

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On January 18, 2015, an Argentine federal prosecutor named Natalio Alberto Nisman was found shot dead inside of his Buenos Aires apartment. Nisman had been appointed in 2004 by the then-president of Argentina to investigate the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentina's history, the July 1994 bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, AMIA) headquarters in Buenos Aires. Though Argentina had charged Hezbollah for the bombing, which killed 85 people and injured more than 300, the country had so far failed to bring anyone to justice for involvement. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [New Yorker](#) [2], [La Nación](#) [3])

A week before his death, Nisman had accused the government of then-Argentine president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of engaging in a cover-up of Iran's role in the AMIA bombing in exchange for trade concessions. He had been due to present evidence to the Argentine National Congress on January 19, the day after his body was found. In spite of initial allegations—including from Kirchner herself—that Nisman's death was a suicide, a police report released in November 2017 revealed that he had been murdered. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [New Yorker](#) [2], [La Nación](#) [3], [Guardian](#) [4])

Overview

Argentina has a history of extremist and terrorist activity—perpetrated both by extremist groups and the Argentine state itself—dating back to the years following World War II, when then-President Juan Perón allowed former Nazi officials a safe haven in the country. Perón's nationalist political ideology, Peronism—which has been described by the *New York Times* as “a sort of right-wing socialism”—became extremely popular on both sides of the political spectrum and remains the dominant political ideology in Argentina today. After Perón was overthrown by his political opponents in a coup d'état in 1955, Argentina entered into a period of significant political unrest. The Peronist movement also split into left- and right-wing factions, and several major urban guerrilla groups emerged on both sides. When Juan Perón returned to Argentina from exile in 1973, right-wing Peronists opened fire on left-wing Peronists awaiting his return at Argentina's Ezeiza International Airport. (Sources: [History](#) [5], [New York Times](#) [6], [New York Times](#) [7], [Economist](#) [8], [BBC News](#) [9], [CIA](#) [10], [La Nación](#) [11])

Largely in response to the growing unrest in the country, a military junta launched a U.S.-backed coup d'état that expelled then-President Isabel Perón—Juan Perón's third wife—from office in March 1976. The subsequent seven years under the ensuing military dictatorship would come to be known as Argentina's “Dirty War,” a period of state oppression in which individuals accused of opposing the regime were subjected to torture and death. Approximately 30,000 individuals disappeared at the hands of the regime before the collapse of the dictatorship in 1983. Most of the regime's leaders were subsequently protected by amnesty laws until such laws were finally repealed in 2003. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [12], [Guardian](#) [13], [El Español](#) [14], [Telegraph](#) [15], [BBC News](#) [16])

Argentina also has a history of Islamic terrorism. Numerous Islamic terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, Hamas, and al-Qaeda, operate in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America—the region that straddles the borders of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. Such groups have fundraised and plotted attacks from the region, including two Hezbollah-linked attacks on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires: a 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy that killed 29 people, and Argentina's deadliest terrorist attack to date—a 1994 bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) headquarters that killed 85 people. To date, Argentina has failed to bring anyone to justice for either attack, and two of Argentina's presidents have been accused of engaging in cover-ups related to the 1994 bombing. Argentine prosecutor Alberto Nisman was found murdered in January 2015 days after he claimed that he had evidence that the then-president Cristina Kirchner had attempted to cover up Iran's role in the attack. Argentina designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization on July 18, 2019, the 25th anniversary of the AMIA bombing. (Sources: [Library of Congress](#) [17], [New York Times](#) [18], [Telegraph](#) [1], [Guardian](#) [4], [New York Times](#) [19])

Though ISIS-linked individuals have threatened to carry out attacks in Argentina, none have been carried out to date and Argentine authorities have denied the group's presence in the country. However, on October 31, 2017, five Argentine citizens were killed in an ISIS-inspired lone wolf terror attack carried out in New York City in which U.S. permanent resident Sayfullo Saipov plowed a rental truck down a bike path. (Sources: [Perfil](#) [20], [Deutsche Welle](#) [21], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [22], [Washington Post](#) [23])

In addition to Islamic terrorist groups, a small number of radical left-wing anarchist groups have also carried out terrorist

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

in Argentina in recent years, though they have caused few casualties. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [24], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25])

Argentina has a criminal code in place to prosecute terrorism, as well as police and intelligence units that work to combat terrorist activity in the country. However, Argentina has been heavily criticized for its failure to bring anyone to justice for both the 1992 and 1994 bombings in Buenos Aires. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26], [Perfil](#) [27], [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) [28], [Atlantic](#) [29], [Telegraph](#) [11])

Argentina is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and has pledged its support to the U.N. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. It regularly cooperates with the United States on security matters, and coordinates counterterrorism efforts in the TBA with Paraguay and Brazil through a joint Trilateral Tri-Border Area Command. However, institutional corruption and inadequate funding and resources have hindered the Command's efforts to combat illicit activity in the TBA. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26], [Library of Congress](#) [17])

According to a November 2017 *Washington Post* article, Argentines "generally feel safe from terrorism." Consequently, the death of five Argentines in the October 2017 terrorist attack in New York City came as a "shock to the entire country." Argentines also have little faith in the government's ability to prosecute terrorist activity. A 2015 survey revealed that a majority of Argentines believed that it was "improbable" that those responsible for the 1994 AMIA bombing would ever be convicted. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [30], [La Tercera](#) [31])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Nazis in Argentina

Following the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, Argentine President Juan Perón helped establish escape routes, or "rat lines," for former members of the Third Reich to escape to South America. Argentina harbored up to 5,000 former Nazis--the most of any South American country--including Adolph Eichmann, who masterminded the network of Nazi extermination camps, and Gerhard Bohne, who was in charge of Hitler's euthanasia program and subsequently worked as a technician in the Argentine military. Though some former Nazis disguised their identities and were later extradited and prosecuted, others evaded capture and lived openly under their real names, sometimes receiving support from Argentine authorities. The Patagonian town of Bariloche became a haven for former Nazis to associate with each other and live under their true identities. (Sources: [History](#) [5], [History](#) [32], [Mirror](#) [33])

Urban Guerrilla Movements, 1955-1975

Following then-President Juan Perón's exile from Argentina in 1955, Peronism, which has been described by the *New York Times* as "a sort of right-wing socialism," continued to draw support from both ends of the political spectrum. The ultra-nationalist urban guerrilla Nationalist Revolutionary Tacuara Movement (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionaria Tacuara, MNRT) emerged in 1962 and was linked to the more conservative elements of the Peronist movement. The MNRT was strongly anti-Semitic and launched attacks against Jewish targets in Buenos Aires until it was ultimately dismantled in the mid-1960s. On the other extreme, the Peronist Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Peronistas, FAP) emerged later that decade as a left-wing Peronist urban guerrilla group, launching attacks on foreign-owned companies in Buenos Aires. The FAP preceded a major left-wing urban guerrilla group called the Montoneros, a Marxist-Peronist group that harassed the government for the return of Juan Perón. Although Perón returned to Argentina and resumed the post of president in 1973, he died only a year later and was replaced by his third wife, Isabel Perón. The pro-Marxist Montoneros resumed their violent activities against her government, which became increasingly right-wing. As of 1975, the Montoneros was estimated to have 1,500 militants and 15,000 supporters. The group carried out kidnappings, bombings, and assassinations of business managers and political figures, including assassinations of the police chief of Buenos Aires and U.S. Consul John Egan. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [7], [Página/12](#) [34], [Clarín](#) [35], [Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of](#) [36] *History*, [Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium](#) [37], [CIA](#) [10], [New York Times](#) [38], [New York Times](#) [39])

Another major left-wing guerrilla group, the People's Revolutionary Army (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, ERP) emerged in July 1970 as the military arm of the Revolutionary Workers Party, a Marxist-Leninist political party. The ERP,

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

which was inspired by the ideology of Ché Guevara, was not affiliated with Peronism and identified the Argentine military as its principal enemy. As of 1975, the group was estimated to have about 500-700 members. It conducted several kidnappings and assassinations of business executives and military officials, as well as commando raids on towns and military garrisons. At the same time, the group also aimed to win public favor by distributing stolen goods such as food, milk, and children's toys to the poor. (Sources: [CIA](#) [10], [New York Times](#) [39])

Right-Wing Extremism and the Dirty War

Right-wing extremism rose in response to the activities of these radical left-wing groups. On June 20, 1973, right-wing Peronists opened fire on a crowd awaiting the return of Juan Perón from exile at the Ezeiza International Airport near Buenos Aires, killing at least 13 people and injuring approximately 380 more. A radical right-wing death squad, the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (AAA), emerged between 1973 and 1975. It was established by José Lopez Rega, the then-Argentine Minister for Social Welfare, and aimed to cleanse the Peronist movement of leftists. With the support of the police and many government figures, the AAA carried out several bombings and assassinations of several prominent liberal figures, including singers, actors, writers, professors, and politicians--many of whom had no links at all to the radical leftist groups. The activities of the AAA marked the start of Argentina's "Dirty War"--a period of state oppression directed at political dissidents and socialists. (Sources: [La Nación](#) [11], [Clarín](#) [40], [CIA](#) [10], [BBC News](#) [41], [New Yorker](#) [2], [El País](#) [42])

On February 5, 1975, the Argentine military launched an operation called Operativo Independencia (Operation Independence) in Argentina's Tucumán province. Argentina's then-President Isabel Perón stated that its objective was to "neutralize and/or annihilate" the "subversive elements" there--meaning the ERP and the Montoneros. In the subsequent year, the military kidnapped, tortured, and murdered hundreds of individuals--including both guerrillas and civilians. (Sources: [Página/12](#) [43], [La Nación](#) [44])

On March 25, 1976, a military junta led by Army Commander General Jorge Videla launched a U.S.-backed coup d'état that expelled President Isabel Perón from office, largely in response to the growing unrest perpetrated by left-wing guerrilla groups and the AAA. Individuals accused of opposing the military regime--as well as their families, including women and children--were subjected to gruesome torture methods and executed at 400 detention centers throughout the country. Approximately 30,000 individuals permanently disappeared--almost certainly at the hands of the state--between 1976 and the eventual collapse of the dictatorship in 1983. Argentina returned to civilian rule in 1983 after elections were held, though several amnesty laws were passed that granted protection to the military regime's leaders for several years afterward. Argentina's Congress finally voted to repeal the amnesty laws in 2003, and several of the regime's leaders have since been prosecuted for crimes against humanity. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [12], [Guardian](#) [13], [New York Times](#) [45], [El Español](#) [14], [Telegraph](#) [15], [BBC News](#) [16])

Tri-Border Area

The Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America--the area that straddles the borders of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay--is considered by law enforcement to be a concentrated area of criminal and terrorist activity. In 1998, then-director of the FBI Louis Freeh referred to the TBA as a "free zone for significant criminal activity, including people who are organized to commit acts of terrorism." In a July 2003 report updated in 2010, the Library of Congress stated that Islamist groups operating in the TBA included Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and Hamas. Such groups fundraise in the region through narcotics and arms trafficking and money laundering schemes--often with the help of organized crime groups. According to Mario Agustín Sapriza, Paraguay's former Vice Minister of the Interior, the region serves as a base for extremist groups to obtain supplies and plan their actions before launching attacks in other countries. Several Islamic extremist sleeper cells also operate in the TBA. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [46], [Library of Congress](#) [17])

Hezbollah

[Hezbollah](#) [47], a U.S.-designated and Iranian-backed Lebanese terrorist group, has reportedly operated out of the TBA since the mid-1980s, from where it has operated sleeper cells, conducting fundraising activities, and plotted attacks--including two deadly suicide bombings on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires in the 1990s. The group has reportedly drawn "hundreds of millions of dollars"--a significant portion of its overall income--from its illicit activities in the region,

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

which it conducts in collaboration with organized crime and mafia organizations. Hezbollah also receives financial support from fundraising networks throughout Argentina, which has a large Lebanese expatriate population. According to intelligence reports, Hezbollah's activities in the TBA have been supported by both the Iranian and Lebanese governments—though the latter is due to Hezbollah's own influence in Lebanese politics. Intelligence and media reports have also suggested that Hezbollah has cooperated with al-Qaeda in the TBA as part of a broader strategic alliance, despite stark differences in their respective Shiite- and Sunni-oriented ideologies. For example, in 1999, authorities reportedly foiled a plot led by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyeh to launch simultaneous attacks on Jewish targets in several cities, including Buenos Aires. (Sources: [Library of Congress](#) [17], [Ynet](#) [48])

Hezbollah was responsible for two deadly suicide bombings on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires in the 1990s. On March 17, 1992, a car bomb struck the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 people and injuring 242 others. Among the dead were both Israeli embassy personnel and Argentine civilians, including children. The bombing also completely destroyed the embassy building and a nearby church. The Islamic Jihad Organization, a Hezbollah- and Iran-linked group, claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that it was in retaliation for the death of the five-year-old son of Hezbollah leader Abbas Moussawi in an Israeli airstrike earlier that year. On July 18, 1994, a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-packed van in front of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, AMIA) headquarters in Buenos Aires. The blast, which remains the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentina's history, killed 85 people and injured more than 300. Both attacks were linked to Hezbollah operatives based in the TBA, Iranian operatives in Argentina, and the Iranian regime itself, which was reportedly motivated in part by Argentina's decision to suspend all nuclear cooperation with it in 1992 over reports that its nuclear program was not limited to peaceful purposes. (Sources: [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) [28], [Atlantic](#) [29], [Times of Israel](#) [49], [La Nación](#) [50], [Library of Congress](#) [17], [Telegraph](#) [1], [Times of Israel](#) [51])

Argentina designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization on July 18, 2019, the 25th anniversary of the AMIA bombing. Argentina has charged a number of Hezbollah members for involvement in the two attacks, including Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyeh, who was suspected of masterminding the 1992 bombing. Mughniyeh, who was ultimately linked to both attacks, evaded capture until he was killed in Syria in 2008. Argentina also issued an arrest warrant for Assad Ahmad Barakat, who served as Hezbollah's chief of operations and fundraising in the TBA and financed the 1994 AMIA bombing, though he was arrested in Brazil in 2002 and extradited to Paraguay. In 2015, Argentina issued an arrest warrant for Hezbollah member Hussein Mohamad Ibrahim Suleiman, who allegedly brought the explosives used in the 1992 bombing into the country. However, Argentina has so far failed to prosecute anyone for involvement in either attack, and the investigations into both officially remain unresolved. Two Argentine presidents have also been accused of cover-ups related to the 1994 AMIA bombing. In July 2019, the U.S. government sanction-designated Salman Raouf Salman, the Hezbollah operative who allegedly coordinated the AMIA bombing. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [19], [Telegraph](#) [1], [Library of Congress](#) [17], [Times of Israel](#) [51], [Reuters](#) [52], [CNN](#) [53], [La Nación](#) [54], [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) [55])

Hamás

[Hamás](#) [56], a U.S.-designated Palestinian terrorist group, also reportedly operates out of the TBA. According to a report from the Library of Congress, Hamas actively uses the TBA as a "support base" for its operations from where it has operated sleeper cells and plotted attacks. Several Hamas operatives were arrested in connection to a foiled 1999 plot led by Osama bin Laden and Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyeh to launch simultaneous attacks on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires and several other cities, though they were later released from custody. (Source: [Library of Congress](#) [17])

Al-Qaeda

The global jihadi Salafist network [al-Qaeda](#) [57] reportedly also operates out of the TBA, where it reportedly has sleeper cells, plots attacks, and conducts fundraising operations through illicit activities such as drug trafficking. The group's roots in the region trace back to 1995, when Osama bin Laden and future 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed traveled to the TBA and participated in meetings at local mosques. Argentine intelligence first identified al-Qaeda operatives in the region in mid-1999. Intelligence and media reports have also suggested that al-Qaeda has cooperated with Hezbollah in the TBA as part of a broader strategic alliance, despite stark differences in their respective Sunni- and Shiite-oriented ideologies. For example, in 1999, authorities reportedly foiled a plot led by Osama bin Laden and Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyeh to launch simultaneous attacks on Jewish targets in several cities, including Buenos Aires. (Source:

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

[Library of Congress](#) [17])

In 2005, Argentine authorities detected the entry into Argentina of 26 individuals linked to the Islamic fundamentalist movement Tablighi Jamaat, which has connections to al-Qaeda. Some were arrested and others were kept under surveillance. In 2016, an Argentine citizen named César Raúl Rodríguez was sentenced to eight years in prison in Spain for allegedly being part of an al-Qaeda cell there, though he denied the accusations against him. (Sources: [La Nación](#) [58], [Perfil](#) [59], [Perfil](#) [60])

ISIS

In 2016, Argentine national security secretary Eugenio Burzacó stated that there was no information to suggest that ISIS had any presence in Argentina. However, ISIS-linked individuals have issued threats toward Argentina and Argentine citizens. In September 2017, the Argentine Army's website was hacked by ISIS-linked individuals, who posted a message stating, "We are the Islamic State. This is a threat. ISIS is in Argentina and soon you are going to know about us." ISIS threats have also targeted the world-famous Argentine soccer player Lionel Messi, who was portrayed as an ISIS captive in propaganda images about the 2018 FIFA World Cup produced by a pro-ISIS media agency. (Sources: [Perfil](#) [20], [Deutsche Welle](#) [21], [Mirror](#) [61])

On October 31, 2017, five Argentine citizens were killed and one was injured in an ISIS-inspired lone wolf terror attack carried out in New York City. In the attack, U.S. permanent resident Sayfullo Saipov plowed a rental truck into pedestrians and bicyclists on a bike path, killing a total of eight people and injuring 12 others. Saipov later stated that he had been inspired to carry out the attack by ISIS and its propaganda. ISIS also claimed responsibility for the attack, calling Saipov a "caliphate soldier." The Argentine victims had been high school friends from Rosario, Argentina, on a reunion trip. In a statement, Argentine president Mauricio Macri said, "They were five young entrepreneurs, model citizens in Rosario society...We all must stand together in the fight against terrorism." (Sources: [CBS News](#) [62], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [22], [Washington Post](#) [23], [CNN](#) [63])

Foreign Fighters

According to the Soufan Group, an unofficial estimate of 23 Argentine individuals were reported to have gone to fight with Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq. In 2016, Argentine national security secretary Eugenio Burzacó stated that there had potentially been Argentine citizens present in Iraq and Syria who had trained with ISIS, but denied the possibility of ISIS members present in Argentina. (Sources: [Soufan Group](#) [64], [Perfil](#) [20])

Anarchist Groups

There are a few radical left-wing anarchist groups that operate in Argentina and have carried out attacks in recent years. The U.S. Department of State reported that domestic anarchist groups carried out 12 bombings in the country in 2010. The bombings targeted banks, airline offices, police facilities, and a telecommunications company, and resulted in one death. An anarchist group calling itself the "Eduardo Maria Vazquez Aguirre Anti-Prison Insurgent Cell" claimed responsibility for a November 2011 bombing at a police station in a Buenos Aires suburb that damaged the building but caused no casualties. In its claim of responsibility, the group stated that its aim had been to avenge the deaths of six individuals shot by Buenos Aires Provincial Police officers. Another group called the Nucleus of Conspirators for the Extension of Chaos claimed responsibility for a December 2011 bombing that occurred near the Argentine Ministry of Security that damaged cars and buildings but caused no casualties. Though the group threatened to carry out additional attacks, there have been no reports of its activity since. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [24], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium](#) [65], [La Nación](#) [66], [Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium](#) [67], [Ámbito Financiero](#) [68])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

1992 Israeli Embassy Bombing

On March 17, 1992, a car bomb struck the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 people and injuring 242 others.

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Among the dead were both Israeli embassy personnel and Argentine civilians, including children. The bombing also completely destroyed the embassy building and a nearby church. The Islamic Jihad Organization, a Hezbollah- and Iran-linked group, claimed responsibility for the attack, stating that it was in retaliation for the death of the five-year-old son of Hezbollah leader Abbas Moussawi in an Israeli airstrike earlier that year. Argentina and Israel have also both accused Iran of sanctioning the attack, which was planned by Hezbollah operatives in the TBA with the help of Iranian operatives in the country. Argentina has so far failed to prosecute anyone for involvement, and the investigation into the attack officially remains unresolved. (Sources: [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) [28], [Atlantic](#) [29], [Times of Israel](#) [49], [New York Times](#) [18], [La Nación](#) [50], [CNN](#) [53], [Library of Congress](#) [17], [Telegraph](#) [1], [La Nación](#) [54], [Reuters](#) [52])

1994 AMIA Bombing

On July 18, 1994, a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-packed van in front of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, AMIA) headquarters in Buenos Aires. The blast, which collapsed the building, killed 85 people and injured more than 300 and remains the deadliest terrorist attack in Argentina's history. Argentina has once again failed to prosecute anyone for involvement, though in 2006, it officially charged Hezbollah with carrying out the attack and Iran with financing it, and obtained international arrest warrants for one Lebanese individual and six Iranian individuals allegedly involved. However, the investigation officially remains unresolved, and two Argentine presidents have been accused of cover-ups related to the attack. In January 2015, prosecutor Alberto Nisman was murdered days after he claimed that he had evidence incriminating then-President Cristina Kirchner for her alleged cover-up of Iran's role. Kirchner was charged with treason in December 2017. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [Library of Congress](#) [17], [Times of Israel](#) [51], [La Nación](#) [3], [New York Times](#) [69], [Reuters](#) [70])

- **December 26, 2017:**A federal judge officially rules Nisman's death as a homicide. The judge also charges one of Nisman's former aides with involvement. Source: [BBC News](#) [71]
- **December 7, 2017:**Former Argentine President Cristina Kirchner is charged with treason for her alleged role in covering up Iran's role in the 1994 AMIA bombing. Source: [Reuters](#) [70]
- **November 6, 2017:**A police report is released declaring that Nisman's January 2015 death was a homicide. According to the findings, he was beaten and drugged before his murder, though the attackers framed his death to look like a suicide. Source: [Guardian](#) [4]
- **October 31, 2017:**U.S. permanent resident Sayfullo Saipov plows a rental truck into pedestrians and bicyclists on a bike path in New York City, killing eight people and injuring 12. Five of the deceased and at least one of the injured are Argentine citizens. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [23], [CNN](#) [63]
- **September 2017:**The Argentine Army's website is hacked by ISIS-linked individuals, who post a message stating, "We are the Islamic State. This is a threat. ISIS is in Argentina and soon you are going to know about us." Source: [Deutsche Welle](#) [21]
- **September 2016:**An Argentine citizen named César Raúl Rodríguez is sentenced to eight years in prison in Spain for allegedly being part of an al-Qaeda cell there, though he denies the accusations against him. Sources: [Perfil](#) [59], [Perfil](#) [60]
- **August 6, 2015:**The trial of Juan José Galeano, Carlos Menem, and other officials who allegedly engaged in misconduct in the initial 1994 AMIA bombing investigation begins. Sources: [La Nación](#) [72], [La Nación](#) [73], [Centro de Información Judicial](#) [74]
- **January 2015:**Initial police reports and autopsy findings claim that Nisman's death was a suicide. Source: [New Yorker](#) [75]
- **January 18, 2015:**Nisman is found shot dead in his Buenos Aires apartment with a gun next to his corpse. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [New Yorker](#) [2], [La Nación](#) [3]
- **January 14, 2015:**Nisman claims that he has had "significant evidence" incriminating Kirchner and foreign minister Héctor Timerman with attempting to cover up Iran's role in the 1994 AMIA bombing. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [New Yorker](#) [2], [La Nación](#) [3]
- **May 15, 2014:**An Argentine federal court rules that the "truth commission" with Iran is unconstitutional. Source: [Reuters](#) [76]
- **January 27, 2013:**The Argentine government of Cristina Kirchner and the Iranian government sets up a joint "truth commission" composed of international legal experts from neutral countries to investigate the 1994 AMIA bombing. Many see the move as tantamount to collusion, given that several Iranian officials are suspects in the attack and will likely be immune to prosecution from such an inquiry. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [La Nación](#) [3]
- **December 21, 2011:**A bomb detonates near the Ministry of Security headquarters in Buenos Aires, damaging cars and buildings but inflicting no casualties. An anarchist group calling itself the "Nucleus of Conspirators for the Extension of Chaos" claims responsibility. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [25]

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **November 29, 2011:** A bomb detonates at a police station in Avallaneda, a suburb of Buenos Aires, damaging the building but inflicting no casualties. An anarchist group calling itself the “Eduardo Maria Vazquez Aguirre Anti-Prison Insurgent Cell” claim responsibility, stating that the bombing aimed to avenge the deaths of six individuals shot by Argentine police officers. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [25]
- **October 2, 2009:** Carlos Menem, who was Argentina’s president at the time of the 1994 AMIA bombing, is charged along with some former senior intelligence officials for covering up possible evidence suggesting that former Syrian president Hafez al-Assad may have ordered the 1994 AMIA bombing attack. Sources: [Sydney Morning Herald](#) [77], [Telegraph](#) [1]
- **November 9, 2006:** Nisman obtains Interpol arrest warrants for one Lebanese individual and six Iranian individuals wanted in connection with the 1994 AMIA bombing. Argentina formally charges Hezbollah with carrying out the attack and Iran with financing it. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [La Nación](#) [3], [New York Times](#) [69]
- **February 2005 - August 2005:** Argentine authorities detect the entry into Argentina of 26 individuals linked to the Islamic fundamentalist movement Tablighi Jamaat, which has connections to al-Qaeda. Some are arrested and others are kept under surveillance. Source: [La Nación](#) [58]
- **February 9, 2005:** Juan José Galeano is suspended as a judge over his mishandling of the 1994 AMIA bombing investigation. Sources: [La Nación](#) [78], [Times of Israel](#) [79]
- **July 18, 2004:** Alberto Nisman is appointed to lead a new investigation into the 1994 AMIA bombing. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [La Nación](#) [3]
- **2004:** The trials that came as a result of the initial investigation into the 1994 AMIA bombing led by Juan José Galeano collapse due to his misconduct. Sources: [New York Times](#) [80], [Times of Israel](#) [79]
- **December 2003:** Federal judge Juan José Galeano, who oversaw the initial investigation into the AMIA bombing since 1994, is removed from the investigation over accusations that he paid an individual a \$400,000 bribe to falsely accuse a group of police officers of involvement in the attack. Sources: [BBC News](#) [81], [Times of Israel](#) [79]
- **August 2003:** Argentina’s Congress votes to repeal the amnesty laws protecting former officials that perpetrated human rights violations during the country’s military dictatorship. Source: [BBC News](#) [16]
- **1999:** Argentine intelligence identifies al-Qaeda operatives in the TBA. Intelligence authorities foil a plot led by Osama bin Laden and Hezbollah leader Imad Mughniyeh to launch simultaneous attacks on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires and several other cities. Source: [Library of Congress](#) [17]
- **May 31, 1996:** Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil establish a joint Trilateral Tri-Border Area Command to better control commerce and the transit of international individuals in the TBA. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26], [Library of Congress](#) [17]
- **1995:** Osama bin Laden and future 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed visit the TBA. Source: [Library of Congress](#) [17]
- **July 18, 1994:** A suicide bomber detonates an explosives-packed van in front of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina, AMIA) headquarters in Buenos Aires. The blast, which collapses the building, kills 85 people and injures more than 300. Argentina accuses Hezbollah of carrying out the attack. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [Times of Israel](#) [51]
- **March 17, 1992:** A suicide bomber detonates a truck bomb in front of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 people and injuring 242. The Hezbollah-linked Islamic Jihad Organization claims responsibility. Sources: [Atlantic](#) [29], [New York Times](#) [18], [Times of Israel](#) [49]
- **October 1983:** Following the collapse of the military dictatorship, Argentina holds free elections and returns to civilian rule. Source: [BBC News](#) [41]
- **March 25, 1976:** A military junta led by Army Commander General Jorge Videla launches a U.S.-backed coup d’état that expels President Isabel Perón from office. The military regime tortures and executes numerous political opponents. Until the end of its rule in 1983, up to 30,000 people disappear at the hands of the state. Sources: [Guardian](#) [12], [Guardian](#) [13], [New York Times](#) [45], [El Español](#) [14], [Telegraph](#) [15], [BBC News](#) [16]
- **February 28, 1975:** The Montoneros kill U.S. Consul John Egan. Source: [New York Times](#) [38]
- **February 5, 1975:** The Argentine military launches Operativo Independencia (Operation Independence) in Argentina’s Tucumán province in an attempt to wipe out “subversive elements” there. In the subsequent year, the military kidnaps, tortures, and murders hundreds of individuals—including civilians in addition to guerrillas. Source: [Página/12](#) [43], [La Nación](#) [44]
- **November 1974:** The Montoneros assassinate the police chief of Buenos Aires, one of the most heavily guarded public

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

officials, by exploding a bomb on a yacht.

Source: [CIA](#) [10]

- **July 1, 1974:**The AAA publishes lists of assassination targets.
Source: [El País](#) [42]
- **November 21, 1973:**The AAA plants a bomb under the car of an Argentine senator in an attempt to kill him in the first of hundreds of attacks.
Source: [BBC News](#) [41]
- **June 20, 1973:**Right-wing Peronists open fire on a crowd of people awaiting the return of Juan Perón from exile at the Ezeiza International Airport near Buenos Aires, killing at least 13 people and injuring approximately 380 more.
Sources: [La Nación](#) [11], [Clarín](#) [40]
- **May 1970:**The Montoneros execute former Argentine president and army general Pedro Aramburu, who sent Juan Perón into exile.
Source: [CIA](#) [10]
- **1946:**Argentine President Juan Perón helps establish escape routes, or “rat lines,” for former members of the Third Reich to escape to South America.
Argentina harbors up to 5,000 former Nazis--the most of any South American country. Sources: [History](#) [5], [History](#) [32]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Argentina has a criminal code in place to prosecute terrorism, including the 2007 Anti-Terrorism Law, which was updated in 2011. The Secretariat of Intelligence (SIDE) was Argentina’s premier intelligence agency until 2015, when then-President Cristina Kirchner dissolved it and replaced it with a new intelligence body, the Federal Intelligence Agency. Argentina’s National Gendarmerie also contributes to combating domestic terrorist activity. Argentina also has a domestic financial intelligence unit, called the Unidad de Información Financiera (UIF), which works to combat anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing (AML/CTF) activity in the country. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [82], [U.S. Department of State](#) [26], [Perfil](#) [27], [Library of Congress](#) [17])

In 2016, Argentina announced a plan to reform its legal counterterrorism framework, including its penal system, security and intelligence capabilities, and AML/CTF laws and procedures. Argentina also announced its intention to expand the authority of the UIF, and passed legislation allowing it to share information with additional law and security agencies. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26])

Before Argentina returned to civilian rule in 1983, the military junta passed a blanket amnesty law that granted protection to those who committed crimes during the military dictatorship. Though the subsequent civilian government revoked the initial amnesty law, the military quickly pressured it to pass additional amnesty laws protecting the regime’s former leaders from prosecution. Argentina’s Congress finally voted to repeal the amnesty laws in 2003, though they remained in place for two more years until the country’s Supreme Court ruled to repeal them in 2005. Several of the regime’s leaders have since been prosecuted for crimes against humanity. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [16], [Human Rights Watch](#) [83])

Argentina has been criticized for its failure to bring anyone to justice for both the 1992 Israeli embassy bombing and the 1994 AMIA bombing. (Sources: [Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) [28], [Atlantic](#) [29], [Telegraph](#) [1])

Investigation of the 1994 AMIA Bombing

Not only has Argentina failed to bring anyone to justice for the 1994 AMIA bombing, but several high-ranking Argentine officials and politicians have been accused of related cover-ups. Federal judge Juan José Galeano, who oversaw the initial investigation from 1994 to 2003, was suspended as a judge in 2005 over accusations that he paid an individual a \$400,000 bribe to falsely accuse a group of police officers of involvement in the attack. The trials that he oversaw in connection to the attack were also suspended for procedural violations. Galeano’s own trial for his misconduct began in 2015 and was ongoing as of 2018. (Sources: [La Nación](#) [84], [La Nación](#) [72], [La Nación](#) [73], [Centro de Información Judicial](#) [74], [Times of Israel](#) [79])

Following Galeano’s removal from the investigation, then-Argentine president Nestor Kirchner called the country’s failure to bring anyone to justice “a national disgrace.” In 2004, his government appointed a lawyer named Alberto Nisman to lead

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

a new investigation. In 2006, Argentina formally charged Hezbollah with carrying out the attack and Iran with financing it. Nisman also obtained international arrest warrants via Interpol for one Lebanese individual--a senior Hezbollah leader--and six Iranian individuals wanted in connection with it. They included former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and other high-ranking Iranian officials. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [La Nación](#) [3], [New York Times](#) [69], [New Yorker](#) [75])

In 2009, Carlos Menem, who had been Argentina's president at the time of the 1994 bombing, was accused along with some of his senior intelligence officials of covering up possible evidence termed the "Syrian trail." Before the bombing, Menem had revoked a promise to sell Argentine firearms to Syria because of pressure from the United States. The initial investigation had hypothesized that former Syrian president Hafez al-Assad may have ordered the attack in retaliation. However, Menem, who is of Syrian descent, allegedly ordered Galeano to cease investigations into a suspect Syrian-Argentine individual with ties to Menem's own family. Menem and his allegedly complicit intelligence officials were charged for their misconduct. Their trial, which began in 2015, was still ongoing as of 2018. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [Times of Israel](#) [79], [La Nación](#) [72], [La Nación](#) [73], [Centro de Información Judicial](#) [74])

In 2013, Cristina Kirchner, the then-president of Argentina, announced that the Argentinian and Iranian governments would set up a joint "truth commission" composed of international legal experts from neutral countries to investigate the 1994 AMIA bombing. Many saw the move as tantamount to collusion, given that several Iranian officials were suspects in the attack and would likely be immune to prosecution from such an inquiry. Though an Argentine federal court ultimately ruled the "truth commission" to be unconstitutional the following year, Nisman--the prosecutor in the ongoing AMIA bombing investigation--alleged that it had been part of a deal that Kirchner had struck with Iran in exchange for guaranteed oil supplies. In January 2015, Nisman stated that he had "significant evidence" incriminating Kirchner and foreign minister Héctor Timerman, and called for Kirchner's assets to be frozen. Less than a week later, Nisman was found shot dead in his Buenos Aires apartment. He had been due to present the evidence to the Argentine National Congress the following day. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [New York Times](#) [69], [New Yorker](#) [2], [New Yorker](#) [75], [La Nación](#) [3], [Reuters](#) [76])

Nisman's body had been found with a gun next to it, and the initial police reports and autopsy findings claimed that he had committed suicide. However, a police report released in November 2017 revealed that Nisman had in fact been beaten, drugged, and murdered, though it had been staged to look like a suicide. The following month, a federal judge officially ruled his death as a homicide and charged one of Nisman's former aides with involvement. The same month, Cristina Kirchner was also charged with treason for her alleged corruption, and is due to face trial as of 2018. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [1], [New Yorker](#) [2], [New Yorker](#) [75], [La Nación](#) [3], [Guardian](#) [4], [BBC News](#) [71], [Associated Press](#) [85])

International Counter-Extremism

Argentina is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and the regional Financial Action Task Force of Latin America. Argentina regularly cooperates with the United States on security, law enforcement, and AML/CTF matters. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26])

Argentina has issued statements condemning major acts of international terror, and has pledged its support to the U.N. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. It also participates in multilateral efforts such as the UN Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism, Organization of American States Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, and the Southern Common Market Special Forum on Terrorism. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26])

Tri-Border Area

Argentina has also specifically worked to coordinate its counterterrorism efforts with Brazil and Paraguay in the TBA. In 1996, the three nations established a joint Trilateral Tri-Border Area Command to better control commerce and the transit of international individuals. Argentina contributed members from several of its intelligence and security agencies. However, the Command has suffered from institutional corruption, inadequate funding and resources, and poor training, hindering its efforts to combat illicit activity in the TBA. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [26], [Library of Congress](#) [17])

In July 2019, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and the United States formed an alliance to combat terrorism and "illicit

Argentina: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

activity” in the region, focusing on activity in the TBA. Representatives of the so-called “three plus one” alliance intend to meet twice a year. The countries agreed to the alliance during the Western Hemisphere Counterterrorism Ministerial Plenary in Buenos Aires that month. During the conference, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo singled out Hezbollah and Iran as the leading terrorist threats to the region. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [86], [Rio Times](#) [87])

Public Opinion

According to a November 2017 *Washington Post* article, the terrorist attack that killed five Argentines in New York City the previous month “was a shock to the entire country,” given that Argentines generally feel safe from terrorism.” The article notes that the 1992 and 1994 terrorist bombings on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires “partly modified Buenos Aires life,” as many Jewish buildings reportedly increased security in an effort to prevent or mediate damage from any future bombing. Nonetheless, most buildings—even in Argentina’s major cities—have “lax controls” or none at all for detecting explosives, and “nobody on the subway or bus ever thinks that their lives could be endangered by a suicide bomber.” (Source: [Washington Post](#) [30])

Following the death of prosecutor Alberto Nisman in January 2015, a survey conducted by the firm Ipsos showed that 70 percent of Argentines believed that he was murdered, and that 57 percent of those who believed that he was murdered also believed that the government was involved. The same survey also revealed that 82 percent of Argentines considered his allegations that the government of then-President Cristina Kirchner had colluded with Iran to cover up Iran’s role in the 1994 AMIA bombing were “credible.” A majority—67 percent—of Argentines believed that it was “improbable” that those responsible for the 1994 AMIA bombing would ever be convicted. (Source: [La Tercera](#) [31])