



## Spotlight on Global Jihad (June 2-7, 2017)



### Main events of the week

- The main event of the week **was a combined vehicular and stabbing attack on London Bridge, for which ISIS claimed responsibility.** Seven people were killed and 48 others were wounded. The attack is part of ISIS's efforts to carry out showcase attacks during Ramadan in various places around the world (Iraq, Egypt, the Philippines, Afghanistan (?) and now Britain as well). **ISIS continues to call on its supporters to carry out attacks in Western countries (the "Crusader countries"), taking advantage of the month of Ramadan.**
- **On the ground, pressure on ISIS is increasing: Syria: on June 6, 2017, SDF forces began an attack on the city of Al-Raqqah, with Coalition air support.** According to reports, they are now fighting in one of the eastern neighborhoods of the city. In the Yarmouk basin in the southern Golan Heights, ISIS suffered a severe blow following the killing of senior operatives in an airstrike. **In Iraq, Iraqi forces continue to take over neighborhoods in western Mosul from ISIS, and the campaign to take over the city is approaching its final stages.**
- It is worth noting **the increasing "competition" between the various international, regional and local forces to demonstrate their presence along the Syrian-Iraqi border** (from a strategic perspective with regard to the importance of controlling the border area after the fall of Mosul and Al-Raqqah). This week, **Syrian forces** reached the area west of Lake Assad, near the Euphrates Valley; **The US-led Coalition** is supporting the **rebel force** (Commandos of the Revolution) advancing to the city of Abu Kamal (ISIS's rear stronghold in the Euphrates Valley); and (once again) Coalition aircraft attacked a force affiliated with the Syrian regime, which apparently included fighters from Shiite militias handled by Iran, which attempted to advance towards Al-Tanf (the Iran-Iraq-Jordan tri-border area); while the **Iranians** are helping the Shiite militias (the Popular Mobilization) advance along the Iraqi-Syrian border to the city of Al-Qaim, on the Iraqi side of Abu Kamal (Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Qods Force, even had his picture taken with Shiite militia fighters near the border).

## ISIS attacks in Western countries

### Combined vehicular and stabbing attack in London: initial overview

- On the evening of June 3, 2017, a commercial vehicle carrying **three terrorists crossed London Bridge**, drove onto the sidewalk and began ramming pedestrians. **The vehicle then stopped in the nearby entertainment area of Borough Market**. The terrorists got out of the vehicle and began to stab passersby with knives. Eight policemen who arrived on the scene eight minutes after receiving the call fired about 50 bullets (an unprecedented number for the British Police) **and killed the three terrorists**.
- **Seven people were killed and 48 others were wounded** (21 of them severely or critically). Some of the casualties are foreign nationals. The wounded include four policemen (The Guardian; the London Police website; Twitter page of the London Ambulance Service, June 4-6, 2017).



The scene of the attack in London (Twitter page of the London Fire Services, June 5, 2017; Twitter page of the London Metropolitan Police, June 6, 2017).

- Following the attack, British Police made a series of arrests in the suburbs of East London in order to locate possible accomplices of the perpetrators. One of the places searched was apparently the home of one of the terrorists. Police detained 12 suspects, seven women and five men, but they were released without charges being filed. Searches of the area are still ongoing. Following the attack, the safety level of 33 bridges in the city was examined, and barricades were set up on London Bridge (Reuters; The Guardian; London Police website, June 4-6, 2017).
- On June 5, 2017, **British Police reported that investigators had identified the three terrorists and published details about them:**

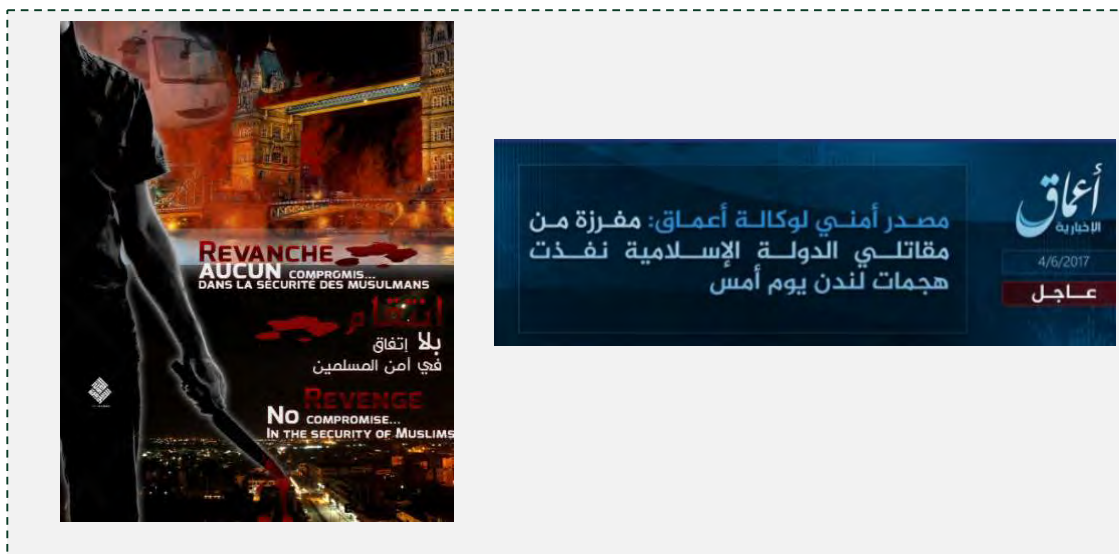
- **KhuramShazad Butt**, 27, a British citizen born in Pakistan and married with two children. He lived in the East London Borough of Barking. He was known to the British police and intelligence services because he had previously participated in videos bearing jihadi messages. However, the police allegedly did not have information that could have indicated that he planned to carry out an attack.
- **RachidRedouane**, 30, the son of immigrants from Morocco and Libya. He was married to a Scottish woman. According to the identity card found on his body, he lived for some time in Dublin, Ireland. He used another identity, RachidElkhdar (London Police website, June 4-6, 2017).
- The details of the third terrorist, **Youssef Zaghba**, were published by the Italian and British media. According to the reports, he was 22 years old, an Italian citizen with an Italian mother and a Moroccan father. According to Italian media reports (Corriere della Serra, La Repubblica), he was arrested at the airport in Bologna **attempting to fly to Syria via Turkey**. He was interrogated but was released after no evidence was found. According to several reports, his personal phone contained propaganda films and religious sermons confirming his desire to join the Islamic State. An official Italian source claimed that when Zaghba moved to East London, the Italian security services warned the British authorities about him and gave them the information in their possession. However, the London Metropolitan Police said that he was unknown to the British authorities prior to the attack (London Metropolitan Police website; The Guardian, June 6, 2017).



The three terrorists involved in the attack (from left to right): KhuramShazad Butt, RachidRedouane, and Youssef Zaghba (London Metropolitan Police website, June 6, 2017).

## ISIS's claim of responsibility

■ On June 4, 2017, ISIS issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack. The wording of the statement: “A security source told the Aamaq News Agency that **a unit of the Islamic State fighters carried out the attacks in London last night.**” In addition, a poster was published in three languages: French, Arabic and English, **showing London Bridge in flames and with inscriptions in English and Arabic: “Revenge, No compromise in the security of Muslims”** (Haqq, June 5, 2017).



Right: ISIS's claim of responsibility for the attack (Aamaq, June 4, 2017). Left: A poster published by ISIS following the combined attack in London: “Revenge, No compromise in the security of Muslims” (Haqq, June 5, 2017).

■ It should be noted that **ISIS has again called on its supporters to carry out terrorist attacks in Britain and in other Western countries** during the month of Ramadan. On June 1, 2017, following the attack in Manchester, ISIS published an editorial in its organ titled “The Blessed Manchester Raid - A New Lesson for the Tyrants of the Crusader Countries.” **In the editorial, ISIS promised to continue attacking Britain as well as other Western countries** (Al-Naba, June 1, 2017). The Telegram account of the ISIS-affiliated Al-Sawarimagency published a poster with the inscription in English and Arabic: “**Kill the Crusader civilians, ram them with, take advantage of Ramadan**” (June 4, 2017).

## Terrorist attack in Australia (?)

■ On June 5, 2017, **an armed man entered a building in the city of Melbourne, Australia and murdered one person.** He barricaded himself in an apartment and took a woman hostage. The police shot him and killed him. The woman was released unharmed. While he was barricaded in the apartment, the armed man called an Australian news channel, saying that **he was carrying out the attack for ISIS and Al-**



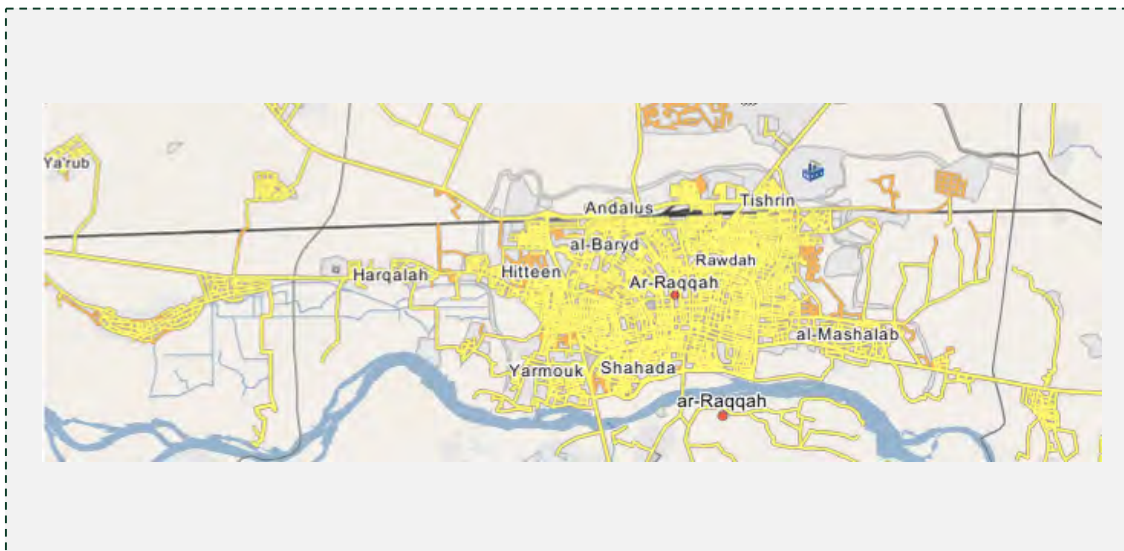
**Qaeda.** According to the police, the perpetrator of the attack was **YacqubKhayre**, 29, of Somali descent. He reportedly had a criminal record, and in 2009 he was tried and convicted for planning to attack an army base in Sydney (Express, June 6, 2017).

■ **ISIS claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack.** According to the announcement, the attack was carried out by a “soldier of the Islamic State” in response to Australia’s involvement in the international Coalition forces against ISIS (Amaq News Agency, June 5, 2017). **So far, it is unclear whether ISIS’s announcement is credible,** and the matter is still under investigation.

## Main developments in Syria

### The campaign to take over Al-Raqqah

■ **On June 6, 2017, the SDF forces started the attack on Al-Raqqah,** with Coalition air support. Thus, the “**Great campaign**” to take over the city started after several months of preparations and mopping up the region around Al-Raqqah. The SDF reportedly took over several buildings in the Al-Mashlab neighborhood in east Al-Raqqah (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, June 6, 2017; Enab Baladi, June 6, 2017).

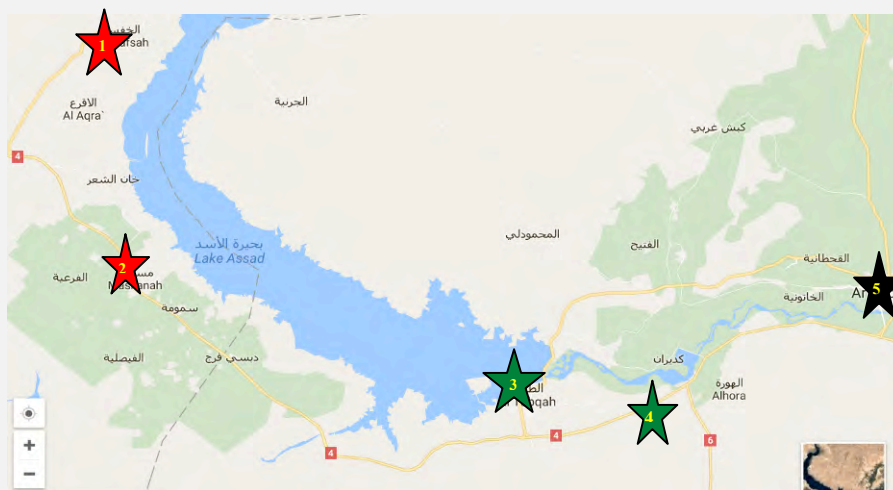


**Al-Mashlab neighborhood (marked in black) in east Al-Raqqah, where fighting takes place between the SDF forces and ISIS (Wikimedia).**

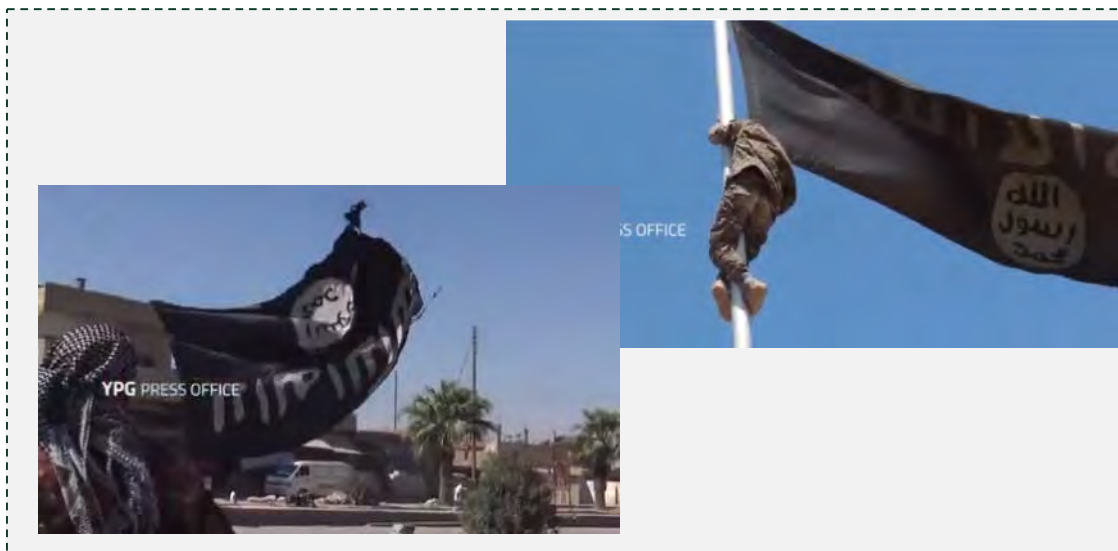


The SDF announces the opening of the “Big Campaign” to liberate Al-Raqqah from ISIS (Enab Baladi, June 6, 2017).

- A short while before the launch of the attack on Al-Raqqah, an SDF force took over the Al-Ba’ath Dam and the town of Mansoura (about 7 km southwest of the Al-Ba’ath Dam), as part of the process of mopping up the Al-Raqqah region from ISIS presence. Following are the deployment zones of the various forces in the region of Lake Assad.



1. Water pumping station in the village of Al-Khafsah, taken over by the Syrian Army last week;
2. The town of Maskana, which was taken over this week by the Syrian forces;
3. The Tabqa Dam held by the SDF;
4. The town of Al-Mansoura, held by SDF.
5. Al-Raqqah, the “capital” of ISIS in Syria (Google Maps).



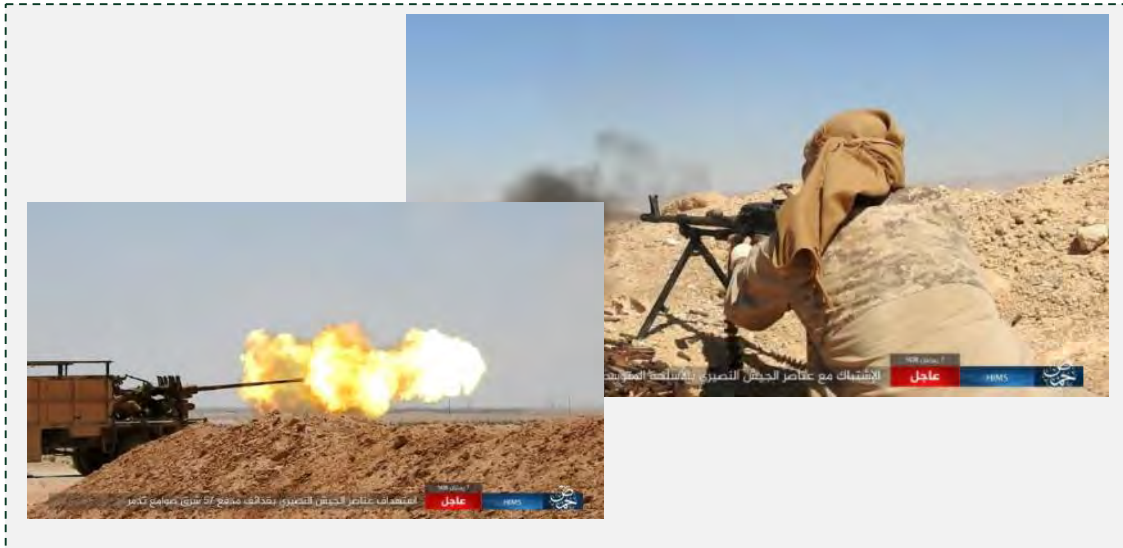
An SDF operative removing ISIS's flag in the town of Al-Mansoura, southwest of the Al-Ba'ath Dam (Twitter, June 4, 2017).

■ **The Russian Defense Ministry announced that its forces would do all they can to prevent the passage of ISIS operatives from Al-Raqqah to other provinces in Syria, such as Homs and Hama.** According to the Defense Ministry, SDF forces with US, British and French support, blocked the crossings north of Al-Raqqah but **left open passages south of the city** to allow ISIS operatives to leave it. **Russia's Air Force Command in Syria warned that they would foil any attempt by ISIS operatives to leave Al-Raqqah through the open crossing towards Palmyra**(Facebook page of the Russian Defense Ministry, June 1, 2017).

## Palmyra

■ **ISIS reported that its operatives had stopped an attempt by the Syrian forces to advance in the Palmyra region,** and said that they had killed forty people:

- An ISIS suicide bomber codenamed **Abu Zayd the Kosovar** detonated a car bomb at a staging zone of Syrian forces, near Al-Abbasiyah (about 21 km southeast of Palmyra), killing 21 people (Haqq, June 4, 2017).
- An ISIS operative codenamed **Razaq the Indonesian** carried out a suicide bombing attack in the area of Al-Hamad, east of Palmyra, killing 14 people.
- In the area of the grain silos, about 10 km northeast of Palmyra, **ISIS operatives launched an anti-tank missile** at the Syrian forces. Five people were killed and two others were wounded (Haqq, June 4, 2017).



ISIS operatives firing at the Syrian forces northeast of the Palmyra grain silos (Haqq, June 2, 2017).

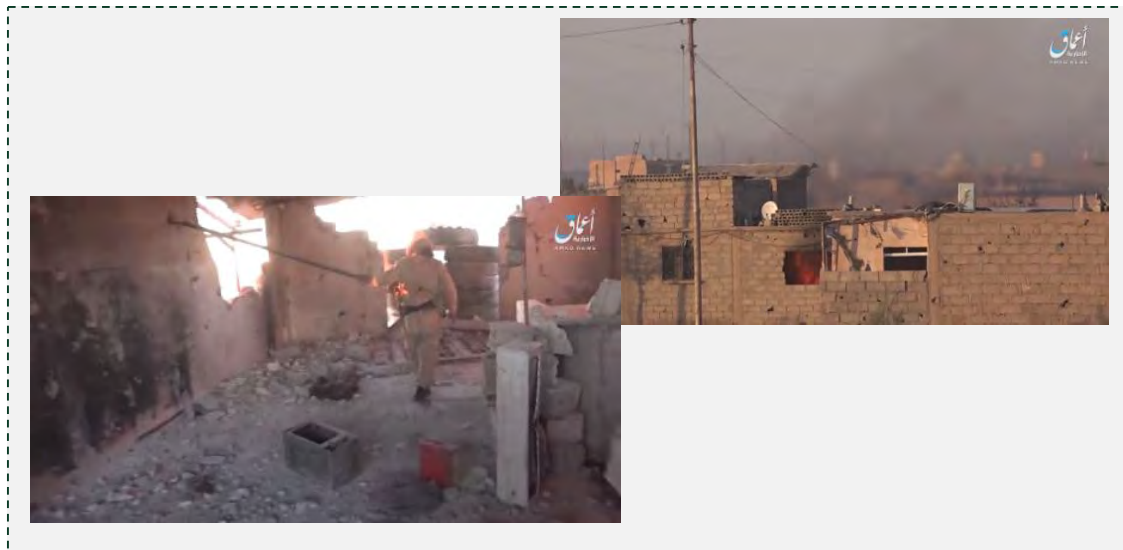
## Deir ez-Zor

- In the south of the city of Deir ez-Zor, clashes took place between the Syrian regime forces and ISIS operatives. ISIS operatives attacked the Syrian forces in the area of the military airfield and in the area of the Panorama Roundabout. In addition, a base of the Syrian Army's 137th Brigade west of Deir ez-Zor was **attacked** (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, June 3, 2017; Sham Network, June 1, 2017). ISIS operatives reportedly had local achievements in these attacks.
- On the other hand, the Syrian Army reported on more than 70 fatalities among ISIS and the destruction of military equipment following an attack by the Syrian forces against ISIS outposts and operatives in the area of the Euphrates River and the hospital area in Deir ez-Zor (Syrian News Agency, June 1, 2017; Syria-Victory, June 3, 2017).





Areas attacked by ISIS south of Deir ez-Zur: 1. The Deir ez-Zur airfield; 2. The Panorama Roundabout (Google Maps).



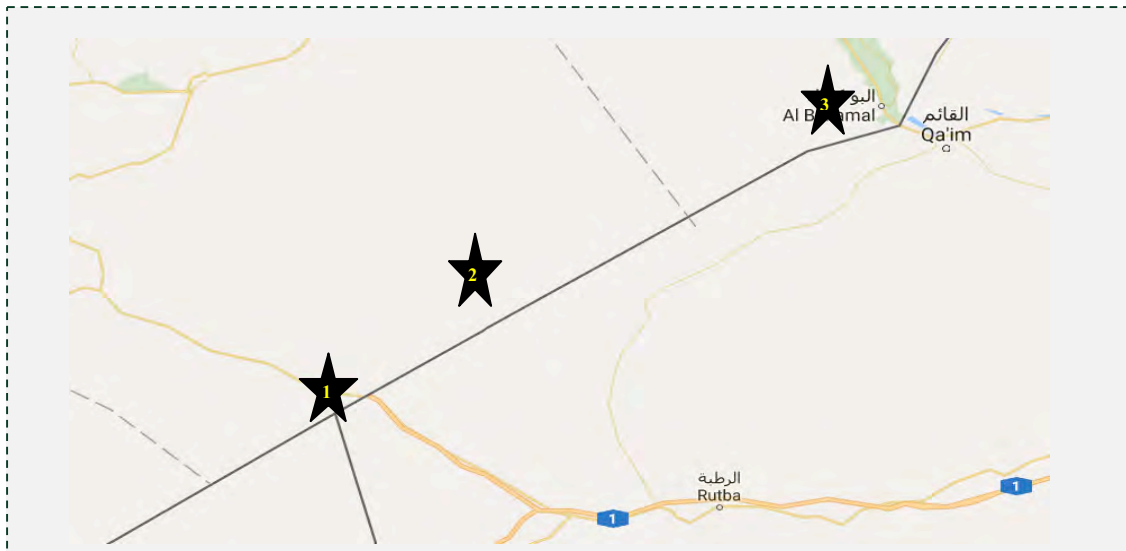
Photos of a video released by ISIS, showing ISIS operatives at a Syrian Army compound that they have taken over, near Panorama Roundabout (Al-Sawarim, June 4, 2017).

## The Syrian-Iraqi border

■ **Muhannad al-Talla**, head of the “Commandos of the Revolution” force, reported that his forces and the International Coalition had set up a front army base in the area of **Al-Zakf**, northeast of **Al-Tanf**, near the border between Syria and Iraq (Khotwa, June 4, 2017).<sup>1</sup> The base is designed to serve as a launching pad for patrols and military activity against ISIS in order to prepare the ground for the takeover of additional territories (Enab Baladi, June 4, 2017). According to the commander of the Al-Tanf base, **there are now 150 US soldiers at the new base as well as soldiers of five additional Coalition countries** (Al-Monitor, June 1, 2017). **In the ITIC's**

<sup>1</sup>Originally, the base was set up by the international Coalition countries in 2016 to serve as a training camp for the Free Syrian Army.

assessment, this base is designed to serve as a front base for the continued advance of the force towards the city of Al-Qaim.



1. Al-Tanf; 2. Al-Zakf (70 km northeast of Al-Tanf, 130 km southwest of Abu Kamal); 3. The city of Abu Kamal, held by ISIS (Google Maps).



The new base northeast of Al-Tanf (Akhbar AdalatHammurabi, June 4, 2017).

## Attack against a pro-Syrian force which tried to advance towards Al-Tanf

■ The US Department of Defense announced on June 6, 2017, that **the Coalition forces attacked a pro-Syrian force** which tried to advance towards the Coalition base in Al-Tanf. Two pieces of artillery, anti-aircraft weapons, and a tank were destroyed in the attack. The attack was the second of its kind, designed to prevent forces affiliated with the Syrian regime from arriving in Al-Tanf, near the tri-border area of Syria, Iraq and Jordan (on May 18, Coalition warplanes attacked a Syrian force that tried to advance towards Al-Tanf). A spokesman for the Coalition countries called on the forces

operating in south Syria to focus their efforts on defeating ISIS, which is their common enemy (website of the US Department of Defense, June 6, 2017).

■ On June 6, 2017, it was reported that **Mohammad Hosseini, the intelligence officer of the Al-Fatemioun Shiite militia, was killed near the Al-Tanf crossing** (Enab Baladi, June 6, 2017). Al-Fatemioun is an Afghan Shiite military framework operating in Syria, which is directed and supported by Iran. Mohammad Hosseini's death may indicate that the attacked force included fighters from this unit, which operates in cooperation with the Syrian Army.



Mohammad Hosseini (Enab Baladi, June 6, 2017).

## The Syrian Army arrives near the Euphrates Valley

■ This week, the Syrian Army took over the town of Maskana, west of Lake Assad (about 36 km southeast of Deir Hafer). In addition, the Syrian Army regained control of two water pumping stations and generators belonging to the pumping station of the **town of Al-Khafsa**, west of Lake Assad (Al-Hadath, June 4, 2017). Thus, **the Syrian arrived near the Euphrates Valley. Their continued advance may bring them closer to the control area of the SDF forces, which began the attack on Al-Raqqah.**

## Southern Syria

### Syrian Army operation to remove the rebels from Daraa

■ According to Syrian media reports, on June 5, 2017, **the Syrian Army started an operation to retake the city of Daraa from the rebels, including the Al-Nusra Front** (i.e., Fateh al-Sham Front). The fighting started at a camp for displaced persons

west of the city and continues in the **Manshiyya neighborhood**, which the rebels are trying to take over from the Syrian forces (Butulat Al-Jaysh Al-Suri, a website affiliated with the Syrian Army, June 5, 2017).

## Airstrike of the Yarmouk Basin hits senior ISIS operatives

■ According to Syrian media reports, on June 6, 2017, unidentified fighter planes, arriving from Jordan, attacked the villages of Jamla and Al-Shajara (Enab Baladi; Khotwa News Agency, June 6, 2017). These villages are held by the **Khaled bin Al-Walid Army** (ISIS's Yarmouk Basin). **Abu Mohammad al-Maqdisi, commander ("Supreme Emir") of the Khaled bin Al-Walid Army, was reportedly killed in the attack. Additional senior commanders were reportedly killed, including the military emir Abu Uday al-Homsi**<sup>2</sup>(Enab Baladi; Araby 21, June 7, 2017).

## Main developments in Iraq

### The campaign for the takeover of Mosul

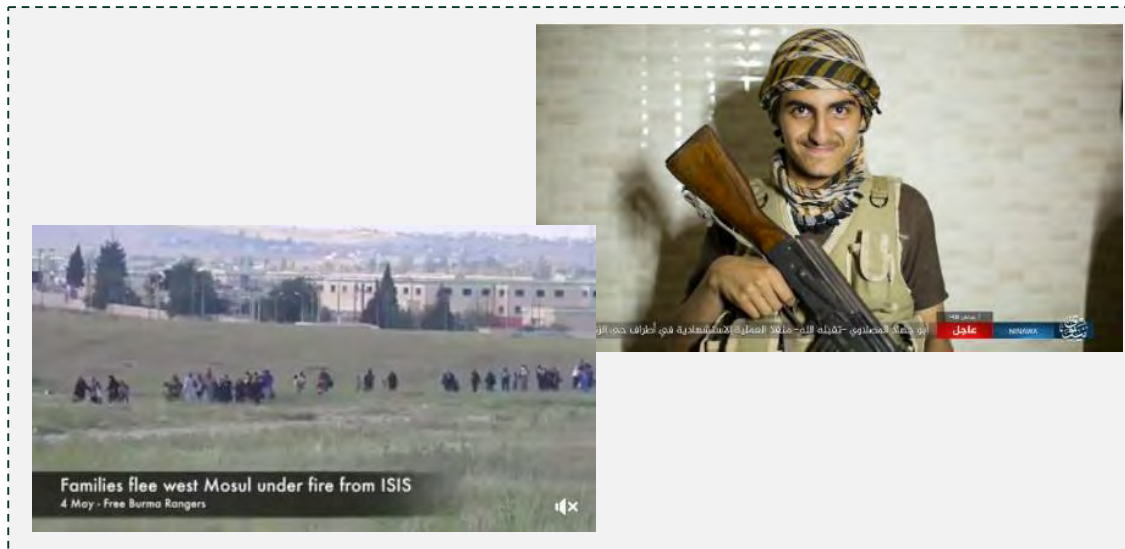
■ **The campaign for the takeover of Mosul is approaching its final stage of taking over the Old City, the last significant stronghold remaining in the hands of ISIS.** During the week, the Iraqi security forces continued to advance in the western part of the city. Fighting concentrated on the Al-Zanjili neighborhood north of the Old City. A third of it was liberated from ISIS (Nineveh Information Center, June 3-4, 2017). According to Iraqi Police commander's estimate, there are now **about 500 ISIS operatives** in west Mosul (Press TV, June 3, 2017).

<sup>2</sup>The day before the attack, Khaled bin Al-Walid Army executed a group of senior operatives for collaboration with Israel and attempts on the lives of commanders in the organization (Enab Baladi, June 5, 2017).



Map of control areas in west Mosul (updated to June 5, 2017): A small area (in white and gray) still remains in the hands of ISIS (Nineveh Information Center, June 5, 2017).

- ISIS operatives are still fighting against the Iraqi forces. ISIS reported that its operatives had killed over thirty members of the Iraqi security forces in various neighborhoods in west Mosul. According to ISIS's announcement, they were killed in clashes, sniper shooting and suicide bombing attacks (Haqq, June 3-5, 2017; Al-Jazeera, June 3, 2017).



Right: Suicide bomber codenamed Abu Jihad al-Moslawi, who carried out a suicide bombing attack in the Al-Zanjili neighborhood (Haqq, June 3, 2017). Left: Residents of the Al-Zanjili neighborhood flee the areas held by ISIS towards the areas taken over by the Iraqi forces (Nineveh Information Center, June 4, 2017).

## ISIS's terror and guerrilla activities throughout Iraq

- On June 4, 2017, ISIS claimed responsibility for carrying a suicide bombing attack at the headquarters of the regiment (*foj*) of the Popular Mobilization Units (the Shiite militias) in the village of Halabsa (about 30 km north of Baghdad). The attack was carried out by three operatives who detonated their explosive belts. According to



ISIS's claim of responsibility, 12 Popular Mobilization operatives were killed, including the regiment commander, *Aqid* (colonel) Ali Kamel al-Shiblawi (Haqq, June 4, 2017).



The three operatives who carried out the suicide bombing attack at the village of Halabsa, north of Baghdad: Abu Omar al-Suri, Abu Mus'ab al-Idlibi, and Abu Omar Bahra (Haqq, June 4, 2017)

### Shiite militia activity along the Iraqi-Syrian border

■ The force of the Shiite militias (Popular Mobilization Units) which arrived in late May 2017 at the Iraqi-Syrian border **started mopping up the border area and moving south**. This week, the Popular Mobilization announced that **their fighters had taken full control of the city of Ba'aj**, about 32 km southeast of Sinjar (Al-Sumaria, June 4, 2017). It seems that the destination of the force is the **city of Al-Qaim, a major ISIS stronghold** on the Iraqi side of the city of Abu Kamal (which is the destination of a rebel force supported by the Coalition).

■ Photos disseminated on social media show **Qods Force Commander Qassem Soleimani** having his picture taken with Shiite militia fighters near the Iraqi-Syrian border. This may indicate **the importance attributed by the Iranians to the Shiite militia move along the Iraqi-Syrian border**, having in mind the establishment of an Iranian-Shiite influence zone along the border after the fall of Mosul and Al-Raqqah.



Qassem Soleimani (third from the right) with the Iraqi Shiite militia fighters (Twitter, May 29, 2017).

## Sinai Peninsula and Egypt

### Sinai Peninsula

■ Following repeated acts of sabotage on the electricity lines in Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid, causing power outages, the Egyptian Parliament Energy and Environment Committee decided to allocate funds to replace the electricity pylons with underground cables. According to an electricity company representative, the electricity lines have been exposed to acts of sabotage by terrorist operatives since May 2015 (Al-Massa, June 1, 2017).

## Global jihad activity in other countries

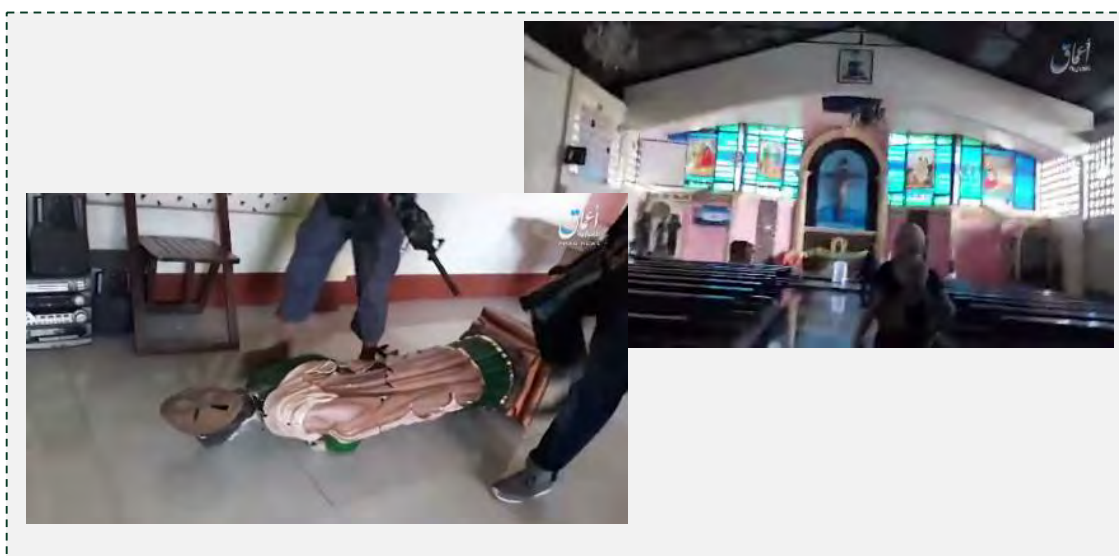
### The Philippines

■ **At least 36 people were killed in a shooting attack** carried out on June 1, 2017, at a hotel casino in Manila. Gaming tables were set on fire, and some of the patrons died of asphyxiation as a result of the thick smoke. The terrorist who had carried out the attack was hit by police fire (Reuters, June 3, 2017). **ISIS's East Asia Province** announced that about 100 people were killed or wounded after an ISIS operative codenamed **Abu al-Khayr al-Arakhbili** broke into the hotel and used an assault rifle to fire indiscriminately until he was shot (Haqq, June 3, 2017).

■ **Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte announced that ISIS had no connection with the incident**, and that police said that the incident was a robbery that went wrong (Reuters, June 3, 2017). Police sources reported that the perpetrator of the shooting had nothing to do with Islamist radicals. They said that the shooter was a Philippine citizen called Jessie Javier Carlos, who was a gambling addict, lost a lot of money at the casino

and incurred heavy debts. He was shot by a security guard and then committed suicide in one of the hotel rooms (Reuters, June 4, 2017).

■ On June 4, 2017, ISIS's news agencies released a video **showing ISIS operatives wreaking havoc on a church in the city of Marawi, in the island of Mindanao, southern Philippines**. The operatives were seen destroying statues, taking down the picture of the Pope, tearing down the crucifix and setting fire to pews and religious objects (Al-Sawarim, June 4, 2017; Aamaq, June 4, 2017). Armed operatives affiliated with ISIS took over most of the territory of the city of Marawi in late May 2017.



ISIS operatives wreaking havoc on a church in Marawi, southern Philippines (Aamaq, June 4, 2017).

## Propaganda activity

### ISIS infographic of suicide bombing attacks in Syria and Iraq

■ ISIS released an infographic summing up the terrorist organization's activity in Iraq and Syria in May 2017. According to ISIS, its operatives carried out 112 suicide bombing attacks. According to the infographic, a total of 59 attacks were carried out in the city of Mosul and its environs (ISIS's Nineveh Province); 16 suicide bombing attacks were carried out against the SDF forces; ten against Syrian forces, and three against the rebel forces. A total of 73 suicide bombing attacks were carried out by car bombs, 31 by explosive vests, and eight by explosive belts (Haqq, June 2, 2017).



Infographic released by ISIS, summing up the organization's suicide bombing attacks in Iraq and Syria in May 2017 (Haqq, June 2, 2017).