

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On December 19, 2019, Cloverhill District Court in Dublin granted [Lisa Smith](#) [1] bail following an appeal hearing. Smith, a former member of the Irish Defense Forces, was arrested at Dublin Airport on suspicion of terrorism offenses following her return from Turkey in November 2019. According to Irish authorities, Smith was allegedly a member of ISIS. Smith was later examined by Professor Anne Speckhard who determined that Smith had “no interest in rejoining or returning to the Islamic State.” (Source: [Belfast Telegraph](#) [2])

Ireland saw an increase in Islamist and far-right extremism throughout 2019, according to Europol. In 2019, Irish authorities arrested five people on suspicions of supporting “jihadi terrorism.” This included Smith’s November 2019 arrest. An additional four people were arrested for financing jihadist terrorism. Europol also noted a rise in far-right extremism, based on the number of Irish users in leaked user data from the far-right website Iron March. (Source: [Irish Times](#) [3])

Beginning in late 2019, concerns grew that the possible return of a hard border between British-ruled Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland after Brexit could increase security tensions in the once war-torn province. The Police Services of Northern Ireland recorded an increase in violent attacks along the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland border in 2019 and called on politicians to take action to heal enduring divisions in society. According to a representative for the New IRA—Northern Ireland’s largest dissident organization—the uncertainty surrounding Brexit provided the group a politicized platform to carry out attacks along the U.K. and Irish border while also drawing new recruits. The New IRA’s representative told the *Sunday Times*, “Our armed actions serve one purpose. They are symbolic. They are propaganda. They let the world know there is an ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland.” However, on October 2, 2019, U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson formally published his proposals for a Brexit deal which did not include checks at the Irish border. The United Kingdom officially left the European Union in January 2020 without an agreement on future relations between the United Kingdom, European Union, Northern Ireland, and Ireland. Negotiations remain ongoing. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [4], [France 24](#) [5], [Independent](#) [6], [Sunday Times](#) [7], [Financial Times](#) [8], [BBC News](#) [9])

Overview

Violent extremism in the Republic of Ireland has historically been driven by Irish republicanism, which seeks to unite Northern Ireland with Ireland. While radicalization and violence by republicans remains a concern, the Irish government has in recent years devoted more resources toward countering the threat of Islamist extremism, given large-scale attacks elsewhere in Europe. Though Ireland has not experienced an Islamist-inspired terror attack, the Irish government remains concerned that returning Irish foreign fighters could perpetuate a domestic attack.

Beginning in the late 1960s, Ireland was a target of Irish nationalist violence from Northern Ireland, a period known as the Troubles. Catholic republicans sought to reunite Northern Ireland with Ireland, while Protestant loyalists wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. Militants from both sides fought across Ireland and the United Kingdom until the 1998 Belfast Agreement, a.k.a. the Good Friday Agreement, largely ended the conflict. Though more sporadic now, republican extremists continue to operate and threaten violence within Ireland. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [10], [NBC News](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [12], [CAIN](#) [13], [CAIN](#) [14], [RTÉ](#) [15], [CAIN](#) [16], [BBC News](#) [17], [NBC News](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [18], [Christian Science Monitor](#) [19], [Gov.UK](#) [20], [Reuters](#) [21], [Reuters](#) [22], [Irish Times](#) [23], [BBC News](#) [24])

Ireland has not had a major terrorist attack since the end of the Troubles, but officials remain concerned about the impact of returning foreign fighters from the Middle East. From the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011 through January 2016, between 30 and 50 Irish citizens joined the fighting in the Middle East. By September 2014, Ireland was one of the top two countries proportionally sending foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria with almost one per 1,400 Muslim citizens going abroad to fight. Some Irish media estimate that half of these fighters have returned. Authorities also believe that there is a small number of ISIS recruiters operating in Ireland. Further, Irish authorities reportedly continue to monitor 20 Irish jihadists in the Middle East. (Sources: [Jamestown Foundation](#) [25], [Irish Times](#) [26], [Irish Independent](#) [27], [Irish Sun](#) [28])

In response to terror attacks in other European countries, the Irish government has increased funding and resources to An Garda Síochána (Garda), Ireland’s national police service responsible for counterterrorism and intelligence. Nonetheless, the Irish public and security establishment have criticized the government’s preparedness for a domestic terror attack. Following the March 2017 terror attack in Manchester, England, an informal poll by Ireland’s *Journal* newspaper found

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

that 87 percent of 27,582 respondents did not believe Ireland was prepared for a terror attack. Members of the Garda (gardai) have criticized their training and equipment's inability to defend against a domestic terror attack. In October 2016, the Irish government approved a plan to expand the Garda, but the Garda Representative Association has criticized the modernization plan as too slow, lamenting a lack of street patrols and a visible Garda presence in urban and rural areas. (Sources: [The Journal](#) [29], [The Journal](#) [30], [Irish Times](#) [31], [Irish Independent](#) [32], [Irish Times](#) [33], [Irish Times](#) [34], [The Journal](#) [35], [Frances Fitzgerald TD](#) [36])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Radicalization

Historically, radicalization in Ireland has centered on Irish nationalism. Beginning in the 1960s, republican militias that wanted Northern Ireland to secede from the United Kingdom and unite with the Republic of Ireland fought against loyalist militias that wanted to maintain Northern Ireland's position in the United Kingdom. In recent years, the Irish government has devoted more resources to combat Islamist radicalization and the threat of returning foreign fighters. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [24], [Irish Sun](#) [28])

Ireland saw an increase in Islamist and far-right extremism throughout 2019, according to Europol's 2020 terrorism report. In 2019, Irish authorities arrested five people on suspicions of supporting "jihadi terrorism." This included the November 2019 arrest of ISIS bride Lisa Smith after her extradition to Ireland. An additional four people were arrested for financing jihadist terrorism. Europol also noted a rise in far-right extremism, based on the discovery of about a dozen Irish users in leaked user data from the far-right website Iron March. Europol identified "a strong international network involving right-wing extremists from Ireland, other European countries and the USA." According to Europol, "several high profile right-wing extremist online figures" in Ireland "ask for online donations, partially in cryptocurrencies." Europol also noted a growing anti-immigrant movement in Ireland consistent with right-wing ideology. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [3], [Europol](#) [37])

Nationalist Radicalization

"The Troubles" were a three-decade period of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland that began in the late 1960s and spread to the Republic of Ireland. Mostly Catholic "nationalists" or "republicans" wanted to expel British forces from Northern Ireland and reunite it with Ireland. On the other side, mostly Protestant pro-British "unionists" or "loyalists" sought to maintain Northern Ireland's position within the [United Kingdom](#) [38]. Several militant groups were active during this time, but the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was the most well-known. The original IRA, a.k.a. the "old IRA," fought in Ireland's war of independence between 1919 and 1921. In 1969, the Provisional IRA paramilitary group—commonly referred to as simply the IRA or PIRA—splintered from the "old IRA." (Sources: [BBC News](#) [10], [NBC News](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [12])

In 1986, the Continuity IRA (CIRA) split from the IRA over a political disagreement with the IRA's political party, Sinn Féin. The CIRA began its own campaign of violence in 1994 after the IRA declared a ceasefire. The group rejects the Good Friday Agreement and continues to claim violent attacks in the United Kingdom. The Real IRA (RIRA) is another IRA splinter group that broke away in the 1990s and continues to reject the 1998 ceasefire. In 2012, the New IRA emerged. By 2017, the Garda estimated that the New IRA had some 200 supporters in Ireland and Northern Ireland providing logistical support such as housing and transportation. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [12], [TRAC](#) [39], [Newsweek](#) [40], [Independent](#) [41], [Herald](#) [42])

On April 10, 1998, the British government, Ireland, and warring factions signed the Belfast Agreement, a.k.a. the Good Friday Agreement. The agreement 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. Sporadic violence continues to occur, but the fighting has largely ended. IRA splinter groups such as the New IRA, the Real IRA, and Óglaigh na hÉireann ("Soldiers of Ireland") have sought to disrupt the calm. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [18], [Christian Science Monitor](#) [19], [Gov.UK](#) [20], [Reuters](#) [21], [Reuters](#) [22], [Irish Times](#) [23], [Irish Times](#) [43], [CAIN](#) [44])

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Between 2015 and 2017, the Garda seized 100 kilograms of explosives, as well as AK-47s, and other weaponry from republican extremists. In recent years, republican attacks in Northern Ireland have largely focused on security personnel. Irish authorities have linked some violent attacks by Irish republicans to individuals in Ireland, according to the U.S. State Department. In December 2015, the Garda uncovered a cache of weapons and explosives in Ireland's County Monaghan. Irish police said that the weapons would have posed "a very significant threat to security personnel on both sides of the border." In March 2014, gardaí arrested five men after discovering a bomb in County Louth near the border with Northern Ireland. In September 2013, police discovered guns and ammunition used by republican dissidents in Dublin and County Clare. Nonetheless, a 2015 Garda report found no evidence that the IRA is operating within the republic. In May that year, the Garda arrested a north Dublin man on explosives charges during a visit by Prince Charles, and that December, the Garda uncovered a weapons cache in County Monaghan. In February 2016, the CIRA claimed responsibility for a shooting at a Dublin boxing match that killed one man and wounded two others. The CIRA claimed it planned to continue to target "drug dealers and criminals." The group said it opposed any peace deal that did not include a united Ireland. (Sources: [Herald](#) [42], [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [BBC News](#) [24], [The Journal](#) [46], [BBC News](#) [47], [BBC News](#) [48])

Republican recruitment has continued in Ireland. In 2000, Real IRA member John McDonough pled guilty to recruiting five teenage boys outside a McDonald's in Dublin the previous year. McDonough took the young men to a Real IRA training camp at a farmhouse in Drogheda, Ireland, which Irish authorities raided soon after. In March 2001, the Special Criminal Court in Dublin imprisoned six men for attending a Real IRA training camp in County Meath the previous year. In 2009, the Police Service of Northern Ireland reported that Irish Republican groups had turned to social media to recruit teenagers to their cause. The police pointed to a popular social network in Ireland called Bebo. One group on Bebo, called "Support the Dissidents," featured pictures of men in paramilitary uniforms and republican slogans such as "Remember the price that has been paid, do not allow it to be for nothing." A message in another Bebo group, called "Join the ERPS," read: "The Republican cause has been betrayed by traitors such as [Sinn Féin leaders] Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness" ... "enemies of Irish republicanism." Bebo's management promised to remove inflammatory content. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [49], [Irish Central](#) [50], [Irish Times](#) [51], [The Journal](#) [46])

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 its political party, Sinn Féin. Separately, the Garda reported no evidence of the IRA operating within Ireland. Nonetheless, Garda chief Michael O'Sullivan said in 2017 that the New IRA poses the "biggest security threat" since the IRA in the 1990s. In September 2020, British intelligence revealed the New IRA began communicating with Hezbollah and Palestinian militant groups in 2017. New IRA leaders traveled to Lebanon in 2018 and reportedly received financial assistance and weaponry, though British security services did not indicate which group provided the weapons. (Sources: [The Journal](#) [46], [Herald](#) [42], [Arab News](#) [52], [Times](#) [53])

The Good Friday 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. Ireland's government is not directly affected, but the discord could potentially enflame republican tensions. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [54], [BBC News](#) [18], [Independent](#) [55], [BBC News](#) [56])

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, Taoiseach 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. 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. The United Kingdom officially left the European Union in January 2020 without an agreement on future relations between the United Kingdom, European Union, Northern Ireland, and Ireland. Negotiations remain ongoing. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [57], [Guardian](#) [58], [Guardian](#) [59], [Belfast Telegraph](#) [60], [BBC News](#) [9])

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Northern Ireland and the Troubles

The IRA carried out multiple bombings during the 1970s and 1980s targeting Irish and British civilians, politicians, and military in opposition to British rule over Northern Ireland. More than 1,800 people died in IRA attacks. According to the Garda, the IRA used Ireland for logistical support through so-called military departments in the country. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [10], [BBC News](#) [61], [BBC News](#) [62], [BBC News](#) [63])

During the Troubles, the IRA primarily used Ireland to direct funding and weapons to militants in Northern Ireland. The IRA also relied on the support of Irish-Americans and Irish charities in the United States to collect money and weapons. Between 1969 and 1985, security forces seized more than 8,000 weapons in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Of those, 1,357 of the weapons seized in Ireland reportedly came from the United States. On September 29, 1984, the Irish navy seized the Irish trawler *Marita Ann*, which was carrying seven tons of rifles, ammunition, and other military-related equipment smuggled from the United States bound for the IRA. Beginning in 1985, the Garda investigated the IRA's use of Irish pubs as sources of money laundering and racketeering. The IRA stole millions of Irish pounds in bank robberies, which it then laundered. In 1992, Irish media reported that 37 pubs in and around Dublin were suspected IRA fronts. In 1997, the IRA reportedly hired a Dublin-based accountant and other professionals to oversee the finances of 20 militia-owned pubs in Ireland and two taxi companies in Dublin. At that time, the IRA reportedly had an annual income of 10 million Irish pounds from robberies, fraud, counterfeiting, and front businesses. (Sources: [Christian Science Monitor](#) [64], [Independent](#) [65], [Irish Times](#) [66])

Some IRA members sought refuge in Ireland. In 1983, IRA militants Dermot Finucane and James Pius Clarke escaped a Northern Ireland prison and fled to Dublin. In 1990, the Irish supreme court refused a British extradition request on grounds that their convictions were political and they would likely be beaten by British prison guards, which then-British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said would encourage terrorists to seek haven in Ireland. The British government granted Finucane amnesty in 2002. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [67], [Irish Independent](#) [68], [Guardian](#) [69])

In 2014, Kieran Conway, a former head of IRA intelligence in the 1970s, claimed that some gardaí and other Irish officials had colluded with the IRA to alert the terror group ahead of arrest raids, move money, or collect weapons for the group. A 2013 report by Judge Peter Smithwick found evidence of collusion between the IRA and Irish police in a March 1989 IRA ambush that killed two Northern Ireland policemen in Northern Ireland after they crossed the border following a meeting at a Garda station in Dundalk, Ireland. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [70], [Guardian](#) [71], [BBC News](#) [72])

The Ulster Defense Association (UDA) was a loyalist paramilitary group formed in 1971 that at one point included 30,000 people. It was responsible for killing about 100 people. Operating under the name the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), a group of UDA members claimed deadly attacks such as a 1992 shooting at a Belfast bookstore that left five people dead. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was another pro-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 republicans. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [73], [NBC News](#) [11], [BBC News](#) [74])

Beginning with an August 5, 1969, bombing outside the RTÉ Television Centre in Dublin, the UVF claimed several bombings in the Republic of Ireland during the Troubles. The UVF was responsible for the Dublin-Monaghan bombings in Ireland on May 17, 1974, reportedly the single largest loss of life in one day during the Troubles. Three bombs exploded almost simultaneously in Dublin during rush hour, while a fourth bomb exploded 90 minutes later in Monaghan, near the border with Northern Ireland. The bombings killed 33 and an unborn child and wounded almost 300. The UVF claimed responsibility in 1993. (Sources: [CAIN](#) [13], [CAIN](#) [14], [RTÉ](#) [15], [CAIN](#) [16], [BBC News](#) [17])

The IRA also claimed responsibility for several bombings that killed high-profile victims in Ireland. On July 21, 1976, a landmine blew up the car of U.K. Ambassador to Ireland Christopher Ewart-Biggs near his home in south Dublin. An August 27, 1979, a bomb on a fishing boat near Sligo killed 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 claimed responsibility. Thomas McMahon was later convicted for the bombing but released in 1998 under the Good Friday Agreement. (Sources: [CAIN](#) [75], [BBC News](#) [76], [BBC News](#) [77])

The IRA and Protestant 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

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

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](#) [78], [Irish Times](#) [79], [CAIN](#) [80], [Baltimore Sun](#) [81])

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](#) [82], [BBC News](#) [83], [CAIN](#) [84], [New York Times](#) [85], [New York Times](#) [86], [RTÉ](#) [87], [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) [88], [Irish News](#) [89])

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 RIRA had reportedly swayed republican loyalties in the republic away from Sein Féin and the IRA. (Sources: [Chicago Tribune](#) [90], [New York Times](#) [91], [Irish Times](#) [92])

Founded in 1905, Sinn Féin (“We Ourselves”) is a left-wing Irish political party active in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Sinn Féin is dedicated to creating a united Irish republic that encompasses the Republic of 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.” Nonetheless, Sinn Féin is the third largest political party in the Republic of Ireland as of the February 2016 parliamentary elections. (Sources: [10 Downing Street](#) [93], [BBC](#) [94], [Sinn Féin](#) [95], [Sinn Féin](#) [96], [New York Times](#) [97])

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 the Republic of 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](#) [98], [The Journal](#) [99], [BBC News](#) [100], [Irish News](#) [101])

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. The Northern Ireland Police Service blamed the violence on the New IRA and other republican groups opposed to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. That night, explosive devices 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. Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar wrote on Twitter, “We will not allow a small minority intent on violence to drag Northern Ireland back to the past.” (Sources: [NBC News](#) [102], [RTÉ](#) [103], [BBC News](#) [104], [Twitter](#) [105], [Independent](#) [106])

Islamist Radicalization

Ireland has not faced a major domestic terror attack driven by Islamist extremism, but radicalization remains a concern for government and communal leaders. As of June 2017, Ireland is home to more than 63,000 Muslims, making Islam the country’s third largest religion. Irish Islamic cleric Shaykh Dr. Muhammad Umar al-Qadri has warned that more than 100 radical jihadists are at-large in the country. Qadri warned of the growing radical threats within the Irish Muslim community in a 2015 letter to the Irish Council of Imams. The letter pointed to the radicalization of young Muslims in the United Kingdom, Netherlands, and other European countries and called for pro-active counter-radicalization initiatives within Irish Islamic schools, including standardizing a curriculum across the country. Qadri has also called for the Irish Islamic leadership to condemn “hate narratives” and take the lead in providing counter-narratives. Qadri resigned from the

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

council in 2016 because of his reported “lack of confidence and trust in the council.” (Sources: [Irish Examiner](#) [107], [Guardian](#) [108], [Irish Independent](#) [109], [Belfast Telegraph](#) [110])

The Irish government has taken note of the threat of radicalization within its Islamic community. In the summer of 2016, Irish intelligence units increased their monitoring of suspected [ISIS](#) [111] sympathizers in Ireland out of growing concern about lone-wolf attacks. Nonetheless, former-[al-Qaeda](#) [112]-member-turned-security-specialist Aimen Dean warned in May 2017 that Ireland represents a “safe haven” for terrorists because it lacks a central intelligence agency and relies too much on international intelligence. In March 2018, a Garda spokesman confirmed the police force was monitoring “no more than 30 people” in Ireland who have demonstrated radical views. (Sources: [Belfast Telegraph](#) [110], [Irish Post](#) [113], [Irish Mirror](#) [114], [The Journal](#) [115])

Authorities have identified cases of extremists operating in Ireland to radicalize Irish citizens and provide support for extremism abroad. In 2017, Irish authorities identified a Pakistani-born British citizen known as “Raza,” who led a financial fraud network to fundraise and provide support for [ISIS](#) fighters. Raza’s Irish fiancée reportedly radicalized after converting to Islam and co-directed the fraud network. Authorities believe Raza intentionally radicalized other Irish Muslims as well. (Sources: [Belfast Telegraph](#) [110], [Irish Post](#) [113], [Irish Independent](#) [116],)

The London Bridge Attack and Links to Dublin

On June 3, 2017, Youssef Zaghba, Khuram Butt, and Rachid Redouane ran over several people in a van on London Bridge. 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](#) [117], [BBC News](#) [118], [BBC News](#) [119], [Associated Press](#) [120], [Reuters](#) [121], [Wall Street Journal](#) [122], [Independent](#) [123])

Following the attack, investigators learned that Redouane had lived in Dublin for several years and was married to an Irish woman. Two years before the bridge attack, Redouane and Butt had reportedly scouted Dublin as a target before deciding on London. According to media reports, the duo decided that Ireland “would suit [ISIS](#) better as a logistics base from where internet frauds could be carried out to raise funds.” While examining Dublin, the pair stayed with a Pakistani-born British citizen known as “Raza.” [MI5](#) and [Scotland Yard](#) believe Raza played a role in orchestrating the London Bridge attack. Raza employed an Internet scam to raise money for transportation and forged documentation for jihadists. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [124], [Irish Post](#) [125], [Irish Independent](#) [126], [Irish Independent](#) [127])

Terror Financing

In September 2017, Irish authorities uncovered the first major [ISIS](#) money laundering scheme in Ireland. A network of [ISIS](#) sympathizers in Ireland reportedly tricked university students—mostly foreign—into opening up personal Irish bank accounts. In September 2016, at least six accounts were created by unsuspecting participants, who were given cash to set up bank accounts and then turn over account details, PINs, and bank cards to the network members, who could then transfer funds outside of Ireland to foreign fighters in [ISIS](#) without fear the transfers would be traced back to them. Led by a Pakistani-born British citizen known as Raza, the network sought to use the fake accounts to move €2.8 million it defrauded from a Dublin-based data processing company. Also in September 2017, the Garda revealed that they were probing a suspected eight-man [ISIS](#) cell in western Ireland led by two Chechen brothers living in the country. The Garda suspected the cell of fundraising for and transferring funds to extremist organizations abroad. (Sources: [Irish Independent](#) [116], [Irish Independent](#) [128], [Irish Sun](#) [129])

In 2015, Irish authorities identified an elaborate financial ring operated by a Dublin-based individual with ties to [al-Qaeda](#). He reportedly received up to €3,000 a month from the Department of Social Welfare and had links to deceased [al-Qaeda](#) leader [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#) [130]. In addition to laundering money through several front companies, this individual provided false documentation to gain entry to other countries. A 2014 Central Bank report found that Irish financial firms needed to do more to “effectively manage” their money-laundering and terrorist-financing risks. (Source: [Irish Independent](#) [131])

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the Muslim Brotherhood

Qatar-based [Muslim Brotherhood](#) [132] ideologue [Yusuf al-Qaradawi](#) [133] is one of Sunni Islam's most influential scholars. Because of his statements and fatwas (religious decrees) inciting violence, he has been banned from the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. Qaradawi heads the Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), a foundation that promotes an extreme interpretation of sharia (Islamic law) based on Qaradawi's teachings. The council has routinely accepted Qaradawi's extreme dictums, such as his support of suicide bombings. Qaradawi has issued fatwas permitting suicide bombings against U.S. troops in Iraq and against Israeli civilians. At a 2003 ECFR meeting in Sweden, Qaradawi praised suicide bombers in Israel and denied that they could be classified as terrorism. In the aftermath of a 2016 series of suicide bombing in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Bangladesh, Arab Gulf leaders condemned Qaradawi's defense of suicide bombings for encouraging the attacks. Beginning in 2008, Irish immigration officials regularly blocked Qaradawi's visa applications to attend the ECFR's annual meetings citing Qaradawi's extreme rhetoric. Qaradawi has since been "red flagged," which makes him the subject of arrest if he enters Ireland. (Sources: [Irish Examiner](#) [134], [Wall Street Journal](#) [135], [European Council for Fatwa and Research](#) [136], [Irish Independent](#) [137], [Irish Times](#) [138], [MEMRI](#) [139], [MEMRI](#) [140], [MEMRI](#) [141], [The Journal](#) [142], [The Journal](#) [115], [Irish Mirror](#) [143], [Irish Sun](#) [144])

The ECFR is based at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI), Ireland's largest mosque. ICCI director Nooh Edreeb al-Kaddo allegedly has links to the Muslim Brotherhood, and has described Qaradawi as a "learned scholar" whose "views are representative of Islamic teachings and are not assumed to be a violation of same." Kaddo is also allegedly a former officer of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, the Brotherhood's European branch. In 2006, the U.S. embassy in Dublin expressed concerns about the ICCI's links to the Brotherhood, according to leaked Wikileaks documents. Then-U.S. Ambassador James Kenny also questioned Qaradawi's connection to the ICCI, given his links to the Brotherhood and radical statements in support of suicide bombings, spousal abuse, and anti-gay violence. According to his 2006 memo, Kenny cited an unidentified journalist who said that the Brotherhood was stronger in Ireland than anywhere else outside of Qatar, and Qaradawi "runs Islam in Ireland." (Sources: [Irish Examiner](#) [134], [Global Muslim Brotherhood Watch](#) [145], [European Council for Fatwa and Research](#) [136], [Irish Independent](#) [137], [Irish Independent](#) [137], [Irish Times](#) [138], [The Journal](#) [142], [The Journal](#) [115], [Irish Mirror](#) [143], [Irish Sun](#) [144])

ICCI representative Ali Selim has denied any connections between the ICCI and the Brotherhood. In March 2018, Selim told Ireland's *The Journal* newspaper that people focus only on Qaradawi's negative opinions while overlooking the majority of his views. Selim also told the newspaper that the opinions of U.S. officials cannot be trusted. The ICCI's imam, Sheikh Hussein Halawa, is Ireland's most senior cleric. He is also the general secretary of the ECFR. Halawa is on record denying any links to the Brotherhood, but he has also embraced radical views shared by Qaradawi, such as condemning homosexuality as "sinful." Sheikh Umar Al-Qadri, who has repeatedly warned against Islamic radicalization in Ireland, has criticized Halawa for not speaking out forcefully against extremism in Ireland, "allowing [extremists] to hijack our religion." (Sources: [Irish Examiner](#) [134], [European Council for Fatwa and Research](#) [136], [Irish Independent](#) [137], [Irish Times](#) [138], [The Journal](#) [142], [The Journal](#) [115], [Irish Mirror](#) [143], [Irish Sun](#) [144])

Colleen LaRose

[Colleen LaRose](#) [146], a.k.a. Jihad Jane, is an American citizen and a convicted Islamic extremist. Between 2008 and 2009, LaRose served as an online recruiter and fundraiser for an Ireland-based al-Qaeda cell from her home in Pennsylvania. In August of 2009, she traveled to Ireland to live with the cell members and to plan the assassination of Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, LaRose agreed to kill Vilks—who had previously depicted the Islamic prophet Muhammad as a dog—in such a way that would frighten "the whole Kufar [nonbeliever] world." LaRose lived in Ireland for approximately six weeks before she returned to the United States, according to the Assistant U.S. Attorney. She was arrested by the FBI in October 2009. LaRose pled guilty to four terrorism-related charges in February 2011, and authorities sentenced her to 10 years in prison in January 2014. The alleged leader of LaRose's cell, an Algerian Irish citizen named Ali Charaf Damache, was extradited to the United States in 2017 after his arrest in Spain. Damache reportedly initially convinced LaRose to travel to Ireland. In July 2018, Damache pled guilty to terrorism charges in U.S. court. (Sources: [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [147], [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [148], [Reuters](#) [149], [New York Times](#) [150], [New York Times](#) [151], [Inquirer](#) [152])

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Lisa Smith

[Lisa Smith](#) [1] is a former member of the Irish Defense Forces who converted to Islam before joining ISIS in Syria in 2015. Smith married a British ISIS fighter and later had a daughter. Following the territorial defeat of ISIS in March 2019, Smith and her daughter were detained at Ain Issa camp—a Kurdish-controlled displacement camp for wives and children of ISIS fighters. After Turkey’s incursion of the region in October 2019, Smith and her daughter were transferred to Turkish custody. On December 1, 2019, Smith was deported from Turkey and arrested upon arrival at Dublin Airport on suspicion of terrorism charges. According to authorities, Smith claimed she was not involved in combat and did not train girls to become fighters. On December 19, 2019, Cloverhill District Court in Dublin granted Lisa Smith bail following an appeal hearing. Although the court ruled that Smith was formerly a member of ISIS, Smith was examined by Professor Anne Speckhard who determined that Smith had “no interest in rejoining or returning to the Islamic State.” (Sources: [Belfast Telegraph](#) [2], [New York Times](#) [153], [BBC News](#) [154], [United Nations](#) [155])

Foreign Fighters

From the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011 through January 2016, between 30 and 50 Irish citizens traveled to the Middle East to join in the fighting. Some media estimate that up to half of these fighters have returned. In January 2018, the *Irish Sun* reported that gardaí are monitoring 20 Irish jihadists in the Middle East. (Sources: [Jamestown Foundation](#) [25], [The Journal](#) [156], [Irish Times](#) [26], [Irish Independent](#) [27], [Irish Sun](#) [28])

The Garda also believes that there is a small number of ISIS recruiters operating in Ireland. In July 2016, Ireland deported a Jordanian man accused of being the main ISIS recruiter in the country. The deported had been living in Ireland since 2000 and arranged travel for ISIS recruits, according to the government. (Sources: [Breaking News](#) [157], [Irish Times](#) [158], [The Times](#) [159])

There is some evidence that ISIS supporters in Ireland are using the country as a logistics hub for the movement of foreign fighters. For example, in January 2015, Humza Ali flew from the United Kingdom to Dublin to Istanbul, where he was denied entry to Syria and arrested. That November, authorities suspected a group of 12 Irish Islamic extremists of harboring jihadists from Britain and mainland Europe and providing them with fake passports and other documentation. Irish media have also reported that foreign intelligence agencies have reported that young Islamists are training in Ireland to become foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria. These prospective recruits reportedly go to “training camps” in the Leinster region, where one such camp reportedly took place in the fall of 2015. (Sources: [Irish Post](#) [113], [Irish Independent](#) [131])

The *Irish Independent* reported in August 2014 on a self-described “Irish-Nigerian” convert to Islam who had been trying to recruit individuals to come to Syria via the social media site Ask.fm. The paper also reported unconfirmed claims that young mujahideen fighters were using Ireland to recuperate after fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. In November 2015, an Irish cyber analyst identified 20 Irish ISIS recruiters operating on Twitter, as well as two ISIS recruitment websites based in Ireland. (Sources: [Irish Independent](#) [160], [The Journal](#) [161])

Khalid Kelly

In November 2016, Terence Kelly, a.k.a. Khalid and Abu Osama Irelandi, blew himself up in Iraq on behalf of ISIS. Kelly was a Catholic-born convert to Islam from Dublin. In 1996, Kelly began work at a hospital in Saudi Arabia. In 2000, Saudi authorities arrested him for illegally making alcohol in his apartment and sentenced him to eight months in prison. Kelly converted to Islam while in prison. In 2002, Kelly was deported to the United Kingdom. He moved to London and became a follower of British Islamist [Omar Bakri Mohammed](#) [162]. Kelly went on to join [Anjem Choudary](#) [163]’s now-banned al-Mouhajiroun network.

In 2010, Kelly trained for several months with the [Taliban](#) [164] in Pakistan before returning to Ireland, earning him the nickname “Taliban Terry” in Irish and British media. In May 2011, gardaí held Kelly for questioning on suspicion of threatening to kill U.S. President Barack Obama during an upcoming visit to Ireland. Garda also suspected Kelly of plotting to assassinate Prince Charles in 2015. In both cases, the Garda released Kelly for a lack of evidence of specific plots. The Garda believes that Kelly’s radicalization began in prison in Saudi Arabia and continued online. Kelly died on November 4, 2016, after he drove an explosives-filled armored truck into a Popular Mobilization Unit target in Iraq. As of January 2018,

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

the Garda reportedly continues to list Kelly as missing rather than dead. (Sources: [Independent](#) [165], [Telegraph](#) [166], [Guardian](#) [167], [CNN](#) [168], [Daily Mail](#) [169], [Irish Independent](#) [170], [Irish Independent](#) [171], [Breaking News](#) [157], [Irish Times](#) [172], [Irish Sun](#) [28])

Joshua Molloy

Joshua Molloy is an Irish citizen from County Laois who traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight alongside a Kurdish militia against ISIS. After finishing school, the England-born Molloy joined the British army's Royal Irish Regiment for four years because he reportedly wanted to see the world. After hearing reports of ISIS persecution of the Yazidis, Molloy traveled to Syria in March 2015 and joined the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). In April 2016, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq arrested Molloy and two British nationals for illegally crossing into the country from Syria as they were trying to return home. Molloy and the two British nationals spent over a week in an Iraqi prison until the U.K. Foreign Office negotiated their release with the KRG. (Sources: [The Journal](#) [173], [Irish Times](#) [174], [Irish Times](#) [175], [Irish Times](#) [176], [The Journal](#) [177], [BBC News](#) [178])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Ireland experienced a string of bombings in the 1970s during the Troubles, when republicans and loyalists violently clashed across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland over the fate of Northern Ireland. The largest of these attacks was the Dublin-Monaghan bombings of May 17, 1974, during which multiple bombs exploded in Dublin and Monaghan during morning rush hour, killing 33 and wounding almost 300. It was reportedly the single biggest loss of life in one day during the Troubles. Ireland has not experience a major terrorist attack since that period. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [179], [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [RTÉ](#) [15], [CAIN](#) [16], [BBC News](#) [17])

- **September 11, 2019:**A 37-year-old man is extradited from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland on terrorism charges. He first appeared before Newry Magistrates' Court on October 24, 2016. He was later released on bail to live at an approved address in Ireland. At that time, he was charged with a number of terrorism-related offenses. This included membership of a proscribed organization, conspiracy to possess explosives with intent to endanger life, preparation of terrorist acts, and receiving training or instruction in the making or use of weapons for terrorism. Source: [BBC News](#) [180]
- **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. The Northern Ireland Police Service blamed the violence on the New IRA and other republican groups opposed to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. That night, explosive devices 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. Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar wrote on Twitter, "We will not allow a small minority intent on violence to drag Northern Ireland back to the past." Sources: [NBC News](#) [102], [RTÉ](#) [103], [BBC News](#) [104], [Twitter](#) [105], [Independent](#) [106]
- **September 2017:**A suspected ISIS cell of eight, headed by two Chechen brothers in west Ireland is put under surveillance for suspicion that they were undertaking "dummy runs" using the local postal service to send items to the Middle East, as well as working to fundraise and make financial transfers to support extremist organizations. Source: [Global Risk Insights](#) [181]
- **June 26, 2015:**Two gunmen kill 39 and wound 36 at a seaside resort hotel in Sousse, Tunisia. Three Irish citizens are among the dead. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [CNN](#) [182], [BBC News](#) [183], [Department of the Taoiseach](#) [184]
- **January 31, 1999:**Former IRA prisoner and opponent of the peace process Paddy Fox is abducted outside a hotel in Monaghan. He is beaten and released later in the day. The IRA is suspected. Sources: [CAIN](#) [44], [Independent](#) [185]
- **February 10, 1994:**Gunmen shoot dead former Irish National Liberation Front leader Dominic McGlinchey in Drogheda. There are no claims of responsibility. Source: [CAIN](#) [186]>
- **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. The following day, loyalist paramilitaries mistakenly kill Protestant student Adam Lambert in Belfast, thinking he was Catholic. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reportedly believes the bombing to be a "last straw" violation of the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, which gave Ireland a consultative role in Northern Ireland. A

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

twelfth person dies in 2000 after 13 years in a coma. Sources: [CAIN](#) [84], [New York Times](#) [85], [New York Times](#) [86], [RTÉ](#) [87], [Encyclopedia Britannica](#) [88], [Irish News](#) [89]

- **January 20, 1987 - March 26, 1987:**A feud between the INLA and the Irish People's Liberation Organisation results in 11 deaths in Drogheda, County Louth.
Source: [CAIN](#) [84]
- **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. Sources: [New York Times](#) [187], [Irish News](#) [188], [New York Times](#) [85]
- **May 1981 - July 1981:**On May 5, IRA member Bobby Sands dies while on a hunger strike in a Northern Ireland prison, leading to riots in Northern Ireland and Ireland.
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 gardaí outside the British embassy. Of the 200, 150 are reportedly gardaí. The hunger strike continues until October, resulting in the deaths of 10 total strikers and 66 people in strike-related violence outside the prison. Sources: [CAIN](#) [189], [The Journal](#) [190], [Houses of the Oireachtas](#) [191]
- **August 27, 1979:**A bomb on a fishing boat near Sligo 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. 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](#) [75], [Irish Times](#) [192], [BBC News](#) [76]
- **October 16, 1976:**A gardaí is killed by a bomb near Portlaoise, County Laois.
Source: [CAIN](#) [193]
- **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](#) [77]
- **November 29, 1975:**Two bombs explode in a bathroom at Dublin Airport, killing one and injuring eight others.
The Ulster Defence Association claims responsibility. Sources: [Irish Independent](#) [194], [RTÉ](#) [195]
- **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](#) [15], [CAIN](#) [16], [BBC News](#) [17]
- **January 20, 1973:**A bomb in a hijacked car explodes in Dublin, killing one and wounding 20.
There are no claims of responsibility. Sources: [Justice for the Forgotten](#) [196], [CAIN](#) [197], [The Journal](#) [198]
- **December 28, 1972:**A bomb in the village of Belturbet in County Cavan kills two.
There are no claims of responsibility. Source: [CAIN](#) [199]
- **December 1, 1972:**Two car bombs kill two civilians and wound 127 more in Dublin.
The attacks are the first car bombs to explode in the Republic of Ireland. There are no claims of responsibility. The bombings come as the Irish government is debating the Offences Against the State Bill to increase police powers to combat the Provisional IRA. Sources: [History Ireland](#) [200], [Justice for the Forgotten](#) [196], [Irish Times](#) [201], [The Journal](#) [198]
- **November 26, 1972:**IRA gunmen dressed as police and priests raid the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in Dublin in an attempt to free Scan MacStiofain, leader of the Provisional wing of the IRA, who was brought to the hospital after he collapsed from a hunger strike in prison.
Two civilians, a police officer, and two of the gunmen are wounded. Sources: [BBC News](#) [202], [New York Times](#) [203]
- **November 26, 1972:**A bomb explodes at the Film Centre movie theater in Dublin during a late-night screening, wounding 40.
The IRA denies responsibility. Sources: [New York Times](#) [203], [Department of the Taoiseach](#) [204], [Justice for the Forgotten](#) [196], [The Journal](#) [198]
- **March 20, 1972:**A car bomb in Belfast kills six and wounds 100.
The IRA claims responsibility. Source: [CAIN](#) [199]
- **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. Sources: [CAIN](#) [199], [Irish Times](#) [192]

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **February 8, 1971:**A bomb destroys the Wolfe Tone statue at St. Stephen's Green park in Dublin. Source: [CAIN](#) [205]
- **January 17, 1971:**A bomb explodes in the tomb beneath the Daniel O'Connell monument at Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin. Sources: [The Journal](#) [206], [RTÉ](#) [207], [CAIN](#) [205]
- **July 2, 1970:**A bomb damages the main Dublin-Belfast railway line in Baldoyle. The UVF is suspected. Source: [CAIN](#) [14]
- **March 26, 1970:**A bomb explodes and causes damage at an electricity substation in Tallaght in South Dublin. The UVF claim responsibility. Source: [CAIN](#) [14]
- **December 28, 1969:**A bomb explodes outside the Garda Síochána central detective bureau in Dublin. Gardaí suspect the UVF. On the same day, the IRA splits into the Official IRA and Provisional IRA factions. Source: [CAIN](#) [14]
- **December 26, 1969:**A bomb at the Daniel O'Connell monument in Dublin causes no casualties but damages the monument and destroys windows within a half-mile of the site. Authorities believe the UVF to be responsible. Source: [CAIN](#) [13]
- **October 31, 1969:**A bomb explodes at the grave of 18th century Irish revolutionary Wolfe Tone in Bodenstown, destroying a headstone. The UVF claims responsibility. Source: [CAIN](#) [13]
- **August 5, 1969:**A bomb damages the outside of the RTÉ Television Centre in Dublin. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) claims responsibility. It is the UVF's first attack in the Republic of Ireland. Source: [CAIN](#) [13]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

The Irish government terror threat level has remained at moderate since 2015, meaning that a terror attack is possible but not likely. In July 2017, EU Commissioner for Security Union Julian King said that Ireland is not immune from “low-cost terrorism,” such as the recent car-ramming attacks in the United Kingdom. In the aftermath of the August 2017 terror attacks in Barcelona, Spain, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney said that Ireland is “better prepared” than ever before for a terrorist attack. In August 2017, the Irish government published its annual National Risk Assessment for 2017. The report found that an international terrorist attack in Ireland remains possible but unlikely. The possibility of such a threat remains under constant review, according to the assessment. (Source: [Irish Sun](#) [208], [Belfast Telegraph](#) [110], [Irish Examiner](#) [209], [Irish Times](#) [210], [Irish Times](#) [179], [Department of the Taoiseach](#) [184])

In June 2017, incoming Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar promised to create a cabinet subcommittee on terrorism and security, modeled after the United Kingdom's Cabinet Office Briefing Room A (Cobra) committee. The U.K. Cobra committee holds security briefings on terrorism and major crises. The Irish government had not yet instituted such a committee as of January 2018. In December 2017, Varadkar announced intentions to divide the Justice Department in 2018 into separate Justice and Home Affairs departments. The Justice Department would continue to oversee civil and criminal law reform, crime and security, and international policy, while Home Affairs would oversee policing, prisons, courts, equality, and integration. (Sources: [Irish Independent](#) [211], [Irish Examiner](#) [212], [Irish Examiner](#) [213], [Irish Times](#) [214])

The Republic of Ireland seeks to integrate its immigrant population through a series of benefits meant to prevent radicalization. In April 2000, the Garda created the Garda Racial, Intercultural & Diversity Office (GRIDO) to “coordinate, monitor and advise on all aspects of policing in the area of diversity.” In May 2009, the Garda published “Beyond Legal Compliance,” a diversity strategy plan through 2012 that called for increasing diversity within the organization in order to enhance communal relationships and better domestic policing. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [Garda](#) [215], [Ireland Department of Justice & Equality](#) [216], [Ireland Department of Justice & Equality](#) [217])

Legislation

Beginning with the Offenses Against the State Acts of 1939, Irish counterterrorism legislation initially targeted the IRA. The government has subsequently broadened the Offenses Against the State acts to include a broader range of terrorist offenses. In 1998, the government passed the Offenses Against the State (Amendment) Act, which added “direction of terrorism” as an offense. The 2005 Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offenses) Act prohibited any international terrorist group “that engages in, promotes, encourages or advocates the commission, in or outside the State....” The 2005 act further specified Ireland's definition of terrorism and aligned it with international statutes such as the 1997 U.N. International

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings. (Sources: [Ireland Department of Justice and Equality](#) [218], [Irish Times](#) [201], [Irish Statute Book](#) [219], [Irish Statute Book](#) [220], [Irish Statute Book](#) [221], [Irish Statute Book](#) [222])

In August 2014, Ireland's legislature introduced new terrorism laws adopting three new terrorism offenses: public provocation to commit a terrorist offence, recruitment for terrorism, and training for terrorism. The laws went into effect in 2015 as the Criminal Justice (Terrorism Offences) Act of 2015, which amended Ireland's Terrorism Offences Act. The act also specifically recognized that terrorist-linked activities may be committed electronically and imposed sentences of up to 10 years. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [The Irish Sun](#) [223], [Ireland Department of Justice and Equality](#) [218], [Irish Times](#) [224])

In June 2017, the Irish Department of Justice announced new legislation making it illegal for Irish citizens to travel abroad to join or support terrorist organizations. The new legislation was reportedly a response to information that one of the attackers in the 2017 London Bridge attack had lived in Dublin for several years. (Source: [Irish Post](#) [225])

In January 2019, Ireland's government introduced the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill. The proposed law would create a new Media Commission to replace the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. It would also create a new Online Safety Commissioner, who will have the ability to fine companies that do not control the spread of harmful videos and other content on their community forums and platforms. The commissioner will also have the authority to shut down forums with repeated infractions. Ireland's regulator would also reportedly become the de-facto pan-European regulator for tech companies with European headquarters in Ireland. The regulator would be funded by fees imposed on companies. The proposed law is Ireland's incorporation of the European Union's Audiovisual Media Services Directive to regulate the publication of abusive or harmful videos online. The deadline for incorporating this directive into national laws was September 19, 2020, but Ireland and several other countries are expected to miss the deadline due to delays stemming from COVID-19 restrictions. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [226], [Ireland Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment](#) [227], [Government of Ireland](#) [228])

Domestic Policing

An Garda Síochána (Garda) is Ireland's domestic and national police service responsible for counterterrorism and intelligence. In July 2016, the Garda increased their monitoring of suspected ISIS sympathizers to better prevent lone-wolf attacks. In 2016, Garda released a five-year Modernisation and Renewal Programme, which called for increased information-sharing and cooperation with international partners on terrorism and crime, as well as increased visibility for Garda patrols, enhanced communal relations, and renewed focus on domestic crime prevention. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [An Garda Síochána](#). [229])

Irish pundits and security officials have criticized Ireland's lack of preparation for a terror attack. Tom Clonan, a security analyst for Ireland's *Journal* newspaper, wrote in April 2017 that Ireland was "Europe's weakest link in terms of counter terrorism awareness, preparedness and training." Security analyst Michael C Murphy, a former deputy director of Irish military intelligence, said in July 2017 that the "inaction" of Ireland's government puts both Ireland and the European Union at risk. Members of the Garda have also expressed concern over their training and equipment's ability to defend against terrorist attacks. In June 2017, the president of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) publicly declared that they have received no training and are ill-equipped to handle a domestic terror attack. Budget cuts had further limited Garda's intelligence capabilities, according to AGSI president Antoinette Cunningham. (Sources: [The Journal](#) [30], [Irish Times](#) [31], [Irish Independent](#) [32])

In October 2016, the Irish government approved a plan to expand the Garda to 15,000 gardaí, 2,000 reserves, and 4,000 civilian staff by 2021 from then current levels of just under 14,000 people. In December 2016, the Department of Justice created the Garda Armed Support Unit (ASU), an armed unit of the Garda to combat gang violence. Beginning in June 2017, ASU members were stationed in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Kilkenny to guard against potential terrorist threats. Garda held an unprecedented counterterror training exercise in Dublin in July 2017. In October 2017, the Justice Department announced plans to increase the force by 800. But the Garda Representative Association (GRA) has criticized the modernization plan as too slow, lamenting a lack of street patrols driving down the visible Garda presence in urban and rural areas. (Sources: [Belfast Telegraph](#) [110], [Irish Times](#) [33], [Irish Times](#) [34], [The Journal](#) [35], [The Journal](#) [230], [Irish Independent](#) [231], [Frances Fitzgerald TD](#) [36], [Irish Department of Justice and Equality](#) [232])

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

In January 2018, the Irish government further sought to scale back on armed Garda patrols in order to control spending on overtime pay to gardaí. Cuts were made to the Armed Response Unit and Special Detective Unit patrols in Dublin. The GRA called for armed patrols to be increased, not cut. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [33], [Irish Times](#) [34])

International Counter-Extremism

International Agreements

In 1986, the Republic of Ireland signed the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism. In 1997, Ireland signed the International Convention on the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, which the government ratified in 2005. The agreement requires signatories to condemn “all acts, methods and practices of terrorism as criminal and unjustifiable, wherever and by whomever committed, including those which jeopardize the friendly relations among States and peoples and threaten the territorial integrity and security of States.” (Sources: [CAIN](#) [233], [Council of Europe](#) [234], [United Nations](#) [235], [United Nations](#) [236], [United Nations](#) [237])

In December 2017, Ireland joined other EU Member States in signing the Permanent Structured Cooperation Agreement (PESCO), a defense pact to integrate EU countries’ armies. Signatories agreed to jointly fund, develop, and deploy defense capabilities. All EU nations except for Denmark, Malta, and the United Kingdom signed the pact. Ireland would remain unaligned and neutral, despite signed the PESCO, according to Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. (Sources: [Irish Times](#) [238], [Reuters](#) [239], [Irish Independent](#) [240], [Irish Independent](#) [241])

International Missions

Ireland has contributed forces to the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since the body’s creation in 1978. As of December 2017, Ireland maintained 377 soldiers in UNIFIL, the country’s largest overseas deployment. From 1978 to January 2018, 46 Irish soldiers were killed as part of the UNIFIL mission. As of January 2018, an additional 580 Irish troops serve in eight other international peacekeeping missions in Mali, Kosovo, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Western Sahara, the Congo, and various locations in the Middle East. From June 1997 to August 1998, Ireland participated in the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force in the area of separation between Israel and Syria in the Golan Heights. (Sources: [Office of the Taoiseach](#) [242], [UNIFIL](#) [243], [Defense Forces Ireland](#) [244], [Defense Forces Ireland](#) [245])

Ireland is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Ireland’s contributions to the coalition focus primarily on humanitarian concerns and stemming the flow of foreign fighters. A representative of Ireland’s Department of Foreign Affairs told Irish media in 2016 that Ireland “has not and will not” participate in international military action against ISIS. Ireland has not contributed personnel toward Operation Inherent Resolve, nor has the country contributed financially toward the anti-ISIS military campaign. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [Global Coalition Against Daesh](#) [246], [Irish Times](#) [247])

Terror-Financing

Ireland is a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). According to a June 2017 FATF assessment, Ireland “has a sound and substantially effective regime to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing, but could do more to obtain money laundering and terrorist financing convictions and demonstrate its effectiveness in confiscating proceeds of crime.” The FATF report praised Ireland for promoting cooperation between the Department of Justice and Equality and the Central Bank of Ireland. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [45], [FATF](#) [248])

Public Opinion

Following the March 2017 terror attack in Manchester, England, an informal poll by Ireland’s *Journal* newspaper found that 87 percent of 27,582 respondents did not believe Ireland was prepared for a terror attack. A June 2017 Gallup poll found that 32 percent of Irish citizens felt acts of terrorism in Ireland by non-residents were a serious problem, while 38 percent felt terrorism by residents was a serious problem. Another 32 percent felt immigration levels constituted a serious

Ireland: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

problem. (Sources: [The Journal](#) [29], [Gallup](#) [249])