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Insider's View Bulletin: Data analysis of violence in and around Mosul

Sept. 9, 2016

Key points:

- Data analysis of violence perpetrated inside IS territory – both by IS and targeting IS – may provide insight into the group's hold on given territory
- IS fatalities from attacks by guerrilla groups have increased each month since May
- Fatalities still remain well below those seen in Q4 2015 and Q1 2016
- Civilian executions by IS have remained steady month on month since Feb. 2016

Operational impact:

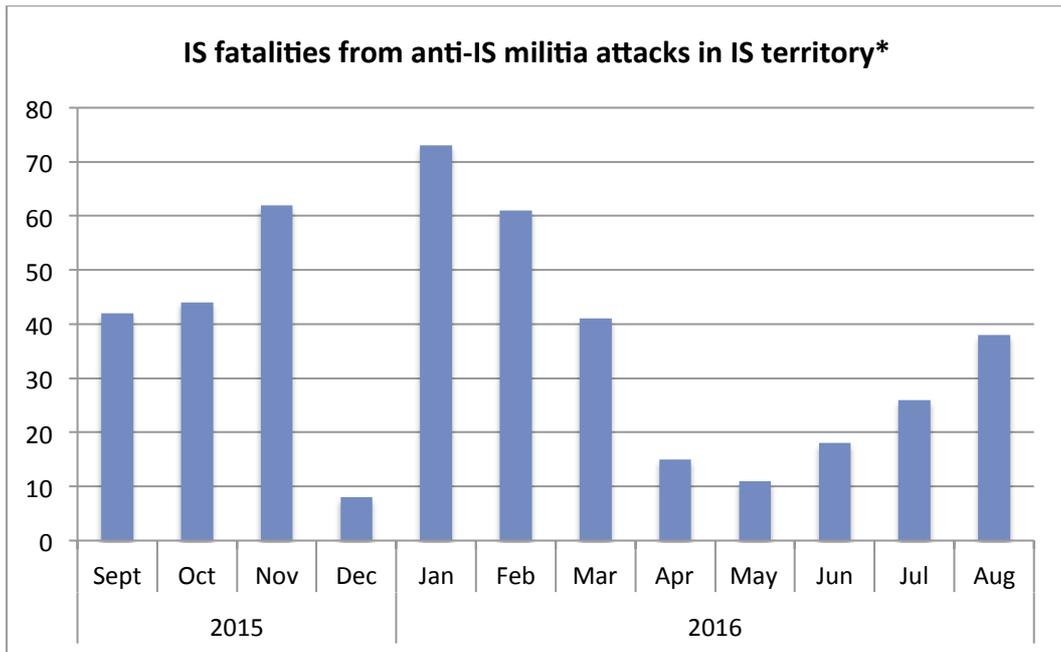
- Individuals and entities with business interests in Iraq should note that despite their recent increase in their kinetic activities, anti-IS guerrilla groups in Mosul are still less lethal now than they were in late 2015. Monitoring these groups kill rate going forward will provide an indicator for the efficacy of insurgency operations against IS inside the "Caliphate".
- IS tends to increase its pace of civilian executions in specific geographies prior to losing control of territory. As such, monitoring the pace of executions by IS in Mosul is one way to anecdotally assess the group's perception of its level of control.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Data collected from sources inside IS-held territory indicate that the frequency and deadliness of anti-IS attacks being launched by guerilla groups against IS have increased in recent months. Data also indicate that although the frequency of civilian executions by IS has remained steady in recent months, they are increasingly concentrated in areas where IS is concerned about losing ground.

For any questions on data collection and methodology, please contact jaredlevy@iraqoilreport.com

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Details: Attacks on IS by local guerrilla groups in and around Mosul have increased over the past three months, after falling significantly during the first half of the year. Proprietary data collected inside IS-controlled territories in Ninewah province shows a clear upward trend in the number of IS fatalities as a result of these attacks, the majority of which have occurred in Mosul City proper.



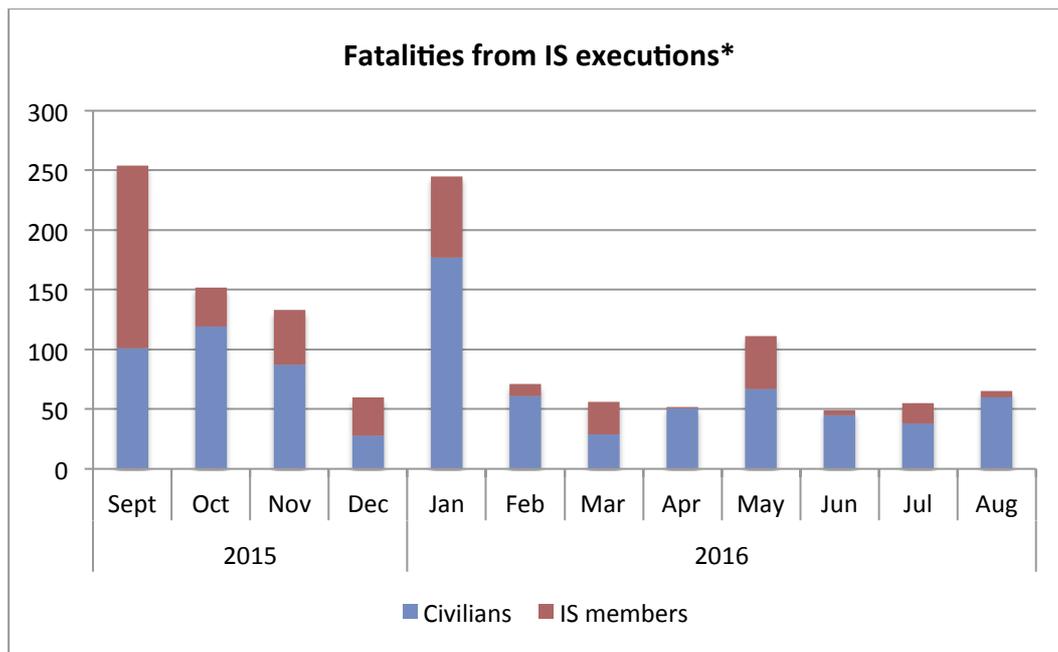
**This chart analyses data on IS executions in Ninewa province, and does not include data from IS-held territory elsewhere in Iraq*

Local residents attribute most of these attacks to Kataeb al-Mosul, a local guerrilla group ostensibly funded, armed, and directed by former Ninewah Governor Atheel Nujaifi. The group – thought to consist largely of former Saddam era military and intelligence officials – generally engages in small-scale violence against IS, shooting individual IS members manning checkpoints or planting small IEDs.

Though these anti-IS guerrillas have recently attracted the attention of the international media, the reality is that they have been operating for over a year. In fact, relative to Q-4 2015 and Q-1 2016, their activity in the past five months has been markedly reduced. However, within the most recent five-month period, their activity has once again been on the rise.

Analysis: *For now, there appears to be a stasis between IS and these guerrillas. IS lacks the strength and intelligence capacity to wipe the guerrillas out, but has sufficient resources to prevent the guerrilla movement from expanding (and/or the guerrillas lack the ability, resources and popularity to expand). Looking forward, it seems likely that anti-IS groups will continue to intensify their attacks as IS loses control over additional territory, a move which could prompt a crackdown by IS. However, that the increasing frequency of attacks now has not yet provoked a crackdown may either suggest that IS does not view the group as an existential threat, or, conversely, that the group is too focused on its military losses to shift attention to threats inside its territory.*

Rate of IS executions falls in 2016: Another indicator that has been tracked over the past year is the frequency of IS executions, both of civilians and of members of the group. Executions in the Caliphate have fallen significantly in 2016, relative to Q-4 2015. Executions of IS members have grown particularly rare, likely due to the group’s increased focus on defending its territory.



**This chart analyses data on IS executions in Ninewa province, and does not include data from IS-held territory elsewhere in Iraq*

Executions over the past year have centered in areas where IS is under immediate duress from anti-IS security forces. Qayara, for instance, has had 25-30 civilians executed in each month since April 2016, whereas in 2015, the town averaged just 8 executions per month. This suggests that, moving forward, an analysis of the rate of executions of civilians in Mosul city may be an indicator for the extent to which IS is feeling pressure from anti-IS forces.

The reasons for civilians being executed have also shifted over time. The high number of civilian executions in January was the result of an intentional purge, with 50 journalists, lawyers, and other prominent figures being detained in Mosul killed in one day. The group also killed groups of civilians in Hamam al-Aleel, Hajji Ali, Sherqat, and Mahalabiyah that month. All of those killings can be viewed as part of a wider campaign to terrorize and control the population, and specifically, to prevent organized dissent.

Over the past three months – when execution levels have dropped – the typical rationale for violence was reported by be the execution of anyone caught trying to leave the "Caliphate" without permission.

Executions of IS members, meanwhile, can be characterized as waves of purges, generally in response to defections following battles. The largest number of IS members killed was in September 2015, reportedly in response to an attempted coup by some IS leaders. Those 30 leaders were held for two weeks before being killed, while as many as 115 of their followers were shot and killed during one brutal day in Mosul.

Analysis: *Though executions remain a common occurrence in IS-controlled territory, there has been a shift in the locations and reasons for the killings. If Qayara is taken as a test case, it would follow that civilian executions in Mosul will increase if and when IS feels pressured by security forces. Further data collection in the city will continue to track executions and other violence, in order to determine whether this pattern holds going forward.*

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