



Global Islamism Monitor No. 76

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Related Categories: Africa; Europe; Middle East

MILITANT ISLAMISTS RISE IN AFRICA

Militant Islamist groups in North and East Africa have become steadily more active since 2013, according to a new study released by the National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies. The activity is most concentrated in and around the lawless Sahel region, the report notes, "specifically the countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger," as well as a recent spike in militancy that has taken place in Burkina Faso. Meanwhile, groups like al-Shabaab and the Islamic State, while still active in and around Somalia and North Africa, respectively, have declined in activity or simply maintained their presence on the continent.

Of particular note, according to the NDU study, are incidents in Mozambique, where the number of violent episodes tied to militant Islamists tripled to stand at 200 between 2018 and 2019. This sudden spike of Islamist activity is particularly notable - and alarming - given that there was virtually no organized activity by Islamist groups in the country as recently as four years ago. (National Defense University, January 18, 2020)

AT LONG LAST, A BRITISH BAN ON HEZBOLLAH

In its boldest move against Lebanese terror conglomerate Hezbollah to date, the British government has banned the Shi'a militia's economic activity and frozen all of its financial activity. Under a new proclamation issued by the government of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, "any individual or institution in Britain with accounts or financial services connected to Hezbollah" must suspend all activity "or face prosecution." The edict represents a significant evolution of British policy toward the Iranian-supported militant movement; previously, British actions had been confined to merely targeting various wings of the group, rather than the organization as a whole. (*France 24*, January 17, 2020)

THE PACE OF PALESTINIAN TERROR

Last month, at a ceremony honoring Israel's various intelligence services, the country's top internal security chief, Shin Bet Director Nadav Argaman, disclosed some alarming details regarding the accelerating militant threat now confronting the Jewish state. According to Argaman, the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, had prevented 560 terrorist attacks by Palestinian extremist elements in 2019, including over 300 shootings and 10 suicide bombers. That figure, he stressed, reflects a nearly 17% increase over extremist activity in 2018, when the Shin Bet was responsible for preventing a total of 480 attacks. (*Jerusalem Post*, January 20, 2020)

A SAUDI STEP FORWARD

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is continuing its efforts to reshape global perceptions about its position on Islamic extremism. In its latest initiative, the House of Saud last month dispatched the country's most prominent cleric, former Justice Minister and current Muslim World League Secretary-General Mohammed al-Issa to lead a delegation of Muslim leaders from various countries on a four-day visit to Poland to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Auschwitz Nazi death camp. Ahead of his trip to Auschwitz, al-Issa made a strong - and significant - policy statement, telling reporters that it was a crime to "falsify history" and deny the Holocaust, as many more extreme elements throughout the Muslim World continue to do. (*Bloomberg*, January 24, 2020)

HOW TURKEY IS TRANSFORMING THE LIBYA CONFLICT

Now ensconced in northern Syria, the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has turned its sights to another regional conflict: the ongoing civil war in Libya. Ankara has reportedly begun exporting Turkish fighters currently in Syria to Libya's hot zones. The fighters, drawn from the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (TFSA), are said to be offered steep financial incentives to migrate from one conflict to the other. TFSA fighters are now paid just \$100 a month to stay in Syria, and as much as \$2,000 monthly to fight in Libya in support of the Government of National Accord (GNA), the internationally recognized government of Libya. The policy, although officially denied by the Turkish government, is well known in the region, and represents an irresistible lure to would-be fighters, many of whom are currently homeless around Syrian cities and find themselves in dire financial straits. (*Investigative Journal*, January 23, 2020)