

ISIS bans music, imposes veil in Raqqa

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Yesterday [Jan. 20], the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/01/isis-prisoner-horrors-syria.html>) (ISIS) started imposing extensive restrictions in the [Syrian] province of Raqqa, in the northeast of the country. ISIS has banned smoking and music, imposed the full-face veil and closed all shops before and during prayer times. All this occurred after the organization managed to gain the upper hand in violent clashes with other Islamic groups fighting along the Turkish border in northern Syria.

On Jan. 14, ISIS fighters managed to take sole control of all the areas in Raqqa near the Iraqi border, except for the regions under the control of Syrian regime forces. ISIS has been seeking to impose a radical lifestyle, which was one of the reasons that prompted other Islamic brigades — such as the Islamic Front (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/islamic-front-isis-rebel-clashes-syria.html>), the Mujahideen Army and the Syria Revolutionaries Front — to challenge it. While ISIS' opponents gained ground in western Aleppo, in the northwest of the country, the organization maintained its position to the east of Aleppo, in the northeast.

Yesterday, ISIS issued four statements in the streets of the city of Raqqa. The first statement provided for the “imposition of the full-face veil,” requiring “all sisters to wear the full-face veil in public, in line with Islamic morality. Women must wear Islamic dress, which consists of the full-face veil and an abaya to cover the whole body, in addition to gloves. Women are not allowed to raise their voices in the street or walk at a late hour without a male guardian.”

“Every sister that continues to violate Sharia after a three-day warning will be punished along with her guardian,” the statement asserted, stressing that if these rules are not applied, “we risk losing control of the liberated areas.”

In its second statement, ISIS “banned music and songs in cars, at parties, in shops and in public, as well as photographs of people in shop windows.” The organization urged shop owners to remove photographs of men and women from their shop windows, warning that “whoever violates these rules will subject themselves to the necessary Sharia punishment.”

“Songs and music are forbidden in Islam, as they prevent one from the remembrance of God and the Koran and are a temptation and corruption of the heart,” the statement added.

In the third statement, the ISIS Preaching Office banned the sale of cigarettes and hookah pipes. The statement began by mentioning the health and financial harms of smoking, describing it as a “slow suicide.” It noted that “wise men refrain from smoking ... not to mention its financial and health damages.”

“Every smoker should be aware that with every cigarette he smokes in a state of trance and vanity is disobeying God,” added the statement.

ISIS warned that “Three days following the issuance of the statement, selling tobacco and shisha will be strictly prohibited and those who insist on selling them will bring injustice upon themselves and upon other people. All tobacco quantities will be burned and the seller will be punished according to Sharia.”

A fourth statement, signed “your brothers in the ISIS Preaching Office,” demanded that shopkeepers in Raqqa “close their shops 10 minutes before [prayer time]. Any man who is present in the street shall go to the mosque to perform the religious duty of praying. They shall not be late, nor shall they talk in the streets while Muslims are in the mosques.” It added, “Those who open their shops or are outside the mosques during prayer time will have their shops closed, and they will be held accountable according to Sharia.”

The Aleppo Media Center said yesterday that the Jarabulus border crossing has been closed by the Turkish government. The latter removed all of the equipment from the Turkish side of the crossing after ISIS took control of the city of Jarabulus. Last week, the Turkish government also closed the Tell Abyad border crossing for the same reason. The border posts that remain open between northern Syria and Turkey are the Bab al-Salamah border crossing, in the Aleppo countryside, and the Bab al-Hawa border crossing, in the Idlib countryside.

Activists said yesterday that ISIS fighters had targeted 33 positions of the opposition forces with 51 bombings, including four bombings in Saraqib, in the countryside of Idlib, three in Raqqa and six on the road to Azaz, in northern Aleppo (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/syria-mood-geneva-ii-anticipation.html>). They pointed out that the bombings had resulted in 400 deaths. The activists published a map showing that the targeted sites were close to the regime's forces and its loyal militias, yet the latter were not targeted by ISIS.

The Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC) announced, “Fighters from the Free Syrian Army killed a Tunisian woman wearing a suicide vest while she was heading toward the Bab al-Salamah border crossing to conduct a suicide attack. Her attempt was discovered [via information provided by] a person who gave her a ride to the village of Sjo, near the crossing. The fact that she was wearing a large vest in the waist area and a military uniform raised the suspicions of the driver, who informed members of the Tawhid Brigade [part of the Islamic Front] present in the area. The woman was pursued from the moment she entered [the area] until a few moments before she was to conduct the attack, when she was shot in the head.” The SRGC added that the explosives on her person weighed 15 kilograms. This was the first announcement of a female suicide bomber from ISIS.

ISIS fighters withdrew from the entire western countryside of Aleppo after [the night of Jan. 20] “and have evacuated their positions in Rif al-Muhandisin and Kafar Joum.” Activists said the objective was to strengthen the group’s positions in northern Aleppo, where clashes erupted yesterday, with opposing brigades on the outskirts of the city of Azaz, which ISIS took control of last September.

Read More: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/01/isis-raqq-ban-music-smoking-impose-veil.html>



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