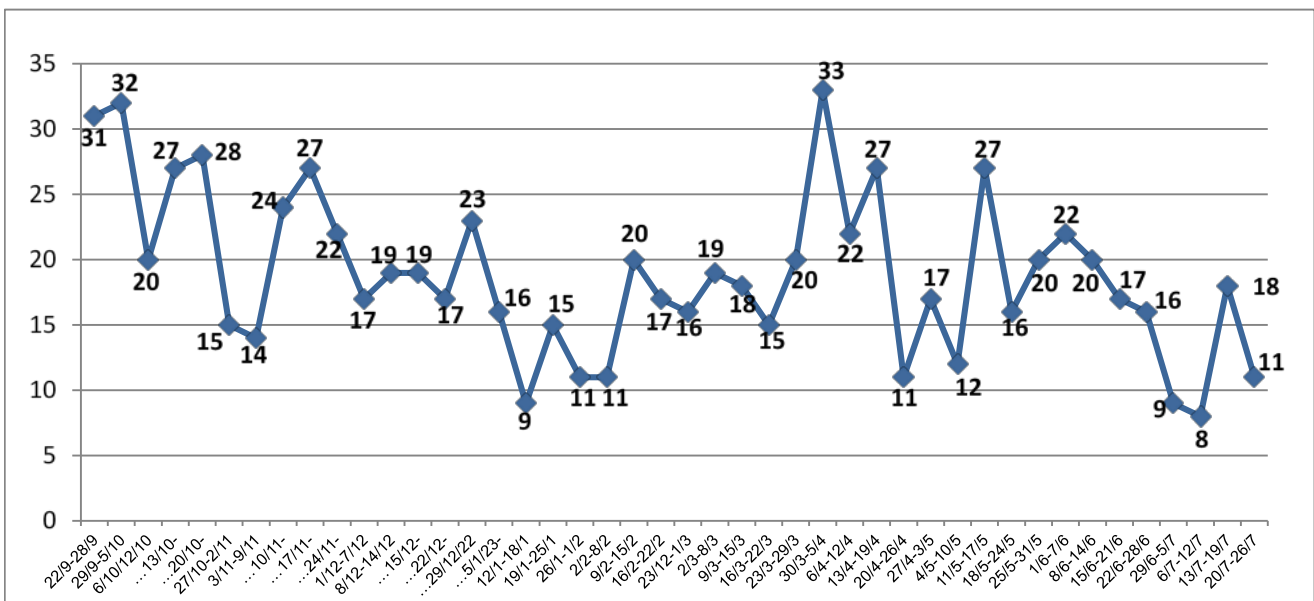
► An infographic published by Al-Naba, ISIS's weekly, summarizing ISIS's activity on July 20-26, 2023, indicates that during this period, ISIS operatives carried out 11 attacks in various provinces (compared with 18 in the previous week). The highest number of attacks were carried out by operatives of the West Africa Province (4). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Syria (2); Iraq (2); Central Africa (1); Pakistan (1) and Somalia (1). A total of 25 people were killed and wounded in the attacks, compared with 37 in the previous week. The largest number of casualties was in the Syria Province (11). In other provinces: West Africa (5); Iraq (4);

Central Africa (3); Pakistan (1); and Somalia (1) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 27, 2023). This represents a moderate decline in ISIS’s activity around the world.



Summary of ISIS attacks (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, July 27, 2023)

Weekly attacks (according to ISIS’s figures)



Africa

Nigeria

ISIS’s activity

► On July 31, 2023, an attack was carried out against Christian civilians in the village of Laoan Malomati, about 300 km south of Maiduguri, close to the Nigeria-Cameroon border. The civilians fled. A church and several houses were set on fire (Telegram, August 1, 2023).

►On July 27, 2023, a Nigerian government “spy” was kidnapped and shot dead in the town of Gujba, about 20 km south of Damaturu, Yobe State, in northeastern Nigeria (Telegram, July 29, 2023).

►On July 27, 2023, an attack was carried out against a staging area of forces supporting the Nigerian army in the town of Ajiri, about 15 km south of Maiduguri. The fighters fled. Three assault rifles were seized, and the staging area was set on fire (Telegram, July 29, 2023).

►On July 27, 2023, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army patrol between the towns of Ajiri and Mafa (about 40 km northeast of Maiduguri). Soldiers in an armored vehicle were killed or wounded. The armored vehicle was destroyed (Telegram, July 29, 2023).

Somalia

ISIS’s activity

►On July 26, 2023, an IED was activated against a Somali intelligence operative in the Yaaqshiid area of Mogadishu. He was killed (Telegram, July 26, 2023).

Al-Shabaab activity

►On July 27, 2023, Al-Shabaab operatives activated two IEDs at the Bakaara (market) junction in central Mogadishu. Two members of the Somali Intelligence and Security Apparatus, including an officer, were killed and five others were wounded. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks (TRACTerrorism, July 28, 2023).

Counterterrorism

►According to reports, Somali army forces, in collaboration with the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), killed more than 100 operatives, including senior commanders, in Middle Shabelle and Galgaduud, northeast of Mogadishu. A base used by the operatives and ten vehicles were destroyed (Somalia News Agency, July 28-29, 2023).

►Al-Shabaab issued a denial claiming that at that time no Somali army activity had been carried out against it in these areas and that the photos published on Somali TV documenting the activity were actually photos taken on July 11, 2023, by Al-Shabaab, showing US Army vehicles and Somali Army Special Forces with a car bomb being detonated against them and an attack by Al-Shabaab on the outskirts of the city of Afmadow in southern Somalia. According to Al-Shabaab, in the same combined attack, at least 35 soldiers of the Special Forces and three commanders of the Somali army were killed, and 37 soldiers and six officers were wounded (Shahada News Agency, July 29, 2023).

Asia

Pakistan – ISIS suicide bombing attack

► On July 30, 2023, a suicide bomber activated his explosive vest near the stage during a political conference ahead of the elections in Pakistan in the city of Khar, the capital of Bajaur Province, on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The conference was attended by about 400 members of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Assembly of Islamic Clerics) party, which is a key member of the coalition in Pakistan. According to a rescue worker, 54 people were killed and nearly 200 were wounded (Al-Jazeera, July 31, 2023).

► ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, noting that a suicide bomber codenamed Abdallah al-Muhajir (the migrant) entered a place where a political conference was being held wearing an explosive vest and detonated it near party members and officials. According to ISIS, at least 60 people were killed, including senior party officials, and dozens were wounded. At the end of its claim of responsibility, ISIS noted that the attack was carried out as part of ISIS's ongoing fight against democracy, as it is a regime hostile to Islam and Sharia (Amaq, Telegram, July 31, 2023).



The terrorist who carried out the suicide bombing attack (Amaq, Telegram, July 31, 2023)

India

► On July 27, 2023, a UN report was published according to which relations between Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, which took over the country in August 2021, remain close. The UN also referred in the report to the infiltration of Al-Qaeda operatives into its law enforcement agency and the country's public administration. According to the report, the cooperation encourages the expansion of Al-Qaeda's activity to other regions such as Kashmir, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. According to the report, Al-Qaeda has about 400 fighters in Afghanistan and about 200 in India (Hindustan Times, July 27, 2023).

Kuwait

► On July 27, 2023, five people were executed in Kuwait's central prison. One of them is Abdulrahman Sabah Idan, a taxi driver who drove ISIS's Saudi terrorist who carried out the first suicide bombing attack of its kind at a Shiite mosque in Kuwait. The attack, for which ISIS claimed responsibility, killed 27 people and wounded 227 (AP, July 28, 2023). Sabah Idan was an illegal resident in Kuwait and was discovered hiding in a house in southern Kuwait City (Al-Hayat; Asharq Al-Awsat, June 28, 2015).

Turkey

► Turkish police forces raided 15 houses in eight areas throughout Istanbul and detained 16 people on suspicion of ties to ISIS and Al-Qaeda (Anatolia News Agency, July 27, 2023).

United Kingdom

► The British government officially announced that ISIS's actions against Iraq's Yazidi minority were considered "genocide." According to the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, this recognition follows a recent ruling by the Federal Court of Germany, which accused a former ISIS operative of genocide and crimes against humanity. It was the first time a member of a terrorist organization had been convicted of genocide. Britain's decision was issued ahead of events to be held in Baghdad to mark nine years of ISIS's activity against the Yazidi minority (The East African, August 1, 2023).

United States

► On July 27, 2023, the US Department of State designated Abdiweli Mohamed Yusuf as a wanted terrorist. Mohamed Yusuf is ISIS's head of the finance office in Somalia and has played a key role in transferring funds to finance the organization's activities in Africa. ISIS's branch in Somalia exploits the weakness of the central government and finances its activities by extorting financial institutions, financial service providers, and local businesses. They also provide money transfer services using various methods, including transfer via mobile phones as well as Hawala⁴ (US Department of State, July 27, 2023).

► On July 31, 2023, the US imposed sanctions on 18 Al-Qaeda operatives, ISIS **collaborators**, and 29 companies in the Maldives. The sanctions prohibit dealing with them, cooperation with

⁴ Hawala is a popular informal money transfer system which follows Muslim tradition and is based on a network of money changers rather than money transfers through computer systems between banks. These money changers, referred to as Hawaladars, are spread around the world mainly in the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Indian subcontinent (Wikipedia).

companies associated with them, and their entry into US territory. Matthew Miller, the department spokesman, said these individuals are leaders and members of terrorist organizations based in the Maldives. One of them was designated by the United States back in 2019 as a key recruiter for ISIS's Khorasan Province (Starconnect Media, July 31, 2023).

Families of ISIS victims in Syria sue cement manufacturer

►About 12 families of ISIS victims in Syria are suing LaFarge, a French cement manufacturer, which admitted to paying ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front to continue operating in Syria during the civil war. It is the first company in US history to be convicted of bribing a foreign terrorist organization. The investigation also focuses on steps French politicians and intelligence agencies have taken to save the company from legal proceedings against it and how the process of financing ISIS in Syria ultimately financed the Paris attacks in November 2015 (TRT World, July 31, 2023).

Canada

►A 34-year-old man from Toronto, Canada is suspected of being an ISIS financier and charged with terrorism-related offenses. According to the police, the suspect is part of an international network of ISIS supporters who use online and encrypted messaging platforms to recruit and provide financial support for ISIS. It was noted that the police began investigating the matter in March 2021 in international cooperation with investigators from Spain. According to the police, the suspect also conspired with the organization to carry out attacks against foreign embassies in Afghanistan and provided propaganda and research materials for attacks carried out in Afghanistan against foreign nationals (CBC, July 29, 2023).