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ISWAP's Kuje Prison Break Points to Expansion of Operations Throughout Nigeria

Jacob Zenn

In one of the most dramatic, and surprising, attacks in the history of the now 13-years long jihadist insurgency in Nigeria, on July 6, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) raided the maximum security Kuje Prison in Nigeria's capital of Abuja (thecable.com, July 11). The prison had long been a subject of ire of the Abubakar Shekau faction. For example, Shekau, who years later detonated an explosive to kill himself during an ISWAP offensive against him, issued an audio in September 2015 in which he condemned

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's statements about “Boko Haram” members playing soccer during de-radicalization sessions in that prison ([Telegram](https://t.me/Telegram), September 19, 2015).

Despite the fact that high-profile jihadist prisoners were in Kuje Prison and it had been on the mind of Shekau loyalists, neither ISWAP, nor Shekau's faction or the al-Qaeda-affiliated Ansaru faction, have operated with any consistency in Abuja since 2012. This made a prison break in the capital seemingly unlikely. In fact, one of the last jihadist operations in Abuja was Ansaru's own prison break at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) prison, which freed several dozen members ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), November 26, 2012).

Moreover, whereas prison breaks were a key part of the Shekau faction's operations between 2009 and 2014, these primarily occurred in northeastern Nigeria and stalled out in 2014. This was possibly because Nigeria beefed up the security around prisons after the infamous prison break at Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri, Borno that year (aljazeera.com, March 15, 2014). The Giwa prison break saw hundreds of prisoners, including Shekau loyalists, escape, as recorded in a dramatic video of the operation ([YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj8v8v8v8v8), March 24, 2014).

If Ansaru had special operations skills in Abuja in 2012, the question arises as to whether Ansaru, which historically has operated in Abuja and especially Kogi State to its south, aided or supported ISWAP in this latest prison break. In recent years ISWAP has killed Ansaru members for their loyalty to al-Qaeda, or specifically al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which Ansaru's leadership reaffirmed earlier this year ([Humangle](http://Humangle.com), June 10, 2020). However, Ansaru members from the time of the group's 2012 founding may not be as hostile toward ISWAP as the group's more recent members, and vice-versa, and could have collaborated in some way in the prison break. That the kidnappers of passengers on a Kaduna-Abuja train reportedly celebrated the Kuje Prison break also suggests some mixture of Ansaru and northwestern Nigerian-based bandits may have been connected to the Kuje Prison attackers (thecable.com, July 11).

Ansaru founder Khalid al-Barnawi, for example, who was arrested in Kogi in 2016, may have been in Kuje Prison. He had overcome factional differences to collaborate indirectly with Shekau even after Ansaru separated from Shekau's faction (africa-confidential.com, November 30, 2012). Another Nigerian jihadist who

had been in Kuje Prison was Mukhtar Ibrahim, who facilitated Shekau faction's Mali-based trainings in 2011 with AQIM, but he was arrested at that time (premiumtimes.ng, May 8, 2013). Given that he collaborated with Shekau loyalists and was arrested before the major factional jihadist divisions occurred in Nigeria, it is possible he is now working for ISWAP. Nevertheless, neither al-Barnawi nor Ibrahim's names were on the official list of escapees provided by the Nigerian government (premiumtimesng.com, July 8).

Further proof of potential collaboration comes from the late ISWAP leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, who acknowledged in 2018 that ISWAP had accepted Ansaru defectors into its ranks ([al-Haqaiq](http://al-Haqaiq.com), June 2018). While Ansaru's current leaders will likely not join ISWAP, those freed from Kuje Prison, who constitute the Ansaru "old guard," may now join ISWAP, which would strengthen not only ISWAP, but also serve as encouragement for other Ansaru members or late Shekau loyalists to join ISWAP, which is at present the strongest jihadist faction in Nigeria. ISWAP's increasing operations in the former Ansaru stronghold of Kogi State in recent months also provides an opportunity for Ansaru and ISWAP to cooperate (dailypost.ng, April 24). However, should unification fail, it could also mean they will clash for control of the jihadist space in that state.

Any jihadist factional unification in Nigeria still seems unlikely, but ISWAP's Kuje prison break at least presents an opportunity for it. ISWAP's video of the operation released through IS media channels will also spread the message about ISWAP's success far and wide among jihadists ([YouTube/SaharaTV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj8v8v8v8v8), July 6). For ISWAP to strike not only Kogi and Taraba

states in early 2022, but also Abuja, shows the organization continues to adapt and expand its operations throughout Nigeria and remains the most impressive external IS province globally.

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Burkina Faso on the Verge of Breakdown

Jacob Zenn

On June 14, the town of Seytenga, Burkina Faso suffered one of the largest attacks in the country's history, with more than 80 civilians killed (lemonde.fr, June 14). The two jihadist factions operating in Burkina Faso, al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for Supporters of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) and Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), were both capable of such a large scale operation. However, ISGS is better known for targeting civilians, and the group claimed the attack in an unofficial audio. ISGS did not view the villagers as "civilians," however, because it alleged the villagers included "volunteer fighters" of the Burkina Faso army ([Twitter/@Menastream](https://twitter.com/Menastream), June 18).

ISGS' massacre also comes on the heels of JNIM deputy leader, Hamadou Kouffa, exploiting another massacre to advance JNIM's cause. Appearing in a video on June 23, Kouffa justified JNIM's participation in a "massacre" by asserting that only 30 JNIM fighters were involved and that they did not kill all of the civilians in the town of Moura. Rather, he claimed it was the Malian army and its allies in Russia's Wagner Group who killed the civilians (maliweb.net, July 1). The contrasting

narratives between JNIM's somewhat softer approach compared to ISGS' reflects JNIM's generally more accommodating way of dealing with civilians.

The Seytenga and Moura massacres were still followed by another massacre, on July 4, in Kossi province in which at least 15 people were killed (aljazeera.com, July 5). On the same day, at least 12 other people were killed in Namissiguima, Yatenga province. Although there was no initial claim of either attack, the latter's targeting of pro-government militiamen was typical of both ISGS and JNIM operations (lematinal.media, July 6). The freedom of movement of the jihadists into these villages, including their ability to leave and then return again later, demonstrates how the Burkinabe security forces are ill-equipped to manage the rising levels of violence in the country.

Little reason exists for optimism that Burkina Faso can quell either the ISGS or JNIM insurgency. The military conducted a coup against the democratically elected government in January with the promise that it would more effectively deal with the jihadists (thenewhumanitarian.org, June 29). However, if anything, the security trends are worsening in the country, with the Seytenga and Moura massacres being considered the largest ones in the country's history. Furthermore, the coups in neighboring Mali over the past decade, including as recently as 2021, have brought military rulers to power, but have also resulted in no improvements to the country's internal security.

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Islamic State in Khorasan Province Exploits Tajik Martyrs for Online Recruitment in Central Asia

Lucas Webber

On June 18, Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) militants attacked a Sikh place of worship, or *gurdwara*, in Kabul, killing two people, although Islamic State (IS) touted a much higher casualty total ([The Hindu](#), June 19). IS formally claimed the operation through its Amaq News Agency and claimed the raid against the “temple for Hindu and Sikh polytheists” was intended to avenge the Prophet Muhammad following recent blasphemous comments made by Indian politicians ([Twitter/@Minalami](#), June 18). These comments about India drew considerable attention. However, there was another angle to the IS media strategy in revealing the attacker as “Abu Muhammad al-Tajiki,” which received much less commentary ([NDTV](#), June 20).

In 2022, ISKP has ramped up its outreach efforts to target potential supporters in Tajik communities throughout Afghanistan and the broader region ([Caravanserai](#), May 9). IS and its supporters have accordingly expanded propaganda production in the Tajik language and have framed the Taliban as Pashtun-centric and hostile toward Afghanistan’s other ethnic groups. This involves specifically noting the Taliban’s oppression of and violence against Tajiks, while presenting ISKP as the vehicle for smashing Central Asia’s arbitrarily drawn borders, destroying the Tajik government, and forming an IS province in Transoxiana, or “Khorasan” ([Jihadology](#), June 22, 2020). ISKP matched words with action on May 8 when a volley of rockets was fired at Tajikistan that galvanized supporters online ([Twitter/LucasADWebber](#), May 11). Moreover, ISKP has made it a point to highlight martyrs of Tajik ethnicity, who are extolled as examples of courage, devotion, and self-sacrifice to the IS cause.

ISKP’s History of Revering Tajik Martyrs

ISKP has a history of touting the presence of Tajik fighters among its ranks and celebrating their sacrifice in carrying out martyrdom operations. This kind of ethnolinguistic signaling, however, is not exclusive to ISKP or unique to Tajik militants ([Deccan Herald](#), November 10, 2021). For instance, ISKP often reveals the *kunyas* of militants to indicate their Baloch, Uzbek, Uighur, Indian, or other ethnic, linguistic, and national backgrounds ([OpIndia](#), October 9, 2021; [Hindustan Times](#), March 12). Yet, ISKP’s Tajik-targeted media efforts feature prominently and provide a human connection by creating Tajik jihadist role models for sympathizers. Such individuals have included:

- Abu Bakr al-Tajiki, who conducted a suicide bombing outside the Afghan Supreme Court in Kabul in 2017;
- Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Tajiki and Ibrahim al-Tajiki, who were part of a five-man force that assaulted the Daud Khan Hospital in Kabul in 2017;
- Abu Aisha al-Tajiki, who raided a TV station in Kabul, also in 2017 ([Twitter/@Rita_Katz](#), February 8, 2017 ; [Jihadology](#), March 9, 2017 ; [Twitter/@WarObserver97](#), November 8, 2017).

Meanwhile, in 2020, Ahmed al-Tajiki and another operative killed scores of people at a gathering in Kabul, and that same year Ahmad Tajik, Abu Bakr Tajik, Ismail Tajik, and Idris Tajik were among a large team that attacked Jalalabad prison ([Twitter/@NatSecJeff](#), March 6, 2020; [India Today](#), August 4, 2020). The prison operation was featured in the fourth installment of IS’s “Makers of Epic Battles” video series, which profiled ISKP. The series also spotlighted a Tajik insurgent who threatened the government in Dushanbe and called out President Emomali Rahmon by name ([Jihadology](#), July 20).

Abu Muhammad al-Tajiki and ISKP's Expanded Tajik Media Apparatus

The ISKP-aligned Tajik media and communications space became abuzz when the Amaq News Agency released the name and photo of Abu Muhammad al-Tajiki. The Tajik language pro-ISKP online ecosystem produced an array of visual and audio propaganda praising him and calling for others to follow his lead. The Al Azaim Tajiki media outlet, which translates official IS media into Tajik language, further published its own claim of responsibility in Tajik Cyrillic. [1] In addition to this, translations of the claims in IS's standard Amaq format were circulated through tens of channels and bots that publish precise Tajik language translations of official IS media statements, which seem to be provided by I'lam Media Foundation. [2]

The Life of Khurasan group, which provides supporters with regular inside information and updates from IS militants in Afghanistan and recruits for ISKP, also superimposed its logo over the photo of al-Tajiki and even made it the display image for the group's Telegram channel. [3] Further exemplifying the importance of a Tajik ISKP fighter conducting such an operation, some Telegram channels, such as Al Azaim Tajik and Sadoi Shaykh, had al-Tajiki's photo and the claim as their 'pinned message' for days.

The Sadoi Shaykh network even produced a 14-minute-long audio statement about the operation featuring a photo of al-Tajiki. [4] The audio was shared widely by Tajik Telegram channels, including Al Azaim Tajiki, Ummah of Muhammad, and Sadoi Shaykh. The Movarounnahr Telegram channel also released a version of the audio seemingly by the late Yusuf Tajiki, who was a well-known ISKP member and propagandist, with a custom-made image celebrating Abu Muhammad al-Tajiki ([Twitter/@LucasADWebber](https://twitter.com/LucasADWebber), July 7).

Conclusion

Abu Muhammad al-Tajiki's photo was featured prominently on two different pages in the June 23 issue of IS's official al-Naba newsletter and was profiled in ISKP's Voice of Khurasan and Khurasan Ghag magazines ([Jihadology](#), June 23; [Twitter/@Valle_Riccardo](https://twitter.com/Valle_Riccardo), June 30). This is yet another instance where Tajik fighters have received multiple rounds of promotion from the IS's central media apparatus as well as ISKP's own propaganda outlets. These are then relayed to Tajik language networks under the Al Azaim umbrella and a number of other media groups in the Tajik IS milieu. Given ISKP's increased efforts to broaden its appeal with Tajiks, it is likely the group will continue to use Tajik and other ethnic militants to conduct high-profile attacks in order to continue producing online propaganda and increase recruitment from among those non-Pashtun ethnicities.

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Notes

[1] Al Tajiki Group on Telegram, June 19.

[2] Al Azaim TJ on Telegram, June 20.

[3] Life of Khurasan on Telegram, June 21.

[4] Sadoi Shaykh on Telegram and YouTube, June 20.

[5] Movarounnahr on Telegram, June 22.

Pakistani Counter-Insurgency Measures Risk Fueling Rebellion in Restive Baluchistan Province

Kiyya Baloch

When the ethnic Baluch separatist insurgent group, Baluch Liberation Army (BLA), claimed responsibility for a female suicide attack by Shari Baloch in the southern port city of Karachi on April 26, it asserted that the attack was against projects launched by Beijing and Islamabad in the restive Baluchistan province under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) ([Terrorism Monitor](#), May 20). The CPEC is an estimated \$62 billion collection of energy and infrastructure projects, which Baluch separatists consider to be exploitative. The BLA further claimed that hundreds of its “highly-trained male and female members” were ready to carry out “harsher” attacks in the future.

The rising number of local Baluch men and women joining the armed struggle in Baluchistan province has become a matter of severe concern to the local authorities. In response, the Pakistani government has empowered and loosened restrictions on the counter-terrorism department (CTD) and paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC), allowing them to detain or forcefully apprehend anyone suspected of having links with the separatists. The nationalist group, Baluch National Movement (BNM), for example, claimed on June 6 that Pakistani security forces had abducted 61 people inside and outside Baluchistan since the April 26 suicide attack ([Twitter/@BNMovement](#), June 6).

Since early 2000 when the latest iteration of armed uprisings broke out in Baluchistan, law enforcement agencies have widely used these tactics as a means to wipe out rebels from the province. However, this has now backfired. For example, as a result of this strategy, highly educated females like Shari Baloch continue to join rebel ranks and leave

behind a luxurious life, children, and even government jobs ([Dawn](#), May 6). Shari, a mother of two children and the first BLA female suicide bomber, in her final video message mainly spoke about economic injustice and the humiliation of Baluch youth at the hands of security forces. She also mentioned enforced disappearances, torture, and brutalities against the Baluch in general ([Hakkal Media](#), April 26).

Women’s Involvement in Baluch Separatism

Despite the increase in counter-insurgency operations, enforced disappearances, and surveillance, the violence has drastically increased in Baluchistan, which has remained Pakistan’s second most volatile province after northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to data compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal, overall fatalities in Baluchistan increased from 215 in 2020 to 311 in 2021 ([EurasiaReview.com](#), March 8). Between 2018 and 2021, more than 500 fatalities in terror-related incidents were also reported in the province, and overall, a 30% increase in terrorism was recorded between 2018 and 2021 ([The News](#), November 6, 2021). A number of counter-terrorism incidents have prompted militant groups in Baluchistan to change their tactics, including recruiting “women” and more youth to join them as a response to these incidents, which include:

- A Baloch woman shot dead by members of a state-backed private militia in June 2020;
- The killing of a young student by paramilitary frontier corps in Turbat in August 2020;
- The sexual assault of a young boy by a soldier in 2021;
- The mysterious death of Karima Baloch, a female activist for “Free Baluchistan” in Canada in December 2020; and
- The killing of a Baluch driver carrying smuggled Iranian diesel in Chagai district in April 2022 ([The Diplomat](#),

June 4, 2020; [Dawn](#), August 16, 2021; [Dawn](#), April 23, 2021)

The incidents involving women and Shari Baloch's subsequent suicide attack highlight a departure from women's traditional involvement in the Baluch separatist movement as social and political actors. Karima Baloch, for example, was a former chairperson of the pro-separatist Baluch Students Organization (BSO) Azad faction and was named in the BBC's annual list of 100 inspirational and influential women in 2016; this was due to her relentless campaigning on behalf of the Baluchistan separatist movement ([BBC](#), October 7, 2016). Likewise, hundreds of women who sympathized with the separatists snatched the body of veteran politician and tribal chief, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, from Pakistani officials in June 2014 in the Baluchistan provincial capital of Quetta. Afterward, they performed his last rites ([Twitter/@RaisaniSadiq](#), June 10, 2021).

Marri, a Marxist in his political leanings, led a separatist insurgency in the 1970s and was considered an icon of the current Baluch armed rebellion until he died of a brain hemorrhage. Although the Pakistani authorities wanted him to be buried in quiet and a heavy number of police and paramilitary forces were deployed at his residence in Quetta, Baluch women draped his body in the "Free Baluchistan" flag and laid him to rest while chanting separatist slogans ([Dawn](#), June 12, 2014). The women did not, however, commit any lethal attack at that time.

Conclusion

The widespread crackdown on Baluch separatists, their supporters, and the targeting of women by Pakistani intelligence agencies has further strengthened the separatist narrative that armed struggle is the only option for achieving respect and freedom. With a surge in enforced disappearances and counter-insurgency operations, violence may wane for a short time. However, the

Baluchistan conflict will not end any time soon, even if the military launches a full-fledged operation in Baluchistan much like it has waged against the Pakistani Taliban elsewhere in the country. Women's increasing involvement in Baluch militancy is but one example of the long-term ramifications of Pakistan's counter-insurgency measures.

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Islamic State Propaganda Renews Focus on Africa, but a "Jihadist Monopoly" Remains Elusive

Daniele Garofalo

Islamic State (IS) propaganda in videos, photos, and editorials since June has increasingly focused on Africa, particularly Nigeria and Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP). However, its publications have also regularly referred to Mozambique, Congo, and the Sahel. Although it appears that through propaganda and military conquests, IS is conquering Africa, which is certainly the organization's focus at present, in reality, both in Nigeria and elsewhere on the African continent, IS does not have a monopoly. In fact, al-Qaeda's affiliates remain strong and credible rivals to IS's expansion.

The Case of ISWAP

One of the most important IS media productions was the ISWAP video released by IS official media on June 14, which lasted approximately 39 minutes ([al-Furqan](#), June 15). The video, which was titled "A Book that Guides and a Sword that

Gives Victory," was narrated in Hausa with Arabic subtitles, and thus targeted a local audience. The production was of the highest graphic quality and began with a tribute to 23 "martyred" ISWAP fighters.

IS flaunted ISWAP's governance activities, with scenes of religious outreach by *hisbah* (*Islamic accountability*) teams, distribution of *zakat* (*charity*), preaching to civilians, interviews of commanders, and entertainment for children. The key message IS conveyed is that of full implementation of sharia law and land management and control. The video further demonstrated how ISWAP has become the leading IS province in Africa and likely among all IS global provinces.

A unique moment also occurred when one of the ISWAP speakers, Abu Thabet al-Barnawi, acknowledged IS's plight in Iraq and Syria and mentioned the need to continue the fight despite multiple setbacks. In particular, he cited the importance of freeing imprisoned IS members, as occurred with ISWAP on July 5 at Kuje Prison in following IS's "Breaking the Walls" campaign ([DailyTrust](#), July 6). Within the video, there were also several minutes in which ISWAP fiercely criticized the Taliban and its allies (a reference to al-Qaeda) and called them apostates. The video ended with ISWAP calling on Muslims around the world, "especially those in Africa," to move to territories under IS provinces' control, particularly Nigeria. This was a direct call for *hijrah* (*migration*) to the African continent.

In issue 343 of the official IS media outlet al-Naba, IS returned again to Africa and ISWAP ([al-Naba](#), June 16). The issue's editorial praised the success of ISWAP in establishing aspects of Islamic governance and returned to urging Muslims to perform

"hijrah" in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. IS supporters are expected to assist the caliphate's project on the African continent, which IS called "a key front."

Continuing with its focus on Nigeria and Africa, on June 23, IS official media released a new Syria Province propaganda video, which was around five minutes long ([Amaq News Agency](#), June 23). Titled "From the Land of Sham [Syria] to the Lions of Africa," it showed IS's Syria-based jihadists praising their African "colleagues," particularly those in ISWAP, for their recent "victories" on the continent. It was part of a new video series, as a few days later, IS official media released a new short video from Wilayah Iraq entitled "From the Lands of Iraq to the Lions of Africa" ([Amaq News Agency](#), June 27). The video showed tributes from Iraqi fighters to African jihadists and urged Muslims in general and those in Africa specifically to travel to IS provinces in Africa, particularly in Nigeria with ISWAP.

IS has stepped up its operations and plans to expand into Africa after the loss of territory and difficulties in other theaters of operation. The organization currently sees Africa as fertile ground to achieve its goal of state control because rampant corruption, religious and ethnic conflicts, high levels of poverty, poor state governance, and the minimal presence of foreign military forces allow it to recruit, expand territorially, and control territory. ISWAP is currently the only province with the military and "political" strength to do so.

Ansaru Remains Active

While IS has focused on highlighting ISWAP, the al-Qaeda affiliate in Nigeria, Ansaru continues to make its presence

known. Its latest video, released on June 12 by al-Yaqout Media through Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), was over 16 minutes long ([Al-Yaqout Media](#), June 12). In both Arabic and Hausa languages and titled "Declaration of Innocence," Ansaru reiterated its ideology, denied rumors of its responsibility in the Kaduna-Abuja train attack, and advocated an anti-Christian message by blaming Independent People's of Biafra (IPOB) for the excessive killing of Muslims ([DailyPostNG](#), March 28). Further, Ansaru urged all Muslims to support its cause because Ansaru claimed the organization defended them. The video was also notable because it was the first time Ansaru used the Hausa language in one of its videos. Until now, Ansaru had released videos only in Arabic, English, and French.

On June 30, al-Yaqout Media published the second issue of its periodical bulletin "Voice of the Black Continent" ([Twitter/G88Daniele](#), June 30). Titled "The Danger of a Media, Educational and Health War in Nigeria", it was 26 pages in Arabic and divided into several editorials, the first being on the danger of a media and health war in Nigeria. Then a long editorial compared al-Qaeda and IS and another touched on the importance of leading Muslims on the path of jihad. Finally, the most interesting part was a five-page editorial on the relationship between al-Qaeda and Iran in which Ansaru tried to defend al-Qaeda and refute the accusations from al-Qaeda's detractors about al-Qaeda and Saif al-Adl's cooperation with Iran ([Akhbaral-Aan](#), June 9).

The topics covered in the bulletin, particularly this last one, are very notable when considering that Ansaru operates exclusively in Nigeria at present. Nevertheless, Ansaru has loudly and repeatedly enunciated its connection to al-

Qaeda over the past seven months. The choice to defend Saif al-Adl may be related to a desire to have him be accepted by al-Qaeda affiliates in Africa as an al-Qaeda leader one day.

Ansaru remains particularly active in the northwestern and north-central areas of Nigeria, with a presence in Kaduna, Ondo, Katsina, Zamfara and footholds in Kogi and Niger. The group is also trying to build trust, provide assistance and essential services, and preach to communities ([DailyTrust](#), May 6). However, it also clashes with Fulani bandits ([TribuneNG](#), May 14). Ansaru is on the rise, and if it can integrate the thousands of bandits in the areas where it operates into disciplined fighters for its operations, strengthen its relationship and trust with the local population, and create strong supportive ties with other African al-Qaeda affiliates, it could position itself as a more relevant competitor to ISWAP.

IS's Other African Provinces

More than half of the attacks claimed by IS from January to June 2022 were carried out in Africa. In addition to ISWAP, Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP), which is based in Congo, had 93 attacks; Sinai Province had 60 attacks; Mozambique Province had 58 attacks; Somalia Province had 21 attacks; Sahel Province, which is based in Mali and Niger, had 15 attacks; and Libya Province had two attacks ([Jihad Analytics](#), July 1).

Propaganda about other African provinces is not as consistent as for ISWAP, but there have still been respective publications and videos in al-Naba and the IS-affiliated Amaq media agency in recent weeks. In particular, detailed infographics for Sahel Province and Mozambique Province were

included in al-Naba issues 343 and 344 ([al-Naba](#), June 16; [al-Naba](#), June 23). Mozambique Province attacks and related propaganda on Amaq and in al-Naba have also increased significantly, especially against Christians. Sahel Province, meanwhile, after a several week-long propaganda vacuum, has also seen increased attention with several photo sets being released by Amaq after major attacks in the regions of Menaka in Mali and Tillaberi in Niger ([Twitter/@minaallami](#), June 22; [Twitter/SimNasr](#), June 18).

ISCAP also saw a sharp increase in propaganda in both video production and photo sets, which confirmed its areas of operation in Congo and Uganda. Sinai Province was also featured several times in al-Naba and in Amaq in June. As Somalia Province conducted only attacks, IS propaganda only detailed the claims and mentioned the attacks in al-Naba.

Regarding al Qaeda's presence in Africa, there is no daily propaganda, but Sahel-based Jamā'at Nusrat al-Islām wal-Muslimīn (JNIM) and al-Shabaab use unofficial and local media channels. JNIM, through az-Zallaqa Media, released a video on June 24 in which its deputy leader Hamadou Kouffa accuses Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) and Russia's Wagner Group of killing hundreds of "unarmed and oppressed" civilians in Mali ([JeuneAfrique](#), April 4). The most wide-reaching propaganda and operations of all al-Qaeda's African affiliates are, however, those of al-Shabaab. On June 23, its official al-Kataib media agency released a 40-minute video titled "From the Frontiers of Glory #8" ([al-Kataib](#), June 23). It showed multiple groups of fighters marching in different areas of Somalia and engaging in training and large and complex military operations.

Conclusion

It is clear that IS does not have a monopoly in Africa, as evidenced by the propaganda and operations of Ansaru, as well as of JNIM and al-Shabaab. IS's tributes to its African militants, however, underscore the weight and attention the organization gives to its operations in Africa. In addition, even though ISWAP and Nigeria are the main subject of IS's attention, one must also recall that besides ISWAP and Ansaru, there is also the faction of the late Abubakar Shekau, which has regained strength through the Bakura faction led by Abu Umaymah near Bama, Gwoza, and the Mandara Mountains alongside the borders of Nigeria and Cameroon ([Telegram](#), May 2). This faction remains a major threat and further undermines any IS monopoly in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, let alone Africa more broadly.

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