



Spotlight on Global Jihad

August 12-18, 2021



Main events of the past week

- ▶ **Afghanistan:** The Taliban forces have taken over the entire country, including the capital Kabul, which fell into their hands without a battle. The Taliban have also completed their takeover of the land border crossings, apart from Kabul Airport. Senior Afghan government officials fled the country and security forces abandoned the arena. Taliban flags were hoisted at the Presidential Palace and throughout the capital. **It is not yet clear whether the Taliban will allow jihadi organizations, led by ISIS, to continue operating in the country or restrict their activity.** It should be noted that many militias in Afghanistan defected to the ranks of the Taliban as well as several Afghan army forces.
- ▶ This week, ISIS published an infographic summing up its activity around the world in the past Hijri year which ended on August 9, 2021. According to the data, **there was a significant decrease in ISIS's activity during the year.** ISIS operatives carried out **2,944 attacks around the world**, compared with **4,722 attacks in the previous year**, i.e., a decrease of about 37% in the number of attacks.
- ▶ **Syria:** The downtrend in ISIS's activity in the various provinces continued. In a counterterrorism operation by the SDF and Global Coalition forces, **ISIS operatives were detained, including a senior operative** who was in charge of ISIS's activity in northern and eastern Syria and on the Syria-Iraq border. According to ISIS, its operatives shot down a Russian UAV in the Homs Desert.
- ▶ **Iraq: ISIS activity continues in the various provinces, albeit on a relatively small scale. The epicenter of ISIS's activity this week was the Salah al-Din Province**, where most of its attacks were carried out, with the main target being the security forces and the militias supporting them. At the same time, the economic war declared by ISIS against the Iraqi government continues, mainly by sabotaging high-voltage lines in order to disrupt the power supply. According to an infographic published by ISIS, its operatives recently attacked 33 high-voltage pylons.

▶ **The Sinai Peninsula:** This week, ISIS carried out one attack against the Egyptian security forces in the New Rafah region. The Egyptian army operated in the region with air support. ISIS operatives recently carried out several attacks in the Rafah region, with the Egyptian army sustaining losses. According to tribal sources, the increase in attacks in the region is due to the increase in construction activity by the Egyptian army.

▶ **Africa: There was a significant decrease in ISIS's activity this week.** The epicenter of the activity was Nigeria, where two attacks were carried out against Nigerian army forces.

Afghanistan

▶ The battle for Afghanistan ended after Taliban forces took over the entire country, including the capital Kabul, which fell into their hands without a battle. The Taliban have also completed their takeover of the land border crossings. Kabul Airport, which is controlled by the US army, remains the only secure point of departure from the country. Senior Afghan government officials fled the country and security forces abandoned the arena. Taliban flags were hoisted at the Presidential Palace and throughout the capital. **A senior Taliban official said they would soon announce the establishment of an Islamic emirate.** The United States has evacuated the US embassy and its staff. Thousands of civilians are attempting to leave the country. The Taliban's political leadership is currently monitoring the events from Doha, the capital of Qatar.

▶ There is no doubt that the Taliban takeover of the country and the removal of the United States are a potential source of strength for Al-Qaeda and ISIS, jihadi organizations that are enemies of the West. With the Taliban takeover of the country, a number of questions arise with regard to the future nature of the activity of the jihadi organizations and especially ISIS, most of whose activity has been carried out against the Afghan security forces. The main question is whether the Taliban will allow them complete freedom of action in the country or restrict their activity. It should be noted that many militias in Afghanistan defected to the ranks of the Taliban as well as several Afghan army forces.

▶ Following are some of the incidents for which ISIS claimed responsibility before the takeover of the country, some targeting the Taliban forces (Telegram):

◆ **On August 14, 2021,** a Taliban operative was targeted by gunfire in Khogyani region, southwest of Jalalabad. He was wounded.

- ◆ **On August 13, 2021**, a sticky bomb was activated against the vehicle of a village leader (mukhtar), who ISIS claims was an agent of the Afghan security forces in the Bati Kot region, about 35 km southeast of Jalalabad. He was killed and his vehicle was destroyed.
- ◆ **On August 12, 2021**, a vehicle carrying Taliban operatives was attacked (by either gunfire or an IED) in Kunduz, north of Kabul, near the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border. Three operatives were wounded.
- ◆ **On August 11, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of the Afghan Intelligence forces in the Watabor district in the Kunar Province, near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Four passengers were killed or wounded.

Summary of ISIS's activity during the year

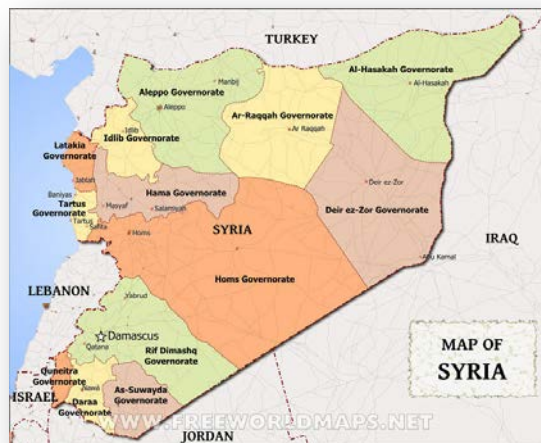
- ▶ On August 12, 2021, ISIS published an **infographic summing up its activity in the various provinces around the world in the past year** (the Hijri year 1442, the period between August 20, 2020 and August 9, 2021). According to the figures, during the year in question **there was a significant decrease in ISIS's activity. ISIS operatives carried out 2,944 attacks around the world.** This is compared to **4,722 attacks carried out in the previous year**, i.e., a decrease of about 37% in the number of attacks. One attack (in Austria) was carried out in the West during the year in question.
- ▶ **Nearly half of the attacks** (about 45%) **were carried out in Iraq** (a total of 1,304), the epicenter of ISIS's activity. It is followed by the West Africa Province (505 attacks, about 17% of the attacks). Details of the other attacks in the various provinces: Syria (487); Khorasan (i.e., Afghanistan) (269); Sinai Peninsula (153); Central Africa (142). The rest of the attacks (84) were carried out in the following countries and regions: Somalia (34); Pakistan (17); the Philippines (7); East Asia (7); India (6); Indonesia (4); Tunisia (4); Libya (2); Hejaz (i.e., Saudi Arabia) (1), the Caucasus (1) and Austria (1) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, August 12, 2021).
- ▶ The number of casualties also decreased significantly this year. During the year, **over 8,052 people were killed and wounded in ISIS attacks, compared to over 15,522 in the previous year. The largest number of casualties (2,443) was in the West Africa Province**, mainly Nigeria. The remaining casualties were in the following provinces: Iraq (2,286), Khorasan, (1,083), Syria (1,070), Central Africa (672), the Sinai Peninsula (249), Somalia (100), Pakistan (40), Austria (30), the Philippines (23) and East Asia (18). There were a total of 38

casualties in other countries and regions, as follows: India (10), Libya (9), Indonesia (7), Tunisia (6), Hejaz (i.e., Saudi Arabia) (4) and the Caucasus (2) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, August 12, 2021).



Infographic summing up ISIS’s activity around the world over the past year (Al-Naba’ weekly, Telegram, August 12, 2021)

The Syrian arena



Syrian governorates (freeworldmaps.net)

The Idlib region

▶ During the week, exchanges of artillery fire continued almost daily between the Syrian army and the forces supporting it, and the rebel forces in the rebel enclave in Idlib.

Al-Hasakah region

▶ The Kurdish Internal Security forces found the bodies of two men inside a tent in the Al-Hawl refugee camp run by the Kurdish forces. They said that the two men had probably

been shot by operatives affiliated with ISIS (Enab Baladi, a Syrian news website affiliated with the rebel organizations, August 17, 2021).

The desert region (Al-Badia)

▶ A Russian UAV was shot down by machine gun fire in the Homs Desert (Telegram, August 15, 2021).



The wreckage of a Russian UAV which, according to ISIS, was shot down in the Homs Desert (Telegram, August 15, 2021)

Counterterrorism activity

▶ The SDF forces detained three ISIS operatives north of Deir ez-Zor. They found weapons, ammunition, communications devices, mines and IEDs in their possession. In addition, they found documents indicating their involvement in carrying out attacks (SDF Press, August 17, 2021).



Right: Detained ISIS operatives and some of the weapons found in their possession. Left: IEDs and equipment found in their possession (SDF Press, August 17, 2021)

▶ Helicopter-borne forces of the Global Coalition against ISIS, with the assistance of SDF counterterrorism units, detained a senior ISIS commander in the Mahaimida region, about 10 km north of Deir ez-Zor. He had been in charge of the activity of ISIS squads and communication between them in northern and eastern Syria and on the Syrian-Iraqi border. Large quantities of explosives, weapons and documents were seized (SDF Press, August 15, 2021).

The Iraqi arena



Provinces of Iraq (Wikipedia)

ISIS's economic war against the Iraqi government

► ISIS's Al-Naba' weekly published this week an infographic detailing the scope of the economic war waged by ISIS against the Iraqi government. According to the infographic, 33 high-voltage pylons were destroyed or hit throughout Iraq. The following are details by province: nine in the Salah al-Din Province; eight in the Dijla (Tigris) Province; eight in the Kirkuk Province; five in the Al-Anbar Province; two in the Nineveh Province; and one in the Janub (South) Province. The infographic notes that the Iraqi government sustained heavy losses due to this activity (Al-Naba' weekly as posted on Telegram, August 12, 2021).



ISIS infographic about recent damage to high-voltage pylons (Al-Naba' weekly as posted on Telegram, August 12, 2021)



High-voltage pylon sabotaged by ISIS (Iraqi News Agency, August 16, 2021)

Attacks by province¹

Kirkuk Province

▶ According to the Iraqi Minister of Electricity, an IED exploded and hit a high-voltage line between Kirkuk and Baiji, damaging seven high-voltage pylons (Iraqi News Agency, August 10, 2021).

Al-Anbar Province (western Iraq)

▶ **On August 12, 2021**, an Iraqi army compound was attacked on the Baghdad-Amman International Highway, east of Al-Rutba, in the western Al-Anbar Province. Two soldiers were wounded. The compound was set on fire and weapons and ammunition were seized.

Salah al-Din Province

▶ **On August 14, 2021**, an Iraqi federal police compound was targeted by gunfire in the Qaderiya region, northwest of Samarra, about 10 km northwest of Baghdad. A policeman was wounded.

▶ **On August 13, 2021**, a Popular Mobilization compound was targeted by gunfire and rockets near Al-Surah, about 100 km west of Kirkuk. Two fighters were killed and two others were wounded. A force arriving on the scene to provide assistance was ambushed and targeted by gunfire. Two vehicles were destroyed and six others were put out of commission. ISIS operatives took control of the road for several hours and then retreated.

▶ **On August 12, 2021**, ISIS operatives broke into the house of Aboud Mahmoud Aboud, the village leader (mukhtar) of Al-Nahiya, about 100 km west of Kirkuk. He was shot and killed. According to ISIS, he had been an Iraqi government agent.

¹ Mostly according to ISIS's claims of responsibility posted on Telegram

- ▶ **On August 11, 2021**, IEDs were activated on the outskirts of Baiji while an Iraqi army sapper team was trying to neutralize them. Nine soldiers were killed and several others were wounded.
- ▶ **On August 11, 2021**, mortar shells were fired at homes of Tribal Mobilization operatives in the Albuabdu region, about 25 km north of Baghdad. According to ISIS, accurate hits were detected.
- ▶ **On August 10, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Iraqi army vehicle near Al-Shirqat junction, about 100 km west of Kirkuk. The passengers on board were killed. That same day, a Tribal Mobilization compound in Al-Salma was targeted by gunfire. One fighter was wounded.
- ▶ **On August 10, 2021**, a mortar shell was fired at a power plant of the Iraqi Electric Company in the Albu Khadu region, about 100 km northwest of Baghdad. According to ISIS, an accurate hit in the plant was detected.

Diyala Province

- ▶ **On August 17, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle carrying Tribal Mobilization fighters south of the Qara Tapa region, about 100 km northeast of Baqubah. Four fighters were killed and three others were wounded.
- ▶ **On August 15, 2021**, an IED was activated against a vehicle of a Shiite civilian in the Hashemiyat region, west of Baqubah. He was wounded.
- ▶ **On August 13, 2021**, two Iraqi army compounds were targeted by gunfire and rockets. They were damaged.

Nineveh Province

- ▶ **On August 15, 2021**, a rocket was fired at a Popular Mobilization headquarters in the Khadr region, about 90 km southwest of Mosul. The site sustained damage.
- ▶ **On August 13, 2021**, a Tribal Mobilization compound was targeted by gunfire 50 km south of Mosul. One fighter was wounded.

Counterterrorism measures in Iraq

Baghdad Province

- ▶ The Baghdad Operations Command announced that based on intelligence, its forces had combed areas north of Baghdad and captured a wanted ISIS operative. They also

destroyed two ISIS guesthouses and seized three machine guns and medical equipment intended to treat wounded ISIS operatives (Al-Sumaria, August 16, 2021).

Diyala Province

▶ **Iraqi Military Spokesman Yahya Rasool** reported that based on intelligence, an infantry force succeeded in thwarting an attack against high-voltage pylons in the province. The force surrounded the area and exchanged fire with an armed squad. One terrorist operative was killed in the exchange of fire (Al-Sumaria, August 17, 2021).



High-voltage pylons in Iraq (Iraqi News Agency, August 17, 2021)

Kirkuk Province

▶ The Iraqi Defense Ministry announced that Iraqi military aircraft supporting the security forces had killed two ISIS operatives in the province (Al-Sumaria, August 17, 2021).



Iraqi army helicopter and armored vehicle during security activity (Al-Sumaria, August 17, 2021)

The Sinai Peninsula

Egyptian security forces counterterrorism activity

▶ According to tribal sources, as part of the fight against ISIS in the Sinai Peninsula, Egyptian fighter planes carried out a series of airstrikes in south Sheikh Zuweid and west Rafah (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 10, 2021). Recently, ISIS operatives carried out several attacks in the Rafah region, with the Egyptian army sustaining losses. Tribal sources estimate

that the large number of attacks in the area stems from the fact that the Egyptian army had increased the construction in the Rafah region (Al-Araby al-Jadeed, August 11, 2021).

► **Egyptian Armed Forces Spokesman Col. Gharib Abdel Hafez** reported that as part of the efforts to fight against terrorism in the central and northern Sinai Peninsula, the forces had killed 13 “Takfir operatives” and seized 15 automatic rifles, several weapon caches, telephones, binoculars and money. Nine soldiers were killed or wounded in the operation (official Facebook page of the Armed Forces Spokesman, August 13, 2021).

ISIS activity

► **On August 12, 2021**, an IED was activated against an Egyptian army vehicle west of New Rafah. The passengers on board were killed or wounded (Telegram, August 12, 2021).



Egyptian army armored vehicle going up in flames following an IED explosion (Amaq video posted on Telegram, August 15, 2021)

Summary of ISIS’s activity in the various provinces

Summary of ISIS’s weekly activity

► Data from an infographic published by ISIS, summing up its activity around the world, shows that this week **there has been no significant change in the number of attacks carried out by ISIS operatives in the various provinces**. According to ISIS’s data, in the period between August 5 and August 11, 2021, **ISIS carried out 73 attacks in the various provinces in Asia and Africa**, compared to 69 attacks in the previous week. **The largest number of attacks was carried out in Iraq (57)**. Attacks carried out in ISIS’s other provinces: West Africa (6); Khorasan, i.e., Afghanistan (5); Central Africa (3); and Sinai (2). This week, Syria is not mentioned in the infographic.

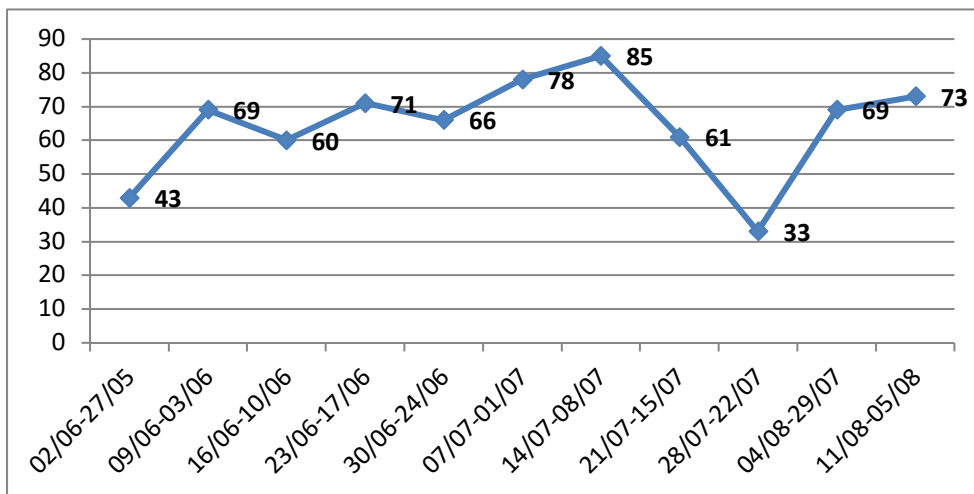
► According to the infographic, a total of **73 people were killed or wounded in the attacks**, compared to 193 in the previous week (a 62% decrease in the number of casualties). **The largest number of casualties was in the Iraq Province (34)**. The other casualties were

in the following provinces: West Africa (18); Khorasan, i.e. Afghanistan (10); Central Africa (6); Sinai (5) (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, August 12, 2021).



The infographic detailing ISIS's activity (Al-Naba' weekly, Telegram, August 12, 2021)

ISIS's attacks in recent months



Africa

Democratic Republic of the Congo

► On August 10, 2021, Congolese army forces were targeted by gunfire in a village about 50 km west of the Congo-Uganda border. Several soldiers were killed and several others were wounded. ISIS operatives set fire to 10 homes of Christian residents in the village (Telegram, August 11, 2021).

Nigeria

▶ **On August 14, 2021**, a Nigerian Army patrol was ambushed and targeted by gunfire near Malam Fatori, about 200 km north of Maiduguri. Five soldiers were killed and several others were wounded (Telegram, August 14, 2021).

▶ **On August 12, 2021**, three IEDs were activated against a Nigerian army convoy, which was also targeted by gunfire, on a road located about 50 km west of the Nigeria-Chad-Cameroon tri-border area. Two vehicles were put out of commission and their passengers were wounded (Telegram, August 13, 2021).



Right: ISIS operative planting one of the IEDs against the Nigerian army. Left: Nigerian army forces being targeted by gunfire (Telegram, August 17, 2021)

Cameroon

▶ An attack was carried out against a Cameroonian army compound in Makari, about 70 km southeast of the Cameroon-Nigeria-Chad tri-border area. Several soldiers were killed or wounded. The compound was set on fire and weapons, ammunition and vehicles were seized (Telegram, August 17, 2021).

Somalia

▶ A hand grenade was thrown at a Somali police checkpoint in a Mogadishu neighborhood. Two policemen were wounded (August 16, 2021).