

Province (excerpt of Chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2019)

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Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 5 - ISIS Sinai Province (ISIS-SP)

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Aka Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis; Ansar Jerusalem; Supporters of Jerusalem; Ansar Bayt al-Maqdes; Ansar Beit al-Maqdis; Islamic State-Sinai Province; Islamic State in the Sinai; Jamaat Ansar Beit al-Maqdis fi Sinaa; Sinai Province; Supporters of the Holy Place; The State of Sinai; Wilayat Sinai
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Description: Originally designated as an FTO on April 9, 2014, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM, as it was known then) rose to prominence in 2011 following the uprisings in Egypt. In November 2014, ABM officially declared allegiance to ISIS. In September 2015, the Department of State amended ABM’s designation to add the aliases ISIL Sinai Province and Islamic State-Sinai Province (ISIS-SP), among others.

Activities: Prior to pledging allegiance to ISIS, ABM claimed responsibility for numerous attacks against Israeli and Egyptian interests from 2012 through 2014, including attacks on Israeli economic and military assets, as well as attacks on the Egyptian military and tourist sectors. On November 4, 2015, ISIS-SP released an audio recording in which it claimed responsibility for the October 31 bombing of a Russian passenger plane carrying 231 people from the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg, Russia. All 224 passengers and seven crew members were killed.

On August 5, 2015, ISIS-SP claimed responsibility for the July 22 abduction and killing of Croatian citizen Tomislav Salopek.

Throughout 2016, ISIS-SP carried out numerous attacks in the Sinai, including a January double bombing that killed two Egyptian policemen and two military officers. The group was responsible for a July 2016 wide-scale coordinated attack on several military checkpoints that reportedly killed more than 50 people. On December 11, 2016, an attack on St. Mark’s Cathedral, a Coptic Christian church in Cairo, killed 29 people.

In 2017, ISIS-SP attacked two Coptic Christian churches on Palm Sunday (April 9), killing 30 people at St. George’s Church in Tanta and killing 17 people at St. Mark’s Church in Alexandria. In May 2017, the group’s attack on a bus of pilgrims en route to St. Samuel the Confessor, a Coptic monastery near Minya, killed 29 people. In September 2017, ISIS-SP attacked an Egyptian police convoy in an ambush that killed 18 soldiers. In November 2017, an attack on the al-Rawda mosque in North Sinai – Egypt’s deadliest in modern history – killed more than 300 individuals at prayer. While the attack was unclaimed, press reported the Egyptian Prosecutor General’s office as attributing the attack to ISIS-SP and alleging that attackers carried an ISIS flag. The group’s December 2017 attack on St. Mina, a Coptic Christian church near Cairo, killed 11 people.

ISIS-SP attacked an Egyptian army base in April 2018 and attacked an Egyptian police checkpoint in December 2018, killing 15 soldiers in each attack. On November 2, 2018, the group’s attack on a bus of pilgrims traveling from St. Samuel the Confessor killed seven and wounded 14 others.

In 2019, ISIS-SP claimed responsibility for multiple attacks on Egyptian police and army checkpoints in the Sinai. In February, ISIS-SP killed 15 Egyptian soldiers and killed eight Egyptian policemen in June. In July, ISIS-SP claimed responsibility for beheading four civilians and for a suicide bombing in North Sinai that killed a civilian and a member of the security forces.

Strength: ISIS-SP is estimated to have between 800 and 1,200 fighters in the Sinai Peninsula and affiliated cells in the Nile Valley.

Location/Area of Operation: Egypt

Funding and External Aid: Although the sources of ISIS-SP’s funding are largely unknown, there are indications that it may receive funding from ISIS in Syria.

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