



# Spotlight on Global Jihad

## August 3-9, 2023



### Main events of the past week

► **This week, there was a decline in the scope of ISIS activity around the world. The organization's activity was concentrated in Syria and Africa.**

► **ISIS announced the death of its leader (caliph) and the appointment of a new leader, Abu Hafs al-Hashemi al-Qurashi.**<sup>1</sup> Operatives of several provinces have already pledged allegiance to the new leader.

► **Syria:** At least ten fighters of the Syrian army and the forces supporting it were wounded in an attack carried out by ISIS east of Al-Raqqah. In another incident, two officers and four soldiers were killed in attacks carried out by operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated HTS against Syrian army positions in the western area of the rebel enclave in Idlib. Four SDF fighters were killed in ISIS IED and shooting attacks in the regions of Al-Raqqah and Al-Hasakah.

► **Africa:**

◆ **Nigeria:** ISIS operatives carried out several attacks against the Nigerian security forces in the northeast of the country.

◆ **Mali:** A Malian army convoy was attacked in the border area between Mali and Niger. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks, noting that 13 soldiers were killed and three others were abducted.

◆ **Somalia:** According to Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre, the Somali army is ready for a large-scale operation against the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab. According to reports, there are about 10,000 Somali soldiers ready for the operation. At the same time, ten employees of Somalia's intelligence agency, NISA, who passed on information to Al-Shabaab, were reportedly arrested. As far as we know, this is Al-Shabaab's deepest penetration into state apparatuses, reported to date.

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For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from August 8, 2023, "ISIS has announced the <sup>1</sup> death of its leader and the appointment of a new leader"

- ◆ **Cameroon:** Boko Haram militants kidnapped 15 people in two villages in Lake Chad. Five fishermen kidnapped before were executed after refusing to pay taxes used to finance terrorism.

## ISIS declared the death of its leader and the appointment of a new leader

- On August 3, 2023, ISIS's Al-Furqan Media Foundation released an audiotape of ISIS spokesman, Abu Hudhaifa al-Ansari, announcing the death of ISIS's leader, Abu al-Hussein al-Husseini al-Qurashi, and the appointment of his replacement, Abu Hafs al-Hashemi al-Qurashi. ISIS spokesman blamed the leader's death on HTS (Telegram, August 4, 2023). HTS issued a statement denying its involvement in the killing of ISIS's leader (Syria TV, August 5, 2023).
- Following the announcement, ISIS operatives from the provinces of Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Al-Sahel, West Africa, and Central Africa pledged allegiance to the new leader. As was the case in previous cases when a new ISIS leader was announced, additional pledges of allegiance by other provinces are expected to be published in the coming days.



**Operatives of ISIS's Yemen Province (right) and ISIS's Al-Sahel Province (left) pledge allegiance to the new leader (Telegram, August 7, 2023)**



Operatives of ISIS's Central Africa Province pledge allegiance to the new leader (Telegram, August 8, 2023)

## The Syrian Arena



Provinces of Syria (Free World Maps)

### ISIS's activity Al-Raqqa region

- ▶ On August 8, 2023, ISIS operatives attacked positions of the Syrian army and the forces supporting it in the town of Ma'dan Atiq, in the southeastern periphery of Al-Raqqa. At least ten fighters were killed and several others were wounded. ISIS operatives took over the positions and left after several hours. Vehicles and caravans used by the fighters were set on fire (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, August 8, 2023).
- ▶ On August 5, 2023, an IED was activated against an SDF vehicle in the village of Khneiz, about 30 km north of Al-Raqqa. Two fighters were killed and another was wounded (Telegram, August 5, 2023).

►On August 5, 2023, an SDF fighter was shot dead in the city of Tabqa, about 40 km southwest of Al-Raqqah (Telegram, August 5, 2023).

### Idlib region

►On August 6, 2023, operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated HTS carried out three attacks against Syrian army positions in the Latakia area, the western part of the rebel enclave in Idlib. Two Syrian army officers and four soldiers were killed (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, August 6, 2023).

### Al-Hasakah region

►On August 2, 2023, an SDF vehicle was targeted by gunfire in the Al-Saada area, about 80 km south of Al-Hasakah. One fighter was killed and four others were wounded (Telegram, August 2, 2023).

### Deir ez-Zor-Al-Mayadeen region

►On August 6, 2023, ISIS operatives hung leaflets on several houses in the town of Al-Tayyana, about 7 km southeast of Al-Mayadeen, threatening to execute the women in that town if they did not adhere to strict Sharia clothing (i.e., clothing that covers the woman's entire body, including her face and hands) (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, August 6, 2023). This is an ISIS attempt to impose its governance in the region.



One of the leaflets posted by ISIS operatives (Ugarit Post, August 6, 2023)

# Iraq



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

## Counterterrorism Kirkuk Province

► On August 7, 2023, the Iraqi security forces detained two ISIS operatives (the exact location was not specified). The two admitted their affiliation with ISIS and their activities in various frameworks within the organization. One of them served in ISIS's morality police (Al-Hisbah) and was responsible for planting IEDs and detonating them in the homes of members of the Iraqi security forces. The other took part in the fighting against the Kurdish Peshmerga forces (Iraqi News Agency, August 7, 2023).



Two ISIS operatives detained in the Kirkuk province (Iraqi News Agency, August 7, 2023)

## Baghdad Province

► On August 6, 2023, Iraqi intelligence teams detained three wanted ISIS operatives in the city of Baghdad. The three admitted their affiliation with the organization (Iraqi News Agency, August 6, 2023).



**The three ISIS operatives detained in Baghdad (Iraqi News Agency, August 6, 2023)**

## Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

► An infographic published by Al-Naba, ISIS's weekly, summarizing ISIS's activity in the period between July 27 and August 2, 2023, indicates that during this period, ISIS carried out 31 attacks in the various provinces (compared with 11 in the previous week). The highest number of attacks were carried out by operatives from the provinces of Syria and the Sahel (8 each). Attacks carried out in other provinces: West Africa (7); Iraq (5); Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan and Pakistan) (2); and Central Africa (1). A total of 441 people were killed and wounded in the attacks, compared with 25 in the previous week. The largest number of casualties was in Khorasan Province (Afghanistan and Pakistan) (270). In the other provinces: Syria (76); the Sahel (75); West Africa (10); Iraq (7); Central Africa (3) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, August 3, 2023). Based on the above data, this is a significant increase in ISIS's activity around the world. The significant increase in the number of casualties is the result of an ISIS suicide bombing attack carried out in Pakistan on July 30, 2023, killing 250 people.<sup>2</sup>

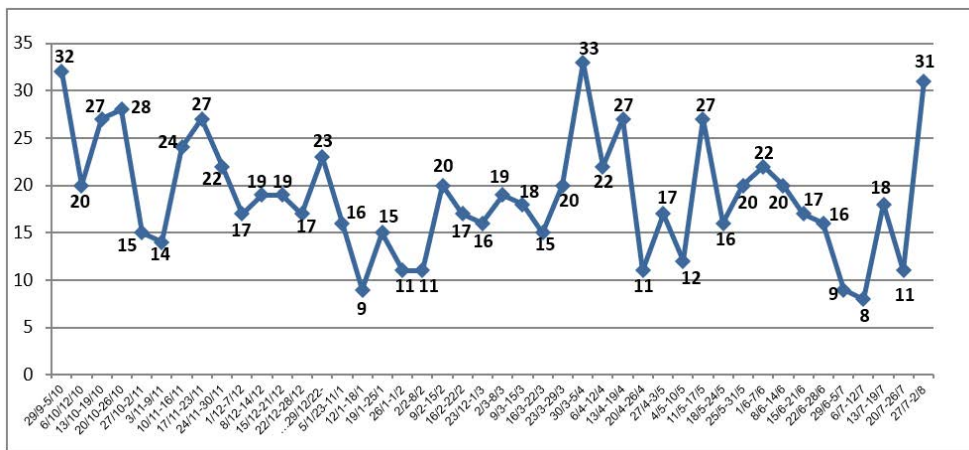
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For details about the attack, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from August 3, 2023, "Spotlight on<sup>2</sup> Global Jihad, July 27 - August 2, 2023"



Summary of ISIS attacks (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, August 3, 2023)

Attacks by week (according to ISIS’s figures)



**Africa**  
**Nigeria**  
**ISIS’s activity**

- On August 5, 2023, ISIS operatives traveling in several vehicles and motorcycles attacked soldiers of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) stationed in Monguno, about 100 km northeast of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria. In the exchange of fire, which lasted about half an hour, the attack was repulsed, and several ISIS operatives were killed (Zagazola, August 6, 2023).
- On August 4, 2023, an attack was carried out against the Christian town of Bambi, in Borno State. There were exchanges of fire with local militia fighters. At least ten militia fighters were killed and wounded (Telegram, August 7, 2023).

►On August 4, 2023, an attack was carried out against a Nigerian army headquarters near the town of Monguno. Several soldiers were killed and wounded. ISIS operatives seized equipment (Telegram, August 7, 2023).

►On August 1, 2023, an IED was activated against a Nigerian army foot patrol near the town of Malam Fatori, in northeastern Nigeria, near the border with Niger. Several soldiers were wounded (Telegram, August 3, 2023).

►On July 31, 2023, an attack was carried out against a Nigerian police checkpoint near the town of Geidam, about 30 km south of the Nigeria-Niger border. Two policemen were wounded (Telegram, August 2, 2023).

### **Counterterrorism**

►On August 4-5, 2023, Nigerian military forces, in collaboration with local militia fighters (CJTF – The Civilian Joint Task Force), operated against Boko Haram operatives' hiding places on the outskirts of Sambisa Forest, about 60 km southeast of Maiduguri. Eleven Boko Haram operatives were killed and four were detained. Six hiding places were destroyed (Zagazola, August 7, 2023).

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

►On August 5, 2023, ISIS-affiliated militants attacked civilians (apparently Christians) in the border area between Congo and Uganda (the exact location was not specified). Ten civilians were killed (ABC News, August 7, 2023).

### **Cameroon**

#### **Boko Haram activity**

►On August 4, 2023, it was reported that Boko Haram operatives abducted 15 people, including local fishermen, in two villages in Lake Chad, near the border with Nigeria. Several days before, Boko Haram operatives killed five fishermen in the same area after they refused to pay taxes used to finance terrorist activity (France24, August 4, 2023).

### **Mali**

►On August 3, 2023, ISIS operatives ambushed a truck convoy passing through the border area between Mali and Niger, not far from the city of Ménaka, in southeastern Mali. There were heavy exchanges of fire between Malian Border Police forces and ISIS operatives. The number of fatalities in the incident is unknown. According to one of the unverified versions, the trucks that were attacked were carrying weapons (Asharq Al-Awsat, August 4, 2023). ISIS claimed



responsibility for the attack, noting that it had ambushed a military convoy and that 13 Malian soldiers were killed and three others were abducted (Telegram, August 7, 2023).



**The three abducted Malian soldiers (Telegram, August 7, 2023)**

### ISIS attacks against Al-Qaeda operatives

►ISIS's weekly Al-Naba noted several ISIS attacks carried out recently against Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM), Al-Qaeda's branch in the Sahel region. According to the report, the first attack was carried out on July 26, 2023, in Gao Province, near the border with Niger. Al-Qaeda operatives fled, leaving behind sheep and cattle they had robbed from residents of the area. In another incident on the same day, ISIS operatives attacked the Timbuktu area, killing 40 Al-Qaeda operatives. In another incident, on July 29, 2023, ISIS operatives captured three collaborators with the Russian Wagner Group in the Ménaka area. They were interrogated and then executed (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, August 3, 2023).

### Somalia

►On August 4, 2023, two Al-Shabaab operatives were killed while trying to plant a roadside bomb in the Lower Shabelle area, in southern Somalia (KUNA, August 4, 2023).

### Counterterrorism

►On August 7, 2023, **Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre** announced that the Somali army was ready for a large-scale operation against the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab. According to reports, there are about 10,000 Somali soldiers ready for the operation. However, according to researchers working on the subject, as long as the Somali government does not have the support of tribal chiefs, no operation will lead to the elimination of the organization (garoweonline.com, August 7, 2023).

►On August 7, 2023, Somali military forces, supported by the African Coalition and the US Army, attacked two Al-Shabaab bases in the towns of Mukayle and Bulo Burde, in the center of the country. The two bases were reportedly destroyed and a large warehouse in one of them,

where IEDs and explosives were stored, was also destroyed. According to estimates, several Al-Shabaab operatives were killed in the attack (garoweonline.com, August 8, 2023).

►On August 4, 2023, **Somalia's Minister of Information Daud Aweys** announced that ten employees of Somalia's intelligence agency, NISA, who passed information to Al-Shabaab and carried out espionage activities for the organization within the intelligence apparatus had been arrested by Somalia's security forces. It was noted that two employees of the agency involved in the affair fled and a manhunt was underway for them. This is Al-Shabaab's deepest penetration into Somalia's state apparatuses reported so far (hornobserver.com, August 6, 2023).

## Kenya

►On August 5, 2023, the Kenyan security forces detained six Tanzanian citizens who tried to enlist in Al-Shabaab (nairobi.news.nation.africa, August 5, 2023).

## Morocco

►On August 7, 2023, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) released a propaganda video addressed to Moroccans. The video, intended to recruit young Muslims to the ranks of the organization, shows a picture of King Mohammed VI of Morocco and two other leaders (one of them Tunisian President Kais Saied) with blood dripping from their heads, as a call to assassinate them. It should be noted that AQIM regularly issues announcements against the Algerian government, but this is the first time the organization has published an announcement against the Moroccan government (MEMO – Middle East Monitor, August 8, 2023).

## Asia

### Afghanistan

#### ISIS's activity

►On August 1, 2023, a Taliban "spy" was kidnapped in the Suki area in Kunar Province, northeast of Jalalabad. He was interrogated and then executed (Telegram, August 2, 2023).



**ISIS operative shoots the “spy”**  
(Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, August 3, 2023)

## Yemen

### Al-Qaeda activity

►Operatives, apparently from Al-Qaeda, attacked forces of the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which operates as an autonomous element in southern Yemen, on two separate occasions in the town of Mudiya, in the Abyan Province:

- ◆ In an attack on August 7, 2023, two fighters were killed and ten were wounded in a heavy exchange of fire (Xinhua, August 7, 2023).
- ◆ On August 5, 2023, an IED was activated against a vehicle. Two fighters were killed and five others were wounded (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 6, 2023).

## India

### Counterterrorism

►On August 5, 2023, a court in Ankleshwar, in the western Indian state of Gujarat, sentenced two ISIS operatives arrested in 2017 by the Indian government’s counterterrorism unit to life imprisonment. The two, Ubed Ahmed Mirza and Mohammad Kasim Stimberwala, were convicted of planning lone wolf attacks and promoting radicalization among young people to recruit them for terrorist activity (The Indian Express, August 6, 2023).

## Europe

### Sweden

►A total of 37 shareholders of Swedish telecommunications company Ericsson and victims of terrorism from the United States have filed separate lawsuits against the company worth \$170 million for improper conduct and payment to ISIS as part of its operations in Iraq. The lawsuits were filed after unusual expenses were found in the financial report on the company’s operations in Iraq. As a result, the company’s CEO admitted on February 16, 2022, that they paid bribes to travel through transportation routes in Iraq in areas controlled by terrorist

organizations, including ISIS. The CEO's admission caused a sharp drop in the value of the company's shares. A year after the incident, more details were revealed, and the company admitted that it had transferred money to ISIS and that several company employees had even been abducted by ISIS while trying to negotiate with the organization. The investigation is reportedly underway (Dagens Industri, August 4, 2023).

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

►On August 4, 2023, security forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina arrested a 43-year-old man on suspicion of ties to ISIS. According to the accusations, he planned to carry out attacks against Muslim clerics who preached against extremism and reported radical Islamic activity to the Bosnian authorities. The detainee was previously convicted of several charges related to terrorist activity as well as fighting in Syria. He maintained online contact with ISIS supporters and even asked them for instructions on how to make IEDs activated by mobile phone. It should be noted that in recent years, the Bosnian judicial system has convicted 46 civilians who returned to its territory from Syria and Iraq. According to Bosnian intelligence, 241 Bosnian adults and 80 children moved to Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2016 (U.S. News, August 7, 2023).