



## Spotlight on Global Jihad (June 2 - 8, 2016)



### Main events of the week

#### ■ ISIS continues to face heavy pressure exerted on its strongholds in Syria, Iraq and Libya:

- **In Syria**, the Syrian Army, with Russian air support, launched a military operation in the east, on the route leading from Ithriya to the city of Tabqa, located on the banks of Lake Assad (about 43 km southwest of Al-Raqqah). The Syrian Army recorded achievements and took over several key areas along the route. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have reached the suburbs of Manbij, an ISIS stronghold west of the Euphrates River, and are preparing to take it over. ISIS's oil production and marketing facilities in the area of Al-Hasakah, northeastern Syria, were the target of Russian airstrikes this week with the declared intention to "destroy the economic base" of the organization.
- **In Iraq**, the battle over Fallujah continues, with air support from the US and coalition countries. The Iraqi Army has taken over several targets around the city **but had difficulty advancing into the city itself**. ISIS is waging intense fighting, deploying suicide bombers, detonating car bombs, using tunnels, and using civilians trapped in the city as human shields.
- **In Libya**, the encirclement of the city of Sirte, a stronghold of ISIS, is tightening. This week, forces of the Government of National Accord, led by the Libyan Dawn militias, **took over Al-Qardabiya Airport**, located about 20 km south of Sirte. The Petroleum Facilities Guard continues to advance toward Sirte from the east and is preparing to take over the town of Harawah (some 70 km east of Sirte).

### The ceasefire in Syria

- According to a report by the Russian Defense Ministry, so far 134 local arrangements for a ceasefire in Syria have been achieved (Sputnik, June 6, 2016). **In practice, the fighting continues (although its intensity varies) in the various provinces in Syria**

## The US-led campaign against ISIS

### Airstrikes

■ The week, the US-led coalition carried out intensive airstrikes in Syria. Most of the airstrikes were carried out in the city of Manbij, as support for the SDF, who are preparing to take it over. This week, for the first time, planes from the aircraft carrier Harry Truman carried out airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria from the Mediterranean Sea. In Iraq, coalition aircraft carried out intensive airstrikes in Fallujah, in support of the campaign waged by the Iraqi Army.

## Russia's involvement in the fighting

■ According to a report by the Russian coordination center at Hmeymim base, during the past week, **Russian Air Force planes attacked several oil production facilities in the area of Al-Hasakah, which is controlled by ISIS.** These attacks destroyed technical equipment and oil products were set on fire (TASS News Agency, June 2, 2016). **In the area of Al-Tura** (about 42 km southwest of Al-Raqqah), Russian Air Force planes attacked another oil facility. According to the coordination center, **the Russian Air Force continues its mission to demolish the economic foundation of ISIS** (TASS News Agency, June 1, 2016).

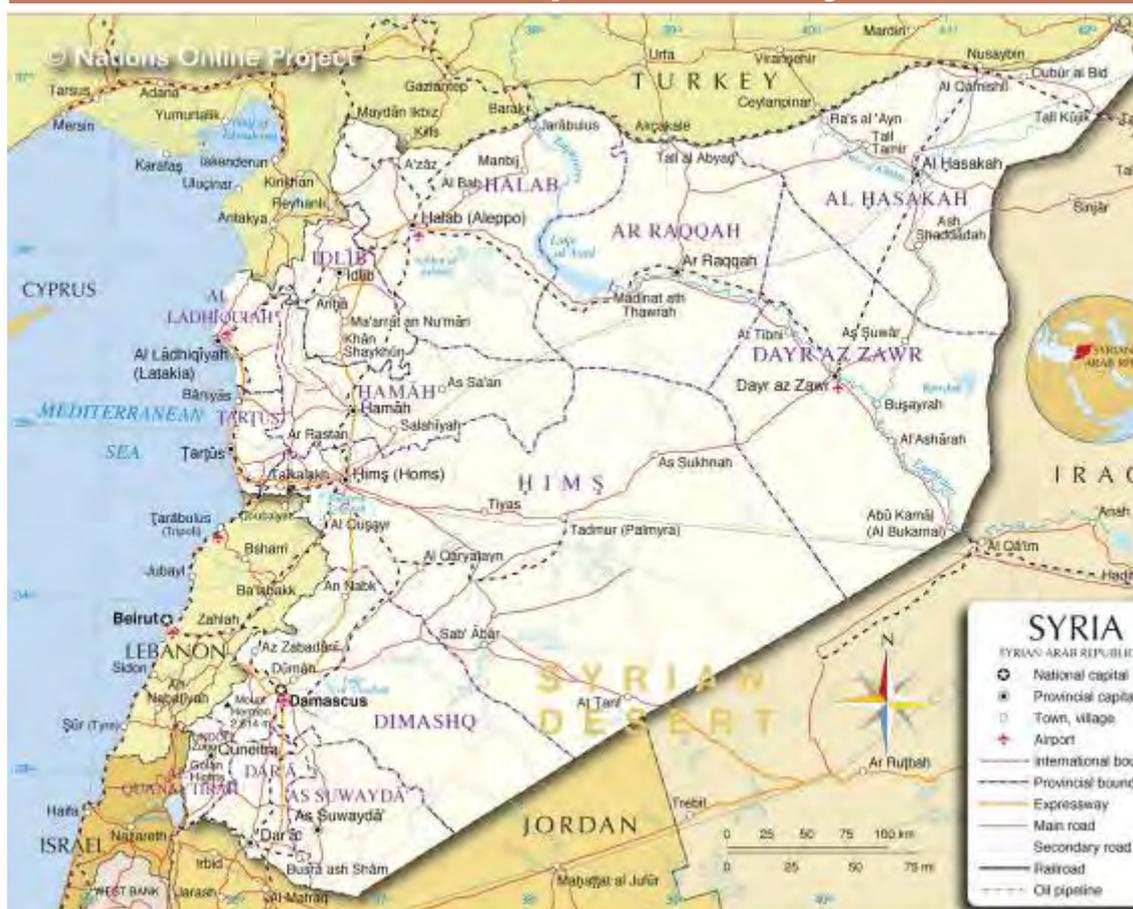
■ The Russian ambassador in Iraq was quoted as saying that Russia was prepared to supply the Iraqi security forces with all the military equipment necessary to defeat ISIS (Sputnik, June 7, 2016).

■ Russian officials **continued to criticize Turkey.** For example:

- **According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, the US-led coalition in Syria was futile because the terrorist operatives continued to enter through the border with Turkey.** According to Lavrov, this coalition is “just talk” and Russia feels that it is being deceived (TASS News Agency, May 31, 2016).

- According to **Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, Turkey serves as a patron of “extremist groups” in Syria.** According to Zakharova, these groups are the main cause of ceasefire breaches. She also pointed out that without the “criminal” intervention of Turkey in the affairs of its neighbor (i.e., Syria), a peace settlement would have been achieved much earlier (TASS News Agency, June 2, 2016).

## Main developments in Syria



Map of Syria ([www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org))

### Syrian Army attack on Tabqa

- On June 4, 2016, the Syrian Army **launched a military operation in eastern Syria with Russian air support**. The operation is taking place on the road from the city of Ithriya to the city of Tabqa, located on the banks of Lake Assad (about 43 km southwest of Al-Raqqah). According to reports, the Syrian Army is already within the boundaries of the Al-Raqqah Governorate (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, June 4, 2016).



The administrative area of the Al-Raqqah Governorate in eastern Syria (Google Maps)



Towns that have been taken over by the Syrian Army along the road leading from Ithriya to Tabqa (circled) (Google Maps)

■ According to reports at the time of the attack, the Syrian Army was able to take over some important towns along the route leading to Tabqa and the forces are within about 20 km from the military airbase of Tabqa:

- **The area of the village of Abu al-'Allaj:** On June 5, 2016, the Syrian Army reportedly took over the village of Abu al-'Allaj from the hands of ISIS. In addition, several hills around the village were taken over. During the fighting in the area, dozens of ISIS operatives were killed and injured, and an ISIS headquarters, armored vehicles and weapons were destroyed (Syrian TV, June 5, 2016).



Syrian Army artillery fire around the village of Abu al-Allaj (Syrian TV, June 5, 2016)

- **The area of the village of Bir Nabaj:** That same day, the Syrian Army took over the village of Bir Nabaj, on the road leading to Tabqa (around 40 km south of Tabqa). Russian planes carried out airstrikes against ISIS targets in the area, in support of the Syrian Army.
- **The town of Bir Zidan:** The next day, the Syrian Army took over the town of Bir Zidan, located on the road.

## The SDF's attack on the city of Manbij

■ After about a week of fighting, the SDF troops **were five kilometers from the ISIS-controlled city of Manbij**. According to Kurdish sources, the forces are now preparing to attack the city. ISIS operatives have reportedly retreated from 15 towns and villages to the east of the city (Al-Durar al-Shamiya, June 1, 2016). ISIS released a video documenting the distribution of weapons and military equipment to 140 young people aged 15-16 and their pledge of allegiance to ISIS's leader. This recruitment of young people, with the SDF troops at the outskirts of Manbij, may indicate a **manpower shortage** among the ISIS operatives in the city. ISIS operatives have reportedly transferred detainees from the city's jails out of the city and are also allowing civilians to leave.



Right: Boys from Manbij standing in line to receive combat vests and weapons. Left: Armed boys from Manbij pledging allegiance to ISIS (Haqq, June 4, 2016)

## Battles in the area of Khan Touman, south of Aleppo

■ Jaysh al-Fatah (led by the Al-Nusra Front) launched an offensive this week in the area of Khan Touman, south of Aleppo, which it had taken over on May 6, 2016. The purpose of the attack is to expand Jaysh al-Fatah's area of control around Khan Touman. The Syrian Army in the area is supported by the pro-Iranian Shiite militias, along with Russian air support. Jaysh al-Fatah has announced the takeover of several villages near Khan Touman. It also claims that its operatives shot down a fighter plane (allegedly Russian, according to one report) that crashed about 13 km southwest of Aleppo (Al-Jazeera, June 5, 2016).



The Khan Touman village area, the site of battles between the Syrian Army and Jaysh al-Fatah (Google Maps)



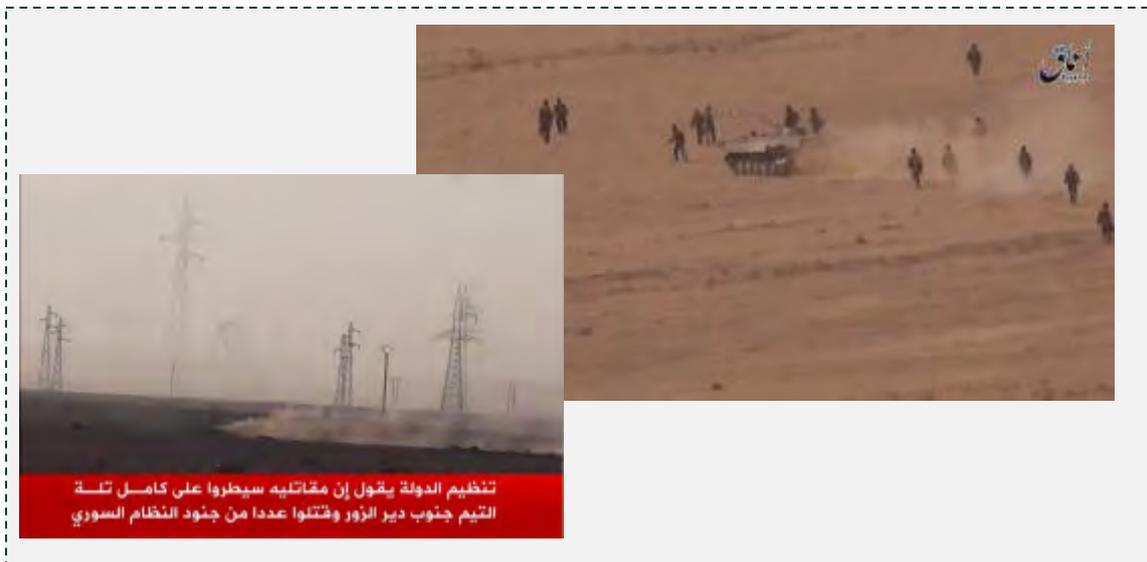
A large fireball claimed to be a Russian fighter jet shot down southwest of Aleppo  
(Jaysh al-Fatah's Twitter account, June 5, 2016)

## Fighting in the area of the oil field south of Deir al-Zor

- On June 4, 2016, ISIS announced that its operatives had taken over **Tallat Thayyem** from the Syrian Army. This is an area that dominates the **Thayyem oil field** (10 km southeast of Deir al-Zor). This is one of Syria's most important oil fields in the Deir al-Zor area.



The Thayyem oil field (Google Maps)



Right: Syrian Army soldiers retreating from the area dominating Thayyem (Haqq, June 5, 2016)  
Left: Tallat Thayyem, the area that dominates the Thayyem oil field (Al-Jazeera, June 5, 2016)

## Main developments in Iraq



Map of Iraq ([www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org))

## The campaign to take over the city of Fallujah (Updated to June 8, 2016)

■ **The Iraqi Army has encountered difficulties in the campaign to take over Fallujah.** Although Iraqi sources continue to report on accomplishments, **the Iraqi Army is apparently finding it difficult to advance into the city.** ISIS responded with guerrilla attacks against the Iraqi Army and Shiite militias, during which suicide bombers and car bombs were used.

■ According to a report by an Iraqi “security source” from June 6, 2016, the Iraqi Army managed to take over the gas plant located south of Fallujah. The Iraqi Army also reported that its forces had entered the Jubail and Shuhadaa neighborhoods in the south of the city (Al-Sumaria, June 5-6, 2016). According to the Iraqi Army commander of the operation for the liberation of Fallujah, the Iraqi Army’s slow progress in the city is due to the large number of IEDs planted by ISIS throughout the city. He added that the Iraqi Army was advancing from the southern side of the city, with the aim of reaching the city center (AFP, June 7, 2016). According to the commander of the pro-Iranian Shiite militias, the militias are cooperating with the Iraqi security forces, and 47 villages and two suburbs of Fallujah have been liberated so far (Al-Mayadeen, June 5, 2016).



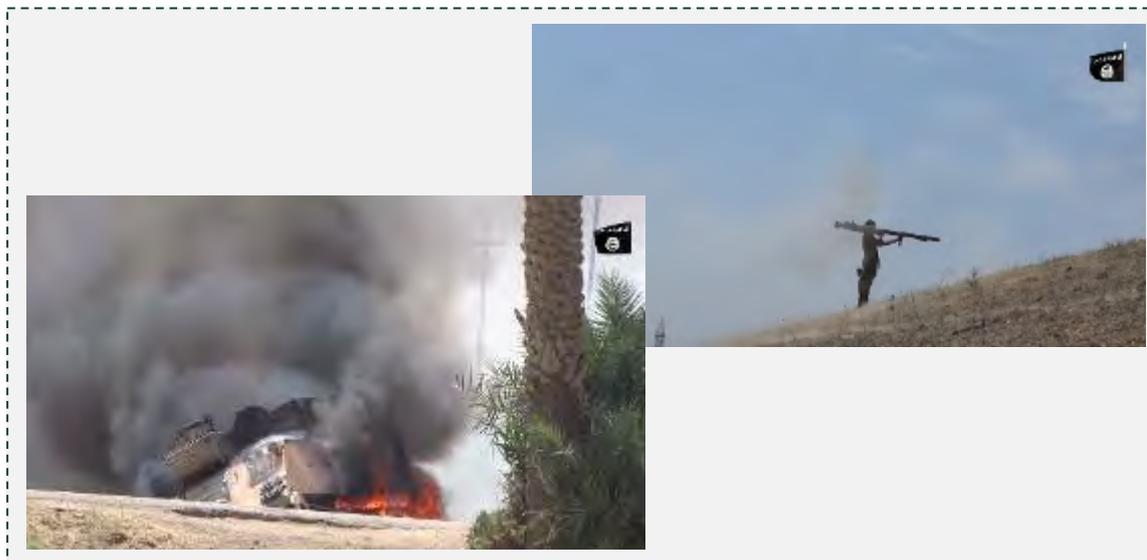
Gas plant in the city of Fallujah, taken over by the Iraqi Army (Al-Sumaria, June 6, 2016)

■ **ISIS is accompanying the battle over Fallujah with a media campaign.** The main message of the campaign is that ISIS operatives are achieving victories over the Iraqi Army and that **ISIS is determined to keep Fallujah under its control.** One of

the videos distributed by ISIS shows anti-tank missiles being fired at an Iraqi Army vehicle and a car bomb being detonated by a suicide bomber (Haqq, June 3, 2016).



Right: The suicide bomber Abu Omar the Uzbek on his way to carry out a suicide bombing attack against the Iraqi Army. Left: The car bomb blowing up (Haqq, June 3, 2016)



Right: Antitank missile fire. Left: Iraqi Army in flames (Haqq, June 3, 2016).

## The city of Baghdad and its environs

■ **ISIS continues to carry out terrorist acts and guerrilla warfare in and around the city of Baghdad.** On June 4, 2016, there were several attacks **throughout Baghdad**, killing nine people (including soldiers). **In the town of Al-Tarmiya**, north of Baghdad, a suicide bomber activated an explosive belt at an Iraqi Army checkpoint. Four soldiers were killed. In two other places to the south and southwest of Baghdad, four people were killed by IEDs that exploded.

## Other areas

- **Karbala** - A car bomb exploded in the city of Karbala (about 100 km south of Baghdad), one of the Shiites' strongholds in Iraq. At least eight people were reportedly killed and 24 others were wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack (Haqq, June 7, 2016).
- **Mosul** - ISIS's Nineveh Province released a video documenting the destruction of archaeological sites, probably in the city of Mosul and its outskirts. The video ends with a call to destroy the Pyramids in Egypt (Haqq, June 7, 2016).



Destruction of antiquities in the area of Mosul (Haqq, June 7, 2016)

## Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula

- Egyptian security forces continued their intensive security activity against ISIS's Sinai Province. The activity focused on northern Sinai. ISIS operatives were killed, there were widespread arrests, weapons were seized, a new tunnel near the border with Gaza was destroyed, and IEDs were neutralized. ISIS operatives, on their part, continued to attack the Egyptian forces, mainly by detonating IEDs in cities and along roads.

## The global jihad in other countries

### Libya

#### The campaign over Sirte

This week, the forces advancing toward the city of Sirte from east and west took over other key areas. The most prominent is the **Al-Qardabiya Airport, located south of Sirte**. **ISIS's territorial control base in and around Sirte** is shrinking and its operatives are forced to defend the city itself.

#### Advance to Sirte by forces from the west

■ According to an announcement by the operations room in Misrata, forces led by Libyan Dawn **took over the Al-Qardabiya International Airport, about 20 km south of Sirte** (the airport had been taken over by ISIS about a year ago). There is also a **Libyan Air Force base** at the airport. Next the forces took the town of **Qasr Abu Hadi**, near the airport, and advanced towards **the area of Al-Gharbiyat, on the outskirts of Sirte** (the Facebook page of the information center of the campaign over Sirte, June 4, 2016; Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, June 4, 2016).



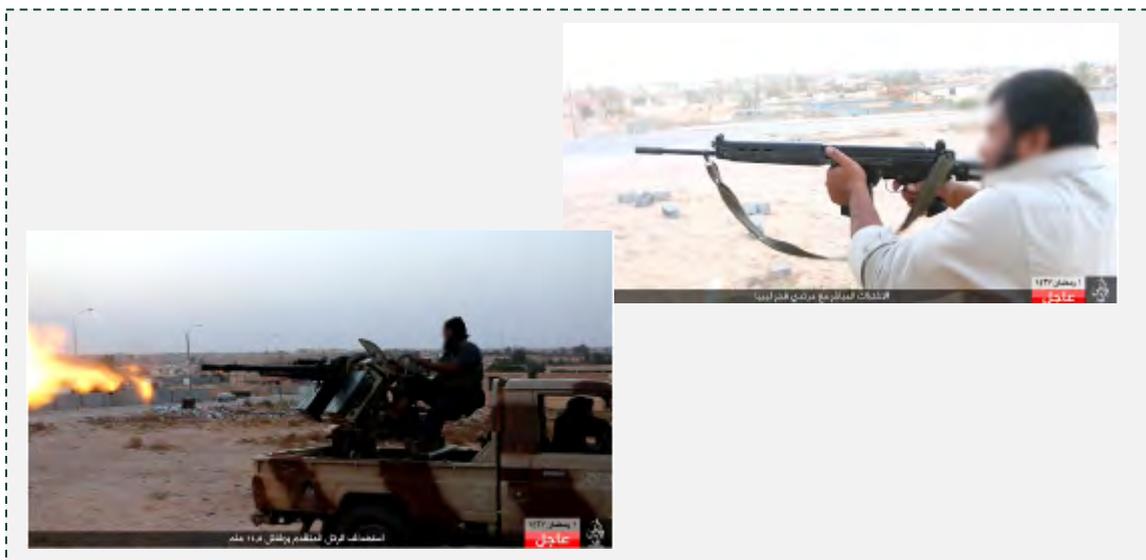
The Al-Qardabiya International Airport, about 20 km south of Sirte, which was taken over by the Libyan Dawn forces (Google Maps)



The attacking forces entering the Al-Qardabiya International Airport (Twitter account of the information center of the campaign over Sirte, June 4, 2016)

■ **ISIS (as usual) responded with guerrilla warfare against the attacking forces.**

On June 2, 2016, ISIS claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing attack against a convoy of Libyan Dawn troops attempting to advance toward Sirte. ISIS also claimed responsibility for shooting down a fighter plane that had attacked the ISIS operatives in the area where the suicide bombing attack was carried out (justpaste.it, June 2, 2016; Haqq, June 3, 2016). The operation's information center confirmed that two combatants were killed and 12 others were wounded in a car bomb explosion to the east of the power plant. The information center also reported that a fighter plane had crashed "due to a technical failure" after carrying out airstrikes on ISIS targets (Al-Wasat Portal, June 2, 2016).



From an ISIS video documenting fighting between ISIS operatives from Sirte and Libyan Dawn operatives to the south of the city. According to ISIS, 22 Libyan Dawn operatives were injured in the fighting. According to ISIS, after the fighting, the Libyan Dawn operatives abandoned the area, leaving behind weapons (Haqq, June 6, 2016).

## The force east of Sirte

■ The Petroleum Facilities Guard, which liberated the towns of Bin Jawad and Nawfaliyah last week, **announced that it was advancing towards the town of Harawah** (70 km east of Sirte). A senior operative in the attacking force anticipated difficulties in the battle over Harawah because of the presence of civilians, the minefields surrounding the town, and the booby-trapped buildings there. According to sources in Harawah, ISIS operatives built embankments around the town and booby-trapped a number of buildings there (Al-Arabi al-Jadeed, June 2, 2016; Bawabat Ifriqya al-Ikhbariya, June 2, 2016; Al-Wasat Portal, June 3, 2016).



The town of Harawah, ISIS's last stronghold east of Sirte (Google Maps)

## The maritime arena

■ A senior officer in the Libyan Coast Guard, who held a press conference in Misrata, said that his forces were also participating in the campaign. According to him, the Coast Guard carries out patrols along the coast **to prevent the arrival of supplies and reinforcements for ISIS in Sirte and to prevent ISIS operatives escaping by sea**. At the press conference, the spokesman for the campaign's operations room stressed that there was no presence of foreign forces or foreign military experts alongside the Libyan forces (Al-Tadamoun News Agency, June 3, 2016; Al-Wasat Portal, June 3, 2016).

## The battle for hearts and minds

### The threats against Israel continue

- The Twitter account of Aamaq, ISIS's media foundation, **published an announcement calling for the opening of a front against Israel** (the original wording: "the Jewish enemy") immediately. According to ISIS, this is because Israel carries out airstrikes against its Sinai Province. According to Aamaq, seven unmanned Israeli aircraft, warplanes and Apache attack helicopters carried out massive airstrikes against positions [of ISIS operatives] in northern Sinai (Aamaq's Twitter account, June 5, 2016).