



Global Islamism Monitor No. 63

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; Afghanistan; Central Asia

TOWARD A TRUCE WITH THE TALIBAN

U.S. and Taliban officials, including American envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, ended nearly two weeks of peace talks on March 12th in Doha. Although no formal agreement was finalized, officials from both delegations claimed that "substantial progress" had been made in two key areas: a Taliban agreement to prevent attacks launched from Afghanistan and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghan soil. Representatives from both sides are expected to continue their consultations this month to potentially finalize the peace deal, and will likely discuss the possibility of a transitional government should the U.S. withdraw its troops. The current Afghan administration, however, has not yet been included in the negotiations. (New York Times, March 12, 2019)

MALAYSIA CRACKS DOWN ON ANTI-ISLAM SENTIMENT

The Malaysian government is more closely monitoring domestic online activity for any form of insult against Islam. Already, one person has been jailed for 10 years for insulting Islam on social media, and three others have been detained for violating laws against "causing racial disharmony, incitement, and misusing communications networks." A total of some sixteen investigations have been opened to date on these grounds, and one thousand complaints and reports of infractions have been received by authorities. The 10 year sentence - the harshest in Malaysian history for a crime of its kind - reflects a deeper Islamization of the national political identity now underway in the Southeast Asian state. (Kuala Lumpur Malaysia Today, March 7, 2019; Riyadh Al-Arabiya, March 9, 2019)

ISIS THRIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Following a January 27th suicide bombing that killed 23 in Jolo, concerns over the Islamic State's presence in the Philippines have increased sharply. According to Rommel Banlaoi, chairman of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research, ISIS represents "the most complicated, evolving problem for the Philippines today," despite official denials from the government of President Rodrigo Duterte of a significant presence by the group in the country. Of particular concern are the activities of local terrorist group Abu Sayyaf, which pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2016 and which remains active despite dwindling membership. The country has also seen an increase in attacks carried out by foreign fighters, although the government has been slow to fully investigate and properly attribute these incidents. (New York Times, March 9, 2019)

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH ISIS CHILDREN?

Now that the Islamic State's caliphate in Iraq and Syria has crumbled, foreign governments are increasingly dealing with a vexing problem. Raised - and sometimes born - inside what was the Islamic State, ISIS children often show symptoms of post traumatic stress. The size of this cohort is staggering; roughly 2,500 minors from more than 30 countries have now fled previously ISIS-held territories. Countries like France, Germany, Iraq, and the United Kingdom are currently balancing how to reintegrate these children into "post-IS" life. While some nations and their politicians consider the children primarily as victims in need of social service support, others view them as criminals who should be prosecuted accordingly. (The Globe Post, March 12, 2019)

KYRGYZSTAN GETS SERIOUS ABOUT ONLINE RADICALIZATION

The Central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan is stepping up its efforts to counter online extremism. The country's interior ministry has announced that it will henceforth "track" the publication of "provocative" messages on social media networks and messaging apps - and mete out punishment to the authors as appropriate. The effort comes as part of recent changes to the country's Criminal Code which make online propaganda and recruitment serious crimes and strengthen punishments for them. (Radio Azattyk, February 11, 2019)

PAKISTAN BELATEDLY MOVES AGAINST BANNED GROUPS

The government of Pakistani premier Imran Khan is taking "decisive action" against a range of proscribed terrorist groups as part of an effort to more fully come into compliance with United Nations demands. The open-ended policy, which will target groups like Jaish e-Mohammed, is the result of an interior ministry order to provincial governments to "speed up" counterterrorism efforts. Among the steps to be taken by Islamabad is a wide-ranging crackdown on the finances of banned groups, including asset seizures and the closure of "charity wings" of such organizations. (Karachi Dawn, March 4, 2019)

