

United Kingdom: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On November 3, 2020, the U.K. raised its terror threat level to “severe”—the second-highest level—following recent deadly attacks in Austria and France. Raising the threat level to severe indicates that the U.K. considers the possibility of a terror attack to be highly likely. The announcement follows the November 2 attack in Austria in which an ISIS sympathizer opened fire on a busy nightlife district in Vienna, which ultimately killed four. The attack occurred a day before Austria’s countrywide lockdown in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The U.K. increased their threat level ahead of their own lockdown on November 5. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [1], [Guardian](#) [2])

A public inquiry was launched on September 6, 2020 to investigate the motivation behind the March 2017 Manchester Arena suicide bombing. The inquiry, which was established on October 22, 2019, by U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel, is being held at Manchester Magistrates’ Court and is expected to last until spring 2021. Chaired by Sir John Saunders, the inquiry explores the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the attack. Accordingly, the investigation examines whether the attack could have been prevented, details of the security arrangements of the arena, emergency responses, and the radicalization of assailant Salman Abedi and his brother Hashem. The inquiry comes after Hashem Abedi was found “jointly responsible” for the attack and sentenced to 55 years in prison for the murder of 22 people and conspiracy to cause an explosion. On September 29, Patrick Gibbs QC, who represents the British Transport Police, claimed that the Abedi brothers “did not act alone” and others who provided technical and financial help, as well as training and support to the brothers are still “at large.” In October 2020, Hashem Abedi admitted to the inquiry legal team that he and his brother carried out the attack on behalf of ISIS. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [3], [BBC News](#) [4], [Sky News](#) [5], [Institute for Government](#) [6], [Independent](#) [7])

A mass stabbing attack in Reading on June 20, 2020, left three people dead and several others wounded. Among those killed was Joe Richie-Bennet, an American citizen. The incident occurred around 7 p.m. at Forbury Gardens in the town center, and police arrested Khairi Saadallah, a 25-year-old Libyan national, that evening. The following morning, the Counter Terrorism Policing South-East announced that the stabbing rampage was being investigated as a terrorist attack. On June 21, Saadallah, who was originally arrested for murder, was re-arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 which states that an arrest without a warrant can be made if the authorities reasonably suspect a person to be a terrorist. According to authorities, it is suspected that Saadallah worked alone. Saadallah was first alerted to MI5 in 2019 after authorities received information that the suspect allegedly sought to travel abroad to carry out terror acts. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [8], [Financial Times](#) [9], [CNN](#) [10], [Guardian](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [12], [UK Legislation](#) [13])

Overview

The British government and intelligence branches take extremist threats to the United Kingdom very seriously. The Security Service (MI5), Britain’s national domestic intelligence agency, rates the threat from international terrorism as “severe” and the probability of an attack as “highly likely.” As a result, former Prime Minister Theresa May, who sought to introduce tough laws against domestic Islamic extremists during her time as British home secretary, saw battling extremism as one of her “top priorities.” The British government believes that Islamic terrorism, and ISIS in particular, present the largest security threat to the United Kingdom. The government also remains concerned by the growing threat of right-wing terrorism. On November 4, 2019, Home Secretary, Priti Patel, announced that the U.K.’s terrorism threat level has been downgraded from “severe” to “substantial.” Patel claims the risk of a terrorist attack is now “likely” rather than “highly likely.” The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC)—part of MI5—makes the decision on the threat level independently of government ministers, after weighing up intelligence and known terrorist groups. A review is carried out every six months (Sources: [U.K. Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al.](#) [14], [MI5](#) [15], [Telegraph](#) [16], [Gov.uk](#) [17], [Telegraph](#) [18])

The United Kingdom is concerned about homegrown radicalization and possible terrorist attacks committed by British nationals on British soil. This was underscored by then-Prime Minister David Cameron at a September 2014 U.N. Security Council meeting. While condemning the atrocities perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Cameron noted that many of those who had been sucked into the conflict in Syria and Iraq were U.K. nationals. Cameron also reiterated that the threat to the United Kingdom from extremists, in particular al-Shabab, Boko Haram, and al-Qaeda, would endure for many years. As a result, the year 2014 proved to be unprecedented in terms of efforts to counteract extremist-related activity. According to Britain’s top counterterrorism official, “[t]he volume, range and pace of counter-terrorism activity has undergone a step-change.” (Sources: [Guardian](#) [19], [United Nations](#) [20])

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Prior to 2000, the primary terrorist threats to the United Kingdom and its interests were Irish republican and loyalist such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA). Seeking Northern Ireland's succession from the United Kingdom to become part of a united Ireland, the IRA and other republican groups conducted a concerted campaign of violence against the United Kingdom and Ireland beginning in the late 1960s. The violent period, known as the Troubles, largely ended with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. The U.K. government continues to monitor the threat of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, but Britain's chief extremist threat comes from Islamic extremism and related homegrown radicalization. This shift stems mainly from the 2005 London train bombings, also referred to as the 7/7 London bombings, which compelled British authorities to pursue a more comprehensive counterterrorism strategy. Nonetheless, the British government continues to monitor the threat of Northern Ireland-related violence. As of April 2018, the government threat level remained moderate in Great Britain and severe in Northern Ireland. (Sources: [U.K. Government Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al.](#) [14], [Gov.UK](#) [21])

Today, ISIS is specifically identified as the most significant extremist threat to the United Kingdom and its interests at home and abroad. In June 2015, an ISIS sympathizer murdered 30 British tourists in an ISIS-inspired attack in Sousse, Tunisia. In December the same year—reportedly in direct response to the U.K. decision to extend airstrikes against ISIS in Syria—a man carried out a stabbing attack against three passengers at an East London underground station. As a result of the November 2015 Paris and March 2016 Brussels terrorist attacks, the United Kingdom expanded Project Griffin in April 2016. The program is designed to train workers in crowded city centers on how to deal with terrorist attacks. The program will increase the number of workers who are trained in terror response ten-fold from 100,000 to 1 million in over the course of 12 months. (Sources: [U.K. Government Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al.](#) [14], [MI5](#) [15], [BBC News](#) [22], [BBC News](#) [23])

The United Kingdom has also taken steps to counter far-right extremism. In December 2016, Home Secretary Amber Rudd banned the neo-Nazi group National Action, officially outlawing membership and support of the group and classified the group as a terrorist organization. The classification marks the first time that membership of a far-right group has been prohibited in the United Kingdom. The government announced in February 2020 it would ban the violent, white supremacist group Sonnenkrieg Division. Other far-right extremist groups such as English Defence League continue to operate in the United Kingdom. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [24], [Independent](#) [25], [Guardian](#) [26], [BBC News](#) [27])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Radicalization

Britain's domestic intelligence agency, the Security Service (MI5), defines radicalization as "[t]he process by which people come to support terrorism and violent extremism and, in some cases, then join terrorist groups." The United Kingdom currently faces a particularly acute challenge in this respect. As of October 2016, approximately 850 British citizens have gone to fight for jihadist organizations in Iraq and Syria. In January 2016, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond disclosed that "600 British citizens had been intercepted while trying to reach Syria" since 2012, attributing the interceptions to closer cooperation with Turkish authorities. Even by the most conservative estimated figures, Britons comprise one of the largest foreign elements within ISIS ranks. As a result, about 50 people are referred to de-radicalization programs every week in the country. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [28], [Telegraph](#) [29], [Guardian](#) [19], [Telegraph](#) [30], [BBC News](#) [31], [BBC News](#) [32])

MI5 is especially concerned with the trend of U.K. nationals traveling to undergo radicalization in three key territories: Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) for terrorism training; Yemen to join al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and Somalia to fight with al-Shabab, an al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamist terrorist group. On the latter, the former head of MI5, Jonathan Evans, has stated, "It is only a matter of time before we see terrorism on our streets inspired by those who are today fighting alongside al-Shabab." (Sources: [MI5](#) [33], [Guardian](#) [34], [Financial Times](#) [35])

Head of British intelligence agency MI6 Alex Younger said in December 2016 that ISIS is "plotting ways to project violence against the UK and our allies without ever having to leave Syria." In October 2016, London's Metropolitan police revealed that U.K. security and counterterrorism services had foiled at least 10 terrorist plots since fall 2014. In the same period, there were 294 convictions for terrorist-related offences. In November 2014, then-U.K. Home Secretary Theresa May disclosed that 40 terror plots against the country had been thwarted since the 7/7 London bombings of 2005, including "a

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Mumbai style gun attack, the murder of members of the armed forces, an attempt to bring down a plane and the assassination of an ambassador.” (Sources: [Guardian](#) [36], [Guardian](#) [37], [Guardian](#) [38])

According to the *Guardian*, it was reported that in April 2020, counterterrorism officials claimed to fear a rise in terrorist recruits following a drastic decrease—around 50 percent—in referrals to the U.K.’s main anti-radicalization scheme, Prevent. Given the restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely that those who generally refer individuals with radical leanings to Prevent have not been able to meet with people and offer the support to deter radicalization. However, on December 10, 2020, the U.K. Home Office released statistics claiming that the number of suspected terrorists arrested in the United Kingdom has fallen to the lowest level in a decade, with 215 arrests made in January to October 2019—down 18 percent from the previous year. The lower numbers were in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic as restrictions on activities have generally reduced crime. According to the data, 44 percent of those arrested were white—the largest ethnic group among suspects for the third consecutive year—and over 79 percent of those suspects were either British or dual national suspects. Accordingly, the number of suspects under the age of 18 has increased, which U.K. counterterrorism officials claim refers to a “new and worrying trend of child extremists.” (Sources: [Guardian](#) [39], [Independent](#) [40])

Anjem Choudary

In February 2015, 19-year-old [Brusthom Ziamani](#) [41] was found guilty of plotting to behead a British soldier. Ziamani was inspired by Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale, who beheaded Fusilier Lee Rigby near Rigby’s Woolwich barracks in southeast London on May 22, 2013. Ziamani, like Adebolajo and Adebowale, was sentenced to 22 years in jail after being found guilty in February 2015. Ziamani would later go on to launch a terrorist attack on January 9, 2020, while incarcerated at Whitemoor maximum security prison, and have his sentence extended to a life term. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [42], [London Evening Standard](#) [43], [BBC News](#) [44])

All three men are believed to have been indoctrinated by [Anjem Choudary](#) [45], a self-styled Islamist cleric who British law enforcement believe is connected to more than 80 individuals implicated in terrorism cases in the United Kingdom. In September 2016, Choudary was convicted of supporting ISIS and sentenced to prison for five-and-a-half years. Following the sentencing of Choudary and co-defendant [Mohammed Mizanur Rahman](#) [46], Home Secretary Amber Rudd said, “The country is safer. All their evil words and dissent they’ve tried to sow throughout society is over. They’re paying the price and they’re going to jail.” Due to U.K. probationary law, Choudary was released October 19, 2018, only halfway through his sentence. British authorities imposed several restrictions on Choudary’s communications and travel. In addition, the United Nations and British government added Choudary to their respective financial sanctions lists ahead of his release. (Sources: [Independent](#) [47], [BBC News](#) [48], [Guardian](#) [49], [Evening Standard](#) [50], [BBC News](#) [51])

A lawyer by training, Choudary had evaded imprisonment for many years by walking a fine line between permitted speech under British laws and hate speech, despite continuously advocating sharia in the West. Nevertheless, the “family man,” allegedly subsidized in full by U.K. [welfare](#) [52] programs, had been on the British government and law enforcement’s radar for many years. In September 2014, then-Home Secretary [Theresa May](#) [53] proposed significantly more stringent domestic counter-extremism measures to silence Islamist preachers like Choudary. (Sources: [Independent](#) [47], [Daily Beast](#) [54], [Washington Post](#) [55], [Daily Mail](#) [52])

Choudary criticized British involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and defended the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the July 7, 2005, terrorist attacks in London and Madrid. He also organized a protest against the *Jyllands-Posten* (Danish cartoons) controversy despite being denied a permit, for which Choudary was fined 500 pounds. One placard at the event stated, “Massacre those who insult Islam.” In August 2014, some of Choudary’s students in east London were found handing out pro-ISIS literature. Choudary was arrested in September 2014 on terrorism-related charges, but was later released on bail. In August 2015, Choudary was charged for encouraging support of ISIS, contrary to Section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [56], [Daily Mail](#) [57], [Channel 4 News](#) [58], [Guardian](#) [59])

Choudary was also an active leader in al-Muhajiroun, a U.K.-based Islamist organization founded in 1983 by Choudary’s mentor, Omar Bakri Muhammad. *The Independent* reported that the group is connected to approximately half the terror attacks committed in the United Kingdom between 1995 and 2015. A counterterrorism unit of the New York Police Department (NYPD) believes that al-Muhajiroun and its numerous front organizations have as many as 1,500 followers in the United Kingdom and possibly another 1,500 abroad. Al-Muhajiroun’s front groups in the United Kingdom include Call

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to Submission, Islamic Path, London School of Sharia, the Saved Sect of Savior Sect, and the Sharia4 network. In February 2019, British media reported a revival of al-Muhajiroun thanks to the recent release of several former members from British prisons. More than 25 members of al-Muhajiroun—including Choudary—were released from prison in 2018. According to British NGO Hope Not Hate, the release of prominent al-Muhajiroun members inspired a new generation of activists to restart the group’s street proselytization. British police were reportedly working to disrupt new al-Muhajiroun plots. (Sources: [Independent](#) [60], [Guardian](#) [61], [BBC News](#) [62], [Guardian](#) [59], [Hope Not Hate](#) [63], [Independent](#) [64])

Formed by Choudary in 2010, the now-banned [Sharia4](#) [47] network has chapters outside the United Kingdom including Sharia4Belgium, Sharia4Italy, Sharia4America, Sharia4Indonesia, and Sharia4Holland. In September 2014, 46 members of Sharia4Belgium went on trial in Antwerp in Belgium’s largest Islamic extremism case to date. Only eight defendants were present in court, with the rest presumed to be in Syria. This network has also become an apparent facilitator in the flow of some of the thousands of Europeans who have entered Iraq and Syria to join ISIS. Choudary reportedly acknowledged that his followers have a habit of “popping up” in Syria. Choudary has also previously stated his intention to travel to Syria. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [55], [Guardian](#) [65], [BBC News](#) [66], [Guardian](#) [61], [Washington Post](#) [55])

Choudary’s influence abroad is also significant. ISIS foreign fighter numbers from Indonesia surged soon after he spoke at the Sharia4TheWorld rally in Indonesia in October 2014. (Source: [Washington Post](#) [55])

Mohammed Mizanur Rahman

[Mohammed Mizanur Rahman](#) [67], also known as Abu Baraa, is a British preacher and convicted ISIS supporter from Palmers Green, north London. In November 2006, Rahman was convicted of promoting racial hatred during a rally at the Danish embassy in London, during which he also called for 9/11 style attacks in Iraq and Europe. The following July, Rahman was sentenced to six years in prison for calling for British soldiers to return from Iraq in body bags. Rahman participated in the British de-radicalization program Prevent, and was released from prison in 2010. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [68], [Daily Mail](#) [69], [Crown Prosecution Service](#) [70], [Reuters](#) [71])

In May 2014, Rahman again came under police investigation following his praise of [Boko Haram](#) [72] militants after the group kidnapped more than 300 Nigerian schoolgirls. Rahman defended the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris during a January 2015 sermon, stating that by “insulting Islam...they can’t expect a different result.” Rahman declared Great Britain “the enemy of Islam,” and claimed France was carrying out “ethnic cleansing.” He defended the *Charlie Hebdo* attack as a “war.” (Source: [Crown Prosecution Service](#) [73], [Daily Mail](#) [74])

Rahman and Anjem Choudary were arrested in September 2014 for suspected membership in ISIS, and Rahman was charged that August with encouraging public support for ISIS. They were both convicted in June 2016 on charges of soliciting support for ISIS. That September, Rahman and Choudary were each sentenced to five years and six months in prison. (Sources: [CNN](#) [75], [BBC News](#) [76], [Crown Prosecution Service](#) [73], [New York Times](#) [77])

Abu Izzadeen

Born Trevor Brooks, [Abu Izzadeen](#) [78] is a former electrician who considers himself the “Director for Waltham Forest Muslims” in north London. Izzadeen has been in and out of prison since 2008, when he was convicted of inciting terrorism. He was released early in 2009, but repeatedly sent back to prison for violating his parole. In 2014, Izzadeen and two of his followers were sentenced to two years and 10 months for harassing the public as a self-styled “Muslim Patrol.” The vigilantism was part of Izzadeen’s campaign to make Waltham Britain’s first suburban borough governed under sharia. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [79], [BBC News](#) [80], [Daily Mail](#) [81], [BBC News](#) [82], [BBC News](#) [83])

Izzadeen is married with three children and, like Choudary and Rahman, relies on welfare. Choudary refers to such assistance as “the jihad-seekers allowance.” All three men are believed to be connected to Choudary’s Muslims against Crusades organization and are, therefore, no longer permitted to speak to Choudary. (Sources: [Daily Mail](#) [84], [Telegraph](#) [85])

In April 2015, the British Home Office denied Izzadeen’s request for a passport based on a belief he would likely try to join ISIS. Nonetheless, Izzadeen was arrested on November 14, 2015, aboard a Romania-bound train at the Hungarian border. After British authorities issued an arrest warrant for Izzadeen, Hungary deported him back to Great Britain. In January

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2016, British authorities sentenced him to two years in prison. (Sources: [Daily Mail](#) [86], [Guardian](#) [87], [Associated Press](#) [88], [Guardian](#) [89])

Omar Bakri Mohammad

[Omar Bakri Mohammad](#) [90] is the founder of al-Muhajiroun. He originally entered the United Kingdom in the 1980s as a political asylee from Saudi Arabia, which had expelled him for his Islamist proselytizing. In 1986, Bakri and Anjem Choudary created the British chapter of [Hizb ut-Tahrir](#) [91]. Bakri was arrested in 2005 for his connections to terrorist plots and terrorist-related organizations, which include al-Muhajiroun and its front groups. Days after his arrest, Bakri fled the country, and Britain banned him from returning because of his links to radical groups. Like Choudary, Bakri has glorified the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks and other acts of Islamist violence. While under investigation, Bakri fled to Lebanon in 2005. Lebanese authorities arrested Bakri on terrorism charges in 2010. Bakri was sentenced to life in prison in Lebanon, but was released after witnesses recanted their testimony. Bakri was arrested again in Beirut in May 2014 on terrorism-related charges. In October 2015, he was sentenced to six years of hard labor for funding an organization affiliated with the Nusra Front and building training camps in Lebanon. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [92], [New York Times](#) [93], [New York Times](#) [94], [Independent](#) [95], [Daily Mail](#) [96])

Bakri's family is still in the United Kingdom and is trying to gain permission for his return. Unlike Choudary, law enforcement was able to connect Bakri to Michael Adebolajo's conversion to Islam. Adebolajo was an accomplice in the Lee Rigby murder. Bakri has also been linked to Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the mastermind of the January 2015 Paris attacks. Abaaoud has been connected to the banned Islamist group Sharia4Belgium, for which Bakri helped transport fighters to Syria. (Sources: [Independent](#) [97], [Daily Mail](#) [98])

Abu Hamza and the Finsbury Park Mosque

Mustafa Kamel Mustafa ("[Abu Hamza al-Masri](#) [99]" or "Abu Hamza") is an Egyptian-British citizen and U.S.- and U.N.-sanctioned terrorist associated with al-Qaeda. In 1987, Abu Hamza traveled to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where he met with the spiritual leader of the Afghan Mujahideen movement, Abdullah Azzam. He then traveled to Afghanistan to work on a Saudi rebuilding project after the Afghan-Soviet war. There, he lost both hands and an eye, reportedly in a demining operation, though accounts vary. (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) [100], [Telegraph](#) [101], [BBC News](#) [102], [BBC News](#) [103], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [104])

In 1997, Abu Hamza arrived at the Finsbury Park Mosque in London. Abu Hamza associated remotely with Yemen-based extremist figures, even claiming to serve as the "legal officer" for the al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic Army of Aden terrorist group. In 1999, Scotland Yard questioned him about alleged bomb plots in Yemen. Police jailed the cleric's son Mohammed Mustafa Kamel for involvement in violence in Yemen. In 1999, Abu Hamza and several co-conspirators attempted to establish an al-Qaeda training camp in the United States, based in Bly, Oregon. In late November 1999, Abu Hamza dispatched several British-based al-Qaeda operatives to establish the camp. One of the operatives, Oussama Abdullah Kassir, brought with him a manual on the use of sarin nerve gas. (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) [100], [Telegraph](#) [101], [BBC News](#) [102], [BBC News](#) [103], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [104])

Abu Hamza's fiery speeches at Finsbury Park attracted such attendees as 9/11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui and failed shoe bomber Richard Reid. Three of the 7/7 bombers—Mohammad Sidique Khan, Shehzad Tanweer, and Germaine Lindsay—also reportedly attended Abu Hamza's sermons at Finsbury Park. The mosque became known as a "suicide factory" and "Al-Qaeda camp in the heart of London," according to Al Arabiya journalist Ben Flanagan. In February 2002, British media reported that Islamists had trained on AK-47 assault rifles at the mosque. That April, the U.S. government designated Abu Hamza as a "terrorist facilitator with a global reach." (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) [100], [Telegraph](#) [101], [BBC News](#) [102], [Guardian](#) [105], [BBC News](#) [103])

British police arrested Abu Hamza in May 2004 on 11 terror-related charges after the U.S. government requested his extradition. In 2006, he was convicted and imprisoned for seven years. The U.S. government extradited Abu Hamza in 2012. He was convicted in May 2014 of 11 terrorism-related charges. In January 2015, Abu Hamza received a life sentence in U.S. prison. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [106], [BBC News](#) [102], [CBS News](#) [107], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [104])

In 2005, the Finsbury Park Mosque reopened under the management of the Muslim Association of Britain. In July 2015,

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global financial risk-analysis database World-Check labeled the mosque a terrorism risk, though the mosque's leaders vowed to fight the label. Thompson Reuters, which owns World-Check, agreed to pay damages to the mosque in February 2017. On June 19, 2017, Darren Osborne drove a van into a crowd of worshippers outside the mosque, killing one and wounding 10 people. He was sentenced to life in prison in 2018. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [108], [Newsweek](#) [109], [Guardian](#) [110], [Al Arabiya](#) [111], [International Business Times](#) [112], [BBC News](#) [113], [Associated Press](#) [114], [Independent](#) [115], [Business Insider](#) [116])

Hizb ut-Tahrir

[Hizb ut-Tahrir](#) [117] (HT), meaning "Party of Liberation," is an international Islamist movement seeking to unite Muslims under one Islamic caliphate. HT considers itself a non-violent political party dedicated to peacefully converting Muslim nations to Islamist political systems. HT praises the concept of jihad but insists that it does not use "material power to defend itself or as a weapon...." (Sources: [Center for Social Cohesion](#) [118], [Hizb ut-Tahrir](#) [119], [Hizb ut-Tahrir America](#) [120])

HT's British chapter (HT Britain) is considered the nerve center of the global movement. HT's operations in the United Kingdom are led by HT Britain's chief executive, Dr. [Abdul Wahid](#) [121]. HT's spokesperson, Taji Mustafa, engages the media on behalf of the movement, and has spoken at HT conferences in other countries like Australia. Because HT is allowed to operate freely in Britain, HT Britain recruits members by hosting public conferences and panels, and by engaging with the British media on a regular basis. HT Britain also maintains a website, where its positions on foreign and domestic policy are made available through articles and video. (Sources: [Nixon Center](#) [122], [Hope Not Hate](#) [123])

On both Twitter and Facebook, HT Britain has amassed more than 11,000 followers. Local HT Britain chapters organize their own fundraising to support outreach efforts, such as printing and handing out leaflets in public spaces. HT Britain has also benefited from government funding, including grants to run early education programs. The British government ended this funding program after media reports confirmed that HT members were using the funding to indoctrinate students with controversial HT ideology, including the belief that tolerance and integration are un-Islamic. (Sources: [Facebook](#) [124], [Twitter](#) [125], [American Foreign Policy Council](#) [126], [Telegraph](#) [127], [Telegraph](#) [128])

Individuals known to have been in contact with HT Britain have gone on to join more violent Islamist groups. For example, notorious ISIS executioner Mohammed Emwazi (a.k.a. Jihadi John) was in contact with the group while studying at British universities before he joined ISIS. In March 2019, Oxford University suspended student and HT member Danial Farooq after he attempted to recruit others while claiming "jihad has been made one of the most important duties" and he does not "see it as aggressive." (Sources: [Daily Mail](#) [129], [Daily Mail](#) [130])

Former British prime ministers Tony Blair and David Cameron called for banning HT in 2009 and 2011, respectively. However, David Anderson, then the U.K. government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, submitted a report to Parliament in 2011 recommending against banning HT as it had not advocated violence. The British Home Office has also ruled that HT does not advocate violence and that Britain cannot ban the group for having unpopular ideas. The Home Office did concede, however, that HT is anti-Semitic, homophobic, and anti-Western. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [131], [The Week](#) [132], [Guardian](#) [133])

Abu Qatada

Born Omar Othman, [Abu Qatada](#) [134] is a U.S.- and U.N.-designated Jordanian cleric of Palestinian descent accused of being an al-Qaeda propagandist who has spread radicalism and influenced jihadists such as the September 11 hijackers. The United Nations at one point considered Qatada to be Osama bin Laden's "spiritual ambassador in Europe." British security services have accused Qatada of granting religious legitimacy to people who want to "further the aims of extreme Islamism and to engage in terrorist attacks." Qatada also stands accused of organizing military training trips to Afghanistan, funding the Iraq- and Syria-based terror group Ansar al-Islam, and encouraging Ansar al-Islam to strengthen its ties with al-Qaeda. A Spanish judge once described him as bin Laden's "right-hand man in Europe." (Sources: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#) [135], [U.N. Security Council](#) [136], [Jadaliyya](#) [137], [BBC News](#) [138], [New York Times](#) [139], [New York Times](#) [140])

Abu Qatada is also accused of being involved in the 2000 "millennium conspiracy" in which terrorists planned bombings at

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Western and Israeli targets during millennium celebrations in the United Kingdom. British authorities arrested Qatada Abu Qatada is also believed to have inspired several members of al-Qaeda, including Mohammad Atta, a “ringleader” behind the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. after Abu Qatada videos were found in Atta’s apartment in Hamburg, Germany. (Source: [Telegraph](#) [141], [U.N. Security Council](#) [136])

Abu Qatada sought asylum in Great Britain in 1993. In 1999, a Jordanian court convicted Qatada in absentia on terrorism charges and sentenced him to life in prison. British authorities arrested him several times and sought his deportation. Beginning in 2005, Qatada began an eight-year fight against deportation. The cleric argued Jordanian authorities had tortured him and would employ evidence collected through torture. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [142], [European Court of Human Rights](#) [143])

In 2005, Jordan and the United Kingdom signed an agreement guaranteeing Qatada a fair trial and Jordan’s compliance with human-rights laws in order to allow for Qatada’s deportation. After an eight-year battle in British courts to avoid deportation, Qatada returned to Jordan in 2013. In 2014, two Jordanian courts acquitted Abu Qatada of both the 1998 bombing and 2000 terror plot. (Sources: [European Court of Human Rights](#) [143], [Jordan Times](#) [144], [Telegraph](#) [145])

Kabir Ahmed

Kabir Ahmed was a British suicide bomber who blew himself up in a November 2014 attack on an Iraqi police station that killed seven police officers. Prior to his death, Ahmed—also known as Abu Sammyh Al Brittani—was the first person to be convicted of terror charges in the United Kingdom. After Ahmed handed out pamphlets depicting a mannequin—representing gay people—hanging from a tree, a court convicted him in February 2012 of “distributing threatening written material to stir up hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation.” Ahmed said he was doing his “duty as a Muslim, to inform people of God’s word and to give the message on what God says about homosexuality.” (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [146], [BBC News](#) [147], [BBC News](#) [148])

Ahmed told *Newsweek* that he had been radicalized in British prisons. He expressed his admiration for the late Muslim Brotherhood ideologue Sayyid Qutb, deceased al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki, Osama Bin Laden, and Ayman Zawahiri. Ahmed claimed he “simply walked” across the Turkish border in 2013 and joined ISIS. Other reports say he first joined Jund al-Sham in Syria before joining ISIS. In early 2014, Ahmed told BBC News that he was on a “waiting list” to become a suicide bomber. During the *Newsweek* interview, Ahmed referred to the United Kingdom as “Dar Al Kuffar, the land of the Infidels,” and said he never wanted to return. (Sources: [Newsweek](#) [149], [BBC News](#) [147])

The Troubles

“The Troubles” were a three-decade period of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland that began in the late 1960s. Catholic “republicans” wanted to expel British forces and unite Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. On the other side, Protestant pro-British “unionists” or “loyalists” sought to maintain Northern Ireland’s position within the United Kingdom. Several militant groups were active during this time, but the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was the most well-known. Various iterations of the IRA have been responsible for nationalistic violence in the United Kingdom since the late 19th century. The original IRA, a.k.a. the “old IRA” or “Official IRA” (OIRA), fought in Ireland’s war of independence between 1919 and 1921. In 1969, the Provisional IRA paramilitary group—commonly referred to as just the IRA or PIRA—broke away from OIRA. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [150], [NBC News](#) [151], [BBC News](#) [152])

The IRA carried out multiple bombings during the Troubles targeting British civilians, politicians, and military in opposition to British rule over Northern Ireland. More than 1,800 people died in IRA attacks. On July 1, 1972, the IRA detonated 22 bombs in Belfast, Northern Ireland, killing nine and wounding 130 in what is known as Bloody Friday. Two bombs in London public parks killed 11 British soldiers and wounded 50, mostly civilians, on July 20, 1982. On October 21, 1984, an IRA bombing of the Brighton hotel in a plot to kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher instead killed five people and wounded 34. A bomb at the Royal Marine barracks in Deal, Kent, killed 11 Royal Marines on September 22, 1989. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [151], [BBC News](#) [150], [BBC News](#) [153], [BBC News](#) [154], [BBC News](#) [155])

The loyalist Ulster Defense Association (UDA) was the largest paramilitary group during the Troubles. At one point the group included 30,000 people. It was responsible for killing about 100 people. Operating under the name the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), the group claimed deadly attacks such as a 1992 shooting at a Belfast bookstore that left five

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people dead. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was another loyalist paramilitary group. The UVF was responsible for killing 500 people in bombings and other attacks. The British army and Northern Ireland's police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, also fought against the republican groups. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [151], [BBC News](#) [156])

The IRA and loyalist groups both employed systems to distribute propaganda to the public. The groups reportedly used code words with police and media in order to verify their identities when they would call in with statements, warnings, or claims of violence. According to media and police, the code words helped distinguish legitimate claims from false ones. The groups would also use pseudonyms that became closely associated with the groups. Loyalist groups like the UDA would sign their statements "Captain Black," and the IRA would use the name "P O'Neill." The IRA maintained a publicity bureau in Dublin, from which it released press statements signed by the fictitious O'Neill, who began signing IRA statements claiming and justifying violent attacks in 1970. Journalists and researchers have speculated that O'Neill was actually a committee of IRA military leaders. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [157], [Irish Times](#) [158], [CAIN](#) [159], [Baltimore Sun](#) [160])

In 1920, the United Kingdom established a local parliament in Northern Ireland, commonly referred to as Stormont. In March 1972, four days after an IRA car bomb killed six and wounded 100 others in Belfast, the British government suspended the Stormont government and imposed direct rule over the territory. In July 1972, the IRA began a bombing campaign that made 1972 the bloodiest year of the Troubles. On May 29, the OIRA declared a ceasefire. The British government and the IRA entered secret negotiations later that June, leading the IRA to declare a ceasefire on June 26. The talks soon after broke down. On July 21, the IRA planted almost 23 bombs in and around Belfast, 22 of which exploded, killing nine and wounding 130 in what became known as Bloody Friday. (Sources: [CAIN](#) [161], [CAIN](#) [162], [CAIN](#) [163], [Guardian](#) [164], [BBC History](#) [165])

On November 15, 1985, the British government and Ireland signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which gave Ireland a consultative role in the governance of Northern Ireland. The agreement marked the first time the British government acknowledged that it would allow a united Ireland if the people voted for one. Following the November 8, 1987, IRA bombing of a veterans' memorial service in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, known as the Remembrance Day Bombing, Thatcher called the bombing the "last straw" violation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Nonetheless, the agreement remained in effect. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [166], [BBC News](#) [167], [CAIN](#) [168], [New York Times](#) [169], [New York Times](#) [170], [RTÉ](#) [171], [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) [172], [Irish News](#) [173])

In March 1993, after double IRA bombings killed two children in England, some 20,000 people rallied for peace in Dublin. Observers at the time pointed to the rally as a demonstration of the IRA's lack of support in Ireland. By 1998, the splinter group Real IRA (RIRA) had reportedly swayed republican loyalties in the republic away from the IRA and its political party, Sinn Féin. (Sources: [Chicago Tribune](#) [174], [New York Times](#) [175], [Irish Times](#) [176])

Founded in 1905, Sinn Féin ("We Ourselves") is a left-wing Irish political party active in both Northern Ireland and Ireland. Sinn Féin is dedicated to creating a united Irish republic that encompasses both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin acted as the political wing of the IRA during the Troubles. A February 2005 British government statement called Sinn Féin and the IRA "inextricably linked" and noted "obvious implications at leadership level." (Sources: [10 Downing Street](#) [177], [BBC](#) [178], [Sinn Féin](#) [179], [Sinn Féin](#) [180], [New York Times](#) [181])

Gerry Adams led Sinn Féin from 1983 until 2018. Adams has denied that he is a member of the IRA while refusing to "disassociate" himself from the group. He consistently refused to condemn the IRA's violence during the Troubles, but he eventually helped broker the Good Friday Agreement. In 2011, Adams won a seat in Ireland's parliament. Irish media reported in December 2017 the discovery of files possibly linking Adams to a failed May 1987 IRA plot to blow up a police station in Armagh, Northern Ireland. Mary Lou McDonald succeeded Adams in February 2018. According to *Irish Times* political editor Pat Leahy, Sinn Féin's goal is more focused on Ireland than Northern Ireland so it can gain political power in order to promote unification. (Sources: [NPR](#) [182], [The Journal](#) [183], [BBC News](#) [184], [Irish News](#) [185])

On April 10, 1998, the British government, Republic of Ireland, and warring factions signed the Belfast Agreement, a.k.a. the Good Friday Agreement, which called for a Northern Ireland Assembly, the creation of a British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Governmental Conference. Also under the agreement, Ireland would drop its claims to Northern Ireland, and British authorities would release conflict-related prisoners. Coinciding with the 30th anniversary of Bloody Friday in July 2002, the IRA issued an official apology for all the deaths of non-combatants it caused during the conflict. Sporadic violence continues to occur, but the conflict has largely ended. IRA splinter groups such as the New IRA, the Real IRA, and

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Óglaigh na hÉireann (“Soldiers of Ireland”) have sought to disrupt the calm. In the years following the Good Friday Agreement, loyalist paramilitaries continued to target Catholic civilians and plant pipe bombs around Northern Ireland. In June 1999, for example, loyalist paramilitaries planted a series of pipe bombs around the territory, killing a Protestant woman married to a Catholic man. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [151], [BBC News](#) [186], [Christian Science Monitor](#) [187], [Gov.UK](#) [188], [Reuters](#) [189], [Reuters](#) [190], [Washington Post](#) [191], [Irish Times](#) [192], [CAIN](#) [193], [CAIN](#) [194])

In 2015, a British intelligence report found that the IRA was no longer actively recruiting in Ireland or Northern Ireland, but its leadership structure remained in place. According to the report, the IRA was distributing campaign materials on behalf of Sinn Féin. Other violent republican groups continue to operate in the United Kingdom. In July 2015, the IRA splinter group Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) held a military parade in Belfast despite the Good Friday Agreement. In its 2015 Annual Report on the United Kingdom’s counterterrorism strategy, released in July 2016, the U.K. Home Office reported 16 national security attacks in Northern Ireland in 2015. The British government continues to monitor the threat of North Ireland-related violence. As of April 2018, the government threat level remained moderate in Great Britain and severe in Northern Ireland. (Sources: [The Journal](#) [195], [Belfast Telegraph](#) [196], [Herald](#) [197], [Gov.UK](#) [21], [Gov.UK](#) [198])

Maintaining the Good Friday Agreement faces other challenges in both the United Kingdom and Ireland. The agreement created a power-sharing assembly to govern Northern Ireland. In March 2017, Sinn Féin withdrew from government power-sharing talks in the Northern Ireland Assembly, leaving Northern Ireland without a devolved executive for more than a year. Devolution is the process of government decentralization by which authority is distributed from the U.K. parliament to assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales, and parliament in Scotland. Observers believe the discord could potentially enflame republican tensions. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [199], [BBC News](#) [186], [Independent](#) [200], [BBC News](#) [201])

Further, Britain’s decision to exit the European Union (the so-called “Brexit”) has opened the possibility of a physical border between Northern Ireland and Ireland, which remains in the EU. According to Ireland’s minister of state for culture, Joe McHugh, Brexit threatens to close and harden the now-open border between Ireland and Northern Ireland, which could encourage violence and rally republicans who want the pathways between Ireland and Northern Ireland to remain fluid. In March 2018, Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar also warned that hardening the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland could reignite violence, calling Brexit a threat to the Good Friday Agreement that could “drive a wedge” between Ireland and the United Kingdom. As of April 2018, negotiations were continuing on terms of the British withdrawal. According to Irish Ambassador to the U.K. Adrian O’Neill, the European Union and United Kingdom are in agreement that there will be no hard border on the Irish isle. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [202], [Guardian](#) [203], [Guardian](#) [204], [Belfast Telegraph](#) [205])

In July 2018, six days of rioting erupted in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, culminating in rioters throwing 74 petrol bombs and two improvised explosive devices at police and passing vehicles on July 13. Pro-republican protesters reportedly objected to plans to hold a parade in Londonderry marking July Twelfth, the annual Protestant commemoration of the victory of the Protestant William of Orange over the Catholic King James II in 1690’s Battle of the Boyne. The Northern Ireland Police Service blamed the violence on the New IRA and other republican groups opposed to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Also on July 13, an explosive device were thrown at the Belfast homes of former Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams and Bobby Storey, Sinn Féin’s former Northern Ireland chair. There are no injuries in either attack. The rioting was reportedly the worst in Londonderry in years. Sinn Féin, the Irish government, and the U.K. government condemn the violence. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [206], [RTÉ](#) [207], [Deutsche Welle](#) [208], [BBC News](#) [209], [Twitter](#) [210], [Independent](#) [211])

The New IRA is made up of Irish dissidents who do not accept the Good Friday Agreement. Authorities refer to the group as the New IRA to differentiate it from the main group active during the Troubles, but the group calls itself only the IRA. Police suspected the New IRA of responsibility for four parcel bombs sent to multiple addresses in London and Glasgow between March 5 and March 6, 2019. There were no casualties reported. A claim of responsibility sent to Belfast-based *Irish News* was signed just the IRA. The claim reportedly used a verified code word used by the extremists to verify authenticity to the media. Police suspected the New IRA of responsibility for the bombs and noted similarities to past parcel bombs sent by Irish dissidents. Nevertheless, authorities continued to investigate all possibilities. The New IRA also claimed responsibility for a January 2019 car bomb in Londonderry that resulted in no casualties. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [212], [Reuters](#) [213])

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Far-Right Extremism

Between April 2017 and March 2018, the U.K. government noted an increase of 36 percent of the number of people referred to the government's counter-extremism program for far-right activities. The United Kingdom has taken steps to counter far-right extremism. In December 2016, Home Secretary Amber Rudd banned the neo-Nazi group National Action, officially outlawing membership and support of the group. National Action, which has held demonstrations in British cities bearing banners saying "Hitler was right," is now classified as a terrorist organization. The classification marks the first time that membership of a far-right group has been prohibited in the United Kingdom. Rudd declared, "National Action is a racist, antisemitic and homophobic organization which stirs up hatred, glorifies violence and promotes a vile ideology...It has absolutely no place in a Britain that works for everyone." (Sources: [Gov.UK](#) [214], [CNN](#) [215], [Guardian](#) [24], [Independent](#) [25])

Despite the group's proscription, National Action members have reportedly continued to meet under different group names to avoid conflicting with the ban. In July 2017, whistleblower Robbie Mullen informed authorities of plans to kill Labour Party parliamentarian Rosie Cooper. During the June 2018 trial of National Action leader Christopher Lythgoe and five other members, Mullen described preparation for a so-called "white jihad." National Action member Jack Renshaw pled guilty to buying a knife to kill Cooper but denied membership in National Action. The following month, Lythgoe received an eight-year prison sentence for membership in a banned group. (Sources: [Sky News](#) [216], [BBC News](#) [217], [BBC News](#) [218])

In February 2020, the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD) became the second British far-right group to be banned. SKD is a British branch of the violent, white nationalist group Atomwaffen Division (AWD) in the United States. SKD was created in 2018. Members have described it as "atomwaffen with less guns." In June 2019, SKD members Michal Szewczuk and Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski were imprisoned for encouraging an attack on "race traitor" Prince Harry for marrying a woman of mixed race. Both SKD and AWD are inspired by neo-Nazi James Mason and his book *Siege*, which calls for the creation of independent terror cells to bring about a violent race war. In July 2020, the United Kingdom also banned Feuerkrieg Division (FKD), an Estonia-based European offshoot of AWD created in approximately 2018. According to the United Kingdom's Counter Terrorism Policing, FKD specifically targeted young people between the ages of 13 and 25 through online propaganda advocating accelerationism and white supremacy. Membership in FKD, SKD, or National Action carries a prison sentence of 10 years. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [27], [BBC News](#) [219], [Guardian](#) [26], [ProPublica](#) [220], [Gov.UK](#) [221], [Counter Terrorism Policing](#) [222])

Britain First is a far-right, nationalist party formed by members of the British National Party in 2011. The group views itself as a "patriotic political movement" but has no representation in the British government. A video on Britain First's website shows members at a so-called training camp in North Wales learning combat techniques. In a self-described "invasion" in May 2014, Britain First sent members to Whitechapel's East London Mosque with army-issued Bibles and Christian pamphlets. The group has also formed so-called "Christian patrols" to hand out anti-Islam pamphlets to Muslims in London, Luton, and other cities. Britain First has promised to be the first "professional, patriotic, nationalist campaigning organization" and promised to "get our country back." Fourteen churches and Christian groups representing every Christian denomination in the country issued a joint condemnation of Britain First as "extremist" and accused the group of "hi-jacking the name of Jesus Christ to justify hatred and spread fear." In April 2016, members of Britain First carrying signs declaring "No more mosques" protested outside a mosque in Whitechapel, London. The demonstration ended in violent confrontation with counter-protesters, which Britain First described as "aggressive Muslims assembled who promptly attacked our activists, stealing expensive camera equipment, and inflicting violence on our activists." (Sources: [International Business Times](#) [223], [Daily Mail](#) [224], [Huffington Post UK](#) [225])

On June 16, 2016, Member of Parliament Jo Cox was murdered by an assailant who reportedly shouted "Britain First" before the attack. Other witnesses have disputed the claim and Britain First has denied any connection to the attack. In November 2016, Member of Parliament Louise Haigh called for the British government to proscribe Britain First as a terrorist organization. (Sources: [National Post](#) [226], [MSN](#) [227])

The English Defence League (EDL) emerged in Luton in 2009 to take a stand against radical Islam in Britain, according to its leaders. The EDL believes that British society is under attack by Muslim extremists. British media has routinely referred to the EDL as a far-right group, which has "aggressive rallies" at Luton's Central Mosque and violently clashed with anti-fascist protesters. In 2011, EDL members joined vigilante patrols in southeast London and clashed with police. Matthew

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Collins of the British NGO Hope Not Hate told British media in 2013 that the EDL had become increasingly fascist in its protests and went from being concerned about extremism, to them radicalising themselves.” A 2013 British media poll after the Lee Rigby murder found that 61 percent believed that the EDL made terror attacks more likely. In October 2013, the EDL’s founder, Tommy Robinson, quit the group citing concerns of far-right extremism. (Sources: [International Business Times](#) [228], [Birmingham Mail](#) [229], [Channel 4 News](#) [230], [BBC News](#) [231], [Daily Mail](#) [232], [Daily Mail](#) [233])

Anti-Semitism

In December 2018, then-Prime Minister Theresa May called on all British citizens to commit to fighting anti-Semitism in 2019. Between January and June 2018, the Community Security Trust (CST), the primary Jewish communal organization in the United Kingdom, recorded 727 anti-Semitic incidents, representing the second-highest number of anti-Semitic incidents in the country on record for the six-month period. Recorded incidents included physical attacks on victims as young as 11, vandalism of synagogues, and anti-Semitic abuse of Jewish members of parliament. CST leaders reported that the figures represented the continuation of a growing trend over the past two years. According to the CST, “this sustained high level of antisemitic incidents suggests a longer-term phenomenon in which people with antisemitic attitudes appear to be more confident to express their views, while incident victims and reporters may be more motivated to report the antisemitism they experience or encounter.” (Sources: [Jewish News](#) [234], [Independent](#) [235], [Community Security Trust](#) [236])

Overall, CST recorded 1,652 anti-Semitic incidents in 2018, representing a 16 percent increase over 2017. The 2018 number represented the highest number of recorded incidents on the U.K. Jewish community since CST began keeping records in 1984. The numbers also marked the third consecutive year with a record-high number of incidents. CST recorded 1,420 anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 and 1,375 incidents in 2016. Of the incidents reported in 2017, CST recorded 145 assaults, a 34 percent increase from the 108 recorded in 2016. Between April 2016 and October 2017, CST recorded at least 100 anti-Semitic acts per month. (Sources: [Times of Israel](#) [237], [Community Security Trust](#) [238], [Community Security Trust](#) [236], [Community Security Trust](#) [239])

Foreign Fighters

As of October 2016, approximately 850 British citizens have traveled to the Middle East to become foreign fighters in the Syrian conflict or with ISIS. British courts have convicted more than 70 people for attempting to leave the country. The United Kingdom faces a threat from returning foreign fighters. According to the BBC, approximately half of the country’s foreign fighters have returned. British Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation David Anderson warned in January 2016 that lax security and porous borders at British beaches, marinas, and small ports could provide easy access to the country for returning foreign fighters. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [32], [Soufan Group](#) [240], [Daily Mail](#) [241])

In a January 1, 2016, interview with the *Times*, British Security Minister Ben Wallace warned that returning British foreign fighters will pose a greater threat to the United Kingdom as ISIS loses territory in the Middle East. Wallace also said there is a threat of returning fighters using chemical weapons in the United Kingdom. ISIS has used such weapons in Iraq and Syria, and Wallace said British intelligence chiefs believe returning fighters aspire to use them in domestic attacks as ISIS wants to carry out “mass casualty attacks” in the United Kingdom. (Sources: [Times](#) [242], [Guardian](#) [243], [Jerusalem Post](#) [244])

With the collapse of ISIS’s caliphate, British foreign fighters have attempted to return to the United Kingdom. Approximately 400 British jihadists have reportedly returned to the United Kingdom from Syria and Iraq as of March 2019, though only approximately 40 returnees have been prosecuted. The U.K. government has also sought to void the citizenship of foreign fighters where applicable. British law permits the government to revoke citizenship if the target maintains citizenship in another country. In February 2019, the British Home Office revoked the citizenship of Shamima Begum, the British high school student who became a jihadi bride in 2015 with two other girls from her school. The U.K. government has also revoked the citizenship of British ISIS brides Reema and Zara Iqbal, two sisters who traveled to Syria in 2013. The sisters reportedly married into a terror cell linked to the murder of Western hostages. The government pointed to Begum’s mother’s dual Bangladeshi citizenship, while the Iqbal sisters reportedly have Pakistani citizenship as well. As of March 2019, at least a dozen British ISIS brides and more than 20 of their children were housed in Syrian refugee camps. (Sources: [Express](#) [245], [Times](#) [246], [ITV](#) [247], [BBC News](#) [248], [Times](#) [249])

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On October 1, 2019, U.S. security forces demanded that the U.K. take back all jihadis and their families that are entitled to British passports. The move to repatriate their families has been backed by the U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab. Intelligence services and security chiefs back Raab, but insist that the U.K. keep an eye on former ISIS fighters once back in the U.K. However, Home Secretary Priti Patel opposes the idea and, instead, proposed a special system of tribunals and courts to handle the returning jihadis. This debate has transpired as Shamima Begum, an ISIS bride and a former British national, has pled to the U.K. to be allowed to return home. According to figures reported by the U.K. Home Office, there are at least 900 British citizens who have fled to join ISIS. (Source: [Express](#) [250])

At least 100 British citizens have also gone to the Middle East to fight against ISIS since the fall of 2014. Many fight alongside the Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG), such as Ryan Lock of West Sussex. Lock died in a YPG battle in Raqqa, Syria, on December 21, 2016. He was the third British volunteer to die fighting with the YPG. A YPG statement said that Lock "joined actively in our offensive against the terror threat that Isis caused upon Rojava, Kurdistan." The U.K. Foreign office has warned against all travel to Syria, but the government has not made a blanket restriction on volunteer fighters. According to a U.K. Home Office statement, each case is examined individually. The Home Office has also recommended that British citizens contribute to registered charities rather than become foreign volunteers. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [251], [Guardian](#) [252], [Telegraph](#) [253], [International Business Times](#) [254], [BBC News](#) [255])

Abu-Zakariya al-Britani

On February 19, 2017, British citizen Abu-Zakariya al-Britani, a.k.a. Ronald Fiddler and Jamal Udeen al-Harith, blew himself up in a car bomb at an Iraqi military base on behalf of ISIS. A convert to Islam, Fiddler traveled to Pakistan in October 2001, allegedly for a religious retreat. He claimed that the Taliban captured him at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border as he was trying to make his way back to Europe and accused him of being a British spy. The Northern Alliance liberated him in early 2002, but turned him over to the U.S. military. Fiddler was incarcerated at the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, from 2002 to 2004. Fiddler returned to the United Kingdom in 2004 after the British government lobbied for his release. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [256], [Reuters](#) [257], [BBC News](#) [258], [Daily Mail](#) [259])

Upon his return, Fiddler successfully sued the British government, alleging that British agents participated in torturing him at Guantanamo. Fiddler received a compensatory payment of £1 million. Alex Carlile, Britain's former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, told the Associated Press that Fiddler was "a potentially dangerous terrorist," but the British government settled to avoid releasing sensitive information during legal disclosure proceedings. British authorities reportedly lost track of Fiddler, and he reportedly crossed into Syria from Turkey in 2014 to join ISIS. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [256], [Reuters](#) [257], [BBC News](#) [258], [Daily Mail](#) [259])

Jihadi John and The Beatles

[Mohammed Emwazi](#) [260], a.k.a. "Jihadi John," was a Kuwaiti-born British man who joined ISIS in Syria in 2013 and became known as one of the group's most brutal executioners. He belonged to a four-member ISIS unit known as "The Beatles," which included British foreign fighters [Alexanda Amon Kotey](#) [261], Aine Davis, and El Shafee Elsheikh. The four were responsible for holding captive and beheading two dozen hostages, including American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and American aid worker Peter Kassig. Emwazi was featured in multiple ISIS videos in which he beheaded captives including Foley, Sotloff, Kassig, British aid workers David Haines and Alan Henning, and Japanese journalist Kenji Goto. In the videos, Emwazi threatened U.S. President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and other world leaders. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [262], [Telegraph](#) [263], [Reuters](#) [264], [CNN](#) [265])

Hostages nicknamed the four members of the group "Ringo," "George," "Paul," and "Jihadi John" because of their British accents. According to freed ISIS hostages, The Beatles were among the more brutal of ISIS's guards. Didier Francois—a French journalist held prisoner by The Beatles for 10 months—told CNN that The Beatles would regularly stage fake executions after telling captives they were to be beheaded. Escaped captives also reported that The Beatles would also waterboard them and use other torture methods. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [266], [CNN](#) [267])

Emwazi was targeted and killed in a November 2015 U.S. drone strike in Raqqa, Syria. Kotey and Elsheikh reportedly remain at large in Syria, while Davis was arrested in Turkey in November 2015. (Sources: [CNN](#) [265], [U.S. Department of State](#) [268], [Daily Mail](#) [269], [Washington Post](#) [266])

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Junaid Hussain and Sally Jones

[Junaid Hussain](#) [270] was a British computer hacker and member of ISIS, who allegedly developed ISIS's cyber division and taught hackers how to break into bank accounts. Hussein reportedly radicalized and directly encouraged [Elton Simpson](#) [271] to carry out a May 3, 2015, attack with [Nadir Soofi](#) [272] on a Draw Muhammad contest in Garland, Texas. Almost immediately after the attack, Hussain praised Simpson and Soofi on Twitter and called for death to "those That Insult the Prophet." In April 2016, the U.S. Justice Department revealed that Hussain had communicated with Usaamah Abdullah Rahim ahead of the 26-year-old's June 2015 attack on police officers and FBI agents, during which he was killed. According to U.S. court documents, Hussain had encouraged Rahim to kill political activist and critic of Islam Pamela Gellar, who had organized the Garland contest. Instead, Rahim chose to attack the police. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [273], [Daily Mirror](#) [274], [CNN](#) [275], [CNN](#) [276], [Washington Post](#) [277])

Hussain grew up in England and, at age 18, was part of a British hacker group called Team Poison. The group famously hacked former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's e-mail account and released personal information online. The group also attacked Scotland Yard, NATO, and the British National Party, and worked with the hacker group Anonymous to target banks. Hussain left the United Kingdom to join ISIS in Syria in July 2013. Later that year, he married [Sally Jones](#) [278], a British ISIS propagandist and recruiter designated by the United Nations. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [279], [Vice News](#) [280])

Jones has used Twitter to issue terrorist threats against U.S. veterans and the United Kingdom, including calling upon Muslim women to launch terrorist attacks in London, Glasgow, and Wales during Ramadan. Jones converted to Islam in May 2013 and soon met Hussain. She moved to Syria later that year with her 10-year-old son and married Hussain. According to leaked ISIS documents, Jones began overseeing the training of all European female recruits in August 2015. (Sources: [Independent](#) [281], [Vice News](#) [280], [Daily Mail](#) [282], [Telegraph](#) [283])

In 2014, British banks accused Hussain of masterminding a cyber-campaign to steal money from the bank accounts of celebrities and the wealthy in order to fund ISIS. Hussain reportedly led ISIS's CyberCaliphate hacker group, which hacked the U.S. Central Command's social media accounts in January 2015. The following month, the CyberCaliphate hacked various U.S. and international media companies and threatened First Lady Michelle Obama and the Obama children over Twitter. (Sources: [Daily Mirror](#) [274], [Wall Street Journal](#) [284], [Reuters](#) [285], [Guardian](#) [273], [CNN](#) [286])

Hussain died in a targeted U.S. drone strike in Syria in August 2015, in what U.S. officials called a serious blow to ISIS. (Source: [BBC News](#) [287])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Parsons Green Attack

On September 15, 2017, an improvised explosive device partially exploded at the London underground Parsons Green station during morning rush hour, wounding 30. ISIS claimed an affiliated unit carried out the attack. The British government subsequently raised the terrorism threat level from "severe" to the highest level of "critical," meaning an imminent attack is expected. Police lowered the threat level back to "severe" two days later. The attack was England's fifth terror attack—and the fourth claimed by ISIS—that year. (Sources: [Fox News](#) [288], [BBC News](#) [289], [Associated Press](#) [290], [Guardian](#) [291], [Reuters](#) [292])

Police believe the bomb exploded prematurely and otherwise could have caused widespread fatalities. The bomb was reportedly packed with knives and screws. On September 16, police arrested 18-year-old Ahmad Hassan and later charged him with attempted murder for planting the bomb. Hassan is an Iraqi refugee who passed through London's foster system. Metropolitan police charged that Hassan used triacetone triperoxide (TATP), an explosive known as "the mother of Satan" that had been used the 7/7 Bombings as well as ISIS-claimed attacks in Manchester and Barcelona, [Spain](#) [293], earlier in 2017. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [294], [Newsweek](#) [295], [Independent](#) [296], [Independent](#) [297])

London Bridge Attack

On June 3, 2017, Youssef Zaghba, Khuram Butt, and Rachid Redouane ran over several people in a van on London Bridge.

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The men, wearing fake bomb vests, then abandoned the van and attacked people in a nearby market with knives. The attackers killed eight people and wounded 48 before police shot and killed them. ISIS claimed responsibility, calling the perpetrators a “unit of Islamic State fighters.” (Sources: [Guardian](#) [298], [BBC News](#) [299], [BBC News](#) [300], [Associated Press](#) [301], [Reuters](#) [302], [Wall Street Journal](#) [303], [Independent](#) [304])

Butt appeared in a 2016 British documentary called “The Jihadis Next Door.” The U.K.-based Quilliam Foundation reportedly alerted British authorities about Butt in July 2016 after he allegedly attempted to attack a Quilliam employee at an Eid al-Fitr event. The Ramadhan Foundation also reported Butt in 2013 for a similar incident. Butt was a follower of British radical preacher Anjem Choudary, and belonged to Choudary’s al-Mouhajiroun network possibly as far back as 2013. Butt was also reportedly influenced by U.S. extremist preacher [Ahmad Musa Jibril](#) [305]. Redouane was a Moroccan-Libyan pastry chef living in Ireland who was unknown to authorities before the attack. Zaghba was an Italian national of Moroccan decent who had reportedly tried to travel to Syria in 2016. (Sources: [Sun](#) [306], [BBC News](#) [307], [Telegraph](#) [308], [Guardian](#) [309], [Independent](#) [304])

Iran

Due to close ties with the United States, the United Kingdom is also a target of Iran and Iranian-sponsored extremist groups. In fact, Iranian officials have explicitly talked of targeting the United Kingdom as a means of deterrence against American military strikes. In 2008, a senior Iranian official said, “the most appropriate means of deterrence that Iran has, in addition to a retaliatory operation in the [Gulf] region, is to take action against London.”

As the world’s leading sponsor of terrorism, Iran is the chief supporter of [Hezbollah](#) [310] as well as the Islamist insurgencies in Iraq and southern Afghanistan. Through the Quds Force, the arm of the [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\)](#) [311] primarily responsible for liaising with foreign terrorist organizations, Iran has “committed terrorism by proxy through Hezbollah, Hamas, the Taliban, militias in Iraq, and a plethora of other terrorist groups,” according to United Against Nuclear Iran. In addition, there are several British military ships stationed in the Persian Gulf alongside U.S. naval vessels likely possible targets of Iranian or Iranian sponsored extremist proxies. (Sources: [MEMRI](#) [312], [U.S. Department of State](#) [313], [United Against Nuclear Iran](#) [314], [NPR](#) [315], [BBC News](#) [316], [Telegraph](#) [317])

Murder of Lee Rigby

On May 22, 2013, Nigerian Islamists Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale murdered 25-year-old off-duty British Army Fusilier Lee Rigby near the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, South London. After running Rigby over with a car and hacking him to death with a cleaver, the attackers dragged Rigby’s body into the street and attempted to decapitate him. The attackers encouraged onlookers to take pictures on their cellphones. While waiting for police to arrive at the scene, Adebolajo stated, “The only reason we have killed this man today is because Muslims are dying daily by British soldiers ... By Allah, we swear by the almighty Allah we will never stop fighting you until you leave us alone.” (Sources: [Guardian](#) [318], [Telegraph](#) [319])

Adebolajo and Adebowale were convicted in December 2013 of murdering Rigby. In February 2014, the attack’s mastermind, Adebolajo, received a life sentence. Adebowale was sentenced to a minimum of 45 years in prison. In December 2014, the pair appealed their sentences. Adebolajo argued that he “killed a soldier in the course of fighting a war,” which the court dismissed as “hopelessly misconceived” and upheld the sentences. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [318], [BBC News](#) [320], [Guardian](#) [321])

7/7 Bombings

On the morning of July 7, 2005, three bombs exploded on underground trains in central London within 50 seconds of each other. A final explosion occurred on a double-decker bus near King’s Cross international train station. All four attacks were carried out by Islamic extremist suicide bombers. Five days later, more than a dozen unexploded bombs were discovered in a car in Luton, north of London. In all, 52 people were killed, and more than 600 injured. In April 2012, it was discovered that the suicide bombers were guided by al-Qaeda operative and dual British-Pakistani citizen Rashid Rauf. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [322], [Independent](#) [323], [CNN](#) [324])

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Rauf died in an October 2012 U.S. drone strike in Pakistan. British intelligence reportedly provided U.S. authorities with intelligence on Rauf's location. Rauf also allegedly planned the failed 2006 plot to blow up U.S. airliners leaving London's Heathrow Airport. (Sources: [CNN](#) [325], [Long War Journal](#) [326], [Birmingham Mail](#) [327])

Manchester Arena Suicide Bombing

On May 22, 2017, a suicide bomber killed at least 22 people and wounded another 59 at the Manchester Arena where U.S. pop singer Ariana Grande had been performing. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. Police identified the attacker as 22-year-old Manchester-born Salman Abedi. British police arrested at least 16 suspected accomplices in the week following the attack. The British government also temporarily raised the terror threat level warning from "severe" to "critical," indicating an imminent attack. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [328], [Associated Press](#) [329], [BBC News](#) [330], [Reuters](#) [328], [Associated Press](#) [331], [BBC News](#) [332], [New York Times](#) [333], [Wall Street Journal](#) [334], [Telegraph](#) [335])

Shortly after the attack, Salman Abedi's brother, Hashem, was arrested in Libya on multiple murder charges. On July 17, 2019, Abedi was extradited from Libya to the U.K. to face charges over his alleged assistance in the attack. On March 4, 2020, forensic analysts discovered the fingerprints Hashem's fingerprints on a tin can that was linked to the Manchester Arena bomb. Despite the evidence, Abedi denied allegations that he assisted his brother in carrying out the attack. On March 12, Abedi dismissed his legal team and claimed he would no longer take further part in his murder trial. On March 17, Abedi was found guilty by a jury of 22 counts of murder, attempted murder, and conspiring to cause an explosion. Hashem Abedi continued to refuse to appear in court despite receiving over £350,000 in legal aid. On August 20, the Old Bailey sentenced Abedi to 55 years in prison for his participation in the murder of 22 people. Abedi, who refused to leave his cell at the Old Bailey for the sentencing, will need to spend at least 55 years in prison before even being considered for parole. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [336], [Guardian](#) [337], [BBC News](#) [338], [BBC News](#) [339], [The Sun](#) [340], [BBC News](#) [4])

On March 17, 2020, the Central Criminal Court in London (Old Bailey) found Hashem guilty of being an accomplice in the murder of 22 people. According to reports, the Old Bailey heard the pair worked together to source materials used in the suicide blast. Abedi was originally due to be sentenced on April 23 and 24 at the Old Bailey, however, on April 8, the court announced the date would be changed due to travel restrictions in place to contain the spread of the coronavirus. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [341], [BBC News](#) [342])

On May 13, 2020, The Manchester and Salford Magistrates' Court charged Yahya Werfalli with fraud in relation to chemical purchases made by Hashem Abedi. Werfalli allegedly allowed Abedi to use his banking details to purchase bomb-making chemicals in 2017. Werfalli will appear before the Manchester magistrates again on May 27. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [343], [Daily Mail](#) [344])

On September 6, 2020, a public inquiry was launched to investigate the motivation behind the March 2017 Manchester Arena attack. The inquiry, which was established on October 22, 2019, by U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel, is being held at Manchester Magistrates' Court and is expected to last until spring 2021. Chaired by Sir John Saunders, the inquiry explores the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the attack. Accordingly, the investigation examines whether the attack could have been prevented, details of the security arrangements of the arena, emergency responses, and the radicalization of assailant Salman Abedi. The inquiry comes after Hashem Abedi was found "jointly responsible" for the attack and was sentenced to 55 years in prison for the murder of 22 people. At the launch of the inquiry, Salman Abedi's parents and elder brother have refused to provide information regarding the trajectory of Abedi's radicalization. On September 29, Patrick Gibbs QC, who represents the British Transport Police, claimed that Abedi and his brother "did not act alone" and others who provided technical and financial help, as well as training and support to the brothers are still "at large." While meeting with a public inquiry legal team on October 22, 2020, Hashem Abedi admitted that he played a "full and knowing part" in planning the Manchester attack. Abedi also admitted he and his brother carried out the attack on behalf of ISIS. The admission became public that December. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [3], [BBC News](#) [4], [National](#) [345], [Sky News](#) [5], [Institute for Government](#) [6], [Independent](#) [7], [Manchester Evening News](#) [346])

Whitemoor Prison Attack

On January 9, 2020, Brusthom Ziamani and [Baz Hockton](#) [347], both Muslim converts, launched an attack using makeshift weapons and wearing fake suicide belts at the Whitemoor maximum security prison in Cambridgeshire. The pair lured

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prison officer Neil Trundle into a storage space and stabbed him, at one point shouting, “Allahu Akbar.” Two other prison staff were also injured while trying to subdue the inmates. Authorities discovered extremist material belonging to the attackers, including a letter in which Ziamani expressed “expectation of immediate martyrdom” and “strong belief in violent jihad.” Ziamani, already serving time for preparing an act of terrorism in August 2014, had obtained jihadist propaganda while in prison and used the material to radicalize fellow inmates. Ziamani reportedly groomed Hockton, who converted to Islam while serving time for violent offenses prior to his arrival at Whitemoor. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [348], [Times](#) [349])

Later that year on October 7, 2020, Ziamani and Hockton were found guilty of attempted murder. The following day, both were sentenced to life in prison, extending their previous custodial terms. The January 2020 attack was the first terrorist attack to occur inside a British jail and prompted the U.K.’s justice secretary to launch an internal review of the management of terrorist prisoners. At least one other Whitemoor inmate has been implicated in a terrorist incident—Usman Khan who killed two people during the November 2019 knife attack near London Bridge. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [44], [Independent](#) [350])

Republican and Loyalist Terrorism

Historically, the chief threats to the United Kingdom and its interests were Irish republican groups such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), whose actions also often prompted terrorist reprisals from loyalist groups like the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and its offshoots. In the early 1970s, the IRA shifted its focus of attack from the U.K. province of Northern Ireland to the British mainland, targeting dozens of English cities and towns in a sustained campaign of violence lasting until the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Notable attacks include the November 8, 1987, Remembrance Day bombing, during which an IRA bomb exploded at a veterans’ memorial service in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, killing 12 and wounding 63. On October 12, 1984, an IRA bomb exploded at the Grand Hotel in Brighton in an attempt to kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during a political conference. Thatcher was unharmed but five people were killed. On December 17, 1983, an IRA car bomb exploded outside the Harrod’s department store in London, killing six and wounding 90. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [150], [CAIN](#) [168], [BBC News](#) [154], [BBC News](#) [351], [RTÉ](#) [352], [BBC News](#) [353])

The three-decade period of sectarian violence known as “the Troubles” resulted in the deaths of more than 1,800 people in IRA attacks. Since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, IRA splinter groups have continued sporadic attacks. Loyalist paramilitaries have also continued to target Catholic civilians and plant pipe bombs around Northern Ireland. In June 1999, for example, loyalist paramilitaries planted a series of pipe bombs around the territory, killing a Protestant woman married to a Catholic man. The British government recorded 16 such attacks in Northern Ireland in 2015. In May 2016, the government raised the threat level from Northern Ireland-related violence to Great Britain to “substantial.” (Sources: [BBC News](#) [150], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [354], [Reuters](#) [355], [U.K. Home Office](#) [198], [CAIN](#) [194])

- **August 22, 2020:**The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) charges three men under the Terrorism Act in Northern Ireland as part of a police investigation into the New IRA. The three men were charged with “membership of a proscribed organization, directing terrorism and two separate charges of preparatory acts for terrorism.” One of the suspects was also charged with “conspiracy to possess explosives with intent to endanger life and conspiracy to possess ammunition with intent to endanger life.” Source: [Guardian](#) [356]
- **August 18, 2020:**Woolwich Crown Court sentences Sneha Chowdhury, the sister of Mohiussunnath Chowdhury—who previously planned terrorist attacks in London hotspots and was sentenced to life imprisonment on July 9—to a two year suspended sentence for not informing police about her brother’s imminent plots. According to prosecutors, Chowdhury acted out of misguided loyalty as there was “no evidence” that she shared his extremist views. Sources: [Sky News](#) [357], [BBC News](#) [358]
- **June 20, 2020:**A mass stabbing attack in Reading leaves three people dead and several others wounded. The incident occurs around 7 p.m. at Forbury Gardens in the town center, and police arrest Khairi Saadallah, a 25-year-old Libyan national, that evening. The following morning, the Counter Terrorism Policing South-East announce that the stabbing rampage is being investigated as a terrorist attack. According to authorities, it is suspected that Saadallah, who was previously alerted to MI5 in 2019, worked alone. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [8], [Financial Times](#) [9], [CNN](#) [10]
- **June 13, 2020:**Hundreds of far-right activists demonstrate in Hyde Park, London to counter an anti-racism protest that had been scheduled but was canceled due to security concerns. The right-wing protesters gather around a statue of former Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the Cenotaph war memorial, which are boarded up. Aggressive altercations ensue between the far-right activists and the police officers. A number of journalists are also reported to have been attacked by right-wing activists. According to sources, more than

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- 100 people are arrested. Sources: [Euro News](#) [359], [New York Times](#) [360]
- **May 6, 2020:** Filip Golon Bednarczyk, a far-right extremist, appears at the Central Criminal Court in London via video-link. Bednarczyk pleads guilty to terror offenses and having explosives. According to reports, Bednarczyk was arrested on December 11, 2019, by counter-terrorism detectives after they discovered that the suspect had collected bomb manuals and bomb components. The suspect also pleaded guilty to seven charges of possessing a document likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. A sentencing date has yet to be scheduled. Source: [Independent](#) [361]
 - **April 22, 2020:** Spanish police arrest three men in a counterterrorism operation in Almeria. According to reports, one of those arrested was British national Abdel-Majed Abdel Bary—it is suspected that Bary is the notorious ISIS executioner, Jihadi John. It is unreported what the connection is between the two other suspects and Bary. Source: [Express](#) [362]
 - **March 20, 2020:** Fatah Mohammed Abdullah, a Newcastle resident, admits to inciting people to commit terror attacks in Germany. According to the Liverpool crown court, Abdullah bought explosive equipment and sought to help Omar Babek and Ahmed Hussein. According to court records, from April 9, 2018 to December 11, 2018, the suspect allegedly encouraged others to commit terror attacks in the country, including driving a car into a crowd, attacking people with a meat cleaver, and setting off bombs. He is set to be evaluated by a psychiatrist before his sentencing in May. Source: [Guardian](#) [363]
 - **March 9, 2020:** Two police forces refer members of their staff to a government program that steers vulnerable individuals away from committing acts of terrorism. Referred staff were considered vulnerable to radicalization due to the influence of a partner or close family member. The referrals come after a Metropolitan police officer was arrested for being a suspected member of National Action, a banned group linked to right-wing terrorism. According to a report issued by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), "insider" threats are generally overlooked by the majority of forces. Sources: [Guardian](#) [364], [BBC News](#) [365]
 - **March 5, 2020:** Counterterrorism officers arrest a police constable in north London who is suspected of being a member of the outlawed neo-Nazi group, National Action. He is released on police bail until late March, pending further inquiries. Sources: [BBC News](#) [365], [Guardian](#) [364]
 - **February 20, 2020:** An attacker enters a mosque in Regent's Park and stabs a muezzin—someone who leads the call of prayer. The victim sustains injuries to the back of his neck following the attack. Although the incident is not declared as terror-related, the Metropolitan Police's SO15 counter-terror unit is looking into it. Source: [Express](#) [366]
 - **February 10, 2020:** Woolwich Crown Court charges Mohiussunnath Chowdhury with planning terrorist attacks at London Tourist hotspots. The charges come a year after he was cleared of attacking police with a sword outside Buckingham Palace. Chowdhury had revealed his plot to undercover police. Chowdhury's sister, Sneha, was also convicted for one count of failing to disclose information about acts of terrorism. Jurors find Chowdhury guilty of engaging in conduct in preparation of terrorist acts, collecting information likely to be useful to someone preparing an act of terrorism, and disseminating terrorist publications. The prosecution claimed Chowdhury was inspired by al-Qaeda and Khalid Masood—the assailant who killed six people in an attack on Westminster Bridge in March 2017. On July 9, the Woolwich Crown Court sentences Chowdhury to life in prison, with a minimum term of at least 25 years. Sources: [BBC News](#) [367], [Crown Prosecution Service](#) [368]
 - **February 3, 2020:** Hashem Abedi—the younger brother of Salman Abedi—appears at London's Old Bailey where he faces charges including 22 counts of murder, attempted murder, and conspiring to cause an explosion. On March 12, Abedi dismissed his legal team and refused to further participate in the trial. Greater Manchester Police accused Abedi of possibly being the senior figure in the plot and encouraging Salman in the days before the attack. On March 17, Abedi was found "jointly responsible" for the attack and convicted on all charges. On August 20, the Old Bailey sentences Abedi to 55 years in prison for the murder of 22 people. Abedi, who refused to leave his cell at the Old Bailey for the sentencing, will need to spend at least 55 years in prison before even being considered for parole. Sources: [BBC News](#) [4], [Crown Prosecution Service](#) [369], [BBC News](#) [370], [Greater Manchester Police](#) [371]
 - **February 2, 2020 - February 3, 2020:** On February 2, a man with a fake bomb strapped to his body indiscriminately stabs and injures three people in Streatham, London. Police shoot the attacker dead at the scene. The assailant, Sudesh Amman, had just been released from prison a week prior, having served half of a three year and four month sentence. Amman was convicted in December of 2018 for 13 separate offenses including publishing graphic terrorist videos online and stockpiling instructions on bomb making and knife attacks. Amman was released under strict conditions, including a curfew and continued surveillance by police officers as part of a "proactive counter-terrorism surveillance operation." On February 3, ISIS released a statement through Telegram claiming the attacker was a fighter for the jihadist group. Following news of the attack, the British government introduced emergency legislation that will prevent people convicted of terrorism from being released after serving half their sentences. The emergency legislation is a response to both the attack on February 2, as well as a terror attack on November 29, 2019. In both cases, the attackers were recently freed terror offenders. Sources: [Time](#)

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- [372], [CNN](#) [373], [Soufan Center](#) [374], [BBC News](#) [375], [Washington Post](#) [376], [France 24](#) [377]
- **January 9, 2020:**Inmates Brusthom Ziamani and Baz Hockton launch an attack using makeshift blades and while wearing fake suicide belts at the Whitemoor maximum security prison in Cambridgeshire. The attackers target prison guard Neil Trundle, injuring him and two other prison staff. Ziamani and Hockton, both Muslim converts, are found to be in possession of extremist content, including ISIS propaganda. It is the first terrorist attack inside a British jail. On October 8, 2002, Ziamani and Hockton are sentenced to life imprisonment for the attack. Hockton receives an additional 10 years in prison, to be served concurrently, for wounding another prisoner in April 2019. Ziamani must serve a minimum of 21 years and Hockton a minimum of 23 years of their sentences before being considered for parole. Sources: [BBC News](#) [44], [Independent](#) [350]
 - **January 7, 2020:**Manchester Crown Court sentences a 17-year-old neo-Nazi to six years in prison after a jury found him guilty of preparation of terrorist acts between October 2017 and March 2018. The Durham teen was arrested in March 2019 after police found journals detailing attacks as well as firearm manuals that he uploaded on a neo-Nazi site. He also engaged in prolonged searches of race-hate material and “lone actor” attacks. Sources: [BBC News](#) [378], [Huffington Post](#) [379]
 - **November 29, 2019:**A man armed with a knife indiscriminately stabs bystanders on London Bridge. At least two people are killed and three others are wounded in the attack. City of London police shoot and kill the attacker, a man identified as Usman Khan, and discover he was wearing a hoax suicide vest. Khan was a former prisoner convicted of a terrorism offense in 2012 when he pleaded guilty to plotting to bomb the London Stock Exchange. Police declare the incident a terrorist attack. On November 30, ISIS releases a statement claiming the assailant had carried out the attack in its name and had done so “in response to calls to target coalition countries.” Sources: [Guardian](#) [380], [Independent](#) [381], [Washington Post](#) [382], [BBC News](#) [383], [The Times](#) [384], [New York Times](#) [385]
 - **November 14, 2019 - November 17, 2019:**U.K. authorities arrest Mamun Rashid, a 26-year-old man, at Heathrow Airport in London after his arrival on a flight from Turkey on suspicion of terrorism offenses. On November 17, the Metropolitan police’s counterterrorism command charges Rashid with the preparation of terrorist acts. Turkey’s Interior Ministry said it had deported eight ISIS suspects—seven Germans and Rashid. The deportation of Rashid, 26, was part of a controversial push to repatriate the foreign ISIS suspects held in Turkish jails. Sources: [BBC News](#) [386], [Guardian](#) [387]
 - **October 24, 2019:**The Central Criminal Court of England and Wales finds Aidan James guilty of a terrorism offense in a retrial. James, 28, was found guilty of training in weapons with the banned Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Iraq, but he was cleared of a second charge of attending a place of terror training with the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) in Syria. It is the first time a Briton has been put on trial for traveling to Syria to oppose ISIS. Source: [Guardian](#) [388]
 - **October 14, 2019:**British authorities sentence Salih Khater to life in prison for committing a terrorist attack. During the August 2018 attack, Khater ploughed his car into cyclists outside the Houses of Parliament. Police found no evidence of any links to terrorist groups, or any extremist material at Khater’s home or on his electronic devices. However, prosecutors argued that the crash was “premeditated and deliberate,” and that the fact Khater drove towards police officers outside parliament indicated it was a terror attack. Source: [Independent](#) [389]
 - **October 11, 2019:**A sword-wielding man in his 40s enters a shopping mall in Manchester and lunges at bystanders. The attack injures five people, three of which are hospitalized. Police forces apprehend the man within five minutes of the attack and charge him with terrorism offenses. Police have not yet ascertained the motivation for the assault, which they believe “appeared random.” Sources: [Washington Post](#) [390], [Guardian](#) [391], [Financial Times](#) [392]
 - **October 10, 2019:**The U.S. military takes custody of two high-value ISIS detainees accused of involvement in executing American hostages. Military officials have moved the two British men—Alexanda Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh—to Iraq. Source: [Washington Post](#) [393]
 - **September 10, 2019:**Irish nationalist youth throw dozens of petrol bombs at police as officers defuse an explosive device near homes in the Northern Ireland city of Londonderry. While no officers were injured, two of the attackers sustained burns. The police attribute the attack to the New IRA. Source: [Reuters](#) [394]
 - **September 9, 2019:**Police in Northern Ireland recover a command wire IED in the city of Derry following the weekend discovery of a mortar nearby. The police assess that the device was to be used by the New IRA against police patrol in Creggan. Source: [Defense Post](#) [395]
 - **August 25, 2019:**Two men were arrested under the Terrorism Act and later released by detectives investigating the attempted murder of police officers in County Armagh and County Fermanagh. The first incident happened in the Tullygally Road area of Craigavon on Friday 26 July. The attack in County Fermanagh near Wattlebridge saw officers and soldiers lured to the scene with a hoax device. No one was injured in the attack. Security officials said they believed the New IRA was behind the “deliberate attempt” to kill police officers. The attack at Wattlebridge was the fifth attempt to murder police officers so far this year. Source: [BBC News](#) [396]
 - **August 19, 2019:**A device detonates in Northern Ireland near the border with Ireland in what police said was an attempt to kill officers looking into an earlier incident.

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- No group immediately claims responsibility for the blast which hit near a busy road in County Fermanagh, close to the spot where officers were investigating a suspicious device discovered a few days earlier. Source: [Reuters](#) [397]
- **July 6, 2019:** Detectives from Ireland's Police Service of Northern Ireland's (PSNI) terrorism investigation unit (TIU) arrest a 31-year-old woman when officers carried out a search operation at an address in Glarryford. A 33-year-old man was later arrested after police stopped a car on the Westlink in Belfast in a follow-up operation. The search at the property uncovered a range of suspected munitions and a quantity of ammunition. The pair are taken to PSNI's serious crime suite where they will be questioned under terrorism legislation. Source: [Guardian](#) [398]
 - **July 3, 2019:** Two Islamist terror suspects are arrested in Luton after police stop their car. Counterterrorism police arrested the pair on "suspicion of terrorism offences." Although the pair were stopped on the public highway, it is not thought they were on their way to conduct a terrorist attack and it will be some time before any emails or photographs from mobile phones or other devices can be analyzed. Source: [Telegraph](#) [399]
 - **June 2, 2019:** A bomb found under a serving police officer's car at a Belfast golf club is being treated as attempted murder by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The club is located in east Belfast, near the PSNI headquarters. The head of the Terrorism Investigation Unit, said the PSNI believed the attack was carried out by the New IRA. The bomb was examined by Ammunition Technical Officers and they declared it to be a "viable improvised explosive device." Source: [BBC News](#) [400]
 - **May 9, 2019:** Police in Northern Ireland arrest four people in connection with the April 2019 murder of journalist Lyra McKee. The four, aged 15, 18, 38 and 51, are arrested in Londonderry under terrorism legislation and have been taken to Belfast for questioning. McKee was shot while reporting on violent disturbances in Londonderry. The New IRA claimed responsibility for her death but also accused police of provoking the riot which preceded it. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [401]
 - **April 19, 2019:** A 29-year-old female journalist is killed during riots in Derry, Northern Ireland. Violence broke out following police searches in Derry's Creggan district, with petrol bombs thrown at police Land Rovers. Police are treating the killing as a "terrorist incident" and launch a murder inquiry. The New IR is suspected of carrying out the attack. Source: [Politico](#) [402]
 - **April 17, 2019:** The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) report that officers recover "two viable pipe bomb-type devices" in Rasharkin. The same night, two other pipe bombs explode outside a house in Armagh, 50 miles to the south. No casualties or injuries are reported. Irish security forces are not investigating the attacks as linked and are uncertain of the motive behind the attacks, but pipe bombs are a common method of attack used by terrorists, paramilitaries, vigilantes and criminals. Source: [Independent](#) [403]
 - **March 13, 2019:** Oxford Crown Court arrest a 16-year-old boy who allegedly plotted a terror attack in a bid to trigger a race war in Britain. The boy was allegedly caught with a "shopping list" of items to make petrol bombs when he was arrested in the Durham area. He is charged with one count of engaging in preparation of an act of terrorism. The charge states that his planning included reading extreme right-wing ideological texts, searching for synagogues and trying to secure ammonium nitrate—an explosive component. Source: [Independent](#) [404]
 - **March 5, 2019 - March 6, 2019:** On March 5, multiple envelopes containing small amounts of explosives are found at Heathrow Airport, London City Airport, and the Waterloo rail station in London. The envelopes contain small improvised explosive devices that authorities believe are powerful enough only to start small fires and not cause serious injury. The first package catches fire as authorities open it. Two of the packages have Republic of Ireland stamps and a return address of Dublin. Authorities do not identify a motive but believe the packages are linked. Irish police and Scotland Yard's Counter Terrorism Command investigate. A fourth package is delivered to the University of Glasgow in Scotland on March 6. There are no injuries from any of the packages. Police suspect the Real IRA of sending the packages. The Belfast-based Irish News receives a claim of responsibility signed simply the IRA. The claim uses a verified code word to establish credibility. The group also claims it sent five parcel bombs, though only four are recovered. Sources: [BBC News](#) [405], [BBC News](#) [406], [Telegraph](#) [407], [BBC News](#) [212]
 - **January 19, 2019:** A car bomb explodes outside a courthouse in Londonderry, Northern Ireland. There are no casualties. A group calling itself the IRA claims responsibility 10 days later. Police focus their investigation on the New IRA. Source: [Reuters](#) [213]
 - **December 31, 2018:** A 25-year-old man with a kitchen knife attacks a couple in their 50s at a train station in Manchester, wounding three, including one of the police officers who tackled the attacker. The assailant is arrested under the Mental Health Act and authorities do not immediately release his identity. The government labels the attack an act of terrorism. Police report that the attacker acted alone. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [408], [Reuters](#) [409]
 - **December 4, 2018:** A gunman shoots and kills a man sitting in his car waiting for his son outside a Belfast primary school. The gunman flees the scene on foot. Police suspect the gunman has ties to dissident republicans. Sources: [BBC News](#) [410], [BBC News](#) [411]
 - **August 14, 2018:** A man drives his car into bicyclists and pedestrians during morning rush hour in London before crashing into security barriers outside the Houses of Parliament, wounding three. Police label the incident an act of terrorism and arrest the driver. Sources: [BBC News](#) [412], [Washington Post](#) [413]

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- **July 2018:** On July 8, rioting erupts in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, days ahead of a planned parade for July Twelfth, the annual Protestant commemoration of a 17th century military victory over the Catholic King James II. The riots continue for several days, culminating on July 13 when rioters throw 74 petrol bombs and two improvised explosive devices at police and passing vehicles. Police report minor injuries to officers and two separate attempts to kill officers during the six days of rioting. The Northern Ireland Police Service blames the violence on the New IRA and other republican groups. That night, explosive devices are thrown at the Belfast homes of former Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams and Bobby Storey, Sinn Féin's former Northern Ireland chair. There are no injuries in either attack. Sources: [NBC News](#) [206], [RTÉ](#) [207], [Guardian](#) [414], [Deutsche Welle](#) [208], [BBC News](#) [209], [Independent](#) [211]
- **September 15, 2017:** An improvised explosive device partially explodes at the Parsons Green station of the London underground during morning rush hour, wounding 30. ISIS claims an affiliated unit carried out the attack. The British government raises the terrorism threat level from severe to the highest level of critical, meaning an imminent attack is expected. Police lower the threat level back to severe two days later. Sources: [Fox News](#) [288], [BBC News](#) [289], [Associated Press](#) [290], [Guardian](#) [291], [Reuters](#) [292]
- **June 19, 2017:** Darren Osborne drives a van into a crowd of worshippers outside the Finsbury Park Mosque and the Muslim Welfare House in London, killing one man and wounding 10 other people. Osborne reportedly shouts that he wants to “kill all Muslims,” according to witnesses. Police arrest Osborne within minutes. The British government labels the attack as terrorism. Prime Minister Theresa May orders a security review of British mosques in response. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [114], [Business Insider](#) [116], [Agence France-Presse](#) [415], [Independent](#) [416]
- **June 3, 2017:** Youssef Zaghba, Khuram Butt, and Rachid Redouane run over several people in a van on London Bridge. The men, wearing fake bomb vests, then abandon the van and attack people in a nearby market with knives. The attackers kill eight people and wound 48 before police shoot and kill them. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Guardian](#) [298], [BBC News](#) [299], [BBC News](#) [300], [Associated Press](#) [301], [Reuters](#) [302], [Wall Street Journal](#) [303]
- **May 22, 2017:** A suicide bomber kills at least 22 people and wounds 59 at the Manchester Arena where U.S. pop singer Ariana Grande had been performing. ISIS claims responsibility. Police identify the attacker as 22-year-old Manchester-born Salman Abedi. British police arrest at least 16 suspected accomplices in the week following the attack. The British government also temporarily raises the terror threat level warning from “severe” to “critical,” indicating an imminent attack. Sources: [Reuters](#) [328], [Associated Press](#) [329], [BBC News](#) [330], [Reuters](#) [328], [Associated Press](#) [331], [BBC News](#) [332], [New York Times](#) [333], [Wall Street Journal](#) [334], [Telegraph](#) [335]
- **April 12, 2017:** Safaa Boular, a 16-year-old radicalized by the 2015 Paris terror attacks, is arrested in London after revealing to undercover officers that she planned to carry out a terror attack near the British Parliament as well as travel to Syria to carry out terror attacks. On April 27, her mother and sister—Mina Dich and Rizlaine Boular—along with their friend, Khawla Barghouthi, are arrested for attempting to carry out Safaa's knife plot. The women used coded conversation about Alice in Wonderland to evade authorities. On June 15, 2018, Rizlaine and her mother plead guilty to the preparation of terrorist acts. The central criminal court sentences Rizlaine to life in prison, and sentences her mother to six years and nine months imprisonment for helping her daughter. On June 22, 2018, Barghouthi is sentenced to 28 months in prison for not alerting authorities of a terrorist plot. On August 3, 2018, Safaa is sentenced to life in prison. Safaa is the youngest woman to be convicted of plotting a terror attack in the U.K. Sources: [BBC News](#) [417], [BBC News](#) [418], [BBC News](#) [419]
- **March 22, 2017:** British-born Islamic convert Khalid Masood rams a crowd of pedestrians on London's Westminster Bridge, killing three people. Masood then crashes his car into the gates of the Palace of Westminster. He stabs a police officer outside of the nearby Houses of Parliament before he is shot and killed by police. The officer later dies from his wounds. At least 50 people are wounded. ISIS claims responsibility the following day, but British authorities say a week later that they have not discovered any links between Masood and ISIS or other extremist groups. Sources: [Independent](#) [420], [BBC News](#) [421], [CNN](#) [422], [Associated Press](#) [423], [Associated Press](#) [424], [BBC News](#) [425]
- **December 12, 2016:** Police forces raid a suspected bomb-making facility in the East Midlands region and arrest six people in Derby, Burton upon Trent, and London. Two of the suspects are charged with terror offenses related to their suspected involvement in a plot to make bombs out of cell phones. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [146], [Daily Mail](#) [426], [Independent](#) [427]
- **August 2016:** Four men are arrested in an undercover sting operation after authorities discover a partly built pipe bomb, an imitation gun, and a meat cleaver in one of the suspect's car. The suspects, Naweed Ali, Khobaib Hussain, Mohibur Rahman, and Tahir Aziz, called themselves the “Three Musketeers” and plotted to carry out an ISIS-inspired attack in Britain after plotting the attack over an encrypted messaging platform. The following year on August 2, 2017, a London court convicts the suspects with terrorism offenses for plotting a mass casualty attack. On August 3, 2017, the suspects are all sentenced to life in prison. Sources: [Reuters](#) [428], [BBC News](#) [429]
- **June 16, 2016:** Member of Parliament Jo Cox is shot and killed in Birstall by an assailant who reportedly shouted “Britain First” before the attack.

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- White supremacist and neo-Nazi Thomas Mair is found guilty of the murder in November 2016. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [430], [Guardian](#) [431], [MSN](#) [227]
- **March 29, 2016:** Tanveer Ahmed is charged with the murder of Asad Shah, an Ahmadi Muslim shopkeeper from Glasgow. Ahmed, a Sunni Muslim of Pakistani origin, “claimed he committed the act because Asad had blasphemed against Islam.” Shortly after, a Sunni Muslim group called Almi Majlis Tahafuzz Khatme Nubuwwat (AMTKN) issued the message “Congratulations to all Muslims,” which was followed by the distribution of “Kill Ahmadi” pamphlets. Sources: [Guardian](#) [432], [Huffington Post](#) [433], [Daily Mail](#) [434]
 - **January 2016:** ISIS releases a propaganda video showing the execution of five hostages, claiming they are British spies. Then-Prime Minister David Cameron confirms that none of the hostages were “working for Britain” and refers to the video as “desperate stuff.” The video is accompanied by a man with a British accent threatening attacks in the United Kingdom. Source: [Guardian](#) [435]
 - **December 5, 2015:** Muhiddin Mire stabs three people causing serious and minor injuries at Leytonstone underground train station, East London. Mire reportedly shouts “this is for Syria,” referring to the United Kingdom’s December 2 parliamentary decision to join airstrikes against ISIS in Syria. On August 1, 2016, London’s Central Criminal Court sentences Mire to life in prison for attempted murder, attempted wounding, and wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. Sources: [BBC News](#) [22], [BBC News](#) [436]
 - **July 2015:** A delivery driver from Luton, Juneed Khan, is arrested for planning to carry out an attack against a U.S. soldier outside a base in East Anglia. Khan, an alleged ISIS supporter, sought to crash his car and attack a soldier with a knife. On April 1, 2016, Khan was found guilty of preparing terrorist acts and preparing to join ISIS in Syria. On May 13, 2016, Khan was sentenced to life in prison. Sources: [BBC News](#) [437], [BBC News](#) [438]
 - **November 2014:** Nadir Syed, a resident of Hounslow, is arrested after buying a knife and plotting to carry out an ISIS-inspired beheading on a Remembrance Day poppy-seller. On June 23, 2016, Syed was sentenced to 15 years in prison. Sources: [Guardian](#) [439], [Guardian](#) [440]
 - **May 22, 2013:** Armed with cleavers and machetes, Nigerian Islamic extremists Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale decapitate off-duty British army soldier Lee Rigby on a London street in broad daylight. Source: [BBC News](#) [441]
 - **April 26, 2013:** As part of counterterrorism investigation Operation Pitsford, 11 Birmingham-based Islamic extremists are jailed on various charges of terrorist fundraising and suicide bomb attack plots. Source: [BBC News](#) [442]
 - **May 14, 2010:** Roshonara Choudhry stabs Member of Parliament Stephen Timms twice in the abdomen. Timms’s assistant Andrew Bazely wrestles the knife away from Choudhry, who is restrained by security until police arrive. Choudhry later tells police that she wanted “revenge for the people of Iraq.” In November, Choudhry receives a life sentence for attempted murder. Sources: [BBC News](#) [443], [BBC News](#) [444]
 - **February 27, 2008:** British police foil a suspected plot to kill King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia during a state visit to the United Kingdom. Police suspect a dissident cell of Saudi Arabian dissidents. Source: [Daily Mail](#) [445]
 - **June 30, 2007:** Islamic extremists ram a Jeep loaded with propane canisters into the glass doors at Glasgow International Airport, setting it on fire. The incident is later tied to the unsuccessful London car bomb plot discovered the previous day. Source: [Telegraph](#) [446]
 - **June 29, 2007:** Two car bombs are discovered and disabled in central London. Source: [BBC News](#) [447]
 - **July 7, 2005:** Islamic extremist carry out four separate suicide bombings across London on underground trains and buses. The attacks kill 52 civilians and injure over 700. Source: [BBC News](#) [448]
 - **September 28, 2001:** Loyalist paramilitaries shoot dead Catholic journalist Martin O’Hagan outside his home in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. The Red Hand Defenders, a pseudonym previously used by the Ulster Defence Association, and the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), claim responsibility. O’Hagan, who had previously written about the LVF, is the first journalist killed during the Troubles. Source: [CAIN](#) [193]
 - **March 4, 2001:** A car bomb explodes outside the BBC Television Centre in London, injuring one and damaging the surrounding area. Authorities suspect the RIRA. A warning call had been placed the night before the bombing. Source: [CAIN](#) [193]
 - **June 1999:** Loyalist paramilitaries plant a series of pipe bombs in Northern Ireland. A Protestant woman married to a Catholic man is killed on June 5. The Loyalist Volunteer Force denies responsibility. The Royal Ulster Constabulary discovers other pipe bombs throughout the month, but there are no other fatalities. Source: [CAIN](#) [194]
 - **August 15, 1988:** A bomb in Omagh, Northern Ireland, kills 29 people and wounds more than 100.

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It is the worst single incident in Northern Ireland since the beginning of the conflict. The RIRA claims responsibility, but issues a statement apologizing for civilian casualties. The RIRA claims its target had been commercial. The RIRA declares a “complete cessation” of violence the following month in response to pressure over the Omagh bombing. Sources: [CAIN](#) [449], [BBC News](#) [450]

- **August 1, 1998:** A car bomb explodes in County Down, Northern Ireland, wounding 35. The RIRA claims responsibility. Source: [CAIN](#) [449]
- **May 1998:** On May 8, a new republican paramilitary group called the Real IRA (RIRA) forms. RIRA declares the ceasefire over and declares war on the British cabinet. On May 9, mortars are fired at the Royal Ulster Constabulary office in County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. There are no injuries. It is unclear whether the RIRA or Continuity IRA are responsible. Source: [CAIN](#) [449]
- **October 7, 1996:** Two bombs explode at the British Army headquarters in County Antrim, wounding 31. The IRA claims responsibility the following day. It is the first IRA attack on British security forces in Northern Ireland since the IRA announced a ceasefire on August 31, 1994. Source: [CAIN](#) [451]
- **June 15, 1996:** A 3,300-pound truck bomb explodes at a shopping center in Manchester, wounding more than 200 people. The bomb is the largest detonated in the United Kingdom since World War II. The IRA claims responsibility. Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#) [452], [BBC News](#) [453]
- **March 1994:** On March 9, the IRA fires five mortars at the perimeter of Heathrow Airport. None of the mortars explode. It is the group’s first mortar attack on the airport. The IRA attacks the airport again on March 11 and March 13. None of the mortars fired in those attacks explode. Source: [CAIN](#) [454]
- **April 24, 1993:** An IRA bomb of more than one ton explodes at Bishopsgate in London, killing one and wounding more than 30. Source: [CAIN](#) [455]
- **March 20, 1993:** Two bombings at the Gold Square shopping mall in Warrington kills a 4-year-old boy and a 12-year-old boy, and injures 56 people. The IRA claims responsibility but says it had given adequate warning. Sources: [CAIN](#) [455], [BBC News](#) [456]
- **February 7, 1991:** The IRA fires homemade mortar shells at 10 Downing Street in an attempt to assassinate Prime Minister John Major and his war cabinet. The shells land in surrounding areas of 10 Downing Street, wounding three people. Source: [New York Times](#) [457]
- **July 30, 1990:** A bomb planted in the car of Member of Parliament Ian Gow kills him outside his home. The IRA claims responsibility. Gow had been a vocal critic of the IRA. Source: [CAIN](#) [458]
- **September 22, 1989:** Islamic extremists carry out four separate suicide bombings across London on underground trains and buses. Source: [BBC News](#) [155]
- **December 21, 1988:** Pan Am Flight 103 is blown up by a bomb in a suitcase while flying over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270. In 2001, Libyan national Abdelbeset Ali Mohamed al Megrahi is convicted of murder for the attack, which is tied to Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Sources: [CNN](#) [459], [Washington Post](#) [460]
- **August 20, 1988:** An IRA bomb in Ballygawley, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, kills eight British Army soldiers and wounds 28. Source: [CAIN](#) [461]
- **March 1988:** On March 6, undercover members of the Special Air Service shoot and kill three IRA members in Gibraltar. During the March 16 funerals for the IRA members at Belfast’s Milltown Cemetery, Loyalist gunman Michael Stone throws a grenade and then begins shooting at mourners, killing three and wounding 50. Mourners chase Stone to a nearby motorway, but police intervene and arrest him. During the March 19 funeral of Kevin Brady, who was killed at the Milltown Cemetery attack, mourners fearing another attack assault two passengers in a car that had approached the cemetery at high speeds. The mourners beat and kill the two passengers, later identified as British Army soldiers. Source: [CAIN](#) [461]
- **November 8, 1987:** An IRA bomb explodes at a veterans’ memorial service in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, during the annual Remembrance Day ceremony, killing 11 and wounding 63. The IRA claims the bombing was a mistake and the group had targeted the British soldiers traveling to the memorial, not civilians. A twelfth person dies in 2000 after 13 years in a coma. The following day, loyalist paramilitaries mistakenly kill Protestant student Adam Lambert in Belfast, thinking he is Catholic. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reportedly believes the Remembrance Day Bombing to be a “last straw” violation of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, which gave Ireland a consultative role in Northern Ireland. Sources: [CAIN](#) [168], [New York Times](#) [169], [New York Times](#) [170], [RTÉ](#) [171], [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) [172], [Irish News](#) [173]
- **March 23, 1987:** A car bomb explodes at a British army base in West Germany, wounding 27 West Germans and three Britons. The IRA claims responsibility and says the unit that carried out the attack was ordered to strike a “devastating blow” but avoid civilian casualties. The attack reportedly kills mostly German soldiers and their wives. The previously unknown National Democratic Front for the Liberation of West Germany also claims responsibility. Source: [BBC News](#)

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- **February 28, 1985:**Members of the IRA fire homemade mortars at the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) station in Newry, County Down, killing nine officers and wounding 30.
It is reportedly the single largest loss of life in a single incident for the RUC. Source: [CAIN](#) [463]
- **October 12, 1984:**A bomb explodes at the Grand Hotel in Brighton during the annual conference of the Conservative Party, killing five and wounding 34.
The IRA claims responsibility. IRA member Patrick Magee had planted the bomb five weeks earlier in order to kill Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher during the conference, but Thatcher is unharmed. Magee is arrested in June 1986 and sentenced to 35 years in prison. He is released in 1999 under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement after serving 14 years. Sources: [BBC News](#) [154], [BBC News](#) [351]
- **December 17, 1983:**A car bomb explodes outside the Harrod's department store in London, killing six and wounding 90.
Authorities had received a warning an hour before the blast. The IRA claimed responsibility the following day, saying it had provided ample warning. Sources: [RTÉ](#) [352], [BBC News](#) [353]
- **December 6, 1982:**A time bomb explodes at the Droppin' Well disco in Ballykelly, Northern Ireland, killing 17 and wounding 30.
Among the dead are 11 soldiers. IRA splinter group the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) claims responsibility. A month after the bombing, an INLA spokesman says the group carried out the large-scale bombing because targeting one soldier does not have as much impact on the media or British government. The Irish government bans the INLA in response. In June 1986, four INLA members receive life sentences for the bombing. Sources: [New York Times](#) [464], [Irish News](#) [465], [New York Times](#) [169]
- **July 20, 1982:**Two IRA bombs in central London public parks kill 11 British soldiers and wound 50, mainly civilians
Source: [BBC News](#) [153]
- **March 1981 - October 1981:**On March 1, imprisoned IRA member Bobby Sands begins a hunger strike in Northern Ireland's Maze Prison to demand the reintroduction of political status for republican prisoners.
On April 9, Sands is elected to the British parliament. Sands dies from his hunger strike on May 5, leading to protests and rioting across Northern Ireland and Ireland. In Dublin, more than 10,000 people protest in the streets after Sands' death. Following the death of a second hunger striker, Francis Hughes, on May 12, a group of 2,000 people attempt to break into the British embassy in Dublin. By July 18, four more hunger strikers die. In response, protesters march to the British embassy in Dublin. The protests turn violent, resulting in the injury of 200 people in clashes with police outside the embassy. The hunger strike concludes on October 3 after the deaths of 10 strikers. The strike also inspired violence outside the prison, which killed 62 people. On October 6, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Prior, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announces a series of measures that mostly meet the demands of the strikers, including allowing prisoners to wear civilian clothes and freely associate within certain areas of the prison. Republicans consider the strike a propaganda success and Sinn Féin sees a political boost in popularity. Sources: [CAIN](#) [466], [The Journal](#) [467], [Houses of the Oireachtas](#) [468]
- **August 27, 1979:**A bomb on a fishing boat near Sligo, Ireland, kills Lord Louis Mountbatten and three others.
Mountbatten was a cousin of Queen Elizabeth and the supreme commander of Allied forces in southeast Asia during World War II. The IRA claims responsibility. Thomas McMahon is later convicted for the bombing but released in 1998 under the Good Friday Agreement. Also that day, IRA bombs kill 18 soldiers in County Down, Northern Ireland. The IRA claims responsibility. Following the bombings, a gun battle erupts between IRA fighters based on the Ireland side of the border and British soldiers on the Northern Ireland side. One civilian is killed on the Ireland side of the border. Sources: [CAIN](#) [469], [Irish Times](#) [470], [BBC News](#) [471]
- **March 30, 1979:**A bomb attached to the car of Conservative Party spokesman MP Airey Neave explodes at the House of Commons in London, killing Neave.
The INLA claims responsibility, saying it had targeted Neave because of his "rabid militarist calls for more repression against the Irish people." On July 2, the U.K. government outlaws the INLA. Sources: [Guardian](#) [472], [BBC News](#) [473], [CAIN](#) [474]
- **February 17, 1978:**A bomb explodes at the La Mon House Hotel in County Down, Northern Ireland, killing 12. The IRA claims responsibility.
Source: [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **July 21, 1976:**A landmine blows up the car of U.K. Ambassador to Ireland Christopher Ewart-Biggs near his home in south Dublin, killing the ambassador.
Three others are wounded in the blast. The IRA claims responsibility. Source: [BBC News](#) [475]
- **January 5, 1976:**The Republic Action Force, believed to be a cover for members of the IRA, attack a minibus in County Armagh, killing 10.
Source: [CAIN](#) [476]
- **August 13, 1975:**An IRA bomb and gun attack on the Bayardo Bar in Belfast kills five and wounds 40.
Source: [CAIN](#) [477]
- **July 3, 1975:**UVF members disguised as a fake army patrol stop a minibus carrying the Miami Showband, which had been performing in County Down, Northern Ireland.
Three band members are killed and one is wounded. Sources: [CAIN](#) [477], [BBC News](#) [478]

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- **October 1974 - November 1974:**A series of IRA bombings of British pubs kills 28 people and leaves more than 200 wounded.
Sources: [CAIN](#) [479], [Reuters](#) [480]
- **February 4, 1974:**A bomb on the M62 bus carrying British soldiers and their families kills 12 people. The IRA claims responsibility. Later that year, suspected IRA member Judith Ward is sentenced to 30 years in prison for the bombing, though she denies belonging to the IRA. Her conviction is overturned in 1992. Sources: [CAIN](#) [479], [BBC News](#) [481]
- **May 17, 1974:**Three bombs explode almost simultaneously in Dublin during rush hour. A fourth bomb explodes 90 minutes later in Monaghan, near the border with Northern Ireland. The bombings kill 33 and an unborn child and wound almost 300. It is reportedly the single biggest loss of life in one day during the Troubles. The UVF claims responsibility in 1993. In Northern Ireland, Ulster Defence Association press officer Sammy Smyth praises the attacks, saying, "I am very happy about the bombings in Dublin. There is a war with the Free State and now we are laughing at them." Sources: [RTÉ](#) [482], [CAIN](#) [483], [BBC News](#) [484]
- **March 8, 1973:**Two IRA car bombs explode outside the Old Bailey Central Criminal Court and the Ministry of Agriculture, killing one person and injuring almost 200.
Source: [BBC News](#) [485]
- **July 31, 1972:**The British government mobilizes more than 12,000 troops to dismantle barriers in Northern Ireland marking "no-go" areas. The IRA explodes three car bombs in Claudy in County Londonderry, Northern Ireland, killing nine people. Source: [CAIN](#) [161]
- **July 21, 1972:**The IRA detonates 22 bombs across Belfast within an hour and a half, killing nine and wounding 130. The attacks began a steadily escalation in IRA attacks in Northern Ireland. The UDA retaliates by killing five Catholics. The day is dubbed "Bloody Friday." Sources: [CAIN](#) [161], [BBC News](#) [165], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **March 20, 1972:**An IRA car bomb in Belfast kills six and wounds approximately 100 others. A seventh person dies the following month. Source: [CAIN](#) [161]
- **February 22, 1972:**In a retaliatory bombing for Bloody Sunday, the OIRA kills seven people at the Aldershot military barracks in Hampshire, England. The dead include a Catholic priest and six civilian workers. Sources: [CAIN](#) [161], [BBC News](#) [486], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **February 22, 1972:**An IRA bomb kills five women and an army priest in an attack on the 16th Parachute Brigade headquarters at Aldershot, Hampshire.
Source: [BBC News](#) [487]
- **February 2, 1972:**Following the deaths of 13 people in January 30 protests against the British army in Derry, Northern Ireland, in what came to be known as Bloody Sunday, between 30,000 and 100,000 protesters march to the British embassy in Dublin carrying 13 coffins. Some protesters attack the embassy with petrol bombs, rocks, and bottles, burning down the embassy. A government inquiry later that year finds the army's actions on Bloody Sunday "bordered on the reckless," but the army had been fired upon first. Sources: [BBC News](#) [486], [CAIN](#) [161], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **January 3, 1972:**A bomb explodes on Callendar Street in Belfast, wounding more than 60 people. The IRA claims responsibility.
Source: [CAIN](#) [161]
- **December 4, 1971:**A bomb at McGurk's Bar in Belfast kills 15. The UVF claims responsibility.
Sources: [CAIN](#) [488], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **September 1971:**The Ulster Defense Association is formed after a group of Loyalist paramilitary associations join forces. The UDA goes on to become the largest Loyalist paramilitary group during the Troubles. UDA members carry out sectarian violence under the name Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). Because of this, the British government does not proscribe the UDA until 1992. Source: [CAIN](#) [488]
- **February 6, 1971:**The IRA shoots and kills Gunner Robert Curtis, the first British soldier to die during the Troubles. Sources: [CAIN](#) [489], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **December 28, 1969:**The IRA splits into two factions, the Official IRA (OIRA) and the Provisional IRA (PIRA or the IRA). The split does not become public until January 11, 1970, when the IRA's political party, Sinn Féin divides between Officials and Provisionals. Sources: [CAIN](#) [489], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **July 14, 1969:**Catholic farmer Francis McCloskey is hit on the head with a baton by a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary during street protests in County Derry. It is considered the first death during the Troubles. Sources: [CAIN](#) [489], [RTÉ](#) [490], [Irish Times](#) [470]
- **October 11, 1969:**Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officer Victor Arbuckle is shot and killed during protests in Belfast. Arbuckle is the first RUC officer to be killed during the Troubles. Source: [CAIN](#) [489]
- **March 1969 - April 1969:**The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Protestant Volunteers (UPV) plant bombs at electrical and water installations around Northern Ireland. There are no casualties, but the bombings shut down electricity and water supplies across Belfast. Source: [CAIN](#) [489]

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Domestic Counter-Extremism

On November 3, 2020, the U.K. raised its terror threat level to “severe”—the second-highest level—following deadly attacks in Austria and France that occurred in late October and early November. Raising the threat level to severe indicated that the U.K. considers the possibility of a terror attack to be highly likely. The announcement followed the November 2 attack in Austria in which an ISIS sympathizer opened fire on a busy nightlife district in Vienna, which ultimately killed four. The attack occurred a day before Austria’s countrywide lockdown in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The U.K. increased their threat level ahead of their own lockdown on November 5. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [1], [Guardian](#) [2])

Following the September 15, 2017, London underground bombing, the United Kingdom raised its terror threat level to its highest level of “critical,” indicating suspicion of an imminent attack. The threat level returned to the next lowest level of “severe” two days later. The government previously raised the threat level to critical after the May 22, 2017, Manchester suicide bombing. Prior to the Manchester attack, the terror threat level had been at the second-highest level of “severe” since 2014. Less than a week after the Manchester attack, the government lowered the alert level back to severe, indicating an attack is highly likely but not imminent. In December 2016, MI6 head Alex Younger declared that the United Kingdom and other European democracies faced a “fundamental threat” from cyberattacks, propaganda, and “subversion of the democratic process” by hostile states. ISIS and its sympathizers pose an “unprecedented” threat, Younger also said. (Sources: [Fox News](#) [288], [BBC News](#) [289], [BBC News](#) [491], [Telegraph](#) [335], [Guardian](#) [492], [Guardian](#) [493])

Since Khalid Masood’s March 2017 car-ramming attack, British authorities have stopped several threats. On April 27, 2017, London police arrested a 27-year-old man carrying knives outside of Parliament. In unrelated action the following day, police raided house in west London and Kent, foiling what they said was an active terror plot. Six people were arrested in the raids and a female suspect was shot and wounded. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [494], [BBC News](#) [495])

British authorities reported a total of 273 terrorism-related arrests in 2018, a 41 percent decrease from the 465 arrests in 2017. The Home Office partly attributed the decrease to the high number of arrests in 2017 following terror attacks in London and Manchester. The government also reported that there were 221 persons incarcerated on terrorism charges as of December 31, 2018, a 1 percent decrease from the 224 incarcerations as of December 31, 2017. It is the first year-over-year decrease since 2013. Of those in custody on terrorism charges as of December 2018, 79 percent held Islamist views, 13 percent held far-right views, and 8 percent subscribed to other ideologies. (Source: [U.K. Home Office](#) [496])

British law enforcement has contended with limited resources and budget cuts, which have curtailed terrorism investigation and prevention initiatives. Between 2010 and 2015, the national police budget decreased by £2.3 billion. There were 122,859 police officers in England and Wales in 2016, down from a high of 144,353 in 2009. In June 2017, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick warned that police had fewer resources for “forward-looking” intelligence to prevent future attacks because they were spending more time on “backward-looking” investigations into recent terror attacks. This has put a tremendous strain on British police resources and stalled several ongoing investigations, she said. In a letter to Home Secretary Amber Rudd, Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley wrote of the “significant impact” of terror investigations on other crime prevention in England and Wales. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [497], [Guardian](#) [498], [Guardian](#) [499])

In the wake of the June 2017 London Bridge attack, the British government instituted a three-month emergency plan called Operation Roset in order to strengthen British counterterrorism efforts. The plan includes reassigning police officers from other investigations to focus on counterterrorism. U.K. police heads have requested assurances that the increased counterterrorism operations will not come at the expense of non-terrorism-related police investigations. In late June 2017, Rudd acknowledged in Parliament that British police resources had been stretched “very tightly” in confronting a “new phase” of the terrorist threat facing the United Kingdom. The British Home Office pledged to increase counterterrorism funding to police by 30 percent by 2022. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [497], [Guardian](#) [498], [Guardian](#) [499])

Few British police officers carry live firearms. British police chiefs reportedly fear that their armed officers could face public accusations of misusing their firearms on suspects. However, the Police Federation of England and Wales reported in May 2016 that a national shortage of armed officers leaves Britain vulnerable to terror attacks. As of March 2016, only 2,139 of London’s 32,000 police officers (6.7 percent) were armed. According to a January 2017 poll by the Police Federation of London’s officers, 43 percent believed there should be more specialist firearm officers, while 26 percent

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believed that all officers should be regularly armed. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [500], [Guardian](#) [501], [BBC News](#) [502], [BBC News](#) [503])

Throughout 2016 and 2017, the United Kingdom has taken steps to increase the number of armed police officers in the country. In April 2016, British police announced plans to arm 1,500 more police officers nationwide. In August 2016, Scotland Yard armed an additional 300 London police officers, raising the number of the city's armed officers to just under 3,000. The additional armed officers included members of the Metropolitan Police's counterterrorism unit, which would carry SIG 516 semi-automatic carbines and Glock 9 mm pistols. Despite the planned increases, the Police Federation has warned that recruiting and training an additional 1,500 armed officers could take up to two years. In May 2017, the British government allocated an additional £114 million to fund 1,000 additional armed officers over five years. (Sources: [Independent](#) [504], [Telegraph](#) [505], [Telegraph](#) [500], [Guardian](#) [501], [BBC News](#) [502])

Activity to prevent terrorism in the United Kingdom is presently at its highest level in years. MI5 increased its operations throughout the country after the 7/7 bombings. The intelligence agencies also increased their cooperation and expanded their recruitment. Former MI5 head Andrew Parker said in October 2016 that the agency had stopped 12 jihadist plots in the United Kingdom in the last three years. According to Scotland Yard, there were more than 299 terror-related detentions for the year between March 2014 and March 2015 as a result of police conducting "exceptionally high numbers of counter-terrorism investigations." Of these, 16 people who returned from Syria were charged. In addition to devoting more resources to counterterrorism investigations—leading to greater numbers of arrests—U.K. security forces are also seeking to sever the sources of radicalization. As of October 2014, there were 100 Syria-related "preventative activities" each week, and police are removing thousands of pieces of illegal online material showing beheadings, murders, torture, and suicides. Over 80 percent of the content is related to Iraq and Syria. In the month of October 2020, MI5's director general, Ken McCallum, announced that the security service disrupted "27 late-stage terrorist attack plots in Great Britain." Furthermore, McCallum stated that more than 30 percent of major terror plots that MI5 has disrupted at a late stage since 2017 have been from far-right extremists. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [506], [Guardian](#) [507], [Guardian](#) [492], [Guardian](#) [19], [Guardian](#) [2], [CNN](#) [508])

In the aftermath of the May 22, 2017, Manchester terror attack, British authorities for the first time barred British citizens suspected of going overseas for terrorism from returning. The so-called temporary exclusion order requires suspects to contact British authorities before they are allowed to return to the United Kingdom. (Source: [Guardian](#) [509])

On March 21, 2017, the British government enacted a ban on laptops and tablets on U.K.-bound flights from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia. The move followed a similar U.S. ban on electronics bigger than a cellphone on flights originating from eight countries in the Middle East and Africa. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [510], [Al Jazeera](#) [511])

According to MI5, more than 60 percent of lone-wolf attackers provide clues that they are about to carry out an attack through changes in their behavior. Since 2004, MI5's Behavioural Science Unit (BSU) has studied and attempted to identify behavioral signs in individuals that indicate they may be planning a terrorist attack. For example, Roshonara Choudhry, who stabbed parliamentarian Stephen Timms in 2010, reportedly quit her college course, emptied her bank accounts, and settled her student loan before she attempted to murder Timms. The BSU comprises criminologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and other specialists in the social scientists. The BSU uses intelligence information collected through networks of informants. Findings are then passed along to The BSU reportedly foiled at least seven terrorist plots in 2016 alone. The BSU is reportedly monitoring hundreds of British jihadists, including some 400 returned foreign fighters. The unit is charged with determining whether suspects are merely threatening action or actually intend to carry through. A member of the unit who spoke with the *Times* in August 2016 that "Many of those whom the service investigates have secrets from their family and friends. They many even lie to themselves about who they are." The unit has reportedly doubled in size since the 2013 murder of Lee Rigby. MI5 has labeled the BSU a valuable resource that "is regularly used by investigative and agent running teams to support assessments and decision making." (Sources: [BBC News](#) [512], [Times](#) [513], [Sun](#) [514], [Economic Times](#) [515], [Gov.UK](#) [516])

On July 20, 2020, U.K. police proposed to drop the terms "Islamist terrorism" and "jihadis" when describing attacks carried out in the name of Islam. Alternative terms that were suggested include "faith-based terrorism," "terrorists abusing religious motivations," and "adherents of Osama bin Laden's ideology." The request was issued by the National Association of Muslim Police that claimed "Islamist" and "jihadi" perpetuated Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims.

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Accordingly, the national coordinator of Prevent, the U.K.'s deradicalization program, stated that although the current terminology could lead to the "stigmatizing of innocent Muslims in the U.K." no plans are currently in place to amend the language in an official capacity. (Source: [The Times](#) [517])

Social Media and Extremism Online

A September 2017 study by the British think tank Policy Exchange found that online extremist content attracts more clicks in the United Kingdom than anywhere else in Europe. Worldwide, the United Kingdom is the fifth most frequent location for accessing jihadist content. The study further claimed that the majority of the British public would support legislation criminalizing reading online content that glorifies terrorism. (Source: [Policy Exchange](#) [518])

British officials have criticized social-media companies for continuing to allow the proliferation of hate speech, including extremist content, on their platforms. In April 2017, a report by the U.K. Parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee cited the "repeated" failure of social media companies to remove such content, which committee chairwoman Yvette Cooper called a "disgrace." The committee accused Google, Facebook, Twitter, and other multi-billion dollar companies of forcing taxpayer-funded government organizations like the Metropolitan Police to monitor content on their platforms. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [519], [Guardian](#) [520], [Newsweek](#) [521])

The committee called for social media companies to pay the extra costs of policing their platforms and fines for those that do not act against extremist content. The committee also recommended social media companies publicly report their efforts to moderate their platforms. Additionally, the committee requested the government enact new laws to further regulate extremist content online. The committee also called for fines for companies that fail to act against extremist content. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [519], [Guardian](#) [520], [Newsweek](#) [521])

In May 2017, ahead of June's national elections, then-Prime Minister Theresa May promised to create government mechanisms to punish social media companies that failed to remove illegal content. May's Conservative Party issued a political manifesto that promised a new tax on social media companies to fund "awareness and preventative activity to counter internet harms." The manifesto also called for sanctions against companies that failed to remove extremist content. The following month, Home Secretary Amber Rudd reiterated May's pledge to fight online extremism. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [522], [Reuters](#) [523], [Guardian](#) [499])

On June 13, 2017, May and French President Emmanuel Macron launched a joint campaign against online extremism. According to May, the joint campaign would seek to create a "legal liability" for Internet companies that do not remove extremist content from their platforms. May pledged that the Internet "must not be a safe place" for extremists. Writing in British media, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley reaffirmed May's position that extremist content is too readily accessible online. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [524], [NBC News](#) [525], [Guardian](#) [526])

During her September 2017 address to the U.N. General Assembly, May demanded that tech companies go "further and faster" to develop artificial intelligence tools to remove extremist content. May said that the United Kingdom, France, and Italy were partnering to pressure tech companies to remove extremist content within two hours of its discovery on their platforms. May imposed a one-month deadline of the October 20 G7 meeting for tech companies to demonstrate that they are progressing appropriately. (Source: [BBC News](#) [527])

On September 23, 2019, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated at the United Nations General Assembly that British scientists are working on technology to stop violent attacks from being broadcast live on the Internet as part of an international call to curb online extremism. The United Kingdom is among almost 20 countries backing the Christchurch Call, an appeal to world leaders and tech companies launched after 51 people died in a far-right attack on mosques in the New Zealand city in March. (Source: [Washington Post](#) [528])

Online Harms Bill

In 2018, the U.K. began proposals for stronger "online harms" regulation to address harmful content on social media. The regulations would require large tech companies to enforce stronger regulations against content including foreign disinformation, terrorist radicalization, and the protection of children from exploitation. The bill will also enforce sanctions on social media platforms that fail to comply with content moderation. The U.K.'s communications regulator, Ofcom, is

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expected to oversee the new rules. The Online Harms Bill is expected to be presented to Parliament for debate in the beginning of 2021, with the enforcement of the legislation suspected to take effect in either 2023 or 2024. (Sources: [Financial Times](#) [529], [Open Access Government](#) [530], [Independent](#) [531], [BBC News](#) [532])

Counterterrorism Measures

The British general election on May 7, 2015, resulted in the formation of a Conservative Party majority government for the first time in almost two decades. In the wake of his re-election, then-Prime Minister David Cameron reiterated the United Kingdom's commitment to targeting radicalization and the "poisonous Islamist extremist ideology" and announced a series of new legislative measures. Furthermore, Cameron posited that the country's "passively tolerant society" had engendered neutrality "between different values" and encouraged "a narrative of extremism and grievance." His comments were buttressed by specific legislative proposals submitted by then-Home Secretary Theresa May, including:

- "Banning Orders," targeting organizations that operate within the law but nonetheless seek to incite extremist hatred in the public or seriously threaten democracy. Banning orders may also criminalize fund-raising for and membership of such groups;
- Extreme Disruption Orders targeting those who want to radicalize young people;
- Measures to shut down premises where extremists seek to influence others;
- Granting new powers and an £8 million investment to the United Kingdom's charity watchdog, the Charity Commission, to identify charities financing extremists and terrorists. The commission has been criticized for previously failing to identify abuses of the charity sector system. The draft Protection of Charities Bill will also allow the Commission "to disqualify any trustee candidate they deem unfit;"
- Stronger immigration rules on extremists; and
- Enhanced powers for the United Kingdom's communications regulator, the Office of Communications (Ofcom), to "take action against channels that broadcast extremist content.

(Sources: [BBC News](#) [533], [Prime Minister's Office](#) [534], [Independent](#) [535])

On May 19, 2020, it was reported that U.K. government ministers are planning to alter counterterrorism laws that will increase control over terrorism suspects by expanding terrorism prevention and investigation measures (TPIMS). According to the proposed legislation, terrorism suspects who have not been convicted of any offense could potentially face expanded and increased surveillance measures. Additionally, the surveillance measures would no longer be liable to a two-year cap on their use. TPIMS usually employ secret intelligence to control the risk of terrorism suspects who have not been prosecuted. Additional proposed changes to counterterrorism legislation includes a new "serious terrorism sentence" that includes a 14-year minimum jail term and 25 years for dangerous offenses that include multiple deaths. Furthermore, the proposed bill seeks to eradicate the deadline for the review of Prevent, a government-sponsored anti-radicalization program that has faced backlash from human rights activists. (Source: [Guardian](#) [536])

CONTEST

In 2003, the United Kingdom began implementing a long-term, comprehensive Counter-Terrorist Strategy known as CONTEST. It consists of four elements: stopping terrorist attacks; preventing people becoming or supporting terrorists; enhancing protection against terrorist attacks; and mitigating the impact of a terrorist attack. CONTEST was strengthened in 2009 under then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The United Kingdom's current specific focus is on developing programs to monitor Internet based communications, as well as supporting the U.K. security industry to export services and products to other countries hosting major global events. (Sources: [U.K. Government Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al.](#) [14], [Guardian](#) [537], [U.K. Home Office](#) [198])

The United Kingdom's anti-terrorism strategy under CONTEST is supported by legislation stretching back to 2000, when Parliament passed the Terrorism Act. This forms the legal basis for prosecuting terrorists and banning terrorist organizations. Among the list of proscribed terrorist groups are the Abu Nidal Organization, al-Qaeda, al-Shabab, Boko Haram, Hamas, Hezbollah, ISIS, Jemaah Islamiyah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The Terrorism Act of 2000 has since been supplemented by several further pieces of counterterrorism legislation, most notably including: the Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001; the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005; the Terrorism Act 2006; the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008; and the Terrorist Asset Freezing Act 2010. The United Kingdom has also enacted the United Nations Terrorism Order 2009. (Source: [U.K. Government Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al.](#) [14], [U.K. Government Home](#)

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[Office](#) [538])

Prior to 2000 and for much of the 20th century, British counter-extremist legislation focused almost exclusively on efforts to deal with the long history of conflict arising from “the Troubles” related to Northern Ireland. A series of legal measures collectively known as the Prevention of Terrorism Acts were first enacted as far back as 1939, which initially prohibited membership in a variety of republican (nationalist) and loyalist (unionist) organizations. Measures to prevent entry to the British mainland, to block the flow of financial support, and enhanced powers of detention and arrest also formed key parts of the Northern Ireland-related Acts. Several Northern Ireland groups continue to be proscribed as terrorist groups, including the IRA, the Irish People’s Liberation Organization, the Loyalist Defence Force, and the Ulster Freedom Fighters. (Source: [U.K. Government Home Office](#) [538])

To prevent Islamists from traveling to conflict zones, the United Kingdom already maintains an extensive “no-fly” register but this is set to be supplemented by new rules to make it easier to remove suspected jihadi recruits from commercial flights. Airline companies will now need to present an “authority to carry” list when flying to conflict zones after giving the passenger list to enforcement agencies. While the authority to carry program was implemented in July 2012, it has not been strictly enforced. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [539], [U.K. Government Home Office](#) [540])

The U.K. government released an updated CONTEST strategy in June 2018. The strategy views Islamic terrorism, and ISIS in particular, as the chief security threat to the country. The strategy also recognizes the growing threat posed by far-right extremists. In announcing the revised CONTEST, U.K. Home Secretary Sajid Javid declared that the government would focus its efforts on amending current legislation, strengthening the sentencing framework for terrorism offenses, and enabling U.K. courts to prosecute terrorism offenses committed overseas. CONTEST also calls for expanded powers for security services to arrest suspects at earlier stages. Additionally, the revised strategy calls on businesses to more quickly alert authorities of suspicious transactions, such as stockpiling chemicals or erratic behavior while renting a car. Critics questioned whether the strategy could encourage vigilantism, prejudicial reporting, and a weakening of civil rights. (Sources: [Gov.UK](#) [17], [Gov.UK](#) [541], [Independent](#) [542], [Daily Mail](#) [543])

Release and Monitoring of Extremist Prisoners

The United Kingdom has sought to increase its focus on extremists released from prison. According to the U.K. Home Office, 46 convicted terrorists were released from prison between March 2017 and March 2018. Overall, more than 500 prisoners convicted of terrorism offenses have reportedly been released since 2001. By the end of 2018, more than 40 percent of the 193 terror-related sentences handed down between 2007 and 2016 will expire. Government officials have called for revisions of U.K. extremism laws to increase attention on deradicalization both in prison and after prison. (Sources: [Gov.uk](#) [544], [Express](#) [545], [Guardian](#) [546], [Telegraph](#) [547], [Sun](#) [548], [News.com.au](#) [549])

British probation law formerly allowed prisoners serving fixed-term sentences—excluding life sentences—to be released halfway through their terms. The practice came to public light in the summer of 2018 when British media reported that imprisoned ISIS supporter Anjem Choudary would be released that October. He was one of 80 prisoners convicted on terrorism charges expected to be freed in 2018. British police and prison officials have criticized the releases but acknowledged they could not override the law that would set Choudary and others free. Government officials have called for additional resources to monitor freed prisoners to prevent recidivism. In Choudary’s case, officials imposed restrictions on Internet use and his ability to meet with former radical associates, as well as placing him under heavy surveillance. (Sources: [Gov.uk](#) [544], [Express](#) [545], [Evening Standard](#) [50], [Telegraph](#) [547], [Sun](#) [548], [News.com.au](#) [549])

On February 3, 2020, the British government introduced emergency legislation to prevent people convicted of terrorism from being released after serving half their sentences. The Terrorist Offenders (Restriction of Early Release) Bill required convicted terrorists to serve at least two-thirds of their sentences and then receive approval from a parole board before early release. Both houses of parliament approved the bill by February 24. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [550], [Reuters](#) [551])

The new law blocked the early release of approximately 50 convicts, including Mohammed Zahir Khan. Khan had been set for release on February 28, 2020, after serving half of his four-and-a-half-year sentence for encouraging terrorism. The emergency legislation is a response to both an attack on February 2, 2020, as well as an attack on November 29, 2019. In both cases, the assailants were recently freed terror offenders. The government also plans to amend existing counterterrorism legislation by implementing a minimum of 14 years in prison for anyone convicted of offenses such as

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preparing acts of terrorism or directing a terrorist organization. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [552], [BBC News](#) [553], [Time](#) [372], [Reuters](#) [554], [U.S. News](#) [555])

Prevent Strategy

Within CONTEST is the Prevent strategy. The strategy has three objectives: respond to extremist ideology, build relations with civil society groups, and provide support to prevent radicalization. Through Prevent, the government has funded sports activities, leadership development forums, discussions on current affairs, and other programs to boost communal engagement in combating extremism. The government has reportedly been reluctant to reveal specifics of the programs instituted under Prevent in order to avoid hindering their effectiveness through association with the government. (Sources: [Gov.UK](#) [556], [Gov.UK](#) [198], [Gov.UK](#) [557])

The British government also coordinates with more than 2,790 institutions—including schools, universities, and religious organizations—to reach almost 50,000 people. These relationships resulted in 130 community projects—more than half of which were in schools—in 2015 with more than 25,000 participants. Teachers monitor their students for signs of radicalization and refer cases to police for follow up and possible referral to Channel, a multi-agency system of panels across England and Wales that assesses potentially at-risk individuals and provides “support before their vulnerabilities are exploited by those that would want them to embrace terrorism.” (Sources: [Gov.UK](#) [556], [Gov.UK](#) [198], [BBC News](#) [558], [U.K. Parliament](#) [559], [Gov.UK](#) [557], [Guardian](#) [560])

In 2015, the British government recorded 3,955 referrals to Channel, of which approximately 15 percent were linked to right-wing extremism and about 70 percent were linked to Islamic extremism. Specific details of Channel projects are not publicly available. Between January 2012 and December 2015, just under 2,000 British children under 15 were referred to government counter-radicalization programs. Between 2017 and 2018, Police Scotland referred 28 children under the age of 15 to Prevent, up from eight in 2016-2017. Of the 104 total cases identified by Police Scotland in 2017-2018, 66 were passed on to other agencies, 34 were determined to require no further action, and three were determined to require additional Prevent programming. (Sources: [Gov.UK](#) [556], [Gov.UK](#) [198], [BBC News](#) [558], [U.K. Parliament](#) [559], [Gov.UK](#) [557], [Guardian](#) [560], [Police Scotland](#) [561], [BBC News](#) [562])

In October 2016, the government launched a pilot program called the Desistance and Disengagement Programme (DDP) to aid in the deradicalization of convicted terrorists who have been released from prison on probation. The program includes mentoring, psychological support, and theological and ideological advice. The government expanded the program in 2018 to include returned foreign fighters and individuals sanctioned for terrorism. The DDP became compulsory. In June 2018, the government announced its intention to double the capacity of the DDP to 230 within 12 months. Upon his release from prison in October 2018, pro-ISIS propagandist Anjem Choudary was ordered to participate in the DDP. (Sources: [Hampshire Prevent Board](#) [563], [Gov.UK](#) [17], [Gov.UK](#) [541], [The Times](#) [564])

In December 2016, Leicestershire Chief Constable Simon Cole—the National Police Chiefs’ Council’s point person for Prevent—called the program “absolutely fundamental” to British counterterrorism efforts. Between 2015 and 2016, there were approximately 7,500 referrals through the program for evaluation. Of those, approximately 1 in 10 were classified as vulnerable to terrorism and referred to the Channel program. The U.K. Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit removed more than 55,000 pieces of online terrorist material in 2015, compared with 46,000 in 2014. In 2015, online counter-narrative resources developed by the U.K. government and civil society groups received more than 15 million online views, compared with approximately 3 million in 2014. British authorities stopped 150 people from traveling Iraq and Syria in 2015, and family courts prevented 50 children from approximately 20 families from being taken to Iraq and Syria. The National Offender Management System identified 1,000 prisoners who are either extremist or vulnerable to extremism and scheduled interventions such as prisoner transfers and disciplinary action. (Sources: [Gov.UK](#) [556], [Gov.UK](#) [198], [BBC News](#) [558], [U.K. Parliament](#) [559], [Gov.UK](#) [557], [Guardian](#) [560], [Mirror](#) [565], [BBC News](#) [566])

Prevent has also received criticism from NGOs, teachers, and within the U.K. government. In 2011, the government restructured the program in light of criticism that authorities were using Prevent-funded programming to spy on Muslim communities. In February 2016, the U.K. independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, David Anderson QC, called for an independent review of Prevent because some elements of the program have been “ineffective or being applied in an insensitive or discriminatory manner.” U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Assembly Maina Kiai said that Prevent has “created unease and uncertainty around what can be legitimately discussed in public.” In a March 2016

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interview with the *Guardian*, Kiai said that because of the program “some families are afraid of discussing the negative effects of terrorism in their own homes, fearing their children would talk about it at school and have their intentions misconstrued.” For example, in March 2016, teachers at a Luton nursery school overheard a 4-year-old pronounce “cucumber” as “cuke bum” and thought he was referring to a pressure-cooker bomb. (Sources: [U.K. Parliament](#) [567], [Guardian](#) [568], [Guardian](#) [569], [Independent](#) [570])

There are also questions regarding the efficacy of Prevent. In August 2018, Anjem Choudary acolyte Lewis Ludlow pled guilty to planning a vehicular attack on behalf of ISIS. At the time of his April 2018 arrest, Ludlow had been involved in the Prevent program for approximately 10 years. Ludlow reportedly refused to engage with the program until he began meeting with a mentor in late 2017. He continued meeting with Prevent counselors while plotting his attack in 2018, according to court records. In messages obtained by the police, Ludlow bragged about resisting the programming while a contact told him to “fake it” during his meetings with Prevent professionals. (Source: [BBC News](#) [571])

Muslim Brotherhood Review

On December 17, 2015, the U.K. review of the Egypt-originated Muslim Brotherhood and its associated groups in Britain was published. The report found that the Brotherhood in the United Kingdom—a “loosely associated” group with no single leader—generally subscribed to peaceful methods and “non violent incremental change.” It also found that although the Brotherhood had in the past sought an Islamic state in Britain, “there was no indication that the Muslim Brotherhood itself still held this view or at least openly promoted an Islamic state here.” However, both authors, former British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sir John Charles and Director General of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism Charles Farr, expressed concerns about the Brotherhood’s relationship with Hamas. According to Charles, the Brotherhood has “deliberately, wittingly and openly incubated and sustained an organization - Hamas - whose military wing has been proscribed in the UK as a terrorist organization....” Charles also noted that “they are prepared to countenance violence - including, from time to time, terrorism- where gradualism is ineffective.” Reviewing the Brotherhood’s fundraising activities, Charles Farr reported that “[t]hough never publicly acknowledged by the Muslim Brotherhood charities in the UK are an important part of the Hamas and Brotherhood in the country.” He noted that some of the Brotherhood-affiliated charities “have been linked to Hamas.” Hamas has been proscribed in the United Kingdom since 2001. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [572], [Muslim Brotherhood Review: Main Findings](#) [573])

In his official response to the findings, Cameron highlighted the Brotherhood’s “highly ambiguous relationship with violent extremism.” Cameron stated, “[t]he main findings of the review support the conclusion that membership of, or association with, or influence by the Muslim Brotherhood should be considered as a possible indicator of extremism.” He proposed that the British government would continue to:

- Refuse visas to Muslim Brotherhood members who have made “extremist comments” on record;
- Ensure Brotherhood-linked charities do not fundraise for the Muslim Brotherhood;
- Coordinate better with international partners to properly investigate claims of Muslim Brotherhood impropriety regarding “illicit funding or other misuse of charities”
- “[E]nforce the EU asset freeze on Hamas;” and
- Review whether the Muslim Brotherhood should be proscribed.

(Source: [Prime Minister’s Office](#) [574])

International Counter-Extremism

The United Kingdom plays a key role in overseas military activities, and remains an active and leading participant in international coalition efforts to thwart extremism and terrorism globally. Due to its military commitments in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as its strong alliance with the U.S., British soldiers and U.K. interests overseas have also been targeted by extremist entities, most notably the Taliban in Afghanistan during the long-running intervention that finally ended with British withdrawal in late 2014.

Afghanistan

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, the United Kingdom launched Operation Veritas, in

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simultaneous support of the American-led campaign, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The goals of OEF, like Operation Veritas, were to find al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and to remove Afghanistan as a terrorist refuge by deposing its Taliban leaders. While rapidly ousted from power, the Taliban quickly initiated an insurgency in 2002, seeking to regain control.

In 2003, all U.K. operations within Afghanistan were placed under Operation Herrick. The goal was to protect Britons at home by developing Afghanistan's security force to combat terrorism. Turning over command to NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2006, British troops worked to increase the stability of Afghanistan's new government under President Hamid Karzai, who assumed power in 2004.

By 2010, amid rising costs and casualties, NATO announced a full withdrawal of international forces by 2014, with the United Kingdom ending combat operations by 2015. Throughout the 13-year conflict, the Taliban posed a deadly threat to the nearly 10,000 British troops stationed throughout Kabul, Kandahar and Helmand province. At the cost of 450 British servicemen deaths and over 6,000 injuries, the United Kingdom withdrew from Afghanistan in November 2014. Control was then handed to the new 350,000-strong Afghan army (ANA), trained and equipped by ISAF. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [575], [U.K. Government Home Office, Foreign & Commonwealth Office et al](#) [576], [U.K. Government Home Office](#) [577], [Guardian](#) [578])

Iraq

In the early 2000s, the United Kingdom and its western allies sought to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power, viewing his regime as a destabilizing force in the Middle Eastern region due to its suspected weapons programs, support of terrorism, and record of brutality against its own people. In response to these concerns, the United Kingdom and United States launched airstrikes on Iraq's air defense network in 2003, quickly followed by a land invasion of 42,000 British and tens of thousands of American troops. Hussein's government quickly fell to the coalition forces.

In 2007, the United States and United Kingdom began handing over security of several Iraqi provinces to the Iraqi military, effectively marking the beginning of the move to withdraw entirely from Iraq. By 2009, the United Kingdom had formally begun to withdraw its forces from Iraq, having incurred 179 military casualties. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [579], [Stanford University](#) [580], [National Review](#) [581])

ISIS

On September 26, 2014, the U.K. Parliament approved joining U.S. airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq, citing concerns that Islamic extremists posed a "clear and proven" threat to Britons everywhere due to the proximity of battlegrounds in Iraq and Syria to Europe. Though the vote by Parliament specifically prohibited the deployment of ground troops, the U.K. has actively trained and armed Kurdish fighters to combat ISIS since the beginning of September 2014. After weeks of reconnaissance flights to gather intelligence, British Royal Air Force GR4 Tornado jets fired on several ISIS truck convoys as well as "heavy weapon positions" in early October 2014. Throughout that month, U.K. Royal Air Force (RAF) fighters continued to attack ISIS positions along with their American allies as the U.S. sent in new Apache AH-64 helicopters in order to increase its aerial bombardment on ISIS positions. Although there have been calls in both the U.K. and the U.S. for the deployment of ground troops against ISIS, so far both countries have been cautious not to escalate the conflict. However, in May 2016, it was [reported](#) [582] that the United Kingdom is drawing up plans to deploy ground forces in Libya, forming "part of an Italian-led Libyan international assistance mission." Then British Foreign Minister Tobias Ellwood [said](#) [582] that "[t]here is planning for 1,000 troops or so but we are yet to receive the invitation - the request - for any support."

Following the November 13, 2015, attacks in Paris that claimed the lives of 129, then-Prime Minister David Cameron sought parliamentary approval to extend airstrikes against ISIS in Syria. The prime minister said, "it is in Syria, in Raqqa, that Isil has its headquarters and it is from Raqqa that some of the main threats against this country are planned and orchestrated." On December 2, 2015, British parliamentarians voted 397 to 223 to authorize U.K. airstrikes against ISIS in Syria. Hours after the decision, four British jets departed from the Cypriot Royal Air Force base at Akrotiri and carried out strikes in Syria. Apparently in response to this decision, 29-year old Muhaydin Mire stabbed three people at a London underground station in East London, causing serious and minor injuries. A 56-year old was left with "serious" stab wounds.

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Mire was sentenced to life in prison. In March 2016, London's Metropolitan Police issued another ISIS-related statement, warning that the jihadi group had shifted "from a narrow focus on police and military as symbols of the state, to something much broader," claiming that it had "big ambitions for enormous and spectacular attacks...." (Sources: [New York Times](#) [583], [Daily Mail](#) [584], [Telegraph](#) [585], [Independent](#) [586], [BBC News](#) [587], [New York Times](#) [588], [BBC News](#) [22], [CNN](#) [589], [Guardian](#) [582])

Public Opinion

Islamic Extremism

In May 2017, the Pew Research Center released polling that found that 79 percent of Britons were at least somewhat concerned by extremism in the name of Islam. Of that 79 percent, 43 percent responded they were "very concerned." According to Pew, older Britons are more concerned about Islamic extremism than other demographics. The poll found that 87 percent of those who were 50 or older responded they were at least somewhat concerned. Of respondents 30 to 49 years old, 80 percent said they were at least somewhat concerned. Of those who were 18 to 29, 61 percent said they were at least somewhat concerned. Pew conducted the poll between February and March 2017, and released the results a week after the May 22, 2017, Manchester suicide bombing. (Source: [Pew Research Center](#) [590])

Nationalism and Islamophobia

In March 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron accused the United Kingdom of "retreating into nationalism." Britain's decision to leave the European Union ("Brexit") aligns with an increase in nationalist opinions throughout the country. Pew Research Center polling between 2015 and 2017 found that 46 percent of respondents in the United Kingdom agreed with the statement: "Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others." The research also found that 36 percent of Britons polled would not accept Muslims as family members, while 23 percent would not accept Jews as family members. (Sources: [Independent](#) [591], [Pew Research Center](#) [592])

A February 2019 report by British NGO Hope Not Hate found that five of the top 10 far-right activists online were British born. Hope Not Hate also reported that its 2017 polling found that 42 percent of respondents said their suspicion of Muslims in Britain had increased due to recent terror attacks. One-quarter of respondents believed that Islam is "a dangerous religion that incites violence," while 52 percent believed Islam posed a serious threat to Western civilization. Two-thirds of Conservative voters viewed Islam as a threat. A July 2018 Hope Not Hate poll found that 35 percent of respondents viewed Islam as a general threat to the British way of life. Thirty-two percent of respondents also believed that there were "no-go zones" in the United Kingdom where non-Muslims are forbidden and communities are dominated by sharia. (Source: [Hope Not Hate](#) [63])

Anti-Semitism

According to a December 2018 report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), four out of five British Jews believe anti-Semitism is a problem in U.K. politics, while 75 percent of British Jews believe anti-Semitism is a problem throughout the country. The findings are in line with polling of the broader European Jewish community. According to a December 2018 survey by the European Commission, 9 out of 10 European Jews believe anti-Semitism has increased within the past five years. The survey also found that almost a third of European Jews avoid attending events or visiting Jewish sites because of safety concerns. (Sources: [FRA](#) [593], [Politico](#) [594])

Online Extremism

Polling released by the British think tank Policy Exchange in September 2017 suggested that British citizens are concerned about the availability of extremist content online. According to the poll:

- 74 percent believe Internet companies should be more proactive in removing extremist content from their platforms
- 65 percent believe that the major Internet companies are not doing enough to combat online radicalization
- 72 percent said that Internet companies had a responsibility to combat and remove extremist content from their platforms

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- 75 percent would support the creation of an independent monitor to regulate web companies' compliance with counter-extremism laws
- 74 percent would support new legislation criminalizing the consumption of online extremist materials
- 73 percent would support new legislation criminalizing the possession and viewing of online extremist content

(Source: [Policy Exchange](#) [518])

Use of Force Against Terrorism

In August 2016, the Pew Research Center released polling that found that 71 percent of Britons support U.S.-led military action against ISIS, but only 34 percent agree that overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat global terrorism. In contrast, Pew found that 57 percent of Britons agree that relying too much on military force creates hatred that leads to more terrorism. (Source: [Pew Research Center](#) [595])

In a Spring 2016 Pew poll released that June, 79 percent of Britons viewed ISIS is more of a threat to their country than global climate change (58 percent), global economic instability (48 percent), cyberattacks from other countries (55 percent), and large numbers of refugees leaving Iraq/Syria (52 percent). (Source: [Pew Research Center](#) [596])

Poll of the British Muslim Community

In April 2016, the British network Channel 4 commissioned a poll of British Muslims, which was conducted by ICM Unlimited. According to the results:

- 34 percent would inform the police if they thought somebody they knew was getting involved with people who support terrorism in Syria
- 4 percent sympathize with people who take part in suicide bombings
- 23 percent support the introduction of sharia (Islamic law) in place of British law in certain areas of the country
- 32 percent either sympathize with or won't condemn those who take part in violence against those who mock the Islamic Prophet Muhammad.
- 86 percent feel a strong sense of belonging to Britain

In analyzing the results, former Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission Trevor Phillips said, "The integration of Britain's Muslims will probably be the hardest task we've ever faced. It will require the abandonment of the milk-and-water multiculturalism still so beloved of many, and the adoption of a far more muscular approach to integration." The Muslim Council of Britain rejected the poll's findings, which he said used the views of a "fringe minority" to smear a large population, according to the *New York Times*. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [597], [Channel 4](#) [598])

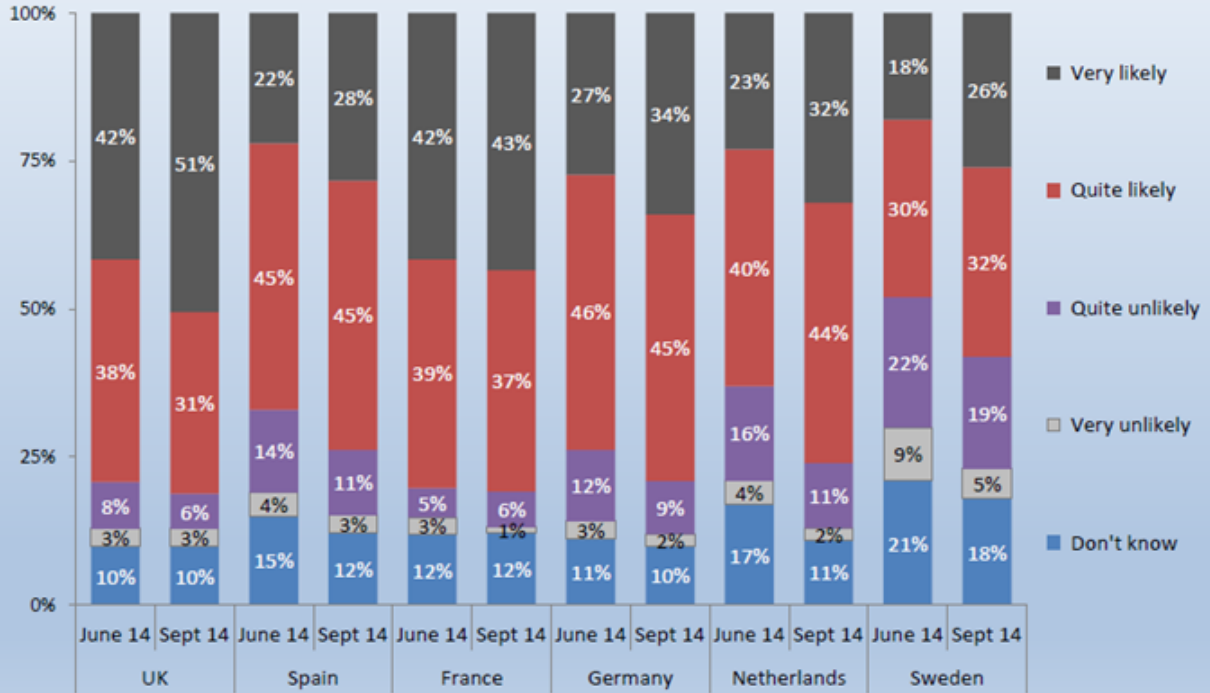
CEP Polling

CEP polling found that U.K. citizens see Islamist-based extremism as the greatest threat to national security and very likely to become an increasingly severe threat over the next decade. According to CEP data from 2014, more than half of British public respondents agree with U.K. national intelligence assessments, and consider the potential for Islamic extremist to pose a serious threat to national security over the next decade as "very likely." (Source: [Counter Extremism Project](#) [599])

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Likelihood of Islamist Extremism Being a Serious Threat Over the Next Ten Years [Over Time]

Islamic extremism is increasingly seen as a serious threat to national security over the next ten years in all countries except France.



Q20a. Based on what you know, how likely is it in your opinion that Islamist extremism will present a serious threat to our national security over the next ten years or so?

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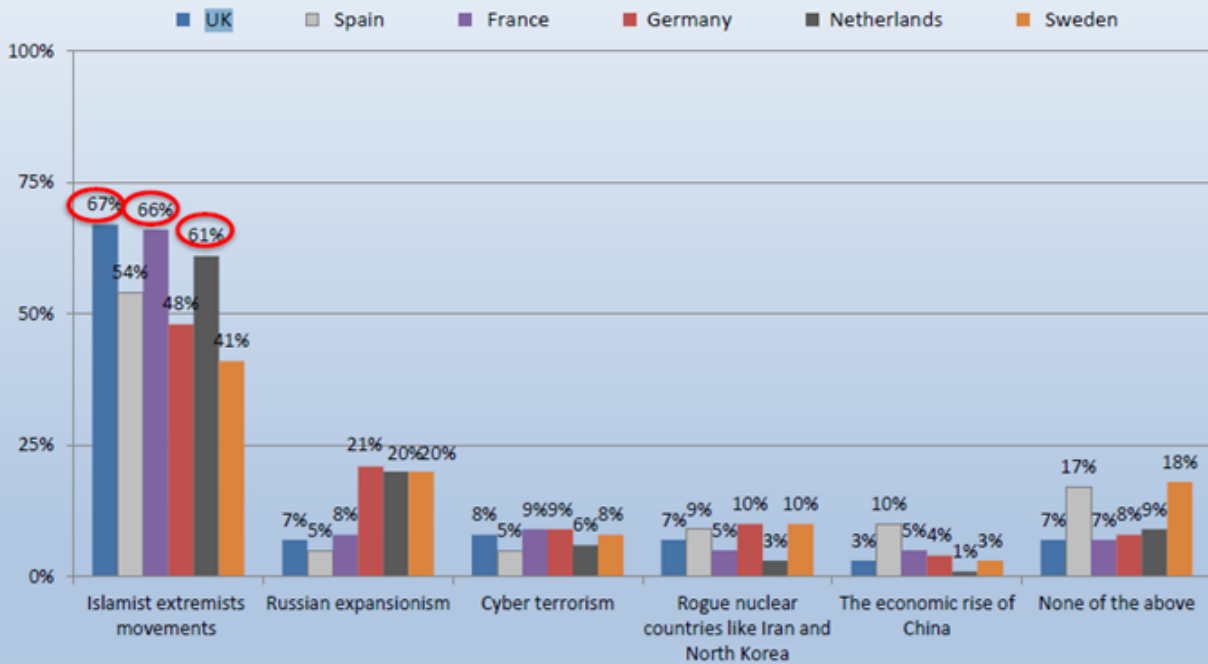
Two-thirds of British respondents in a CEP poll consider Islamist extremist movements the greatest threat to national security, more than any other country surveyed.

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Greatest Threat to the National Security of Your Country Today

All countries now see Islamist extremist movements as the greatest threats to their national security. The French, British and Dutch are most likely to view this as the greatest threat.

 Emphasis



Q3. Regardless of which issues you think are most important, which of the following do you think presents the greatest threat to the national security of our country today?

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