

Jihadist Snapshot: Daesh & AQ Trends



MONTHLY ANALYSIS #08

During September, Moonshot collected and analyzed over **670 posts** across pro-Daesh and pro-al-Qaeda (AQ) channels on encrypted platforms and identified their relevance to geographic regions. Posts classified as regional were focused on events taking place in specific countries/regions. Posts identified as non-regional were not linked to a physical event or were primarily significant to each group's global narratives.

This brief analyzes the narratives shared by the two groups and their supporters, and provides a breakdown of the topics discussed in relation to each region. For more information or analysis, please get in touch with info@moonshotteam.com to chat to one of our Jihadism experts.

Key findings

- ▶ In September, pro-Daesh channels prioritized non-regional discussions over any individual region, whereas pro-AQ channels predominantly focused on issues related to Africa.
 - ▶ The activities and attacks of AQ's Somalia affiliate, al-Shabaab, dominated discussion on pro-AQ channels during September.
 - ▶ A significant portion of pro-Daesh outputs was linked to the release of an official audio speech by the group's spokesman, Abu Omar al-Muhajir.
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Daesh

Three main topics were discussed across pro-Daesh channels in September:

- **Official Daesh audio release - "Hold Fast to the Rope of God Together and Do not Become Divided" (13% of all posts)**

On September 13, Daesh's official al-Furqan Media Foundation released a speech by the group's spokesman, Abu Omar al-Muhajir, titled "Hold Fast to the Rope of God Together and Do Not Be Divided". The 36-minute audio message is the third released by al-Muhajir since he became the group's new spokesperson in March 2022 following the death of his predecessor, Abu Hamza al-Qurayshi. The speech celebrated the group's affiliates in Africa, and called for more attacks on prisons to free Daesh supporters and fighters and for more recruits in south-east Asia.
- **Daesh and others' attacks in Syria (12% of all posts)**

Throughout September, Daesh claimed responsibility for a series of attacks against forces belonging to the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), who control the de-facto autonomous region of northeastern Syria. Daesh supporters celebrated the attacks against these two parties, particularly those against the SDF. They described attacks against the latter as "revenge" for the conditions of the detained wives and children of current and former Daesh fighters in al-Hol camp, a facility administered by the SDF. Daesh also discussed Israeli Air Force strikes on Damascus airport on September 17.

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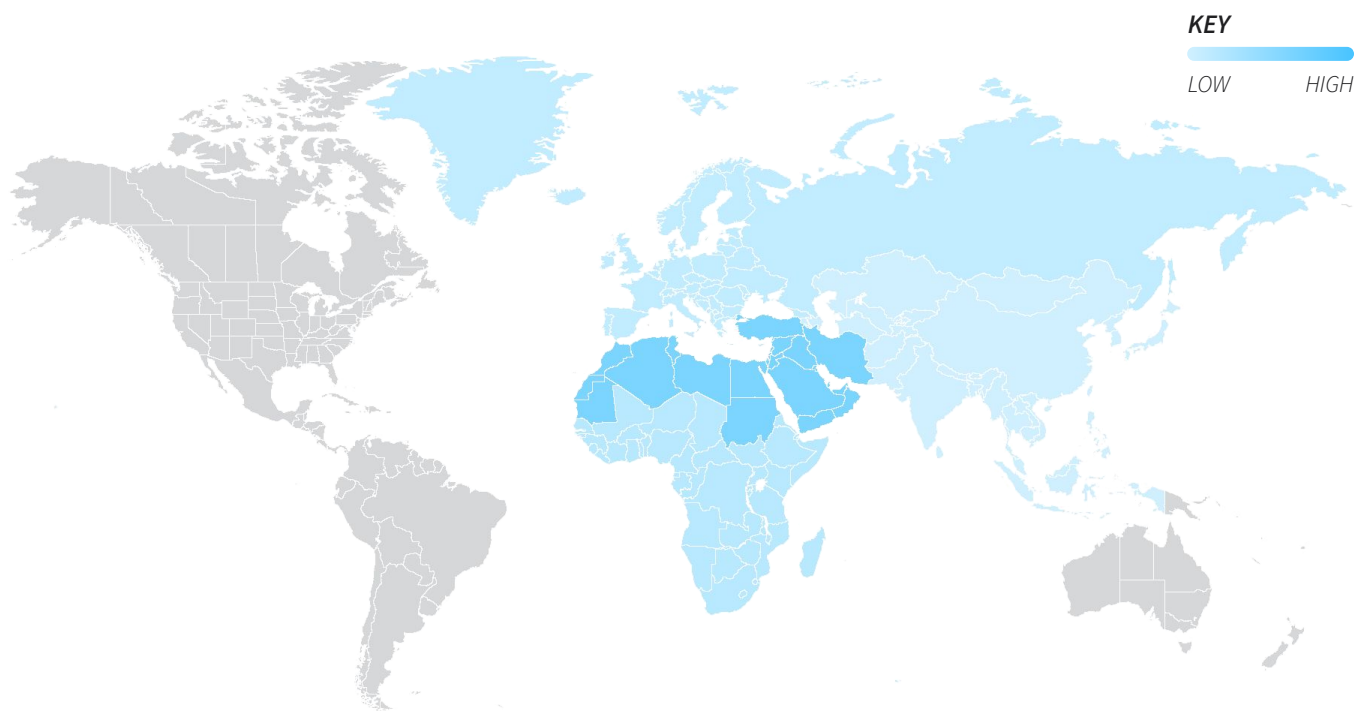
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- **Afghanistan attacks (7% of all posts)**

On September 5, Daesh's Central and South Asia branch, the "Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP)", launched an attack against the Russian Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, claiming to have killed or injured 25 individuals. Daesh dedicated an editorial of its weekly newsletter to the attack, where it attempted to undermine the Taliban, presenting it as "weak", "unstable", "subservient" to foreign powers, and "idolatrous" in its alleged pursuit of international recognition. Daesh supporters celebrated this attack as well as others against Afghan Shiites, condemning the Taliban as "protectors of polytheists".



Regional and non-regional posts identified on pro-Daesh channels



Non-regional	38%
MENA	27%
Africa (excluding North Africa)	14%
Europe	12%
Asia	9%

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Analysis of regional and non-regional posts

☞ MENA

In September 2022, **27%** of regional posts were related to the MENA region. Of these, **63%** discussed Daesh's attacks in Syria, as well as other developments and unrest in the country. **14%** discussed protests and unrest in Iraq, and a further **9%** focused on ongoing protests and unrest in Iran.

☞ Africa

35% of posts related to Africa discussed attacks in Mozambique, and **33%** related to attacks by Daesh's "West Africa wilaya [province]" affiliate.

☞ Asia

Posts related to Asia were largely focused on Daesh's attacks and other developments in Afghanistan (**85% of Asia-related posts**). These predominantly focused on the group's September 5 attack against the Russian embassy in Kabul.

☞ Europe

The most discussed topic in posts relating to Europe was the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II (**51%**), followed by developments in the Ukraine-Russia war (**46%**).

☞ Non-regional

A large volume of post not linked to a specific region discussed the September 13 release by Daesh's official al-Furqan Media Foundation of a speech titled "Hold Fast to the Rope of God Together and Do Not Be Divided", amounting to **34%** of non-regional posts. A smaller volume of posts on pro-Daesh channels (**10%**) also discussed the 21st anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

☞ Al-Qaeda (AQ)

Three main topics were discussed across pro-AQ channels in September:

- **Al-Shabaab military, "civilian" and media activities (41% of all posts)**

AQ supporters widely circulated and celebrated reports of al-Shabaab's attacks against the Somali government, militias loyal to it, and forces belonging to international partners of the Somali government, such as the Kenyan military. They shared the group's propaganda outputs depicting militants "graduating" into its ranks, and also promoted al-Shabaab media outputs seemingly showing the group's efforts to distribute drought relief to populations under its control.

- **AQ attacks in Yemen (8% of all posts)**

In September, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) launched a series of attacks in Yemen, primarily targeting UAE-backed "Security Belt" forces which had recently instigated a campaign against the AQ affiliate in the country. AQAP's counter-campaign represented its most militarily active period in Yemen since 2015. AQ supporters discussed the group's military attacks and celebrated the "renewed frequency" of the group's operations.

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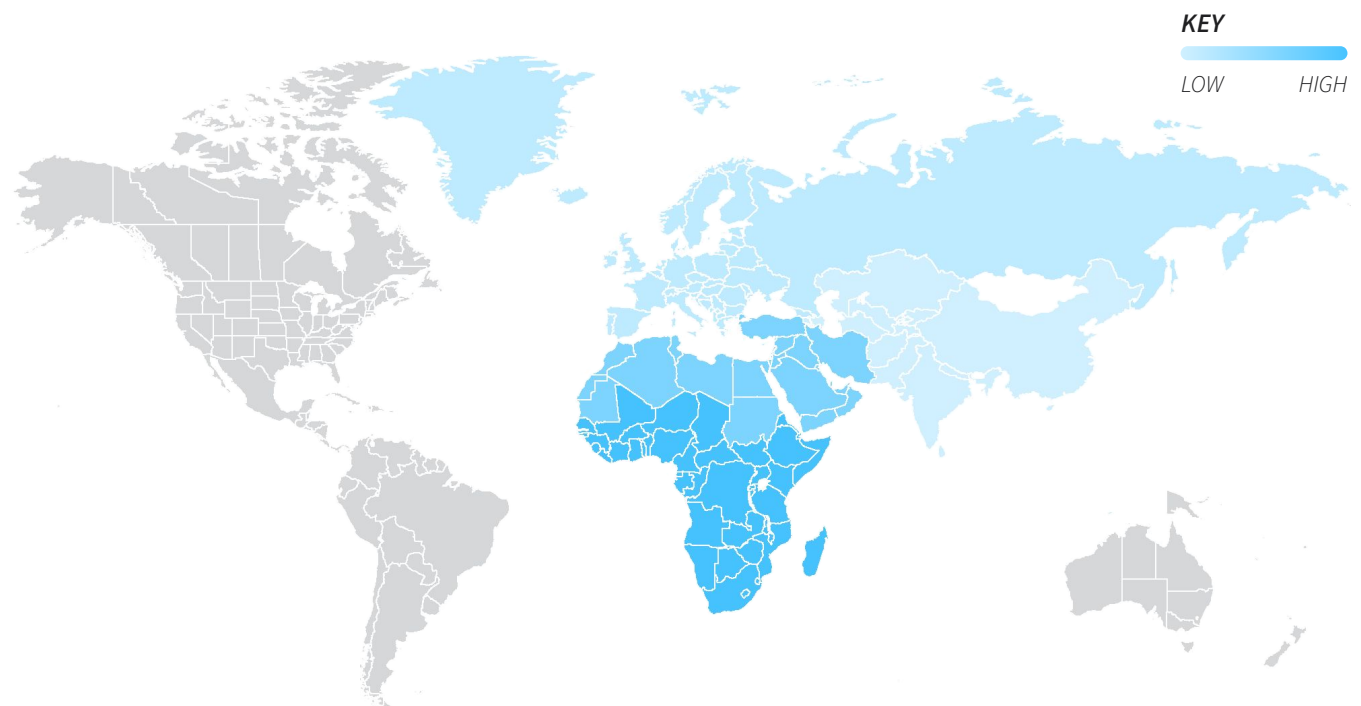
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- **Russia-Ukraine war (6% of all posts)**

AQ supporters discussed new developments in the Russia-Ukraine War, including the decision by Russian President Vladimir Putin to “partially mobilize” the Russian population and a Turkey-facilitated exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine. AQ supporters were critical of President Putin’s mobilization, with some considering it a sign of Russia’s “relative weakness” in the war.



Regional and non-regional posts identified on pro-AQ channels



Africa (excluding North Africa)	43%
MENA	28%
Non-regional	14%
Europe	10%
Asia	5%

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MONTHLY ANALYSIS #08

Analysis of regional and non-regional posts

☞ Africa

In September 2022, **43%** of all posts focused on **Africa**. Of these, **95%** discussed the military activities, “civilian” affairs and media releases of al-Shabaab, AQ’s Somalia affiliate.

☞ MENA:

Posts related to the MENA region focused on AQ attacks in Yemen (**28%**) and Hamas’ normalization of ties with the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (**18%**).

☞ Asia

The most discussed topics related to Asia were Afghanistan affairs (**39%**), including the first anniversary of NATO forces’ withdrawal from the country, and the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (**33%**).

☞ Europe

Posts related to Europe primarily discussed the Ukraine-Russia war (**64%**) and the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II (**31%**).

☞ Non-regional

37% of non-regional posts discussed the 21st anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. A further **18%** of posts discussed AQ’s media releases as well as the group’s internal affairs, such as the succession of Ayman al-Zawahiri.