

Civil Society Perspectives: ISIL in Africa – Key Trends and Developments

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United Nations Security Council
Counter-Terrorism Committee
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The present report reflects the outcomes of two civil society virtual roundtables on ISIL Trends and Developments in Africa, organized by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) on 28-29 October and 17-18 November 2021, respectively. Its findings do not necessarily represent the views or official positions of CTED, the Counter-Terrorism Committee, or any Committee member.

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I. Background and introduction

1. The present report synthesizes the views of more than 50 representatives of African civil society organizations (CSOs), located in 15 Member States, who contributed to two virtual roundtables convened by CTED in October and November 2021. The roundtables aimed to enhance CTED’s understanding of the trajectory and impact of ISIL-affiliated groups’ activities in Africa, as well as the gaps and challenges in African Member States’ ability to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

2. The roundtables formed part of CTED’s ongoing efforts to engage with its civil society and Global Research Network (GRN) partners in order to better understand the related gaps and challenges and identify ways in which States could improve their compliance with their counter-terrorism obligations. The present report is not intended to be an in-depth study of the threat of terrorism and ISIL affiliates in Africa. Rather, it draws on the roundtable discussions and findings – as well as on additional CTED research and analysis – to highlight important perspectives from civil society on the threat of terrorism in Africa and the means to tackle it more effectively in accordance with the requirements of Security Council resolution 2617 (2021).

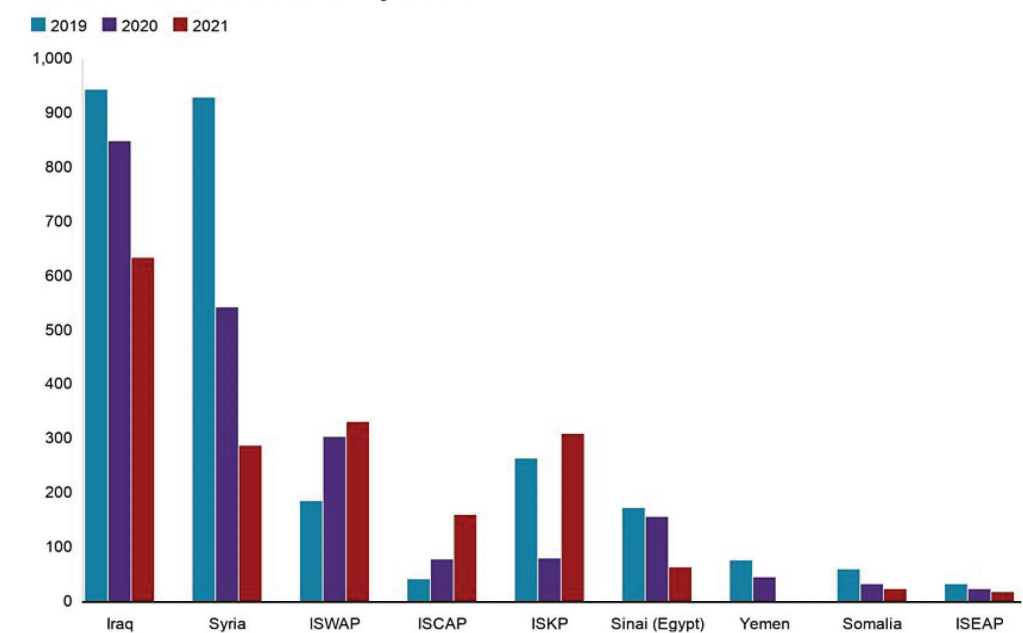
3. The topic of the report will be the focus of a joint open briefing to be organized in 2022 by the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. The report has been prepared in accordance with Security Council resolution 2617 (2021), in which the Council notes the importance of engagement with locally-focused entities. In the preamble to the resolution, the Council recognizes “the importance of civil society, **including community-based civil society**, grassroots organizations, the private sector, academia, think tanks, media, youth, women, and cultural, educational, and religious leaders in **increasing awareness about the threats of terrorism and more effectively tackling them**”.

4. It is expected that, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2617 (2021), the range of views reflected at the roundtables and in the present report will enhance the above-mentioned joint open briefing by presenting civil society perspectives on ISIL-associated activities in Africa. The roundtable discussions also form part of CTED’s overall strategy to effectively counter and prevent terrorism based on a whole-of-society approach. In

its resolution 2617 (2021), the Council also underscores the importance of a whole-of-Government approach; recognizes the important role civil society organizations can play, including in the health, social welfare and education sectors in contributing to the rehabilitation and reintegration of FTFs and their associated family members, as **civil society organizations may have the relevant knowledge of, access to, and engagement with local communities to be able to confront the challenges of recruitment and radicalization to violence**; and encourages Member States to engage proactively with CSOs when developing rehabilitation and reintegration strategies.

5. Since suffering significant tactical and territorial losses in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh, appears to have given greater emphasis to its activities in Africa, including by establishing branches across Africa and expanding into areas already troubled by conflict and other areas previously unscathed by terrorist violence. A growing number of ISIL-affiliated groups in Africa have shown an ability to launch deadly and coordinated attacks, capture strategic territories, recruit followers using anti-Government propaganda, and conscript child soldiers. With the exception of attacks carried out by the Islamic State – Sinai Province and the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS), the frequency of ISIL attacks and the resulting casualties across the continent indicate that African States are facing an unprecedented terrorist threat. This trend is buttressed by attacks claimed by ISIL affiliates, which reflect the growth in attacks on the African continent (as shown in the graph below).

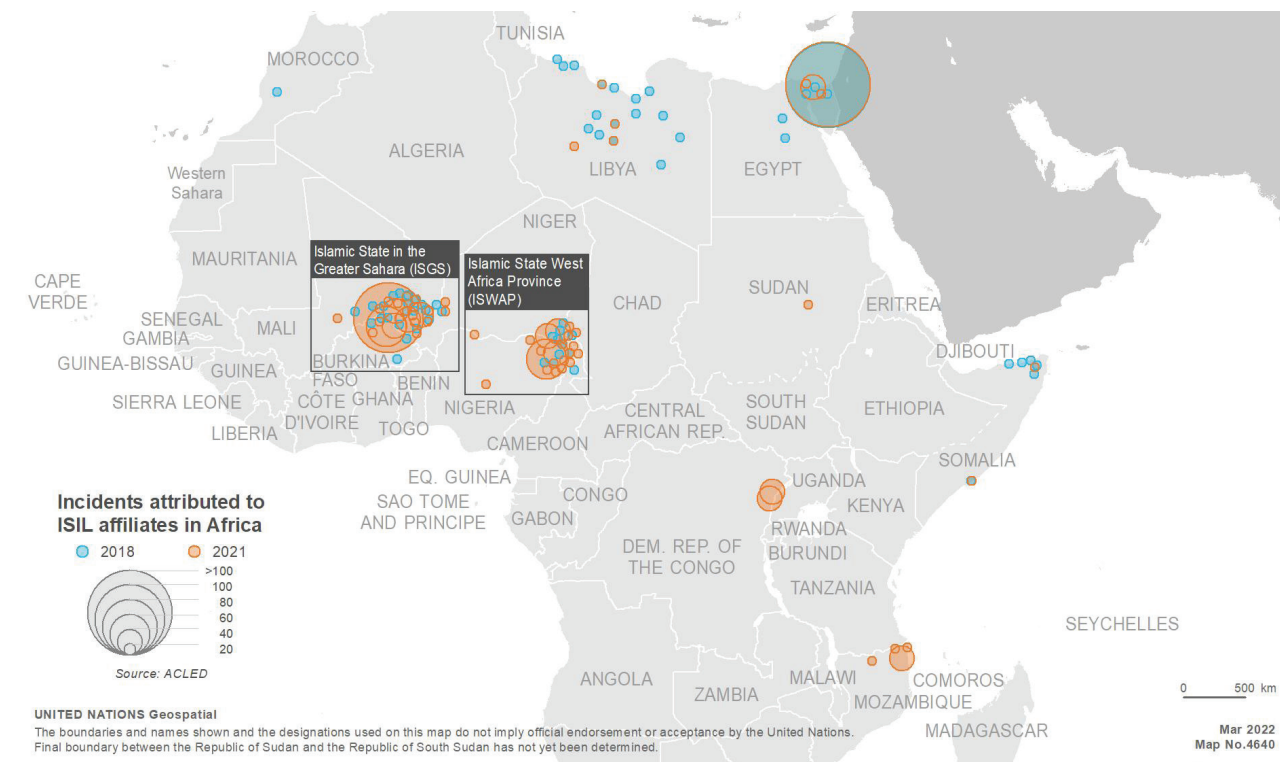
IS attack claim annual totals by branch



Source: Islamic State (IS) group propaganda

BBC MONITORING

II. The threat of ISIL in Africa



Incidents attributed to ISGS and ISWAP respectively are attributed to “Greater Sahara Faction” and “Lake Chad Faction” in the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)’s dataset, <https://acleddata.com/>.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

6. According to CSOs represented at the roundtables, the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) – which consists of various insurgent groups operating under ISIL influence or inspiration in Central and Southern Africa – has recruited fighters from across several States of East, Central and Southern Africa.

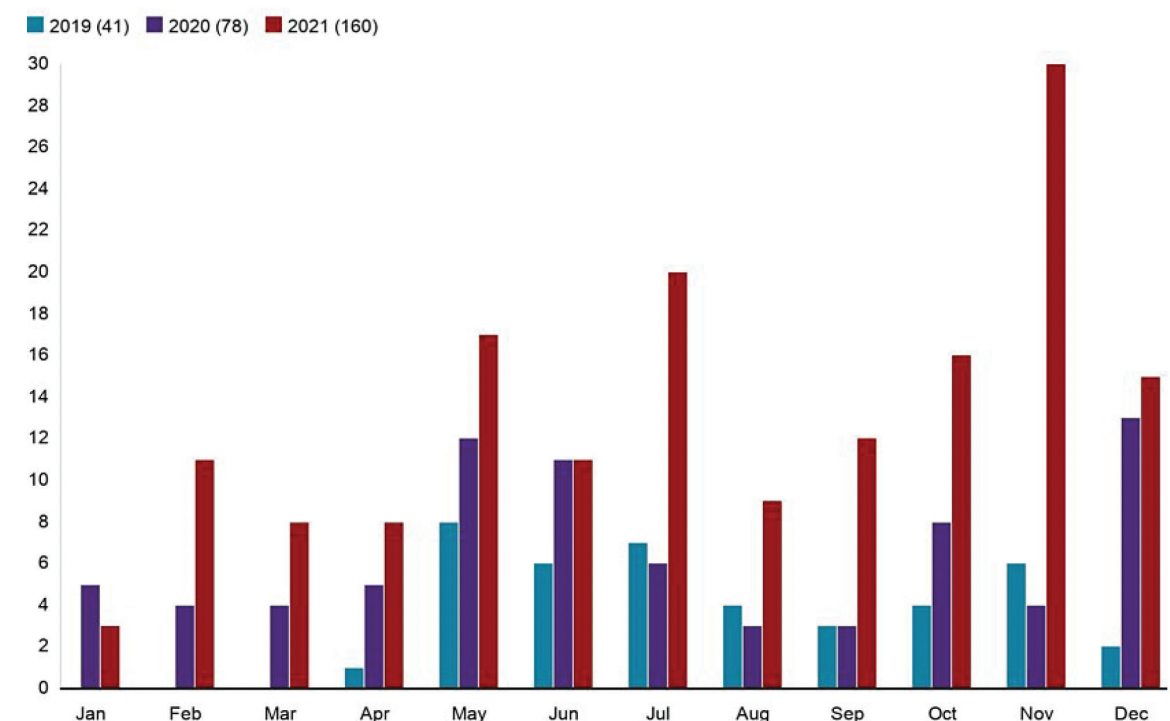
One of the two operationally distinct ISCAP groups, which was forged from an alliance with a local group, is known as *Al Sunnah wa Jamah*. Its recruitment strategy has reportedly instrumentalized longstanding socio-economic and other grievances in local communities in northern Mozambique. The nature and tactics of its attacks, such as beheadings and territorial

occupation, share elements of ISIL’s modus operandi in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and appear to reflect external influence.

7. The group is also influenced from neighbouring Tanzania, including through its leadership, which is said to include nationals from Tanzania, such as Abu Yasir Hassan.¹ The group was reportedly placed under the command structure of ISIL’s affiliate in Somalia, along with ISCAP’s affiliate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the objective of coordinating operations among the East, Southern and Central African ISIL-affiliated groups.²

According to CSOs participating in the roundtable discussions, the Mozambican army – with the support of the Rwandan military and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique – regained control of territory from the group in July 2021 and facilitated the provision of humanitarian relief to affected populations in Cabo Delgado Province. Large-scale attacks have subsequently diminished, but attacks have increased in more remote areas³ with fighters adjusting their tactics to withstand the Rwandan-SADC military pressure, relocating into neighbouring Niassa province and launching attacks in Tanzania.⁴

ISCAP-claimed attacks by month 2019-2021



Source: Islamic State (IS) propaganda

BBC MONITORING

1 Fourteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2022/63), para. 16, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/231/80/PDF/N2223180.pdf?OpenElement>.

2 Twenty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities (S/2020/53), para. 43, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2020_53.pdf.

3 Fourteenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat (S/2022/63), para. 17, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/231/80/PDF/N2223180.pdf?OpenElement>.

4 International Crisis Group, *Winning Peace in Mozambique’s Embattled North*, 10 February 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/b178-winning-peace-mozambiques-embattled-north>.

CENTRAL AFRICA

8. The second of the two ISCAP branches, based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is reported to have emerged as a result of the pledge of allegiance to ISIL by Seka Musa Baluku and his followers in the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in 2019. The ADF is a longstanding non-State armed group which originated in Uganda in 1995 and relocated to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to escape Uganda's military operations. It has since resisted military campaigns conducted by the Governments of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2014, the ADF responded to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's military campaign by launching violent reprisal attacks against the local population. Jamil Mukulu, the founder of the ADF, who fled the attacks, was arrested that same year in Tanzania. His second-in-command, Baluku, reportedly grew increasingly close to ISIL in apparent philosophy and modus operandi.

9. ISIL's alliance with the ADF has been described as a "marriage of convenience", which has both raised the local group's profile and fed into ISIL's narrative of expansion. Emboldened by its ISIL affiliation, under Baluku, the group has reportedly increasingly attacked civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including through knife attacks and beheadings. It has also launched several attacks against the Democratic Republic of the Congo military and peacekeepers from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The group – which has deep,

longstanding roots in Uganda, including through marriage links⁵ – has markedly increased its attacks in Uganda since August 2021 and dispersed its attacks to more remote areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

EAST AFRICA

10. According to CSOs represented at the roundtables, the earliest ISIL connection to East Africa can be traced to 2015, when a faction of Al-Shabaab fighters split and declared allegiance to ISIL. The group's operations have been mainly concentrated in Puntland, Somalia. Al-Shabaab has continued to pose a significantly elevated threat relative to ISIL. In Kenya, ISIL has attracted a more educated membership and reportedly sought to recruit engineering and medical students to fight in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Meanwhile, Tanzania – considered the bridge between terrorism in East and Southern Africa – has suffered cross-border attacks from Mozambique, where its citizens have been linked to the insurgency. In October 2021, the Government of Rwanda arrested 13 members of the ADF for reportedly planning terrorist attacks in the Rwandan capital.⁶

LAKE CHAD BASIN REGION

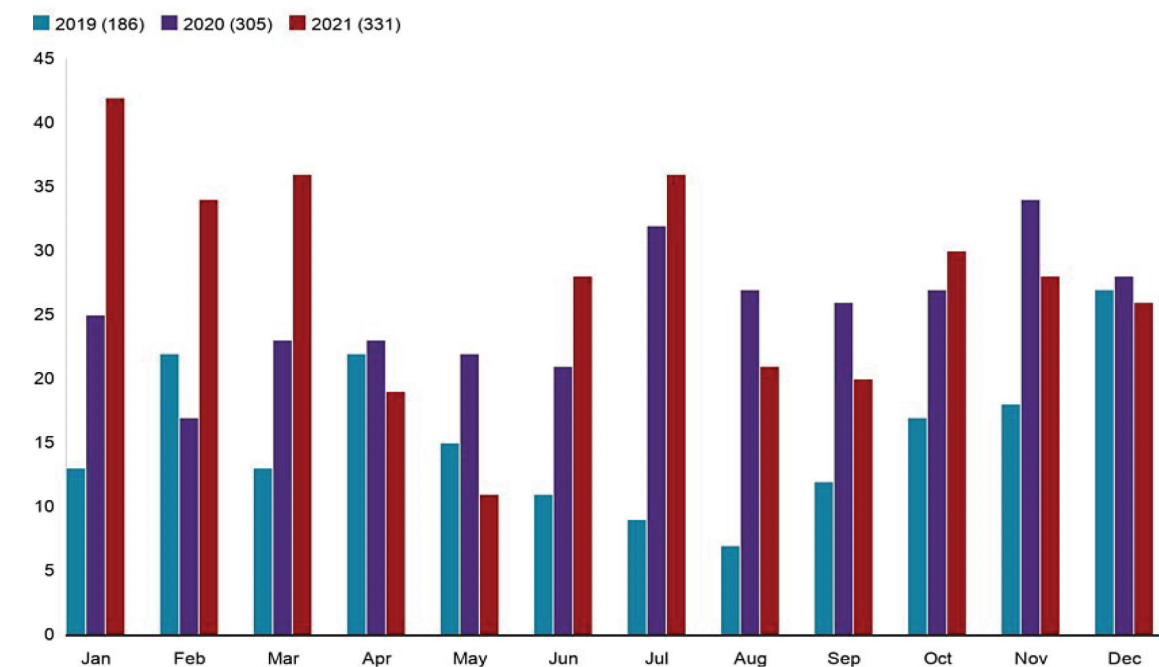
11. ISIL is reported to have been active in Nigeria since 2015, when a Boko Haram faction pledged allegiance to ISIL, establishing Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). This split in Boko Haram – caused by ideological and

practical differences concerning the targeting of civilians and Muslims – left both ISWAP and a separate faction, led by Abubakar Shekau⁷, active in the region. Generally, ISWAP has been considered a less violent faction than Boko Haram, which forcefully recruited members; carried out abductions, beheadings, suicide bombings and attacks targeting non-Muslims and the military; and created linkages with criminal groups.

12. Although ISWAP has reportedly condemned certain Boko Haram methods, including the latter's indiscriminate targeting of Muslim civilians, it has expressed a preference for targeting Christians and has conducted attacks on security forces.⁸

It has also exploited the local socio-economic and political conditions by providing some level of governance in previously under-governed areas, positioning itself as an alternative form of Government. The death of Shekau, in August 2021; rivalries between the faction leaders; difficulties in merging the factions into one; and the expansion and/or introduction of exit programmes in Nigeria and Cameroon are reported to have encouraged a spate of defections among members of the Shekau faction. Emboldened by the Nigerian Government's focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, ISWAP launched high-profile attacks against military targets at the pandemic's height, and in 2021 increased its attacks in Niger and Cameroon.⁹

ISWAP-claimed attacks by month 2019-2021



Source: Islamic State (IS) propaganda

BBC MONITORING

⁵ Kristof, T. & Koen V, (2012), "Rebels without borders in the Rwenzori borderland? A biography of the Allied Democratic Forces", *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 6:1, 154-176.

⁶ Twenty-ninth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities (S/2022/83), para. 16, <https://undocs.org/S/2022/83>.

⁷ In 2015, Shekau's own attempt to pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi was rejected. His followers are also known by the official name of Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād.

⁸ United States Congressional Research Service, *Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province*, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10173.pdf>.

⁹ International Crisis Group, *Winning Peace in Mozambique's Embattled North*, 10 February 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/b178-winning-peace-mozambiques-embattled-north>.

13. Participants in the roundtables argued that although ISWAP currently has a monopoly of power over other groups in the Lake Chad Basin region, it must also address conflict with the late Abubakar Shekau's fighters under new leader Bakura Salaba's command.¹⁰ Through its propaganda, ISWAP has increasingly demonstrated an affiliation with the ISIL core. According to CSOs attending the roundtables, the group continues to launch attacks against the Nigerian military and its quasi-governance in certain geographical areas has reportedly attracted some individuals who previously left ISWAP to return to the group. Since 2020, the propaganda of ISWAP and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) has become increasingly aligned as ISGS (under pressure from the Al-Qaida-affiliated *Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin* (JNIM)), has sought to reinforce itself through its links to ISWAP.

THE SAHEL

14. ISIL entered the Sahel in 2015, when Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi defected from the Al-Qaida-affiliated al-Mourabitoun (following its refusal to swear allegiance to ISIL) and established ISGS. Active in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the ISGS is known for attacking military bases and kidnapping civilians for ransom. However, since 2020, it has lost key personnel in clashes with JNIM and as a result of French airstrikes, culminating in the death

of its leader al-Sahrawi in August 2021. His replacement, Abdul Bara al-Sahrawi,¹¹ sought to consolidate the group's position in the region but was himself killed in 2021.¹² Participants noted an attempt, since 2017, to "Africanize" the references and languages used by ISGS, including the use of African literature to justify its views in an attempt to increase their appeal to local audiences. Some propaganda now describes ISGS as a sub-group of ISWAP.

NORTH AFRICA

15. In September 2014, fighters from *Jund al-Khilafah* in Algeria pledged allegiance to ISIL.¹³ They were followed by several local groups in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, including *Jund al-Khilafah* in Tunisia and Islamic State – Sinai Province in Egypt.¹⁴ CSOs represented at the roundtables suggested that North Africa had been the point of origin for a significant number of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) who travelled to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (some estimates suggest that there were around 8,000 North African FTFs,¹⁵ with the largest number travelling from Tunisia).¹⁶ Libya was also a destination for FTFs (and mercenaries) from across Africa. Many have since returned to their countries of origin, creating other security challenges, while the flow of small arms and light weapons (SALW) from Libya has continued to exacerbate the terrorism threat across the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions.

16. In 2020, terrorist attacks were carried out in Algeria, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, Libya, and Tunisia.¹⁷ However, by the first half of 2021, ISIL's presence and attacks across the North African region had generally declined.¹⁸ This has been attributed to successful interceptions and the arrests of individuals linked to terrorism across the region. ISIL-affiliated groups have sought to debunk counternarratives, emphasizing a weakening of their effectiveness in North Africa, and have also sought to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic in their propaganda.

COVID-19 & Terrorism in Africa

There has been limited reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic by ISIL-affiliated groups in Africa. A reprioritization of government resources in certain Member States did result in a short-term shift away from counter-terrorism priorities, including the redeployment of military and police assets. However, although parts of Africa reported increased fatalities in 2020 and 2021, there is no simple explanation for the increase in fatalities and there is limited evidence to suggest a causative relationship with COVID-19.

Once COVID-19 vaccines are available in terrorism-affected areas, it is possible that ISIL-affiliated groups in Africa could campaign against their use and employ force to prevent the local population from gaining access to them. Developing preparedness to build resilience against anti-vaccine tactics through pro-vaccine campaigns and extra security for health workers may be necessary.

¹⁰ Around 2018, Bakura and his followers emerged in Niger, then subsequently in Cameroon and Chad, as a faction of Boko Haram loyal to Shekau.

¹¹ International Crisis Group, *Winning Peace in Mozambique's Embattled North*, 10 February 2022, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/southern-africa/mozambique/b178-winning-peace-mozambiques-embattled-north>.

¹² <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210916-the-assassinated-abou-walid-al-sahrawi-france-s-major-enemy-in-the-sahel>.

¹³ United Nations Security Council, *Jund al-Khalifa in Algeria*, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/qa_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/jund-al-khilafah-in-algeria.

¹⁴ United Nations Security Council, *Jund al-Khilafah in Tunisia*, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/jund-al-khilafah-tunisia>.

¹⁵ According to an International Crisis Group Study, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/178-how-islamic-state-rose-fell-and-could-rise-again-maghreb>, this number is obtained from various government sources and validated by other sources.

¹⁶ Arevalo, T, Cleary, M Riviera, J et al, *Impact Analysis: The Challenges Foreign Fighters Present to the Security of States in North Africa and the Sahel*, <https://gordoninstitute.fiu.edu/research/diplomacy-lab/diplab-foreign-fighters-formatted.pdf>.

¹⁷ Wilson Center, *U.S. Report: ISIS and Al Qaeda Threats*, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-report-isis-and-al-qaeda-threats>.

¹⁸ Twenty-eighth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities 21 July 2021 (S/2021/655), para. 7, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/168/50/PDF/N2116850.pdf?OpenElement>.

III. Community perceptions of policy and practical responses to terrorism, gaps and challenges in responding to the threat

TRENDS ACROSS ISIL-AFFECTED COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

ISIL forms affiliations with local groups, exploiting structural issues like corruption, unemployment, and poor governance to recruit fighters and drive a wedge between authorities and communities.

- Overly-securitized responses can leave communities caught between the violence of terrorist groups and the heavy-handedness of government forces.
- Responses have followed similar patterns across different regions, with initial securitized responses eventually followed by the adoption of legislation, CVE strategies, and community engagement, as lessons are learned.
- National policy responses suffer from limited community engagement, often due to a lack of awareness of those policies within communities.
- Relevant P/CVE programmes are often unsustainable owing to reliance on external donors for funding.
- Under-resourced government and security personnel are unable to effectively engage with relevant entities at the community level.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

17. Participants attending the roundtables stated that some Governments' responses to terrorism had serious human rights implications, reporting mosque closures, forced detentions, illegal arrests, and enforced disappearances. Although responses have incorporated a criminal

justice component, severe capacity challenges were reported to have impeded the effectiveness and proportionality of such efforts. On the one hand, the release of large numbers of suspects owing to lack of evidence was criticized because of, inter alia, their alleged exposure to violent extremist indoctrination while in detention. On the other hand, insufficient information to justify

arrests and detentions has also posed problems. A related challenge has been a reported lack of coordination among security forces and between security forces and criminal justice actors. Participants also noted a lack of transparency on the part of certain authorities with respect to their efforts to address the situation.

18. The international community has also supported counter-terrorism efforts in the subregion. In 2021, the United States designated the ISIL-affiliated group in Mozambique¹⁹ as a terrorist organization, resulting in asset-freezes and the criminalization, under United States law, of the provision of any material support or resources to the group or its members. The United States has also begun to provide military training to the subregion, while the SADC and Rwanda deployed military forces in 2021, helping to regain control of territory held by the ISIL-affiliated group. Military gains have reportedly facilitated humanitarian access to affected areas in need of aid, although the humanitarian aspects of the response were described as inadequate because there is reportedly no policy in place for displaced persons fleeing attacks across communities. This lack of policy has increased the vulnerability of children and women to kidnapping. Government authorities are also alleged to have beaten, detained, and demanded bribes from displaced persons fleeing violence. Another concern is the lack of coordination between humanitarian groups and government authorities.

EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

19. Participants observed that in East Africa (as in Southern Africa and the Lake Chad Basin region), the counter-terrorism response has typically been security dominated. Although some

¹⁹ <https://mz.usembassy.gov/state-department-terrorist-designations-of-isis-affiliates-and-leaders-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-and-mozambique/>.

States of the region have recognized the need for a balanced, overarching response to the multifaceted nature of violent extremism conducive to terrorism – including by introducing national countering violent extremism (CVE) strategies and plans of action – challenges are said to remain. Where States have prosecuted acts of terrorism, there have been complaints relating to the heavy-handed nature of policing and the inconsistent application of human rights and the rule of law. Participants also recalled how Government-led military offensives against ISIL-affiliated groups in certain States had prompted a wave of reprisal attacks against civilians. Government-imposed “states of siege” were said to have been ineffective in halting hostilities in certain affected States. Logistical and other shortcomings in affected areas also reportedly limit the coordination of efforts to prevent attacks against civilians.

20. Participants noted that Governments had become more willing to collaborate with communities and faith-based organizations. However, suspicion reportedly hindered cooperation between State and non-State actors and coordination in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) was minimal. Moreover, participants observed that non-security initiatives are often unfunded or underfunded, despite the principled commitments set forth in national action plans or strategies, limiting the efficacy of the preventive approach. Lastly, it was suggested that an overemphasis on the ideological aspects of radicalization and recruitment had undermined efforts to address the drivers of radicalization.

NORTH AFRICA

21. The roundtable discussions suggested that there had been changes in the counter-

terrorism priorities of North African stakeholders over the past three years. Those changes, which were attributed either to COVID-19 or to adjustments in donor States' policies, had made a major impact on counter-terrorism strategies and resources. Coups d'état²⁰ and other changes in national Governments of the region had further contributed to shifts in counter-terrorism priorities and enabled the misuse of counter-terrorism as a political tool. Furthermore, the conflict in Libya and difficulties in dealing with militias had, according to participants, hindered the establishment of a comprehensive regional counter-terrorism strategy. Worsening relations between some States had also hampered collaboration and the sharing of relevant information, despite concerted efforts to counter terrorism.

22. Participants highlighted the complex challenges faced by North African States in dealing with women and children returning from detention camps in the Syrian Arab Republic. The judiciaries of those States neither recognized civil documents signed by ISIL nor understood how to handle certain legal issues, especially pertaining to the widows of FTFs who had no male relative and had remarried several times after the successive deaths of their husbands in battle. A reported lack of cooperation between FTF host States, the country of transition, and the country of origin further compounded those challenges.

SAHEL AND LAKE CHAD BASIN REGION

23. The roundtable discussions focused on the full range of counter-terrorism responses in the region, including military offensives and

negotiation. States have also enacted legislation and implemented programmes to rehabilitate and reintegrate persons associated with Boko Haram or ISWAP²¹ primarily for those who have surrendered to authorities and are considered to be "low risk". Participants identified challenges linked to Governments' responses to ISWAP in the region, including the military's perceived dominance over all other aspects of the response. The Nigerian military's involvement in both military offensives and in running deradicalization programmes is reported to have fostered suspicion and caused would-be defectors to hesitate.²² Other concerns included the limited focus on addressing affected communities' economic needs and on establishing intra-community reconciliatory platforms. The stigma associated with terrorist group membership and harsh socio-economic conditions in local communities have also contributed to the recidivism of some defectors.

24. Participants argued that, even though the strong military response had helped reduce insecurity, it had been insufficient and restrictive. Competing insecurity and conflict in other parts of States of the region had allegedly created resource constraints and challenged States' responses to the terrorism threat posed by ISWAP. Participants reported moves towards the reintegration of former fighters in Cameroon – including through a 2018 Presidential Decree establishing a National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee – as an important first step in establishing an approach to reintegration. The Decree has been supplemented by a Regional Strategy for Stabilization Recovery and Resilience in the Lake Chad Basin. Participants noted that community-based reintegration could not begin amid the ongoing conflict. They also described the 2018 Decree as "premature and inadequate"

in responding to the terrorism crisis and recommended a separate strategy for reintegrating ISIL-affiliated fighters which was more suited to addressing the Anglophone conflict affecting the country's northwest and southwest regions. Participants further pointed to the lack of a clear criminal justice component, under the current approach, with respect to individuals associated with ISIL.

25. Although arrests do not traditionally form part of the military's role, participants noted that the volatile conflict environment in which terrorists operate and are captured – in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin and in other areas lacking a government presence – often necessitates military involvement. However, these situations can present significant challenges. For instance, the military (which has a distinct mandate) is sometimes hesitant to work with officers from the judiciary, with whom it is unfamiliar.

26. Participants observed that the G5 Sahel Joint Force had not been successful in establishing a police unit to support the military, owing to difficulties in obtaining a decision within the G5 command structure. However, in Niger, where external partners have provided awareness-raising technical assistance to the military, the number of military arrests has increased and there has been improved cooperation between the criminal justice system and the military.²³

27. Across Africa, despite improvements in the incorporation of rule of law and criminal justice measures in counter-terrorism responses, chronic shortcomings reportedly persist. Those shortcomings include weaknesses in evidence-collection processes, resources, and overall capacities. For example, the discussions revealed that the military had not been adequately supported and trained to respond to criminal justice requirements. Although troops may collect evidence and hand it over to specialized bodies, the lack of computers required to process evidence limits the admissibility of evidence and often prevents investigators and magistrates from proceeding with cases. As a result, suspects arrested by soldiers are released by the authorities, thereby engendering frustration and a loss of trust in the justice system and ultimately increasing the likelihood that the military will take matters into its own hands.

²⁰ From August 2020 to February 2022, military coups took place in Mali (2), Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea and Sudan. There was also an attempted coup in Guinea-Bissau.

²¹ Participants did not distinguish between ISWAP and Boko Haram with respect to these comments.

²² Under the Nigerian Terrorism Prevention Act, the military is also considered to be a law enforcement entity.

²³ In 2020, the Nigerian Ministries of Defence, the Interior, and Justice signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in these areas.

IV. Community resilience in dealing with terrorist presence

28. Communities across terrorism-affected regions in Africa continue to exhibit strong resilience in dealing with terrorist threats. The roundtable discussions revealed that ISWAP-affected communities in Nigeria had found ways to cope with persistent terrorist activity, despite abductions that had made it difficult for girls to return to, remain in, and complete school without militarization. Despite reports of an absence of necessary psychosocial support, survivors have shown immense resilience. However, the return of communities to insecure areas or the return of former fighters to communities that are unprepared to receive them remain significant challenges. Stigma, silence, and shame surround victims of terrorism upon their return to their homes. Communities have also criticized Governments for rewarding former terrorists with packages to facilitate their reintegration. The ongoing violence has resulted in some communities' engaging in harmful cultural practices such as "breast-ironing" to delay the appearance of puberty in girls and prevent their abduction and forced marriage.

29. In Mozambique, CSOs and government institutions have sought to understand and mitigate the drivers of violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Participants cited a study conducted among displaced persons in Cabo Delgado and Nampula (which borders Cabo Delgado), which had found that ethnicity, heritage, and cultural identity were key in driving recruitment to the ISIL-affiliated group. Ethnic groups that were already represented in

the terrorist group were more successful in recruiting from the same ethnic pool. In Cabo Delgado, historical ethnic grievances between different groups had also helped increase vulnerability to terrorist recruitment.²⁴ In heavily targeted communities, confidence in Government was reported to be low and there was a widespread perception that retaliatory violence by affected communities against the group was persuasive.²⁵

30. In Kenya, the arts are used to address trauma resulting from exposure to terrorism. However, as in Nigeria, meaningful livelihood support, comprehensive counselling, and human rights considerations are often lacking. Participants recommended that, as seen in some ISWAP/Boko Haram-affected areas, community leaders, families, and young people should be encouraged to play a more active role in influencing individuals to leave terrorist groups or in preventing young people from believing in the narratives of terrorist groups. Research suggests that, in the Sahel, people show resilience to terrorist recruitment in different ways. For instance, some individuals have fled affected communities or camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) to avoid being recruited to terrorism, while others have successfully resisted pressure to return to terrorist groups after fleeing. In other communities, people are dissuaded from joining terrorist groups because their community or religious leaders have themselves shown resilience to radicalization.

V. Key challenges, recommendations and observations

This section aims to summarize the challenges identified by roundtable participants, as well as their recommendations and observations, in order to provide the relevant policymaking audiences with the broadest range of insights from African CSOs. The recommendations and observations below were made by the participants. They do not necessarily represent the views of CTED, nor do they necessarily represent a consensus.

31. Roundtable participants emphasized that ISIL-affiliated groups were currently in a crucial period. The relatively recent deaths of Abu Musab al Barnawi of ISWAP, Abubakar Shekau of Boko Haram, and Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi of ISGS, and the desertion of thousands of individuals from the groups' ranks signalled a possible weakening of ISIL-affiliated groups in parts of Africa. Those developments represented an opportunity for a renewed, holistic approach that took into account the local aspects of the phenomenon, employed transitional justice approaches (including criminal justice) and prevention mechanisms to enhance States' resilience, strengthened pathways out of conflict, and included robust steps towards preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

A. KEY CHALLENGES

- Inadequate exit strategies and support provided to former terrorists after they leave reintegration programmes, leading them to consider re-joining terrorist groups.
- Lack of compensation and support for victims and local populations (particularly women) disproportionately affected by terrorism and counter-terrorism.
- Insufficient criminal justice response mechanisms in most affected States.
- Failure of the relevant authorities to take advantage of the positive role that civil society, community, and women can play in preventing terrorism, building resilience, and reintegrating former fighters.
- Insufficient coordination of P/CVE initiatives between the national and community levels, which undermines efforts to understand and better support communities and families.

²⁴ Alps Resilience, *A Survey of Communities at Risk of Violent Extremism in Tanzania and Mozambique*, https://www.alpsresilience.com/_files/ugd/ae1dfd_758282fe793444ad81a84aa2cd5b7fd5.pdf.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

B. RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

1) FOR GOVERNMENTS AND RELEVANT AUTHORITIES:

- Consistently protect and respect human rights in counter-terrorism and CVE initiatives, including by thoroughly investigating and ensuring justice for past abuses.
- Employ context-specific and evidence-based strategies that diversify responses away from the dominant military approach and find the appropriate balance between over-securitized measures and under-securitized responses.
- Develop comprehensive responses which simultaneously address the underlying causes of violent extremism conducive to terrorism and strengthen resilience, especially in border areas, while also attending to the humanitarian, psychological, and other needs of people impacted by terrorism.
- In close partnership with local communities, women, youth, and other relevant groups, create and implement gender and age-appropriate CVE processes and psychological support programmes for victims and persons associated with terrorism.
- Provide all affected community members with specific assistance to counter the effects of terrorism, including by reuniting all families separated by conflict, and stop limiting the provision of support packages to those who participated in violence.
- Conduct scoping visits to States with existing Screening, Prosecution, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (SPRR) frameworks to assist in the design and implementation of comprehensive national strategies to deal with FTFs, which include provision for alternatives to imprisonment (including traditional justice mechanisms).
- Provide meaningful and equitable skills to men and women to enable them to successfully reintegrate into communities and share the strategies employed with interested partners.
- Address various types of criminality (including the flow of SALW) by strengthening border controls between States and between North Africa and West Africa.
- Implement all aspects of national counter-terrorism strategies and other relevant policies.
- Improve domestic communication on policies and actions being undertaken to prevent and respond to terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.
- Employ whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approaches and strengthen coordination of all relevant counter-terrorism-related actions by the relevant actors.

- Engage in dialogue with fighters and terrorist groups, including through respected local community and religious leaders, in areas where confidence in Government is lacking.
- Implement educational reforms to change attitudes, including by incorporating peacebuilding into academic curriculums, educating audiences to enhance their understanding of radicalization and detect signs of radicalization, and developing national youth service programmes that help to build national pride (where lacking).
- Engage local communities (especially female community members) in more inclusive processes for conflict management in order to promote resilience.
- Ensure that responses adequately cater to the regional nature of the conflict and include relevant regional responses (e.g., regional transitional justice programmes).
- Lift restrictions on movement within terrorism-affected areas to help facilitate research aimed at creating a thorough and gendered understanding of the underlying drivers of radicalization and recruitment.

2) FOR INTERNATIONAL AID AND CAPACITY-BUILDING PARTNERS:

- Provide comprehensive human rights support to Governments (including clear evidence on the practical implications of human rights violations on communities) to facilitate a culture change within security forces.
- Provide international human rights training to relevant government authorities on evidentiary requirements in terrorism cases and other aspects to facilitate the delivery of justice for human rights abuses; change Governments' negative perceptions of human rights defenders; facilitate the provision of basic assistance to victims; and help build trust between the military and criminal justice arms of Government.
- Support the building of civil society capacity to strengthen expertise in various areas, including by providing psychosocial support, SPRR support, and support in handling FTFs.
- Sensitize security forces to the benefits of including communities in counter-terrorism responses and the need to understand and build trust with communities as part of the response.
- Promote the development of other justice mechanisms for terrorism situations, such as transitional justice mechanisms and reparations, alongside the criminal justice system.
- Develop partnerships with local and community-based organizations to implement counter-terrorism programming and enhance community ownership.

- Work with communities to achieve behavioural and attitudinal changes in order to deter them from advocating harsh punishments, such as extrajudicial killings, for terrorists.

3) FOR CTED:

- In partnership with Governments and research entities, promote research to better understand the nuances of radicalization, recruitment, and other aspects of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in affected communities, where gaps exist.
- Work closely with States to enhance their understanding of the importance of collaboration with CSOs in counter-terrorism and CVE.
- Assess whether States have mechanisms in place to compensate victims as part of their counter-terrorism measures and encourage the introduction of such mechanisms within the framework of the recommendations emanating from Counter-Terrorism Committee assessment visits.
- Convey policy recommendations through appropriate knowledgeable and influential government channels to promote implementation of the necessary actions.
- Highlight the need to prioritize efforts to protect children in terrorism situations.
- Continue to engage with African States that are not yet affected or severely affected by terrorism, emphasizing context-specific conditions that can be conducive to terrorism and sharing lessons learned from other States to enable them to take preventive measures against terrorism.