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Egypt: Developments of Security Status in Sinai

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Introduction

Despite going back to school after a 7-month suspension in the areas of Arish, Sheikh Zuweid, Bir al-Abed, Hasna and Nakhil, however the humanitarian crisis is still continuing in North Sinai with no horizon for a near solution. Despite the support provided by the army to local militant formations of tribesmen to help in fighting the Islamic State's affiliate 'Sinai Province', however there were significant losses among the army ranks in September, most prominently the killing of the Seventh Infantry Brigade's Chief of Staff in Jabal Halal area, which the army had announced it was under their control more than once before.

In general, Operation Sinai 2018 continued in North Sinai, increasing the suffering of citizens with respect to the high rates of unemployment and poverty, which contributes to the formation of a local environment for denouncing the central authority in Cairo. This does not mean that there is real sympathy with IS affiliate 'Sinai Province', as the IS organization has been suspected by the Sinai people of being behind some incidents that badly affected them. Accordingly, this undermines the popularity of the 'Sinai Province' and its ability to move and operate. On the other hand, this situation is not in favor of the Egyptian regime either; as the Sinai population's anger, especially among the young people, may provide the appropriate circumstances for creating an effective rebellion environment in the future, albeit under other umbrellas.

In this monthly report, we aim to provide documentation and reading of events in the Sinai Peninsula by monitoring and tracking daily military campaigns on the ground and

their developments, with a numerical census on the losses of both the Egyptian Armed Forces and the militants.

First: Casualties and Losses as declared by the Army and militants

Here are the casualties and losses derived from the Egyptian Army communiqués and the statements declared by militants as well as media reports:

1- Casualties and Losses as Declared by Egyptian Army

This month, no military communiqués were issued on the army's field operations in Sinai. Only one military [statement](#) was issued on a visit to the operations center of the armed forces at the east canal headquarters by Minister of Defense Mohamed Zaki to follow up the comprehensive operation "Sinai 2018". The statement said that Zaki heard a detailed presentation from the commanders of the Second and Third Field Army, including the size and composition of participating forces, as well as the measures taken to develop combat activities in the areas of combating terrorism. He also listened to efforts of the completion and elimination of terrorist elements and the controlling of areas that were previously cleared, in order to avoid terrorist elements from infiltrating them again or receiving any logistical support, according to the military spokesman's statement. Also, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi [ordered](#) the Supreme Council of the Police to maintain the ongoing coordination between the different security apparatuses and the Egyptian armed forces in order to continue achieving success in Sinai 2018 operations. In this context, the Ministry of Interior announced the [killing](#) of 11 citizens in the city of Arish, North Sinai, claiming that they had clashed with the National Security forces during their attempt to arrest them. The names of the liquidated citizens included a citizen that had been arrested and forcibly

disappeared, Mohamed Ibrahim Shahin, which questions the credibility of such reports.

2- Casualties and Losses as Declared by militants and media reports

According to what was monitored by the [Egyptian Institute for Political and Strategic Studies](#) in September, the losses of the army and police forces were as follows:

- At least 16 military personnel were killed, including 2 officers, in addition to the assassination of a civil servant, three militant tribesmen were executed for cooperating with the army, and injuring 15 army soldiers, including at least one officer.
- An army tank was destroyed in Sibbana village on September 19.



- Regarding operations, the Sinai Province militants carried out three assassination attempts in Al-Arish city, two of which succeeded in killing a conscript and a civil servant.
- The militant organization also erected more than 2 ambushes against the army and local militias.
- More than 7 armed clashes were carried out against the army forces in areas south of Sheikh Zuweid and west of Rafah.

- There were 3 cases of targeting with sniper weapons.
- IS militants detonated an anti-tank/personnel explosive device, resulting in the destruction of 20 military vehicles.
- The Sinai Province seized a vehicle and a machine gun from tribal militants, backed by the army.

Second: Overview of the military operation developments

Following is an overview of the developments of Egypt's Comprehensive Operation - Sinai 2018 during its eighth month (September 2018):

- 1- There was a complete absence of military data on the comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018, despite the presence of confrontations and clashes on the ground that resulted in losses in the army and police forces causing the death of a number of the military, most notably the killing of Colonel Staff Ahmed Jaafari, the Seventh Infantry Brigade's Chief of Staff in Jabal Halal area in Central Sinai early September.
- 2- The military campaign in Sinai focused on the villages south of Sheikh Zuweid beyond the buffer zone, removing several houses and razing agricultural land, amid a siege imposed on the area preventing access to water and food.
- 3- For the first time, Egyptian military forces used a military balloon mid-September for imaging and espionage in the area of the village of El-Muqataa, south of Sheikh Zuweid.
- 4- This month saw a complete power and water supply failure in the city of Arish, Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah, which led to a real tragedy experienced by residents of these cities.
- 5- The army and security forces maintained the policy of physical liquidation of some of forcibly disappeared citizens. The enforced disappearance of one of the 11 persons

who were liquidated during September, Mohamed Ibrahim Shahin, had been documented by his family. Shahin was arrested on 25 July 2018 along with his young son from home, and disappeared since then. Shahin's family sent telegraphs to the Egyptian Prosecutor-General in August on his disappearance. However, the fate of Shahin's son is still unknown.

6- The interior ministry maintained its policy of besieging districts – such as Salayma and Samran – and preventing citizens from leaving while carrying out illegal arrests of anyone known for opposing the military coup or rejecting the massacres committed against civilians. It should be noted that this policy did not stop the assassination in the city of El Arish, and failed to build a successful communication bases with the citizens; but on the contrary it increased feelings of hatred and anger towards the security forces.

7- Despite the state of weakness of the IS's Sinai Province, the organization is still able to inflict heavy losses on the army and police forces. The clashes focused this month on the village of Shabaneh, south of Rafah, where the army forces suffered losses in personnel and equipment more than once. Also, there were clashes in the Moqataa and Wefaq villages west of Rafah, and the Lefitat and Ataiqa villages south of Sheikh Zuweid. In addition, the militants were able to move south and east of Arish and planted improvised explosive devices targeting military bulldozers.

8- The Sinai Province continued to carry out successful security operations in the city of Arish, assassinating a police soldier and head of finance and administrative affairs in the Arish Fourth District, Mohamed Atef al-Gharib, and attempting the assassination of three police officers.

9- The Sinai Province was able to carry out infiltrations, raids, arrests and assassinations inside Al-Barth area in southern Rafah, targeting some tribesmen working in the local militias supporting the army. The militant organization also executed one of its elements, according to the organization's media. Sinai Province also assassinated two persons and seized their vehicle, a machine gun and two phones, providing photos for the operation.

10- Continued intensive activity of Israeli drones in terms of survey and targeting IS members in Sinai.

Third: Israeli Drone Attacks and violation of sovereignty

During August, we observed five penetrations of Israeli drones inside areas of operation in northeast Sinai including the areas of Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah in violation of Egyptian sovereignty. These air penetrations varied between the aerial survey and shelling, including:

- On 6 September, two Israeli drones overflew the airspace of the village of Kharafin south of Sheikh Zuweid, and carried out aerial reconnaissance there.
- On 9 September, an Israeli drone overflew the village of El-Sayala in Central Sinai, and another drone flew over the Nqizat and Al Barth villages south of Rafah.
- On 25 September, two Israeli drones bombed several targets south of the city of Rafah and east and south of Sheikh Zuweid.
- On 28 September, an Israeli drone carried out an aerial survey above the area of Qoz Abo Raad south of Rafah, and another flew over the area west of Rafah.
- On September 29, two Israeli drones carried out aerial surveys and fired several missiles at targets in the village of Balaa west of Rafah, and the village of El-Moqataa in Sheikh Zuweid.

Conclusion

The regime is maintaining its intransigent security and military policies against citizens of North Sinai. Army officers and soldiers are informed that the inhabitants of this region are rebels working in the fields of smuggling, drugs, and weapons. This is reflected in the humiliating practices of army and security officers at checkpoints, including arrests, beating, and verbal assaults and abuses, such as the incident where an army officer whipped a driver for bypassing the queue of cars waiting for filling fuel at a petrol station in the city of El Arish. In addition, many thefts were monitored for houses belonging to citizens evicted from the Rafah area by army soldiers – while officers either agree or turn a blind eye on such practices.