



# Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: al-Qa'ida in Iraq

Publisher [United States Department of State](#)

Publication Date 30 April 2014

Cite as United States Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: al-Qa'ida in Iraq*, 30 April 2014, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5362299c14.html> [accessed 6 August 2014]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

aka 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; al-Nusrah Front; Jabhat al-Nusrah; Jabhet al-Nusrah; The Victory Front; al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant

Description: Al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on December 17, 2004. In the 1990s, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian-born militant, organized a terrorist group called al-Tawhid wal-Jihad to oppose the presence of U.S. and Western military forces in the Islamic world and the West's support for and the existence of Israel. In late 2004, he joined al-Qa'ida (AQ) and pledged allegiance to Usama bin Laden. After this, al-Tawhid wal-Jihad became known as AQI. Zarqawi traveled to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and led his group against U.S. and Coalition Forces until his death in June 2006. In October 2006, AQI publicly renamed itself the Islamic State of Iraq, although within the past year the group adopted the moniker "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" as it expanded its operations to include the Syrian conflict. Since 2012, AQI has been led by Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri, aka Abu Du'a, who was designated by the Department of State under Executive Order 13224 on October 4, 2013.

Activities: Since its founding, AQI has conducted high profile attacks, including improvised explosive device (IED) attacks against U.S. military personnel and Iraqi infrastructure; videotaped beheadings of Americans Nicholas Berg (May 11, 2004), Jack Armstrong (September 22, 2004), and Jack Hensley (September 21, 2004); suicide bomber attacks against both military and civilian targets; and rocket attacks. AQI perpetrates the majority of suicide and mass casualty bombings in Iraq using foreign and Iraqi operatives.

AQI was active in Iraq in 2012 and 2013. In 2012, AQI was behind an attack in March on Shia pilgrims in the city of Karbala; the torching of cars near a police headquarters in Kirkuk; the targeting of security forces and government officials in Baghdad; a series of attacks in July that killed 325 people; and attacks in November that killed at least 166 Iraqi civilians, police, and soldiers.

AQI was responsible for the majority of the over 7,000 Iraqi civilians killed in 2013 – the highest number since 2008. In April 2013, AQI's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the group was operating in Syria and changed its public name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In 2013, ISIL was heavily involved in the fighting in Syria, including against other militant opposition groups, and participated in a number of kidnapping incidents against civilians and reporters. For example, in September ISIL abducted Spanish journalist and photographer, and in December, ISIL reportedly kidnapped at least 120 Kurdish civilians in Aleppo province. According to a December 2013 UN report, ISIL is also running secret prisons in northern Syria, where civilians are tortured and killed for challenging ISIL's rule.

In April 2013, AQI's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the group was operating in Syria and changed its public name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. AQI was responsible for the simultaneous attacks in July on prisons at al-Taji and Abu Ghraib that killed approximately 29 and freed hundreds of prisoners; a wave of bombings in Baghdad in August that killed approximately 52; and the September bombing of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's Directorate of Security headquarters in Irbil that killed six. On October 6, in Ninewa Province, two Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) were detonated in the al-Aiyathiya neighborhood. The first VBIED was detonated near an elementary school and the second one targeted an Iraqi Police checkpoint. The attacks killed up to 13 school children and one Iraqi police officer. Another 140 were wounded, mostly students from the school. On October 17, near the end of the Eid al-Adha holiday, a suicide bomber detonated a VBIED in a Shabak minority neighborhood in eastern Mosul, killing 15, including seven children, and wounding more than 50 others. On December 23, five people were killed in a suicide bombing after armed AQI militants stormed a television complex in the city of Tikrit. The violence unfolded when a car bomb exploded outside Salah ad Din TV and the local offices of al-Iraqiyya State TV. Militants then stormed the offices of Salah ad Din TV and a suicide bomber killed the chief news editor, a copy editor, a producer, a presenter, and the archives manager. Five other employees were wounded.

**Strength:** In Iraq, membership is estimated between 1,000 and 2,000, making it the largest Sunni violent extremist group in Iraq. Membership in Syria is unknown, although it is likely that the group's members make up a significant portion of the estimated 26,000 violent extremist fighters in Syria.

**Location/Area of Operation:** AQI's operations are predominately Iraq- and Syria-based, but it has perpetrated attacks in Jordan. In Syria, al-Nusra Front has claimed attacks in several major city centers. AQI maintains a logistical network throughout the Middle East, North Africa, Iran, South Asia, and Europe.

**Funding and External Aid:** AQI receives most of its funding from a variety of businesses and criminal activities within Iraq and Syria.

## Search Refworld

by keyword

and / or country

All countries

Clear

Search

[Advanced Search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

## Countries

- [Iraq](#)
- [Jordan](#)
- [Syrian Arab Republic](#)

## Topics

- [Armed groups / Militias / Paramilitary forces / Resistance movements](#)
- [Terrorism](#)