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Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 5 - Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

Aka al-Qa'ida in Iraq; al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in Iraq; al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida in Mesopotamia; al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida of Jihad in Iraq; al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Qa'ida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers; al-Tawhid; Jam'at al-Tawhid Wa'al-Jihad; Tanzeem Qa'idat al Jihad/Bilad al Raafidaini; Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn; the Monotheism and Jihad Group; the Organization Base of Jihad/Country of the Two Rivers; the Organization Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia; the Organization of al-Jihad's Base in Iraq; the Organization of al-Jihad's Base in the Land of the Two Rivers; the Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in Iraq; the Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in the Land of the Two Rivers; the Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers; al-Zarqawi Network; Islamic State of Iraq; Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria; ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa-sh-Sham; Daesh; Dawla al Islamiya; al-Furqan Establishment for Media Production; Islamic State; ISIL; ISIS; Amaq News Agency; Al Hayat Media Center; al-Hayat Media Center; Al Hayat.

Description: Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) was designated as an FTO on December 17, 2004. In the 1990s, Jordanian militant Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi organized a terrorist group called al-Tawhid wal-Jihad to oppose the presence of U.S. and western military forces in the Middle East as well as the West's support for, and the existence of, Israel. In 2004, Zarqawi joined al-Qa'ida, pledged allegiance to Usama bin Laden, and his group became known as al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI). Zarqawi led AQI during Operation Iraqi Freedom to fight against U.S. and Defeat-ISIS Coalition forces in Iraq until he was killed in June 2006.

In 2006, AQI publicly renamed itself the Islamic State in Iraq before adopting the moniker of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2013 to express its regional ambitions as it expanded operations to include the Syrian conflict. ISIS was led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who declared an Islamic caliphate and separated this group from al-Qa'ida in 2014, before he was killed in 2019. In 2017 the U.S. military fighting with local Syrian allies announced the liberation of Raqqa, the self-declared capital of ISIS's so-called caliphate. Also in 2017, then-Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi announced the territorial defeat of ISIS in Iraq. In 2018 the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), with support from the Defeat-ISIS Coalition, began a final push to oust ISIS fighters from the lower Middle Euphrates River Valley in Syria. 2019 marked the full territorial defeat of ISIS's so-called caliphate; however, ISIS remains a serious threat. The group benefits from instability, demonstrating intent to cause and inspire terrorist attacks around the world. This report refers to central ISIS leadership as ISIS-core.

Activities: ISIS has conducted numerous high-profile attacks, including IED attacks against U.S. military personnel and Iraqi infrastructure, videotaped beheadings of U.S. citizens, suicide bombings against both military and civilian targets, and rocket attacks. ISIS also was heavily involved in the fighting in Syria and participated in numerous kidnappings of civilians, including aid workers and journalists. ISIS was responsible for most of the 12,000 Iraqi civilian deaths in 2014 and claimed responsibility for several large-scale attacks in Iraq and Syria, including a 2016 car bombing at a shopping center in Baghdad that killed nearly 300 people — the deadliest bombing in the city since 2003. In 2018, ISIS conducted multiple suicide bombings and simultaneous raids in a brutal offensive in southwestern Syria, killing more than 200 people.

Since 2019, ISIS has claimed responsibility numerous attacks including the 2019 suicide bombing of a restaurant in Manbij, Syria, that killed 19 people, including four U.S. citizens; the 2019 killing of a U.S. servicemember while he was participating in a combat operation in Ninewa province, Iraq; the 2021 twin suicide bombings in a busy market in Tayaran Square in Baghdad that killed at least 32 people; and a 2021 suicide attack in a busy market in a predominantly Shia neighborhood in east Baghdad, Iraq, that killed 30 people.

ISIS also directs, enables, and inspires individuals to conduct attacks on behalf of the group around the world. In 2015, ISIS carried out a series of coordinated attacks in Paris, including at a rock concert at the Bataclan concert hall, killing about 130 people, including 23-year-old U.S. citizen Nohemi Gonzalez. In 2016, ISIS directed two simultaneous attacks in Brussels, Belgium — one at the Zaventem Airport and the other at a metro station, killing 32 people, including four U.S. citizens. In 2016 a gunman who pledged allegiance to ISIS killed 49 individuals at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. ISIS also claimed responsibility for two

attacks in 2016: one in which a terrorist driving a cargo truck attacked a crowd in Nice, France, during Bastille Day celebrations, resulting in 86 deaths, including three U.S. citizens; the second a truck attack on a crowded Christmas market in Berlin that killed 12 people and injured 48 others.

In 2017, ISIS claimed responsibility for two attacks in the United Kingdom: one a terrorist attack on London's Westminster Bridge, when a man drove his car into pedestrians and stabbed others, killing five persons; the other a suicide bombing in Manchester, England, that killed 22 people outside of a live concert. That same year, a man claiming to be a member of ISIS drove a truck into a crowded shopping center in Stockholm, Sweden, killing five persons. In 2019, ISIS-inspired terrorists carried out coordinated suicide bombings at multiple churches and hotels, killing more than 250 people on Easter Sunday. Also in 2019, ISIS claimed responsibility for a stabbing attack near the London Bridge in which a man killed two persons.

In 2022, ISIS attacked Hasakah prison in Syria, triggering a 10-day battle that spilled over into the streets, killing at least 121 SDF soldiers, 374 suspected ISIS militants, and four civilians. Also in 2022, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack at the Shāh Chérāgh shrine in Shiraz, Iran, killing at least 15 people.

Strength: Estimates suggest ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria number between 8,000 and 16,000, including several thousand foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). Since at least 2015, the group has integrated local children and children of FTFs into its forces and used them as executioners and suicide attackers. ISIS has systematically prepared child soldiers in Iraq and Syria using its education and religious infrastructure as part of its training and recruitment of members. ISIS also has abducted, raped, and abused thousands of women and children, some as young as 8 years old. Women and children were sold and enslaved, distributed to ISIS fighters as spoils of war, forced into marriage and domestic servitude, or otherwise subjected to physical and sexual abuse.

Location/Area of Operation: Iraq and Syria, with branches and networks around the world

Funding and External Aid: ISIS received most of its funding from a variety of criminal activities in Iraq and Syria. Criminal activities included extortion of civilian economies, smuggling oil, and robberies. The organization also maintains stockpiles of as much as hundreds of millions of dollars, scattered across Iraq and Syria, which it looted during its occupation of those countries in 2013 to 2019. ISIS continues to rely on trusted courier networks and money services businesses to move its financial resources within and outside of Iraq and Syria. The territorial defeat of ISIS that eliminated its control of territory in Syria in 2019

reduced ISIS's ability to generate, hold, and transfer its financial assets. Despite this, ISIS continues to generate some revenue from criminal activities through its many clandestine networks and provides financial support and guidance to its network of global branches and affiliates.

Associated documents

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30 November 2023 | [USDOS – US Department of State](#) (Author)

Syrian Arab Republic

Annual report on terrorism (covering 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 2 - Syria](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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Iraq

Annual report on terrorism (covering 2022)

[Country Report on Terrorism 2022 - Chapter 1 - Iraq](#) (Periodical Report, English)

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ecoi.net description:

Brief description of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2022)

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