

Security Council Update: Containing the Islamic State

I. Background

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as IS or ISIS), led by Caliph Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, has been designated as terrorist organization by the UN. Since seizing a significant amount of territory in Syria and Iraq and proclaiming a worldwide caliphate in the summer of 2014, ISIL has committed innumerable human rights abuses, including massacres, beheadings, rapes, torture, sexual enslavement and kidnappings. While airstrikes by the United States and their allies have had some success in reconquering territory from ISIL, 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 has recently been fuelled since the attack on French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo causing the death of 12 civilians¹, increasing a public sense of urgency. The international community's concerns therefore should be addressed in a new SC resolution.

II. US-led Airstrikes

Since the start of air raids against ISIL in August 2014, the United States and its Western and Arab allies have carried out 1,676 strikes so far, hitting 3,222 targets. According to American commanders, their combined efforts have "halted the advance of ISIL in Iraq, disrupted its crude oil smuggling network and hampered its ability to move on the ground."² Countries whose forces have participated in the strikes in Iraq are: Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France and the Netherlands. Those participating in strikes in Syria are Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates³. However, ISIL remains in control of major territory in Syria and Iraq, recently killed at least 30 Iraqi soldiers in three suicide attacks on 6 January⁴, and continuously receives new recruits.

III. Continuous Human Rights Abuses

Human Rights abuses by ISIL have continued over the course of the past weeks. ISIL pressured Jordan into pulling out of the US-led bombing campaign by publishing a propaganda video on 30

¹ <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/189641#.VK6u6CvF9iq>

² <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/01/08/U-S-led-forces-drop-nearly-5-000-bombs-on-ISIS-.html>

³ <http://uk.businessinsider.com/r-us-led-air-strikes-have-hit-3222-islamic-state-targets-pentagon-2015-1?r=US#ixzz3OFW1a95C>

⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2015/01/iraqi-troops-killed-twin-isil-attacks-201516123114268910.html>



December, which staged a trial by public opinion for the captured F-16 pilot captured in Syria⁵. On 6 January, ISIL released photos showing the brutal execution of Iraqi police and men it accused of informing on the group⁶. A street magician in Syria beloved by children was beheaded by ISIL militants on 7 January, after his performances were deemed to be insulting to God⁷.

IV. ISIL Attack on Saudi Arabia borders

ISIL first officially announced its intention to conquer the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia last month, as a reaction to Saudi Arabia entering the US-led international coalition against ISIL. On 5 January 2015, Iraqi government officials confirmed the launch of a terrorist attack on the Saudi border with Iraq, killing three Saudi border guards and their commanding officer⁸. ISIL's official media wing for Iraq's Anbar province later took responsibility for the attack⁹.

V. ISIL Cyber Attacks

ISIL may be fighting the United States with cyber-attacks with its hacker group known as the Cyber Caliphate. The Federal Bureau of Investigation is currently investigating a series of hacking incidents involving U.S. news outlets. Cyber Caliphate has claimed it is part of ISIS and declared plans of more attacks in officers and homes across the country¹⁰.

⁵ <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article4316836.ece>

⁶ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/new-isis-images-show-brutal-execution-of-eight-iraqi-policemen-accused-of-informing-on-group-9960556.html>

⁷ <http://www.ibtimes.com/syrian-street-magician-beheaded-isis-kills-sorcerer-says-magic-tricks-are-insult-1775798>

⁸ <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2015/0105/Saudi-border-fight-with-militants-How-much-of-a-threat>

⁹ <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-claims-attack-saudi-arabia-border-signals-strategy-change-militant-infiltration-1773754>

¹⁰ <http://au.ibtimes.com/articles/578298/20150107/isis-hacking-cyber-caliphate.htm#.VK6qrivF9io>