



# Security Council

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## Letter dated 3 February 2022 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-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#), which was submitted to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#).

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

(Signed) Trine **Heimerback**  
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 22 December 2021 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2610 (2021) addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities**

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

I therefore transmit to you the Monitoring Team's twenty-ninth comprehensive report, pursuant to annex I to resolution 2610 (2021). 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-ninth 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*

The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan was the most significant event that occurred during the reporting period (June to December 2021). Afghanistan has the potential to become a safe haven for Al-Qaida and a number of terror groups with ties to the Central Asia region and beyond. While Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan (ISIL-K) controls limited territory, it has demonstrated a continuing ability to mount sophisticated attacks, adding to the complexity of the security situation in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, most Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida affiliates have continued to advance in Africa. In West Africa, in particular in the Sahel, those groups have successfully exploited local grievances and weak governance to command growing numbers of followers and resources, notwithstanding internal divisions and rivalries.

In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the ISIL core conflict zone, the group has evolved into a primarily rural insurgency, withstanding sustained counter-terror pressure from forces in the region. The current ISIL leader remains hidden from view while the group seeks to recover from leadership attrition caused by both death and capture. Al-Qaida-affiliated groups continue to control the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, in the Idlib area.

One bright spot has emerged in South-East Asia, where Member States report significant success in disrupting ISIL- and Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorism and potentially forcing one ISIL-affiliated group into retreat.

The ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impede cross-border travel, decreasing threats arising from flows of fighters into conflict zones and wider terrorist travel in non-conflict zones, while increasing opportunities for online recruitment and radicalization.

Member States and the international community are struggling with when and how to relocate, prosecute and reintegrate members of the former so-called caliphate who are now held in prisons and displaced persons camps primarily in the Syrian Arab Republic. A generation of children, many raised in incubators of violent extremism, are at particular risk.

Funds assessed as being available to ISIL in the core of the conflict zone are holding steady at between \$25 million and \$50 million, with much of it assessed to remain in Iraq. The group is assessed to be spending more than it earns and is supporting operational activity in the conflict zone, as well as in Afghanistan and other regions. The recent capture of a senior ISIL financier by Iraq raises expectations that authorities may soon learn more about where remaining ISIL funds are being maintained.

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## I. Overview and evolution of the threat

1. The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan during the reporting period (June to December 2021), has raised concerns globally about the possibility of it becoming a safe haven for Al-Qaida and its affiliates in the country and a potential magnet for terrorist fighters from other regions to travel to the country.

2. Global recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was uneven and uncertain. In some areas, public health measures limiting travel and assembly remained in force; in others, they have been reintroduced in response to rising public health concerns. The net effect is that cross-border travel remains difficult and subject to greater monitoring by local authorities. Such measures have suppressed the threat posed by terrorists in non-conflict zones, who find it difficult to travel or meet securely. Secondary effects of the pandemic include obstacles to recruiting new members, to raising money and to identifying and attacking suitable targets. Member States, however, remain concerned about the impact of the pandemic on radicalization and recruitment online, including the accessing of extremist websites and likely online plotting. They therefore continue to expect that attacks, some of them pre-planned, may occur when lockdowns ease, with the suppression of the threat proving to be only a temporary respite in non-conflict zones.

3. In conflict zones, by contrast, there has been no reduction in the threat. Insurgency and terrorist activity have continued wherever the rule of law is weak. Those attacking authorities or civilians have not been deterred by the pandemic, whereas those attempting to govern or conduct other public business have been obliged to address the pandemic and have found their resources and capabilities correspondingly stretched. Consequently, despite Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida lacking any coherent narrative or strategy for the pandemic, the threat they pose in conflict zones has risen and is expected to increase further.

4. ISIL and Al-Qaida leadership both continue to face difficulties. The current ISIL leader, Amir Muhammad Sa'id Abdal-Rahman al-Salbi (QDi.426),<sup>1</sup> went a further six months without showing himself to his supporters or communicating directly with them. He and the ISIL leadership are believed to stay mainly in the Syrian Arab Republic, and they continue to suffer losses. In addition to the regular killing of ISIL seniors in counter-terrorist operations, ISIL suffered a serious setback when Iraq announced, on 11 October, the capture of Sami Jasim Muhammad al-Jaburi (alias Hajji Hamid, not listed), who was in charge of ISIL finances and also believed to be al-Salbi's most senior deputy and a possible successor as ISIL leader. Member States differ as to how serious a blow this will prove to ISIL leadership and finances, but the fact that al-Jaburi was taken alive means that the Iraqi authorities are likely to acquire a great deal of valuable intelligence on the group.

5. The emergence of ISIL regional structures has proved to be a slow process, and it is unclear how quickly any of those will become sufficiently established and mature to the point of offering ISIL strategic options such as external operational planning. Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic remain fundamental to the group's identity, and the political difficulties that inhibit stabilization and recovery in both countries indicate that an eventual ISIL resurgence in the core region cannot be ruled out.

6. Al-Qaida continues to have concerns about its future leadership, although there is now proof of life for Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri (QDi.006) as recently as early 2021. Al-Qaida also received a significant boost following the Taliban takeover

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Salbi is currently listed under the last name of al-Mawla. The Monitoring Team has established from Iraqi authorities that al-Salbi is his correct last name, while al-Mawla is a nickname. This will be addressed with the Committee by means of a proposed amendment to his listing.

of Afghanistan in August 2021, as some of its closest sympathizers within the Taliban now occupy senior positions in the new de facto Afghan administration. The Taliban takeover has made it more likely that Mohammed Salahaldin Abd El Halim Zidane, (alias Sayf-Al Adl, QDi.001), in the event that he succeeds al-Zawahiri, will have the option of establishing himself in Afghanistan to take up his new role, although one Member State has denied his presence in the Islamic Republic of Iran (S/2021/655, paras. 3 and 50). Although under the Doha agreement of February 2020, the Taliban has committed itself to preventing any international terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan, Member States are concerned that the regime will offer a safe haven for Al-Qaida, provided that the latter does not jeopardize Taliban efforts to achieve international legitimacy.

7. The success of ISIL and Al-Qaida affiliates in Africa during the reporting period remains deeply concerning to Member States. ISIL affiliates in Mozambique and the Sahel have both suffered setbacks, but are assessed to pose significant ongoing threats. The ISIL affiliate in the Lake Chad basin has grown in strength, absorbing most of the followers of the deceased Abubakar Shekau (QDi.322), thereby confirming its status as, numerically, the strongest ISIL province outside the core region and looking poised to expand its area of operations. Meanwhile, the key Al-Qaida affiliates in both Somalia and the Sahel have continued to grow in strength and ambition, leaving Member States concerned that they have been inspired by the example of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

8. The interrelated issues of foreign terrorist fighters, other ISIL fighters and activists and their dependents (including minors) continue to pose concerns to Member States. This human legacy of the ISIL “caliphate” is located mainly in the internally displaced camps and detention facilities in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. International efforts to address the issue have failed to progress at a pace commensurate with its seriousness. Failure to deal proactively with these people risks aggravating the situation in the medium-to-long term. Remaining stranded in harsh conditions, surrounded by radicalizing influences, may cause younger residents, especially, to become hardened and trained extremists, increasing the threat that veterans of the “caliphate” may come to pose over the years and decades ahead.

## II. Regional developments

### A. Africa

#### Central and Southern Africa

9. In Mozambique, Cabo Delgado Province saw further attacks by Ahlu Sunna wal-Jama’a (ASWJ), a local group that has pledged allegiance to ISIL and that is another component of what the latter regards as Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP). Regional Member States are of the view that there is no clear evidence of command and control over ASWJ by the ISIL core. Owing to the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Cabo Delgado and the growing terror threat to the broader region, Mozambique agreed, on 9 and 15 July 2021, respectively, to the deployment of forces from Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), alongside its own Mozambican Defence Force.

10. Member States noted that, since July, SAMIM and the Rwandan forces have caused ASWJ serious setbacks. The Rwanda Defence Force liberated Mocimboa da Praia from ASWJ occupation on 8 August and, to date, their forces have killed 100 militants. In several large-scale operations, SAMIM destroyed ASWJ terrorist bases and training camps, neutralizing insurgents and senior leadership responsible for

recruitment, indoctrination, training, attacks and abductions. In November alone, those forces killed 51 militants.

11. There has since been an increase in sporadic violent attacks on civilians in more remote areas. After insurgents were dislodged, first from Mocimboa da Praia, and then from Mbau, they fled southwards into Quissanga, heading in the direction of the provincial capital, Pemba. The same pattern was seen after fighters were displaced from Macomia, Mueda and Nangade, some disbursing further west towards Niassa Province, near the border with the United Republic of Tanzania, thereby opening up a new front and complicating the theatre of conflict. ASWJ appears to be displaced rather than defeated, with fighters continuing to regroup into smaller, more autonomous cells. There is evidence that these dispersed cells mount guerrilla attacks on security forces, while plundering vulnerable villages for food and provisions, often beheading civilians as a warning not to cooperate with military forces deployed in the area. They also abduct young girls as sex slaves and young boys for recruitment into their ranks as child soldiers.

12. Led by Abu Yasir Hassan (not listed), a Tanzanian national, ASWJ is estimated to have 600 to 1,200 fighters, comprising locals and foreign terrorist fighters, primarily from the United Republic of Tanzania and, to a lesser extent, the Comoros. Regional Member States are increasingly worried about the spread of violent extremism in the SADC region and view enhanced transborder cooperation as critical to curbing the movement of foreign terrorist fighters.

13. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (CDe.001), led by Seka Baluku (alias Musa Baluku, CDi.036), is responsible for the escalation in violent attacks against civilians and defence forces in the Beni territory of North Kivu Province and the accelerated expansion into the gold-rich Irumu territory of Ituri Province. Following Baluku's pledge of allegiance to ISIL in July 2019 and the statement he issued in September 2020 that ADF no longer existed and was now ISCAP, there are clear indications of a fracture within the leadership of the ADF. Those loyal to Jamil Mukulu (CDi.015), who claim to be the legitimate ADF leadership and refuse Baluku's allegiance to ISIL, have splintered off under the leadership of Muzaya, a former military commander in Mwalika camp, Benjamin Kisokeranio, a close advisor to Mukulu, and Hassan Nyanzi (Mukulu's son). There is currently some engagement around the splinter group indicating that it may wish to negotiate terms under which it can join a political process.

14. Military operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo targeting ADF have led to an escalation in attacks and prompted ADF expansion into Ituri Province. ADF membership is Ugandan and Congolese, with foreign terrorist fighters coming primarily from the United Republic of Tanzania and, to a lesser extent, Kenya, with some also coming from Burundi. To date, there is a record of four Mozambicans receiving training in ADF camps in early 2020. Member States reported that a Jordanian national was arrested in Beni on 18 September 2021. Although initial reports indicated that he may have had training in drones and improvised explosive devices, subsequent information suggests he was seeking to explore illicit artisanal gold extraction. One Member State assesses that he was possibly in contact with the ISIL core and could be seeking to generate revenue for ISIL; another Member State reports that he had been recruited online by ISIL.

15. One Member State noted that ADF members Seka Baluku, Meddie Nkalubo (alias "Punisher", not listed) and Abu Akassi (not listed) are connected to the ISIL core command through the general directorate of provinces and its Al-Karrar office in Somalia, although this relationship is not strong. Several regional Member States refute any command-and-control links between ADF in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ISIL. Member States, however, noted a

growing communication link between ADF and ISIL, which serves to amplify local ADF status and propaganda while enhancing the image of the global footprint of ISIL. Since September 2020, there has been enhanced coordination on ADF activity promoted by ISIL, predominantly in Ituri. Recently, a Telegram group has been operational, promoting ADF attacks, which could serve to enhance ISIL propaganda. Telegram is also being used by ADF to communicate with fighters and operatives.

### **East Africa**

16. On 1 October, the Government of Rwanda announced the arrest of 13 individuals for planning terrorist attacks in Kigali. The suspects were all linked to ADF and acting under its guidance. The presence of similar cells in regional capitals requires further assessment. However, the bombings in Kampala suggest that such cells do exist.

17. Uganda experienced four deadly bombings in October and November; authorities confirmed that the attackers used homemade explosives bearing the hallmarks of ADF. On 23 and 25 October, two bombings executed by locals occurred, one in a restaurant and the other on a bus. Ugandan police arrested the coordinator of the bombings, a local ADF commander. Three Ugandan men who received \$114,000 from ADF to pay operatives and agents in Uganda for carrying out the attacks were also arrested. On 16 November, three suicide bombers struck in Kampala, targeting the central police station and the parliamentary district. Counter-terrorism officers killed 5 suspects and arrested 21. Among those killed was Sheikh Muhamed Kirevu (not listed), a local Islamic leader and ADF recruiter responsible for reviving terror cells in Kampala. There is evidence that instructions for the construction of improvised explosive devices were sent via Telegram by Ugandan ADF bombmaker Meddie Nkalubo from Madina Camp, Democratic Republic of the Congo, who, as the ADF Head of Communications and Propaganda, is also responsible for filming and editing videos.

18. It is evident that ADF is re-engaging in Uganda and in neighbouring countries. This points to the emergence of an overall regional terror threat that includes a proliferation of funds, recruitment and terror tactics linked to individuals affiliated with ISIL that have some influence with ADF in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and among insurgents in northern Mozambique.

19. Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujaahidiin (Al-Shabaab) (SOe.001) continues to consolidate its position in Somalia, with the current political situation in Somalia hampering the State's ability to mount an effective response to the group. Al-Shabaab launched attacks against the Government of Somalia, the military, the African Union Mission in Somalia and civilians, making significant use of explosive devices, suicide bombings and car bombs. Al-Shabaab is also making inroads in neighbouring countries. With Ethiopia focused on its own security challenges, Al-Shabaab is exploiting the opportunity to expand its influence and territory, increasing its activities along the Ethiopian border. Both Al-Shabaab and ISIL in Somalia have a presence in Puntland; however, Al-Shabaab remains the dominant force. ISIL has suffered successive losses, with its current force estimated at between 260 and 300 fighters, while Al-Shabaab is estimated at between 7,000 and 12,000 fighters. Al-Shabaab may use its dominance in the region to engage the Puntland Security Forces.

20. Of growing concern is Al-Shabaab's well-developed revenue collection system, which makes it less reliant on external funding. The group is capable of collecting between \$2 million and \$10 million monthly. The group extorts money from citizens through a comprehensive illicit taxation system targeting a number of goods and services. They also exploit the collection of zakat, using targeted and detailed lifestyle audits of wealthy businessmen. The group utilizes mobile money, local bank accounts and a mobile money wallet to collect revenue.



## West Africa

21. Several Member States report that Al-Qaida and ISIL affiliates in West Africa appear to have made decisive progress by exploiting local grievances, overwhelming stretched security forces and navigating complex interrelationships between armed groups. Some national authorities are inclined to negotiate with Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (QDe.159) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (QDe.163). Others consider that the participation of terrorists in dialogue risks consolidating their influence. JNIM has succeeded in exploiting the weaknesses of fragile States with poor governance in order to fulfil its ambitious territorial control objectives. In that context, several Member States report that, in Mali, the capital city itself is under threat, with a security bubble now limited to a 40-kilometre circle around Bamako. The group has also avoided command and control gaps though careful succession planning in the face of sustained counter-terrorism operations by international forces.

22. In central Mali, the Al-Qaida- and JNIM-affiliate Katiba Macina has already established its presence and enforced religious customs according to the JNIM blueprint for imposing itself and has now moved on to the final phase of dominating both the geography and the population. In Senegal, one Member State highlighted ongoing JNIM pressure on the Mouride brotherhood, with the aim of replacing established imams and controlling the redistribution of zakat payments. In southwestern Mali, Modibo Bah (not listed), who is close to the leader of Katiba Macina, Amadou Koufa (QDi.425), coordinates three groups. One of those is the group led by Boulhy (not listed), which has taken control of mosques, reportedly abducted three foreign workers in July, attacked a mining company in September and created logistics bases for Katiba Macina in Tougui and Flanibougou. A second group is that led by Moulaye Arbi (not listed), which has threatened imams, controlled the road between Kuala and Nara, deployed improvised explosive devices and conducted attacks since August. The third group is that led by Ousmane Sangare (not listed), which operates around the Manantali reservoir and seeks to expand into Senegal and Guinea.

23. Ansarul Islam remains a Fulani group endemic to northern Burkina Faso. The group, which supports Al-Qaida affiliates Katiba Macina and Katiba Gourma, is pushing south to expand its area of operations. It consists of between 300 and 350 combatants deployed in the area around and between Douentza, Mali, and Djibo, Dori, Kaya (100 kilometres north of Ouagadougou) and Ouahigouya. Several Member States acknowledge that its leader Jaffar Dicko (not listed) is in contact with JNIM leader Iyad Ag Ghali (QDi.316). On 14 November, Ansarul Islam led an attack close to a gold mine in Inata and killed 49 police officers. One Member State warns that the group is also involved in mass abductions to forcibly recruit combatants. In southern Burkina Faso, south of the main JNIM and ISGS areas of operations, several criminal groups are transitioning to structured terrorist groups motivated by an extremist ideology. One Member State highlighted Abou Hanifa (not listed) as a terrorist close to JNIM who deploys improvised explosive devices along the road from Niamey to Ouagadougou.

24. In the Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger tri-border area, ISGS leader Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui (QDi.415) was killed on 17 August. He was replaced by Abdul Bara al-Sahraoui (alias Abdul Bara al-Ansari alias Abu Omarou, not listed), an experienced logistician who operated previously in Libya. Several Member States report that, in October, in the town of Akabir, Mali, he met with a delegation of ISIL leaders who had travelled from the ISIL core area to assess and orient ISIL affiliates in the Sahel and Nigeria, which are part of the same regional network.

25. ISGS continues to fight JNIM in the Gourma sector of Mali, in part for control of gold extraction areas and for access to buyers in Bamako and southern Algeria.

26. After several operational setbacks, ISGS and its combatants, which number between 400 and 1,000, adopted a more defensive posture in the Liptako area in the Niger, with the objective of extending towards Niamey and Tahoua. Although the group previously attacked military camps, ISGS operations are now focused on soft civilian targets. The loss of senior operatives led to a lack of cohesion among ISGS subgroups, but operations were sustained. For its supplies, one Member State reports that ISGS supporters operate three warehouses in Benin, Ghana and Togo; fighters have been seen in Tanguiéta, Benin, south of Pendjari National Park.

27. In Nigeria, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (QDe.162) was strengthened by the death of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) (QDE.138) leader Abubakar Shekau (QDi.322) in May 2021. Member States remain divided on the status of ISWAP leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi (not listed), who was reportedly killed in September, in a fight with Boko Haram combatants and the group led by Ba Koura (not listed). Although Malam Baku (alias Malam Bako, not listed) has replaced al-Barnawi as ISWAP leader, possibly followed by Sani Shuwaram (not listed), one Member State indicated that al-Barnawi may have reverted to his previous role as head of the Al-Furqan office of the general directorate of provinces to ensure operational, logistical and financial liaison with the ISIL core. The Al-Anfal office is almost defunct; its responsibilities in the Maghreb and the Sahel have been transferred to the Al-Furqan office in the Lake Chad basin. Moreover, al-Barnawi is reported to have dissolved the old ISWAP shura council with the prior approval of the ISIL core in June. The group and its 4,000 to 5,000 combatants have subsequently been reorganized into four branches: Lake Chad, Tunbuna, Sambisa Forest and Timbuktu. Internal opposition to these developments led to a violent revolt in mid-August.

28. ISWAP has sought to integrate Boko Haram fighters, but unification has proved difficult. Ba Koura remains active, as the Boko Haram emir for Lake Chad, conquering Kirta Wulgo Island on 27 September and establishing his sanctuary in the Niger. Aliyu Ngulde (not listed) sought to rebuild the group in the Mandara mountains, and Adamu Yunusa (alias Saddiqu, not listed) is active in gold extraction areas in north-western Nigeria. One Member State assesses that they cooperate with the criminal group led by Dogo Gide and with Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (also known as Ansaru) (QDe.142), but do not systematically join forces.

29. Increasing attacks in Cameroon and the Niger underscore the ability of ISWAP to expand beyond Nigeria. In the Komadougou Yobé region in the Niger, Abba Gana (not listed) led more than 20 terrorist attacks in 2021. The group's capacity to advance further in north-western Nigeria in order to coordinate with ISGS is unconfirmed. Several Member States reported that ISWAP resources may have increased following tactical gains in north-eastern Nigeria. Its revenues come from war spoils, extortion of the local population, the fishing and agriculture industries and zakat.

### **North Africa**

30. Moroccan authorities remain concerned about the unpredictable nature of the threat from ISIL and Al-Qaida, despite counter-terrorist successes that have succeeded in suppressing activity. A number of inspired lone actors were arrested during the reporting period; three ISIL cells were dismantled between June and October. One of those was the Errachidia cell, which was disrupted on 14 September and which had included seven individuals planning attacks on government targets.

31. Terrorist activity in Libya has declined as a consequence of the failure of ISIL to attract new recruits and control territory, notwithstanding the group's continuing efforts to hold its ground in the country. Unresolved political issues could provide

space and opportunity for terrorist groups to reappear in Libya, especially in the Fazzan region.

32. The stronghold of Al-Qaida in Libya, with only 50 fighters spread across several towns, is in Awbari and Ghat in the southwest. The diversity of the local population provides Al-Qaida fighters the ability to blend into the social fabric. Some in this region provide logistical support to terrorist groups as far away as northern Mali. One Member State reported hiding places on the outskirts of Awbari which have been used by operatives of Sahel-based terrorist groups. Two routes used by fighters run through Tin Zaouatène, Anai, Tin Lamsan (east of Anai in the Algeria-Libya-Niger tri-border area) and Awbari -Wadi al-Shati'-Idri to Libya.

33. Members of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Libya (ISIL-Libya) (QDe.165) are also present in the Fazzan region but the group is estimated to have been degraded to approximately 50 fighters, located mainly between Sabha, Murzuq and Umm al-Aranib. A recent arrest led to the identification of a further 30 foreign fighters from Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, the Niger, Senegal and the Sudan. Although weakened, ISIL-Libya retains some operational capability and prioritizes its continued presence in southern Libya, where it hopes to reorganize its command. Setbacks suffered by ISIL-Libya, which include the killing of Adnan Abou Walid Al-Sahraoui (alias Abu Al Walid al-Sahrawi, QDi.415), have prevented the group from pursuing more ambitious objectives, including assisting other branches of ISIL in the region.

34. In Egypt, there has been a reduction in activity by Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), the local terrorist group that has pledged allegiance to ISIL is acknowledged by the ISIL core as a *wilaya*, or province, and has been featured extensively in ISIL propaganda. No terrorist attacks have been attributed to or claimed by ISIL or Al-Qaida in mainland Egypt since 2019. This is credited both to counter-terrorism operations and to an initiative to promote the defection of ABM leaders, which has sapped morale and reinforced the impression that the group is declining. Egyptian public investments in Sinai Peninsula infrastructure, transport and housing are also a factor in that.

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

35. ISIL continues to operate as an entrenched rural insurgency in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, exploiting the porous border between the two countries, while maintaining operations in areas of low security pressure. ISIL is estimated to retain between 6,000 and 10,000 fighters across both countries, where it is forming cells and training operatives to launch attacks. The group's operational leaders remain mainly in the Syrian Arab Republic, while some of its administrative leaders, who provide mostly financial and logistical support, are present in neighbouring countries. The leader of ISIL, Amir Muhammad Sa'id Abdal-Rahman al-Salbi, remains out of public view entirely. No video or audio recordings featuring al-Salbi have been released since he assumed the leadership of ISIL in late October 2019. One Member State observed that he takes extreme measures to ensure his security, allowing no electronics to be carried in his vicinity. He is believed to move regularly between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

36. In the Syrian Arab Republic, ISIL remains active despite limited recent insurgent activity. It uses desert hideouts to train for combat, which could be aimed at reviving its external operational capability, as well as producing fighters for regional operations. During the reporting period, ISIL operations were focused on the eastern side of the Euphrates River in Dayr al-Zawr. Attacks also extended to Homs and Hama Governorates, coupled with an active presence in Dar'a, Suwayda', Hasakah, Raqqah and Damascus. The situation in Dar'a is assessed to be unstable,

with one Member State estimating that ISIL has at least 300 fighters there, in addition to sleeper cells located around the Hawran mountains.

37. The Idlib de-escalation zone remains important for ISIL as a strategic location providing limited safe haven; some ISIL activity is noted near the Turkish border. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)<sup>2</sup> remains the predominant terrorist group in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic and in control of Idlib. Member State estimates of HTS strength range from 6,000 to 15,000 fighters. HTS raises revenues mainly through taxation. One Member State highlighted concerns regarding the potential diversion of humanitarian aid, reporting that HTS had imposed restrictions on charities and relief organizations operating in HTS-held areas, coercing such organizations into providing part of their monthly relief allocations to the group, or risk being banned from providing services to beneficiaries.

38. HTS has sought to counter other armed militias within Idlib and exert full control over the region. This has had the greatest impact on the local Al-Qaida affiliate, Hurras al-Din (HAD), which is reportedly at its weakest point, having lost many of its leaders. The group's strength is assessed to range between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters. Following the operational pressure on Idlib, many HAD fighters relocated to the south, forming cells around Dar'a and Suwayda'. Only a residual presence reportedly remains in Idlib, including the group's leadership. Given the number of mid-level commanders killed, the affiliate's long-term viability may be in question.

39. The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) (QDe.088)/Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) in the Syrian Arab Republic has a total strength of between 1,000 and 3,000 fighters, mostly located in Idlib, Aleppo, Ladhqiyyah and Hama Governorates. According to several Member States, ETIM/TIP fighters continue to serve under the HTS umbrella. They also collaborate with HAD and Katiba al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ) on joint attacks on Syrian armed forces and seek to recruit and send fighters to Central Asian countries and China for terrorist attacks. ETIM/TIP established several training camps in the Syrian Arab Republic, recruiting and training both foreign terrorist fighters and the children of ETIM/TIP members. According to one Member State, the group has established a staging area for the transit, funding, recruitment of fighters, among other logistical support.

40. In Iraq, ongoing counter-terrorism pressures have yielded positive results in reducing ISIL activities, as evidenced by the Babylon Music Festival having been held in October without incident, but cells remain active in desert and rural territories. The group maintains the ability to launch deadly attacks, leveraging urban areas to grow its clandestine networks. ISIL cells in Iraq also focus on economic warfare, targeting infrastructure, in particular power lines. During the reporting period, ISIL continued to launch attacks at a steady rate, including hit-and-run operations, ambushes and roadside bombs, with a marked concentration in Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah al-Din Governorates. A surge was reported in ISIL fighters crossing the borders from the Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq, including through the Sinjar area, and taking shelter in the Hamrin mountain range. The group seeks to exploit security gaps in this area, with a view to increasing attacks there in future.

41. Attacks have continued on both government forces and civilians, with the aim of instigating panic and increasing pressure on authorities. One ISIL attack on villagers in Diyala Governorate, on 26 October, appeared calculated to inflame sectarian tensions. Operations have become more frequent on the edges of the Kurdistan region in Iraq, including a high-profile attack on 2 December that resulted in 13 deaths. In October, the creation of a joint brigade to include Peshmerga and Iraqi forces was agreed. Although ISIL activity in Anbar Governorate has fallen, the

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<sup>2</sup> Listed as Al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant (QDe.137).

region is assessed to have favourable conditions for the group to redeploy and strengthen its fighting capacity, and it is reportedly already building strongholds and tunnels with many sleeper cells and hundreds of fighters in the Anbar desert.

42. ISIL has continued to suffer leadership losses. The capture by Iraq of ISIL finance chief Sami Jasim Muhammad Al-Jaburi, announced on 11 October, was a major blow to the group. He was reportedly found in possession of a residency permit identifying him as a refugee in a neighbouring country. One Member State described him as having been in charge of ISIL external provinces within ISIL; this information was not corroborated by other Member States. His capture adds to the list of senior ISIL leaders lost since al-Salbi assumed control. Others include the former ISIL governor for Iraq, Jabbar Ali Al-Issawi, killed in January 2021, reportedly replaced by Abdallah Mosleh Al Rafi'i (alias Abu Mosaab, not listed); a former ISIL governor for the Syrian Arab Republic, Haidar Mohamed Oayed Al Oubaydi, killed in February 2020, reportedly replaced by Abu Yasir Al Iraqi (not listed); and a deputy to al-Salbi, Moataz Noman Abd Al Jabouri, killed in May 2020. Some Member States assess that the group is significantly undermined by these losses, while others assess that the threat of a resurgence by the ISIL core remains, in particular if counter-terrorism pressure eases.

### C. Arabian Peninsula

43. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (QDe.129) is assessed by Member States to be suffering from setbacks caused by both internal divisions and military offensives. Notwithstanding the group's challenges, Member States assess that it continues to pose a significant threat and to maintain its focus on foreign targets and on plans for external operational capability. In Yemen, the group is consolidating its foothold in central and eastern provinces. It continues to exploit the civil war to relocate its territorial base to the southern governorates of Abyan (where according to one Member State it is strongest), Bayda' and Shabwah and, to the east, in Hadramawt and Mahrah Governorates. The group's priority is to establish control over ports along the Gulf of Aden and over oil and gas infrastructure facilities.

44. Despite heightened recruitment efforts, there has been no marked increase in AQAP fighting strength. One Member State assesses the group to have approximately 3,000 fighters. There are no reports of significant numbers of foreign terrorist fighters arriving to replenish its ranks, with the exception of limited numbers of African migrants recruited to entry-level positions. AQAP is also reluctant to welcome large-scale migrant recruitment because of prior infiltration attempts. The group has recently been reported by one Member State to be establishing several training camps for fighters.

45. AQAP leader Khalid Batarfi (not listed) was featured in two videos released in November, in which he acknowledged the challenges facing the group, including financial pressures, while highlighting ongoing efforts to regroup and to prepare fighters to launch operations targeting the West. Current information points to Batarfi operating as the leader of AQAP and to being at large, with full freedom of action. While he is described as being preoccupied in unifying AQAP behind his leadership, he is more broadly considered a rising second-generation leader of Al-Qaida.

46. The group claimed responsibility during the reporting period for a series of small-scale operations targeting Houthi forces in Bayda' Governorate, carried out mostly through improvised explosive devices. These operations accompanied an increase in activity by the group's media arm. Member States assess that AQAP retains its leading role in disseminating Al-Qaida propaganda to supporters and potential recruits.

47. AQAP remains hostile towards Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Yemen (ISIL-Yemen). For its part, ISIL-Yemen continues on a downward trajectory, with no significant activity during the reporting period. One Member State assesses that ISIL-Yemen has lost many of its fighters and lacks significant operational capacity as a consequence of sustained pressure from rival groups.

## **D. Europe**

48. The terrorist threat level remains moderate in Europe, although it was raised in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland following the murder, on 15 October, of a member of Parliament and the detonation, on 14 November, of an improvised explosive device in Liverpool by an individual whose possible plan to strike a Remembrance Sunday church ceremony was thwarted by a taxi driver. The threat in the wider region is evolving and requires careful analysis to support the development of counter-terrorism policies designed to prevent its resurgence.

49. Several European anti-terrorism prosecutors noted a common pattern in ongoing investigations of home-grown terrorism cases. Cases typically involved young, psychologically vulnerable individuals who had participated in recent or foiled attacks and who combined a fascination for extreme violence with personal grievances, which made them receptive to Al-Qaida and ISIL propaganda. Most did not have personal connections with recruiters, but had been self-radicalized via a combination of propaganda and a desire to replicate previous terrorist attacks. Several prosecutors reported that recent perpetrators and aspiring attackers often acted alone, despite potential connections with a range of extremists through social media. Those prosecutors noted that, in Europe, antisemitism is one grievance that enables Al-Qaida and ISIL sympathizers to connect with far-right extremists.

50. Social media remains the primary vector for inspiring and organizing terrorists in Europe, although one Member State noted that, in France, some established Algerian networks recently revived more traditional practices for indoctrination and recruitment purposes, through in-person meetings on religious compounds rather than discussions online.

51. In European prisons, unrepentant terrorists and supporters convicted between 2014 and 2016 are reported to be rejecting opportunities for early release in order to avoid the imposition of specific control measures upon release. Member States believe that these individuals will require ongoing monitoring.

52. Following the beheading of a French high school professor in October 2020, several European Member States identified connections between Chechen individuals legally residing in their countries and Al-Qaida and ISIL members and sympathizers. Those investigations led to the identification of threats associated with several individuals and networks originating from the northern Caucasus and parts of Central Asia that had formed sleeper cells in European cities. In the case of the Takim cell, which was disrupted in Germany in April 2020, Tajik nationals had been directed by the ISIL core to perpetrate an attack, supported by Chechen facilitators residing in Austria. During the reporting period, investigations led to the identification of additional members of those communities who had travelled to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and who had been previously unknown as foreign terrorist fighters. Other investigations highlighted the financing of terrorism through the exploitation of zakat payments by Chechen individuals who had established a collection and redistribution scheme in Europe, the United States of America and West Africa.

53. Migration routes remain under scrutiny by European counter-terrorist authorities, as illustrated on 10 November by the arrest in Bulgaria of a Belgian-Moroccan foreign terrorist fighter returning from Turkey who had been an associate

of Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the mastermind of the Paris attacks of 2015. Several Member States also cited cases of illegal migrants from Iraq who were subsequently identified, from battlefield evidence, as ISIL operatives who perpetrated attacks in the core conflict zone.

54. Since the republishing of Charlie Hebdo cartoons satirizing the Prophet Muhammad in September 2020 and the opening, on 8 September 2021, of the trial on the 2015 Paris attacks, several Member States reported Al-Qaida propaganda as increasingly identifying France as a target for attacks, which also affects the security of other European Member States.

55. In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, some European foreign terrorist fighters are still participating in combat, while others are in prisons and camps. There is also what one Member State calls the “ghost phenomenon”, in reference to foreign terrorist fighters thought to be still alive, but whose status, whereabouts and intentions are unknown.

56. During the reporting period, Member States repatriated a number of women and children from the conflict zone to Europe. Some of the women had had active roles with ISIL, including a weapons-trained operative belonging to the Hisbah “morality police” unit and a recruiter. Two years after the first wave of women returning from camps arrived in Europe, most are reported to have disengaged from ISIL; some remain openly radical and require ongoing monitoring. However, several Member States note that prisons usually do not have adapted facilities for women who have returned from the conflict zone and who have been convicted of terrorism offenses. The attempted escape of Douha Mounib (not listed) from a French prison on 14 November illustrates the determination of one female foreign terrorist fighter who wished to return to the core conflict zone. The latest assessments of returning children, supported by health and social services, were positive, but some remain of greater concern following their direct exposure to combat and atrocities. One Member State assesses that 15 per cent of men and women who returned from the conflict zone are considered dangerous, and another 15 per cent remain highly motivated by ISIL or Al-Qaida ideology.

## **E. Asia**

### **Central and South Asia**

57. The security landscape in Afghanistan changed dramatically on 15 August, when the Taliban took control of the country. There are no recent signs that the Taliban has taken steps to limit the activities of foreign terrorist fighters in the country. On the contrary, terrorist groups enjoy greater freedom there than at any time in recent history. However, Member States have not reported significant new movements of foreign terrorist fighters to Afghanistan.

58. On 31 August, Al-Qaida released a statement congratulating the Taliban on its victory. Since that statement, Al-Qaida has maintained a strategic silence, likely an effort not to compromise Taliban efforts to gain international recognition and legitimacy. Al-Qaida is also continuing to recover from a series of leadership losses and is assessed to lack the capability to conduct high-profile attacks overseas, which remains its long-term goal. Amin Muhammad ul-Haq Saam Khan (QDi.002), who coordinated security for Usama Bin Laden, returned to his home in Afghanistan in late August. One Member State reported that Bin Laden’s son, Abdallah (not listed), visited Afghanistan in October for meetings with the Taliban. Aiman al-Zawahiri (QDi.006) was reported alive as recently as January 2021, but Member States continue to believe that he is in poor health.

59. Al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), led by Osama Mehmood (not listed) and his deputy Atif Yahya Ghouri (not listed), retains a presence in Afghanistan, in the Provinces of Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Paktika and Zabul, where the group fought alongside the Taliban against the ousted Government. AQIS is estimated to have between 200 and 400 fighters, mainly from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Pakistan.

60. Member States assess that the strength of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan (ISIL-K) (QDe.161) has now risen from earlier estimates of 2,200 to approaching 4,000, following the release of several thousand prisoners. One Member State assessed that up to half of ISIL-K is composed of foreign terrorist fighters. Although the group controls limited territory in eastern Afghanistan, it is capable of conducting high-profile and complex attacks, such as the 27 August bombing at Kabul airport, in which more than 180 people were killed, and several subsequent attacks.

61. The Taliban views ISIL-K as its primary kinetic threat, as the group aims to position itself as the chief rejectionist force in Afghanistan, with a wider regional agenda threatening neighbouring Central and South Asian countries. Member States estimated that, if Afghanistan descends into chaos, some Afghan and foreign extremists may shift allegiances to ISIL-K, which continues to be led by Sanaullah Ghafari (alias Shahab al-Muhajir, QDi.431), an Afghan national. Aslam Farooqi (not listed), a former ISIL-K leader, escaped from prison and has subsequently rejoined the group in a senior role. The former leader of ISIL-K, Abu Omar al-Khorasani, was killed by the Taliban in August, shortly after it took control of the prison in which he was being held.

62. Central Asian terrorist groups Islamic Jihad Group (IJG) (QDe.119), Khatiba Imam al-Bukhari (KIB) (QDe.158) and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (QDe.010), which actively participated in fighting alongside the Taliban, are now experiencing greater freedom of movement in the country. Central Asian embassies based in Afghanistan have observed with concern that several leaders of those groups have travelled freely to Kabul. IJG, led by Ilimbek Mamatov (not listed), a Kyrgyz national, and his deputy, Amsattor Atabaev (not listed), of Tajikistan, is assessed to be the most combat-ready Central Asian group in Afghanistan. It operates primarily in Badakhshan, Baghlan and Kunduz Provinces. KIB, led by Dilshod Dekhanov (not listed), a Tajik national, is currently located in the Bala Murghab district of Badghis Province. The group's strength has increased through the recruitment of local Afghans. In September, Mamatov and Dekhanov separately visited Kabul. Each leader lobbied for support from the Taliban to unify the Central Asian groups under their respective leadership, in recognition of their contributions to the Taliban victory. The Taliban reportedly rejected the proposals, preferring to incorporate the groups as distinct military units within the newly established Taliban army.

63. KIB and KTJ also operate in Idlib Governorate in the Syrian Arab Republic, under the HTS umbrella. KIB in the Syrian Arab Republic is led by Ramazan Nurmanov (not listed), a Tajik national born in 1991, who represents a second generation of foreign terrorist fighters. He is the son of a fighter who left Tajikistan for Afghanistan in the 1990s and who later moved to the Syrian conflict zone. Currently, KIB in the Syrian Arab Republic consists of 110 militants who operate mainly in Ladhhiqiyah Governorate. KIB still abides by its pledge of allegiance to the Taliban. Ilmurad Hikmatov (alias Abdulaziz, not listed), remains the leader of KTJ in the Syrian Arab Republic. The group's capability is undermined by conflict between Hikmatov and the former KTJ leader, Sirajuddin Mukhtarov (not listed).

64. Some Member States reported that, following the Taliban's return to power, ETIM/TIP fighters were relocated from their traditional stronghold in Badakhshan Province, on the border with China, to Baghlan, Takhar and other provinces, as part of the Taliban's efforts to both protect and restrain the group. Member States continue



to estimate its strength at between 200 and 700 fighters. According to several Member States, the group remains active in military training and in planning terrorist attacks against Chinese interests. ETIM/TIP members have been encouraged to strengthen their ties to Afghanistan by becoming refugees or Afghan citizens, as a means of more deeply entrenching the group in the country. One Member State reported that ETIM/TIP members frequently visited the Wakhan corridor, calling for a “return to Xinjiang for jihad”. According to some Member States, the group closely collaborates with Al-Qaida, Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) (QDe.132) and Jamaat Ansarullah to plan attacks on Chinese interests in Pakistan, Tajikistan and elsewhere. ISIL is taking advantage of the turmoil in Afghanistan, including by recruiting ETIM/TIP fighters under the leadership of a Uighur team, in an attempt to expand the organization and support the group’s cause. One Member State reported that the perpetrator of the ISIL-K bombing of the Gozar-e-Sayed Abad Mosque in Kunduz on 8 October was reportedly a Uighur fighter from the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China.

65. Central Asian foreign terrorist fighters and ETIM/TIP members in Afghanistan have embraced the Taliban takeover. They look forward to international recognition of the Taliban, believing that the “terrorist” label will then be removed from them. They also anticipate that the Taliban de facto administration will provide them with refugee status and passports, enabling them to travel internationally.

66. Member States assess the number of TTP fighters at between 3,000 and 5,500 in Afghanistan, with Noor Wali Mehsud (QDi.427) remaining as their leader. Mediation from the Taliban has led to a reduction in TTP attacks against Pakistan. According to one Member State, there have been talks regarding TTP family members in Afghanistan who wish to resettle in Pakistan under assurances that they would reintegrate peacefully into local communities.

### **South-East Asia**

67. Both Indonesia and the Philippines reported significant gains in countering threats from ISIL and Al-Qaida affiliates in the South-East Asia region, leading to an overall decline in terrorist activity and some optimism that the operational capability of the groups may be significantly degraded. At the same time, the threat of lone actor or inspired attacks by radicalized individuals is ongoing. In August, Indonesia disrupted planned attacks targeting Independence Day celebrations, with arrests of members of both Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) (QDe.092) and Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (QDe.164). The apprehensions netted stockpiles of weapons and ammunition and led to the dismantlement of a JI training facility in Sumatra. The reported arrest of JI leader Abu Rusdan (QDi.186) in September has further weakened the group.

68. In September, Indonesian security forces killed Ali Kalora, the leader of Mujahideen Indonesian Timur (QDe.150), potentially dealing a severe blow to the group’s long-term viability. One Member State observed that the group’s remaining members appear to be in retreat.

69. On 29 October, in Maguindanao Province, in the southern Philippines, security forces killed Salahuddin Hassan, the leader of the local ISIL affiliate. Hassan was the leader of Daulah Islamiyah, one of several terror groups that has operated in the region. He has been linked to a series of bombings and attacks in the southern part of the country. Philippine officials described him as one of their most wanted terrorist leaders. Less than two months after Hassan’s killing, his successor was also killed, in an early December raid.

70. There is concern among South-East Asian Member States about the potential creation of a safe haven in Afghanistan for terrorist activity, as well as concern about the use of social media messaging to celebrate the Taliban victory in Afghanistan and as a recruitment tool for violent extremism locally or, potentially, for travel to the

region. JI has maintained historic ties to the Taliban dating back to the 1990s. Authorities in the region are not reporting any immediate uptick in attempted travel to Afghanistan following the Taliban victory, but they are alert to this possibility.

### **III. Impact assessment**

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

71. ISIL leadership located in and around the core conflict zone continues to control access to substantial liquid financial resources, although well below the hundreds of millions of dollars that the group held before its territorial defeat. Recent assessments by several Member States put the group's reserves at between \$25 million and \$50 million, with some suggesting the lower sum as being more accurate. According to one Member State, most of the group's remaining cash reserves are assessed to be located in Iraq. Member States report that ISIL is now consistently spending more than it takes in monthly, with revenues in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars and expenditures in the mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars. Funds are spent primarily on salaries or stipends to fighters and family members of deceased fighters, on operational activities and on attempts to release fighters from detention. Revenues continue to be generated by opportunistic extortion, looting and kidnap for ransom. A recent ransom case involving a kidnapping in northern Iraq was reported to have netted almost \$1 million to ISIL.

72. The Monitoring Team has reported previously that ISIL relies most heavily on unregistered hawala networks and cash couriers. One Member State shared insights into the ongoing movement of funds to ISIL provinces, as well as to fighters and family members in the conflict zone, including some who are in detention facilities or displaced persons camps. Cash payments are said to be regularly couriered into the Syrian Arab Republic from neighbouring States, with ISIL cells receiving reduced payments monthly. While transfers in previous years to ISIL provinces may have been in the range of \$90,000 per month, they are now closer to \$40,000, or less in some cases. There is also a well-established system based in Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic for distributing funds to ISIL family members, resident both in and outside the camp, using a ledger system maintained by female ISIL supporters. Families claim funds using, in some cases, a 12-digit identification number that had been assigned to them when the group controlled the territory. Several hawaladars (brokers) are reported to operate in Hawl, including elements of the Rawi network highlighted by the Monitoring Team in its previous report ([S/2021/655](#), para. 68).

73. As set out above, the capture by Iraq in early October 2021 of Sami Jasim Muhammad Al-Jaburi, a senior member of ISIL long known for his role in overseeing the group's finances, has the potential to provide significant insights into the group's past and present finances, in particular its networks for storing and moving funds, as well as the extent of its reserves.

74. ISIL leadership exerts sufficient operational control over its reserves to allow the transfer of significant sums to certain affiliates abroad. According to one Member State, ISIL-K has received in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars from the ISIL core, after more than a year of receiving no funding. The ISIL core is assessed to have allocated in excess of \$500,000 for the support of ISIL-K. Ismatullah Khalozai (not listed) is described by one Member State as an international financial facilitator for ISIL-K, responsible for delivering approximately \$87,000 to Afghanistan and for personally smuggling an ISIL courier from Afghanistan into Turkey. His current whereabouts are unknown. It will be important to monitor any change in ISIL core

financial support to ISIL-K as an indicator of the strategic importance that ISIL attaches to Afghanistan, following the Taliban takeover.

75. Global affiliates of ISIL and Al-Qaida raise funds through a variety of methods, including extortion, illicit taxation, kidnap-for-ransom, looting and the exploitation of hydrocarbons, minerals and other natural resources. Member States have highlighted the mining of gold and other precious metals in Africa as an ongoing source of financing; rare earth metals are also being excavated to support regional groups. One Member State reported ties between drug trafficking in Africa and illegal migration to Europe as a means of funnelling support to groups in Africa.

76. The use of social media and crowd-sourced fundraising platforms continue to be reported by Member States as an important means of financing. Often, appeals are for humanitarian relief in Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia. One Member State noted that, in an attempt to be more self-financing, ISIL affiliates in South-East Asia are requiring that zakat payments be redirected towards ISIL affiliates. Other Member States mentioned exploitation of zakat as an objective for Al-Qaida and ISIL supporters in several European and West African countries.

77. Member States continue to highlight concerns over the use of cryptocurrencies to finance terrorism. One Member State observed that its financial intelligence unit is beginning to receive high-quality suspicious transaction reports from virtual currency exchanges, which, upon investigation, have shown links to terrorism financing. That observation underscores the developing maturity of both the analytical tools necessary to identify suspicious activity involving blockchain transactions and the regulatory frameworks that require it to be reported to authorities.

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

78. The Monitoring Team continued to engage with Member States during the reporting period regarding the need to identify and prevent the smuggling of stolen cultural property. Officials in Iraq highlighted challenges in assigning valuations to stolen or looted property. Member States reported no incidents of identifying cultural property stolen during the time that ISIL controlled territory in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

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

79. Among the most pressing and urgent issues for Member States remains the subject of foreign terrorist fighters and other displaced and/or detained persons and their dependents present in the ISIL core conflict zone, especially in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. As time elapses, sustaining this precarious situation grows more difficult. It carries a medium- to long-term risk of exacerbating the global threat landscape. Progress in addressing the issue, already slow because of sensitivities, has been further slowed by the pandemic.

80. Hawl camp continues to be under the social control of ISIL. It remains severely overpopulated, and minors there continue to be exposed to ISIL ideology. Member State assessments of the camp inhabitants vary, with the majority providing estimates ranging at around 60,000 inhabitants, in contrast to its intended capacity of 40,000. Women and children represent the highest proportion, estimated at 94 per cent, with two thirds of the camp's population under the age of 12. The movement of some highly radicalized women to the nearby Rawj camp has had some effect in easing

security concerns, but Rawj is now at its capacity of 4,000 residents. In the Hawl foreigners' annex, there are still approximately 2,000 women and 7,000 children.

81. There are currently 10,000 ISIL prisoners in Syrian Democratic Forces prisons, including approximately 2,000 foreign terrorist fighters. Member States report that ISIL continues to plan jail breaks, partly motivated by difficulties in finding new recruits, but its capacity to assist and absorb fugitives is limited, so they are likely to be recaptured. One such instance occurred in November, when a plot by an ISIL cell in Dayr al-Zawr to attack a prison was thwarted.

82. The detained fighters and some camp inhabitants are assessed to constitute a potential threat to security in the region and beyond. One Member State reported assassination operations in Hawl camp being carried out by women possessing pistols with silencers. It was also reported that ISIL was using the camp as an administrative platform, with networks of women within the camp charged with coordinating and maintaining cross-border links with Anbar Governorate in Iraq. The work includes delivering messages to families of fighters, preparing payroll and other general financial aid, including the payment of legal fees associated with cases held in trial.

83. One Member State reported the presence of a wide network of smugglers operating on the border between Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, not solely ISIL-affiliated, but facilitating smuggling for a fee that varies according to the individual. ISIL sometimes uses this method to cross the border.

84. The "Cubs of the Caliphate" programme was reported by one Member State to have been reinstated, targeting mainly young boys who are selected for training to form the next ISIL generation. At least two young Europeans are part of the programme. ISIL may intend to have them repatriated to Europe to operate there, but it remains difficult to assess the feasibility of such a plan. According to several Member States, authorities in the Western Balkans are concerned about ISIL returnees from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. In Kosovo,<sup>3</sup> they are being monitored by local communities and religious officials.

85. Despite the challenges, repatriation efforts by relevant countries have continued. During the reporting period, Iraq transferred 200 fighters from the Syrian Arab Republic to Iraq and repatriated 244 Iraqi families, consisting of 994 individuals, from Hawl camp to Jad'ah camp in Ninawa Governorate. Efforts to transfer some residents of Jad'ah to their home towns have begun, with the reported return of 29 families, consisting of 111 individuals. The reintegration of such families has proved challenging in some cases.

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

### **A. Travel ban**

86. Travel ban measures remain an effective tool for preventing terrorism and denying listed individuals and foreign terrorist fighters the ability to cross borders freely. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on limiting international movement. Member States, in many cases, have imposed unprecedented limitations on travel and, in some cases, have enhanced those restrictions as new strains of the virus have emerged. Member States consistently report that, while there remains a risk of travel to conflict zones, in particular where protocols related to COVID-19 are weak, they are not seeing significant movements or attempted

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<sup>3</sup> References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

movements of foreign terrorist fighters at the present time. The Monitoring Team assesses that a majority of listed individuals are likely to remain in their current locations under these circumstances.

87. The Monitoring Team notes a risk of foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan seeking to obtain travel documents from Taliban authorities. One Member State reported that, notwithstanding those concerns, there was no evidence to date of that occurring.

## **B. Assets freeze**

88. The Monitoring Team received no information during the reporting period regarding the freezing of assets under resolution 2368 (2017) and related resolutions. The Team has continued to encourage Member States to report such actions to the Committee on an ongoing basis. Under resolution 2610 (2021), Member States are called upon to submit updated information regarding asset freezing actions to the Committee. During the reporting period, the Committee received three requests for exemption from the assets freeze for basic expenses, of which one was approved, one was denied, and one was under consideration by the Committee. The Committee received one request for an exemption for extraordinary expenses that was not approved. The Committee denied one request for an extraordinary expense exemption received through the focal point mechanism (S/2021/1041, para. 25). In fulfilment of its mandated task under resolution 2560 (2020) to examine the basic and extraordinary asset freeze exemption procedures set out in paragraph 81 (a) and (b) of resolution 2368 (2017), the Monitoring Team submitted its report and recommendations to the Committee in September 2021.

## **C. Arms embargo**

89. Member States remain concerned about the glut of weapons, especially small arms, that exist in the Middle East, Africa and Afghanistan. Such concerns have been exacerbated by the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, including of the country's large quantities of weaponry and other military equipment. With the country facing a severe economic, financial and humanitarian crisis, tradeable commodities such as arms and related materiel are more readily available. There is a risk that they could be acquired by organized criminals and terrorists inside Afghanistan and even that they could find their way into neighbouring countries.

90. One Member State has observed that the Taliban is in the habit of giving small arms as gifts to groups that have supported it, potentially including groups sanctioned pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) and related resolutions. This risk is not currently reported to extend to arms that are more substantial than automatic rifles, but the risk remains that such transfers could add to the offensive capability of the groups in question. Given the particularly close relationship that exists between the Taliban and Al-Qaida, it will be important to monitor whether the Taliban decides in the future to provide Al-Qaida with items from the State inventory of military equipment it now controls.

91. With respect to Iraq, one Member State highlighted the acquisition of night vision goggles by ISIL fighters in the areas of Diyala and Kirkuk, reportedly procured through a network operating in a neighbouring country, as well as from local sources.

## V. Recommendations

92. The current system used for communicating changes to the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list to Member States and other interested parties consists primarily of press releases and notes verbales advising them of those changes. The press releases are prepared by the Secretariat and posted to the press release section of the Committee's website. Notes verbales are sent to missions in New York at a later date. The system should better facilitate the timely updating of sanctions screening systems in use by governments, financial institutions and other stakeholders.

**93. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee request the Secretariat to provide a continuously updated accounting of all changes made to the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list, both substantive and technical, as they occur, and have them accessible in a single location. As a further step to supporting the timely implementation of United Nations sanctions measures, consideration should be given to doing this by means of the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List.**

94. The Monitoring Team is mindful of the complexity of, and the administrative burden imposed on Member States by, the current process, as stipulated in the Committee's guidelines for the annual review of listed individuals and entities on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list in accordance with paragraph 86 of resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#) and paragraph 90 of resolution [2610 \(2021\)](#). The Monitoring Team also notes that some of the list entries and narrative summaries of the sanctions list are not current.

**95. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee encourage Member States to respond to annual review requests in a timely manner and that it request that the Secretariat work with the Monitoring Team to propose revisions to the Committee's guidelines, with the aim of simplifying and consolidating the annual review process. Such revisions could include changes to the process through which new information on listings is collected and communicated to Member States, as well as to when and how the Monitoring Team's recommendations for the annual review are proposed.**

**96. The Monitoring Team further recommends that the Committee encourage Member States to propose new listings and amendments, in order to ensure that the sanctions list accurately reflects the terrorism threat.**

## VI. Monitoring Team activities and feedback

97. During the reporting period, travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic were eased somewhat, allowing a greater number of in-person meetings during visits to Member States. In addition, the Monitoring Team undertook alternative arrangements using virtual meetings and in-person consultations with Member State interlocutors in New York. The Team continued to seek information relevant to its mandate and to explain and promote the sanctions regime through participation in meetings with relevant international and regional organizations, as well as with members of the private sector and civil society.

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