



Factsheet

ISIL (Da'esh) Crimes against the Sunni Albu Nimr Tribe

Launch of investigation: late 2021 for crimes on the Albu Nimr tribe; November 2023 for crimes against *al-Mustatabin*

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

The investigation focused on crimes committed by ISIL (Da'esh), between 2014 and 2016, against the Sunni community in certain areas of al-Anbar governorate, between the town of Hiit, the Euphrates River and Lake Tharthar in the al-Jazeera desert, and specifically against the Albu Nimr tribe. The Investigative Team also collected preliminary information on crimes committed by ISIL (Da'esh), after 2014, against individuals coerced into repenting in the ISIL (Da'esh) *Wilayat* of al-Furat, Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Dijla and Diyala (crimes against "*al-Mustatabin*" – "those who repent").

DESCRIPTION OF VICTIM GROUP

The Albu Nimr tribe is one of the Sunni tribes, of around 500,000 people, living mainly in the area between Ramadi and Haditha in al-Anbar governorate.

The *al-Mustatabin* were Sunni men who were forced to repent by ISIL (Da'esh) and killed later for the same reasons they repented from.

The Sunnis represent one of the two major branches of the Islamic religion. The Sunni branch differentiates itself from the Shi'a branch in that they recognize the first four caliphs as the Prophet Mohammad's rightful successors. Sunnis have their own interpretation of Islamic history and theology as well as their own holy days of remembrance and holy sites. Sunnis make up approximately 40 per cent of the population in Iraq.

MAIN LOCATIONS/AREAS

- Albu Nimr tribe areas, mainly in the areas between Ramadi and Haditha in Anbar governorate;
- For crimes against the *al-Mustatabin*, in *Wilayat* al-Furat, Nineveh, Salah al-Din, Dijla, and Diyala.

MAIN INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITIES

As part of its work, the Investigative Team screened and/or interviewed dozens of witnesses. It also collected judicial statements, forensic records, audio-visual material, records of excavation of grave sites and exhumations of remains, ISIL (Da'esh) internal documents, publications and videos as well as significant amounts of open-source information, including social media posts. The Investigative Team conducted three field visits to al-Anbar governorate to gather information and apprise community representatives of the Investigative Team's work.



COOPERATION

The Investigative Team cooperated closely with the Iraqi judiciary, local authorities, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The Investigative Team received considerable support from the Sunni community in al-Anbar, including tribal leaders, which led to valuable access to witnesses, victims and their family members. The Investigative Team collected documents and information from local Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that provided highly relevant eyewitnesses and information on crimes and mass graves in the al-Anbar area.

OUTREACH

The Investigative Team organized a town hall meeting for local NGOs and CSOs in al-Anbar in March 2024, which brought together various organizations that work on issues related to ISIL (Da'esh) in al-Anbar. Information and best practices on investigations, evidence management and digitization were shared, and the views of participants, including on their capacity-building needs, on justice and accountability work, were collected.

OVERVIEW OF FACTUAL FINDINGS

In 2007, members of the Albu Nimr tribe were part of the *Sahwa* (Sunni Awakening) forces that fought *al-Qa'eda* alongside the predominantly Shi'a government. In 2014, the tribe was one of the Sunni Arab tribes that opposed ISIL (Da'esh), alongside the Iraqi security forces. In early 2014, ISIL (Da'esh) started to seize control of al-Anbar governorate with the assistance of local Sunni militias, which it lured to its cause by exploiting existing grievances within the Sunni community. In the days following ISIL's (Da'esh) takeover of the Albu Nimr area in al-Anbar and its surroundings in October 2014, on the orders of the ISIL (Da'esh) leadership in al-Anbar, armed ISIL (Da'esh) members captured and executed hundreds of male members of the Albu Nimr tribe, including children. Albu Nimr representatives have reported that ISIL (Da'esh) was responsible for the killing or disappearance of about 1,200 members of their tribe, including women and children. Between 2014 and 2015, many members of the Albu Nimr tribe were executed in the area between Hiit, Ramadi, Lake Tharthar and Haditha in al-Anbar governorate. The majority of those captured, tortured and killed were part of or associated with the Iraqi police, military, *Sahwa* tribal forces, or their family members. In many cases, ISIL (Da'esh) prohibited family members from recovering the bodies and denied them the possibility of an appropriate burial. Many members of the Albu Nimr tribe, including women and children, were forcibly displaced and had their property confiscated or destroyed.

The preliminary information collected about the *al-Mustatabin* crimes indicated the killing by ISIL (Da'esh) of Sunni individuals who had been forced to repent only to be later killed for the same reasons they repented from. This information also pertains to a broader group of Sunni tribes, including the al-Salmani, al-Karbouli, al-Hardani, al-Obaidi and al-Mahalawi tribes. The investigation remained at a preliminary stage.



OVERVIEW OF PRELIMINARY LEGAL FINDINGS

The Investigative Team found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that ISIL (Da'esh) crimes committed against the Albu Nimr tribe in the area between Hiit, Ramadi, Lake Tharthar and Haditha of al-Anbar governorate may amount to the:

- **war crimes** of murder, torture, outrages upon personal dignity; and
- **crimes against humanity** of murder, extermination, torture, enforced disappearance, imprisonment, forcible transfer and persecution.

RELEVANT PUBLIC DOCUMENT

[Summary of Factual and Preliminary Legal Assessment of Crimes Committed by ISIL Against the Albu Nimr Tribe in Anbar](#)