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ISIS in 2018

Iraq as a Model



THE CENTER OF MAKING
POLICIES FOR INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز صنع السياسات الدراسات الدولية والاستراتيجية

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Introduction to the Formation of ISIS:

Since October 2010, ISIS has gone through four stages:

- 2010: formation of solid nucleus around al-Baghdadi
- 2013: Declaration of the unification of Iraq and Sham sections and separation from al-Qaeda
- 2014: Breaking the borders, declaration of allegiance to the Caliphate of al-Baghdadi and the designation of the borders of the land of Caliphate and empowerment.
- In 2015, the start of the battles of liberation from ISIS occupation in Ard al-Tamkeen (land of empowerment) until the end of 2017, when it declared its complete defeat in Iraq, 98% of Syria, 97% of Libya and 98% of Sinai.

Four years ago, the International Coalition announced that it had eliminated ISIS's military capabilities, expelled it from densely-populated cities and villages, hindered the influx of foreign combatants to the land of battles, and then hindered the reverse return, drained terrorism's financial sources from fixed capital and movable assets, decoded ISIS's administration and finance, eliminated the staff of the central chamber of finance and zakat and targeted the centres of ISIS's military and chemical development and manufacturing centres. The Coalition had also targeted senior leaders. It had killed 42 out of 43 founding leaders who constitute the solid nucleus, killed nearly 79 first row leaders, replaced most of the field and central leaders following several defeats and operation interruptions, eliminated staffs and means of ISIS's Central Information Bureau, especially Abu Muhammad al-Furqan, also known as Dr. Wa'il Adel Hasan Salman al-Fayad, and also Killed Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, also known as Taha Subhi Falaha. In addition, the International Coalition had targeted the most important leaders of ISIS's Delegated Committee, which operates as a First Ministry. It had thus killed the head of the Committee Abdul Rahman al-Obeidi (Abu Saleh Haifa) and his deputy Iyad Hamid Mahl al-Jumayli (Abu Yahya al-Iraqi). This mission was assigned to soldiers of less historical and charismatic value and who have limited administrative, security, financial and organisational expertise, namely

Humal Mushtaq Talib al-Janabi (Abu Omar Ujbar, 90), and his associate Anwar Hamad al-Janabi (called Haji Aref).

Organisational and Financial Structure:

Since April 2013, ISIS had issued 104 visual and audio editions, but has provided a visual edition of a different type (the Edifice of the Caliphate), which contains the organisational structure of the most radical group among the extremist Islamic groups, in an attempt to show the rule of Caliphate and decentralisation in the core Islam. This was confirmed by the commentator on the edition when he said: “The caliph cannot directly carry out all of the State’s tasks alone, as he needs an associate.”

The edition talked about the organisational structure, starting with an introduction to its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, followed by the Shura Council and then the Delegated Committee, which receives orders from the Shura Council.

According to the 14-minute and 58-second edition, the “Delegated Committee” supervises the so-called “Offices and Bodies Department,” which includes five offices that monitor the work of the 14 diwans. ISIS mentioned in the edition that its forces are present in 35 cities, which it called “states,” divided into 19 “states” in Syria and Iraq, using the description of Iraq and Syria of course, and 16 “states” in other countries.

The places where ISIS is present in Syria and Iraq were mentioned in the following order: “Jazira, al-Birkah, al-Khair, Raqqa, Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Euphrates,” which ISIS named them all the Sham State in 2018, in addition to “Baghdad, al-Anbar, Saladin, Falluja, Diyala, Northern Baghdad, the south, Nineveh, Kirkuk and Tigris,” that ISIS named the Iraq State in 2018.

The other ISIS locations included Najd, Hejaz, Sinai, Cyrenaica, Tripoli, Fezzan, Algeria, West Africa, Ibb city, Khorasan, Caucasus, Aden, Abyan, Shabwah, Hadhramaut, which ISIS named the Khorasan State (containing less than 1,000 active combatants and nearly 4,000 idle combatants), the State of West Africa (containing about 3,000 active combatants and about 12,000 idle combatants), the State of the Two Holy Mosques and Yemen (containing

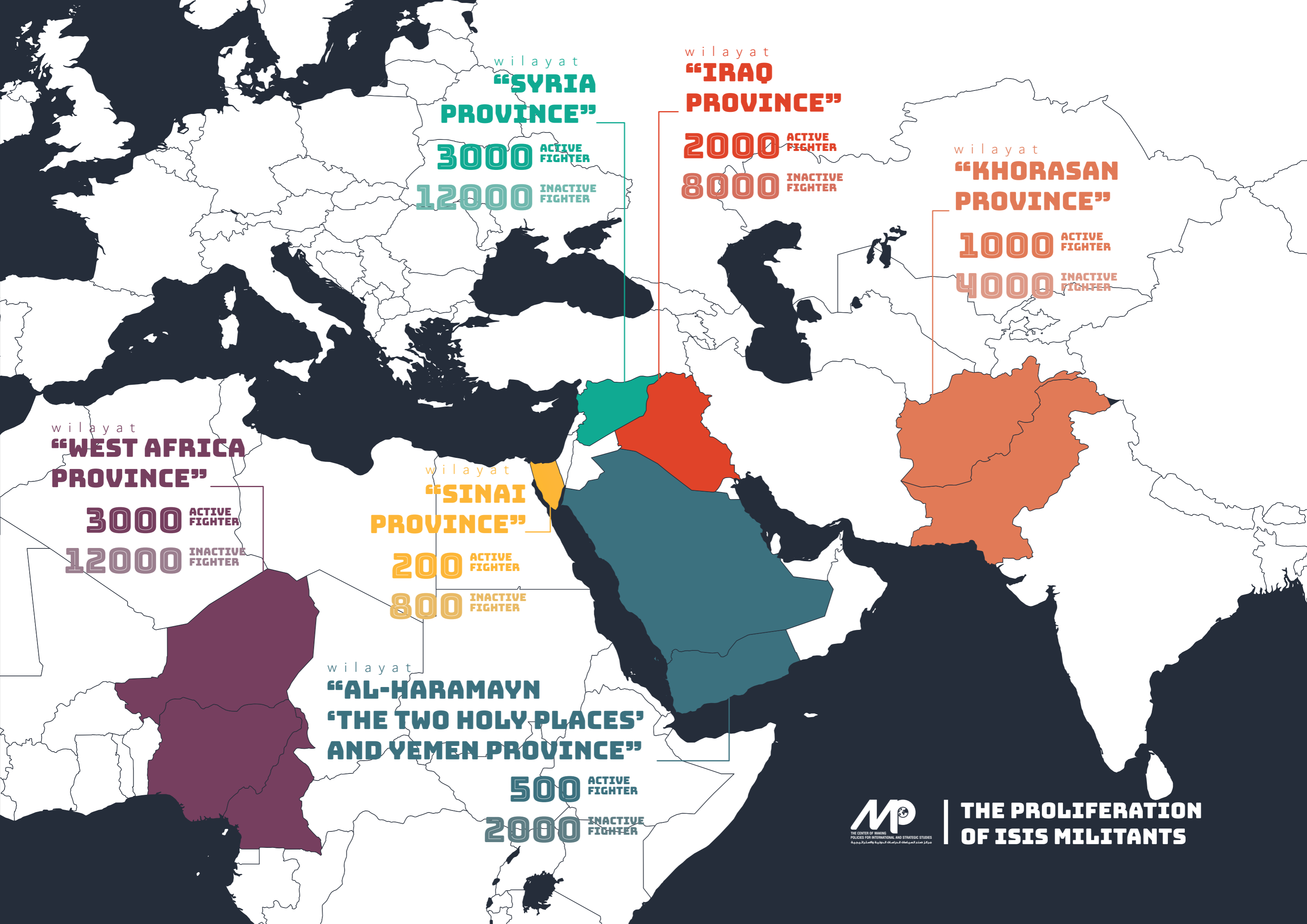
less than 500 active combatants and about 2,000 idle combatants), and the State of Sinai (containing less than 200 combatants and about 800 idle combatants).

In 2018, it seems to us that the land of the Caliphate has almost disappeared, with the exception of internal areas of al-Susah, al-Shaafah and Hajin in the Eastern Euphrates in Syria. Estimates now indicate that in the ISIS's Iraq State, there are about 2,000 active combatants with logistic support from about 8,000 idle combatants "militarily idle cells," and in Syria, there are about 3,000 active combatants with logistical support from about 12,000 idle combatants.

According to reports published by *Foreign Policy* and Western economic newspapers concerned with the war economy, ISIS's finance had reached its peak in March - June 2015. ISIS had acquired about 5.5 to 7 billion US dollars from oil exports, bank deposits, arms sales, smuggling of antiquities, seizure of government equipment and properties, receiving royalties, drug dealing and the imposition of taxes and Zakat. Observers confirm that ISIS succeeded in earning nearly 700 million dollars through the money laundering operations of al-Rawi Financial Network (Fawaz Muhammad Jubair al-Rawi) outside Iraq, Syria and Libya and invested them in trades, industries, real estates and technology, as well as other investments that it had later benefited from their profits in 2017. ISIS had also succeeded in investing about 400-600 million dollars in Iraq and Syria for self-financing uses in each state aside. Accordingly, it still acquires nearly 1.5 - 2 billion dollars in 2018, which confirms the saying that ISIS is "the richest terrorist group in recent history."

According to observers, it may seem that ISIS has simply retreated. However, this is far from reality. It has restarted its organisational work of 2010, its starting point (looking for a new solid nucleus, self-financing, rearranging matters and monitoring security gaps to go back to the Ard al-Tamkeen and Caliphate).

The survival, non-killing or non-capture of the founder of ISIS makes him the guarantor of this group's continuity as a secret group for a long time, with (the stealth fighter) tactic and (long arm battles) that would transform itself from the group of the Caliphate in the



wilayat
**"SYRIA
PROVINCE"**

3000 ACTIVE FIGHTER
12000 INACTIVE FIGHTER

wilayat
**"IRAQ
PROVINCE"**

2000 ACTIVE FIGHTER
8000 INACTIVE FIGHTER

wilayat
**"KHORASAN
PROVINCE"**

1000 ACTIVE FIGHTER
4000 INACTIVE FIGHTER

wilayat
**"WEST AFRICA
PROVINCE"**

3000 ACTIVE FIGHTER
12000 INACTIVE FIGHTER

wilayat
**"SINAI
PROVINCE"**

200 ACTIVE FIGHTER
800 INACTIVE FIGHTER

wilayat
**"AL-HARAMAYN
'THE TWO HOLY PLACES'
AND YEMEN PROVINCE"**

500 ACTIVE FIGHTER
2000 INACTIVE FIGHTER



**THE PROLIFERATION
OF ISIS MILITANTS**

land to a group paving the way for the land of the Caliphate again. ISIS will by then engage in reprisals and revenges against the Sunni tribes and awakening movements, in addition to battles against factions among those affiliated to Sunni and Shiite Islamic groups. It will target afterwards the government forces in camps, barracks, security headquarters, prisons as well as intelligence and investigations officers up to the judges. Europe and USA will not be safe from large operations from organised groups and supporters that are spread as lone wolves from the southeast to the northwest of Europe.

In 2018, ISIS has lost its 14 diwans that served as ministries in the areas under its control, namely, the Diwan of Judiciary and Grievances, Diwan of Daawah and Mosques, Diwan of Soldiers, Diwan of Treasury, Diwan of Education, Diwan of Returns and Booty, Diwan of Accounting, Diwan of Zakat, Diwan of Public Security, Diwan of Central Information, Diwan of Healthcare, Diwan of Ore and Diwan of Services.” According to confessions of Saddam al-Jamal (Abu Rukaya al-Ansari) and Dr. Ismail al-Ithawi (Abu Zaid al-Iraqi), ISIS has formed the following structure for the reduced states:

- A governor who is an acting leader on behalf al-Baghdadi in each State, member of the Shura Council and member of the Delegated Committee.
- Each governor has three deputy governors: Deputy Governor of Security, Intelligence, and Military Centres, Manufacturing, Development and Private Post, Deputy Governor of Sharia Centres, Judiciary, Daawah, Grievances, Allegiance, Mosques and Tribes, as well Deputy Governor of Service, Information and Media Centres, Healthcare, Finance, Zakat and Taxes.
- state is divided into sectors and under decentralised powers granted by al-Baghdadi to the governor.

In addition to the diwans, there are official bodies and offices: “the Immigration Authority, the Prisoners and Martyrs’ Affairs Authority, the Research and Studies Office, the Administration of Distant States, and the Offices of Public Relations and Tribes.” These offices have also been reduced to a single network of operations management outside the states. Their structure is similar to that of the states, especially if we consider Europe as one state with sectors.

This network of operations management is considered the most dangerous office for the West, especially following the return of about 3,000 - 3,500 uncontrolled combatants who are not documented on the lists of the people wanted by the security authorities in Europe and who have received military, security and Sharia trainings through the management of cells that are composed of 9 - 21 combatants. This network controls the detachments of dozens of militants who adopt the extremist jihadist ideology.

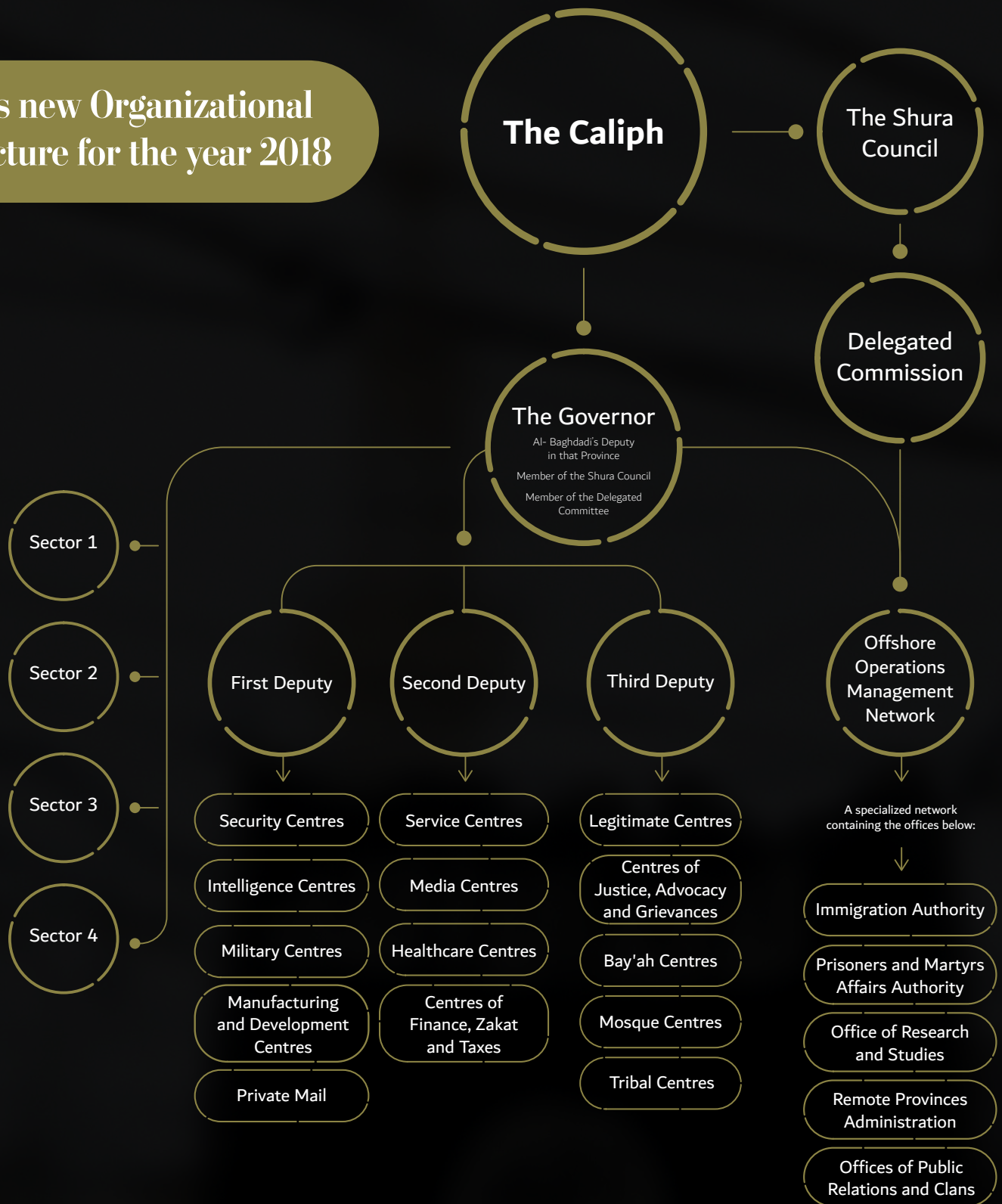


A few months after ensuring a stable situation, ISIS members stand united in their commitment to this group's ideas and directions. ISIS has been defeated in the Ard al-Tamkeen, but its doctrine and approach are still entrenched in the minds and hearts of its members.

In the second preliminary phase, this external network will focus on fighting the US-led coalition countries and their major allies. However, by the beginning of 2021, with the onset of the expected economic crisis, there may be a complete and sudden change in ISIS's objectives. Perhaps what happened in 2014 may happen again in African countries. Instead of carrying out direct attacks in Iraq and Syria, al-Baghdadi talked in his recent speech in August 2018 about ISIS's capabilities of counter-immigration, West Africa and Khorasan, which would be aimed at avenging Arab regimes and random killings in Europe.

When it dominated vast parts of Iraq and Syria, ISIS was still officially part of the organisational structure of the local communities. In the vast majority of areas, it had

ISIS's new Organizational Structure for the year 2018



continued applying the ideas of jihadist Salafism and extremist Muslim Brotherhood. As for now, ISIS is no longer linked to the local communities and has its own approaches, clerics and theorists. It has become very similar to the mixture of the experience of al-Zarqawi and that of al-Baghdadi Abu Omar. However, ISIS's remnants in Iraq, which remained loyal to al-Baghdadi, achieved spectacular gains themselves, while being called the "Triangles of Death" in February 2018.

According to local intelligence and newspaper reports, in Syria more than 15,000 combatants and idle combatants follow ISIS's doctrine and approach. They often impose allegiance, even through murder, on former jihadists at al-Qaeda and its affiliates and other factions.

While the situation in Yemen continues to aggravate, ISIS is getting stronger by means of financial and logistics support coming from the emirate, led by al-Baghdadi. Thus, the security forces in Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf and Jordan relatively managed to neutralize the danger and penetrate most of the organization's terrorist cells and networks.

According to press estimates, the number of ISIS fighters, which was estimated at dozens earlier, has tripled, reaching at least three hundred since the beginning of Yemen's internal crisis. Nonetheless, the number of ISIS combatants in West Africa, counting for at least 3,000, has increased, according to specialist estimates. As such, the terrorist movement continues to attract new recruits, including African immigrants in the US and Europe, frequently targeting Western tourists and aid workers. Moreover, ISIS managed to merge formerly opposing armed factions to form a jihadist block in the region.

Accordingly, ISIS has grown noticeably in number and capacity. Even in Afghanistan, where more than 2,000 US soldiers have lost their lives during armed clashes with al-Qaeda and its ally Taliban since 9/11, US forces discovered in 2015 the largest ISIS command-and-control ISIS centre after Iraq, Syria and Libya.

Similarly, ISIS's strength originates from its six states, abundant funds, specialized expertise, and jihadist doctrine, in addition to thousands of widely spread personnel who

are better trained and organized as they were never before when the organization was located in Ard al-Tamkeen.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, as well as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi have long hoped to dismantle the borders, declare Islamist Caliphate and impose the provisions of its rule. They aspired to establish a global network that can handle professionally the challenges put forth by various international strategies designed to stem the jihadist tide. The latest structural formation of ISIS, which aims to establish the second Ard al-Tamkeen, is technically more advanced than the first one. As such, during its previous stage of action, ISIS was occupied by making a tremendous number of enemies, bloodshed, and desperately defending the land of Caliphate in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and Sinai. However, during the present phase, the terrorist movement executed a complex and secretive diffusion plan for its armed formations in three continents, which makes it difficult to uproot it this time.

Most Prominent ISIS Leaders in 2018:

The ten most important leaders of the terrorist organization in 2018 are:

1. Sükrü Tuncer who is of Turkish-French origin, and fills the position of ISIS's Director of external operations.
2. Abu Ammar al-Saudi, fills the position of ISIS's Director of external operations.
3. Ahmad Abdullah Sweid al-Shammari, aka Abu Saleh al-Shammari, officer of Diwan al-Jund and member of ISIS's Delegated Committee.
4. Nashed Fahd al-Isawi, aka Abu Suhaib al-Iraqi, security and intelligence Commander.
5. Abu Sattam Rafi Ismail al-Asafi, the administrative and financial supervisor of Iraq and Syria states.
6. Moataz Ali Saleh al-Ithawi, aka Abu Yasser al-Ithawi, Operations Commander of Iraq state and member of ISIS's Delegated Committee.
7. Ibrahim Mohammed Abboud al-Isawi, aka Abu Ziad, responsible for finance operations in Iraq state.
8. Mustafa Mansour al-Rawi, aka Abu Talha, Operations Commander of Hajin area in Syria
9. Mithak Taleb Alwan al-Janabi, aka Abu Omar, member of ISIS's Delegated Committee and security supervisor for Iraq and Syria states.
10. Kheder Ahmed Rashed Abu Ahmed al-Quni, supervisor of Nineveh and Saladin districts.

ISIS in 2018 and the Iraqi Model:

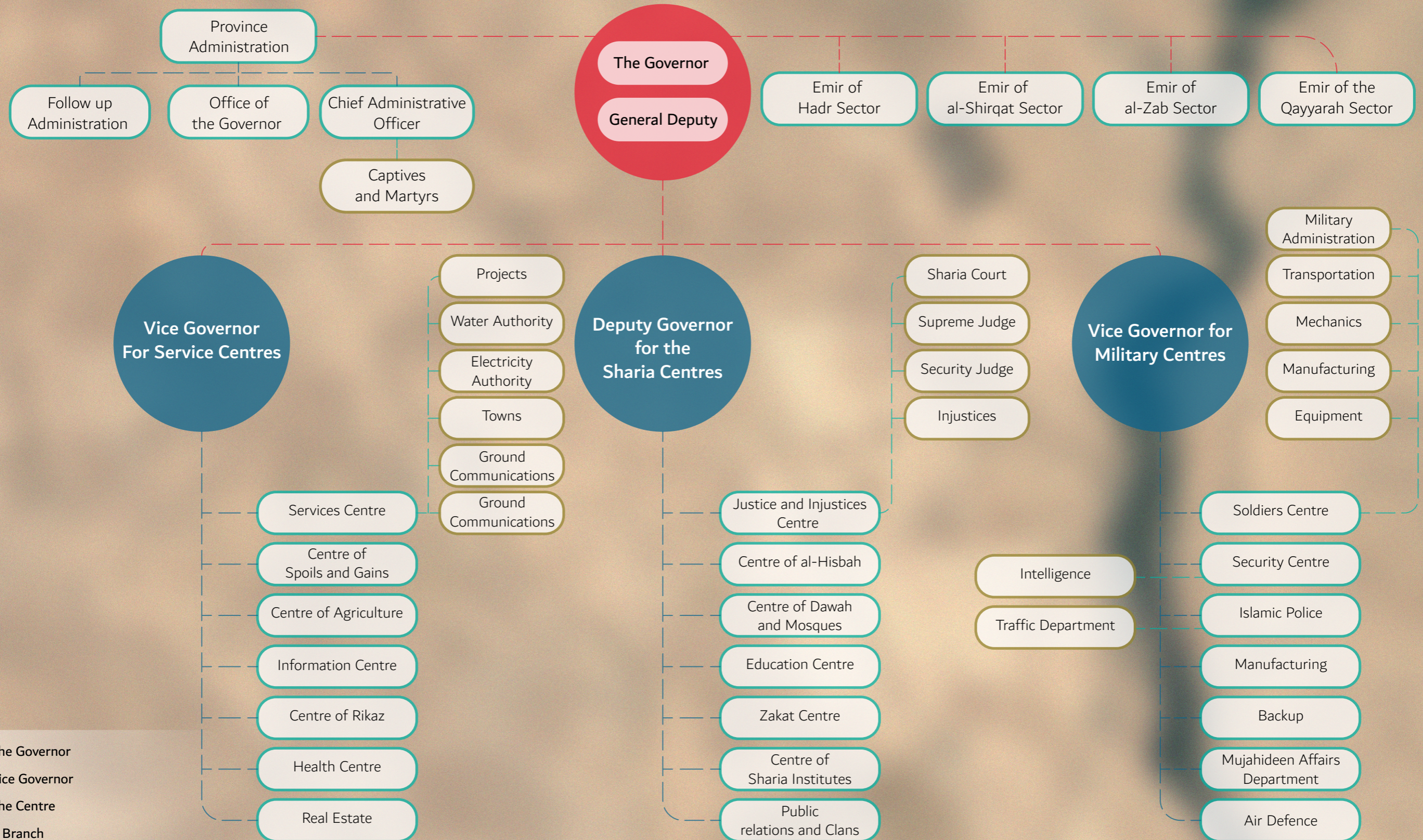
The areas of Saladin, Nineveh, al-Anbar, Diyala and south of Kirkuk, which have been liberated earlier, belong to the Sunni Arabs along with most of the Iraqi religious and ethnic minorities. The urban areas of these regions are inhabited by the liberal society, mostly middle class traders, craftsmen, and professionals who have modern lifestyles; on the other hand, rural zones and the countryside belong to conservative religious communities. As such, the population of these rural regions have established an agricultural society

along with a traditional economic pattern, drifting away from the modern urban way of life.

This heterogeneous and multi-cultural mixture produced an extremist religious rebellion that sought to revive the Islamist Caliphate on the basis of Minhaj al-Nubuwwah (the prophet's pathway) and al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ (the pious predecessors). Such pattern of thought is founded on an extremist interpretation and a distorted understanding of several texts of Islamic creed (Aqidah), jurisprudence (Fiqh), and Sunnah teachings. Nevertheless, the emerging extremist ideology depends mainly on armed violence, i.e. Jihad, in addition to imposing religious rules on others, carrying along hatred, Osama bin Laden's two paths theory (al-fustatin) and Abu Musab al-Suri's military theory. These religious fanatics were also influenced by al-Zarqawi's experience in this particular field, and al-Hakim's *Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass*, in addition to the philosophy of Abu Hamza al-Muhajir and Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, and the oath of allegiance to al-Baghdadi (Bayah). Such unbalanced legacy was endorsed by the energy of youthful enthusiasts, brutal combat experiences, along with military, security and logistics expertise.

After announcing the joint Iraqi forces victory in battles against ISIS, the organization lost the Ard al-Tamkeen and the ability to raise its banner on any civilian, governmental or military building in Iraq. Hence, ISIS combatants turned into remnants scattered in steppes, deserts, mountains and hills, as well as jolty agricultural areas. ISIS remnants attempted to self-finance their operations and exhaust the Iraqi forces located in the roads linking the different governorates and on the outskirts of cities, villages and borders. Indeed, these terrorist elements started targeting Iraqi citizens on the basis of their identities, on the one hand, and their political and sectarian loyalty, on the other.

Organizational Structure of the Tigris Province



- The Governor
- Vice Governor
- The Centre
- A Branch
- Linked to the Governor and his Deputy
- The Centres are linked to Deputies
- The Branches are linked to the Centre

It often seems that the easiest way for ISIS members to get money is to intimidate unarmed locals and impose al-Itawah on them; a fact which sheds light on the ineffectiveness of government's security solutions. Consequently, Iraqis lost gradually their trust in the security forces' ability to protect them, which granted terrorists the power to takeover citizens' will and cash. In fact, the rate of terrorist attacks, conducted on the roads, villages and the outskirts of cities, has increased over the last three months, which is correlated to what I wrote in my article on the triangles of death. Thus, despite being freed from ISIS claws, hundreds of outlying small villages daily feel the return of the terrorist domination, especially at night.

Although, Diyala-Kirkuk, Saladin -Kirkuk, and Baghdad-Kirkuk roads receive great attention from the media and the Iraqi Joint Operations Command, there are areas in the south of Nineveh, west of al-Anbar, and northeast of Diyala, in addition to south-west of Kirkuk, west of Saladin and Samarra Island in need of decisive and severe military actions.

There may be conventionally recognized security measures, but, apparently, such methods have little or minor efficiency in establishing security and stability in the region; as if the events in Siniyah, the south of al-Hadar, and Tharthar basin were of no significance to the Iraqi military and intelligence plan of action.

What was the Role of Citizens during these Incidents? And how far they were Involved?

Here we should distinguish between a citizen who communicates with agents of Iraqi Intelligence Service in a serious and correct manner, without receiving any genuine response from the intelligence authorities!, and another one who is unwilling to be involved in the process of reporting suspicious terrorist movements. Most of the locals, who returned to their hometowns, had extensive activity in providing information; however, these returnees were shocked at the Iraqi intelligence's negligence and lack of interest in the reported data. Therefore, citizen informants fear for their lives, once an ISIS element blames or threatens them after being exposed.

Problems of this kind are frequent in many liberated cities and villages, due to similar acts

of negligence by the Iraqi intelligence headquarters, located in different areas. However, these sorts of violations are difficult to detect or even prove to the central bureau in Baghdad or the leaders responsible for such operations. Iraqis became cautious of potential anger outbursts of an officer or an investigator who is either lazy or corrupt, as it is always realistic to consider such possibility. Though, not everything told by citizens is necessarily true, and there is always flak about mosques' regular attendees and men with long beards, in addition to exaggerations about the involvement of former officers and Baathists.

In general, the intelligence authorities should respect and handle carefully the different reports and testimonies made by Iraqis. The Iraqi citizen, who performs his duty in informing about terrorist plans, has the right to confidentiality and anonymousness when conveying such dangerous information, i.e. to protect his personal information (name etc) for his own safety and to preserve the secretive of testimonies.

Moreover, such role played by decent citizens is definitely influential and effective. Iraqis know that the security of their cities and villages is achieved through their own volition, and they are, therefore, both actors and partners with the security forces.

The most important pre-emptive step is to focus on the search for ISIS command-and-control centres rather than on settling and calming the effects of its terrorist attacks. Hence, these centres present the organization's power locus, specifically located in the Hamrin and Matibja hills, al-Baaj desert and al-Hadar as well as Wadi Hauran. In this regard, ISIS leaders and remnants can be pushed back and forced to leave Iraq, and the south of Iraqi Kurdistan, the land of amicable wars and friendly fire. Indeed, Baghdad and Erbil will find salvation only in serious dialogue based on the rule of the law and the Constitution, and through Ankara and Tehran if the aforementioned parties clearly agreed to annul the Kurdish attempts to create an independent state in Iraq, which is an inevitable surgical procedure.

Triangles of Death have been emerging in the forgotten spot of Iraq's geography, and especially in Baghdad's landscape. For ISIS, these triangles of death are similar to Ard al-Tamkeen for being free of intelligence monitoring points, and can be a yard for terrorist

attacks, in addition to collecting money, restoring communication activities, and fuelling sectarian and national conflicts. Hence, ISIS remnants are congregating in these spots and making preparations for the creation of a new incubator, camps, storage facilities and secret investments, which will lead later to direct confrontation with Iraqi security.

War of Remnants and Sleeper Terrorist Cells:

Neglecting security setbacks will neither fix the problem nor defeat the enemy. Accordingly, since the beginning of March until March 22, ISIS has carried out terrorist attacks in several areas of Iraq, especially in the northeast and south of Diyala as well as in the west of al-Anbar. Likewise, the map of terrorist aggressions confirms that ISIS is systematically attempting to achieve three goals:

1. Cutting out the external roads between governorates, and creating more triangles of death, in addition to occupying areas of complex terrain.
2. Disrupting the unity of Iraqi society, which resulted from solidarity between Iraqis against ISIS, by conducting assassinations on the basis of sectarian, religious and political identities.
3. Imposing an economic siege on outlying regions and transform agricultural and open areas to command-and-control centres.

In the south of Kirkuk, we continue to consider terrorist acts as side effects. Similarly, we keep attempting to cure this serious illness with sedatives after our slow response to alarming symptoms. Furthermore, we are neglecting the source of the disease and the defect that generated the syndromes in the first place.

The Important Question is: what is Next, and what should we Do?

The Iraqi joint forces mobilized the totality of its military capabilities and strength in the triangle of the designated area / Diyala-Saladin-Kirkuk.

On the other side there were only the remnants of ISIS and irregular nationalist insurgent cells, which engaged themselves into some sort of hybrid street warfare, striking unanticipated targets of civilians through treacherous operations, fake control or ambushes,

or isolated military entrants and intermediaries causing significant and dramatic losses.

The outskirts and the rural areas of the liberated cities are witnessing a state of fear and danger. The solution to such situation will only be realized through an intelligence battle, special operations and regional forces.

Even if the military campaign on ISIS ended with the victory of the Iraqi armed forces and their allies, the war on terrorism will be ongoing in order to eradicate the causes and roots of terrorism and track its remnants and sleeper cells and other means. This will rely mainly on intelligence and community cooperation, for the origin of the fight against terrorism and violent extremism springs from the rejection of society and the cooperation of its members with the government.

The return of ISIS sub-units and insurgent groups to spite and choosing specific timing, setting and target, through fictitious control and planned ambushes, means the re-establishment of their “shadow organizations.” This will increase intelligence and economic burden on al-Abadi government and calls for closing the file of the return of displaced through focused and careful security scrutiny and vetting. These burdens also include the activation of the factors contributing to the stability of the southern regions of Kurdistan amid the downturn of political reconciliation between Baghdad and Kurdistan and the dispute over the management of those areas, as well as the need for closing any pending file hampering rights of popular, tribal and regional mobilizations.

The complexity of the economic and security situation in the liberated areas is increasing day after day as a result of the overwhelming problems, weak solutions, the intervention of local, regional and partisan lobbies, and the emergence of community forces, which established ties with relief civil society organizations and international organizations working on rehabilitation and reconstruction programs. The emergence of tribal, ethnic, sectarian and nationalist forces in the vicinity of Mosul and its alliance with Baghdad is another factor. The citizen will have to confront all those administrative slums trapped within the cycle of poverty, lack of services and terrorist threats.

The conclusion that should be drawn out of this story is the need to start enhancing one's confidence in the Iraqi national identity, weakening the authority of tribes and armed groups, and recognizing each other and apologizing.

The cost of the liberation of the following governorates, Saladin, Diyala, Kirkuk, al-Anbar and Nineveh, was very heavy. It took the lives of many people and caused losses at the level of funds, buildings and heritage. This achievement was a major turning point in the history of the victories of the Iraqi armed forces, whose goal was to eliminate the military presence of ISIS, uproot its intellectual strongholds, eradicate its logistical and financial capabilities, thwart its media plans and expose its savage and dirty terrorist practices.

The multiple armed forces stationed in the liberated and relatively stable cities and various government committees involved in reconstruction, as well as the return of the displaced and the provision of necessary services have created major complications at the level of economy and security. These complexities have been primarily caused by multiple interests and contradictions of those forces, and the local governments are weak and need federal government action.

Through supporting the return of some 2.6 million internally displaced people to the liberated cities and accusing the field forces of using "electoral propaganda" tactics to create a majority of partisan elections after Baghdad has accused these forces of hampering coexistence and integration efforts, Baghdad, international organizations and major embassies have come to realize that the political parties are competing over reconstruction deals and care less about Iraqi people losing their lives or property.

Political entities support those who elect them for their political interests, and their leadership is hoping to gain government leverage, which will contribute to increasing its wealth and the expansion of its powers.

It has become clear that information and intelligence services must rely on the citizens of the liberated areas and many relatively stable areas to prevent the re-emergence of ISIS remnants and sleeper cells. Fake controls, repeated ambushes, kidnappings, assassinations, car bombings, explosive devices and mortar shells are all realistic incidents based on

Organizational Structure of Salahaddin [Saladin] Province





documented facts and data. Security investigations in the governorates of Nineveh and Kirkuk, which have been conducted by the Iraqi security services with the members of terrorist cells arrested in the past two months, clearly revealed that ISIS started planning and pulling itself together. Now, it is ready to take a step and launch limited and qualitative terrorist operations.

Identifying the Causes and Suggesting Solutions

“Sadouniyah ambush” the incident which took place in the south-west of Kirkuk killing 27 martyrs was engraved in the memory of the Iraqi people. Previously, there was the fake control on al-Azeem road linking Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk and Saladdin. Since 2006, hundreds of innocent people went missing and the fate of large numbers of them has remained unknown till today. ISIS’s fake control killed 10 citizens and mutilated their bodies because of sectarian and ethnic affiliations in a terrifying scene.

The Iraqi forces have warned against that region and described it as a fragile spot and that the forces deployed there are not enough to cover all those wide areas, characterized by different and rough terrain. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the tactics through which remnants will be tracked, as well as the methods and mechanisms of security clearance and creation of local intelligence sources and enhancing the informational effort, which are meant to address those violations. Terrorism incidents are re-emerging and bringing horror and fear with them.

External roads policing unit needs to:

- Run 24-hours patrols per 5-10 kilometers.
- Add fortified observation points and towers.
- Add rapid response security centers.
- Use cameras and drones for surveillance.
- Use Hotline numbers.
- Strengthen telecommunication network, which are almost non-existent there.

During an interview with some officers and members of the forces of the roads policing

units, they attributed this security problem to:

- The proliferation of weapons.
- The lack of unified Identity Badges.
- Freedom of movement using armored and tinted state vehicles.
- Military uniform.
- Interfering with local authorities.
- The lack of coordination with regard to the marking of the movement of armed vehicles.
- Temporary roadblocks set up on the outside roads by security forces outside their jurisdiction, on the pretext of searching for wanted people, while road police cannot react to such practice.
- Installation of unauthorized controls by the Iraqi Joint Command, which should be legally accounted for as fake control.

The sub-units, which sprung from ISIS remnants, are lurking these violations and weakness points and trying to exploit the fragility of these areas in order to pose a great threat on road and community security. Killing according to one's identity is the most dangerous type of terrorist operation, which often leads to retaliatory attacks on innocent people belonging to different sects and clans in the areas of fake control.

Western Badia:

Since December 2017, the border areas located south-west of Nineveh and northern al-Qaim have been subject to a series of violent attacks in what appears to be an attempt by ISIS remnants in Nineveh and al-Anbar breakaways to maintain the breach of the Iraqi-Syrian border and to create infiltration gaps from Umm Jaris, Tell Safouk and north al-Rumana.

Suicide attack operations have been carried out to break into the camps and barracks of the Popular Mobilization Forces, including the mobilization of Shammar, Liwa Ali Akbar, Liwa al-Tafuf, Kata'ib Hezbollah, al-Nujaba, Kata'ib Jund al-Imam, Albu Risha, Albu Mahal

and al-Karābilah, as well as Border Guard Forces, 20th and 16th divisions of the Iraqi Army in Nineveh operations and 1st, 7th and 8th divisions of al-Jazira operations. The operations were meant to exhaust those bodies stationed on the borders and which are classified as forces not trained enough for the job and also as having weak techniques and equipment for securing the borders. Besides, the borders are not equipped with trenches and observation towers for sniping, and there are no surveillance cameras or drones.

All of this has been achieved through the intense fire targeting the permanent stationed forces in al-Anbar Desert and Nineveh Desert, in order to pressure the forces to turn a blind eye to infiltrations.

During an interview with a command of the 1st division located west of Anbar, he said: “If we leave the sub-units moving freely without facing them then we won’t bump into them and they won’t attack us while we are vulnerable. This is what we came to realize after losing dozens of lives and equipment. Besides, ISIS has communicated this message through the soldiers it has kidnaped and released some of them later.”

The Iraqi forces stationed at the western border are using French and Danish artillery and the jets of the International Coalition. However, the Coalition forces do not wish to provide assistance to the divisions stationed at the same areas as the Shiite Popular Mobilization Forces, especially in Akashat, Phosphate and al-Qaim areas.” This inconsistency led to a clash between Danish artillery and al-Tafuf forces of the Popular Mobilization in Akashat area (there are four mutual accusations so far) and to the fall of more than 8 artillery shells near the Popular Mobilization’s camps in al-Qaim areas.

The command of al-Jazira operations in cooperation with the Joint Command and the leadership of the border guards are willing to be prepared for the risk of infiltration of around 500 to 800 of Iraqi ISIS members when the battles of the International Coalition and its allies will start in the Hajin, al-Soussa and al-Shaafah. Another 2% of eastern Syria is held by ISIS, said Maj. Gen. Qasim al-Mohammadi, commander of al-Jazira operations. These preventive measures are meant to prevent the reenactment of the

scenario of as-Suwayda and also of Palmyra when ISIS sub-units signaled their return through a qualitative operation and killed dozens of citizens. ISIS surprise attack, which was intensive, made the armed factions leave the city and fail to protect its inhabitants. Would as-Suwayda scenario occur again in al-Ba'aj, Hatra, Rawa, al-Qaim and ar-Rutbah? Or, can the regional mobilization forces withstand and continue to resist? What are the possibilities of steadfastness in this case?

The cities of the west Badia in north-west of Iraq, as its name indicates, are in the western governorate of al-Anbar, southwest of Nineveh and west of Saladin governorate. It was called this way because it is mainly desert, hills and a dusty island. It is historically part of the geography of nomadic Arab tribes, who were living on border and thanks to livestock trade.

It covers an area of about 25% of the surface of Iraq, and includes a group of cities and hundreds of villages. Its largest cities are Al-Qaim, Al-Baaj, Al-Hadar, Rawa, Rumana, Akashat, Phosphate and Al-Ratba'a. The Western Badia population is more than half a million. The cities of these regions are known as Sunni Muslim religious cities and belong to tribes interwoven with the border tribes of Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and the people of these tribes participated in the resistance against US forces.

Given that it is a religious, conservative area characterized by harsh geography and environmental conditions, it has been a safe haven for Sunni resistant and extremist armed groups over the past 15 years.

The Western Badia represented one of the four main triangles of death regions along with the triangle of valleys "Wadi Hauran, Wadi Al-abyad and Wadi Al Qaddaf;" northern and eastern Iraq areas, north Samarra and south Shirqat to the Makhoul Mountains. These triangles emerged as a result of the meeting of the ISIS remnants that lost their battles in Nineveh, Al-Hawija and west of Anbar, and after the imposition of law on the disputed areas between Baghdad and Kurdistan in October 2017.

The idea of the triangles of death was aimed at reordering the priorities of ISIS,

rehabilitating its fighters, as well as self-financing and creating chaos on the main roads “Baghdad-Kirkuk Road, Haditha-Baiji Road, Ramadi-Tarbil Road, and Ramadi-Al-Qaim Road.” It also seeks to prepare the rules of command and control from which ISIS detachments carry out reprisals against the mayors, Sheikhs and leaders of tribal and regional crowds, and to exhaust the checkpoints on the international and deep desert roads. This was done following the vision that al-Baghdadi established in his last recorded speech in August 2018. Some of the features of this vision emerged during dozens of isolated attacks on detachments coming from the most remote cities and villages, which focused on the regional and tribal crowd.

Iraqi forces are seeking to establish stability in the Iraqi Western Badia with the assistance of the International Coalition through five main objectives:

Preventing ISIS from establishing military and legitimate camps, stores, sanctuaries as well as command and control centres which would allow them to resurge again according to “the pre-emptive stage to the empowerment territory” tactic. Preventing the transformation of the Western Badia into a base or a platform for planning, recruiting, financing or waging attacks against villages and liberated cities, or against neighbouring countries in western Iraq.

Finding solutions to train and empower the regional and tribal mobilizations in order to control villages and cities, organize the return of the displaced, end the file of the forcibly abandoned villages, and arrive at fair and legal solutions regarding the custom of the tribal clan of families whose children were affiliated with ISIS.

Providing conditions that allow for national reconciliation and enable civil society organizations to revitalize their programmes to combat violent extremism and disseminate the values of dialogue, coexistence, tolerance and rationalization of religious discourse.

Stopping the smuggling of arms, monuments and oil, preventing the cultivation and trafficking of drugs, and providing employment opportunities that encourage the

restoration of normal life and markets to those cities and villages, in addition to the reconstruction and restoration of infrastructure, the return of centres for the management of local government and local police and the opening of regime courts.

Some factions of the pro-Iranian Popular Mobilization Forces considered this as an aggressive act that targets their efforts and sacrifices in the Western Badia, and in particular is aimed at emptying the border of any presence of the state Popular Mobilization and cutting off of the Tehran-Beirut road. The leadership of the International Coalition refused to work in any village or city next to the Popular Mobilization even as a secondary support, and placed pressure on the Iraqi Joint Command to exchange the Popular Mobilization Forces with the tribal or regional Mobilization Forces. The United States established temporary camps in different areas there.

On the other hand, the leadership of the Popular Mobilization tried to withdraw from the Western Badia and stood at the 43rd longitude line except for the areas of Sinjar, Ummash-Shababit, Um Agris, Tal Safoug, Rumana, Akashat and Phosphates, as well as Tal Afar Air Base and near the Qayara Air Base and Seneia city south of Baiji.

However, it seems that this proposal was not accepted by the International Coalition and also strained the relationship between al-Abadi, commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the leadership of the Popular Mobilization.

However, the achievement of the objectives of the Iraqi joint forces may not be as easy as the ones achieved in Kirkuk and the disputed areas a year ago. This is because the potential of political and military understandings in the disputed areas is better than in the Western Badia, although the region has been liberated for more than a year.

The options available for the joint Iraqi leadership - if it decided to remove the Popular Mobilization from the Western Badia regions - are not encouraging, especially since the equipment and preparations of the Tribal Mobilization are not enough to stand up for a long time in front of a large-scale attack of ISIS remnants.

Moreover, over the past year, ISIS remnants have been able to build a large network of tunnels, so that it is possible to say that there are entire homes underground. In addition, the harsh nature of the area and the experience of its people to adapt to it allow for a long-standing survival of ISIS remnants, unless they were fought by the regional forces and the revival of the strategies of Sons of Iraq which defeated al-Qaeda 2006-2011. In fact, the tribes are able to achieve self-victory in this area, provided that the government support is serious and continuous. What can make a real difference here is the unity of the tribes in fighting ISIS and avoiding some of the acts that are classified as violating the law and human rights, as well as sectarian or national conflicts that have no reasonable justification for continuing with the formation of a new government.

Remnants Territory:

The military victory did not leave a way for ISIS remnants they can use in the urban cities and the large and densely-populated villages that were known to ISIS fighters as Ard al-Tamkeen and resistance. So, ISIS fighters became exposed and citizens are their direct enemy, in the remnants' territory (hills, valleys, deserts, valleys and abandoned remote villages). The remnants have the ability to self-finance and move through small detachments and regional escalation (triangles of death), but this does not prevent the risk of escalation in cities.

In the remnants' territory, ISIS fighters are expanding their sphere of influence in remote villages through attacks, assassinations and kidnappings of villages' mayors, tribal sheikhs, and tribal and regional Mobilization leaders who are loyal to the government.

Despite the fact that the Iraqi joint forces have developed their traditional combat and logistical capabilities, they are still particularly weak regarding the creation of forces, techniques and information for the pursuit of remnants. This weakness is deepened by the fact that the government has no viable stabilization programs to reinvigorate the role of a strong civil society that transcends ethnic and religious divisions and can engage in dialogue, tolerance and coexistence, and then identify takfirist and extremist ideas and

acts and cooperate with the government to entirely stop or disable them according to the prevailing law.

An unexpected quick return to the ISIS operations near the liberated cities and in the disputed areas. The map of this return in the remnants' territory has as goals:

1. Using the tactics of the “stealth fighter” and working on the creation of a reliable hiring environment, although not loyal to the ISIS, by employing a group of unemployed supporters in remote villages for logistical support. This has already been confirmed by the Directorate of Intelligence in Saladin governorate. The arrest of men and youth who were not marked by security or judicial parties to be affiliated with ISIS has been repeated. They work in return for money on the transfer of food, medical and health stuff, fuel, bicycles and motorcycles to ISIS tunnels in Mutaibija, Makhoul Mountains, Sad al-Adhim, and Lake Tharthar.
2. Multi-divisional detachments whose mission is to stir up the national and religious chaos in these cities to be a key player within the objectives of internal chaos and civil war .. through dealing with corrupt parties, violent opposition forces and clan ties ... The operations would depend on detachments composed of 9-11 fighters who have been trained on the manufacture of ambushes, improvised explosive devices (IED), sniping and maneuvers. The use of any mobile phone network during their stay in the camps and the headquarters of the remnants' territory was prohibited. There was isolation, secrecy, harsh training, exchange of ideas and experiences and religious sermons that raise the level of hatred and resentment...
3. When we see the types and models of bicycles and motorcycles, we make sure that most of them were purchased from the local markets in Diyala, Kirkuk and Saladin, and used within the guerrilla tactics. They are fast-moving and most of them are of the “jumpy” type, economic and their type adapted to the hills and valleys and rugged terrain. The driver may carry with him a toolbox, such as anti-tank missiles, grenades, improvised explosive devices to make ambushes, medium and light

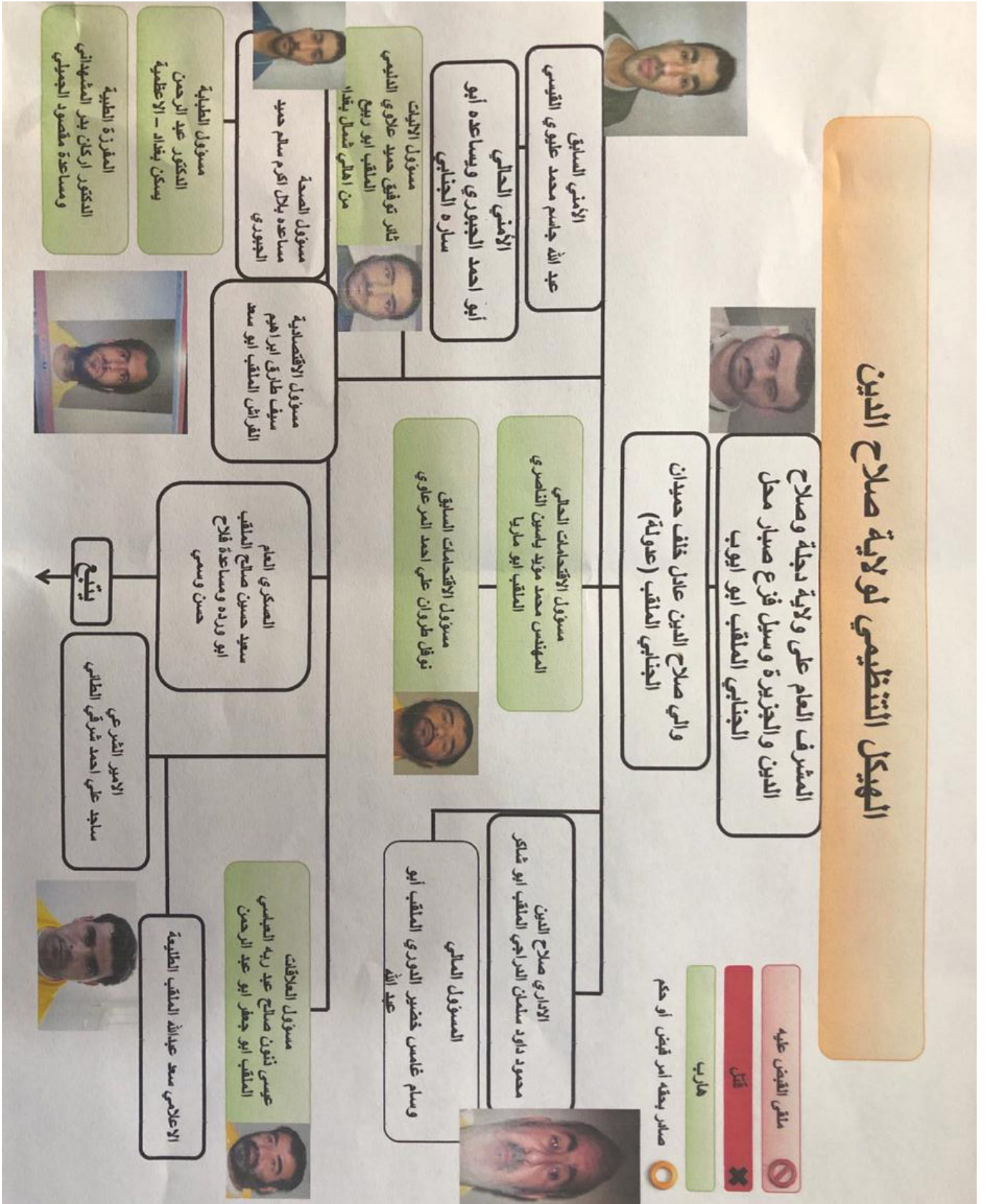
weapons to attack civilians or suicide attacks using car bombs. ISIS aims To destroy targets and to drain and exhaust the Iraqi forces and force them to withdraw ...

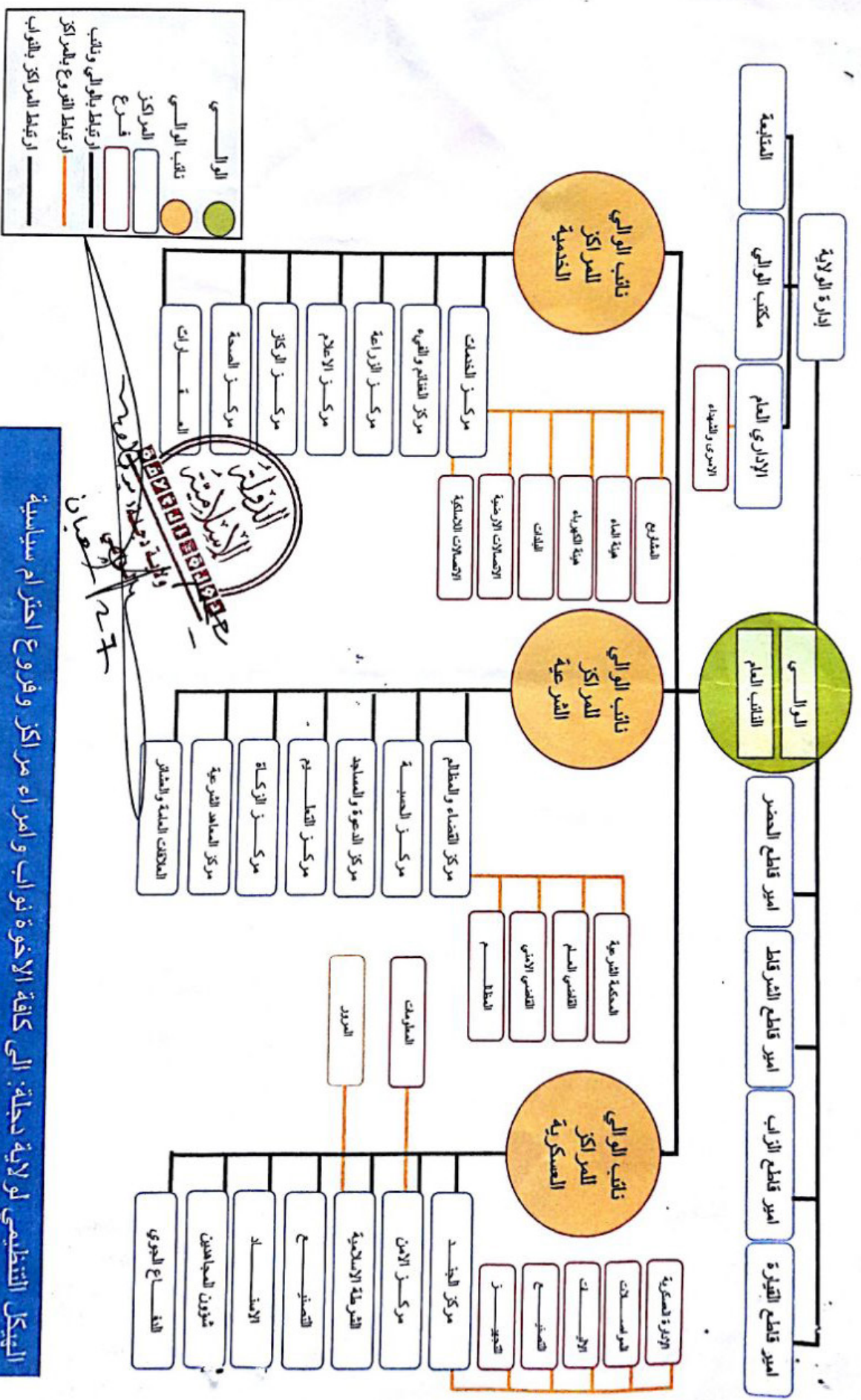
4. The remnants' land was formed in 2013 in the southwest of Nineveh and northeast of Diyala and started to occupy 32% of the land of Iraq in 2014. It is the ground for the Ard al-Tamkeen, camps, stores and headquarters for command and control, and banditry to take the royalties, kidnap passengers and undermine the economy and stability. These open areas help them to set up training camps for these detachments, special military exercises and other martial arts and streetwarfare, and to train them to kill by slaughter, burning and car bombs. These areas are also suitable for drug cultivation as well as the establishment of laboratories for the development and manufacture of toxins and chemicals ...

It is therefore important for the joint Iraqi forces to adopt the method of Sons of Iraq in the pursuit of the remnants, and also to use the approach of the hybrid war within its defensive and offensive policies in order to eradicate the capabilities of ISIS remnants.. They also need to work hard to develop special forces to chase the remnants and to provide all human, technical, economic and information resources to these forces. The joint Iraqi forces should seek to activate the role of citizens in reporting suspicious cases, and to organize proactive and professional media wars based on successful experiences and keenness on the identity of citizenship and belonging in various ways and to inform citizens about existing and future risks.

Appendix

Official documents on the structure of ISIS and its leaders





البيكل التنظيمي لولاية دجلة: الى كافة الاخوة نواب وامراء مراكز وفروع احترام سياسية
سلسلة المراجعات لتسهيل المهام والعمل



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