



Global Islamism Monitor No. 74

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Related Categories: Democracy and Governance; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Intelligence and Counterintelligence; Islamic Extremism; Terrorism; Africa; Turkey

BAGHDADI'S SUCCESSOR HITS THE GROUND RUNNING

The late October death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the hands of U.S. Special Forces operators temporarily left the world's most dangerous terrorist group without a titular head. The organization, however, regrouped quickly, naming a relative unknown, identified as Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Qurayshi, as Baghdadi's replacement just days later.

Since then, researchers have worked diligently to uncover information on the new ISIS leader in order to get a sense of his worldview. And while much still remains to be learned about al-Qurayshi, scholars have begun to put together something resembling a composite picture. In particular, they believe that the new ISIS *emir* is an Iraqi, is not a relative of the group's original leader, but was selected from Baghdadi's inner circle. These characteristics, they note, will help the new ISIS head to maintain loyalty from the group's far-flung *wilayats* (provinces) and affiliates. Indeed, a number of ISIS-affiliated groups - like Somalia's dedicated ISIS affiliate - have moved quickly to publicly pledge allegiance to the new terror chief. (Associated Press, October 31, 2019; Reuters, November 3, 2019; *Small Wars Journal*, December 13, 2019)

SOME TENTATIVE LIBERALIZATION IN SUDAN

The transitional government in Sudan recently overturned a decades-old, *sharia*-inspired law that criminalized revealing women's clothing and the consumption of alcohol. It simultaneously dissolved the National Congress Party (NCP), the local Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated political party of ousted President Omar Al-Bashir. The NCP's coffers were drained, and the money reallocated to the state treasury. International human rights groups have hailed the Sudanese government's decision to overturn laws policing clothing worn by women as a positive political development in the country's post-Bashir era. However, they note, other restrictive laws, such as those that permit flogging as a form of state punishment, still remain on the books in the country. (*New York Times*, November 29, 2019)

TURKEY'S ULTIMATUM TO EUROPE

It is becoming clear that European officials will soon need to answer an increasingly pressing issue: what to do with returnees from the Islamic State. That's because the Turkish government is following through on its threat to release ISIS detainees and send them back to their home countries. This means the "radicalized, often battle-hardened Europeans" that Ankara has imprisoned for their participation in the global *jihad* are returning home, while European countries still do not have a coherent plan by which to manage the issue.

The problem confronting Europe is potentially massive in scope. According to Turkish officials, the country now has custody of more than 2,000 members of the Islamic State from over 30 countries, and plans to deport all of them back to their countries of origin - dramatically exacerbating the potential security problems in those countries in the process. (*New York Times*, November 17, 2019)

ALGERIA STEPS UP COUNTER-TERROR OPS

In an attempt to deter attacks by Islamist groups against civilians and government forces alike, the Algerian army has increased its security presence throughout the North African nation. The army is also tightening the country's borders with the lawless Sahel region, as well as with Libya, Mali, and Nigeria. They have also begun seizing weapons found on patrol, and arresting suspected Islamic militants amid government worries over the activities of extremist groups on Algerian soil. (Reuters, November 20, 2019)