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Letter dated 15 July 2019 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-fourth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions [1526 \(2004\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#), which was submitted to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#).

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

(Signed) Dian Triansyah **Djani**
Chair

Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions
[1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning
Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and
associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities



Letter dated 27 June 2019 from the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2368 (2017) addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities

I have the honour to refer to paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2368 (2017), by which the Security Council requested the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team to submit, in writing, comprehensive, independent reports to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, every six months, the first by 31 December 2017.

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

(Signed) Edmund **Fitton-Brown**

Coordinator

Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team

Twenty-fourth 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

With the fall of Baghuz, Syrian Arab Republic, in March 2019, the geographical so-called “caliphate” of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)^a has ceased to exist and the group has continued its evolution into a mainly covert network. Its leadership is primarily in Iraq, while its centre of gravity remains in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and areas of the immediate neighbourhood. The leadership aims to adapt, survive and consolidate in the core area and to establish sleeper cells at the local level in preparation for eventual resurgence, while using propaganda to maintain the group’s reputation as the leading global terrorist brand – the “virtual caliphate”. When it has the time and space to reinvest in an external operations capability, ISIL will direct and facilitate international attacks in addition to the ISIL-inspired attacks that continue to occur in many locations around the world.

Al-Qaida (QDe.004) remains resilient, although the health and longevity of its leader, Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri (QDi.006), and how the succession will work are in doubt. Groups aligned with Al-Qaida are stronger than their ISIL counterparts in Idlib, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, Somalia and much of West Africa. The largest concentrations of active foreign terrorist fighters are in Idlib and Afghanistan, the majority of whom are aligned with Al-Qaida. ISIL, however, remains much stronger than Al-Qaida in terms of finances, media profile and current combat experience and terrorist expertise and remains the more immediate threat to global security.

The most striking international developments during the period under review include the growing ambition and reach of terrorist groups in the Sahel and West Africa, where fighters aligned with Al-Qaida and ISIL collaborate to undermine fragile national jurisdictions. The number of regional States threatened with contagion from insurgencies in the Sahel and Nigeria has increased. The ability of local authorities to cope with terrorist challenges in Afghanistan, Libya and Somalia remains limited. Meanwhile, the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka show the continuing appeal of ISIL propaganda and the risk that indigenous cells may incubate in unexpected locations and generate a significant terrorist capability. These and other ISIL attacks on places of worship, alongside the attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, of March 2019, offer a troubling narrative of escalating interfaith conflict.

The related issues of foreign terrorist fighters, returnees, relocators and detainees in the conflict zone have become more urgent since the fall of Baghuz. Member States also report pressing domestic security concerns, including with regard to radicalization in prisons and releases of terrorist prisoners, while only a few have the expertise and capacity to manage this range of counter-terrorist challenges successfully.

^a Listed as Al-Qaida in Iraq (QDe.115).

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I. Overview of the threat

1. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was militarily defeated in the Syrian Arab Republic in March 2019. Baghuz, near the Iraqi border, was the last territorial holding of the group's standing army, and its surrender represented the geographical termination of the so-called "caliphate". ISIL suffered heavy casualties during the final months of its defence of the Hajin-Baghuz pocket. Many fighters and dependants left, but the numbers remaining in Baghuz when the town fell were higher than expected. There followed an accelerated movement of inhabitants into detention facilities and refugee camps. The population of the Hawl camp in the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic rose from less than 10,000 in December 2018 to more than 70,000 in April 2019. Many Member States are concerned about the security and humanitarian challenges of the post-"caliphate" phase.

2. The ISIL covert network in the Syrian Arab Republic is spreading, and cells are being established at the provincial level, mirroring that which has been happening since 2017 in Iraq. An increase in ISIL attacks has been reported in areas controlled by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Some senior ISIL personnel are among those who have made their way to the Idlib area, where they coexist uneasily with the local Al-Qaida-aligned groups. That region now contains the greatest concentration of terrorist elements anywhere in the Levant and Iraq and is described by one Member State as "the world's biggest dumping ground for foreign terrorist fighters".

3. ISIL is adapting, consolidating and creating conditions for eventual resurgence in its Iraqi and Syrian heartlands. This process is more advanced in Iraq, where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi¹ and most of the ISIL leadership are now based. Others are elsewhere in the former "caliphate" area and parts of the immediate neighbourhood. This dispersal and the difficult security conditions make communication difficult, and authority is increasingly delegated. Meanwhile, for survival purposes, ISIL has prioritized the continued functioning of its leadership figures and of Syrian and Iraqi fighters. Most foreign terrorist fighters are seen as dispensable and are left to fend for themselves.²

4. Although militarily defeated, ISIL still has large numbers of fighters and other supporters in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and is able to operate freely in many locations and mount regular attacks to show its potency and undermine public confidence in the local authorities. An example of this is the burning of crops in northern Iraq, which is part of an ISIL strategy to prevent reconciliation, stabilization and recovery in areas that were part of the "caliphate". Their hope is that the local populations will become impatient, blame the authorities and grow nostalgic for the time when ISIL was in control. Several Member States expressed concern that the eventual resurgence of ISIL in these areas is a possibility.

5. In a video message in late April 2019, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi confirmed that ISIL still aspires to have global relevance and expects to achieve this by continuing to carry out international attacks. The group is currently dependent upon ISIL-inspired attacks, such as the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka which Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi mentioned but which ISIL leadership clearly knew nothing about in advance. Whether or not the Sri Lankan attacks were motivated by the attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019, the narrative of interfaith conflict is concerning. However, Member States assess that the group will not be content to rely on its media profile and propaganda to generate attacks, as such attacks are often disrupted and usually low-impact when they do succeed. ISIL will reinvest in the

¹ Listed as Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai (QDi.299).

² Member State information.

capacity to direct and facilitate complex international attacks when it has the secure space and time to do so. The current abatement of such attacks, therefore, may not last long, possibly not even until the end of 2019; meanwhile, more ISIL-inspired attacks will occur, possibly in unexpected locations.

6. Outside the core conflict zone, ISIL and Al-Qaida are both contending for dominance and international relevance. Some Member States describe the existence of a number of local conflict zones, each of which has its own gravitational pull, drawing foreign terrorist fighters who either come from the region or have ethnic or linguistic ties to it. Afghanistan remains the most established of these, and concerns remain about the short- and long-term threats posed by ISIL- and Al-Qaida-aligned groups and foreign terrorist fighters who have established themselves on Afghan territory. There are also growing concerns about West Africa and the Sahel, where ISIL and Al-Qaida are both active and deconflict with each other in favour of destabilizing the more fragile regional States.

7. ISIL is reported to be moving towards a hub-and-spoke network in its remote provinces, a logical extension of the dispersed, delegated leadership approach. Better established affiliates are taking on elements of responsibility for lesser ones, channelling funds and assisting with propaganda. Over time, this may have the effect of regionalizing the agendas of these networks. This has already happened in the case of Al-Qaida, which has long embedded itself in local issues and politics, bringing the group some successes but also some problems, as in Idlib. The immediate global threat posed by Al-Qaida remains unclear, with Aiman Muhammed Rabi al-Zawahiri (QDi.006) reported to be in poor health and doubts as to how the group will manage the succession.³

8. The issues of foreign terrorist fighters, dependants, returnees, relocators and “frustrated travellers” feed into all of this and remain acute. Up to 30,000 of those who travelled to the so-called “caliphate” may still be alive, and their future prospects will be of international concern for the foreseeable future. Some may join Al-Qaida or other terrorist brands that may emerge. Some will become leaders or radicalizers, including in prisons if they are successfully prosecuted in Member States that are unable to manage this challenge within their penal systems. Dependants, such as those in Hawl, may come to pose a threat if they are not dealt with appropriately. Member States agree that many of the underlying factors that gave rise to ISIL still exist, which suggests that the threat from ISIL and Al-Qaida, or similar groups, is unlikely to abate any further.

II. Regional trends

A. Levant

9. Following the territorial defeat of ISIL in its core area, the group’s priority is reported to be the security and welfare of the members of its senior leadership. The group shows little concern for its rank-and-file members, including those in camps. According to one Member State, ISIL leaders are monitoring political developments in key Western European countries and considering attacks to exacerbate existing dissent and unrest. Member States assess that ISIL currently has little external operational planning capability, but that it retains the ambition to mount international attacks and has conducted reconnaissance activities against potential overseas targets and prepared explosives.⁴

³ Member State information.

⁴ Member State information.

10. ISIL is reported to lack liquid funds to run operations and therefore to be exploring ways to raise money. It has been undertaking new criminal activity and benefiting from funds that it had generated through legitimate businesses. With the end of the “caliphate”, some ISIL leaders in the Syrian Arab Republic have been dispersed to other areas around the country, and the group was seeking to transfer money to them while concealing their locations. This is the priority for available ISIL financial resources. ISIL is estimated to have between \$50 million and \$300 million remaining from the revenues of the “caliphate”. The locations of these reserves and their accessibility for operational use are unknown. Although not a significant portion of ISIL assets, there may be caches of antiquities and cultural artefacts intended for future sale.

11. Financial transfers identified during the reporting period were made mostly in small amounts, with the intended purpose of financing return travel for foreign terrorist fighters. ISIL fighters were reported to depend upon additional sources of money, including credit cards of family members, and requests for donations made on social media platforms and encrypted messaging applications, such as Telegram. Such methods made it difficult for authorities to link the various individuals or to unravel established networks.⁵ ISIL individuals who entered Idlib from areas previously under the group’s control were reported to have arrived with cash amounts sufficient for daily expenses.

12. In the Syrian Arab Republic, about 150 ISIL elements are reported still to be in areas south of Damascus that have been retaken by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. East of the Euphrates there are an estimated 800 ISIL terrorists still at large in Raqqah and Hasakah Governorates. These ISIL fighters have perpetrated at least 30 attacks against United States and coalition forces since the beginning of 2019.⁶

13. Member States offered various assessments of the strength of Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)⁷ in Idlib, averaging between 12,000 and 15,000 fighters. Hurras al-Din (HAD) is believed to have between 1,500 and 2,000 fighters, half of whom are foreign terrorist fighters, a much higher proportion than in the case of HTS. There is also an ISIL presence in the area, including elements that managed to travel from the east after the fall of Baghuz. An unwritten understanding is reported to exist, allowing ISIL safe haven in some villages in HTS-dominated areas around Idlib, on the condition that they do not engage in any armed activity. The groups, however, reportedly distrust and continue to spy on each other. HTS has the capability to monitor most ISIL and HAD activity.

14. HTS and HAD are assessed to share a history and an ideology but to differ on policy. HTS centred its agenda on the Syrian Arab Republic, with no interest in conducting attacks abroad. HAD, by contrast, was said to have a more international outlook. The leader of Al-Qaida, Aiman al-Zawahiri, was the defining authority for HAD, but not for HTS. A regional Member State assessed that, in the event that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic attempted to retake Idlib by force, all non-ISIL groups would unite to defend the territory, but ISIL fighters would attempt to flee to Turkey. The current state of weakness of ISIL was reported to have led some of its fighters to defect to HAD or to return to their countries of origin.

15. Member States provided some granular detail of the personnel and activity of HAD since its public emergence in early 2018. The group was initially keen to project a Syrian identity, and the Syrian national Samir Hijazi, also known as Abu Hammam

⁵ Member State information.

⁶ Member State information.

⁷ Listed as Al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant (QDe.137).

al-Shami (not listed), was appointed as its overall commander. Jordanian national Khalid Mustafa al-Aruri, also known as Abu al-Qassam (not listed), later assumed leadership. Al-Aruri is an Al-Qaida veteran who was reported to have been previously jailed in the Islamic Republic of Iran and released as part of a prisoner exchange in return for Iranian diplomats held by Al-Qaida in Yemen. HAD ranks also include other Al-Qaida veterans, such as Iyad Nazmi Salih Khalil (QDi.400), Sami al-Aridi (not listed), Bilal Khrisat (not listed) and Faraj Ahmad Nana'a (not listed). The group's foreign terrorist fighters include individuals from Central Asia and Morocco.⁸ HAD generates some of its income from smuggling.

16. HTS taxes the movement of goods into Idlib through checkpoints under the group's control. Overall tax revenues are reportedly sizeable, with some 3 million people living in a territory characterized as having a vibrant economy. The HTS monopoly on tax resources leaves other groups without sufficient sources of income.

17. Member States assess that HTS weapons and ammunition, including military grade RDX and C-4 explosives, come from weapons depots captured from Syrian government forces over the past two years. Additional materiel was seized during clashes with rival groups. The purchase of light weapons, ammunition and vehicles in Idlib is reported to be easy in exchange for the right amount of money. Member States are concerned about the availability of explosives in the region, as they could be acquired by ISIL and transferred elsewhere.

B. Arabian Peninsula

18. One Member State reported that Al-Qaida has been unable to establish itself inside Saudi Arabia. During 2018, three attempted operations by ISIL were reported to have been disrupted, leading to the death of six terrorists and eight members of the security forces. ISIL plots were described as rudimentary and to have been planned mostly by lone actors.⁹

19. On 6 February 2019, in the twenty-ninth issue of Al-Nafeer bulletin, published by Al-Sahab Media Foundation, Al-Qaida condemned the historic papal mass in Abu Dhabi and called upon the entire Arabian Peninsula to embrace terror and to seek help from and lend support to Al-Qaida. Member State information indicated that the strategy of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (QDe.129) in Yemen is to appeal to the local tribes to enable the group to embed itself in the fabric of the civilian population to avoid detection.

20. Regional Member States report that the temporary strategy of AQAP is to prioritize the fight against the ISIL affiliate in Yemen over the fight against the Houthis. AQAP wants to maintain its position as the dominant terrorist group in its areas of operation in Yemen. It began to announce its attacks against ISIL in late December 2018 in an effort to regain control of a narrative that ISIL had monopolized since clashes between the groups began in July 2018.

21. In addition to the capture in May 2019 of prominent AQAP senior member Bilal Ali Wafi (not listed), other leadership figures were reportedly killed during targeted air strikes, forcing the group to work without clear direction. The group is assessed to be currently revising the structure of its leadership. Nevertheless, AQAP remains active in Hadramawt, Shabwah, Ma'rib, Bayda' and Abyan and is assessed to be better equipped than ISIL. The group is reported to possess heavy weapons that include SA-7 and SA-9 missile systems, Grad 122-mm and Katyusha 107- and 122-mm

⁸ Member State information.

⁹ Member State information.

rockets and ZU-23 and 37-mm anti-aircraft batteries. By contrast, ISIL in Yemen is assessed to be weaker, with approximately 400 armed fighters using lighter weaponry.

C. Africa

1. North Africa

22. ISIL activity in the south of Libya gained momentum as a consequence of the preoccupation of the Libyan National Army with the battle around Tripoli. Since fighting around the capital began on 4 April 2019, ISIL fighters have repeatedly attacked the cities of Zillah, Fuqaha' and Fazzan. They were able to hold these cities for hours at a time and succeeded in freeing some ISIL prisoners.¹⁰ Meanwhile, a planned visit of the Monitoring Team to Tripoli was cancelled owing to the outbreak of fighting caused by the Libyan National Army.

23. Despite the ongoing fighting around Tripoli, Libyan authorities remained active in detecting and pursuing ISIL-related activity. On 13 April, they arrested an ISIL-related individual, Anas Abrik Zouki, also known as Abu Abdullah al-Darnawi (not listed), while he was preparing for an attack in the capital.¹¹

24. Although purged from the coastal areas, ISIL fighters remain a significant threat in the subcoastal region, from south of the oil fields in the east to the borders with Algeria in the west. During the reporting period, the farthest points south in which ISIL recorded activity were Umm al-Aranib in the west and Tazirbu in the east. Their numbers were assessed to have fallen to the low hundreds.¹² It was reported that the only non-Libyan in the top leadership of ISIL in Libya is Iraqi national Abu Moaz al-Tikriti¹³ (not listed), while the rest of the leadership are Libyan nationals (see [S/2018/705](#), para. 30).

25. ISIL in Libya is assessed still to have substantial financial resources from the seizure of 50 million Libyan dinars from financial institutions in Sirte while the city was under its control.¹⁴ The group is reportedly investing some of its resources in small and medium-sized enterprises and in money transfer businesses in coastal cities, including Tripoli, Misratah and Khums. Antiquities have reportedly been stolen by ISIL from Shahhat, in north-eastern Libya, and have emerged in a European Member State. Other sources of income include extortion of citizens (protection rackets) and taxation of human trafficking networks. In addition, it was reported that at least 1 million euros was paid as ransom to free workers belonging to a Turkish oil company in southern Libya.¹⁵ ISIL in Libya no longer requires large sums of money, and the group can economize expenditure of the resources it was able to aggregate during the peak of its presence in Libya before October 2016.¹⁶

26. During the reporting period, one Member State reported an overlap of areas under the control of ISIL and Al-Qaida in the south of Libya. Fighters affiliated to Al-Qaida in Libya reportedly numbered between 100 and 200, centred around Awbari in the south-west.¹⁷

27. The movement of fighters in small numbers from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq to Libya and Algeria was detected through the Sudan. Algeria reportedly

¹⁰ Member State information.

¹¹ Member State information.

¹² Member State information.

¹³ Member State information.

¹⁴ Member State information.

¹⁵ Member State information.

¹⁶ Member State information.

¹⁷ Member State information.

intercepted and expelled up to 100 Syrians who attempted to enter the country from the south after transiting Turkey and the Sudan using forged passports and assisted by criminal networks.¹⁸ The organization of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (QDe.014) was vocal in its support of demonstrations in Algeria and called for the population to rise against the army.¹⁹ It is assessed that the group remains weak, although its leadership structure is still intact.

28. In Morocco, a number of terrorist cells were disrupted during the reporting period, bringing the number of apprehended and dismantled ISIL-affiliated cells in the country in the past three years to more than 20. Some of those apprehended had returned to the country with assistance from human trafficking networks and forged European identification documents.²⁰

29. Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM), which pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has been confined to locations around Rafah, Shaykh Zuwayd and Arish, an area covering approximately 3 per cent of Sinai. The number of individuals affiliated with ABM is reported to be approximately 1,000, including individuals not active in fighting but providing logistical support to the group.²¹ Egypt asserts that ABM is a local phenomenon with no operational, organizational or financial ties to the ISIL core or any other ISIL affiliate.

2. West Africa

30. West Africa has seen a sharp rise in violence motivated by ISIL or Al-Qaida affiliates and an increase in recruitment efforts. Both of these factors are exacerbated by porous borders and authorities ill-equipped to confront the growing threat.²² In the Sahel, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (QDe.159) dominates. Its centre of gravity remains in north Mali, where it relies on several militia groups, known as *katibat*, to support its objective of radicalizing the population. Ansar Eddine (QDe.135) remains active north of Kidal. The Emirate of Timbuktu (the former Sahara branch of AQIM), located north of Timbuktu, benefited from the attrition of Al-Mourabitoun (QDe.141), still operating in the Gao-Ansongo sector. Katibat Macina secured a second stronghold for JNIM in the Mopti-Hombori-Douentza area and the border with Burkina Faso in the direction of Bobo-Dioulasso. In this area, approximately 650 schools have opened under the control of JNIM supporters who are seeking to transform society in accordance with the group's teachings.²³

31. In central Mali, inter-ethnic violence is fuelled by terrorist groups to foster radicalization. Bah Ag Moussa (not listed) facilitates liaison between the Emirate of Timbuktu and Katibat Macina,²⁴ which built upon its operational successes to develop a new area of operations for JNIM. Katibat al-Kassam remains active east of Timbuktu, despite the killing of its leader, Al-Mansour Ag al-Kassam, in October 2018. Katibat Serma, which operates south of Douentza and Hombori, provides a connection between JNIM and Ansarul Islam in Burkina Faso. JNIM works closely with Ansarul Islam, although the latter remains independent and does not fall under the leadership of Iyad Ag Ghali (QDi.316).

32. The JNIM head of operations, Djamel Akkacha, also known as Yahia Abou el Hammam (QDi.313), was killed on 21 February 2019. The current AQIM strategy is to replace JNIM combatants and prominent figures killed in counter-terrorism

¹⁸ Member State information.

¹⁹ Member State information.

²⁰ Member State information.

²¹ Member State information.

²² Member State information.

²³ Member State information.

²⁴ Member State information.

operations with seasoned fighters coming from Libya. Messaoud Benaireche, also known as Abou Oussama al-Jazairi (not listed), subsequently replaced Akkacha as leader of the Emirate of Timbuktu, and Hamza al-Jazairi (not listed) took over the leadership of Al-Mourabitoun.²⁵

33. The “W” National Park, in the tri-border area between Benin, Burkina Faso and the Niger, is becoming a new stronghold for terrorist groups in the region, including Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), which continues to cooperate with JNIM in Mali and the Niger (see [S/2019/50](#), para. 36). Terrorist groups in the Sahel are increasingly encroaching on the borders of Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo, as underscored by the abduction of two French nationals in Pendjari National Park in Benin in May 2019.

34. ISGS has a strong position in Mali and the Niger. Its attacks are now claimed by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), which adopted a new narrative to show a unified ISIL presence in the region. ISGS and ISWAP may have cooperated in the attack on forces of the Niger in Togo in May 2019 and may be developing a logistics base in the Nigerian city of Sokoto.²⁶

35. The primary areas of operation of ISWAP in the Lake Chad basin are Borno and Yobe States in Nigeria, with stronger pressure recently focused on the defence and security forces of the Niger in the region of Diffa.²⁷ In March 2019, ISWAP leadership reportedly shifted from Abu Musa’ab al-Barnawi (not listed), a son of the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf, to Abu Abdullah Ibn Umar al-Barnawi (not listed). This change may have led the group to adopt a hardened position, intensifying its operational pace and carrying out exemplary violence against prisoners from local security forces. Moreover, ISWAP is inviting foreign terrorist fighters to travel to its area of operation.

36. Within Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) (QDe.138), Abubakar Mohammed Shekau (QDi.322) remains marginalized, but his group maintains a stronghold in the Sambisa Forest and the Mandara Mountains. In terms of number of fighters, one Member State estimates that Boko Haram has approximately 2,000, whereas ISWAP has at least twice as many, rivalling Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K) (QDe.161) as the largest ISIL franchise outside the core area.

3. East Africa

37. Al-Qaida affiliate Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujaahidiin (Al-Shabaab) (SOe.001) began 2019 with the strategic intent to intensify attacks and maintain momentum in Somalia and abroad.²⁸ During the reporting period, Al-Shabaab shifted from a strategy involving high-impact attacks²⁹ to one of sustained, frequent and eventually daily multiple attacks. In Mogadishu, it ordered the removal of closed-circuit televisions to hinder monitoring of its activities. On 23 March, Al-Shabaab detonated four explosives within one hour in different locations in Mogadishu. Member States observed that Al-Shabaab has further enhanced its improvised explosive device capability with more powerful home-made devices.

38. Member States attribute the upsurge in attacks by Al-Shabaab to several factors. First, many high- and middle-level commanders and fighters relocated from their bases in lower Shabelle to safe havens in the Mogadishu environs owing to the

²⁵ Member State information.

²⁶ Member State information.

²⁷ Member State information.

²⁸ Member State information.

²⁹ Member State information.

ongoing military offensive of the African Union Mission in Somalia and were thus able to enhance coordination in executing complex attacks. Second, the mass dismissal of security personnel in early 2019 created a vacuum that helped Al-Shabaab to reorganize and take strategic positions for attacks. Some of the discharged personnel joined the ranks of Al-Shabaab, boosting its capabilities with much-needed training, skills and insider knowledge of government operations and key targets.

39. According to several Member States, the most critical factor contributing to Al-Shabaab's resilience is its institutionalized and secure revenue base (see [S/2018/14/Rev.1](#), para. 40; [S/2018/705](#), para. 46; and [S/2019/50](#), para. 45). Al-Shabaab continues to expand the scope of its extortion activities in the geographical areas and commercial sectors under its control. In recent months, for instance, Al-Shabaab paralysed supply routes of major towns by closing access roads to government-controlled areas. This consequently opened a lucrative income stream after the group negotiated and increased levies from commercial, public transport and humanitarian agencies operating across Somalia.³⁰ In May 2019, Al-Shabaab closed the port of Mogadishu for six days, reopening it only after an agreement was made with the business community regarding its extortion payments.³¹ Similar negotiations took place in the Bakaara market.³² In addition, Al-Shabaab expanded taxation to include flight tickets and telecommunications companies and secured control of revenue from Ceelasha Biyaha and parts of Yaaqshiid and Huriwa districts.

40. Member States reported continued forced conscription, training and radicalization activities (see [S/2019/50](#), para. 46). One Member State reported that approximately 200 recruits had completed training and been recently deployed in the Middle Juba region. Similarly, the head of the Amniyat³³ in the Banaadir region recently requested that more fighters be deployed to Mogadishu. Consequently, Al-Shabaab ordered those unable to pay the high extortion payments to enrol their children in the group's ranks.

41. Member States observed that the uneasy calm that existed between Al-Shabaab and ISIL operatives in Somalia towards the end of 2018 was short lived, as clashes broke out between the two groups in both Mogadishu and Puntland, where ISIL had made modest inroads (*ibid.*, paras. 47–48). ISIL in Somalia faced two-pronged attacks: one from Al-Shabaab and the other from ongoing military operations of the African Union Mission in Somalia. Subsequently, Al-Shabaab asserted itself against ISIL, which was forced to go underground even in its stronghold of Ceelasha Biyaha near Mogadishu and took over some ISIL bases in Puntland. Despite the setbacks, ISIL continued to conduct attacks, which were limited to assassinations of business figures and government officials in Boosaaso, and retained some operational bases.

4. Central Africa

42. Member States observed that ISIL territorial losses in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and the weakened state of its affiliate in Somalia have given impetus to Madina Tawheed Waljihad (MTW), also known as Madina Tawheed wal Muwahedeen (MTM), a group that emerged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in November 2017. MTW established a base in Medina, Beni Region, North Kivu, where it hoisted the ISIL flag and pledged allegiance to ISIL leadership. Although the allegiance was not formally accepted by the ISIL core, the group sought to attract relocating foreign fighters to bolster its ranks and attempted to communicate with the ISIL core.

³⁰ Member State information.

³¹ Member State information.

³² Member State information.

³³ Al-Shabaab's "intelligence" wing.

Consequently, after the speech made by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi on 22 August 2018, in which he directed fighters to deploy to various locations including Central Africa, some Member States began to observe increased activities by MTW operatives, mainly self-radicalized lone actors. In April 2019, the ISIL leadership featured a banner of Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) alongside its affiliates. This emboldened MTW, which began to operate under the banner of ISCAP.

43. Throughout the reporting period, Member States from the region expressed concerns with regard to the increased momentum and frequency of ISCAP activities. They assessed that, although at its nascent stage, the group has the potential to evolve, attract returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters from the region and beyond and establish links with other ISIL affiliates operating in Africa. For instance, a Member State noted that ISIL in Somalia was directed by the ISIL core to oversee financing for its affiliates and, in one case, had directed funds to support operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

44. Several other Member States consider that ISIL claims may be opportunistic, as there is no indication that ISIL has directed attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or established a link to the perpetrators. These Member States consider ISCAP to be a rebranding of the Allied Democratic Forces – National Army for the Liberation of Uganda movement, which is assessed to be focused primarily on its own survival and to lack significant operational capabilities. These States acknowledge that the ISIL threat in Central Africa is continuing to evolve.

D. Europe

45. Member States in the region report a reduced incidence of successful attacks but assess that the risk remains high. Online propaganda encouraging low-tech, ISIL-inspired attacks remains available. The ISIL core is seeking to develop the technical skills of potential attackers, in some cases by publishing online tutorials on building home-made chemical and biological weapons. Nevertheless, the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threat from ISIL is assessed to remain low owing to the complexity of building and delivering such devices undetected by authorities.³⁴

46. Member States expressed growing concern about the potential for their nationals to initiate home-grown terrorist attacks as a consequence of the difficulties faced by ISIL in sending operatives to Europe. Security services in Europe have noted a relatively high rate of disrupted attacks owing to the poor tradecraft and unsophisticated methods of would-be attackers.

47. The radicalization of criminals within the prison system remains a critical concern in Europe (see [S/2017/573](#), para. 10), where prisons provide a venue for inmates afflicted by poverty, marginalization, frustration, low self-esteem and violence to be influenced by radical ideologies. In addition, some of the first wave of returnees from the “caliphate” to be imprisoned are expected to be released in the coming year.

48. Member States assess that approximately 5,000 to 6,000 foreign terrorist fighters travelled from Europe to the conflict zone in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. Of those, 75 per cent joined ISIL. Those reported killed amount to 30 to 40 per cent, while 10 to 15 per cent remain detained in the region, 10 to 15 per cent have relocated and 30 to 40 per cent have returned to Europe. Many remain unaccounted for.

³⁴ Member State information.

49. Member States report that most returnees were disappointed with the “caliphate”, but many of them retain extremist views. Deradicalization programmes have not proven to be fully effective, and concerns about the risk of those soon to be released from prison remain high. The most combat-hardened fighters serving longer sentences are not yet approaching release from prison. They remain dangerous and continue to pose a challenge both inside and outside the penal system.

50. European Member States continue to highlight the challenges posed by dependants of foreign terrorist fighters living in detention camps in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. No consensus exists on how to resolve complex issues involving nationality, parentage and the extent to which mothers have been radicalized or participated in crimes on behalf of ISIL. There are also barriers to gathering evidence to prosecute women and adolescents who are suspected of having engaged in terrorism abroad.

51. Data on the number of repatriations of Europeans from detention camps in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic remain elusive. The Monitoring Team has received limited reporting on some cases. Kosovar authorities repatriated 32 women and 74 children from the Hawl internal displacement camp in the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic on 20 April 2019.³⁵

E. Asia

1. Central and South Asia

52. Central Asian Member States assess that their primary terrorist threat comes from their nationals who have travelled to the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan, where they are affiliated with a number of terrorist organizations. Foreign terrorist fighters continue to attempt to travel to the conflict zone, albeit on a much smaller scale than in previous years. Uzbek and Tajik migrant labourers in the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Turkey and other countries that host large diaspora communities are targeted by online propaganda and recruitment.

53. Some members of these communities have attempted to join groups such as the ethnically based Katibat al-Tawhid wal Jihad (KTJ) and Khatiba Imam Al-Bukhari (KIB) (QDe.158), which are active under the HTS umbrella in the Idlib area. KIB splintered into three groups following the death of its leader, Akmal Dzhurabaev, and the ensuing organizational challenges. The largest of these groups is led by Ubaydullo Muradologly, also known as “Abu Yusuf” (not listed), a national of Tajikistan. Two smaller groups are led by Alisher Tazhibaev (not listed), a national of Kyrgyzstan, and by Sulaymanov (not listed) of Uzbekistan.

54. According to Member States, the number of fighters of KTJ has grown to 500. The group operates in the provinces of Hama, Idlib and Ladhikiyah, in the Syrian Arab Republic. KTJ is the most combat-ready, best-equipped and best-financed Uzbek group. The Islamic Jihad Group (QDe.119) is now under the full control of HTS. The group comprises between 30 and 40 ethnic Uzbeks and a smaller number of Turkish nationals. The Uzbek nationals arrived in the Syrian Arab Republic from Afghanistan.

55. In the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, approximately 1,500 fighters from Tajikistan joined established terrorist groups, with 600 believed to be alive still. Gulmurod Khalimov (QDi.372) is considered their leader. He lost his position as the ISIL “minister of war” and is reported to be in Idlib. Central Asian nationals in the

³⁵ Member State information.

Syrian Arab Republic target Uzbeks and Tajiks in their native languages through online recruitment. This propaganda promotes travel to the conflict zone, fundraising and the establishment of sleeper cells in their home countries. In 2019, as a result of a joint operation conducted by special services of regional countries, 26 ISIL members, some of them returnees, were arrested.

56. Approximately 2,000 nationals of the Commonwealth of Independent States are detained in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. Since the beginning of 2019, 524 nationals, almost all women and children, were repatriated by Kazakhstan, 156 by Uzbekistan and 84 by Tajikistan.

57. Central Asian countries remain concerned about the terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan. In the north of Afghanistan, in Badakhshan Province, a number of Central Asian groups affiliated with Al-Qaida are operating. These include approximately 50 fighters with KIB, up to 100 with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (QDe.010) and up to 50 with the Islamic Jihad Group. The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (QDe.088) has an estimated 350 fighters. Jamaat Ansarullah, headed by Asliddin Davlatov (not listed), has up to 30 Tajik nationals. In total, approximately 100 fighters from Tajikistan are assessed to be based in Afghanistan.

58. All these groups operate under the auspices of the Taliban, mainly as instructors and explosives experts. In northern Afghanistan, Central Asian groups cooperate with organized criminal networks engaged in drug trafficking across the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, also using those routes to infiltrate fighters into Central Asia.

59. ISIL-K has a Central Asian contingent of approximately 200 fighters, led by Tajik national Sayvaly Shafiev, also known as “Mauaviya” (not listed). He is currently operating in Nangarhar Province, where he is a member of the ISIL-K leadership body, or *shura*. He seeks to recruit Tajik fighters and to raise funds using online propaganda in the Tajik language.

60. In April, ISIL-K leader Mawlawi Zia ul-Haq, also known as Abu Omar Khorasani (not listed), was dismissed and replaced by Mawlawi Abdullah, also known as Mawlawi Aslam Farooqi (not listed), who was previously in charge of operations in the Khyber Agency. Ul-Haq’s demotion was reportedly due to poor performance in the context of ISIL-K setbacks in Nangarhar in the second half of 2018. The new leadership nomination was made during a visit by an ISIL core delegation, underscoring the direct relationship between ISIL-K and the ISIL core in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

61. In 2019, ISIL-K suffered military setbacks and the intensity of its attacks lessened compared with previous periods. Attempts to penetrate Paktiya and Logar Provinces in south-eastern Afghanistan were unsuccessful. The group remains concentrated in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces, with no organized or open presence outside eastern Afghanistan. On the basis of the assessment of one regional Member State, broadly borne out by other Member States, fighters associated with ISIL-K, including foreign terrorist fighters, number between 2,500 and 4,000.

62. ISIL-K is reported by Member States to maintain a robust capability to derive income from the exploitation of local mineral, lumber and talc resources. The group also engages in extortion of the local population and kidnapping for ransom. There is broad agreement among Member States that the group continues to eschew involvement in the narcotics business.

63. Al-Qaida considers Afghanistan a continuing safe haven for its leadership, relying on its long-standing and strong relationship with the Taliban leadership. Under Taliban patronage, Al-Qaida is keen to strengthen its presence in Badakhshan

Province, in particular in the Shighnan area bordering Tajikistan, as well as in Barmal, in Paktika Province. Al-Qaida continues to cooperate closely with Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (QDe.118) and the Haqqani Network (TAe.012). Al-Qaida members continue to function routinely as military and religious instructors for the Taliban.

64. On 21 April, the Easter Sunday suicide bombings against churches and luxury hotels in three cities and seven locations in Sri Lanka resulted in a total of 258 deaths. The bombings were conducted by the local groups National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) and Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim (JMI). NTJ was established in 2014 and had approximately 50 members before the attacks. JMI was established in 2015 with an estimated 135 members. Some of the suicide bombers had travelled to the Syrian Arab Republic and received weapons training from ISIL. The explosives specialists are believed to have studied ISIL methods for constructing improvised explosive devices on the Internet and tested the designs before the attacks. Ball bearings, nails and a combination of chemicals were used in the bombs. Light bulb filaments and washing machine timers were used for initiation. Despite the claim of responsibility by ISIL, Member State investigations revealed that the ISIL core did not direct or facilitate the attacks, nor did it know about them in advance. It was a locally instigated and led attack inspired by ISIL ideology. The bombings aimed to boost the global image of ISIL after its military defeat in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

65. Regional Member States expressed concern about dynamics in the region, in particular in Sri Lanka, southern India and the Maldives, that could contribute to internal threats. Since 2013, approximately 170 Maldivians have travelled to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, and more than 70 have unsuccessfully attempted to travel. In March, it was reported that a Maldivian family, including four children, that had relocated to Afghanistan from the Syrian Arab Republic was attempting to join ISIL-K.

66. As ISIL continues its evolution from a pseudo-state to a global network inspiring and directing terrorism, it may aim to build platforms for operations in areas in which it has not been active before. The Easter Sunday attacks may serve as a blueprint for future ISIL terrorism in other unexpected locations. The return of foreign terrorist fighters to their home countries from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic may combine with indigenous radicalization in South Asia or elsewhere.

2. South-East Asia

67. A series of successful and thwarted terror attacks attributed to ISIL-affiliated groups in South-East Asia underscores the persistent nature of the threat in the region. Two troubling trends observed are the targeting of places of worship and the continued prominence of women in operational activities. Returnees from and “frustrated travellers” to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic have been implicated in attacks in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines and more generally in supporting local ISIL affiliates, which have been tasked by ISIL leadership with carrying out self-directed and self-financed attacks.

68. The most significant attack in the region during the reporting period occurred on 27 January in Jolo, on the south-western tip of Mindanao, in the Philippines. Two bombs exploded minutes apart at the Roman Catholic cathedral during Sunday services, killing 23 people and wounding more than 100. The attack was attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (QDe.001), an ISIL affiliate. Violence in the southern Philippines linked to ASG remained steady for the first half of 2019. Philippine security forces frequently engage ASG and regularly report clashes causing casualties on both sides. One Member State highlighted the arrest by Philippine authorities in April of four women who were reportedly wives of ASG commanders and responsible for the group’s logistics and finances. These women were said to report directly to

the ASG leader, Hajan Sawadjaan (not listed), the alleged mastermind of the attack in Jolo in January. Philippine authorities have noted that, as at the end of May, ASG no longer holds any hostages and that counter-ASG operations are expected to intensify as a consequence. Philippine authorities also announced in April the death of Abu Dar, one of the architects of the siege of Marawi City (see [S/2018/705](#), para. 67) and a leader of the ISIL-affiliated Maute Group.

69. Indonesian authorities continue to confront the challenges of ISIL-affiliated groups operating in the country. In March, the wife of a recently arrested leader of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and her children blew themselves up during a stand-off with police at their home on the island of Sumatra. In May, Indonesian authorities disrupted a terror plot by a JAD splinter cell. A member of the cell was charged with making bombs in a home-based laboratory using triacetone triperoxide; the bombs were to be detonated in connection with the announcement of the country's election results. During the month of May, Indonesian counter-terror officials reported the arrest of 41 people affiliated with JAD and foreign terrorist fighter returnees and the seizure of five undetonated bombs and approximately 350 kg of explosive material.

70. Malaysian authorities have also identified and disrupted terror activity linked to ISIL. In February and May, police announced a series of arrests of individuals, some of whom had received training in bomb-making from JAD and were seeking to target non-Muslim places of worship. One Member State highlighted the arrests in February that involved Singaporean nationals, one of whom was based in Malaysia and had financially supported a senior Malaysian ISIL fighter in the Syrian Arab Republic known as Akel Zainal. Member States are concerned that the targeting of places of worship in South-East Asia and Sri Lanka may prove to be a trend in ISIL operations.

III. Impact assessment

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

71. ISIL is assessed to retain financial reserves totalling between \$50 million and \$300 million and to be able to direct funds both within the core conflict zone and globally to affiliates in its network. ISIL reportedly retains access to cash hidden in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and nearby countries or stored with trusted associates. Its financial reserves are also invested in businesses in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere.

72. Military pressure on ISIL and the seizure of its last territorial holdings have had a severe impact on the group's ability to raise revenue in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic as of early 2019. The group is adapting to its insurgency role with far fewer demands on its financial holdings and relying on smuggling, extortion and kidnapping for ransom to maintain funding streams. ISIL leadership requires cells and affiliates to maintain financial records and appoint a member responsible for financial matters. It has attempted to increase its oversight of finances, directing, for example, that only half of any revenue raised in a particular province be spent in that location. Cells within the core conflict zone and affiliates abroad are encouraged to be financially self-sufficient. One Member State described ISIL affiliates being treated in a manner similar to start-up businesses, receiving "seed money" and advice from head office, while it is made clear that independence is the expectation.

73. Cash couriers, unregistered money service businesses and *hawaladars* remain the most commonly used methods of transferring funds in support of ISIL and Al-Qaida. These mechanisms are largely out of view of regulators and law enforcement, making it extremely difficult to identify the remitters and beneficiaries

of funds. Financial intelligence units consulted by the Monitoring Team have, however, identified transactions in which foreign terrorist fighters in the conflict zone or their family members are able to receive funds from abroad by having the money deposited into a personal or small business bank account in a neighbouring country. The funds are subsequently withdrawn and remitted to the conflict zone either by cash courier or through the use of money service businesses. This type of activity, involving the use of a single account potentially receiving funds from multiple, unrelated parties, can be identified using transaction monitoring rules that are familiar to many financial institutions.

74. One Member State highlighted concerns about the potential abuse of funds involving deceased foreign terrorist fighters, whereby accounts linked to these fighters continue to be accessed by family members without notifying the authorities.

75. Mobile payment platforms are of growing concern to Member States. These payment mechanisms are credited with expanding access to financial services for many people in developing countries, especially as an alternative to traditional banks. Some mobile payment providers, however, would benefit from enhanced customer due diligence procedures and transaction monitoring tools, which would lead to improved identification and reporting of suspicious transactions.

76. A few Member States cited the risks of crypto- or virtual currencies in relation to the financing of terrorism. One Member State monitoring activity on the dark web has observed attempts by terrorists to raise funds in this manner, although it could not be determined whether such activity was related to financial support for ISIL or Al-Qaida. A Member State neighbouring the conflict zone noted a sharp increase in suspicious transaction reports to its financial intelligence unit involving virtual currencies. Again, it could not be established whether they were related to the financing of ISIL or Al-Qaida. As noted in the previous report of the Monitoring Team, such currencies are not currently assessed by Member States to be a significant source of revenue for ISIL or Al-Qaida. The Financial Action Task Force, in an interpretive note on new technologies (virtual assets) issued in June 2019, set forth recommended measures for the regulation and oversight of virtual assets and virtual asset service providers.³⁶

B. Resolution 2347 (2017) on cultural heritage

77. According to one Member State, the looting of Iraqi antiquities in historical sites in the provinces of Ninawa, Diyala, Anbar and Kirkuk had previously been part of a project to finance ISIL. Another Member State reported an increased number of archaeological excavations during the reporting period in the north of the Syrian Arab Republic, including areas controlled by HTS. Looters use advanced devices for detecting antiquities, which are subsequently sold online. In some cases, items were reported to have been offered for sale to collectors even before they had been excavated.

78. Returnees from the conflict zone who had held positions involving ISIL finances reported to one Member State that the organization created a unit within the *diwan* (a ministry) for natural Resources responsible specifically for the sale of antiquities. When the *diwan* was dissolved, the unit moved to the *diwan* of finance. Details of

³⁶ See Financial Action Task Force, "Public statement on virtual assets and related providers," 21 June 2019. Available at www.fatf-gafi.org/publications/fatfrecommendations/documents/public-statement-virtual-assets.html.

traded antiquities, as well as the current location of any stored antiquities, are assessed to be known only by ISIL leaders.³⁷

79. National police authorities in many jurisdictions are involved in identifying and stopping the illicit trafficking of stolen or looted cultural property. As called for by the General Assembly, it should be an international priority to provide special training for police in the operational tools necessary to address illicit trafficking in such goods, and to encourage the establishment of specialized police units (see General Assembly resolution 73/130, para. 17), as well as a national database of stolen works of art that is linked to the corresponding database of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). With the support of its member States, INTERPOL has organized 18 workshops on combating illicit trafficking in cultural property in the African, American, Asian and Eastern European regions since 2017. These initiatives resulted in the training of 600 experts from law enforcement and customs agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations, ministries of culture and of the interior, national museums and public prosecutors.

80. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so to establish, with the assistance of INTERPOL, specialized police units dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage and investigations into cases of trafficking in cultural property. The Monitoring Team further recommends, in this context, the establishment of a national database of stolen works of art connected directly to the corresponding INTERPOL database. In addition, the Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to encourage them to fund and support training workshops by INTERPOL on combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property in key areas of the world.

81. Cooperation between judicial and law enforcement bodies is critically important in reducing the illicit trafficking of cultural property. In 2018, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched a publication for such officials, providing a set of practical tools and exercises for individual or group use. The toolkit is targeted primarily at European users by providing, inter alia, information regarding legislative measures specific to the European Union. It is the first publication to promote the acquisition by both judicial and law enforcement agencies of practical skills for addressing the illicit trafficking of cultural property. It is supplemented by an online training course, available to all Member States on the UNESCO website.³⁸

82. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to encourage them to raise awareness among the relevant judicial and law enforcement agencies of the UNESCO training course regarding the illicit trafficking of cultural property, which is available on the UNESCO website.

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

83. Member States remain concerned about the challenges posed by foreign terrorist fighters, returnees and relocators, even though relocators have not yet appeared in large numbers and returnees have not yet emerged as leading terrorist actors. National estimates of the attrition rate for foreign terrorist fighters average 25 per cent killed and 15 per cent unaccounted for. Set against an approximate initial figure of 40,000 who joined the “caliphate”, these percentages would suggest that between 24,000 and

³⁷ Member State information.

³⁸ See www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/.

30,000 are still alive. Even the lowest credible estimate is huge compared with Afghanistan and Al-Qaida, let alone any other, smaller theatre of terrorist insurgency.

84. Member States have different approaches to repatriating and processing female detainees, including in terms of whether mothers and children are kept together, the difficulty of establishing the parentage and nationality of minors and the specific legal aspects of processing minors. Regardless of the complexities, the conditions in overcrowded camps such as Hawl make it clear that these challenges, if ignored, will not resolve themselves. However, the logistical, jurisdictional and human rights complexities of addressing detainees and displaced persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, and to some extent in Iraq, have made a solution elusive.

85. Security Council resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#) remains the key text on this issue, with regional Member States acknowledging its value but arguing that it does not go far enough to impose a fair share of responsibility upon States of nationality and origin of foreign terrorist fighters and dependants. The Monitoring Team promotes resolution [2396 \(2017\)](#) among Member States at every opportunity and assesses that, if these challenges are not addressed more systematically, the threat posed in the short to medium term by adult detainees and in the medium to long term by minors who become increasingly traumatized and radicalized will grow more serious, with consequences in terms of terrorist attacks carried out over a period of decades from now.

IV. Sanctions measures

A. Travel ban

86. During the reporting period, the Monitoring Team noted several measures instituted by Member States to address challenges associated with the effective screening of databases and watch lists and continued to raise awareness during visits to Member States and in other forums with regard to resolutions [2309 \(2016\)](#), [2368 \(2017\)](#) and [2396 \(2017\)](#). The Team observed that the integrity and effective management of physical borders remain critical focus areas of Member States in their efforts to detect, deter and interrupt the attempted travel of individuals listed on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List, returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters and their associates. As the global threat posed by Al-Qaida, ISIL and their affiliates evolves and the volume of international travel increases, the border screening systems of Member States are contending with additional threats associated with the movement and travel of foreign terrorist fighters and listed individuals (see [S/2019/50](#), para. 94).

87. The Monitoring Team noted that many Member States face challenges in acquiring accurate and timely information necessary for effective processing and screening against various databases and watch lists at the national level.³⁹ In addition, interaction with and real-time access to regional and international databases, including the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List and the INTERPOL databases, are limited largely to a few government agencies in a number of Member States, presenting a challenge in terms of border agencies taking timely, appropriate and informed action. This challenge is attributable to a lack of adequate collaboration between and within government agencies to allow timely access and the sharing of information across agencies and systems and to enhance the implementation of legal

³⁹ Member State information.

and policy frameworks, contributing ultimately to the effective implementation of resolutions 2309 (2016), 2368 (2017) and 2396 (2017).⁴⁰

88. With regard to the implementation of advance passenger information and passenger name record systems, the Monitoring Team noted that to date 65 Member States are generally compliant; specifically, 49 Member States are implementing advance passenger information systems, whereas 16 have upgraded their systems to the interactive advance passenger information system.⁴¹ The Team observed that effective sharing of information in a coherent and timely manner at the national, regional and international levels will promote awareness, responses and the adequate utilization of databases and watch lists to detect and interdict the movement of listed individuals and foreign terrorist fighters (*ibid.*, para. 97). At the national level, collaboration among agencies is essential and will contribute to the establishment of common criteria for reasonable suspicion, data formats and system requirements necessary for the effective screening of travellers. In addition, the provision of real-time connectivity, access to national watch lists and routine updates of information necessary for traveller screening to end users will enhance the implementation of advance passenger information and passenger name record systems.

89. Biometric information reduces the potential for the false identification of individuals on the basis of biographical data solely and decreases the use of fraudulent travel documents (*ibid.*, para. 96). Several Member States observed that, despite efforts to ensure that biometric data is stored, processed and transmitted securely, challenges remain in guaranteeing that biometric collection systems are interoperable with watch lists and databases for effective screening and law enforcement action to interdict listed individuals and foreign terrorist fighters. In addition, Member States face challenges in collecting or accessing biometric data of foreign terrorist fighters located in the conflict zones and of those likely to return or relocate to other areas.⁴²

90. The Team continued its collaboration with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Air Transport Association regarding the implementation of resolution 2309 (2016) and noted that Member State non-machine-readable passports are still in circulation. However, progress has been made in the issuance of electronic passports, with approximately 136 Member States adopting them. With regard to the modernization of visas, 30 Member States currently issue electronic visas and 5 issue electronic travel authorizations, whereas others are making efforts to be compliant.

B. Asset freeze

91. Some Member States have reported to the Monitoring Team information regarding the freezing of assets related to the financing of terrorism and, in a smaller number of cases, the freezing of assets belonging to individuals and entities associated with ISIL and Al-Qaida. In most cases, when Member States share such data, it cannot be determined whether the assets are linked to individuals or entities named on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List. In its resolution 2462 (2019), the Security Council called upon Member States to “consider making publicly available their national or regional asset freezing lists pursuant to resolutions 1373 (2001), 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015)”. Actions taken by Member States in support of this measure would greatly improve the Monitoring Team’s and the Committee’s

⁴⁰ Member State information.

⁴¹ Member State information.

⁴² Member State information.

understanding of the implementation of the asset freeze and of potential gaps in implementation.

92. The Team continues to cooperate with the Financial Action Task Force and similar regional bodies to collect information regarding efforts by Member States to counter terrorist financing and implement the asset freeze.

93. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to recall the request set out in paragraph 11 of resolution 2462 (2019) to make public their asset freezing actions under the relevant resolutions, and to share such information with the Monitoring Team.

C. Arms embargo

94. During the reporting period, the Monitoring Team received information regarding ISIL chemical weapons capabilities, developed when ISIL had access to university laboratories in Mosul. Iraq confirmed that ISIL had developed the capability to produce and deploy sulfur mustard agent. According to Member States, the agent was not stolen from local stocks and was indigenously prepared and deployed via improvised rockets and modified 107-mm munitions. The Monitoring Team was informed of 15 separate incidents between 2015 and 2017 in which ISIL used the agent in attacks across several Iraqi provinces.

95. Although ISIL stocks of the agent may have been depleted, the know-how to produce and deploy it might be disseminated to other theatres. It is unlikely that ISIL will be able to produce additional amounts without access to proper facilities akin to the laboratories it once controlled in Mosul.

96. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States about the potential risk from chemical terrorist attacks, and to encourage those that have not done so to develop capacities to respond to such attacks, by improving their chemical incident scene management, investigation and mitigation capabilities, including through international sharing of good practices and engagement with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and INTERPOL training courses designed to address these gaps.

97. The dark web enables the circulation of illegal weapons and is a potential route for the diversion of legally purchased weapons. While it cannot be regarded as an important source of arms for conflict areas, it poses a risk as a significant source of arms for lone actors and small groups, especially in jurisdictions in which the purchase of arms is otherwise regulated. A Member State also reported that online marketplaces had been used to obtain forged documents that may have been used to facilitate the cross-border travel of suspected terrorists.

98. The Monitoring Team took note of law enforcement activity during the reporting period to shut down dark web markets, including Wall Street Market, DeepDotWeb and Silkkitie. The international cooperation that led to the sites being taken offline is commendable and offers good practices for further cooperation against the trafficking of arms on the dark web, including to terrorists and terrorist sympathizers. The Monitoring Team assesses that, despite these actions, users will migrate to newly established markets or to other platforms, such as single-vendor sites and encrypted communications applications. A similar shift occurred following the major dark web market shutdowns of 2017.

99. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to highlight the terrorist threat associated with dark web markets and vendors, and to encourage Member States that have not done so to establish specialized law enforcement units to detect and investigate dark web crimes and

national contact points through which data can be shared and collated among Member States.

V. Monitoring Team activities and feedback

100. Between January and June 2019, the Monitoring Team conducted 32 country and technical visits. It continued to promote the sanctions regime through its participation in 30 international conferences, meetings and workshops, including those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, INTERPOL, the Financial Action Task Force and similar regional bodies, the Global Counterterrorism Forum, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The Team held its seventeenth regional meeting for the Middle East and North Africa. It also participated in the regional meetings of the Multi-Agency Task Force of the Middle East and North Africa Region, established by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The Team continued its engagement with entities and associations in the financial, natural resources, antiquities, defence and information technology sectors. During the reporting period, the Team participated in meetings organized by the Office of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, including the joint special meeting on links between international terrorism and organized crime. The Team also cooperated closely with the Executive Directorate in the production of mandated reports of the Secretary-General. The Team remains a member of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, participating in meetings of its working groups.

101. The Team welcomes feedback on the present report through 1267mt@un.org.

Annex

Litigation by or relating to individuals and entities on the Sanctions List

1. There has been no change to the state of affairs described in the present annex during the reporting period.
2. The legal challenges involving individuals and entities on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List, or whose names the Committee has removed therefrom, that are known to be pending or to have been recently concluded are described below.

Pakistan

3. The action brought by the Al Rashid Trust (QDe.005) regarding the application of the sanctions measures against it remains pending in the Supreme Court of Pakistan, on appeal by the Government of an adverse decision in 2003. A similar challenge brought by Al-Akhtar Trust International (QDe.121) remains pending before a provincial high court.¹
4. In addition to the two cases mentioned above, a trustee of Pakistan Relief Foundation (listed as an alias of Al-Akhtar Trust International) has challenged the freezing of his bank account.²

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

5. The United Kingdom is defending judicial review challenges to its decision-making with regard to the designations under this sanctions regime of Abdulbasit Abdulrahim, Abdulbaqi Mohamed Khaled and Maftah Mohamed Elmabruk (all delisted). The cases are currently proceeding with hearings related to the use of closed evidence and the level of disclosure required.³

¹ Information provided by Pakistan.

² Information provided by Pakistan.

³ Information provided by the United Kingdom.