



Spotlight on Global Jihad

June 8-14, 2023



Main events of the past week

► **According to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken**, who participated in the meeting of the countries that are members of the Global Coalition against ISIS, the struggle against ISIS has had many successes but it is not yet over. He noted that alongside the continued fight against ISIS, other fields such as society and law must be addressed to exhaust all capabilities against ISIS and its supporters.

► **Afghanistan:** An ISIS operative carried out a suicide bombing attack at a mosque in the city of Fayzabad, in northeastern Afghanistan. Fifteen people were killed and 50 were wounded. In counterterrorism activity, a Taliban force killed the commander of ISIS's Khorasan Province.

► **Iraq:** ISIS operatives attacked an Iraqi army compound southwest of Kirkuk. Two officers, one with the rank of lieutenant colonel, were killed and four others were wounded.

► **Africa:**

◆ **In Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo**, ISIS continued its activity against security forces and Christian civilians.

◆ **Somalia:** A total of 16 people were killed, including at least three soldiers, and 10 people were wounded in an attack on a hotel in Mogadishu carried out by operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab.

► A UN special investigation team on ISIS (UNITAD) reported to the UN Security Council about its activity against ISIS:

◆ The team's investigation revealed findings that ISIS had used chemical weapons in Iraq in 2016: it armed rockets, mortar shells and IEDs with chemical weapons.

◆ The legal struggle against ISIS: The team helps the Iraqi judicial system, through a large-scale digitization project, to organize and make available large quantities of ISIS records that serve as evidence against the organization.

► **The battle for hearts and minds:** The editorial of ISIS's weekly tried to leverage the tensions between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia to encourage Ethiopian Muslims to join the

organization and wage jihad against the “infidels.” The author called on Muslims in Ethiopia to adhere to jihadist Islam and join the organization’s training camps in East Africa.

US Secretary of State: “The fight against ISIS is not over yet”

►On June 8, 2023, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken participated in a meeting of ministers of 80 countries that are members of the Global Coalition against ISIS, held at the InterContinental Hotel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Blinken announced at the beginning of the meeting that the member countries of the coalition had brought about the territorial defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, killed the organization’s leaders, and prevented widespread attacks. However, he noted that “the fight is not yet done” and highlighted several areas that will be the enduring end of the organization. Blinken announced efforts to secure commitments totaling \$600 million to help fund programs in Iraq and Syria in areas related to terrorist activity such as funding social services and ensuring that those responsible for crimes are brought to justice. He noted that it is very important for countries to return to their territory civilians who went to Iraq and Syria to fight in the ranks of ISIS and are now in detention camps (of the Kurdish SDF forces). According to him, if this is not carried out, there is a risk that after they are released, they will return to terrorist activity. He noted that at the same time, civilians (referring to family members of ISIS operatives), especially children, must also be returned to their countries of origin to give them hope and opportunities (VOA, June 8, 2023).

The Syrian Arena¹



Provinces of Syria (Free World Maps)

ISIS's activity

Deir ez-Zor-al-Mayadeen area

► On June 11, 2023, militants attacked several positions manned by Syrian fighters operating as part of Iranian Revolutionary Guards militias in the Al-Mayadeen Desert. Several fighters were killed. So far, no organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, but they apparently were ISIS operatives (Al-Badia 24, June 12, 2023).

Homs Province

► On June 13, 2023, an IED was activated under a military vehicle belonging to a senior Syrian army officer, Brigadier General Ja'far Ali al-Akhras, in front of his home in the Al-Shammas neighborhood, in southern Homs. The officer was killed (Syria TV, June 13, 2023). Another source reported that it was a sticky bomb. So far, no organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, but ISIS was apparently behind it (TRACTerrorism, June 13, 2023).

¹ According to ISIS's claims of responsibility and the global media.

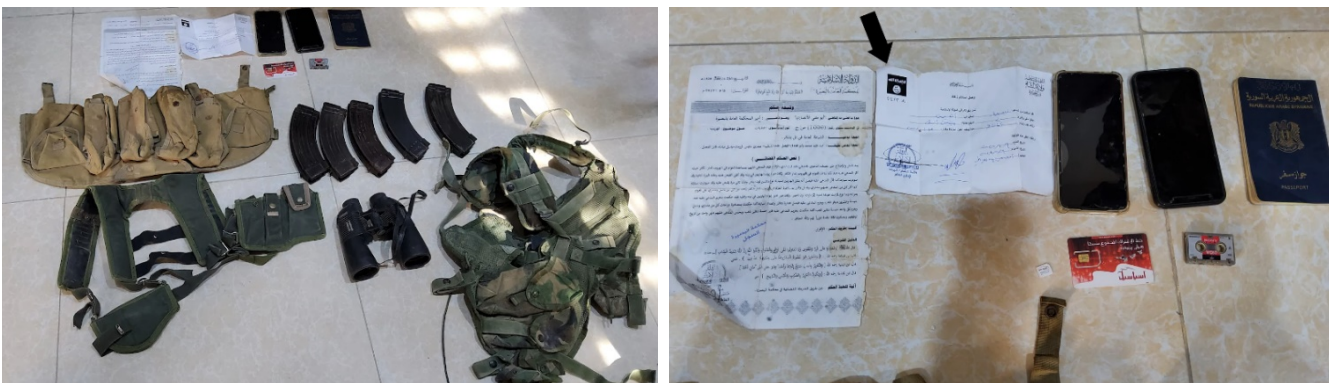


Brigadier General Ali al-Akhras (Syria TV, June 13, 2023)

Counterterrorism

Al-Hasakah Province

►At nightfall on June 12, 2023, an SDF special force operated against an ISIS terrorist cell in the town of Al-Dashishah, about 80 km south of Al-Hasakah. Two ISIS operatives were detained and a third operative, who opened fire and tried to flee, was killed. The cell operated to smuggle terrorist operatives out of Iraq and the areas in northern Syria controlled by Turkish-backed forces. In addition, this terrorist cell carried out attacks against SDF fighters and civilians working in institutions of the Kurdish autonomous administration. The detainees were found in possession of ISIS documents, mobile phones, a Syrian passport, an audio tape, a SIM card, combat vests, magazines, and binoculars (SDF Press. June 12, 2023).



Equipment found in the possession of the ISIS operatives (SDF Press, June 12, 2023)

ISIS's activity by province²

Kirkuk Province

- ▶ On June 12, 2023, shots and rockets were fired at an Iraqi army compound near the village of Al-Rash, in the Rashad region, about 35 km southwest of Kirkuk. One soldier was wounded, and a thermal camera was destroyed (Telegram, June 13, 2023).
- ▶ On June 10, 2023, ISIS operatives attacked an Iraqi army compound near the village of Tal al-Ward, about 20 km southwest of Kirkuk. Two officers, one with the rank of lieutenant colonel, were killed and four others, including an officer with the rank of lieutenant, were wounded (Iraqi News Agency, June 11, 2023). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and announced that it had also targeted an aid force arriving on the scene (Telegram, June 11, 2023).



The Iraqi army compound attacked by ISIS (Iraqi News Agency, June 11, 2023)

Al-Anbar Province

- ▶ On June 10, 2023, light and medium arms were fired at an Iraqi army compound near the Arar area, near the Iraqi-Saudi border. One soldier was killed. The compound sustained damage (Telegram, June 10, 2023).

Counterterrorism

Nineveh Province

- ▶ On June 7, 2023, the Iraqi security forces detained four ISIS operatives, including a sniper in the organization's sniper battalion (Iraqi News Agency, June 7, 2023).

² According to ISIS's claims of responsibility and the global media.



Four ISIS operatives who were detained (Iraqi News Agency, June 7, 2023)

UNITAD's report to the UN Security Council about its activity against ISIS

► Christian Ritscher, head of UNITAD,³ briefed the members of the UN Security Council on the activity of the anti-ISIS team. Inter alia, he listed the following:

- ◆ **Carrying out a large-scale digitization project of ISIS documents for the legal battle against ISIS:** The team assists Iraq's judicial system in organizing and making accessible vast amounts of ISIS records and battlefield evidence through a large-scale mega-digitization project. He announced that digitization activity had begun in five courts in Iraq, and in the coming months, they will be joined by two other courts. According to the report, eight million pages of ISIS documents held by the Iraqi authorities, including documents from the Kurdish authorities, have been digitized, and within a few days, the team will set up a central archive that will include digital documentation against ISIS. In addition, according to the review, ISIS remains a threat due to the organization's 10,000 fighters/operatives operating in the area (Anatolia News Agency, June 7, 2023).
- ◆ **Investigation of ISIS's use of chemical weapons:** Details were presented about the findings of the team's investigation into the first chemical weapons attack carried out by ISIS in March 2016 against Taza Khurmatu, about 8 km south of Kirkuk, a town whose residents are mostly Shiite-Turkmen. According to the findings, many survivors of the

³ UNITAD - UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL. Its objective is to promote the imposition of responsibility for crimes committed by ISIS. The organization cooperates with the Iraqi government. It collects, stores, and preserves evidence, promotes accountability for ISIS around the world, operates a unit to support victims of sex crimes (sex slaves), crimes against the LGBT community, and crimes against children (recruiting children to ISIS), crimes against Yazidis and religious minorities, and the mass murder of Iraqi Air Force cadets in Tikrit, at the Speicher Air Base, in June 2014 (UNITAD, UN website).

attack still suffer from chronic health problems and various health effects. More than 6,000 residents of the town were treated, and two children died a few days after being exposed to a chemical. Ritscher, who visited Iraq in early 2023, claimed that ISIS had armed rockets, mortar shells, and IEDs with chemical weapons. He added that the investigation carried out by the team led to special insights and analysis of the types of ammunition, remains, and materials found in addition to the documents, which included payments and correspondence that led to the identification of people and the establishment of ties to senior ISIS officials (KOB4, June 8, 2023).

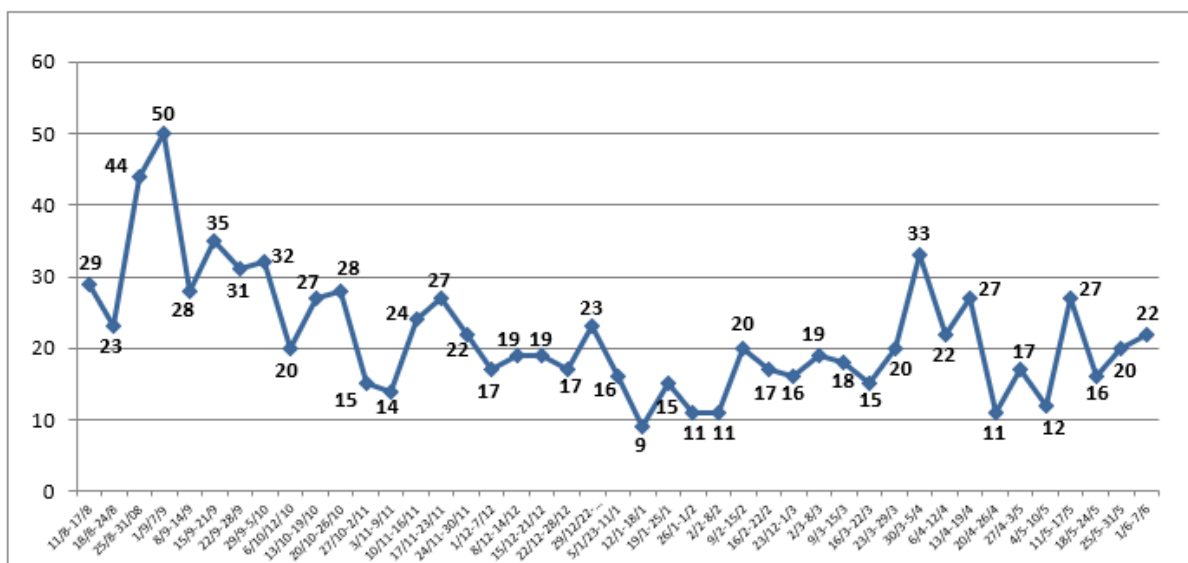
Summary of ISIS's activity in the various provinces

►According to an infographic published by ISIS's weekly Al-Naba, summarizing ISIS's activity in the period June 1-7, 2023, ISIS operatives carried out 22 attacks in the various provinces during this period (compared with 20 in the previous week). The West Africa Province carried out the highest number of attacks (9). Attacks carried out in the other provinces: Central Africa (8); Khorasan, i.e., Afghanistan (3); Syria (1); and Iraq (1). A total of 85 people were killed and wounded in the attacks. This compares with 105 people the week before. The largest number of casualties was in the West Africa Province (42). Casualties in the other provinces: Central Africa (32); Khorasan, i.e., Afghanistan (6); Syria (4); and Iraq (1) (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, June 8, 2023)



Summary of ISIS attacks (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, June 8, 2023)

Attacks by week (according to ISIS's figures)



Summary of ISIS's West Africa Province's monthly activity

►Al-Naba, ISIS's weekly, published an infographic summarizing the activity of ISIS's West Africa Province between May 5 and June 4, 2023. The activity was carried out mainly in Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria, in the following areas: Sambisa Forest, about 60 km southeast of Maiduguri, in northeastern Nigeria; Garo, about 90 km east of Maiduguri; and Lake Chad. According to the infographic, ISIS carried out 33 operations during this period, killing and wounding 113 soldiers of the African Union Transition Mission (ATMIS), the Nigerian army, and local militia fighters. The attacks were carried out in the following forms: attacks and exchanges of fire (16); IED detonations (6); suicide bombing attacks (5); other forms of attacks (6). In addition, 22 vehicles were destroyed or put out of commission (Al-Naba, Telegram, June 8, 2023).



Summary of the activity of ISIS's West Africa Province (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, June 8, 2023)

Nigeria

ISIS's activity

► ISIS's activity against the Nigerian army and against Christian civilians in the east and northeast of the country:

- ◆ On June 10, 2023, a militia fighter supporting the Nigerian army was kidnapped and shot dead near Monguno, about 100 km northeast of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State (Telegram, June 11, 2023).
- ◆ On June 8, 2023, a Nigerian soldier was shot and killed in the town of Kenmari, Borno State (Telegram, June 11, 2023).
- ◆ On June 8, 2023, ISIS operatives attacked the Christian community of Zah, about 85 km west of the Nigeria-Cameroon border, in Adamawa State, in the eastern part of Nigeria. Six civilians were murdered. A church and four houses, one of which belonged to a priest, were set on fire (Church of the Brethren, June 8, 2023).
- ◆ On June 7, 2023, a grenade machine gun was fired at a Nigerian army camp in the town of Malam Fatori, near the border with Niger. No casualties or damage were reported (Telegram, June 11, 2023).
- ◆ On June 6, 2023, ISIS operatives traveling in four SUVs attacked the town of Gajiganna, about 40 km north of Maiduguri. A Nigerian army force repelled the attackers. One civilian was killed and another was wounded (Zagazola, June 7, 2023). ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, noting that it attacked a Nigerian army camp. According to

ISIS, the soldiers manning the camp fled. In addition, one armored vehicle was destroyed, and an RPG launcher, a medium machine gun, and an assault rifle were seized (Telegram, June 7, 2023).

◆ On June 6, 2023, an attack was carried out against Christian civilians in the village of Hija, in Adamawa State, eastern Nigeria. Four Christian civilians were murdered. A church, houses, and property were set on fire (Telegram, June 7, 2023).

► On June 11, 2023, a “sorcerer” was kidnapped and murdered near the village of Jarawa, Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria (Telegram, June 11, 2023).

Counterterrorism

► Nigerian Army Air Force planes carried out airstrikes against Boko Haram operatives and senior members of the organization:

◆ On June 9-11, 2023, airstrikes were carried out against a Boko Haram camp in Grazah and the Wa-jahode hills, about 5 km west of the Nigeria-Cameroon border, and along part of the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. More than 100 Boko Haram operatives, including important operatives and junior commanders, were killed and several others were wounded. Many buildings used as hiding places were destroyed (Zagazola, June 12, 2023).



Boko Haram camp against which the airstrike was carried out (Zagazola, June 12, 2023)

◆ On June 6, 2023, an airstrike was carried out in the Gwoza area, about 10 km northwest of the Nigeria-Cameroon border, against the camp of Ali Ngulde, one of Boko Haram’s senior commanders. One of the houses in the camp, with a Boko Haram flag, served as a hiding place for Ali Ngulde and senior commanders in the organization. Ali Ngulde fled, but dozens of Boko Haram operatives were killed (Zagazola, June 10, 2023).



Camp of Ali Ngulde, the target of the airstrike (Zagazola, June 10, 2023)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

ISIS's activity

► ISIS carried out several airstrikes against the Congolese army and Christian civilians near the Congo-Uganda border:

- ◆ On June 13, 2023, there was an exchange of fire with a Congolese army patrol in the village of Otumberi, in the Ituri region, in northeastern Congo. Eight soldiers were killed, and the rest fled. Six assault rifles were seized. Several Christian homes were set on fire (Telegram, June 13, 2023).



Houses of Christian civilians set on fire by ISIS (Telegram, June 13, 2023)

- ◆ On June 11, 2023, an attack was carried out against Christian civilians in the city of Kasindi, about 3 km west of the Congo-Uganda border. Ten civilians were murdered, and ten others were wounded. Many homes, vehicles, and property were set on fire (Telegram, June 13, 2023).
- ◆ On June 11, 2023, an attack was carried out against a Congolese army compound in the village of Otumberi, in the Ituri region in northeastern Congo. Two soldiers were killed (Telegram, June 12, 2023).

- ◆ On June 8, 2023, an attack was carried out against Christians in the village of Bukuma, about 50 km west of the border with Uganda. Eighteen civilians were killed, and several others were wounded (Telegram, June 10, 2023).
- ◆ On June 7, 2023, an attack was carried out against the Christian village of Kiyanganda, in the Beni region. Two civilians were abducted and murdered, and a third civilian was wounded (Telegram, June 8, 2023).
- ◆ On June 6, 2023, Christian civilians were ambushed on the road between the villages of Luna and Idoho, in the Ituri region. Two civilians were abducted and murdered, and six motorcycles were set on fire (Telegram, June 7, 2023).
- ◆ On June 6, 2023, an attack was carried out against the Christian village of Karuruma in the Beni region. Three civilians were murdered (Telegram, June 7, 2023).

Cameroon

ISIS's activity

- ▶ On June 9, 2023, a Cameroonian army soldier was shot and killed near the town of Sawiram, about 75 km east of the Cameroon-Nigeria border (Telegram, June 9, 2023).

Mali

Al-Qaeda activity

- ▶ On June 9, 2023, an IED was activated and shots were fired at a MINUSMA⁴ patrol in the town of Ber, central Mali. One soldier from Burkina Faso was killed and eight others were seriously wounded. So far, no organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, but it was apparently Al-Qaeda (Jurist; UN News, June 9, 2023).
- ▶ On June 5, 2023, operatives from Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM), Al-Qaeda's arm in the Sahel region, ambushed a Malian Army force in the Macina area in central Mali. Six soldiers were killed. One JNIM operative was killed. Two heavy machine guns, eight assault rifles, an RPG launcher, three pistols, and crates of ammunition were seized. Two cars were set on fire (TRACTerrorism, June 8, 2023).

⁴ MINUSMA – United States Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, a force established in 2013 pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 2640. The mandate priority of MINUSMA is to implement the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali. This force currently includes more than 15,000 troops in Mali, mostly from Chad and Bangladesh.

Somalia

Al-Shabaab activity

►On June 9, 2023, at around 8:00 P.M., operatives of the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab attacked the Pearl Beach Hotel, frequented by Somali government officials, in the Lido Beach area, one of Mogadishu's most popular areas. Sixteen people, at least three of them soldiers, were killed, and several people were wounded. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack (Al-Arabiya, June 10, 2023; telesurenglish.net, June 12, 2023).

ISIS's activity

►On June 9, 2023, an IED was activated against a Somali police vehicle in the Karan area, in the southeastern part of the city of Mogadishu. One policeman was killed and several others were wounded (Telegram, June 10, 2023).

Counterterrorism

►On June 12, 2023, Somali army forces and international forces supporting them attacked Al-Shabaab targets in the lower Shabelle region of southern Somalia. At least 19 Al-Shabaab operatives were killed, and Al-Shabaab vehicles and weapons were destroyed (sakshipost.com, June 12, 2023).

Kenya

Al-Shabaab activity

►On June 13, 2023, two IEDs apparently detonated by the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Shabaab exploded in Lamu and Garissa in eastern Kenya and near the Kenya-Somalia border. At least 12 people, six of them soldiers, were killed. In addition, dozens of people were wounded (the-star.co.ke, June 13, 2023). It should be noted that Kenya is assisting Somalia in the fight against Al-Shabaab.

Ethiopia

Counterterrorism

►On June 7, 2023, the Ethiopian army thwarted an attack by Al-Shabaab operatives against the town of Dolo, in southern Ethiopia, near the border with Somalia and the Somali border twin city of Doolow. A Somali army force killed several Al-Shabaab suicide bombers and destroyed weapons that the organization intended to use in the attack (Barron's, June 7, 2023).

Asia Afghanistan

ISIS suicide bombing attack

- On the morning of June 8, 2023, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive vest he was wearing at the Nabawi Mosque in the city of Fayzabad, the capital of Badakhshan province, about 300 km northeast of Kabul. At the same time, a eulogy was given at the mosque to Nisar Ahmad Ahmadi, the deputy governor of Badakhshan Province, who was killed two days earlier in the detonation of a car bomb. The ceremony was attended by Taliban operatives, including military commanders and senior Taliban officials, the most prominent of whom were the Taliban army commander and the economy minister. A hospital source in Badakhshan province said 15 people were killed and 50 wounded. Among those killed was the former commander of the Baghlan District Police (Al-Jazeera; Tolo News, June 8, 2023).
- ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, noting that a suicide bomber codenamed Tareq al-Khorasani (i.e., the Afghan) underwent a security check and entered, wearing an explosive vest, into a secure hall where participants gathered for the eulogy ceremony. He then activated the explosive vest among them. According to ISIS, at least 20 people, including Taliban commanders and senior officials, were killed and around 50 other people were wounded. Among the casualties was the president of the Badakhshan District Court. At the end of its claim of responsibility, ISIS noted that “by doing so, the mujahideen once again fulfilled their promise to cut off the heads of [Taliban] commanders before beheading their soldiers” (Amaq, Telegram, June 9, 2023).



The terrorist who carried out the suicide bombing attack (Amaq, Telegram, June 9, 2023)

Counterterrorism

The killing of the leader of ISIS's Khorasan Province

►On June 6, 2023, a Taliban force, based on intelligence, acted against Sanaullah Ghafari, commander (emir) of ISIS's Khorasan Province, who was making his way in the mountainous province of Kunar, northeast of Jalalabad. Ghafari, who was known as Shahab al-Muhajir and had served as the leader of this province since June 2020, was killed instantly. In other activities in the same area, six additional ISIS operatives were killed (VOA, June 9, 2023). It should be noted that according to a 2022 announcement by the US Department of State, Ghafari, who was born in Afghanistan in 1994, authorized all the organization's terrorist activities throughout Afghanistan and arranged for their funding. At the time, the State Department offered a reward of up to \$10 million for information provided about him (US State Department, February 7, 2022).



Reward offered by the United States for information on Sanaullah Ghafari, commander of ISIS's Khorasan Province (US Department of State, February 7, 2022)

India

Counterterrorism

►On June 10, 2023, the Indian police arrested four people affiliated with ISIS's Khorasan Province. Three of them, residents of Srinagar, in the northern Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, were arrested in the port city of Porbandar, in western India, on the Arabian Sea coast, before they managed to board a fishing trawler bound for Iran. Identification documents, digital communications equipment, tablets, mobile phones, and weapons were found in the detainees' bags. Another woman, from the port city of Surat, in western India, was also arrested. She was found in possession of ISIS's Khorasan Province magazine, Voice of Khorasan (The Times of India, June 10, 2023).



Three men and one woman, affiliated with ISIS’s Khorasan Province, detained in the Indian state of Gujarat The Times of India, June 10, 2023)

Yemen

Al-Qaeda activity

► On June 11, 2023, Al-Qaeda operatives attacked a Yemeni army checkpoint in the Shabwa province in southern Yemen. Two soldiers were killed. In addition, two Al-Qaeda operatives were wounded, but they managed to escape (AFP, June 11, 2023).

United States

US sanctions imposed on two senior ISIS operatives

► On June 8, 2023, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared two senior officials in ISIS’s General Directorate of Provinces (GDP) as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs). The directorate regional offices are responsible for operational guidance and financing of ISIS operatives around the world (US Department of State, June 8, 2023).

The two, whose property and property interests have been sanctioned, are:

- ◆ Abdallah Makki Muslih al-Rufay’i, in charge (emir) of the bureau of Bilad al-Rafidayn, which operates in Iraq. Al-Rufay’i previously served as the leader (wali) of ISIS’s Iraq Province.
- ◆ Abu Bakr bin Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Mainaki, senior commander of the Al-Furqan Bureau, which operates in the Sahel region in Africa.

Terrorism Financing

► On June 8, 2023, the Massachusetts State Prosecutor’s Office released a statement according to which Mateo Ventura, an 18-year-old resident of Wakefield, north of Boston, who tried to raise money for ISIS by selling gift cards on the dark web, was detained for “knowingly concealing the source of material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization,” i.e.,

ISIS. Between January and May 2023, Ventura donated \$705 to support ISIS. In addition, it was noted that Ventura wanted to join the ranks of ISIS to fight the “Kuffar,” or “infidels.” If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison, supervised release that could last a lifetime, and a fine of up to \$250,000 (ABC News, June 9, 2023).

The battle for hearts and minds

►The editorial of ISIS’s weekly Al-Naba was published this week under the title, “Jihad, Jihad, O People of Ethiopia.” The article attempts to leverage the tension between Christians and Muslims in the country to encourage Ethiopian Muslims to join ISIS and wage jihad against the “infidels.” According to the author, Muslims in Ethiopia suffer from the persecution of Christians (“Crusaders”), which is expressed in violence, discrimination, and destruction of mosques. He stresses that secular ideologies far from Islam would not help them, calling on them to adhere to jihadist Islam and join ISIS’s training camps in East Africa (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, June 8, 2023).



The editorial entitled “Jihad, Jihad, O People of Ethiopia” (Al-Naba weekly, Telegram, June 8, 2023)