



## Global Islamism Monitor: No. 3

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**Related Categories:** Iran

### **TARGETING THE ISLAMIC STATE'S ANTIQUITIES TRADE**

In their effort to drain the finances of the Islamic State, Western governments are increasingly eyeing a significant source of the group's revenue: antiquities. The United States, Germany and the UK are each said to be exploring legal measures expanding customs authorities and prosecutorial powers against individuals and entities suspected of aiding the terrorist group in its illicit sales of Middle Eastern antiquities abroad. Additionally, UNESCO (the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) is already using \$3.5 million of European Union funds to better train customs officials on the Continent to track and identify what are being termed "conflict antiquities" from the Iraqi battlefield. (*Wall Street Journal*, March 30, 2015)

### **BOKO HARAM'S YOUNGEST VICTIMS**

The ongoing rampage of Boko Haram continues to claim innocent victims in Nigeria. A new report issued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) identifies that some 800,000 children have been displaced from their homes to date as a result of Islamist-related violence perpetrated by the group. Minors make up roughly half of the 1.5 million refugees in Nigeria, and the country now holds the dubious distinction of having the largest number of children absent from primary school in the world: 10.5 million.

But Nigeria's children aren't simply collateral damage; they are also cannon fodder for Boko Haram's militancy. "Children have become deliberate targets, often subjected to extreme violence - from sexual abuse and forced marriage to kidnappings and brutal killings," the study notes. "Children have also become weapons, made to fight alongside armed groups and at times used as human bombs." (Associated Press, April 13, 2015)

### **THE ISLAMIC STATE'S BA'ATHIST ROOTS**

The leadership of the Islamic State terrorist group has a common - and surprising - point of origin: Iraq's Saddam-era military. "Even with the influx of thousands of foreign fighters, almost all of the leaders of the Islamic State are former Iraqi officers, including the members of its shadowy military and security committees, and the majority of its emirs and princes," notes a new Washington Post expose. These military cadres "have brought to the organization the military expertise and some of the agendas of the former Baathists, as well as the smuggling networks developed to avoid sanctions in the 1990s and which now facilitate the Islamic State's illicit oil trading."

The synergy between the Islamist group and Saddam's former secularist cadres is definitely counterintuitive, the report lays out. Yet "the two creeds broadly overlap in several regards, especially their reliance on fear to secure the submission of the people under the group's rule." And the post-Saddam political trajectory of many military officers, observers say, demonstrates extensive cooperation with Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda - a willingness that is today being put to extensive use by IS. (*Washington Post*, April 4, 2015)

### **THE ISLAMIC STATE AND RUSSIA**

The number of foreign fighters from Russia that have joined the Islamic State has surged in recent months. "Senior FSB officials have identified North Caucasians among the senior commanders of ISIS and have suggested that 'no less than' 1700 Russian citizens are now fighting with that force, almost all of whom are from the North Caucasus and especially from Daghestan, the most Muslim of Russia's southern republics," notes Russia expert Paul Goble. That figure is more than double the one cited by Russian authorities in the past in their estimates of Russian-origin militants now active in the Middle East - and it raises the danger of a renewed surge of Islamist terror in Russia's restive North Caucasus region (and possibly beyond) if and when these radicals return home. (*Window on Eurasia*, April 13, 2015)