



# Security Council

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## Letter dated 20 January 2020 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 twenty-fifth 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 [2368 \(2017\)](#).

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

(Signed) Dian Triansyah **Djani**  
Chair

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 27 December 2019 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2368 (2017) 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 2368 (2017), 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 2017.

I therefore transmit to you the Monitoring Team's twenty-fifth comprehensive report, pursuant to annex I to resolution 2368 (2017). The Monitoring Team notes that the document of reference is the English original.

*(Signed)* Edmund **Fitton-Brown**  
Coordinator  
Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team

**Twenty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities**

*Summary*

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), following its loss of territory, has begun to reassert itself in both the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, mounting increasingly bold insurgent attacks, calling and planning for the breakout of ISIL fighters in detention facilities and exploiting weaknesses in the security environment of both countries.

ISIL was forced into a change of leadership with the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. It is unclear whether Baghdadi's named successor, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, will emerge as an effective organizing force, capable of leading what has become a far-flung, diverse group of supporters and affiliates. The current assessment is that the strategic direction of ISIL with regard to administration, propaganda and recruitment is unchanged, and that command and control between the ISIL core in the conflict zone and affiliates abroad will be maintained.

The reduction of forces of the United States of America has raised concerns among Member States regarding the ability of security forces currently active in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic to maintain adequate control over a restive population of detained ISIL fighters, as well as family members, numbering more than 100,000. Many dependants remain equally ideologically committed and their fate is a major concern for the international community. Some 2,000 foreign terrorist fighters remain in detention in the area.

Idlib Province, in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, remains dominated by groups affiliated with Al-Qaida but also plays host to relocated ISIL fighters and dependants. Parts of Iraq, especially the area of Anbar Province bordering the Syrian Arab Republic, also represent a permissive security environment for the movement of ISIL fighters.

Beyond the ISIL core conflict zone, threats from Al-Qaida and ISIL affiliates persist globally, especially in Afghanistan and its immediate neighbourhood but also in parts of Africa and South-East Asia. In West Africa, the combined efforts of the affiliates are threatening the stability of fragile Member States in the region. In East Africa, Al-Qaida affiliate Al-Shabaab maintains a steady pace of attacks on security forces and foreign targets. ISIL affiliates are active in the Philippines, with fighters from Indonesia and Malaysia contributing to insurgent attacks there and in their own countries.

Other threats from ISIL, Al-Qaida and their ideology continue to challenge Governments and security forces. These include issues related to the potential return of women and children from the core conflict zone, the effective prosecution of returned fighters, prison radicalization and a wave of pending releases, especially from prisons in Europe. Another issue concerns the ability of those who finance terrorism to evade detection despite increasingly sophisticated tools designed to identify and stop transactions with a suspected link to terrorism.

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## I. Overview and evolution of the threat

1. The period from July to September 2019 saw an acceleration of the reconstitution of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)<sup>1</sup> as a covert network in the Syrian Arab Republic, mirroring what had happened in Iraq since 2017. Freed of the responsibility of defending territory, there was a notable increase in attacks in previously quiet areas held by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic around the country. The final fall of the geographical “caliphate” had precipitated significant human movement of ISIL fighters, supporters, dependants and other refugees and displaced persons.

2. There followed two significant developments relating to ISIL in October. First, the United States announced a drawdown of troops and Turkey launched Operation Peace Spring. This affected the balance of forces in the north of the Syrian Arab Republic and highlighted the precariousness of the holding arrangements of local authorities and non-State armed groups for displaced persons and detainees. Member States<sup>2</sup> estimate that several hundred individuals associated with ISIL, including fighters, escaped from their accommodations in October, although it is not clear how many were redetained, how many remained at large and whether there was any significant change to the associated threat.

3. Then, on 26 October, an operation led by the United States resulted in the death of ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi<sup>3</sup> in Idlib Province in the Syrian Arab Republic. Less than 24 hours later, ISIL suffered a second blow when spokesperson Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir was killed in an airstrike nearby. ISIL announced Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi (not listed) as al-Baghdadi’s successor on 31 October 2019.

4. Some Member States assess that new ISIL leader Abu Ibrahim is in fact Amir Muhammad Said Abdal Rahman al-Mawla (not listed), but this cannot yet be confirmed. Al-Mawla was previously al-Baghdadi’s deputy. His Turkmen ethnicity led some Member States to assess that he might only be a temporary choice until the group finds a more legitimate “emir”, a direct descendant from the Quraysh Hashemite tribe who could therefore command the full support of the remote provinces.

5. Following the announcement of Abu Ibrahim’s appointment, the ISIL central media bureau choreographed through propaganda outlets a series of pledges of allegiance showing small groups of supporters claiming to be in the following locations: Sinai, Bangladesh, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, Khorasan Province (Afghanistan), Hawran (in the south of the Syrian Arab Republic), Tunisia, West Africa, Central Africa, Sham (in the east of the Syrian Arab Republic), Philippines, Greater Sahara, Iraq, Libya and Indonesia. These pledges demonstrated the same tenacity that ISIL showed with the earlier series of renewed pledges announced before al-Baghdadi’s death, in late June and early July, by small groups of supporters claiming to be in the following locations: West Africa, Sinai, South-East Asia, Qawkaz (the North Caucasus), Khorasan Province (Afghanistan), Azerbaijan, Libya, Turkey and Tunisia.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, some relevant Member States expressed doubts about the credibility of those broadcasts as indicators of any ISIL presence in the locations where they were purported to have been made. Moreover, ISIL will face a challenge over the longer term to enthrone its supporters, especially those in more

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<sup>1</sup> Listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq (QDe.115).

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated via a citation, the information contained in the present report was shared with the Monitoring Team by Member States.

<sup>3</sup> Listed as Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai (QDi.299).

<sup>4</sup> The order of listing of geographical locations in the present paragraph reflects the chronological order of declarations of support.

remote locations, about the new leader without putting him in danger by having him communicate more directly and confirm his identity.

6. Member States have made a provisional assessment that the strategic direction of ISIL is unlikely to change under the new leader. Al-Baghdadi released an audio message on 16 September with a renewed focus on the ISIL core area, highlighting the plight of ISIL detainees and refugees as “the worst and most important matter” and urging that efforts be made to free them. ISIL may have limited capacity to absorb personnel and dependants on the run, but it has made efforts to prepare to field them and direct them towards Idlib Province, where the group has resources and facilities. This adds to the security and humanitarian challenges already associated with the Hawl camp and other holding facilities in the area. It also adds to the urgency of the security and humanitarian challenges.

7. The issue of foreign terrorist fighters remains acute, with Member States continuing to assess that between one half and two thirds of the more than 40,000 who joined the “caliphate” are still alive. This is expected to aggravate the global threat posed by ISIL, and possibly Al-Qaida (QDe.004), for years to come. Although some Member States advise that the best way of addressing this issue is to pursue repatriation of individuals associated with ISIL, others remain reluctant to accept returnees.

8. Afghanistan continues to be the conflict zone of greatest concern to Member States outside the ISIL core area and suffers by some measures the heaviest toll from terrorism of any country in the world. Al-Qaida and foreign terrorist fighters aligned with it, under the protection and influence of the Taliban, pose a long-term global threat. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) (QDe.161) suffered severe losses and was largely expelled from its Afghan heartland of Nangarhar Province in November 2019, but it has proved resilient in the past and is still assessed to pose a serious threat.

9. The most successful ISIL affiliate during the period under review was Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad Basin, which maintained a high tempo of attacks and gathered significant arms, materiel and other supplies from raids on Nigerian security forces, and strengthened its links to Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

10. Despite the success of its “remote provinces” in their local conflict zones, however, ISIL still has not been able to reconstitute its external operations capability and remains reliant on inspired attacks to demonstrate relevance outside conflict zones. These tend to be unreliable and relatively low-impact, and Member States report that ISIL is actively working to re-establish the capacity to direct complex international operations. Nevertheless, it suffered a setback to its ability to inspire attacks in November 2019, with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) operation with several Internet companies that resulted in the removal of large quantities of ISIL online material, especially from Telegram’s instant messaging platform.

11. Al-Qaida remains resilient and increasingly threatening despite the confirmation on 14 September of the death at an unspecified earlier date of leadership figure Hamza Usama Muhammad Bin Laden (QDi.421). Al-Qaida affiliates are stronger than ISIL in many conflict zones, especially the Sahel, Somalia, Yemen and the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. One Member State, however, highlighted Al-Qaida’s conservative approach to expenditure and its consistent prioritization of administrative costs and salaries over operations. The ambitions of Al-Qaida-affiliated elements in Idlib Province to plan and execute international attacks are assessed to be curtailed both by the military pressure they are under and by Al-Qaida’s reluctance to resource such activity.

## II. Regional developments

### A. Iraq and the Levant

12. In July 2019, the military forces of Iraq announced the launch of a new counter-terrorism operation called Will of Victory, in an attempt to secure the west of the country and the borders with the Syrian Arab Republic. Small groups of ISIL fighters had been bedding down and reorganizing. ISIL was able to maintain a momentum of operations against official targets away from major populated areas. Iraq estimated the number of fighters operating in the west of the country and its border areas at about 1,000 in July 2019.

13. Member States reported that ISIL in Iraq continued to finance its operations through investing in legitimate businesses and commercial fronts, including money exchange companies. Iraqi nationals Haji Wahab Tabra, also known as Abu Amnah (not listed), and Hameed Al-Najjar, also known as Abu Maryam (not listed), are conducting financial transactions on behalf of ISIL in Iraq and neighbouring countries through clandestine business relationships.

14. The borders between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic remain inadequately secured, allowing some movement of fighters between both jurisdictions. Recent developments east of the Euphrates have led to an increase of ISIL activity in Dayr al-Zawr and Hasakah Governorates and a spike in attacks targeting the United States-led coalition and local non-State armed groups.

15. The north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic remains a haven for cadres affiliated with either Al-Qaida or ISIL who actively operate and plan attacks throughout the region and beyond. Idlib Province, whose population has grown to more than 3 million people during the civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic, is dominated by the larger Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) organization, which is affiliated with Al-Qaida.<sup>5</sup> HTS currently has 12,000 to 15,000 fighters and concentrates on combating Syrian government forces.

16. Another group affiliated with Al-Qaida, Hurras al-Din (HAD), operates in Idlib and its suburbs and is assessed to have between 3,500 and 5,000 fighters, up to half of whom are foreign terrorist fighters from countries that include Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. HAD adheres more to a global than a local Syrian agenda. Its leader, the Syrian national Samir Hijazi, also known as Abu Hammam al-Shami (not listed), obtained the blessing of Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri (QDi.006) to operate in the name and under the umbrella of Al-Qaida. Member States assessed that HAD was made up of a number of small factions, including Jund Al-Malahim, Jaysh Al-Sahel, Jaysh Al-Badyah, Saraya Al-Sahel, Saraya Kabul, Jund Al-Shari'a, Ansar Al-Furqan, Saraya Al-Ghotta, Abu Baker the Al-Sideeq Brigade, the Abu Obaidah Al-Jarah Brigade, Saraya Al-Ghuraba'a, the Jund Al-Sham Brigades, the Fursan Al-Eyman Brigades, the Al-Nukhba Forces, the Abdullah Azzam Group and the Usood Al-Tawheed Brigade.<sup>6</sup>

17. One Member State in the region assessed that HAD, given its size, ideology and the capabilities of its veterans, presented a growing threat to peace and security regionally and globally, and that its leadership plans to revive external operations targeting Western and United States interests wherever possible. The joint "Incite the believers" operations room includes HTS, HAD, Jaysh Ansar Al-Tawheed and other groups currently active in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. HAD exerts

<sup>5</sup> Listed as Al-Nusra Front for the People of the Levant (QDe.137).

<sup>6</sup> See also Aaron Zelin, "Huras al-Din: the overlooked al-Qaeda group in Syria", Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 24 September, 2019.

substantial control over the room's operations. Member States reported that, parallel to its military operations and attacks in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib and Ladhqiyyah, HAD was also conducting proselytization activities through an association called the Duat al-Tawhid Centre, led by Abu Usamah al-Shawkani (not listed). HAD raised funds locally and online using Telegram and WhatsApp as part of a wider fundraising campaign launched in mid-May 2019. Member States expressed concerns that this might give HAD access to international financial support.<sup>7</sup>

## **B. Arabian Peninsula**

18. Member States report that, in Shabwah Governorate of Yemen, attacks by the Shabwani Elite Forces had helped to restrict the movements of Al-Qaida fighters. Those attacks were carried out in the mountains, gorges and valleys of the Governorate where Al-Qaida members and leaders had been hiding. As a result, Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (QDe.129) members have found it difficult and sometimes impossible to move freely in the districts of Ataq, Azzan, Alsayyd and Hawtah. They have fled to the mountains bordering Bayda' Governorate. The group has deployed improvised explosive devices in an attempt to respond to the attacks of the Shabwani Elite Forces.

19. In Bayda' Governorate, AQAP and ISIL continue to battle each other in Qayfah district, as each side attempts to gain control of as many fronts in the area as possible. AQAP has inflicted a series of defeats on ISIL, which has seen many of its members killed, injured or taken prisoner. This has come about despite assistance which ISIL receives from the Houthi militias. The Houthis have provided tactical help, cooperation, prisoner exchanges and handover of military camps to ISIL under Houthi supervision. One Member State assessed that Houthi militias were striving to fuel the ongoing conflict between AQAP and ISIL in Bayda', as it served Houthi interests in the Governorate.

20. In Abyan Governorate, AQAP members in vehicles bearing the insignia of Ansar al-Sharia<sup>8</sup> have fanned out across various districts of the Governorate, including Madiyah, Mahfid and Lawdar, targeting officials of the Security Belt Forces via terrorist operations against security locations in the Governorate. Member States assess that such individual operations by AQAP are only an attempt to prove their presence in the Governorate in response to the offensive campaign launched against them by the Security Belt Forces and Arab coalition forces. Member States report that AQAP fighters in Abyan have received improvised explosive devices from AQAP camps in Hadramawt and Ma'rib Governorates for continued targeting of Security Belt Forces.

21. Member States report that AQAP continues to transfer arms and ammunition from Ma'rib Governorate to the Qayfah area of Bayda' Governorate, supporting the group's fighters who are engaged against ISIL. Arms and ammunition are transferred using Toyota Hilux trucks from Hisn al-Jalal and the Great Dam of Ma'rib, where the organization has depots containing light to medium weapons. Most Ma'rib tribes are well disposed towards AQAP, which gives the organization the ability to move freely in most parts of the Governorate. According to one Member State, Al-Qaida leaders were observed in Ma'rib in mid-November.

22. Information from Member States in the region indicates that AQAP fighters have been observed moving between farms in the following districts of Hadramawt Governorate: Ghayl Ba Wazir, Shihr, Dis al-Sharqiyah, Raydah al-Say'ar, Zamukh wa

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ansar al-Sharia is the local name of AQAP in Yemen.



Manwakh, Wadi Amd, Shi'b Mankhub and Qatan. Several foreign terrorist fighters, including Saudi Arabian nationals, are reported to be in Abr district, an AQAP safe haven owing to the absence of Yemeni security forces in that area. A Member State in the region reported that, following the death of Ibrahim Hassan Tali Al-Asiri (QDi.291), deputy leader Khalid Omar Batarfi (not listed) had claimed more responsibility within the group, including for external operations.

23. On 7 November, ISIL media outlets published photographs of members of its provinces, including Yemen, pledging allegiance to the new “caliph”. ISIL still has few fighters in Yemen, but propaganda footage was published of some of them graduating from sniper and explosives training courses in Bayda'. It was reported that in June 2019 the ISIL leader in Yemen, Abu Osama al-Masri (not listed), was captured with others in a raid conducted by United States and Saudi Arabian forces.

## C. Africa

### North Africa

24. Member States assessed the number of ISIL fighters remaining in the south of Libya to be between 100 and 200. The numbers dropped as a result of a series of aerial strikes that targeted ISIL positions in Sabha Province and around Murzuq in late October and early November 2019; they fell further as many ISIL fighters reportedly moved on from Libya and neighbouring countries to other conflict zones in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin. These moves were facilitated by the same networks in Awbari and Sabha that had previously moved fighters to the Libyan coast. Foreign terrorist fighters in the region are also reportedly returning to their countries of origin, including Chad and the Sudan.

25. Recent air strikes against ISIL led to the death of a number of leadership figures. A Member State confirmed the death of Malik al-Khazmi, former leader of the so called “Barqa Province” of ISIL, as well as Al-Mahdi Danqu, also known as Abu Barakat. A Member State challenged the veracity of reports of the death of Mahmoud al-Baraasi (also known as Abu Mus'ab Al-Libi) (not listed), the former leader of ISIL in Benghazi. It is also likely that Abu Muaz al-Tikriti (not listed) survived the attacks, which otherwise severely hampered the ambitions of ISIL to regain a stable territorial foothold in Libya.

26. Remaining ISIL fighters continue to mount hit-and-run operations in the southern cities of Fuqaha', Ghadduwah and Sabha. Individuals affiliated with ISIL were also captured during the reporting period in Ajdabiya, Darnah and Misratah. ISIL cells continue to be present in cities on the Libyan coast.

27. Member States reported that ISIL might seek to retaliate by attempting an attack against oil facilities in the Murzuq area in order to gain publicity. The video released by ISIL in Libya on 5 December 2019 depicting the brutal murder of civil servants following a raid against Fuqaha' sought to demonstrate relevance within the ISIL network following recent setbacks. The video also underscores the persistent threat posed by the group.

28. The diminished numbers of ISIL in Libya place a lower financial burden on the group, which is using its reserves to pay for weapons on the illicit market. The group is also investing in small projects in coastal cities, though likely within the informal economic sector to avoid detection.

29. Individuals affiliated with the Organization of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (QDe.014) remain dormant in south-western Libya and avoid waging attacks that would attract attention in order to maintain their control of trafficking routes that they are continually able to tax, particularly through the Salvador Pass on the

tri-border area between Algeria, Libya and the Niger. While its activity on the Algerian side of the border remains constrained, AQIM sought to exploit political developments by announcing support for demonstrations and attacking security forces in Tipaza Province in November 2019. ISIL activity in Algeria was also revived after a two-year hiatus when Jund al-Khilafah in Algeria (JAK-A) (QDe.151) launched an attack in November against security forces in Tamanrasset, near the border with Mali and the Niger.

30. Regarding the connections between terrorism and organized crime in the area, several Member States highlighted the terrorism financing risks associated with sustained migrant smuggling. While it is unclear how much this contributes to the coffers of terrorist organizations in North Africa, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that migrant smuggling from West Africa to North Africa generates \$760 million to \$1.1 billion per annum, indicating a potentially lucrative revenue stream for any groups able to tax trafficking and smuggling routes.

### **West Africa**

31. Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (QDe.159) continues to represent the principal international terrorist threat in this region, perpetrating terrorist attacks, developing insurgencies and maintaining safe havens in northern Mali. It destabilizes the Sahel and has increased its presence in littoral countries. Member States in the region report external influences from the Gulf region that shape the environment in which JNIM operates. This is accomplished by means of the promotion of a radical ideology through the presence of foreign activists operating non-profit organizations, which provide an alternative to State authority. JNIM pursues a long-term agenda to transform and radicalize society in its expanding areas of operation.

32. Based on the increasing importance of the operational capabilities of Katiba Macina within the JNIM operational framework, Amadou Koufa (not listed) is assessed to be a key lieutenant to overall leader Iyad Ag Ghali (QDi.316). Koufa called on the Fulani community to join and support his group and take a stand against local authorities throughout West Africa. Member States in the region noted the orchestration of inter-ethnic violence to mobilize more Fulanis in Burkina Faso and Mali. They also highlighted a significant threat associated with attempted manipulation of the Fulani community in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal and Togo. Nevertheless, the Fulani community is diverse, with its own various local issues, and is unlikely to unite in support of Katiba Macina and JNIM objectives. Katiba Macina and Ansarul Islam still benefit from mentoring by the Emirate of Timbuktu (the former Sahara branch of AQIM), which directly facilitates the expansion of the terrorist threat to the south.

33. Despite significant attrition from counter-terrorism operations, ISGS retains a stronghold in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, and maintains pressure on defence and security forces south of *routes nationales* 16 and 20 in Mali. In two major attacks, ISGS killed 49 soldiers at Indelimane military camp in Mali on 1 November, and 71 soldiers at In-Atès camp in the Niger on 10 December. Burkina Faso and Mali also suffered substantial losses in other significant attacks perpetrated by JNIM, ISGS and Ansarul Islam. Since July 2019, more than 100 members of the defence and security forces of Mali, 85 members of such forces in the Niger and 30 in Burkina Faso have been killed. The operational efficiency of terrorist groups in the region is enhanced by deconfliction and operational collaboration between the groups in high-profile attacks.

34. Member States in the region acknowledge a similar fluidity between organized crime and ISIL and Al-Qaida affiliates, as both use the same smuggling routes and

invest in lucrative illicit activities such as trafficking of narcotics, weapons and migrants, and small-scale mining.

35. Further to the establishment of a single narrative for ISGS and ISWAP (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 34), ISGS deploys tactics that are usually associated with ISWAP operations against the Nigerian military forces. These include attacks not just on small outposts but also on large military camps to seize a substantial number of weapons, ammunition, vehicles and gasoline. ISGS and ISWAP already have joint facilitators, which is assessed to presage an enhanced operational connection between the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin theatres. Nevertheless, although ISWAP now claims ISGS attacks, ISGS leader Adnan Abou Walid Al-Sahraoui (QDi.415) is expected to retain his operational independence from ISWAP commander Abu Abdullah Idris Ibn Umar Al-Barnawi (not listed) in the forthcoming period.

36. ISWAP continued to operate with a high degree of success during the reporting period, including by conducting raids on security forces, which have yielded significant war spoils in the form of materiel and other supplies. It is reported to have an unspecified number of foreign terrorist fighters, possibly of Chadian, Libyan or other North African origin. It has outstripped Abubakar Mohammed Shekau's (QDi.322) faction of Boko Haram,<sup>9</sup> in terms of both capability and number of fighters (up to 5,000 for ISWAP compared with estimates of 500 to 2,000 for Shekau's faction). Member States attribute this partly to the continuing benefits of association with and support from the ISIL core. Nevertheless, both groups are perceived by Member States in the region as a menace, one with particularly adverse effects on Cameroon, Chad and the Niger.

### **East Africa**

37. During the reporting period, Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidin (Al-Shabaab) (SOe.001), an Al-Qaida affiliate, continued to conduct attacks and to radicalize and recruit members. Inside Somalia, it focused attacks on the Federal Government's personnel and installations, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), bases and defence positions. It also targeted convoys along the transport corridors and concentrated on planning attacks on western interests, targeting foreign-owned businesses, workers, foreign-affiliated institutions and troops.

38. Member States assessed that the group attempted to achieve its strategic interests by focusing on aviation and other hard targets (see [S/2017/573](#), para. 46). On 30 September, Al-Shabaab attacked Baledogle airstrip in the Lower Shabelle region, which serves as a United States military training base, and attacked a convoy of Italian troops within Mogadishu. On 13 October, the group fired six mortars into the heavily guarded Halane area of the Mogadishu airport, which houses the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. That was the second such attack in 2019.

39. Member States observed that Al-Shabaab continued to enlist fighters to replace over 400 fighters killed in airstrikes in the past two years. Clan elders are coerced into promulgating Al-Shabaab doctrine and recruiting new members. Those who resist are targeted for kidnapping and assassination. The group continues to attract significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters from cross-border communities of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya (see [S/2019/50](#), para. 46, and [S/2019/570](#), para. 40).

40. Similarly, Member States indicated that the number of attacks along the common borders with Somalia increased as Al-Shabaab units, including their intelligence and explosive experts, began operating in strategic towns and villages near the common borders, from where they continue to plan attacks and kidnappings of government officials and foreigners. The influx of fighters into the border areas is

<sup>9</sup> Listed as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (QDE.138).

attributed to desertions from AMISOM bases by some Al-Shabaab elements who exploited the relocation of AMISOM defence positions in order to move freely.

41. There is simmering dissent among foreign terrorist fighters as a result of lower wages and fewer privileges relative to other local fighters. This is likely to motivate fighters to defect to ISIL in Somalia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo; it has also led Al-Shabaab to subject those considering defection to house arrest or assassination.

42. Al-Shabaab continues to enjoy expanded sources of funding and is consolidating an elaborate taxation system in most parts of the country where there is significant economic activity (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 39). For instance, in mid-November 2019, Al-Shabaab operatives released a property tax notice indicating the amount of money to be remitted to the group monthly by households and businesses without exception. Additionally, Al-Shabaab destroyed telecommunications towers in certain areas and introduced monthly compliance reports for all companies, with the largest company, Hormuud Telecommunication, expected to remit about \$200,000 per month.

43. Regarding the ISIL affiliate in Somalia, Member States assessed that, in the latter part of 2019, it faced attrition from intensified military operations targeting key leaders. Despite that setback, it continued to boost its ranks through recruitment in Puntland, southern Somalia and online. Member States observed that ISIL was restructuring its affiliates in Africa to ensure survival following military defeat in the Syrian Arab Republic. The restructuring is aimed at consolidating decision-making and operational command centres. In this respect, ISIL in Somalia has been designated the command centre for ISIL affiliates operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique and for loose networks and sympathizers of these affiliates. The long-term objective is to establish a “triad” connection among the East, Southern and Central African operations.

#### **Central Africa**

44. Member States observed that the threat from Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), an offshoot of Madina Tawheed wal Muwahedeen (MTM), continued to evolve. In July 2019, MTM rebranded itself by replacing its logo with that of ISIL. According to some Member States, ISCAP membership consists of 2,000 local recruits and foreign terrorist fighters from Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Nevertheless, Member States asserted that it was unclear how the foreign fighter elements and the local fighters from the Allied Democratic Forces and MTM had been integrated into ISCAP and the functions they performed.

45. In the latter part of 2019, Ansar Al Suuna in Mozambique was added to ISCAP. Consequently, the online presence of ISCAP began combining footage from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Somalia, an indication of coordination or attempts to unify the three theatres. Additionally, Member States observed a striking improvement in the quality and content of propaganda materials, a possible indication of new funding and resourcing of the group. One Member State reported that operations in Mozambique were planned and commanded from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

#### **D. Europe**

46. Homegrown terrorists still represent the principal threat to European countries. These individuals are radicalized online, consult online tutorials and possibly connect with other radical elements through encrypted Internet applications. They do not

require contact with the ISIL core or its authorization to claim attacks in its name. One prominent development in November 2019 was the Europol operation with Telegram to remove ISIL materials from the latter's platform.<sup>10</sup> It remains to be seen whether this campaign will address concerns among Member States regarding the platform and crowdsourced fundraising by ISIL.

47. Terrorists and radicalized prisoners also pose a threat. These prisoners include a mix of returnees, frustrated travellers, perpetrators, supporters and planners of terrorist attacks, as well as individuals imprisoned for other crimes but radicalized while in custody. Many of the foreign terrorist fighters who received relatively short sentences upon their return to Europe prior to 2015 are expected to be released in the coming period (see S/2019/570, para. 47). Some are still assessed to be dangerous. One Member State reported that approximately 1,000 returnees were due for release in Europe in 2020.

48. On 29 November 2019, a convicted Al-Qaida terrorist released on probation in 2018 killed two people in London. The attacker is reported to have acted alone, without any direct current connection to ISIL or Al-Qaida, but his past involvement in a disrupted terrorist plot in 2010 raises questions about other members of that group, along with broader concerns regarding the effectiveness of deradicalization programmes and evaluation of released terrorists.

49. Member States report instances of terrorists and radicalized prisoners exchanging information through clandestine networks of women who receive and deliver messages when they visit relatives in prison. Incarcerated women also pose challenges as their prison housing does not adequately address the risks they pose, especially when they are housed with children. Many are considered more violent and determined to radicalize others, which adds to concerns regarding the situation in the Hawl camp in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic and the possible repatriation of women from it. Some Member States have received injunctions from their courts to repatriate females and children but continue to emphasize the potential associated threat.

50. Timely detection and identification of foreign terrorist fighters returning to Europe is complicated by their various travel routes and measures taken to avoid detection. A six-week maritime border operation involving six Member States and coordinated by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) detected 12 returnees using maritime routes between North Africa and Southern Europe. The risk of migrants being a propaganda target for ISIL-inspired attacks was also identified. In that regard, Member States outlined the differences in manner of radicalization among European countries, with some affected by indigenous radicalization and others mainly encountering radicalization among diaspora communities.

51. Member States reported that European foreign terrorist fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq continued to provide an income stream for ISIL through a financing network across Europe. Financing from relatives was regularly observed, including through intermediaries based in Turkey. Member States have not observed large-scale organized fundraising in Europe on behalf of ISIL or Al-Qaida. In the Hawl camp, informal money service businesses are used to transfer funds to families of ISIL fighters residing in the camp. Funds entering the ISIL core area often arrive in Turkey through money service businesses and then reach beneficiaries via hawala or cash courier. One Member State noted that funds continued to be remitted to some neighbouring countries for the benefit of foreign terrorist fighters in the conflict zone

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<sup>10</sup> Europol, "Referral action day against Islamic State online terrorist propaganda," press release, 22 November 2019.

seeking to return to Europe. The amounts significantly exceeded the cost of travel. Recent examples suggest that remitted amounts have now increased tenfold compared with in the past, with amounts increasing from €300 to €500 to €3,000 to €5,000. ISIL is assessed to collect a portion of these funds.

52. ISIL appears not to have regenerated its external operational planning capability, although documents have emerged in the Syrian Arab Republic concerning a plan within ISIL to reconstitute its office to assist operatives in Europe with planning and executing attacks. Despite weaknesses in the current structure, the threat of a planned complex attack in Europe, especially by former expert operatives who have the ability to operate independently, is assessed to persist. Member States note that Al-Qaida has also shown interest in large-scale attacks against symbolic European targets. In this regard, HAD is assessed to have a global agenda, including international attack planning and the establishment of clandestine structures.

## **E. Asia**

### **Central and South Asia**

53. Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters were able to inflict severe damage on ISIL-K, displacing it from large areas of Nangarhar Province. More than 1,400 people surrendered to the Afghan authorities, including dependants of ISIL-K fighters. Most males were Afghan nationals, but there were also foreign nationals from Azerbaijan, Canada, France, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The impact on ISIL-K numbers may be significant: the group is now assessed to have approximately 2,500 fighters in Afghanistan, with about 2,100 of them concentrated in Kunar Province. There is a covert ISIL-K presence of up to 25 persons in Faryab Province, led by former Taliban member Qari Salahuddin (not listed). ISIL-K continues recruitment via the Internet. It also conducts propaganda activities in madrasas and universities in Afghanistan, including in Kabul.

54. ISIL-K has established informal contact with other terrorist groups, including Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (QDe.152), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (QDe.132) and Lashkar-e-Islam. Meanwhile, these groups regularly attack Pakistani posts along the Afghan border. The approach of ISIL-K approach could increase the security threat to neighbouring States.

55. Al-Qaida is concerned about the current focus of the Taliban leadership on peace talks. Al-Qaida representatives undertook shuttle diplomacy, persuading various factions of the Taliban and field commanders not to support negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan and promising to increase financial support. Central Asian groups, experiencing financial problems, tend to support Al-Qaida. If a peace agreement is reached, Al-Qaida intends to develop a new narrative to justify continuing the armed conflict in Afghanistan. Relations with the Taliban continue to be close and mutually beneficial, with Al-Qaida supplying resources and training in exchange for protection. This is evidenced by the operation in the Musa Qal'ah district of Helmand Province in September in which some members of Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent were killed. Their protection had been arranged by the shadow governor of the district. There are an estimated 400 to 600 Al-Qaida fighters in Afghanistan, mainly in the Provinces of Khost, Kunar, Nuristan, Paktiya and Zabul.

56. The situation in Central Asia is influenced by events in Idlib and Afghanistan. Security services in the region focus primarily on threats from HTS, which is the umbrella organization for most Central Asian terrorist groups, including Khatiba Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ), Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari (KIB) (QDe.158) and the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG) (QDe.119).

57. In Afghanistan, Member States report continuing activity by the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) (QDe.088), ISIL-K, Jamaat Ansarullah, KTJ, IJG, KIB and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (QDe.010). Following Afghan military operations in Takhar, Kunduz, Baghlan and Badakhshan, approximately 400 foreign terrorist fighters from China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and elsewhere broke into small groups and escaped to other provinces. These groups now plan to continue hostilities in conflict zones, transfer trained fighters to various countries to carry out terrorist acts and disseminate propaganda via the Internet.

58. KTJ is the most active Central Asian group, pursuing combat roles in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere. The former head of KTJ, Sirajuddin Mukhtarov (not listed), left the group's leadership to focus on recruitment and fundraising following an injury in a terrorist operation. Khikmatov (not listed), the new leader, is respected among Central Asian fighters. For most of the past 20 years, he served as deputy to the leader of IJG in Afghanistan. Khikmatov's leadership has made it possible to establish coordination between Afghan and Syrian cells. Regular monthly payments of about \$30,000 are made to Afghanistan through the hawala system for IJG.

59. KIB is assessed to have a total of 220 fighters. The group's financing has improved recently with funds from external sponsors. KIB consists of three cells which operate in the Syrian Arab Republic; Istanbul, Turkey; and the Faryab Province of Afghanistan, which borders Turkmenistan. The leader of the Afghan wing of KIB is Jumaboi (also known as "Juma Aka") (not listed), a former member of IMU. The group numbers about 70 fighters; they participate actively in hostilities against Afghan government forces. Similarly to KTJ, KIB sends financial assistance, from its cell in Istanbul, through the hawala system to Afghanistan. Funds are brought in by informal money exchangers for Jumaboi from Maymana, the capital of Faryab. The original source of this income is the smuggling of fuel, food and medicine from neighbouring Turkmenistan.

60. IJG is led by Ilimbek Mamatov (not listed) and consists of approximately 250 fighters, operating primarily in the Afghan Provinces of Badakhshan, Sari Pul, Zabul and Takhar. Mamatov, who enjoys significant authority among Central Asian fighters, is seeking to create in Afghanistan a united Central Asian terrorist group under his command. This new group would be subordinate to Al-Qaida, enhance the credibility of fighters from Central Asia and establish uninterrupted funding. There is an IJG contingent of approximately 30 fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic known as the "small Islamic Jihad group". They came from Afghanistan and are led by Abu Ubaidah (not listed).

61. IMU has ultimately lost its independent status and is now integrated into Taliban forces operating in the Provinces of Faryab and Zabul. According to one Member State, the leader of the group, Abdulaziz Yuldashev (also known as Abdul-Kholik) (not listed), was imprisoned by the Taliban for returning without their permission to Faryab under pressure by the Afghan army in Kunduz. The group is currently led by his younger brother, Mohammad Yuldash, located in Faryab's Almar district. Suffering material losses, IMU is forced to engage in criminal activity, including transportation of drugs along the northern route. Jamaat Ansarullah, consisting of citizens of Tajikistan, is also involved in these activities.

62. The leadership of ETIM remains present in Afghanistan. Abdul Haq (QDi.268) is reported still to be the leader despite multiple reports of his death. Haji Furkan (not listed) is responsible for the training of armed fighters, and Abu Salam (not listed) is responsible for promoting the group's ideology. Following military operations in Badakhshan's Warduj district in September, ETIM was forced to relocate via the mountainous regions of neighbouring Pakistan to the Jurm district of Badakhshan

Province, where up to 100 fighters are currently located. The remaining 200 fighters are still transiting back towards Badakhshan to join the first group. In Afghanistan, ETIM is coordinating its activity with IJG.

63. In the Syrian Arab Republic, under the umbrella of HTS, there are two Uyghur groups associated with ETIM. They are identified as so-called “Greater Turkestan Jamaat”, numbering about 3,000 fighters, and so-called “Minor Turkestan Jamaat”, numbering up to 300 fighters. Their funding comes primarily from the Uyghur diaspora.

64. Several Member States reported the movement of Central Asian nationals from the Syrian Arab Republic to African destinations, including specifically to the Central African Republic, Egypt, Guinea-Bissau and the Sudan. They are assessed to intend to lie low in these locations. Some Member States reported that some Central Asian nationals could be transiting these locations to join ISIL affiliates in West Africa and the Sahel region.

### **South-East Asia**

65. ISIL and Al-Qaida affiliates in South-East Asia, located primarily in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, remain under sustained pressure from nationally directed counter-terrorism operations. Authorities in these countries have drawn on several tools to address threats from the groups, including expanding the powers available to law enforcement and security services under new counter-terrorism laws. These measures are seen as particularly effective in the case of Indonesia. The three countries further benefit from established channels for intelligence sharing and a clear understanding of the operational intent and capabilities possessed by the groups active in the region. Recruitment of fighters from South-East Asia is reported to be shifting from a focus on travel to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic to joining ISIL-K in Afghanistan.

66. Notwithstanding these efforts, groups affiliated with ISIL especially remain a persistent and growing threat to the region. In the southern Philippines, several ISIL-affiliated groups continue to operate, using the space for training and operational planning, drawing fighters from Indonesia and Malaysia. Member States have noted that the combination of porous maritime borders with visa-free or visa-upon-arrival entry from some Muslim-majority countries has created a well-trodden path to the region by foreign terrorist fighters. Returnees to the region from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic are especially dangerous, as they may improve the capabilities of local groups and change the targeting or methodology of attacks. With a few exceptions, the great majority of fighters entering the southern Philippines are from the South-East Asia region.

67. There is a consensus that the Philippines is unlikely to experience a repeat of the 2017 Marawi siege, in which an ISIL affiliate was able to seize and hold territory (see [S/2018/705](#), para. 67). Nevertheless, violence in the Philippines by ISIL-affiliated groups continued throughout the reporting period. On 28 June, two suicide bombers attacked a Philippine military post in Indanan Sulu Province. One of the attackers was identified as a 23-year-old Filipino, marking the first known instance of a Philippine national conducting a suicide attack. Philippine forces in late November 2019 killed Abu Talha, an ISIL militant affiliated with Abu Sayyaf Group (QDe.001). He was described by one Member State as bringing sophisticated bomb-making skills and acting as a key source of financing.

68. The role of women in the operational planning, financing and execution of terror attacks in South-East Asia continues to be cited by Member States as a concern. ISIL propaganda has abandoned any pretence of discouraging the involvement of women in attacks and openly calls for their engagement. Women are seen as less likely to



arouse suspicion from authorities and have effectively exploited this to undertake transactions and procurement in support of ISIL-affiliated groups. Fundraising by women often takes place under the guise of charitable help for widows and orphans.

69. Authorities in the region report difficulties combating online radicalization, recruitment and fundraising via social media platforms, in particular Facebook, YouTube, Telegram and WhatsApp. Facebook and YouTube are reported to be responsive to requests to remove content promoting these objectives but less effective at identifying and stopping the rapid reposting of content under new accounts.

70. Although there are reports of funds flowing to ISIL affiliates in the region from the leadership in the core conflict zone, local groups are expected to be financially self-sustaining. Kidnap-for-ransom of fishers is a common means of financing some groups in the southern Philippines. Extortion and criminal activity, including smuggling of arms and vehicles, are also reported methods of fundraising.

### **III. Impact assessment**

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

71. The Monitoring Team has reported previously (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 10) that ISIL is assessed to maintain financial reserves ranging between \$50 million and \$300 million. Although several Member States assessed the group's reserves to be at the upper end of that range, one State placed the group's reserves at \$100 million.

72. As at November 2019, ISIL was reported to be operating in the Syrian Arab Republic more openly, including by resuming extortion operations during daylight hours. In general, there is reported to be a heightened level of confidence among ISIL in Dayr al-Zawr and Hasakah, where local businesses and wealthy individuals are being extorted openly and targeted for reprisals should cooperation not be forthcoming. In Iraq, Member States reported that one tactic employed by ISIL cells to raise money was mounting fake checkpoints disguised as Iraqi military or popular mobilization forces checkpoints.

73. ISIL retains a network of cash couriers with the ability to transport resources across borders with limited transaction costs. It is reported to use a mix of mechanisms for a single money transfer, including legitimate transfers via a registered money transfer company followed by a hawaladar or courier. One Member State highlighted the role of front companies established by ISIL in some neighbouring countries, which were used by ISIL for both the movement of funds and the procurement of goods and technology, including in at least one case procurement related to the development of unmanned aerial vehicles.

74. Within Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, it is reported that payments continue to be made by the ISIL leadership to widows and orphans of deceased fighters. This helps to achieve the ISIL goal of ensuring loyalty and building support from the next generation.

75. Member States have also reported the presence of money transfer facilities within the annex of the Hawl camp, which houses primarily women and children from outside of the conflict zone. The means by which funds are sent to detainees can involve wire transfers via traditional banking channels to neighbouring States which are subsequently collected and couriered into the Syrian Arab Republic or transferred via hawala networks. The Monitoring Team has communicated to government authorities that transactions by family members that appear to be remittances to detainees are violations of sanctions measures that prohibit the financing of terrorism.

Analysis by national financial intelligence units of these transactions, in particular of the beneficiaries of such payments, may reveal important links between the formal and informal financial sectors in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as how funds linked with ISIL continue to flow in and out of the conflict zone.

76. The Team assesses that although ISIL affiliates in the global network are expected to be self-financing, there are reports that financial support continues to flow from the core conflict zone to global affiliates. One Member State described this as a system of directing resources and assisting parts of the organization most in need of support. If one affiliate has a windfall, it may benefit but it is also expected to share the windfall.

77. The role of women in raising and transferring funds for ISIL appears to be increasing. Member States reported women transporting significant quantities of gold and gemstones in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as across the borders with neighbouring States. Women have also assumed roles as cash couriers, possibly taking the place of deceased male fighters. Among ISIL affiliates in Africa and South-East Asia, women are also playing more prominent roles in the raising and movement of funds.

78. The Team continues to receive limited reporting of attempted fundraising or movement of funds using cryptocurrencies (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 76). There is one confirmed case reported from South-East Asia of fundraising using bitcoin. The Team notes that some financial intelligence units are now receiving suspicious transaction reports involving cryptocurrencies, although these appear to be unrelated to the financing of ISIL and Al-Qaida.

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

79. The Monitoring Team has continued to work with Member States, INTERPOL and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), focusing on disrupting the flow of antiquities illegally removed from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the ability of ISIL and HTS to benefit from the smuggling of antiquities and cultural goods.

80. The Team established recently that, until at least late 2018, ISIL had directly managed the sale of some Syrian cultural goods. Those goods were brought to Turkey, from where they were moved to trans-shipment points in the western Balkans, then smuggled to Western Europe via yachts or trucks, in which the cultural goods were hidden in consignments of vegetables. Some ancient manuscripts were smuggled out of the Syrian Arab Republic sewn into the lining of travellers' clothes.

81. Recent Member State information confirms that, during the occupation by ISIL of Mosul, Kirkuk and Ninawa, the group stole many artefacts from archaeological sites in order to finance its activities and trafficked these objects to northern Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 77). Several artefacts were seized at the border between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, and one of these pieces was found in a Libyan mosque. Many Iraqi archaeological sites have still not been inventoried, which encourages illegal excavation and looting by thieves who have little awareness of the items' cultural and historical value.

82. One Member State highlighted ongoing illegal excavation and destruction of archaeological sites in the north of the Syrian Arab Republic. Armed groups, some associated with HTS, carry out illegal excavations in the areas of Nabi Huri Castle, the Hill of Zarafki, the Brad site, the two Hills of Kamruk, the Hill of Talaf Village and other archaeological and religious sites.

83. Member States reported the increasing use of Facebook and other social media platforms for illegal trafficking in cultural property. Groups dedicated to antiquities trafficking continue to be created, while the area of origin of trafficked artefacts increases, continuously revealing a web of interconnectivity among antiquities traffickers.

84. **The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to highlight the growing role of Facebook and other social media platforms as a tool for the illicit trafficking of cultural property, and to encourage relevant Member States that have not done so to task specialized units to detect social media groups dedicated to the illicit trafficking of cultural property.**

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

85. Al-Baghdadi called in September 2019 for ISIL to focus on releasing its detainees and dependants. Operation Peace Spring, launched by Turkey in October, highlighted the precariousness of current holding arrangements in the north of the Syrian Arab Republic. There are related issues involving detainees and relocators in the ISIL core area and its immediate neighbourhood. There is an understandable international focus on addressing the huge number of ISIL-related persons stranded in the area shown in the map contained in annex II.

86. This map shows camps for internally displaced persons and detention facilities, with the latter generally being much smaller. In most cases, however, these are improvised facilities which are now overcrowded. This poses both humanitarian challenges, with life being arduous and unpleasant for the residents, and security challenges, with suitable supervision, segregation and interaction of residents, and security against breakout attempts, being difficult to achieve.

87. By far the largest number of people – more than 70,000 – are housed in the Hawl camp, but the total population of the facilities shown is assessed to be well over 100,000. Of these, the number of adult male fighters is reported by one Member State to have decreased as some Iraqis have recently returned to Iraq, leaving an estimated total of 10,000: 6,000 Syrians, 2,000 Iraqis and 2,000 foreign terrorist fighters. The adult male fighters pose one set of challenges, while the minors pose another. Among the female detainees, there is an enormous range in terms of what crimes, if any, they may have committed and what level of ideological commitment to ISIL they retain. Some highly radicalized women in the Hawl annex, which houses foreign women and their dependants, lead the camp's "al-Hesbah" morality police. Two women were murdered by these police for "immoral" behaviour.

88. There is widespread Member State consensus that these exceptional circumstances require an exceptional international response to the crisis. Security Council resolution 2396 (2017) remains the key resolution guiding Member States in their approach, and the Monitoring Team addresses it with Member States at every relevant opportunity. ISIL foreign terrorist fighters, adherents and dependants will continue to pose a terrorist threat over the short, medium and long term on a scale many times greater than was the case with Al-Qaida from 2002 onwards, based on the much greater numbers involved (see S/2019/570, para. 83). Repatriation of these people to their States of origin and/or nationality will be challenging in the short term but holds out the greatest hope of mitigating the longer-term threat.

89. The current improvised holding arrangements are a recipe for radicalization and despair, especially in the case of minors. If the opportunity to process them legally and humanely is missed, rehabilitation may be attempted too late and many may

become hardened extremists. Member States assess that the repatriation programme of the Government of Kazakhstan, among others, shows signs of success and will likely reduce the threat posed by the individuals repatriated.

## IV. Implementation of sanctions measures

### A. Travel ban

90. During the reporting period, there were no noted cases of attempted travel or interdiction of individuals designated on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List. Nevertheless, a few Member States reported false positive hits during travel screening processes and informed the Monitoring Team of the need to continuously improve the quality of the Sanctions List and add relevant identifiers for individuals to address that challenge.

91. The Monitoring Team continued to engage Member States to raise awareness with regard to Security Council resolutions [2396 \(2017\)](#), [2309 \(2016\)](#) and [2368 \(2017\)](#) and noted that returning, transiting and relocating foreign terrorist fighters would continue to pose a challenge to border and immigration agencies (see [S/2019/50](#), para. 94, and [S/2019/570](#), para. 86). Several Member States face challenges in implementing integrated border management systems for effective and real-time information-sharing and inter-agency coordination at border points. Consequently, Member States continued to observe the movement of foreign terrorist fighters across borders, despite elaborate efforts to incorporate biometrics and ensure access to and effective screening against databases and watch lists, including the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List.

92. The Monitoring Team notes that not all foreign terrorist fighters have been included in available databases and watch lists. Some Al-Qaida and ISIL fighters, facilitators and new recruits may not have any adverse record or be listed; they therefore will not be detected or deterred from travelling during the screening process. Separately, some Member States assert that in many instances they learned that their citizens had travelled to join ISIL or Al-Qaida affiliates long after these citizens had left their territory, been arrested or died in combat. In such instances, it is challenging to implement the travel restrictions.

**93. The Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States recalling resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#), in which the Security Council called upon Member States “in accordance with domestic and international law, to intensify and accelerate the timely exchange of relevant operational information regarding actions or movements, and patterns of movements, of terrorists”, which should be understood by Member States to include foreign terrorist fighters who are not listed on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List.**

94. The restriction on the movement of terrorists can be effective only if information regarding all known foreign terrorist fighters is available and shared among Member States. Otherwise, its impact in deterring unknown terrorist fighters remains elusive. Additionally, few Member States have access to the INTERPOL analytical file containing profiles of foreign terrorist fighters. This database is accessible only to those which have contributed information for the file. Thus, some of these fighters may easily travel through Member States that do not have such access.

95. As foreign terrorist fighters diversify their *modi operandi* and use of broken travel routes, Member States are contending with the complex challenge of securing porous land borders and extended maritime borders characterized by varied terrain,

multiple isolated bays, swamps and islands, which can be exploited by terrorists intent on concealing their movements.

96. **The Team recommends that the Committee encourage Member States to submit information regarding profiles of foreign terrorist fighters to the relevant INTERPOL analytical files in accordance with domestic and international legislation.**

97. The Team continued its engagement with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Air Transport Association regarding implementation of resolution [2309 \(2016\)](#). It noted the emphasis on Member States adopting formal identification protocols in traveller screening that incorporated facial recognition, fingerprinting and iris scans, which would increase accuracy in screening passengers and also noted the progress of Member States in implementing advance passenger information and passenger name record systems (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 88).

## B. Asset freeze

98. In previous reports, the Monitoring Team has recommended that Member States share with the Monitoring Team information regarding the freezing of assets belonging to listed individuals and entities associated with ISIL and Al-Qaida (see [S/2019/570](#), para. 93). In the absence of such information, it is difficult to assess the level or effectiveness of implementation of sanctions measures related to the freezing of assets. The Monitoring Team last reported data received from Member States on the issue of frozen assets in May 2008, when it noted that as at September 2007 “approximately \$85 million had been frozen by 36 Member States” (see [S/2008/324](#), para. 47). In November 2007, the Team reported that it was aware of 435 “freezing actions” taken by Member States involving the assets of approximately 165 of the (then) 489 individuals and entities listed, primarily as funds held in bank accounts. The Team calculated at the time that “over 95 per cent of the total value of assets reported frozen result[ed] from the freezing actions of nine States” (see [S/2007/677](#), para. 58).

99. The Monitoring Team notes that, under paragraph 6 of Security Council resolution [1455 \(2003\)](#), Member States were called upon to submit reports on their implementation of the sanctions regime pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1333 \(2000\)](#) and [1390 \(2002\)](#), including the asset freeze. In paragraph 44 of resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#), the Council similarly called upon Member States to submit an updated report to the Committee. The last such report was received by the Committee in December 2009.

100. One current metric that allows for some, albeit limited, assessment of asset freeze implementation measures concerns the number of asset freeze exemption requests received by the Committee. The Monitoring Team has undertaken a review of all exemption requests submitted since 2003 and has found that, in general, the number of exemption requests has declined over the past decade. There could be many explanations for such a decline, including the delisting of individuals who had been the subject of exemption requests.

101. **The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to recall the request set out in paragraphs 11 and 12 of resolution [2462 \(2019\)](#) regarding asset freezing actions and the need for robust implementation of the measures contained in paragraph 1 of resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#), and to share such information with the Monitoring Team. The Monitoring Team also recommends that such a letter recall measures related to exemptions to the asset freeze as detailed in paragraph 81 of resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#).**

## C. Arms embargo

102. The diversion of small arms and light weapons, materiel and improvised explosive device components and precursors continues to aggravate conflict zones. Member States reported that weapons from the Libyan conflict were finding their way into the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, thereby augmenting the capabilities of terrorist organizations in those areas. This highlights the ripple effects of non-compliance with the arms embargo established under Security Council resolution 1970 (2011) and with the enforcement measures extended under Council resolution 2437 (2018), which may hamper counter-terrorism efforts beyond Libya.

103. In the core conflict zone, Member States continued to report a variety of weapons in the possession of designated entities. In the Syrian Arab Republic, Member States reported visual evidence of the use of small arms from a diverse array of countries by entities affiliated with either ISIL or Al-Qaida, which included Steyr AUG assault rifles, Dragunov sniper rifles, AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers, TOW anti-tank missiles and 82-mm mortar shells manufactured in Serbia. Member States also reported a rise in the use of remote-controlled improvised explosive devices in both Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic by ISIL remnant cells. These States reported the use of imported and diverted improvised explosive device components, pointing towards a combination of corruption and illicit procurement networks facilitating the uninterrupted supply.

104. Coordinated Member State action was effective in the disruption of a procurement network that knowingly supplied ISIL in the Syrian Arab Republic with unmanned aerial vehicles and components. Members of this network, and the business entity they used to channel funds for procurement purposes, were nationally proscribed. The same network was also responsible, according to one Member State, for the transfer of chemical products from the Mersin Free Zone of Turkey to ISIL fighters in the Syrian Arab Republic. Such products included aluminium powder, and nitric acid, as well as ammonium, potassium and sodium nitrates. Export documents from Mersin reportedly named registered companies in Iraq and Jordan as end users to enable the goods to pass unhindered through the border crossings in Kilis Province (see S/2016/262, annex).

105. The issue of weapons and materiel diversion underscores the importance of adhering to internationally recognized standards regulating export documents, end user certification and end user statements. It is reported that there continue to be wide discrepancies in standards and the consistency of language within these documents; a recent study highlighted instances of poorly completed forms containing incomplete or inadequate information, with inconsistent language that occasionally obfuscated the commitments to provide exporters with proof of delivery and legally prevent re-export to third parties.<sup>11</sup>

## V. Monitoring Team activities and feedback

106. Between July and December 2019, the Monitoring Team conducted 50 country and technical visits. It continued to promote the sanctions regime through its participation in 40 international conferences, meetings and workshops, including those of ICAO, INTERPOL, UNODC, the European Union, the Financial Action Task Force and similar regional bodies, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, the Southern African Development Community, the Anti-Terrorism Centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty

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<sup>11</sup> Conflict Armament Research, *Diversion Digest*, No. 2 (London, August 2019).

Organization, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The Team held regional meetings for West Africa and South-East Asia. The Team continued its engagement with entities and associations in the financial, natural resources, antiquities, defence and information technology sectors. During the reporting period, the Team participated in meetings organized by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, cooperating closely with them in the production of mandated reports of the Secretary-General. The Team remains a member of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, participating in meetings of its working groups.

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

## Annex I

### **Litigation by or relating to individuals and entities on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List**

1. Legal challenges involving individuals and entities on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List, or whose names the Committee has removed therefrom, that are known to be pending or to have been recently concluded are described below.

#### **Pakistan**

2. The action brought by the Al Rashid Trust (QDe.005) regarding the application of the sanctions measures against it remains pending in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, on appeal by the Government of an adverse decision in 2003. A similar challenge brought by Al-Akhtar Trust International (QDe.121) remains pending before a provincial high court.<sup>1</sup>

3. In addition to the two cases mentioned above, a trustee of the Pakistan Relief Foundation (listed as an alias of Al-Akhtar Trust International) has challenged the freezing of his bank account.<sup>2</sup>

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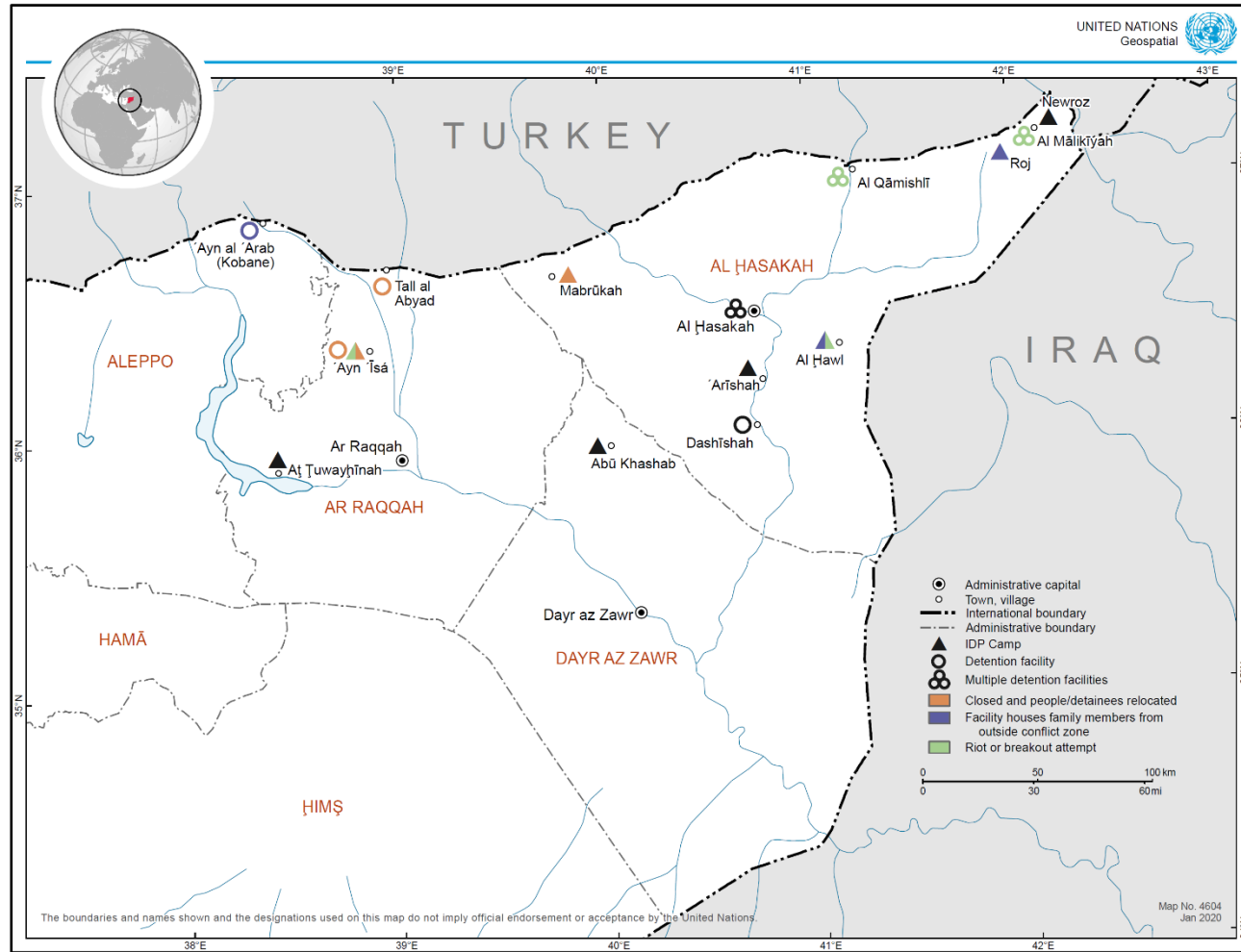
<sup>1</sup> Information provided by Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> Information provided by Pakistan.



# Annex II

## Map of detention facilities and camps for internally displaced persons in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Information regarding the location and status of facilities indicated on the map is approximate and subject to change.