

Security Council Study Guide: Containing the Islamic State

I. Security Council Overview

The Security Council is one of the central organs of the United Nations Organization. Its mandate under the UN Charter is to veil for the safeguarding of international security. It intervenes whenever a threat to peace arises, and is able to do so through a variety of means.

According to the UN Charter, all Member States “shall join in affording mutual assistance in carrying out the measures decided upon by the Security Council” that are deemed to preserve or restore peace (cf. Chapter VII of the UN Charter). This means that while other agencies and committees may only issue suggestions or recommendations to Member States, the Security Council is the only UN-body able to issue resolutions that are legally binding upon them.

The Security Council is composed of 5 Permanent (“P5”) and 10 Non-Permanent Members. According to the UN Charter, the 5 Permanent Members have veto-power in any substantial matter voted upon by the Security Council (cf. Article 27 of the UN Charter). Therefore, every resolution should count with the approval of each one of them. The Permanent Members are:

- the People’s Republic of China,
- the French Republic,
- the Russian Federation,
- the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland,
- the United States of America.

Non-Permanent Members are elected by the General Assembly for a two-year-period. They do not possess veto-power, but can still actively influence the work of the committee. The Non-Permanent Members in 2015 are:

- The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,
- New Zealand,
- the Republic of Chad,
- the Republic of Chile,
- the Republic of Jordan,
- Malaysia,
- the Republic of Lithuania,
- the Kingdom of Spain,
- the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and
- the Republic of Angola .

At Heidelberg National MUN 2015, given the nature of the topic the Security Council will be handling, and in accordance with Article 32 of the UN Charter, the committee will welcome six member states plus the EU representative involved in the matter, which will act as observers during the conference. They have a right to address the committee, and to vote on procedural matters. They are, however, unable to participate in substantial decisions. These entities are:

- The European Union,
- Turkey,
- Israel,
- Iran,
- Germany,
- Syria, and
- Iraq.

II. Topic Overview

A. Introduction

The threat that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as IS or ISIS) poses to international security and global peace has been identified as a clear priority for the UN Security Council. While important steps have already been taken to address the issue, further action is required. Severe human rights abuses have been reported since ISIL seized control over parts of Syria and Iraq; in the last weeks alone numerous reports on massacres, beheadings, rapes, torture, sexual enslavement and kidnappings have been published.¹

While airstrikes by the United States and their allies have had some success in reconquering territory from ISIL², an extension of measures is needed to eject the terrorist group from their territory and prevent further human rights abuses. The raising awareness about the threat to security posed by returning jihadist fighters into the centers of western civilizations only increases the sense of urgency. The international community's concerns need to be addressed in a new SC resolution.

B. Background

ISIL has already been designated as terrorist organization by the UN in October 2004.³ After the seizure of a significant amount of territory in Iraq and Syria - inhabited by approximately eight million people - in the summer of 2014, ISIL proclaimed a worldwide caliphate, assuming its leader Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as the successor of the prophet Mohammed to have religious, political and military authority over Muslim populations worldwide.⁴

It is known for its advanced use of social media for violent propaganda, featuring videos of beheadings.⁵ In the course of its conquests, ISIL has conducted uncountable human rights abuses. Official representatives of various



¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/10/isil-behind-staggering-array-iraq-abuses-201410214400232695.html>

² <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/19/isis-demoralised-us-air-strikes>

³ <http://web.archive.org/web/20131019134254/http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2011/sc10263.doc.htm>

⁴ <http://www.dw.de/isis-declares-leader-al-baghdadi-caliph-of-the-muslims-changes-name/a-17745538>

⁵ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/digital/2014/06/24/How-has-ISIS-conquered-social-media-.html>



Islamic communities have condemned ISIL's activities; the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia has declared ISIL as the „enemy number one“ of Islam.⁶

III. Organizational Structure

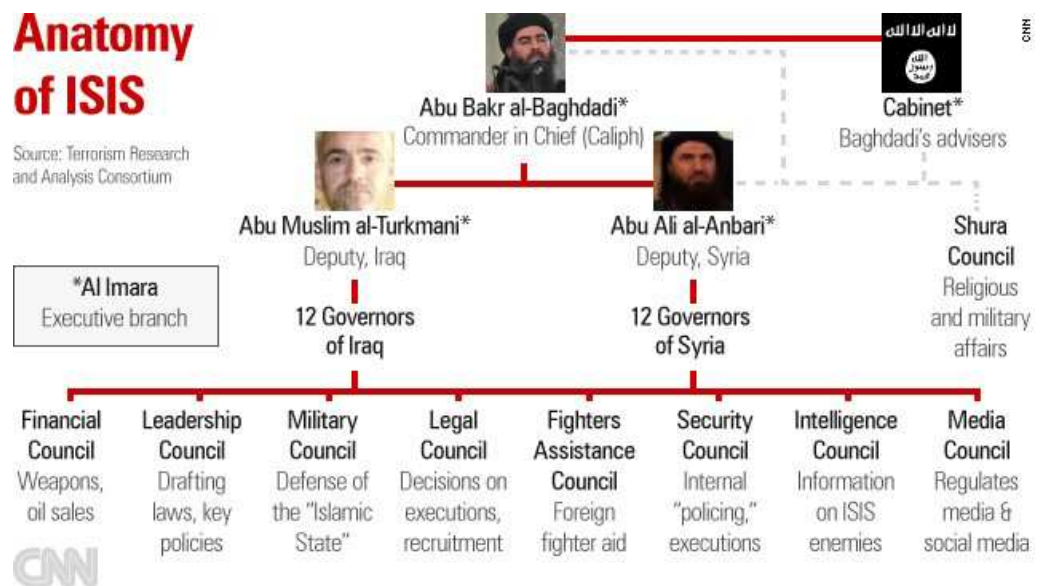
ISIL is run by caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and his deputy leaders Abu Ali al-Anbari and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, which are responsible for governing the Syrian and Iraqi territory respectively.⁷ Twelve governors rule over different regions in both countries, and thematic councils on finance, leadership, military matters, legal matters, fighters' assistance, security, intelligence, and media, compose the overall regime. A Shura council ensures the compatibility of decisions with the sharia. ISIL is mainly financed by exporting oil from occupied oil fields, selling archeological finds and women, collecting taxes and tolls, and demanding ransom for hostages.⁸

Donations from Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates add to ISIL's income.⁹

ISIL's success is partially due to its seizure of military equipment from Syrian rebels and Iraqi soldiers, including a significant amount of US arms.¹⁰

Anatomy of ISIS

Source: Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium



Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11>

⁶ <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/19/Saudi-mufti-ISIS-is-enemy-No-1-of-Islam-.html>

⁷ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/10/30/charting-the-murky-leadership-structure-of-the-islamic-state/>

⁸ <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/18/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq-hierarchy/>

⁹ <http://themuslimissue.wordpress.com/2014/08/12/how-isis-is-funded/>

¹⁰ A detailed compilation of ISIL's arsenal can be found here: <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-military-equipment-breakdown-2014-7?op=1&IR=T>



The CIA estimated that up until September 2014, between 20,000 and 30,000 jihadist fighters have joined ISIL, more than 15,000 of whom travelling from foreign countries into Syria and Iraq.¹¹ US intelligence predicted that 1,000 foreign fighters will continue to enter Iraq and Syria every month. While the majority of these fighters come from countries near the conflict zone, the number of fighters from the West remains a cause for concern. Estimates of Western foreign fighters range between 2,000 and 5,000.¹²

IV. Formation & Military Activities 2003-2014

ISIL started out as sub-group of al-Quaeda in 2003, and claimed responsibility for numerous attacks, suicide bombings and murders, which were captured on videos and then published on jihadist websites, between 2003 and 2006.¹³ In 2007, ISIL extended its activities to the entire Iraq territory, killing approximately 520 people in 2008 alone. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over power in May 2010, further increasing the number of attacks. After entering in the Syrian civil war in 2011, ISIL started fighting against the Assad regime and simultaneously Assad's enemy, the FSA, in January 2012, alongside the al-Nusra front, an al-Quaeda branch operating in Syria and Lebanon, until both groups got involved in a power struggle in April 2013.¹⁴ During the second half on 2013, ISIL captured several Syrian cities and built up its headquarters in the city of Mossul (Iraq), while continuing with attacks on various other cities in both Syria and Iraq, targeting mostly Christian and Alawite communities. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, ISIL was involved in massacres at the end of August 2013, killing at least 190 civilians, and taking over 200 hostages, most of them women and children.¹⁵ In November 2013, ISIL announced their opening of a training camp for



Source: <http://www.dailysabah.com/mideast/2014/08/06/airstrike-kills-60-isis-militants-in-northern-city-of-mosul>

¹¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/>

¹² Radio Free Europe has created an interactive map to illustrate the distribution of European jihadist fighters' origin: <http://www.rferl.org/content/infographics/infographics/26584940.html>.

¹³ <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/37130.htm>

¹⁴ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syrias-sectarian-war-goes-international-as-foreign-fighters-and-arms-pour-into-country-7216665.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/node/119717>



underage fighters from the age of ten.¹⁶ In December 2013, a report was released by Amnesty International, according to which ISIL systematically uses torture, lashings and targeted killings in prisons.¹⁷ Since January 2014, the FSA has launched several large-scale attacks on ISIL in Syria. By February 2014, ISIL had lost all of their Syrian allies, including the al-Nusra front.¹⁸ 29 June 2014 marked the beginning of ISIL calling itself an Islamic State.¹⁹ Over the year, ISIL consistently extended its territory in both Iraq and Syria; the most important victory being the conquest of Mossul (Iraq) in June 2014²⁰, with ISIL capturing money and military equipment worth approximately 1.5 billion USD, as well as several oilfields. In July 2014, all Christian inhabitants of Mossul were requested to either convert to Islam, pay a religious levy - jizya -, or leave the city, otherwise they were to be killed.²¹ The Iraqi army offered little resistance in all of the cities attacked. In the city of Tikrit, 3,000 Iraqi soldiers surrendered to ISIL; they were subsequently divided into Sunnis and Shiites, then all Shiites were killed.²² In August, September and October 2014, videos of the beheadings of journalists James Foley, Steven Fotloff, and David Haines, as well as aid worker Alan Henning were published on the internet to avenge the continuing US airstrikes that had started on 8 August, and the UK's transfer of weapons to the Kurdish Peshmerga.²³ In September, ISIL attacked the Syrian city of Kobani near the Turkish border, which received significant international attention. After significant international pressure, Turkey opened its border for refugees from the attacked areas. With the support of US airstrikes, Kurdish forces were able to defend the city to date.²⁴

¹⁶ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/extremist-syrian-faction-touts-training-camp-for-boys/2013/12/16/e0b4cca4-628e-11e3-a373-0f9f2d1c2b61_story.html

¹⁷ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/syria-harrowing-torture-summary-killings-secret-isis-detention-centres-2013-12-19>

¹⁸ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18785>

¹⁹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28082962>

²⁰ <https://news.vice.com/article/isis-militants-capture-iraqs-second-largest-city>

²¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28381455>

²² http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/world/middleeast/iraq.html?_r=0

²³ <http://www.news.com.au/world/nicolas-henin-describes-brutal-life-as-an-islamic-state-hostage/story-fndir2ev-1227094493950>

²⁴ <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/653798/isis-suffer-heavy-losses-in-kobani-capture-woman-fighter>



V. Ideology & Human Rights Abuses

ISIL's ideology is based on a form of ultraconservative Sunni Wahhabism and the sharia.²⁵ Consuming alcohol and tobacco, carrying weapons, and holding meetings is prohibited. Women are forced to cover their face and body, and are not allowed to leave their homes. All Muslims of other religious denominations are considered to be non-believers and are killed when discovered in ISIL territory. This ideology and the religious violence practices by ISIL have been heavily criticized by official representatives of various Islamic communities.

In August 2014, ISIL was accused by the UN of committing mass atrocities and war crimes.²⁶ Large-scale ethnic cleansing has been conducted against minorities, such as Christian, Alawite and Yazidi communities, as well as Shiiti Muslims.²⁷ In the course of seizing territory in North Iraq in the summer of 2014, large parts of the Yazidi minority population were captured. ISIL announced that their ideological goal was the cultural and religious extinction of the Yazidi identity, and proceeded to killing all male captives and enslaving the women and children. Over 200,000 Yazidi people fled to the Sindschar mountains, where approximately 10% of them could be saved by Peshmerga forces. Others are still locked-in by ISIL. Active trading of girls from the age of nine as sex slaves and the rape of captured non-muslim women is encouraged.²⁸ Other disadvantaged groups, such as disabled persons, are used by ISIL for suicide attacks. Ill treatment of civilians has become a matter of course. Mass executions of men, women and children, public floggings and beheadings, and the use of child soldiers as human shields on front lines have become part of the daily routine.^{29,30} A sharia school



<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10899901/Iraq-crisis-the-bare-faced-ISIS-executioner-who-spreads-terror-with-his-open-killing.html>

²⁵ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/why-isis-threat-saudi-arabia-wahhabism%E2%80%99s-deferred-promise>

²⁶ <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-nations-says-atrocities-in-syria-escalate-victims-voices-go-unheard/2451504.html>

²⁷ <http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/09/isis-carrying-out-ethnic-cleansing-on-historic-scale/>

²⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/who-yazidi-isis-iraq-religion-ethnicity-mountains>

²⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10904414/Iraq-crisis-UN-condemns-war-crimes-as-another-town-falls-to-Isis.html>

³⁰ <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/10/24/children-of-the-caliphate/>



curriculum has been implemented³¹, and music in public spaces or at parties has been banned.³² Women have to wear full-face veils and are forced to stay at home. A religious police enforces those measures. Approximately 1 million Iraqi citizens are on the run. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has stated that ISIL "seeks to subjugate civilians under its control and dominate every aspect of their lives through terror, indoctrination, and the provision of services to those who obey".³³

VI. International Responses

A. Military Responses

After Mosul was captured, the Iraqi government asked for support from the international community. The USA started bombing ISIL-posts on 8 August 2014.³⁴ In the following weeks, several cities could be reconquered by the Iraqi army, Shiite and Kurdish forces with the support of US air strikes. In addition, a large number of military advisors and Special Forces servicemen from US and UK were transferred to Iraq to support the coordination of military action and train local forces.³⁵ On 5 September, the „International Alliance against ISIL“ was created by the US, Germany, UK, France, Italy, Poland, Denmark, Australia, and Turkey.³⁶ On 12 September, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, and UAE joined the international alliance in their fight against the extremists.³⁷ In mid-September, Australia announced the transfer of 600 soldiers and eight aircrafts³⁸ and France started flying airstrikes against ISIL.³⁹ As a reaction, the French Citizen Hervé Gourdel was taken hostage by ISIL-supporters in Algeria and beheaded on 24 September.⁴⁰ By the beginning of October, additional airstrikes had been launched by Australia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, UAE and the UK. Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark sent soldiers to train Iraqi and Kurdish forces, as well as several warplanes. Several

³¹ <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/frontline-isis-how-islamic-state-brainwashing-children-stone-age-school-curriculum-1463474>

³² <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/01/isis-raqq-ban-music-smoking-impose-veil.html>

³³ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=49338#.VJi42sAAA>

³⁴ <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/iraq-options/>

³⁵ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/war-against-isis-british-troops-to-return-to-iraq-to-help-train-iraqi-and-kurdish-peshmarga-forces-9924359.html>

³⁶ <http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/09/26/mobilizing-the-world-up-to-62-nations-and-groups-have-joined-coalition-against-isis/>

³⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29166372>

³⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/14/tony-abbott-australia-military-force-fight-isis-death-cult>

³⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/19/france-bombs-isis-depot-iraq-islamic-state>

⁴⁰ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29352778>



other EU countries, including Germany, have provided training and military equipment to Kurdish forces.⁴¹

B. Humanitarian Responses

A large humanitarian operation was launched by the US, UK, and Australia, supported by international partners, which focused on the supports of refugees in North Iraq, including air-dropping of meals and water.⁴² The EU has to date contributed over €17 million for humanitarian assistance provided through the European Civil Protection Mechanism.⁴³

VII. Status Quo of SC Actions

The Security Council has implemented resolutions 2161, 2170, and 2178, in its combat against ISIL.

Resolution 2161⁴⁴ condemned in the strongest terms “the terrorist acts of ISIL and its violent extremist ideology, and its continued gross, systematic and widespread abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law” and applied several sanctions to ISIL and other individuals, groups and entities associated with al-Qaeda, including asset freezes, travel bans, and an arms embargo.

Resolution 2170⁴⁵, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, demanded the implementation of the following mechanisms:

1. Provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees including the delivery of relief items, logistics, and information management resources,
2. Suppression of the recruiting, organizing, transporting or equipping of national citizens traveling to Iraq or Syria as jihadist fighters for ISIL (e.g. by airlines exchange passenger information data),
3. Prevention of the supply of military material to ISIL through national providers, including flag vessels or aircraft, arms and related materiel of all types; based on the arms embargo imposed by resolution 2161,
4. Prevention financial support to ISIL from UN members and their providers, including the prohibition of illicit oil purchases,
5. Long-term prevention of religious radicalization and extremism.

The latest resolution 2178⁴⁶, adopted on 24 September 2014, again acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, highlighted the urgency of the issue. It encouraged increased efforts by states to

⁴¹ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/united-against-isis-whos-doing-what-9756460.html>

⁴² <http://www.iraqnews.com/iraq-war/us-uk-australia-amp-france-provide-humanitarian-airdrops-to-amirli/>

⁴³ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B8-2014-0121&language=EN>

⁴⁴ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2161>

⁴⁵ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11520.doc.htm>



implement the measures suggested in previous resolutions, as well as better coordination and information sharing between member states (e.g. via Interpol). In addition, it added the demand for the development of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for returning foreign terrorist fighters.

VIII. Position Blocks

A. Coalition against ISIL

The United States-led coalition to fight the Islamic State militant group consists of more than 40 nations providing varying levels of support.⁴⁷ Looking at the members of the Security Council, it has to be noted that France, the United Kingdom the United States, Jordan, and Australia have already engaged in direct military action. The EU has deployed resources for the relief of civilians and refugees.⁴⁸ According to US President Barrack Obama, the goal of this coalition is to “degrade and ultimately destroy” ISIL through air strikes in Iraq and Syria.⁴⁹ However, as of now, there is no intention of this coalition to deploy ground troops. Instead, local fighters, particularly the Peshmerga, and the Iraqi army are to be supported with resources and weapons.

B. Russia and China

Russia and China are the only veto powers that have not joined the coalition against ISIL. Russia has stressed the importance of cooperation with Iran and Syria.⁵⁰ Russia has tried to block Security Council action, while China has taken a passive stand based on a policy of non-interference with the internal affairs of other countries.⁵¹ While China agrees that ISIL is a threat to international security that must be contained, they also argue that the US has to confess that it helped the rise of ISIL by invading Iraq in 2003.⁵² Both countries have vetoed the referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court.⁵³

C. Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iran

There are no doubts that Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey as the countries directly affected by ISIL have a key role in this conflict. As ISIL has already occupied Iraqi and Syrian territory, both countries are trying to fight them back actively. Iran and Turkey have not lost any territory.

⁴⁶ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11580.doc.htm>

⁴⁷ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/09/25/what-the-60-members-of-the-anti-islamic-state-coalition-are-doing/>

⁴⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/en/news/syria-crisis-eu-steps-assistance>

⁴⁹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/09/10/president-obama-we-will-degrade-and-ultimately-destroy-isil>

⁵⁰ <http://rt.com/politics/189036-russia-isis-fight-ministry/>

⁵¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-24100629>

⁵² <http://v.ifeng.com/news/world/201408/0142e29b-402c-45c5-87fa-a9528ab19ee9.shtml>

⁵³ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/22/russia-china-veto-un-draft-resolution-refer-syria-international-criminal-court>



However, both countries are within the proximity of ISIL. Turkey has so far declined any direct military engagement, even when the battle of Kobane has been and still is taking place directly next to its border.⁵⁴ It has, however, provided shelter for countless Syrian refugees and does cooperate with the coalition against ISIL. Iran is not willing to join the coalition against ISIL, but has engaged in airstrikes on targets in Iraq.⁵⁵

IX. Elements of Discussion

Three possibilities to expand UN SC measures could be suggested:

Firstly, the least radical approach would be an increased enforcement of current measures. This would entail an increase in humanitarian aid, the rapid adoption of measures to prevent jihadists from traveling, a more effective implementation of the arms embargo, the prevention of illicit oil sales through intensified cooperation between international intelligence, police, judicial and financial agencies, and an increased effort to create long-term prevention mechanisms to fight the radicalization of citizens, involving a communication strategy to counter the influence of extremist groups on the internet. However, resolution 2178 seems to have covered this already.

Secondly, the UN could take on a greater role as coordinator of military aid. To prevent ISIL from seizing weapons originally destined to Iraqi forces, the UN could take up a more influential role by establishing mechanisms for monitoring, coordinating, and registering the amount and destination of arms to Iraq.

Thirdly, the most ambitious option would be a full military intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, involving the deployment of forces to assist the local soldiers in protecting civilians against ISIL attacks and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid. Such an intervention would self-evidently be based on the support of the Iraqi government, as well as cooperation with the US-led alliance to coordinate air strikes with ground activity. The advantage of such an undertaking would be a significant improvement in the effective delivery of aid and protection of civilians.

In the long-term, trying members ISIL before the International Criminal Court (ICC) could be considered, since the Security Council can directly refer cases to the ICC, defining its territorial jurisdiction for such cases, which may be more expansive than the Court's regular territorial jurisdiction (cf. Rome Statute, Article 13(b)). For example, if the Security Council refers a situation in the territory of a state that has neither become party to the Rome Statute nor lodged a declaration with the Court, the Court can still prosecute crimes that occurred within that state.

⁵⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/unmasking-turkey-isil-strategy-2014101411338118636.html>

⁵⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/03/iran-bombs-isis-in-iraq-says-us>



Consequently, delegates should try to address the following questions in a draft resolution:

1. Should the UN take control over the military operations against ISIL and initiate a full military intervention under Chapter VII of the UN Charter? How can China and Russia be taken on board whilst pursuing such measures?
2. What are the roles of the regional parties in this conflict? How can the region as a whole be stabilized?
3. Should ISIL be tried before the ICC for crimes against humanity?
4. How can Jihadi Tourism be prevented?
5. How should the threat of former ISIL fighters returning to their home countries as potential terrorists be dealt with?

X. Research Recommendations

Due to the actuality of the topic, research should be based on most recent reports. To gain more background information, you may make use of the numerous references of the study guide.

Further entry points are:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2014/10/isil-us-syria-airstrike-coalition-uae-saudi-2014101142731382476.html>

<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/08/world/isis-fast-facts/>

* Please take into account that this Study Guide is just meant to serve as the entry point into your actual research. Its objective is not to provide an exhaustive analysis, but to give delegates some ground knowledge to carry out further research.

** This Study Guide was finished on the 23rd of December 2014. Therefore, any events occurring after this date are not outlined here. Delegates should pay careful attention to the current development of the situation, and be prepared to adapt to any new events.