

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

In February 2020, Jordanian authorities arrested five Jordanian citizens who allegedly sought to carry out suicide attacks against Israeli targets in the West Bank. On June 3, 2020, the suspects were tried at the state security court, a military tribunal that normally deals with terrorism-related cases. According to the charge sheet, one of the suspects had visited the Gaza Strip in 2007 where he was trained in making explosives. He later returned to Jordan in 2010 and recruited the four other suspects to plot attacks “with bombs against buses and trains and with explosive vests against other Israeli targets.” Tel Aviv and Amman have been embroiled in political tension as Israel revealed its plans to annex the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley, which has instigated extremist activity against Israeli targets. (Sources: [Middle East Monitor](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [Associated Press](#))

On July 23, 2017, a construction worker stabbed a security guard at the Israeli embassy with a screwdriver. The guard shot and killed the attacker and another Jordanian worker. The attack coincides with Jordanian protests against Israeli security measures on at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. (Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Times of Israel](#))

On December 18, 2016, four gunmen carried out a series of attacks in and around the Jordanian city of Karak. Police were responding to calls of a house fire in the town of Qatraneh in the Karak district when assailants began shooting at the officers from within the house. The gunmen fled to a Crusader-era castle in Karak, where they took several tourists hostage. By midnight, Jordanian forces killed the gunmen and freed the hostages. The attack left 10 people dead, including seven Jordanian security officers, a Canadian tourist, and two Jordanian civilians, and wounded 34 people. ISIS claimed responsibility. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [New York Times](#))

Since 2015, Jordan has ramped up its military campaign against ISIS with U.S. support. King Abdullah of Jordan has referred to the battle against ISIS as a “third World War.” (Sources: [Newsweek](#), [CBS News](#))

Overview

The [Muslim Brotherhood](#) maintains a presence in Jordan as a legal government opposition group. However, the movement has fractured as reformists seek to cut ties to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and shift the focus of the Brotherhood’s Jordanian branch to domestic issues and away from a Palestinian agenda. With a conflicted Brotherhood, Jordan’s Islamists have moved closer to the country’s banned Salafist-jihadist movement. Jordan’s Salafist movement has facilitated the flow of foreign fighters to Syria, largely to fight with the al-Qaeda-linked [Nusra Front](#). (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

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An influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan since 2011 has further strained the country economically. According to the U.N. High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), 629,128 registered Syrian refugees resided in Jordan in refugee camps and urban areas as of June 17, 2015. Over 80 percent of Syrian refugees live in urban areas of the country. Security officials worry smugglers, jihadists, and spies will enter Jordan from Syria disguised as refugees. (Sources: [Washington Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [UNHCR](#), [UNHCR](#), [UNHCR](#), [Irish Times](#), [Economist](#), [European University Institute](#))

Women in particular have suffered at the hands of extremists beholden to tribal values of family honor. An official average of 20 women are killed annually in Jordan by male family members in so-called honor killings because they supposedly disgraced their families. Human rights groups believe the number to be higher as Jordanian authorities reportedly do not record all incidents. Though the penalty for murder is death, Jordanian courts often commute sentences for honor killings. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Jordan is part of the U.S.-led coalition fighting against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Jordan intensified its airstrikes against ISIS following the terror group’s murder of a Jordanian air force pilot in early 2015. Jordan is also participating in the Saudi Arabia-led coalition against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. The Jordanian government has also implemented new anti-terrorism restrictions in an effort to curb the spread of jihadist groups.

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Homegrown Radicalization

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According to experts, Jordan's Islamist groups are growing in numbers and are becoming increasingly violent. Analysts estimated in early 2015 that ISIS and other jihadi groups had about 9,000 to 10,000 Jordanian supporters, including 2,000 fighters who have left for Syria. The Jordanian Council on Foreign Relations noted that between 2012 and 2014, the price of a Kalashnikov rifle—a preferred weapon of violent extremists—in Jordan dropped from \$2,000 to \$500 in a sign of the rifle's increasing availability. In the latter half of 2014, Jordan arrested 200 to 300 Islamist militants. In November 2014, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs claimed it had prevented 25 radical preachers from delivering extremist sermons. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Associated Press](#))

Jordanian analysts blame the rise in extremism on rampant unemployment and the widening income gap between Jordan's rich and poor. "The failure of governance fed the extremist camp," according to one Jordanian politician. (Source: [Business Insider](#), [Reuters](#))

Salafist Movement

Jordan's Salafist movement seeks to implement sharia law in the country. Despite being officially banned, the Salafist movement continues to attract new followers in Jordan to their jihadist cause. The Salafists adhere to an ultra-conservative form of Sunni Islam that considers Shiite Muslims—and even non-militant Sunni Muslims—to be infidels. Analysts credit Jordanian Islamist Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi with militarizing Jordan's Salafist movement in the 1990s. (Source: [Hudson Institute](#))

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According to Jordanian Salafist leader [Mohammad al-Chalabi](#), a.k.a. Abu Sayyaf, interest in Salafi jihadism rose after the Arab Spring. In Jordan's Maan province, [analysts](#) found Salafist-jihadist preachers attracted the most worshippers, followed by pro-government preachers, and then the Muslim Brotherhood. Analysts blame economic disparity and the Syrian civil war for fueling the ideology's spread. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Associated Press](#), [The National](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Stars and Stripes](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

Al-Chalabi served a seven-year prison sentence for his role in a failed 2003 plot against U.S. and Western diplomatic missions in Jordan. After the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, al-Chalabi said he was "happy to see the horror in America," adding, "American blood isn't more precious than Muslim blood." The Salafist movement is "the only one that practices jihad against the Americans and the Zionists," according to al-Chalabi. He also believes that ISIS wants only to consolidate its position in Iraq and Syria and poses no threat to Jordan. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [BBC News](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Stars and Stripes](#))

Palestinian Extremism

According to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Jordan is home to more than 2 million registered Palestinian refugees, almost 370,000 of whom live in 10 refugee camps. Tensions between Israel and the Palestinians always have an effect on Jordan's population, according to government officials. Protesters frequently call for the cancellation of Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel, a demand the government has thus far rejected. (Sources: [UNRWA](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

During the 1960s, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its member organizations used Jordan as a base for terrorist attacks against Israel. In September 1970, multiple hijackings by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led to the bloody Jordanian crackdown on the PLO known as Black September. Jordan subsequently expelled the PLO in 1971.

Since Jordan's treaty with Israel, flare-ups between Israel and the Palestinians have resulted in widespread protests inside Jordan. Jordan's Hashemite monarchy has maintained guardianship over the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem since 1924. After Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Six Day War, Jordan retained responsibility for the mosque. The mosque—Islam's third holiest site and built on the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site—is often a flashpoint of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Recently, Jordanians took to the streets again in July 2014 to protest Israel's offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Hamas

[Hamas](#)'s leadership based itself in Jordan in the 1990s, and former Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal is himself a Jordanian citizen. In September 1997, Israel reportedly attempted to poison Meshaal, but supplied the antidote after Jordan threatened to reverse its 1994 peace treaty with Israel. In 1999, Jordan banned Hamas and arrested several of its leaders. Jordan expelled Meshaal and three other Hamas representatives that November. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Washington Post](#), [New York Times](#))

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After a 10-day trip to Jordan in July 2012, Meshaal claimed that Hamas and the Jordanian government had reconciled, though Hamas had committed to not involve Jordan's Palestinian population in its activities. According to Meshaal, the new relationship focused on four principles: "The safety and stability of Jordan; Hamas's non-intervention in internal Jordanian affairs; Hamas' non-intervention in affairs concerning the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan; and finally on Palestinian-Jordanian relations." In 2013, Jordan reportedly refused a Hamas request to reopen its offices in the kingdom. Nonetheless, the U.S.-designated terror group and its members have found sources of support in Jordan. (Sources: [Times of Israel](#), [Gatestone Institute](#))

In September 2014, a federal jury in New York City found Jordan-based Arab Bank guilty of facilitating payments to Hamas during the early 2000s. The judgement stemmed from a civil lawsuit filed by 297 U.S. citizens, including survivors and the families of victims of 24 Hamas attacks in Israel. It was the first time a bank was held liable in a civil lawsuit for terrorism-related crimes. In July 2015, a Jordanian state security court sentenced 12 to prison for a Hamas plot to carry out violent attacks in the West Bank. The defendants reportedly received bomb-making training in both Jordan and the Gaza Strip. (Source: [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#))

Jordanian citizen [Ahlam Ahmad al-Tamimi](#) was the first female member of Hamas's armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and is one of the FBI's most wanted female terrorists. In 2003, Tamimi was sentenced to 16 life sentences in Israel for directly aiding the August 9, 2001, Hamas suicide bombing of the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem, which killed 15 people, including two Americans. The bombing wounded 130 others. Tamimi coordinated the attack and drove bomber Izz al-Din Shuheil al-Masri to the target in Jerusalem. (Sources: [Haaretz](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Ezzedeem AL-Qassam Brigades - Information Office](#))

Tamimi was one of more than 1,000 prisoners released in October 2011 in a prisoner swap agreement with Hamas for captured IDF officer Gilad Shalit. Tamimi was deported to Jordan, where she has continued to live freely while publicly maintaining her support of Hamas. The United States has called on Jordan to extradite Tamimi, but Jordanian courts have ruled that the country's 1995 extradition treaty with the United States is invalid because it was never ratified by parliament. (Sources: [U.S. Department of Justice](#), [Haaretz](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

In December 2019, the United States passed legislation threatening to sever financial aid to any country that ignores a U.S. extradition request of somebody indicted for a criminal offense that carries a life sentence. On April 30, 2020, seven members of the U.S. House of Representatives wrote a [joint letter](#) to Jordan's ambassador to the United States, Dina Kawar, calling for Tamimi's extradition. The representatives drew attention to the 2019 sanctions legislation that would punish countries with diplomatic relations that refuse legitimate extradition requests. Signatories to the letter included U.S. Representatives W. Gregory Steube, Paul A. Gosar, Doug Lamborn, Scott Perry, Ted S. Yoho, Brian Mast, and Louis Gohmert. (Sources: [Jewish News Syndicate](#), [Times of Israel](#), [CEP](#))

The Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood is Jordan's oldest political movement. It marked its 70th anniversary on May 1, 2015. It has primarily been a non-violent organization, although it has supported Palestinian violence against Israel. Legally, the Brotherhood in Jordan dissolved in June 1956 following a reorganization in 1953. In an example of the group's long political standing, the Brotherhood won 22 of 80 parliamentary seats in 1989 under the banner "Islam is the Solution," the slogan of the global [Muslim Brotherhood](#). After King Hussein banned political groups with foreign political ties in 1992, the Brotherhood created a new political wing, the Islamic Action Front. The Brotherhood suffered political decline in the 21st century as a result of policies that ignored domestic Jordanian issues in favor of supporting Hamas and the Palestinian fight against Israel. As a result, it won only six seats in 2007's elections. (Sources: [Al-Arabiya](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [The National](#), [Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs](#), [Middle East Monitor](#))

Following the outbreak of the Arab Spring in early 2011, the Islamic Action Front (IAF) participated in protests calling for King Abdullah to dissolve parliament and allow the free election of a prime minister. Abdullah dismissed the parliament and appointed a new prime minister charged with instituting political reform in February 2011. In 2012, Abdullah tried to pass a parliamentary bill that would have restricted religious organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood and its Islamic Action Front from parliament. At a November 2012 press conference, the Brotherhood demanded the king "listen to the people's demands and embark on real and serious reforms." The Brotherhood boycotted the 2013 parliamentary elections. (Sources: [Huffington Post](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Associated Press](#), [CNN](#))

Since the fall of Egypt's Brotherhood-led government in 2013, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have banned the group. As a result, the hardliners and reformists within Jordan's chapter have further divided. The Zamzam Initiative emerged within the Brotherhood following the 2013 election boycott. Zamzam remains committed to the Brotherhood's Islamist ideals, but opposes the traditionalists' focus on regional issues over Jordanian affairs. (Sources: [The National](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Times of Israel](#))

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On February 14, 2015, the Brotherhood voted to terminate the memberships of 10 high-ranking members, mostly reformists who wanted to cut ties with the Egyptian Brotherhood. Afterward, 30 Zamzam members filed with Jordan's Ministry of Social Development to form a new charity called the Muslim Brotherhood Society (MBS) using the same logo. The ministry approved the application on March 3, effectively recognizing the reformist (i.e., Zamzam-created) Muslim Brotherhood over the original Muslim Brotherhood Group (MBG). International Brotherhood branches are independent, and Jordan's was the only one tied to the Egyptian parent group, according to Abdul Majid Thuneibat, leader of the new Brotherhood. His group's goal is to end its relationship with "the terrorist group in Egypt." The Jordanian branch "must become Jordanian and fall under Jordanian law," he said. (Sources: [Christian Science Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [The National](#), [Jordan Times](#))

The government's Department of Land and Survey subsequently seized seven properties belonging to the MBG, transferring them to the MBS. Ruheil Gharaibeh, founder of the Zamzam and a co-founder of the MBS, has called on the Jordanian government to dissolve the MBG because it is no longer formally registered to operate within Jordan. In early 2016, Gharaibeh and other Zamzam leaders expelled from the MBG created a new political party called the National Congress Party, which is separate from the new, reformist MBS. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Washington Post](#))

The government banned a May 1, 2015, rally by the MBG to mark the Brotherhood's 70th anniversary. Later in May, the reformist group announced intentions to legally pursue control of the Jordanian Brotherhood's assets. MBG leader [Hammam Saeed](#) called the new organization a "government conspiracy." Writing in the [UAE's National](#) in March 2015, analyst and journalist Taylor Luck declared the Jordanian Brotherhood to be in the throes of civil war. In December 2015, 400 members of the IAF resigned. According to resigning members, including top leaders of the group, the resignations are the result of almost two years' of political infighting between the party's hawks and doves. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Christian Science Monitor](#), [Jordan Times](#))

Jordan's original Brotherhood group decided in February 2016 to cut ties with the larger, international Brotherhood movement. Jordanian analysts believe the group began to see the larger movement as a liability. According to the Brotherhood leadership, the decision is part of reform efforts before elections in March 2016. (Source: [Associated Press](#))

In January 2016, the reformist group, also known as the Muslim Brotherhood Society (MBS), elected Thuneibat to a four-year term as its overall leader. He had previously been elected as the interim overall leader. The MBS elected Sharaf Qudah as its leader in March 2018 after Thuneibat resigned for health reasons. (Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Jordan Times](#))

Despite the government's recognition of the reformist MBS over the original MBG, the MBG has continued to have political success. In Jordan's September 2016 parliamentary elections, the IAF won 10 seats while the MBS won zero. The Zamzam's National Congress Party won three seats. In August 2017 local elections, the IAF-affiliated Alliance for Reform coalition won 41 out of 88 municipal council seats across the country, as well as three mayoral races. Jordanian analysts predicted that the wins could help the IAF build momentum in future elections. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Jordan Times](#), [The National](#))

In February 2020, Jordan's Court of Cassation ruled that the MBS was not a successor of the original Muslim Brotherhood group, which had officially dissolved in 1956, and could therefore continue to legally operate in the country. (Source: [Middle East Monitor](#))

Syrian Refugees

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, Jordan has become host to 657,000 registered Syrian refugees who largely live in Jordan's urban areas. The largest population of refugees, 177,070, resides in Amman. This has strained Jordan's already scarce water supplies, the job market, health services, and housing. Jordanian authorities are also concerned that Syrian extremists will take advantage of the porous border and the refugee flow to cross into Jordan. For example, security forces blamed "Assad sleeper cells" for riots in the Zaatari—Jordan's largest Syrian refugee camp—in April 2014. Also that April, the Jordanian military fired on a convoy of pick-up trucks crossing into Jordan from Syria. The military believed the trucks were smuggling weapons for the Syrian opposition. (Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Washington Times](#), [UNHCR](#), [Economist](#), [United Press International](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

Syrian refugees largely live outside of the refugee camps in urban areas, impacting Jordanian cities' economies. Landlords crowd refugees into small apartments at higher rents. Registered Syrian refugees cannot legally work in Jordan so many take more dangerous, low-paying jobs. According to the International Labor Organization, Jordanian unemployment rose from 14.5 percent to 22.1 percent between 2011 and 2014 in areas with high concentrations of refugees. The Hussein neighborhood of Amman, for example, is home to about 4,000 Syrian refugees. Rent and food prices have skyrocketed in the already poor neighborhood. Head of Hussein's neighborhood council Emad Issayed told the Associated Press in February 2015 that the refugees "impose a real burden" on Jordanians. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [UNHCR](#), [Daily Beast](#), [Irish Times](#), [Associated Press](#))

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Planning Minister Imad Fakhoury told the Associated Press that month Jordan may have to restrict the entry of refugees if their presence becomes a threat to Jordan's stability or security. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#))

Honor Killings

An honor crime is “committed against somebody—mainly women—because this somebody brought dishonor against the family,” according to Director of the University of Jordan's Center for Women's Studies Abeer Dababneh. For example, Batool Haddad, a Christian woman in her early 20s, sought to convert from Christianity to Islam in April 2014. Her father and brother murdered her rather than suffer what they considered an insult. An official average of 20 women a year are killed in so-called honor killings in Jordan. Experts believe the actual number to be higher. (Source: [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Ammon News](#))

Murder is punishable by death in Jordan, but Jordan's legal framework excuses honor crimes, according to Human Rights Watch. Article 340 of the Jordanian legal code states any man who kills or attacks his wife or any female relative while she is committing adultery receives a reduced sentence. The government extended the protection to female attackers against their husbands in 2001. Article 98 of the legal code allows for the reduction of penalties for offenders who commit crimes in a “state of great fury” due to unlawful or dangerous behavior by the victim. For instance, a Jordanian court in February 2014 reduced the sentence of a man convicted of killing his daughter for leaving the house without her husband's knowledge from life in prison to 10 years. (Sources: [Human Rights Watch](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Abu Qatada

Omar Mahmoud Mohammed Othman, a.k.a. the Islamist cleric Abu Qatada, is a Jordanian of Palestinian descent whom the United States and United Nations have designated for his support of al-Qaeda. Qatada sought asylum in Great Britain in 1994 after a Jordanian court sentenced him to death. He has been in and out of prison since because of his support of al-Qaeda, the Armed Islamic Group and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat in Algeria, and Chechen militants. A Spanish judge once described him as Osama bin Laden's “right-hand man in Europe.” Qatada is accused of spreading radicalism and influencing jihadists such as the September 11 hijackers. The British Home Office has accused Qatada of granting religious legitimacy to people who want to “further the aims of extreme Islamism and to engage in terrorist attacks.” A Jordanian court convicted Qatada in absentia on terrorism charges in April 1999 and sentenced him to life in prison. Qatada has also been charged with encouraging a series of failed bombings in Jordan against Western targets in 1999. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [U.N. Security Council](#), [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#))

British law prevented his deportation because of the risk of torture if he returned to Jordan. Britain and Jordan signed a treaty in April 2013 that guaranteed Qatada a fair trial upon his return, which led to Qatada's deportation that July. A Jordanian court acquitted Qatada on June 26, 2014. A second Jordanian court released Qatada from prison that September after ruling there was insufficient evidence linking him to terrorism. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#))

Foreign Fighters

More than 2,000 Jordanians have officially traveled to Syria and Iraq as of the end of 2015. Unofficially, the number is closer to 2,500. Jordanians have primarily joined the [Nusra Front](#). Approximately 350 have reportedly been killed on the battlefield as of May 2015. Authorities have arrested about 400 Jordanians trying to cross into Syria to join jihadist groups. Analysts estimate Jordan hosts some 6,000 to 7,000 jihadi sympathizers, largely among the country's eastern tribes. These groups have traditionally supported the Hashemite monarchy in exchange for jobs, but higher unemployment rates have fostered jihadist sympathies among younger populations. The government tightened control over its 230-mile border with Syria in 2013 to stem the flow of fighters into Syria and weapons into Jordan. (Sources: [The Soufan Group](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [CTC Sentinel](#))

Jordan's Salafist leaders have encouraged followers to join the fighting in Syria. Al-Chalabi accuses Syria's Bashar al-Assad of intentionally killing Sunnis under Iranian orders. In 2012, Jordanian Salafist scholar Abu Mohammad al-Tahawi issued a fatwa calling for jihad in Syria. Al-Chalabi said in June 2013 that more than 500 Jordanian Salafists were fighting in Syria alongside the Nusra Front. He likened the relationship between Jordanian Salafists and the Nusra Front to that between al-Qaeda and Ansar al-Sharia: the groups are linked by ideology but have no formal relationship. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Stars and Stripes](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#))

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ISIS

Eighty-five percent of Jordanian fighters had reportedly switched their allegiances from the Nusra Front to [ISIS](#) by April 2015. Before the February 2015 revelation of ISIS's murder of the Jordanian pilot, ISIS reportedly had wide support in Jordan. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Associated Press](#))

Between August and September 2014, Jordan arrested 80 alleged ISIS supporters in the country. Security officials arrested six alleged supporters in a September 9, 2014, raid in Amman. For instance, in November 2014, Jordanian Hisham Moussa went on trial for using the mobile app WhatsApp to recruit for ISIS. Another Jordanian citizen known only as M.H. went on trial that month for threatening the Australian embassy on Facebook for the country's role in the fight against ISIS. Jordan's State Security Court sentenced a man to three years in prison in February 2015 for publishing pro-ISIS statements online. (Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Jordan Times](#))

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

The Jordanian-born [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#) was the founder of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), the precursor to ISIS. Before his death, he was the most wanted man in Jordan. In 1989, he traveled to Afghanistan where he trained under al-Qaeda military chief Mohammed Atef. Al-Zarqawi returned to Jordan in 1993 to create a militant Islamist group to overthrow the Jordanian monarchy. He was imprisoned from 1994 to 1999 for several bombing attempts. After his release, he created the paramilitary force Jund al-Sham in Afghanistan. In 2001, Jordan sentenced him to death in absentia for plotting the 1999 Radisson Hotel bombing. Al-Zarqawi became notorious for his videotaped beheadings. He was responsible for the October 2002 assassination of American diplomat Laurence Foley. He is linked to numerous bombings in Iraq and then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell named al-Zarqawi the primary link between al-Qaeda and Iraq in 2003. Al-Zarqawi orchestrated a November 2005 triple hotel bombing in Jordan that killed 57 people. Al-Zarqawi died in a U.S. airstrike in June 2006. (Source: [Counter Extremism Project](#))

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi

[Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi](#) is a Jordanian heralded as one of the most prominent Salafist figures in the world. He was a mentor to al-Qaeda's Iraq branch, but distanced himself over disagreements with the group's methods including Muslim bloodshed. He was the spiritual guide to al-Zarqawi, whom he later disowned for indiscriminately attacking civilians during the 2005 Amman hotel bombings. Al-Maqdisi has chastised ISIS for declaring a caliphate, calling the group divisive and a "deviant organization." Regardless, his influence on jihadist fighters has continued. Al-Maqdisi reportedly maintains support for the Nusra Front. Mohammad al-Chalabi also celebrates al-Maqdisi as the "mentor and father of our curriculum." Al-Maqdisi has been in and out of prison for nearly two decades and has continually denied involvement or complicity in violent terror attacks. In 2008, he was released on lack of evidence and health concerns. In June 2014, authorities allegedly released him to encourage him to speak against ISIS. (Source: [Counter Extremism Project](#))

Sami al-Oraidi

The Jordanian-born [Sami al-Oraidi](#) is the Nusra Front's main sharia authority and reportedly the group's second-in-command. After the Nusra Front captured 44 Fijian peacekeepers in the Syrian Golan Heights in August 2014, al-Oraidi reportedly ordered their unconditional release. Al-Oraidi has used social media to release sermons and declarations on behalf of the Nusra Front. Al-Oraidi has also used social media to attack ISIS, particularly after the group declared its caliphate in June 2014. He has referred to ISIS's leaders as "Muslim killers" and declared war on ISIS in a December 2014 sermon posted to YouTube. (Source: [Counter Extremism Project](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Karak Attacks

On December 18, 2016, four gunmen carried out a series of attacks in and around the Jordanian city of Karak. Police patrol were responding to calls of a house fire in the town of Qatraneh in the Karak district when assailants began shooting at the officers from within the house, wounding two officers. The gunmen drove away from the house and attacked a police station in Karak, where they wounded several police officers and bystanders. The gunmen then fled to a Crusader-era castle in Karak, where they took 10 tourists hostage. By midnight, Jordanian forces had killed the gunmen

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and freed the hostages. The attack left 10 people dead, including seven Jordanian security officers, a Canadian tourist, and two Jordanian civilians. The attack wounded 34 people, including 11 police officers, 17 Jordanians civilians, and two foreigners. Jordanian security sources identified the attackers as Jordanian nationals. ISIS claimed responsibility two days after the attacks. (Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))

The attack is reportedly the first major assault on a Jordanian civilian site in years. During the siege, dozens of Karak residents were filmed carrying weapons and “pledging to help security forces fight the terrorists.” Following the attacks, Jordanian forces discovered suicide vests and other explosives in the house in Qatraneh. Police also found automatic weapons and ammunition in the castle. According to the Jordanian Interior Ministry, the gunmen were prepared for further attacks. Jordanian Prime Minister Hani Mulki described the attackers as “outlaws” but said that there was no information on their affiliation. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#))

Attack on Amman Police Training Center

On November 9, 2015, 28-year-old police Captain Anwar Abu Zaid killed two American security contractors, a South African security contractor, and two Jordanians at the Jordan International Police Training Center near Amman. Four Jordanians, two Americans, and one Lebanese citizen were also wounded. Jordanian security forces shot and killed Zaid, who worked as a trainer at the center. The attack took place on the tenth anniversary of the al-Qaeda hotel bombings, which killed 57. A relative described Zaid as “religious but moderate.” During Zaid’s November 13 funeral, thousands of mourners chanted “Death to America, Death to Israel.” Zaid’s family called him a “victim and a martyr” for killing Americans.

Jihadist-linked Twitter accounts praised Zaid as a martyr and called for more lone-wolf attacks against Americans in and outside of Jordan. Jordanian authorities, however, labeled Zaid psychologically disturbed and said he was motivated by financial problems, not jihadist leanings. Interior Minister Salameh Hamad called the attack “personal and isolated” and not related to any extremist group. In December 2015, ISIS praised Zaid as one of the “martyred ‘lone’ knights of the Khil’fah.” (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Jordan Times](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Associated Press](#), [MEMRI](#), [Dabiq](#))

Death of Muath al-Kaseasbeh

On February 3, 2015, ISIS released a video showing the caged immolation of Jordanian air force pilot Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh. ISIS had captured al-Kaseasbeh in December 2014 after his plane crashed while flying over Syria. Jordanian state TV reported al-Kaseasbeh had actually been killed on January 3. The video enraged the Jordanian leadership and boosted support among the population for increased military strikes against ISIS. Jordan also hanged convicted al-Qaeda terrorists Sajida al-Rishawi and Ziad al-Karbouli in response. Both had been on death row, and ISIS demanded their release in exchange for al-Kaseasbeh. On February 8, 2015, Jordan announced it had killed 7,000 ISIS fighters and destroyed 20 percent of the group’s military capabilities in 56 airstrikes over three days. King Abdullah promised Jordan would be relentless in “our war” against ISIS. (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [CNN](#), [Guardian](#))

2005 AQI Hotel Bombings

An al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) triple suicide bombing at the Radisson, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn hotels in Amman on November 9, 2005, killed 57 people. Hundreds of Jordanians protested in the streets after the bombings. After the bombings, an AQI Internet post called Jordan “a backyard garden for the enemies of the religion, Jews and crusaders ... a filthy place for the traitors.” A second AQI post justified the number of Arabs killed in the attack by calling the hotels “favourite places for the work of [western] intelligence organs.” (Source: [Guardian](#))

Four AQI bombers arrived in Jordan on November 4 and rented a hotel room in Amman. Sajida al-Rishawi had intended to blow herself up with her husband, Ali al-Shamari, in the Radisson but left behind a piece of her explosives belt. Al-Rishawi’s brother, Mubarak Atrous al-Rishawi, was reportedly AQI founder Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s deputy. Police arrested her soon after, and Jordan’s state security court sentenced her to death. Authorities identified the other two bombers as Rawad Jassem Mohammed Abed and Safaa Mohammed Ali. Jordan executed al-Rishawi in February 2015 in response to ISIS’s execution of a Jordanian pilot. ISIS had demanded her release as part of an exchange for the pilot. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#), [Washington Post](#), [Washington Post](#))

PFLP Hijackings and Black September

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

In early September 1970, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked four Pan Am, Swissair, TWA, and British Overseas Airways planes and brought them to a Jordanian airfield, Dawson's Field. The PFLP then transferred 127 hostages to an Amman hotel while keeping 56 Jewish passengers and crewmembers hostage at the airfield. The hostages held in the hotel were later released. However, the PFLP demanded the release of terrorists held in Israel, Great Britain, Switzerland, and West Germany for the 56 passengers. Switzerland and Germany agreed. The PFLP blew up the empty planes on September 12. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Middle East Forum](#), [BBC News](#))

In response to the PFLP's misuse of Jordanian airfields, Jordan's King Hussein declared martial law on September 16. Jordanian forces violently cracked down on the PLO within the country over the next 10 days. This action came to be known as Black September. PLO leader Yasser Arafat called for Hussein's overthrow, and Syrian forces invaded Jordan to support the Palestinians. On September 27, Arab leaders signed a treaty ending the violence. The PFLP freed the remaining hostages at the airfield on September 30 after the United Kingdom released the remaining terrorists from prison. There are varying claims of how many Palestinians died during Black September, ranging from [hundreds](#) to up to [15,000](#). Hussein expelled the PLO in 1971. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#))

- **March 9, 2020:** A Saudi court holds the first hearing for over 68 Palestinian and Jordanian prisoners. Riyadh claims that the prisoners were affiliated with a "terror group." According to Human Rights Watch, the prisoners—all of which are long-term Saudi Arabian residents—were arrested in March 2018 and were held for two years without charge. The court has yet to schedule a sentencing date for the suspects. Sources: [Middle East Monitor](#), [Human Rights Watch](#)
- **June 3, 2020:** Jordanian authorities arrest five Jordanian citizens in the occupied West Bank. The suspects allegedly sought to carry out suicide attacks against Israeli targets in the West Bank. The suspects are tried at the state security court, a military tribunal that normally deals with terrorism-related cases. Source: [Middle East Monitor](#)
- **November 6, 2019:** A Jordanian man wielding a knife, indiscriminately stabs people at an archeological site in Jerash, Jordan. The attack wounds eight people. Authorities arrest the attacker, a man named Moustafa Abourouis, and later disclose that he "came from a Palestinian refugee camp" and that his motives were unknown. On January 26, 2020, a Jordanian court charges Abourouis with committing a terrorist act and promoting the ideas of a terrorist group. It is alleged that Abourouis carried out the attack in the name of ISIS. Sources: [Telegraph](#), [Arab News](#)
- **November 30, 2018:** A Jordanian worker attacks bystanders with a hammer in Eilat, southern Israel. The attack leads to two injuries. Israeli police arrest the suspect and claim the attack was politically motivated. On December 21, an Israeli court indicts the suspect and charges him with several counts of attempted murder, conspiracy to commit a crime that is a terrorist act, and preparation for murder that is a terrorist act. Sources: [Haaretz](#), [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **October 24, 2018:** An unidentified assailant shoots and kills retired Major-General Habis al-Hanini in front of his house in Madaba. Al-Hanini was the former head of counterterrorism. The suspect is allegedly a "man said to be [a follower of] Salafist takfiri ideology." Reports have been inconsistent regarding a suspect's arrest, but Petra, Jordan's News Agency, claims the suspect was found and arrested. Source: [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **August 10, 2018:** ISIS-inspired terrorists detonate an IED beneath a police vehicle outside a music festival in Fuheis. The attack kills two police officers. Security authorities trace the terrorist cell in Salt, and conduct a raid, leading to a shootout. The shootout kills five security members and wounds 10 others. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- In July 2018, Jordanian authorities arrest five alleged members of ISIS in Amman. According to reports, the suspects were planning to attack guards stationed outside a former Jordanian prime minister's home. On October 21, 2019, the suspects are tried at the State Security Court in Amman, where they plead not guilty. The suspects are charged with conspiring to carry out terrorist attacks. Source: [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **January 8, 2018:** Jordanian authorities arrest 17 suspects who allegedly sought to carry out an attack for ISIS. The suspects, all from a fundamentalist-prone city called Zarqa, planned to "execute a number of terrorist attacks simultaneously to destabilize national security." Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 23, 2017:** A construction worker stabs a security guard at the Israeli embassy with a screwdriver. The guard shoots the attacker dead and also hits another Jordanian worker, who later dies of his wounds. The incident sparks a diplomatic crisis between Israel and Jordan, which wants to prosecute the security guard for murder. The attack coincides with Jordanian protests against Israeli security measures on at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Times of Israel](#)
- **December 20, 2016:** Four policemen are killed during an exchange of fire following a raid of a suspected terrorist hideout in a Karak village. One suspect is also killed. The raid is reportedly connected to the December 18 terror attack in Karak. According to Jordanian government officials, the security forces were led to the house by a suspect who confessed to being part of the Karak cell responsible for the December 18 attacks. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Jordan Times](#)
- **December 18, 2016:** Gunmen carry out a series of attacks in and around the Jordanian city of Karak. A police patrol responding to calls of a house fire in the town of Qatraneh in the Karak district comes under fire from within the house. The gunmen flee to a Crusader-era castle in the city of Karak, where they take 10 tourists hostage. By midnight, Jordanian forces kill the four gunmen and free the hostages. The attack leaves 10 people dead, including four police officers, three gendarmes, a Canadian citizen, and two civilians. At least 34 people are wounded. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [New York Times](#)

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

- **September 25, 2016:** A gunman shoots and kills Jordanian writer Nahed Hattar outside an Amman courthouse. Hattar was entering the courthouse, where he was facing charges of insulting Islam. Hattar had posted a cartoon on Facebook of a bearded man in bed with two women ordering God to bring him cashews and wine on August 13. Hattar publicly apologized and deactivated his Facebook account, saying he shared the cartoon to point out the hypocrisy of ISIS's concept of heaven, not to insult Islam. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **June 21, 2016:** An explosives-filled pick-up truck blows up near a Jordanian army outpost on the Syrian border close to a Syrian refugee camp, killing six Jordanian soldiers and wounding 14. Police arrest the suspect. Jordan labels the attack a lone-wolf terrorist act. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Jerusalem Post](#)
- **June 6, 2016:** A 22-year-old Palestinian from Jordan's Baqaa Palestinian refugee camp outside of Amman allegedly kills three Jordanian intelligence officers and two other intelligence personnel in an attack on the camp's intelligence office. Police arrest the suspect. Jordan labels the attack a lone-wolf terrorist act. Sources: [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#)
- **March 1, 2016 - March 2, 2016:** Jordanian security forces raid an alleged ISIS sleeper cell in Irbid near the Syrian border as part of an investigation of possible suicide bombers in the country. The cell members refuse to surrender, leading to a firefight in which seven of the ISIS fighters and one Jordanian security officer are killed. Five policemen are also wounded. Security forces seize automatic weapons and explosives. Jordanian intelligence believes the cell was planning attacks on Jordanian civilian and military sites. According to Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, the cell built ties with ISIS in order to destabilize Jordan. Thirteen others linked to the cell were arrested in previous raids, of which the government did not reveal details. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Associated Press](#)
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- **November 9, 2015:** Police Captain Anwar Abu Zaid kills two American security contractors, a South African security contractor, and two Jordanians at the Jordan International Police Training Center near Amman. The suspect, allegedly affiliated with Iran-backed Bayt al-Maqdis, reportedly planned to target Saudi interests in Jordan. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Jordan Times](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Associated Press](#), [MEMRI](#)
- **July 6, 2015:** Jordanian security forces arrest a man with almost 100 pounds of explosives. The suspect, allegedly affiliated with Iran-backed Bayt al-Maqdis, reportedly planned to target Saudi interests in Jordan. Source: [International Business Times](#)
- Jordanian authorities sentence Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood deputy leader Zaki Bani Rushaid to 18 months for "souring ties with a foreign country" after he criticized the United Arab Emirates on Facebook. The UAE labeled the international Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization in November 2014. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **February 3, 2015:** ISIS releases a video of Jordanian air force pilot Lt. Muath al-Kaseasbeh's caged immolation. Al-Kaseasbeh had been captured the previous December after his plane crashed while flying over Syria. Jordanian state TV reported al-Kaseasbeh had actually been killed on January 3. The video enrages the Jordanian leadership and boosts support among the population for increased military strikes against ISIS. Jordan also hangs convicted al-Qaeda terrorists Sajida al-Rishawi and Ziad al-Karbouli in response. Both had been on death row, and ISIS had demanded their release. Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#)
- **September 22, 2014:** In a civil lawsuit filed by 297 U.S. citizens, a federal jury in New York City finds Jordan-based Arab Bank guilty of facilitating payments to Hamas during the early 2000s. The plaintiffs include survivors and the families of victims of 24 Hamas attacks in Israel. It is the first time a bank is held liable in a civil lawsuit for terrorism-related crimes. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **April 30, 2014:** The father and brother of Batool Haddad, a Christian woman about 22 years old, take her into a forest and kill her for converting to Islam. Haddad is one of four women killed that week in honor killings. Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Ammon News](#)
- **April 23, 2014:** Security forces kill 20-year-old Sunni fundamentalist Qusai al-Emam while trying to arrest him in the city of Maan. A week of armed protests and clashes with Jordanian authorities ensue. Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **April 16, 2014:** Jordanian warplanes fire on a group of pick-up trucks crossing into Jordan from Syria. The army believes the vehicles are smuggling weapons for the Syrian opposition. Sources: [United Press International](#), [Al-Monitor](#)
- **September 23, 2014:** A Jordanian military court sentences five Jordanian Salafists to five years in prison each for trying to join the Nusra Front. The men had been arrested in February 2012 trying to cross the Syrian border while carrying AK-47s. The court had sentenced another seven Jordanians on similar charges the week before. Source: [Middle East Online](#)
- The Iraqi embassy in Amman hosts a commemoration of mass-grave victims killed by the Saddam Hussein regime. The Iraqi ambassador's guard reportedly physically and verbally abuses pro-Saddam Iraqi protesters who now live in Jordan. Hundreds protest at the embassy and call for the ambassador's removal after a video of the violence appears on YouTube. There are reportedly revenge attacks by Jordanians against Iraqi refugees. Source: [Al-Monitor](#)

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

- **October 21, 2012:** Eight extremist Salafists attack a Jordanian-Syrian border crossing, killing a Jordanian corporal, while reportedly trying to cross into Syria to join jihadist groups.
Two hours later, five suspected al-Qaeda members clash with Jordanian soldiers at the border. All 13 are arrested. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **October 21, 2012:** Jordanian security arrest 11 people planning to use car bombs, machine guns, grenades, and other weapons to attack foreign diplomats, hotels, and shopping malls.
According to Jordanian intelligence, the suspects had been planning the attacks since June and had received their weapons in Syria. The group calls itself 11-9 the Second after the November 9, 2005, hotel bombings. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#)
- Four-hundred Salafi-jihadist protesters in the city of Zarqa call for the release of 90 Islamist prisoners from Jordanian prisons, including Abu Mohammed al-Maqdessi.
Clashes with police injure more than 80 people. Source: [National \[UAE\]](#)
- **September 4, 2006:** Nabeel Ahmad Issa Jaoura shouted “Allahu akbar” as he shoots at a group of tourists visiting a Roman amphitheater. Jaoura kills a British man and wounds six others. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **November 9, 2005:** An al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) triple suicide bombing at the Radisson, Grand Hyatt, and Days Inn hotels in Amman kills 57 people.
Hundreds of Jordanians protest in the streets after the bombings. Sajida al-Rishawi, who arrived in Jordan from Iraq that year with her husband, had intended to blow herself up with him in one of the hotels but left behind a piece of her explosives belt. Police arrest her soon after. Sources: [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#)
- Jordanian authorities on April 1 arrest a group of suspects planning attacks using five explosives-filled trucks.
Jordanian forces arrest suspects over the next two weeks and kill four suspects in a firefight on April 20. Authorities believe Abu Musab al-Zarqawi organized the operation. Sources: [New York Times](#), [New York Times](#)
- **August 7, 2003:** A car bomb attack on the Jordanian embassy in Iraq kills 11 and wounds at least 65.
Authorities implicate al-Zarqawi. Sources: [Atlantic](#), [New York Times](#)
- **April 1, 2003:** Jordanian authorities arrest several Iraqi agents planning to poison water supplies in eastern Jordan used by American soldiers.
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **October 28, 2002:** Terrorists gun down senior American diplomat Laurence Foley outside his home in Amman.
Source: [New York Times](#)
- Authorities arrest Raed Hijazi, an American citizen of Palestinian descent, who had planned to attack Amman’s Radisson Hotel, Christian holy sites, and border crossings with Israel during New Year’s celebrations.
Hijazi, a taxi driver from Boston, and his accomplices began planning the attacks in 1996. They received training from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, where they were captured. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **January 29, 1994:** Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal orchestrate the assassination of Naeb Imran Maaytah, Jordan’s second-highest diplomat in Lebanon.
Nidal headed the Fatah Revolutionary Council, which broke off from the PLO in the 1970s. Jordan convicts Nidal in absentia in December 2001 and sentences him to death. Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#)
- Police arrest Abu Musab al-Zarqawi after finding guns and explosives in his home.
Al-Zarqawi had attempted to blow up a movie theater showing pornographic films on behalf of his group al-Tawhid wal-Jihad. Source: [Counter Extremism Project](#)
- Jordan’s Muslim Brotherhood forms a new political party, the Islamic Action Front.
Source: [Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs](#)
- **April 4, 1985:** An unidentified man fires a bazooka at a Royal Jordanian Airline plane taking off from Athens International Airport.
The attack causes only minor damage. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **April 3, 1985:** A member of the Palestinian group Black September fires a bazooka at the Royal Jordanian Airline office in Rome.
Source: [New York Times](#)
- Bomb attacks against the Royal Jordanian Airline office in Rome wound four employees.
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **December 4, 1984:** Ahmed Mohd Ali Hersh, a 27-year-old Jordanian born in the West Bank, murders Jordanian diplomat Azmi al-Mufti in Bucharest while al-Mufti is taking his child to school.
He was Jordan’s second-ranking diplomat in the country. The Black September terrorist group claims responsibility. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **November 28, 1971:** The Black September terrorist group assassinates Jordanian Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal outside a hotel in Cairo.
The group vows to kill King Hussein and his entire family. Source: [New York Times](#)
- The PFLP hijacks four planes, and held hostage 56 Jewish passengers and crew.
The empty planes are blown up on September 12. In response, King Hussein violently cracks down on the PLO. Sources: [Middle East Forum](#), [BBC News](#)
- The Muslim Brotherhood registers as a charity in Jordan and organizes a political party.
Source: [Al-Monitor](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

Addressing the U.N. Security Council in April 2015, Jordan's Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II identified youth as the primary targets of terrorist recruitment. He called for "swift measures" to stop "feeding the fires of terrorism." The prince led the Security Council session as Jordan held the rotating presidency. He called for providing young people with tools to counter extremist messages and the creation of networks to persuade youth to "adopt values of coexistence, respect for diversity and rejection of violence." (Source: [United Nations](#))

Government Programs

Since the revelation of ISIS's murder of a Jordanian air force pilot in February 2015, Jordanian authorities have increasingly arrested suspected ISIS members and other extremists. The government arrested some 90 local jihadists later that month. According to officials, many of those being tried fought in Syria. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Most Jordanian foreign fighters do not return to Jordan. Of those who do return, the most radical are sent to high-security prisons in Jordan. The government established the Community Peace Centre on January 1, 2015, to de-radicalize returned fighters who are less of a security risk. Government-sanctioned clerics preach anti-violence messages at the facility. The center hosted 69 prisoners when it opened. (Source: [BBC News](#))

In 2004, King Abdullah chose 180 Muslim scholars to issue the Risalat Amman (Amman Letter), which endorsed an apolitical, tolerant version of Islam and called for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. The letter also rejected the Salafi-jihadist ideology. The government also organized a conference of Islamic scholars who accepted the Amman Letter and called for co-existence. (Source: [International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence](#))

Legislation

Jordan passed its anti-terrorism law in 2006 in the wake of al-Qaeda's triple hotel suicide bombing in November 2005. On June 1, 2014, Jordan amended the law to expand government authority to act against suspected terrorists by broadening the definition of terrorism and increasing legal penalties. The law specifically calls for the death penalty for those who commit terrorist acts. Any person joining or maintaining contacts with armed groups or attempting to recruit to such groups, whether inside or outside the country, is also subject to punishment. Those who damage Jordan's relations with foreign states could also be classified as terrorists. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [United Press International](#), [Jordan Times](#))

Officials say the law is necessary to "protect the blessing of peace we have had" but free-speech advocates have criticized the act. The Jordan Press Association has rejected the amendments as "illegal and illogical" for equating terrorism perpetrators with journalists who report about them. On July 9, 2015, a Jordanian court sentenced reporter Ghazi Mrayat to 15 days in prison for a July 6 story he wrote for the state-owned *Al-Rai* daily about a foiled Iranian-backed terror plot. The state had reportedly banned coverage of the plot, and it claimed Mrayat had endangered Jordanian citizens and hurt Jordan's relations with an unidentified country. Mrayat was at least the fourth journalist imprisoned under the terrorism law in 2015. Others had been accused of "aiding terrorism" and "spreading false news" by reporting on the campaign against ISIS. (Source: [Committee to Protect Journalists](#))

In November 2014, Jordan arrested the Brotherhood's deputy secretary-general, Zaki Bani Rushaid, after he criticized the United Arab Emirates on Facebook. The Brotherhood condemned his 18-month sentence as a "blow to freedom of speech and the rights of citizens." (Sources: [Jordan Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Associated Press](#), [New York Times](#))

Executions

Jordan employs the death penalty for terrorism offenses, a practice that global human-rights NGOs have roundly criticized. In March 2017, Jordan executed 10 men convicted of terrorism-related crimes. It was the country's largest round of executions in two years. The executed included men with links to a 2003 bombing of Jordan's Iraqi embassy, the September 2016 shooting of writer Nahed Hattar in Amman, and a 2006 shooting attack on a group of tourists in Amman. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch both condemned Jordan's use of execution as a punishment. (Sources: [Telegraph](#), [Human Rights Watch](#))

Non-Government Counter-Extremism

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

Jordanian citizens have also undertaken initiatives to combat extremism. Suleiman Bakhit, a comic book author, businessman, and son of former Jordanian Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit, has created a comic book to reinforce counter-extremist messages to Jordan's children. Extremists "preach terrorism as a heroic journey," according to Bakhit. His sought to provide an alternative to that message using comics featuring original Arab superheroes. More than 1 million copies of his comics have been distributed in Jordanian schools thanks to a government grant. He lost government support, however, when he wrote a post-apocalyptic comic set in a future that did not include the Hashemite monarchy. As of November 2014, he is trying to launch a new company called Hero Factor to continue publishing. (Sources: [NPR](#), [New York Times](#))

No Honor in Crime is an activist group launched in 2009 to campaign for the end of honor killings and profile victims. Other groups, such as the Sisterhood is Global Institute, also seek to end honor killings. (Source: [Al-Monitor](#))

International Counter-Extremism

International Organizations

Jordan belongs to the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force, a regional body to counter terror financing. Jordan's financial intelligence unit, the Anti Money Laundering and Counter Terrorism financing Unit (AMLU) also belongs to the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units, an informal network of international financial intelligence units that convenes in Belgium. AMLU is responsible for monitoring and disseminating U.S. sanction-designations. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Egmont Group](#))

U.S. Relations

The United States announced plans in February 2015 to increase its annual aid package to Jordan from \$660 million to \$1 billion through the end of the 2017 fiscal year. The increase is meant to help Jordan absorb Syrian refugees and fight extremism. The U.S. announced the package before ISIS released the video of the Jordanian pilot's murder in February 2015. The U.S. is also training Syrian rebels in Jordan to fight ISIS. (Source: [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#))

In late October 2015, the United States sent Jordan four planes outfitted with surveillance technology and lasers to be used in monitoring Jordan's eastern border with Iraq. (Source: [Fox News](#))

ISIS

King Abdullah declared that ISIS could be defeated "fairly quickly," during a January 2016 interview. Abdullah said he hoped the military engagement would be short term, while longer-term goals should focus on intelligence and education. Abdullah promised an "increased tempo" in Jordanian airstrikes. (Source: [CNN](#))

Jordan joined the international coalition against ISIS on September 23, 2014, to protect Jordan's "national interests and security." On February 8, 2015, Jordan announced it had carried out 56 airstrikes against ISIS targets since February 5. The air campaign killed 7,000 ISIS fighters and destroyed 20 percent of ISIS's military capabilities. King Abdullah promised Jordan would be relentless in "our war" against ISIS. Government spokesman Mohammed al-Momani has called ISIS "a cancer that must be taken out" before "the fire spreads to our house." Major General Mansour al-Jabour, head of the Jordanian air force, said Jordan would not hesitate to kill ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Guardian](#), [International Business Times](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [NBC News](#))

Following ISIS's May 2015 takeover of Palmyra, Syria, Jordan's Queen Rania al-Abdullah called on Muslims around the world to stand against ISIS. After capturing Palmyra, ISIS troops in Syria reportedly began moving south toward the Jordanian border. (Sources: [Daily Mail](#), [Daily Mail](#))

Yemen

Jordan discontinued its air assault on ISIS in Syria in August 2015. The Hashemite kingdom diverted its air force to Yemen to aid Saudi Arabia against Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Jordanian officials said the country remains "an active partner and international contributor" in the coalition against ISIS. Jordan joined the Saudi coalition against the Houthi rebels in March 2015. An unnamed Jordanian official called Yemen's security "a high strategic interest" for Jordan. Jordan has contributed fighter jets to the Saudi-led coalition, as well as supplying humanitarian supplies to

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Yemen. King Abdullah said Jordan will “continue to stand by” Yemen and is committed to preserving Yemen’s territorial integrity, protecting its borders, and the security of Yemen’s neighboring countries. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Jordan Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Jordan Times](#))

Public Opinion

Security

According to the 2017 Arab Barometer, 97 percent of Jordanians believe their personal security is ensured or fully ensured. This represents a 9-point increase since 2011. Nonetheless, two-thirds of Jordanians worry about a terrorist attack in the country, while 43 percent are “very worried” about the possibility. (Source: [Arab Barometer](#))

Extremism

Only 12 percent of Jordanians consider religious extremism to be a top concern, according to the 2017 Arab Barometer. (Source: [Arab Barometer](#))

A May 2016 poll by the International Republican Institute found that the majority of Jordanians consider ISIS to be a terrorist organization and support Jordanian participation in the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition. According to the poll, 89 percent of Jordanians considered ISIS a terrorist organization while only 4 percent did not. The remaining 7 percent responded “Not sure/don’t know.” The poll found that 42 percent consider ISIS “to a large degree” to be a threat to Jordan, while 22 percent believe ISIS threatens Jordan “to a moderate degree.” Respectively, 64 percent and 16 percent of Jordanians agree with international intervention against ISIS “to a large degree” and to “a moderate degree.” Only 25 percent believes that ISIS’s ideology has support in Jordan. Approximately 29 percent of those surveyed attribute this support to “ignorance of religious teachings,” while 9 percent blame “religious fanaticism.” Other reasons cited include “youth are tricked” (3 percent), “financial gains” (12 percent), unemployment (12 percent), “wrong belief that Daesh is Islamic State” (14 percent), and poverty (15 percent). (Source: [International Republican Institute](#))

In contrast, a September 2014 poll by the University of Jordan’s Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) found that 62 percent of Jordanians viewed ISIS as a terrorist group, while only 31 percent viewed the Nusra Front as a terrorist organization. Also that month, 21 members of Jordan’s parliament signed a letter rejecting Jordan’s participation in the coalition against ISIS, calling it “not our war.” In November 2014, editor of the online daily JO24.net Basel al-Okour questioned why Jordan is involved in the fight against ISIS but not in Gaza or Jerusalem, which are “more important to us.” In December 2014, 25 members of parliament, led by Muslim Brotherhood deputy secretary-general Zaki Bani Rushaid, signed a petition protesting “political arrests” of Islamists. (Source: [Business Insider](#))

In May 2015, Jordan’s Lower House Speaker Abdul Karim Dughmi told a visiting team from the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations that Jordan’s population rejects extremism and believes “in dialogue and understanding as the path to a society of justice, stability and tolerance.” (Source: [Petra News Agency](#))

Public cries for revenge and support for Jordanian airstrikes against ISIS swelled following the February 2015 release of a video of ISIS’s murder of a Jordanian pilot. The Jordanian population had previously been critical of King Abdullah’s support for the anti-ISIS coalition. Jordanian analyst Saad Hattar believes Jordanians are “mobilizing for a long war against Islamic State.” (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#))

A Reuters survey of university students in February 2015 found non-religious students generally supported their country’s fight against ISIS after the death of the Jordanian pilot. Religious students, however, tended to support ISIS’s application of sharia. They also blamed the United States and Israel for a propaganda campaign against ISIS in order to tarnish Islam’s image. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Honor Killings

One-third of Jordanian teenagers condoned honor killings, according to a 2013 Cambridge University study. Researchers interviewed 850 teenagers. The study revealed almost half of the boys and one in five girls surveyed thought it justified to kill a woman who brought shame to her family. The study found boys with low education from traditional families were more likely to support honor crimes. Attitudes toward honor crimes stemmed from broader beliefs about patriarchal authority rather than religion. (Source: [CNN](#))

Jordan: Extremism and Terrorism

Syrian Refugees

According to the 2017 Arab Barometer, 35 percent of Jordanians in 2016 considered Syrian refugees to be a top concern. A May 2016 poll by the International Republican Institute found that 40 percent of Jordanians support closing the country's border to Syrian refugees. This represented a 6 percent decrease from 2015. According to the poll, 24 percent of Jordanians support continuing to receive Syrian refugees, an increase from 13 percent in 2015. A clear majority of 65 percent believe that attitudes toward Syrian refugees are getting worse, while 26 percent believes such attitudes remained the same. (Sources: [Arab Barometer](#), [International Republican Institute](#))