



# Security Council

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## Letter dated 23 January 2024 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#), which was submitted to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#).

I should be grateful if the attached report could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

*(Signed)* Vanessa **Frazier**

Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities



**Letter dated 28 December 2023 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities**

I have the honour to refer to paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#), by which the Security Council requested the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team to submit, in writing, comprehensive, independent reports to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, every six months, the first by 31 December 2021.

I therefore transmit to you the Monitoring Team's thirty-third comprehensive report, pursuant to annex I to resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#). In formulating the report, the Monitoring Team considered information it received up to 16 December 2023. I also note that the document of reference is the English original.

*(Signed)* Justin **Hustwitt**  
Coordinator  
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team

**Thirty-third report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2610 (2021) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities**

*Summary*

The threat of terrorism from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, QDe.115, hereinafter “ISIL (Da’esh)”), Al-Qaida (QDe.004) and their affiliates remains high in the conflict zones and neighbouring countries.

Formal threat levels have risen in some other regions, including Europe.

Where terrorist threat is suppressed, a risk of resurgence is identified in certain circumstances.

Some shifts in terrorist tactics have been observed: a reduction in internecine fighting; a reduction in claims for attacks perpetrated; and, in some regions, a reduction in the number of attacks, offset by an increase in lethality.

The death of ISIL (Da’esh) leader Abu al-Husain al-Husaini al-Qurashi has been confirmed. A three-month delay in the naming of his successor, Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, is judged indicative of internal difficulties and security challenges. Some Member States assess that the extent of counter-terrorism pressure in the core conflict zone now raises the possibility that ISIL (Da’esh) could shift its leadership and centre of gravity away from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Al-Qaida’s communications efforts were enhanced and adapted quickly to seek to capitalize on events in Israel and Gaza since 7 October, demonstrating new agility. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP, QDe.129) is particularly significant in this regard.

In West Africa and the Sahel, violence and threat have escalated again, and the dynamics have become yet more complex. Some Member States are concerned that greater integration of terrorist groups in the region, and freedom of manoeuvre, raises the risk of a safe operating base developing from which they could project threat further, with implications for regional stability.

Regionally focused groups, such as Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP, QDe.132), enabled by a range of listed actors, pose a regional threat in South and Central Asia, with several attacks being supported from within Afghanistan. Activity by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K, QDe.161) in Afghanistan has reduced, but its ability to project threat in the region and beyond causes Member States concern.

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## I. Overview and evolution of the threat

1. Attrition of the ISIL (Da'esh) leadership continued with the death of Abu al-Husain al-Husaini al-Qurashi, first reported by Türkiye on 30 April and subsequently confirmed. It took ISIL (Da'esh) until early August to acknowledge the death and announce a successor, Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, possibly indicating difficulties in the selection and appointment process and concern at ensuring his security. No Member State was confident of Abu Hafs' identity or location; most judge it likely that he is an Arab and based in Iraq or the Syrian Arab Republic. Several Member States assessed that the level of attrition and security challenges makes a shift in the centre of gravity of ISIL (Da'esh) core away from Iraq or the Syrian Arab Republic possible. Africa and Afghanistan were viable locations for a new leader, with the former more likely. In considering the identity of Abu Hafs, one Member State raised an individual who was not an Arab. The trend of greater devolution and autonomy in the group and its affiliates continues. While the group is effectively suppressed in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, the risk of resurgence remains should a large number of detainees return to the battlefield or counter-terrorism pressure ease.

2. Three broad tactical trends caused Member States concern. A localized détente has been established between Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS, QDe.163) and Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM, QDe.159) in the Sahel, with both groups dissipating less effort in fighting each other and focusing resources on other targets. There were reflections of this in other theatres. In several areas, including the Sahel and West Africa, ISIL (Da'esh) now seems to be claiming attribution for significantly fewer attacks than it perpetrated. Interlocutors suspected that this was an effort to win the "hearts and minds" of local populations, recognizing the group's dependencies. While empirical data are challenging to obtain, Member States noted a broad reduction in the number and pace of ISIL (Da'esh) attacks in the six months up to November but some increase in the lethality of attacks, indicating improved capabilities. Some regions have witnessed an increase in attacks since November.

3. The evolution of threat in African conflict zones continues to cause Member States concern, particularly in West Africa and the Sahel, where a deficit in counter-terrorism capabilities has been exploited by ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups over many years. The situation is becoming ever more complex with the conflation of ethnic and regional disputes with the agenda and operations of these groups, bringing Tuareg and Fulani dynamics into play. It has become more difficult to disaggregate actors and threat in a way which would enable the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime to achieve greater effect. Member States did not report significant inflows of foreign terrorist fighters from other theatres but noted that most such fighters were from neighbouring African States or were Africans from affiliated groups elsewhere on the continent.

4. In Afghanistan, the challenges facing the Taliban, as the de facto authorities, in managing competing dimensions of terrorist threat and external pressure are significant. Simplistic analysis is unhelpful, and there is considerable obfuscation by listed entities. A diminution in attacks by ISIL-K probably reflected both the impact of the de facto authorities' counter-terrorism efforts against their principal internal threat and a change in strategy directed by the group's highly adaptable leader. The de facto authorities are also making efforts to constrain the activities of some other listed groups, but with mixed effect. There have been reports of tensions with senior Al-Qaida figures, who resent attempts at control, but the relationship remains strong, particularly with Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), which has been permitted to provide support to TTP operations and to work to enhance TTP capabilities. None of the Al-Qaida-affiliated groups have recovered sophisticated

external operations capability which would allow them to launch major operations at long range, and they are conscious of the sensitivities of their Taliban hosts. Nevertheless, they harbour global ambitions, and covert and calibrated efforts to rebuild capability were reported. The regional threat is clear, evidenced by a succession of attacks in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan and assessments of threat in the Central Asian States. The de facto authorities' efforts against ISIL-K appear to be more focused on the internal threat posed to them than the external operations of the group. TTP and the new group Tehrik-e Jihad Pakistan (TJP, reported to be a front for TTP, possibly with support from Al-Qaida, providing plausible deniability) are able to operate from Afghan territory across borders. The extent to which this is becoming an Afghan issue, rather than one of foreign terrorist fighters, is significant. Several Member States reported that recruitment of Afghans to both TTP and ISIL-K was now substantial, with Afghans often being used for operations.

5. The reporting period witnessed an improvement in the frequency, quality and volume of Al-Qaida media productions, which seemed designed to restore credibility, attract recruits and fill the void left by Al-Qaida's inability to declare its new leader (S/2023/95, para. 7). The context has changed since the 7 October events in Israel and Gaza. Al-Qaida's media response has been rapid and clear. Member States are concerned that it could exploit the situation to recover relevance and tap into popular dissent about the extent of civilian casualties, providing direction to those keen to act. The focus on the sanctity of the Aqsa Mosque is consistent with Al-Qaida's narrative on the holy sites since its inception, and the group has been able to point to extensive writings on this and Palestinian issues by both Aiman al-Zawahiri (QDi.006) and Usama bin Laden (formerly QDi.008). Some communications have stressed an obligation for individuals to take action to the limits of their own ability. It is too early to judge the effectiveness and impact of this messaging, but Member States are concerned that the renewed narrative could inspire self-initiated attacks globally.

6. The ISIL (Da'esh) communications response has been more cautious and calibrated. ISIL (Da'esh) remains firmly antipathetic to Hamas, whose members it considers apostates, and which it criticizes for participating in elections. ISIL (Da'esh) media output indicates that it also wants to tap into perceptions of legitimacy of the cause of the Aqsa Mosque and popular sentiment in the Islamic world and beyond but is finding this a more difficult balance than Al-Qaida. In consultations for the present report, no Member State reported knowledge of or involvement in the 7 October attacks on the part of Al-Qaida or ISIL (Da'esh) members or affiliates.

7. There were no significant developments reported in terms of new terrorist attack capabilities, but interlocutors noted a continued focus on development of unmanned aerial systems technology and its weaponization, particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, with a large-scale attack on a military graduation ceremony in Homs in October representing a new level of capability. While a Member State noted that media reporting of attempts to combine chemical or biological weapons capability with unmanned aerial systems was exaggerated, it provides a reminder of the need to monitor closely the groups' ambition to develop chemical, biological and radiological capabilities.

## II. Regional developments

### A. Africa

#### Central and Southern Africa

8. In Mozambique, Ahlu Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ, not listed) and its leadership in Cabo Delgado Province were significantly degraded. Regional Member States

estimate that ASWJ has 160 to 200 battle-hardened fighters. The Macomia district of Cabo Delgado Province remained the epicentre of the insurgency, with the largest concentration of ASWJ fighters located in bases in the Catupa forest. The districts most affected by ASWJ attacks were Macomia, Mocimboa da Praia and Muidumbe. Fatalities remained low, with sporadic upticks in violence corresponding to offensive operations targeting ASWJ and its leadership. During Operation “Golpe Duro II”, Mozambican and Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) (S/2022/83, para. 9) forces killed the operational leader of ASWJ, Bonomade Machude Omar (alias Ibn Omar), and senior insurgent commanders Abu Kital and Ali Mahando.

9. As a respected veteran leader with strategic vision and formal military training, Omar’s death is assessed to be a significant loss to ASWJ, given his intimate knowledge of the area and oversight of operations, communications and logistics for the group. Member States have noted his likely successor to be Farido Selemene Arune. Member States also noted the rise of Ulanga (Tanzanian national), a spiritual leader and cleric within ASWJ, observing that he could assume a leadership role in ASWJ.

10. With Omar’s death and the relative silence from Abu Yasir Hassan (S/2023/549, para. 13), who has sought to disassociate ASWJ from ISIL following fundamental disagreements over reporting lines, finance, and leadership issues, Member States assess that it is unlikely that the weakened regional ISIL network will have any meaningful impact on ASWJ following the death of Bilal al-Sudani (ibid., para. 24). Regional Member States maintain that there is no clear evidence of “command and control orders” from ISIL over ASWJ.

11. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Operation Shujaa continued to have an impact on the leadership of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF, CDe.001); however, the group remains resilient. ADF is assessed to have 1,000 to 1,500 adult male fighters under the leadership of Seka Baluku (alias Musa Baluku, CDi.036). Operation Shujaa recently expanded its mandate to extend its area of operations. Well over 200 ADF combatants died during the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) bombing campaign in September. In the past few months, several senior ADF commanders were injured in targeted attacks, including Baluku, Meddie Nkalubo, Abwakasi, Amigo and Musa Kamusi. UPDF also killed senior ADF commanders Fazul and Lubangakene.

12. Member States reported that Meddie Nkalubo is alive, actively directing and participating in ADF attacks. Nkalubo is assessed to be in Mambasa, Ituri Province, with Baluku. Member States stated that Nkalubo was personally responsible for overseeing and funding the campaign to bomb Uganda; all nine bombs used and intercepted in Uganda since July were assembled in Kampala using chemicals available on the open market.

13. Member States assess that Abwakasi was injured in September when UPDF targeted and killed Fazul, a Tanzanian ADF commander, who was with Abwakasi. Since his recovery, Abwakasi has tasked ADF operators with prioritizing the sourcing of medication, morphine and antibiotics. Abwakasi is currently in Beni with Amigo. Under the leadership of Abwakasi, ADF commander “Njovu” Kisambila Abdallah<sup>1</sup> (not listed) carried out the attack on the school in Lhubiriha, Mpondwe, Uganda, on 16 June resulting in 44 people killed, including 37 children, the attack on two foreign tourists, and three nearby attacks.

14. Abwakasi’s unit was on a mission to attack Bwere Hospital near Mpondwe on 17 October to obtain medical supplies and kidnap medical workers to assist with the

<sup>1</sup> Directly following the attack on the tourists, he was arrested by Ugandan authorities.

increased injuries among ADF leadership. Its reconnaissance spotted a UPDF contingent nearby and deviated from its original plan to instead target two foreign tourists from South Africa and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, shooting them near the gate of Queen Elizabeth National Park. This was the unit's second attempt to target Bwere Hospital. The ADF cell responsible for the attacks was assessed to comprise eight fighters, including Abwakasi and Amigo, who provided strategic instruction from Kasindi and Beni, and Musa Kamusi and Njovu, who carried out the attacks in Mpondwe and Kasese. Ugandan authorities forensically linked the ballistics of the gun used to attack children at the Lhubiriha school with the gun used against the foreign tourists.

### **East Africa**

15. In Somalia, the Federal Government continues to pursue its military offensive against Al-Shabaab (SOe.001). Member States assess that, despite suffering significant losses from targeted air strikes and military operations, Al-Shabaab remains resilient. Al-Shabaab's financial and operational capacity remains undiminished, with an estimated 7,000 to 12,000 fighters. Al-Shabaab continues to generate an estimated \$100 million each year, mostly from its illicit taxation in Mogadishu and southern Somalia.

16. Al-Shabaab is preparing for the second phase of the Government's offensive, which has now reached areas of the country where Al-Shabaab exercises control with stronger clan ties, such as Galmudug. Thus far, Al-Shabaab has absorbed most of the attacks by the Government. Member States assess that Al-Shabaab has the upper hand in the next phase of the Government's offensive.

17. September was the bloodiest month in terms of improvised explosive device and vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks by Al-Shabaab, with 14 attacks targeting high-level Somali government officials and army recruits and trainees.

18. ISIL in Somalia has a presence in Puntland. The group, which is estimated to have from 100 to 150 fighters, does not have the capacity to control large terrain or undertake significant operations owing to continued attacks by Al-Shabaab. ISIL in Somalia hosts the Al-Karrar office ([S/2022/547](#), para. 24), headed by the emir of ISIL in Somalia, Abdul Qadir Mumin (not listed).

19. Several Member States assess that Bilal al-Sudani gave Al-Karrar prominence, noting that the disruption of this network significantly damaged its strategic role, limiting its coordination capacity. Bilal al-Sudani, a long-time Al-Qaida facilitator in East Africa and trusted money and material smuggler for Al-Qaida leadership in Africa, was a close associate of Abu Talha al-Sudani.<sup>2</sup> After recruiting key spiritual leaders and veteran fighters over the past decades, Bilal al-Sudani tasked them with building a small close-knit network for ISIL in the region. The leaders he brought together in his network are credited with recruiting many fighters in the region. Regional Member States refer to him as the "irreplaceable Bilal al-Sudani".

20. Member States noted that it is a misnomer to identify the network operational in East and Central Africa as ISIL; rather, it is a network of veteran, battle-hardened fighters and religious figures who have, at some stage, all worked together; trusted collaborators who are well connected with smugglers and financiers and who are able to exploit these relationships across the region using their network to extort money and exploit resources for financial gain and control. ISIL is effectively leveraging these pre-existing networks in an attempt to build a viable structure in the region.

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<sup>2</sup> A senior Al-Qaida operative and trusted aide to Usama bin Laden.



21. Member States continue to register concerns that terror groups are exploiting political instability and violence in the Sudan. A Member State reported that the leader of the ISIL cell in the Sudan, Abu Bakr al-Iraqi, is a very senior veteran leader of ISIL (Da'esh) in Iraq and an immediate blood relative of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

22. Despite the conflict, Member States warn that the Sudan remains an ISIL facilitation hub used by North African fighters for onward transfer to southern Libya, Mali and West Africa.

### **West Africa**

23. Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP, QDe.162) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram, QDe.138) remained active in countries neighbouring Lake Chad. ISWAP fighters were reported to number between 4,000 and 7,000, with some Member States indicating that Abu Musab al-Barnawi (not listed) was still the leader of the group. One Member State noted that Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn Ali al-Mainuki (not listed) had replaced Abu Musab as the head of the ISIL Al-Furqan office.

24. ISWAP attacks declined over the past year owing to increased military offensives by national and regional forces, as well as continued clashes with Boko Haram fighters. It nonetheless remained the most active ISIL affiliate in the region, with the ability to carry out complex attacks outside its conventional areas of operation. Clashes with Boko Haram occurred primarily in areas occupied by Boko Haram's Bakura faction on the shores of Lake Chad and within the Sambisa forest in Borno State. The fighting was attributed to competition over territory and the defection of fighters.

25. Boko Haram's leadership status remained unclear following the death of Abubakar Mohammed Shekau (QDi.322) in 2021; the group had yet to declare renewed allegiance to either ISIL or Al-Qaida. Boko Haram was reported to be divided, with the most active faction operating from the north-west of Lake Chad, led by Bakura (not listed). The group has about 1,000 fighters.

26. The Boko Haram faction led by Aliyu Ngulde (not listed) operated within the Mandara mountains, on the Cameroon-Nigeria border, with 500 to 1,000 fighters. The group was responsible for attacks in northern Cameroon, where it engaged in raids for provision of food and medicine. The Adamu Saddiqu (not listed) faction, which previously operated in north-western Nigeria, was also active in north-central Nigeria but was reported to be involved in criminal activities including banditry.

27. Despite pledging allegiance to JNIM in late 2021 and receiving funds from the group, Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru, QDe.142) has been unable to support JNIM operationally. It faced challenges establishing itself due to competition from criminal groups in the north-west and north-central regions of Nigeria.

28. In the Sahel, several Member States report that reduced stabilization capacities following the departure of international forces have contributed to a confluence of interests of terrorist groups, thereby potentially escalating instability in the region.<sup>3</sup>

29. There is a long history of a waxing and waning relationship between JNIM and its predecessors and separatist groups in northern Mali. They have increasingly been fighting alongside each other in recent months and are perceived to be aligned, despite the absence of a formal alliance. Some Member States have noted the risk that a consequence of the current northern offensive by the Malian Armed Forces and their

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<sup>3</sup> The Monitoring Team sent several requests for information and visits to Sahel countries during the reporting period but did not receive any substantive responses. The Team was not able to visit the region, as the requests were not approved by relevant States, with one exception.

allies, which has targeted separatist positions, could be a deepening of the relationship with JNIM or a formal alliance. JNIM might also be able to recruit separatists from these groups.

30. The relative freedom of movement enjoyed by JNIM and ISGS raises concerns about an increase in attacks, particularly against Malian forces and their auxiliaries, targeting logistical convoys and isolating key northern localities now controlled by the Malian Armed Forces. The latter does not yet control significant portions of the rural areas in the north where these groups operate, recruit, equip, and finance themselves.

31. Meanwhile, some Member States noted the continued narrative of JNIM that focused on national and foreign forces. In recent months, JNIM communicated its intention to target the Malian Armed Forces and, notably, the Wagner private security company, primarily to gain favour with local populations. As during the French presence, JNIM specifically targets foreign forces supporting local security forces. It also seeks to exploit humanitarian-related needs resulting from the departure of the United Nations mission previously supplying regional populations of the central and northern regions.

32. In the central part of the country, Katiba Macina (not listed), the main offensive apparatus of JNIM, reduced its operations around the capital, Bamako. Meanwhile, the recent focus of the Malian Armed Forces on the north enabled it to resume operations around Bamako, leading to a deterioration of security in this region.

33. A localized détente between ISGS and JNIM raises concerns about the possible establishment of a terrorist sanctuary. By implicitly dividing the territories where they operate, these groups can concentrate on targeting security forces and continue to embed within local communities. This is a worrying trend, as it enables them to conduct attacks and facilitate operations beyond borders of neighbouring countries. Unlike the previous strategy of terror, ISGS in Mali is pursuing a new strategy to reinforce its acceptance among the population, thus increasing its influence, funding, and recruitment capabilities.

34. JNIM expanded its presence in Burkina Faso, doubling since 2022 and consolidating in the south where it attacked security forces and civilian populations. With its access to borders of littoral countries (Ghana, Togo and Benin), its continued expansion has encircled Ouagadougou, with large natural parks forming a continuous chain extending to the Niger and Nigeria, which could provide important tactical benefits. Its strategy is comparable to that implemented in Mali, involving the isolation of villages, guerrilla attacks, ambushes on convoys, and pillaging of barracks and camps of security forces and the *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* to replenish its arsenal of weapons.

35. Furthermore, JNIM, through Ansarul Islam (not listed), employs similar strategies as in Mali to enhance acceptance among populations. It instrumentalizes possible abuses to isolate certain communities from the rest of society. It imposes taxes on residents in exchange for protection or social ascent for young recruits, thereby ensuring funding in addition to equipment obtained during attacks on security force bases.

36. The Niger experienced a notable increase in violence since the unconstitutional change of government in July, as ISGS regained ground through complex attacks against both security forces and civilian populations. Unlike its strategy in Mali, ISGS was extremely violent, taking advantage of the weakened counter-terrorism capabilities of the Niger, especially along the border with Nigeria. Member States assessed that ISGS might exploit these weaknesses to strengthen its logistical corridor to Nigeria, enabling it to secure supplies and potentially recruit from other

communities. ISGS could also exercise better control of its personnel with the termination of the terrorist reintegration programme due to the unconstitutional change of government.

37. Even without a formal alliance between ISWAP and ISGS, ISGS expansion of territorial control could result in an area of instability from Mali to Nigeria, resulting in the potential establishment of sanctuaries for strengthened integration of terrorist groups. Member States expressed concern that freedom to manoeuvre could lead to the formation of a terrorist hub enabling capabilities to project the threat beyond the region. This possibility is constrained currently by local objectives and agendas of the involved terrorist groups but could emerge if the threat is not checked by effective counter-terrorism pressure.

### **North Africa**

38. Al-Qaida and ISIL (Da'esh) in North Africa faced significant counter-terrorism pressure, which largely contained the threat. Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM, QDe.014) had a limited number of local supporters; among its ranks were fighters from Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

39. The capabilities of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (not listed) were effectively constrained by Egyptian security forces. Its strength was assessed to be a few hundred fighters. One Member State described the group as eliminated, with few elements remaining as fugitive extremists seeking refuge in desert areas. Some Member States reported its relocation to west of the Sinai, closer to the Suez Canal, where its operations were more opportunistic than based on a long-term strategic plan.

40. One Member State reported the strength of Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia (AAS-T, QDe.143) to be from 120 to 140 fighters located in the remote mountainous area bordering Algeria, supported by a network of local accomplices.

41. Morocco experienced a resurgence of the lone actor phenomenon, with the situation in the Sahel inspiring numerous individuals to build operational relationships with ISGS. A cell comprising four individuals was dismantled in October, with one individual attempting to join groups in the Sahel.

42. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Libya (ISIL-Libya, QDe.165) continued to operate in remote areas of south-western Libya: Murzuk, Qatrun, Umm al-Aranib, Ghudwa, the city of Sabha, and Haruj al-Aswad mountains. One Member State noted that ISIL-Libya fighters travelled to areas controlled by the Tebu, and some members of the Tebu provided protection to ISIL-Libya fighters up to Kalanga Mountains near the Chad-Libya border, the gold mining areas in Libya and the Libya-Niger border. ISIL-Libya members from Tebu tribes and their leader, Abdul Salam Darak Allah (not listed), limited their movements to desert and mountainous areas to prevent detection. Some Member States assessed the group's strength at 150 to 400 active fighters but reported that they did not conduct terrorist attacks. Among its ranks are foreign terrorist fighters from Chad, Nigeria and the Sudan. One Member State reported that the leaders of the "Army of the Sahara" (S/2023/95, para. 35) sought to increase revenues through the illegal extraction of hydrocarbons and trafficking of mineral resources. During the reporting period, the Libyan Intelligence Service dismantled an ISIL cell led by Sudanese elements who facilitated the transportation of individuals from the Sudan and Chad towards Libya for transit to other destinations. Another connected cell which handled the associated financial transactions was also dismantled.

43. Al-Qaida in Libya is reported to secure transportation routes to cities for transit or as hideouts. Its members collaborated with some Tuareg individuals residing in the south-west, near the borders with Algeria and the Niger. Its presence was detected

around the cities of Awbari, Ghat and Uwaynat, and the border with Algeria, from Ghadamis to the Salvador triangle passing through the Akakus Mountains. One Member State noted that Al-Qaida utilized southern Libya to transport fighters to Al-Qaida in Mali.

44. Member States reported that the situation in Libya has permitted an increase in the smuggling of drugs, weapons and migrants towards the Sahel. ISIL-Libya and Al-Qaida in Libya were increasingly involved in these networks to finance operations, including in the Fezzan region.

## **B. Iraq and the Levant**

45. ISIL (Da'esh) core continues to operate as a low-intensity insurgency with covert terrorist cells residing mostly in remote and rural areas. Its military capabilities have been degraded, but it persists as a threat as it adapts to counter-terrorism pressure by exploiting security loopholes. The ISIL (Da'esh) combined strength in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic is between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters.

46. On 3 August, ISIL (Da'esh) announced a new leader, Abu Hafis al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, months after the killing of his predecessor, Abu al-Husain al-Husaini al-Qurashi. Member States attribute the delayed acknowledgement to internal ISIL divisions concerning the successor. Leadership changes also included a new spokesperson, who succeeded Abu Umar al-Muhajir after his capture by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS, QDe.137) in March 2023. Türkiye disrupted locally several ISIL (Da'esh) attacks directed by the leader to avenge Abu al-Husain's death, some undertaken by ISIL-K-related individuals.

47. The General Directorate of Provinces underwent reorganization after the death of Abu Sara al-Iraqi in February 2023 (S/2023/549, para. 45). One Member State noted the inclusion of the Bilad al-Rafidayn (formerly Iraq) office under the "Ard al-Mubarak" (formerly Sham) office, led by Abdallah Makki Muslih al-Rafi'i (Iraqi, alias Abu Khadija, not listed). Al-Rafi'i also plays an important role in the Delegated Committee.

48. In Iraq, ISIL (Da'esh) operations remained largely constrained owing to counter-terrorism pressure. Iraqi forces succeeded in targeting operatives and disrupting sleeper cells and guest house networks, but the group persists in conducting periodic attacks and replenishing leadership ranks. It maintained its leadership, management and provincial structures, led by Jasim Khalaf Dawud Ramiz al-Mazroui'i (alias Abu Abd al-Qader, not listed), and appointed new governors for Salah al-Din and northern Baghdad ISIL provinces following the elimination of their predecessors by Iraqi forces. ISIL (Da'esh) also overhauled its communications and security architecture with the aim of limiting leadership losses and preventing infiltration.

49. ISIL (Da'esh) continues to concentrate operations around the outskirts of Baghdad (especially Tarmiya) and the governorates of Kirkuk, Diyala, Salah al-Din and Ninawa, using small, decentralized cells. Kirkuk and areas around the Hamrin Mountains and Wadi al-Shay remain the group's main areas of operations owing to perceived gaps in security by Iraqi and Peshmerga forces. Attacks are carried out primarily with light weapons and explosive devices against government and security officials, community leaders, civilians and military facilities.

50. In the border areas west of Anbar Governorate, ISIL (Da'esh) activities displayed renewed momentum with a presence of 160 to 200 ISIL (Da'esh) fighters, including the deputy leader in Iraq, Ahmad Hamed Hussein al-Ithawi (alias Abu Muslim, not listed). It continued its attacks, including in Rutbah, establishing temporary checkpoints to make its presence felt and attacking military facilities. ISIL

cells continue to shelter in remote areas of western Anbar, including in Wadi Hawran, and near the Iraqi-Syrian borders, where sporadic attacks continue.

51. In the Syrian Arab Republic, ISIL (Da'esh) has intensified attacks since November. The central desert (Badia) serves as a logistics and operations hub with 500 to 600 fighters forming a triangle linking Suwayda', Homs and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates. ISIL (Da'esh) conducted sporadic attacks, including in Sukhnah in the desert of Homs Governorate and in Rusafah in Raqqah Governorate. The group also launched an attack in August in the town of Ma'dan Atiq in Raqqah, briefly controlling the town.

52. Exploiting tensions between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and local tribes that emerged in August, ISIL (Da'esh) was able to free some leaders and operatives held in SDF-controlled prisons, intensify recruitment and expand the presence of small mobile cells along the Syrian-Iraqi borders, specifically Mayadin in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate and Markadah in Hasakah Governorate. ISIL continues to take advantage of the porous Iraqi-Syrian border, with several ISIL leaders and operatives able to infiltrate into Iraq, specifically to Jazirah region in Ninawa Governorate.

53. In the south, ISIL (Da'esh) maintains around 20 active cells totalling 250 to 300 fighters in Dar'a and Suwayda', some opportunistically collaborating with other armed factions in the area. The group underreported its attacks and aims to expand towards the outskirts of Damascus to establish a stronger foothold. Besides ISIL (Da'esh), HTS and Hurras al-Din (HAD, not listed) have also established a footprint around Qunaytirah and Dar'a.

54. To avoid HTS offensives, ISIL moved some leaders and operatives from the north-west towards Badia. As the largest terrorist group exerting effective control in the north-west, HTS presides over a collection of armed factions, such as Ahrar al-Sham and Ansar al-Tawhid (both not listed), comprising approximately 15,000 fighters and administrative operatives. There is high mobility of individuals between factions.

55. Internal divisions within HTS are significant. Foreign terrorist fighters now account for a smaller portion, as many are disgruntled that their objectives are no longer in line with the group's operational and political agenda; new local recruits have taken their place. The HTS leader, Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani (QDi.317), sought to strengthen his authority by systematically arresting competitors/challengers, such as Maysar Ali Musa Abdallah al-Juburi (QDi.337), detained in August. Exploiting unrest in the north-east, HTS deployed military forces to the town of Kafr Jannah in the Afrin countryside to control the Hamran crossing. HTS maintains the most developed unmanned aerial systems capability among terrorist groups in the area, with several Member States assessing that the attack on the military graduation ceremony in Homs on 5 October was conducted by HTS or its allied factions. Its annual revenues are estimated in the tens of millions of dollars, mostly from its controlled territory.

56. The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (QDe.088), also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party (ETIM/TIP), in the Syrian Arab Republic is estimated to have between 1,000 and 2,600 fighters operating mainly in Idlib, Aleppo and Latakia. The group is allied with and supported by HTS to serve as the primary combatant force against the Syrian Arab Army in Idlib. In October, they collaborated in launching attacks against Syrian government forces in Latakia. The group receives financial support from HTS and operates businesses to generate funds. ETIM/TIP is led by Commander Kaiwusair in the Syrian Arab Republic; however, Abdul Haq (QDi.268), who is based in Afghanistan, remains the overall leader. The Syrian branch reportedly provides support to the group in Afghanistan. One Member State reported that ETIM/TIP received firearm and tactical training by the "Yurtugh Tactical" unit in Idlib; its weaponry is assessed to include light weapons, mortars, anti-tank missiles and portable anti-aircraft

systems. The Syrian branch is also equipped with heavy weapons such as rocket launchers, howitzers, anti-aircraft guns, tanks and armoured vehicles.

57. HAD continues to suffer financial challenges. Sami al-Uraydi (not listed), the group's Sharia leader, handles additional military and administrative issues and is closer to becoming the de facto deputy to the HAD leader, Samir Hijazi (not listed). Cooperating with HAD, Ansar al-Islam (QDe.098) shares resources and training facilities and comprises 250 to 300 fighters in the north-western Syrian Arab Republic. Ansar al-Islam and the HTS-aligned Khatiba al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ, QDe.168) are among the most active groups in southern Idlib, Hama and Latakia.

58. ISIL (Da'esh) core exploits any cessation or diversion of counter-terrorism pressure to resurge, capitalizing on local and regional geopolitical dynamics. ISIL (Da'esh)-related violence poses a heightened risk of spillover to neighbouring countries; Member States repeatedly highlight the threat posed by ISIL and Al-Qaida-affiliated elements in the southern Syrian Arab Republic and the possibility of terrorist attacks projecting across borders.

### C. Arabian Peninsula

59. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP, QDe.129) persists as a threat despite facing constant operational and financial challenges due to counter-terrorism pressure and successive leadership losses. Although in decline, AQAP remains the most effective terrorist group in Yemen with intent to conduct operations in the region and beyond.

60. AQAP has significantly reinvigorated its media strategy and content, capitalizing on international events including Qur'an burnings and the 7 October attacks to incite lone actors globally. Some Member States attributed this modernization to the appointment of Jawad al-Abi and Musab al-Adani (both not listed) as leaders of the media wing following the killing of Hamad bin Hamoud al-Tamimi in February 2023.

61. AQAP resumed publication of the *Sada al-Malahem* magazine in September, issued more frequent editions of *Ummah Wahidah* and released an interview with its leader, Khaled Batarfi (not listed). Frequent media appearances by Shura Council members Saad ben Atef al-Awlaki (not listed) and Ibrahim Ahmed Mahmud al-Qawsi (alias Khubayb al-Sudani, not listed), were notable. Multiple unofficial media outlets announced the formation of an alliance to promote Al-Qaida media across branches and establish cohesive messaging.

62. Al-Qaida further tightened control over AQAP, especially through the son of Sayf al-Adl (QDi.001), Khaled Mohammed Salahaldin Zidane (not listed), who resides in Yemen and is close to AQAP senior leadership. Khaled delivers Al-Qaida directives and plays a critical role in recruitment, media and managing AQAP internal strife. His travels to southern Yemen have intensified since mid-August, with his movements protected by the security leader, Ibrahim al-Banna (not listed).

63. AQAP continued to direct operational and human resources to the south, particularly Shabwa and Abyan, the group's current military centre of gravity. Operations targeted mainly leaders of counter-terrorism campaigns. AQAP members, including prominent explosives experts, continue to reside in Wadi Omran in Abyan, despite counter-terrorism efforts to purge the group from the area. AQAP attacks became less frequent and more reactive. Besides standard tactics, AQAP used weaponized drones in early July in Shabwa. It developed unmanned aerial systems capabilities, establishing a specialized drone unit, with operational training from the Houthis. It prioritizes liberating its prisoners to replenish ranks; in September, the Houthis released several AQAP members and explosives experts. The AQAP

abduction cell increased activity, especially in kidnapping foreign employees of international organizations for ransom. Threatening maritime security remains an unfulfilled ambition for AQAP.

64. Ma'rib Governorate, particularly the Husun al-Jalal area, serves as a safe haven for AQAP leaders. AQAP fighters number around 3,000, primarily in Abyan (mostly Madiyah and Mahfad), Ma'rib and areas in Hadramawt. Shabwa became one of the main sanctuaries for members and leaders, particularly the Khawrah al-Dayan, Musayn'ah and Wadi al-Rafad areas. One Member State noted a small presence in Mahrah Governorate near the border with Oman.

65. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Yemen (ISIL-Yemen, QDe.166) activities remain constrained. In August, fewer than a dozen members pledged allegiance to the new ISIL (Da'esh) leader. No attacks were claimed over the reporting period, but the group maintained logistical links with other branches, especially Somalia. Fighters number between 50 and 100, mostly in Ma'rib Governorate, with some cells in Wadi Hadramawt. The leadership cadre includes Mithaq Thabit Haytham, alias Abu Gharib al-Radfani, ISIL-Yemen governor (not listed), and Khaled Ahmed Abu Faraj, alias Abu Ayoub (not listed). Member States remained concerned about the risk of the revival of ISIL-Yemen.

## **D. Europe**

66. Formal terrorist threat levels have risen across Europe following fatal attacks in late 2023 in France and Belgium, in addition to numerous non-lethal terrorist incidents and arrests in several European countries. The murder of a teacher in Arras, France, in October illustrated triggering elements for self-initiated attacks: the prevalence of grievances against European values, and perceived blasphemy. Attacks by autonomous actors against soft targets in public places, using unsophisticated weapons, remain the primary modus operandi.

67. Developments since the 7 October attacks and Qur'an-burning incidents have mobilized efforts to radicalize and recruit new followers within Muslim communities in Europe. Al-Qaida's propaganda supporting Hamas amplified its persistent call for violence in support of its cause. The publications of ISIL, while more cautious, exacerbated religious intolerance, and it focused on capitalizing on the situation in Gaza to mobilize potential lone actors to commit attacks but distanced itself from Hamas.

68. European investigations illustrated the global and interconnected nature of ISIL financial facilitation, with several Member States assessing Türkiye as a logistical hub for ISIL-K operations in Europe. One Member State reported a case involving a complex terrorism financing scheme for the recruitment and travel of foreign terrorist fighters to Afghanistan through electronic wallets that received over \$2 million in donations on the Tron blockchain from more than 20 Western countries. The scheme was operated by an organized criminal network of Tajik individuals led by Khukumatov Shamil Dodihudoevich (alias Abu Miskin, not listed), who was arrested in Istanbul, Türkiye, in late June.

69. In a renewed trend ([S/2020/717](#), para. 57), some individuals of North Caucasus and Central Asian origin travelling from Afghanistan or Ukraine towards Europe represent an opportunity for ISIL-K, which seeks to project violent attacks in the West. Member States noted the existence of current and unfinished operational plots on European soil conducted by ISIL-K. In July, seven Tajik, Turkmen and Kyrgyz individuals linked to ISIL-K were arrested in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, while planning to conduct high-profile terrorist attacks for which they were obtaining necessary weapons and possible targets.

70. Member States highlighted the risk posed by terrorists released from prisons who reinvent themselves as recruiters to form home-grown cells in Europe to conduct terrorist plots. Most are individuals skilled in radicalization and directly linked to central commands in conflict zones. In October, the Spanish National Police arrested Mustafá Maya Amaya (not listed), known as “the biggest recruiter in Europe”, allegedly for involvement in establishing a cell with former foreign terrorist fighters to conduct terrorist acts on European soil. He was convicted in 2018 for leading a terrorist network to recruit ISIL and Al-Qaida fighters and sending them to conflict zones.

71. Member States noted with grave concern the growing number of minors involved in violent radicalization processes through social media, online gaming platforms, alternative Internet platforms and encrypted chat apps. In November, the Spanish Civil Guard dismantled one of the largest ISIL indoctrination structures run by two minors who created video game communication platforms as unofficial channels and radicalized over 50 minors preselected in Internet forums and other online environments.

## **E. Asia**

### **Central and South Asia**

72. Member States continue to report that the high concentration of terrorist groups in Afghanistan undermines the security situation in the region. The greatest threat within Afghanistan still comes from ISIL-K, with its ability to project into the region and beyond.

73. The relationship between the Taliban and Al-Qaida remains close, and the latter maintains a holding pattern in Afghanistan under Taliban patronage. Regional States assess that the presence of Al-Qaida senior figures in the country has not changed and that the group continues to pose a threat in the region, and potentially beyond. The Taliban continues to seek to reduce the visibility of these relationships. Some Taliban operational commanders share ideology and modus operandi with Al-Qaida, rooted in history of joint terrorist activities and personal relations, but not its more global ambition. The de facto authorities’ efforts to constrain some Al-Qaida activities have reportedly caused tensions between the Taliban and Al-Qaida. Remaining, long-standing Al-Qaida figures in Afghanistan are not likely to be able to provide strategic direction to the broader organization, and the group cannot at present project sophisticated attacks at long range. One Member State noted the number of senior Al-Qaida figures in Afghanistan, with historical ties to the group, to be fewer than a dozen.

74. Several Member States noted individuals travelling to provide liaison between Al-Qaida’s de facto leader, Sayf al-Adl, in the Islamic Republic of Iran and senior Al-Qaida figures in Afghanistan, including Abdul Rahman al-Ghamdi (not listed). Another Member State refutes the presence of any Al-Qaida personnel in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Six new Al-Qaida operatives were reported to have moved to eastern Afghanistan to join Katiba Umar Faruq under the leadership of Abu Ikhlas al-Masri.<sup>4</sup>

75. Al-Qaida was reported to have established up to eight new training camps in Afghanistan, including four in Ghazni, Laghman, Parwan and Uruzgan Provinces, with a new base to stockpile weaponry in the Panjshir Valley. Some camps might be temporary. Hakim al-Masri (not listed), based in Kunar Province, is responsible for the training camps and conducting suicide bomber training for TTP. Five Al-Qaida madrasas operate in Laghman, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nuristan and Parwan Provinces. The group maintains safe houses to facilitate the movement between Afghanistan and

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<sup>4</sup> There are reports that Abu Ikhlas might be in some form of Taliban custody.



the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Provinces of Herat, Farah and Helmand, with additional safe house locations in Kabul.

76. Member States assessed that, despite the recent loss of territory, casualties, and high attrition among senior and mid-tier leadership figures, ISIL-K continued to pose a major threat in Afghanistan and the region. Overall, ISIL-K targeting patterns were directed first against the Shia, then the Taliban, and ultimately civilians. ISIL-K attacks decreased as a consequence of counter-terrorism pressure exerted by the Taliban and its good level of infiltration into ISIL-K ranks. ISIL-K has also significantly penetrated the Taliban. While the Taliban claimed to have defeated ISIL-K, terrorist attacks continued and the Taliban leadership to some extent remained divided over approaches in dealing with both the group and Salafist communities sympathetic to it. The recently created Batah Unit within the Taliban General Directorate of Intelligence aims to ensure that educated ISIL-K prisoners abandon Salafist ideology and embrace Deobandism.

77. In contrast, ISIL-K adopted a more inclusive recruitment strategy, welcoming non-Salafists and focusing on attracting disillusioned Taliban and foreign fighters. ISIL-K increased its appeal within Tajik networks. Khukumatov Shamil Dodihudoevich (alias Abu Miskin) is the moderator of the ISIL-K Telegram channel “Mustakim Khurasan” and one of the most active propagandists and high-ranking recruiters.

78. Several Member States confirmed that Sanaullah Ghafari (alias Shahab al-Muhajir, QDi.431) is still alive and remains the ISIL-K leader, reportedly located in Kunar Province. Ghafari was likely targeted while exiting a Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (QDe.152) training centre in Kunar, possibly leaving him injured.

79. TTP was further strengthened and emboldened, increasing attacks with a broader degree of autonomy to manoeuvre. The Taliban are generally sympathetic to TTP aims. Besides supplying weapons and equipment, Taliban rank and file, Al-Qaida core and AQIS fighters assisted TTP forces in cross-border attacks. Despite Taliban instructing TTP fighters not to participate in operations outside Afghanistan, many had done so with no apparent consequence. Some Taliban members also joined TTP, perceiving a religious obligation to provide support. Interlocutors reported that TTP members and their families receive regular aid packages from the Taliban. A new TTP base was established in mid-2023 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, where 66 TTP individuals trained as suicide bombers. A notable development is the increase of Afghan nationals in the TTP ranks.

80. Al-Qaida core and AQIS continue to provide training, ideological guidance and support to TTP. In July, Al-Qaida reportedly issued orders for all vehicles used by the group to be gifted to TTP owing to fear of being targeted by the United States of America. With the consent of senior Al-Qaida leaders, AQIS selected approximately 15 commanders to assist TTP with attacks in Pakistan. In September, AQIS reportedly supplied armed fighters during the TTP attack in Chitral, Pakistan. TTP morale increased following international attention on the September attack. Aside from anti-Pakistan operations, TTP reportedly conducts assassinations of Taliban defecting to ISIL-K.

81. The short-term detention of 70 to 200 TTP members and the relocation of personnel northward away from the border areas by the Taliban were assessed as deflecting pressure from Pakistan to contain TTP.

82. TJP announced its existence on 23 February 2023. Reportedly, it is a front, providing TTP with plausible deniability, to alleviate the pressure from Pakistan on the Taliban. Abdullah Yaghistani (not listed) leads the group, and its spokesperson is Mullah Qasim. TJP conducted several attacks in 2023, including one against Pakistani

security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on 12 December 2023. TTP media further amplifies TJP attacks.

83. The status of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU, QDe.010), the Islamic Jihad Union (QDe.119) and Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari (QDe.158) in Afghanistan remain unchanged (S/2023/370, para. 59). One Member State reported that funding of Jamaat Ansarullah (JA, not listed) comes from the Taliban and Al-Qaida. JA fighters are the main force of Lashkar-e Mansoori, the Taliban special battalion of suicide bombers. Recently, several JA commanders reportedly joined ISIL-K ranks in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces.

84. ETIM/TIP, after relocation from Badakhshan Province, is now headquartered in Baghlan Province, with operational networks extending to multiple provinces. The group focuses on training youth in reserve forces and increases female recruitment and training. Regional States expressed continuing concern for its collaboration with other terrorist groups, especially TTP, in recruitment, training, planning attacks and posing a regional threat. One Member State reported Al-Qaida core providing training and ideological guidance to ETIM/TIP. Exploiting ETIM/TIP grievances at being restrained by the Taliban, ISIL-K is recruiting its members. Some fighters are reported to have already defected to ISIL-K, while the majority of the group remain allied with Al-Qaida. Member States registered concern that fighters might use acquired Afghan passports to infiltrate regional countries. Funding sources include zakat, extortion, kidnapping, drug trafficking and underground money exchanges.

85. One Member State assessed the strength of Majeed Brigade (MB, not listed) at 60 to 80 fighters, with recruitment focusing on female suicide bombers. A couple of Member States reported MB cooperation with TTP and ISIL-K in training, weapons acquisition, intelligence-sharing and joint operations, although several other Member States sought additional information in this regard. MB claimed several attacks targeting Pakistan law enforcement agencies and Chinese personnel in Pakistan during the reporting period.

86. Jaysh al-Adl (not listed) claimed an attack which killed 11 Iranian police officers in Sistan and Baluchistan Province in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 15 December 2023.

### **South-East Asia**

87. While counter-terrorism pressure was largely effective in containing threats in most South-East Asian countries, the sizeable number of terrorist organizations operating in the region, combined with returning or repatriated fighters, represents a persistent threat which could resurge. Terrorist activities decreased in Malaysia and Indonesia owing to actions of security forces, but the Philippines confronted increasing attacks, as demonstrated by an Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in South-East Asia (ISIL-SEA, QDe.169) strike on 3 December on a religious service held in a university gymnasium in Marawi City. Member States assess that ISIL-aligned groups might continue opportunistic attacks, especially in the southern Philippines. The drivers of radicalization largely entail local issues, although support and linkages with global ideologies of ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida exist. Terrorist threats are likely to increase around upcoming elections in 2024 and 2025.

88. ISIL-SEA is decentralized, with no overall command and control through the emir, but retains the capability to respond rapidly to counter-terrorism operations, as demonstrated by attacks in retaliation for the killing of former emir Abu Zacharia in June 2023. Information on the identity of the group's new leader and the appointment of one of the commanders of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, Ismael Abdulmalik (alias Abu Turaife, not listed), as the new ISIL-SEA emir is unconfirmed. Reports of his surrender or death remain unclear.

89. ISIL core maintains ties with groups in Mindanao, which is concerning, since sustained support could improve the capability of ISIL to conduct attacks in the Philippines.

90. Philippine authorities arrested several members of the Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (not listed). Two widows of group leaders were domestically designated as terrorists for their activities. The losses and seizure of weapons and explosives caches led to the surrender of some fighters.

91. The threat from Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG, QDe.001) has been degraded, but it retains the capability to conduct attacks, primarily using improvised explosive devices. On 2 December, Indonesian security services killed one of the ASG leaders and a bomb maker, Mudzimar Sawadjaan, and 20 other ASG fighters in Basilan.

92. Member States expressed concern at the potential resurgence of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI, QDe.092) and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD, QDe.164) in Indonesia. The growth of online propaganda, training, and recruitment activities suggest ongoing radicalization among JAD and JI sympathizers. The pro-ISIL JAD is consolidating internally, operating with small, decentralized cells connected through social media. Imminent attacks appear unlikely, but the group is reportedly strengthening its internal network. JI continued to promote the creation of a State in South-East Asia governed by sharia law, attempting to infiltrate government institutions and recruit public servants, including law enforcement officials. The group is funded by donations facilitated by JI cells operating in Indonesia.

### III. Impact assessment

#### A. Resolutions 2199 (2015) and 2462 (2019) on the financing of terrorism

93. Al-Qaida, ISIL (Da'esh) and affiliates finance themselves through a range of mechanisms, from traditional sources (kidnapping for ransom, robbery, and taxation) to newer forms (fundraising via social media, crowdfunding, cryptocurrencies, and gaming platforms) to raise and transfer funds. While reports note increasing use of cryptocurrencies, the bulk of transactions are still through traditional channels such as cash couriers and hawala. One Member State noted that ISIL used a digital directory for identifying hawaladars regionally.

94. As noted previously, ISIL core's revenue continues to decline. Member States report available reserves at \$10 million to \$25 million. Costs continue to outpace revenue, with payments to members and families of dead or imprisoned fighters remaining the largest expenses. Some Member States reported ISIL finances since January 2023 to be more dispersed after Bilal al-Sudani's death, with fewer internal transfers, but the Al-Karrar office remained important to revenue generation.

95. Most ISIL-affiliated groups are financially autonomous. Some affiliates use social media to raise funds through cryptocurrencies. A pro-ISIL media group, Meydan Medya, appealed to donors, directing the use of Monero coin. Other ISIL outlets also appealed for Monero in more than 20 languages.

96. In December, the Spanish National Police dismantled an ISIL (Da'esh) network with branches in Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Sahel, the Maghreb and Europe, accused of laundering funds and moving €200,000 worth of cryptocurrencies to conduct attacks in Europe. Thirteen individuals were arrested, and two imminent attacks thwarted, in this complex counter-terrorism investigation supported by 12 countries.

97. ISWAP generated funds locally from criminal activities, taxation of fishermen and traffickers, cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, and farming activities such as growing red chillis for sale to countries neighbouring Lake Chad. Reports of poaching (mostly ivory) in Benin, the Niger and Nigeria were noted. Despite both Boko Haram and ISWAP being able to raise their own funds, their fighters were not well paid, and consequently they were unable to attract foreign fighters.

98. ISIL-K continued to benefit from financial support from affiliates. While the Taliban exerted some pressure on TTP through control of funds, the de facto authorities reportedly provided 3.5 million afghanis (\$50,500) to the leader, Noor Wali Mehsud (QDi.427), monthly, with the instruction that he garner further sources of revenue.

99. Member States note Al-Qaida's use of cryptocurrency to raise and move funds. The Republic of Korea imprisoned two Central Asian individuals for soliciting funds for KTJ in the Syrian Arab Republic using cryptocurrencies (stablecoins). Funds sent totalling \$12,000 were used mostly for purchasing weapons and ammunitions.

100. With regard to Al-Qaida affiliates, Al-Shabaab continues its sophisticated revenue collection system, with Mogadishu and southern Somalia remaining its biggest tax base. Its \$100 million annual revenues are derived through a comprehensive taxation system, and it exploits the collection of zakat, using targeted lifestyle audits of wealthy businessmen.

101. AQAP faces financial challenges and is unable at times to pay members or finance operations. In addition to robbery, arms smuggling, counterfeiting, selling petroleum derivatives and extorting local business to pay for protection as primary sources of income, the AQAP abduction cell increased kidnapping-for-ransom operations in Yemen, especially targeting foreign employees of international organizations. The sale and purchase of land on real estate markets are noted as a means of income.

102. The significant local capacity of JNIM allows it to levy taxes, extort funds and carry out abductions. The group is well financed mostly from local funding sources, including by taxing or operating artisanal mines mainly in Burkina Faso and through cattle rustling within the Sahel region. AQIM is involved in arms and drug smuggling, illegal migration, and taxation.

## **B. Resolution 2347 (2017) on cultural heritage**

103. Although connections between transnational organized criminal networks and terrorist organizations have been observed in the illicit trafficking of cultural property, reported cases were exclusively linked to organized crime. It is unclear whether ISIL (Da'esh) retains access to cached cultural artefacts in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, from which it might seek to generate revenue in the future.

104. In Yemen, Wadi Omran in Abyan Governorate has served as a primary AQAP training area. One Member State reported that, upon the initial takeover of the valley, AQAP discovered historical artefacts and subsequently sold them in Shabwa Governorate for unspecified foreign currencies.

## **C. Resolution 2396 (2017) on foreign terrorist fighters, returnees and relocators**

105. While steady progress continues in repatriation efforts from camps in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic, including a significant batch of returnees to Kyrgyzstan, progress continues to be slow and there has been no significant shift in

the situation outlined in the thirty-second report of the Monitoring Team (S/2023/549). At the current rate of repatriation, the risks associated with camps and prisons, described by one Member State as “the largest concentration of terrorist fighters in the world”, will persist for several years. Some Member States have registered concern about the capacity of capable national authorities in some regions to manage a significant increase in the pace or volume of returns securely.

106. ISIL (Da’esh) remains focused on recovering personnel from prisons through attacks or other means, to backfill both leadership roles and rank-and-file fighters, as evidenced by one recent disruption of an ISIL (Da’esh) cell responsible for planning attacks against prisons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

107. There have been occasional reports of movement by individual foreign terrorist fighters, but these have been ad hominem, with some noting fighters of North African origin wanting to move from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq to Africa, closer to their roots. Member States have not reported large-scale or directed flows of fighters from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq to destinations in Africa or Afghanistan. One contributing State noted that HTS had grown in numbers but had compensated for a decline in foreign terrorist fighters by recruiting from local communities.

108. One theme which has emerged in discussion with Member States has been the regional nature of foreign terrorist fighters in the conflict zones in Africa. Such fighters tend to hold the nationality of neighbouring States or to have travelled from another conflict zone on the continent in support of an affiliated group. It was not clear whether such travel was commonly directed by leadership groups. A large number of foreign terrorist fighters in Somalia are East African nationals, although they seldom rise to senior positions in Al-Shabaab or ISIL (Da’esh) there. Thirty foreign terrorist fighters of several African nationalities have previously been detained in south-western Libya. In terms of the movement of personnel, individuals can exploit long and relatively porous borders, and facilities and routes used by transnational organized criminals for various forms of smuggling.

109. Member States have also pointed out that nationality can be a secondary component of identity in parts of Africa and South Asia, with ethnic or tribal identity being a greater determinant of behaviour and of movement across borders in support of a perceived common cause. For example, the interplay between Fulani identity and the activities of sanctioned groups in the Sahel is addressed elsewhere in the present report.

#### **IV. Implementation of sanctions measures**

110. For United Nations sanctions to be implemented effectively, the ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list must be accurate and up to date and changes made in a timely manner so that Member States can reflect sanctions in their domestic lists for compliance by relevant national authorities and the private sector. Neither the Committee nor the Monitoring Team received many replies to requests for information about listed entities and individuals, and the Team notes the importance of such engagement for sanctions implementation.

111. The Monitoring Team continues to provide technical assistance to Member States in the listing and delisting process. In 2023, four names (three individuals and one entity) were added to the ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list and two names delisted.

112. To keep the ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list current and accurate, the Monitoring Team conducted the annual review exercise as well as the data validation project approved by the Committee to identify inconsistencies in the list entries and

narrative summaries. Eighty-five names were reviewed in 2023 and 22 amendments approved by the Committee.

### **A. Travel ban**

113. During the reporting period, no travel ban exemption requests were submitted to the Committee, and no information was received from Member States regarding attempted travel or interdiction of individuals designated on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list.

### **B. Assets freeze**

114. During the reporting period, the Committee received and approved six requests for assets freeze exemptions, five of which are for basic expenses and one for extraordinary expenses.

### **C. Arms embargo**

115. Member States continue to express concern about the proliferation of weapons in Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa, in particular the increased use of unmanned aerial systems and improvised explosive devices.

116. Several Member States reported continued proliferation of weapons from stockpiles left by former coalition partners in Afghanistan. In one case Taliban commanders were reported to have provided TTP with significant quantities of weaponry, including M24 sniper rifles, M4 carbines with Trijicon ACOG scopes, and M16A4 rifles with thermal scopes. Weapons and equipment, particularly night vision capability, continued to be reported as adding lethality to TTP attacks on Pakistani security forces. A Member State highlighted that TJP used such weapons and equipment in the attack on the Mianwali airfield, in Pakistan, on 4 November.

117. It was reported that senior TTP leaders were issued weapons permits for 15 weapons each, while subcommanders received five permits. Support to TTP strengthens its alliance with the Taliban, discouraging potential defections to ISIL-K. Member States also reported that ISIL-K sought and obtained such weapons from TTP.

118. A Member State reported that fighters crossed the Afghan border to attack Tajik targets in Dushanbe, using weapons and equipment supplied to the former Government of Afghanistan by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, including high-yield grenades, tactical radio communication sets, night-vision equipment and sophisticated improvised explosive device components.

119. Member States report that use of unmanned aerial systems is increasing, with groups sourcing components through local markets and commercially. Both ISIL and Al-Qaida use unmanned aerial systems technologies. Member States report that AQAP now possesses several unmanned aerial systems and has established a specialized unmanned aerial systems unit with capacity to operate and weaponize them. In the Syrian Arab Republic, HTS has robust indigenous unmanned aerial systems capabilities with components procured mostly through Türkiye. A Member State reports that, in the Syrian Arab Republic, ETIM/TIP has established a "Falcon unmanned aerial system squadron" with reconnaissance, suicide attack and bombing capabilities deployed in multiple operations. In Afghanistan, ETIM/TIP also has specialized technical teams and drone manufacturing facilities producing multiple rotary-wing drones which have been successfully tested with M16 rifles.

120. In Africa, usage of improvised explosive devices is increasing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the improvised explosive device techniques of ADF continue to advance with increased capacity and sophistication, with a notable increase in incidents in Kampala. In Mozambique, ASWJ deployed increased numbers of improvised explosive devices against regional forces with at least one such device triggered via remote control. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab launched landside attacks near Aden Adde International Airport using 107-mm rockets that some Member States assess were raided during its attack on the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia base in Bulo Marer in May.

## V. Recommendations

121. The Monitoring Team continues to stress the importance of Member States sharing additional information to update list entries and narrative summaries without delay in accordance with their national legislation, and in support of annual review and data validation processes ([S/2023/549](#), para. 107).

122. The Monitoring Team proposes that the Committee mandate the Team, working together with the Secretariat and other sanctions committees' panels of experts if required, to study and assess the scope to update the standard form for the listing of individuals and entities under the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida regime, and to consider what tools might support more effective list management. The Team should report its findings back to the Committee in due course for further consideration by the Committee.

## VI. Monitoring Team activities and feedback

123. The Monitoring Team notes that reliable data on the numbers of fighters aligned with groups affiliated with Al-Qaida and ISIL (Da'esh) are difficult to obtain, particularly from conflict zones. In some theatres, individuals can be aligned with more than one group. The figures used in the present report reflect either consensus or a range of estimates made by contributing Member States, with a potential margin of error. Where possible, the Team sought to disaggregate fighters from family members or other affiliates.

124. The Monitoring Team engaged a wide range of Member States in the preparation of the present report, including in New York, through visits and in written exchanges. The Team made a concerted outreach effort to African Member States, meeting in person with 22 States from Southern, Central and East Africa, all of which provided contributions, and 10 from North and West Africa. The Team continued to seek information relevant to its mandate and to explain and promote the sanctions regime through participation in meetings with relevant international and regional organizations, the private sector and civil society, and a wide range of United Nations entities and panels of experts supporting Security Council committees. The Monitoring Team is grateful for the assistance and support it received.

125. The Monitoring Team welcomes feedback on the present report at [1267mt@un.org](mailto:1267mt@un.org).