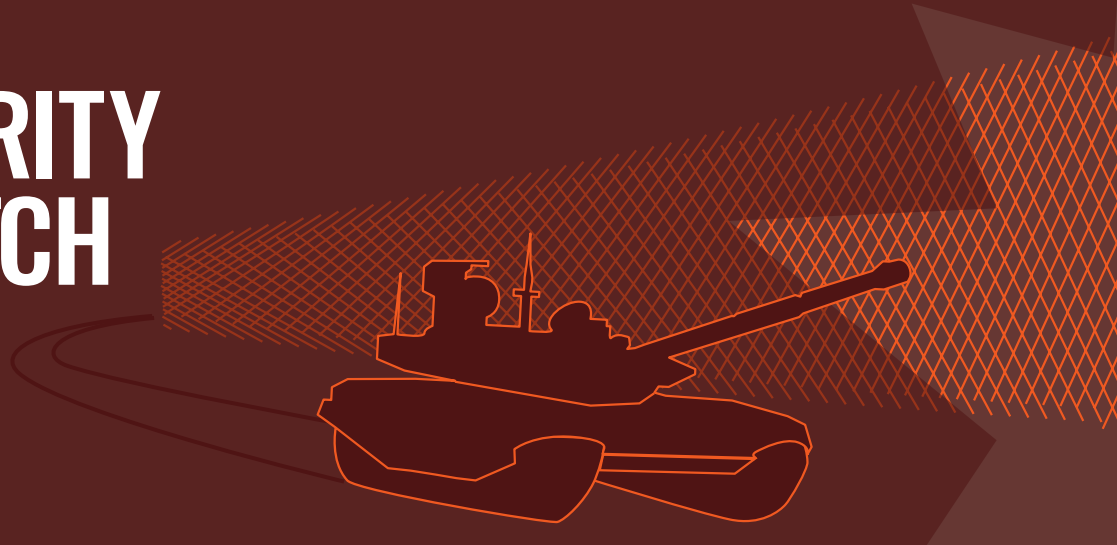




# EGYPT SECURITY WATCH



## WEEK IN BRIEF NOVEMBER 3–16, 2018

### Summary

- The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the November 2 attack at the Monastery of St. Samuel the Confessor in Minya. Egypt’s Ministry of the Interior released photos of a raid in the Western Desert that killed 19 people who were supposedly connected with the Minya attack.
- Wilayat Sinai released a 43-minute propaganda video titled “Sabil al-Rashaad.”
- A Cairo criminal court added Jama’a al-Islamiya to the list of terrorist entities. The group’s inclusion on the list is accompanied by travel bans and asset freezes.
- Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for eight attacks over this period. Seven used improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and one used a heavy machine gun.
- The Cairo Criminal Court sentenced 67 individuals as part of the al-Said Case, in which the defendants were accused of establishing a new branch of the Islamic State in Upper Egypt.

### Islamic State in Egypt Claims Responsibility for Minya Attack

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the November 2 attack in Minya via its media arm, Amaq. In that incident, seven Coptic Christians were killed and 16 others wounded as they traveled in a bus convoy to the Monastery of St. Samuel the Confessor. The statement claimed the attack was in retaliation for arrests of “virtuous sisters.” This was the only attack claimed by the Islamic State in Egypt (as opposed to Wilayat Sinai, a distinct but related affiliate) so far in 2018. The most recent operation claimed by the Islamic State in Egypt was a December 2017 attack on the St. Mina Church in Helwan, Cairo.

The reference to liberation of women in prison was not the first for the Islamic State’s affiliates in Egypt. In 2015, just ahead of the opening of the Suez Canal expansion, Wilayat Sinai had apprehended a Croatian topographer, Tomislav Salopek, near Cairo and threatened that it would kill

him if all Muslim women were not liberated from Egyptian prison within 48 hours. Days later, the group released photos of Salopek's decapitated body.

In its weekly *al-Naba* newsletter, the Islamic State commented on its renewed focus in targeting Christians in operations. In the full-page article, the group described the operation from planning to execution and discussed the similar operation from last year.

## Wilayat Sinai Releases New Propaganda Video

Wilayat Sinai released a video titled, "Sabil al-Rashaad," or "The Path of Reason." The video featured testimonials from security forces-turned-militants and showed footage of past Wilayat Sinai operations. The video also included confirmation that Wilayat Sinai leader Abu Osama al-Masri was killed in an Egyptian air strike. Masri previously served as the group's spokesman but was characterized as the group's leader, when designated by the U.S. State Department as a foreign terrorist in May 2017. The video concludes by memorializing additional Wilayat Sinai fighters, whom the group deemed "martyrs."

## Ministry of Interior Operations Kills 19 After Bus Attack

On November 4, forces from the Ministry of Interior killed 19 individuals who were allegedly involved in the November 2 attack in Minya. The ministry stated that they were killed in a shootout in a mountainous area in the western part of the province. A report from the ministry stated that government forces tracked the militants following the attack and raided their camp, prompting militants to open fire on the forces, to which they responded. Security forces purportedly recovered weapons including automatic and semiautomatic rifles, shotguns, and ammunition. No casualties were reported on the side of the security forces, and no individuals were apprehended in the raid.

Photographs accompanying the raid's announcement suggested discrepancies with the ministry's account: Most gunshot wounds shown were to the head rather than to the body, as would be typical of a firefight. Many weapons were not loaded, and those killed did not appear to be carrying ammunition. Paraphernalia shown at the scene matched that found at a similar scene in July 2017.

While the instance of counter-terror raids-turned-shootouts in Egypt has been on the rise since 2017, the exact circumstances around many of them are incredibly difficult to determine. The Ministry of Interior is often the only source of information about these raids, as the vast majority have no available eyewitness reports. In previous raids, individuals who were killed were previously reported to have been in police custody. For more on these instances, read this article by TIMEP's Research Director and a former research associate.

## Jama'a al-Islamiya Added to List of Terrorist Entities

A Cairo criminal court designated Jama'a al-Islamiya as a terrorist entity under the Terrorist Entities Law. The group waged an armed campaign against the Egyptian state throughout the 1990s, operating mainly out of Assiut. The group officially renounced violence in 2003 after being defeated militarily by Egyptian security forces. The state alleges that, following the January 25 Revolution, Jama'a al-Islamiya leaders deviated from this pledge and sought instead to establish an Islamic state. The court also placed 164 of the group's members on the terrorism list for five years.

## Wilayat Sinai Claims Eight Attacks

On November 5, Wilayat Sinai claimed two attacks in Rafah that it said were carried out to repel an Egyptian military operation. The first incident involved the use of heavy machine guns to disable an Egyptian M60 tank, and the second destroyed an unspecified military vehicle with an IED. The Islamic State's Amaq news agency released a rare explanation for the attacks, referencing an offensive military operation.

On November 7, Amaq reported an IED attack in the buffer zone between North Sinai and Gaza, killing one and wounding another. Buffer zones make the areas they surround more easily defensible and are supposed to aid in IED detection. Bulldozers used to create buffer zones are often targets of IED attacks as well. Amaq also reported a second IED attack, which targeted two of these bulldozers.

On November 12, Amaq news agency reported that Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for an IED attack near Sheikh Zuweid. The next day, Wilayat Sinai claimed another attack near Sheikh Zuweid, which damaged a military bulldozer. On November 14, Wilayat Sinai claimed two IED attacks near Rafah, which destroyed Egyptian military vehicles. Wilayat Sinai has used IEDs in seven of its eight November operations.

## Attempted Suicide Attack Foiled in Arish

The Ministry of the Interior and news outlets reported that a would-be suicide bomber was shot and killed by the Central Security Forces before he could detonate the explosive belt he was wearing. Wilayat Sinai targeted Arish's Kilo 17 checkpoint in a successful suicide operation in August that killed four and injured 10 security personnel.

## 30 Bedouin-Style Homes Opened in Central Sinai

The commander for the Region East of the Canal, Muhammed al-Masri, and the governor of North Sinai, Muhammad Abdel Fadil Shousha, oversaw the opening of 30 new residential units. A second phase of the project is expected to construct 70 additional homes. President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi and other government officials have stressed the need for development in the North Sinai province as key to fighting terrorism, though similar plans and announcements have not seen fruition.

## German Firm Wins Contract to Build Egyptian Frigates

Reports in German and British media confirm that Egypt has ordered four A-200 frigates from the German company ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems. The reports come after months of negotiations between the Egyptian government and other firms, including the French Naval Group. German and French media have reported conflicting stories about Saudi Arabia financing of the deal, with French media earlier reporting rumors of the kingdom having blocked the sale to Germany by withdrawing its financing over backlash regarding the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

## 67 Sentenced in Counter-terrorism Case

The Cairo Criminal Court sentenced 67 individuals as part of the al-Said Case. Eighteen defendants were sentenced to life in prison, 41 sentenced to 15 years, and six to five years, while two individuals were acquitted. Twenty-four of the defendants were tried in absentia. The defendants were accused of establishing an organization in Upper Egypt under the Islamic State's umbrella, and of planning to target police, members of the armed forces, and Christians.



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Egypt Security Watch provides the most comprehensive available resource to monitor Egypt's security situation, with a dataset that includes all instances of violence and state operations, state actor and terror group profiles, and expert analyses.