

care about a shifting reputation. Other factions, however, seem to use discursive tactics to ‘get around’ the problem. As such, **ISWAP use an increasing number of distinctions, when it comes to civilians. ‘Legitimate’ civilian targets - judging by statements and claims made by ISWAP - (now) include government affiliated civilians, NGO workers, and most important as of latter, Christians.** By casting these groups as something distinct from civilians, and even associating them with other targets, ISWAP become able to target these distinct groups of civilians with less reputational damage. On 21 February, for instance, ISWAP said they had captured an amount of weapons. In their claim, they juxtaposed Christians to soldiers who have been the most prominent target hitherto, saying the weapons came “from soldiers and Christians.”

More graphic visual content

At the same time as ISWAP have moved to target Christians and other civilians more, the quantity and quality of ISWAP's audio/video content also appears to have changed. **The videos ISWAP release, as evident by content produced this reporting period, have in different ways become more violent and visually stunning.** While this development did not begin during this reporting period, it intensified with **the video of a child executing a captive and a video of 11 victims being beheaded, marking sad ‘highlights.’** In quantity, the number execution videos increased from 1 in September to 6 in December/January:

- On 8 December, Amaq released a video showing the gun execution of 3 security officers who had previously been kidnapped at a fake checkpoint in Benisheikh west of Maiduguri
- On 13 December, ISWAP released a video of the execution of 4 Action Against Hunger workers
- On 24 December, ISWAP released a video showing the beheading of 11 Christian captives
- On 5 January, Amaq released a video showing the execution of another 2 Christian captives
- On 14 January, Amaq released a video showing the execution of 1 Christian captive who was shot by a child, possibly down to 8-10 years of age.
- On 26 January, ISWAP released images, claiming to have executed 8 Christians near Chibok



Qualitatively, the videos are grisly but well-produced. As such, they are **visually and stylistically reminiscent of the execution videos produced by ISIL from 2014 and onwards.** Specifically, the style of execution in some of the videos – beheading – as well as the bright pink clothes victims are made to wear, resemble ISIL's video of the killing of James Foley, among others. **This may imply ISIL are providing (even) more support to ISWAP's media production.**

Why now?

