

Name: ISIS

Type of Organization:

- Insurgent
- territory-controlling
- religious
- terrorist
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Islamist
- jihadist
- pan-Islamist
- Salafist
- takfiri

Place of Origin:

Iraq

Year of Origin:

Al-Qaeda in Iraq: 2004; ISIS: 2013

Founder(s):

Al-Qaeda in Iraq: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi; ISIS: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

Places of Operation:

ISIS has declared wilayas (provinces) in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Central Africa, and the North Caucasus. Beyond this, the terror group has waged attacks in Lebanon, France, Belgium, Bangladesh, Morocco, Indonesia, Malaysia, Tunisia, and Kuwait.

Overview

Also known as:

ISIS

- Al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in Iraq¹
- Al-Qa'ida Group of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers²
- Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)³
- Al-Qa'ida in Iraq - Zargawi⁴
- Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia (AQM)⁵
- Al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers⁶
- Al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers⁷
- Al-Qa'ida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers⁸
- Al-Qaeda Separatists in Iraq and Syria (QSI)⁹
- Al-Tawhid¹⁰
- Al-Tawhid and al-Jihad¹¹
- Al-Zargawi Network¹²
- Ansar Beit al-Maqdis¹³
- Battar Brigade¹⁴
- Brigades of Tawhid¹⁵
- Daesh¹⁶
- Dawla al-Islamiya¹⁷
- Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa as-Sham¹⁸
- Islamic Caliphate¹⁹
- Islamic Caliphate State²⁰
- Islamic State (IS)²¹
- Islamic State in Iraq (ISI)²²
- Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)²³
- Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)²⁴
- Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)²⁵
- Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS)²⁶
- Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)²⁷
- Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)²⁸
- Islamic State Pakistan Province²⁹
- Islamic Youth Shura Council³⁰
- Jam'at al-Tawhid Wa'al-Jihad (JTJ)³¹
- Kateab al-Tawhid³²
- Monotheism and Jihad Group³³
- Mujahidin Shura Council³⁴
- Organization Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia³⁵
- Organization of al-Jihad's Base in Iraq³⁶
- Organization of al-Jihad's Base in the Land of the Two Rivers³⁷
- Organization Base of Jihad/Country of the Two Rivers³⁸
- Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in Iraq³⁹
- Organization of al-Jihad's Base of Operations in the Land of the Two Rivers⁴⁰
- Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers⁴¹
- Qaida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers⁴²
- Southern Province⁴³
- Tanzeem Qa'idat al Jihad Bilad al Raafidaini⁴⁴
- Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn⁴⁵
- Unity and Holy Struggle⁴⁶
- Unity and Holy War⁴⁷
- Unity and Jihad Group⁴⁸
- Wilayah al-Hind (India)⁴⁹
- Wilayah Badiya⁵⁰
- Wilayah Barakah (Hasaka)⁵¹
- Wilayah Kheir (Deir al Zour)⁵²
- Wilayah Raqqa⁵³
- Wilayah al-Tarabulus⁵⁴
- Wilayah Anbar⁵⁵
- Wilayah Barqa⁵⁶
- Wilayah Coast (Al Sahel)⁵⁷
- Wilayah Damascus (Dimashq)⁵⁸
- Wilayah Diyala⁵⁹
- Wilayah Fezza⁶⁰
- Wilayah Gharb Ifriqiyya⁶¹
- Wilayah Halab (Aleppo)⁶²
- Wilayah Hama⁶³
- Wilayah Idlib⁶⁴
- Wilayah Khorasan⁶⁵
- Wilayah Kirkuk⁶⁶
- Wilayah Ninawa⁶⁷
- Wilayah Salahuddin⁶⁸
- Wilayah Pakistan⁶⁹
- Wilayah Turkey⁷⁰
- Wilayah Central Africa⁷¹

Executive Summary:

ISIS is an extremist group formed from [al-Qaeda](#) [1] offshoots in Iraq and Syria. Since its formation in 2013, ISIS has worked to sustain a self-declared caliphate in eastern Syria and western Iraq. Ultimately, ISIS seeks to unite the world under a single caliphate, and to that end the group has begun to establish satellite operations in nine countries. Initially, ISIS gained support within Iraq as a Sunni insurgency group fighting what some Sunnis viewed as a partisan Shiite-led Iraqi government. The group has since garnered additional momentum as a result of the Syrian civil war, and has recruited up to 33,000 fighters from around the world. Thousands of foreign ISIS fighters are estimated to have been killed in battle, while some have returned—or are reportedly planning to return—to their home countries.⁷²

ISIS finds its origins in al-Qaeda forerunner al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), formed by sectarian extremist [Abu Musab al-Zarqawi](#) [2]. During the Iraq War and its aftermath, the group experienced a series of setbacks and restructurings, for a while going by the name the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). In June 2014, the group—then led by Iraqi extremist [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) [3]—unilaterally declared a caliphate spanning eastern Syria and western Iraq, naming Baghdadi as its “caliph.” In his first speech as “caliph,” Baghdadi made clear that ISIS’s aspirations were not limited to any one region, saying that the group sought to establish governance over all Muslims. Consequently, the organization changed its name from the “Islamic State

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in Iraq and Syria” (or the “Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham”) to simply the “Islamic State.”

Although ISIS controlled large swaths of territory across Iraq and Syria at the peak of its territorial control in the summer of 2014, the group lost the last of those territorial holdings over the course of 2017.⁷³ At its height, ISIS controlled almost 40 percent of Iraqi territory. By April 2017, U.S.-backed Iraqi forces had reduced ISIS’s control of the country to less than 7 percent.⁷⁴ On July 10, 2017, the Iraqi government announced the liberation of Iraq’s second largest city of Mosul, where Baghdadi had declared ISIS’s caliphate three years earlier.⁷⁵ Following the November 17 recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in Iraq, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared military victory over ISIS in the country.⁷⁶ In June 2017, U.S.-backed forces began an offensive to drive ISIS out of its declared capital in Raqqa, Syria.⁷⁷ On October 17, 2017, American-backed forces announced the liberation of Raqqa, and on November 21, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani declared that ISIS had been driven out of Syria by Iranian-backed forces.⁷⁸ By December 2018, ISIS retained only a small foothold in the Syrian town of Baghuz along the Syrian-Iraqi border.⁷⁹ In March 2019, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched an assault on ISIS forces in Baghuz.⁸⁰ Notwithstanding ISIS’s territorial losses, security officials expect ISIS to remain a threat and lead an ongoing insurgency in the region.⁸¹

Despite its territorial losses in Iraq and Syria, ISIS maintains a global presence. The group has declared *wilayat* (provinces, governorates) in Iraq, Syria, Egypt,⁸² Libya,⁸³ Algeria,⁸⁴ Yemen,⁸⁵ Saudi Arabia,⁸⁶ Nigeria,⁸⁷ Afghanistan,⁸⁸ and the North Caucasus.⁸⁹ Within the first seven months of 2019, ISIS announced new provinces in India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Central Africa as it sought to reassert itself after the loss of its territory in Iraq and Syria.⁹⁰ Beyond this, the terror group attracts considerable sympathy or has waged attacks in Turkey,⁹¹ Morocco,⁹² Tunisia,⁹³ the Philippines,⁹⁴ Lebanon,⁹⁵ Bangladesh,⁹⁶ Indonesia,⁹⁷ and the Palestinian territories.⁹⁸ ISIS sympathizers have also carried out lone-wolf attacks in a variety of Western countries such as France⁹⁹ and Belgium.¹⁰⁰ In January 2020, ISIS announced a “new phase” that would shift its focus from the remains of its caliphate onto Israel.¹⁰¹

ISIS has historically funded itself through extortion, robbery, human trafficking, and the highly lucrative oil industry. However, ISIS lost approximately \$500 million in income between 2014 and 2015 due to loss of territory and military setbacks amid sustained coalition airstrikes.¹⁰² The group has also lured significant numbers of recruits through online propaganda, including videos and magazines produced in English, French, German, and a variety of other languages.¹⁰³ ISIS recruiters have also been successful on social media platforms and encrypted messaging services such as Telegram.¹⁰⁴

Under its self-proclaimed caliphate, ISIS imposed sharia (Islamic law) and was notorious for killing civilians en masse, often by public execution and crucifixion. Since losing its territory in Syria and Iraq, ISIS has shifted its strategy in those countries from holding territory to insurgency against the state. ISIS encourages followers to undertake lone-wolf attacks using inexpensive means such as vehicles, knives, and homemade explosives. Despite ISIS’s territorial losses, its propaganda continues to inspire lone-wolf attackers such as Khalid Masood, who killed seven people in a ramming-and-stabbing attack in London in March 2017. While ISIS’s dreams of a global caliphate are unlikely to ever be realized, the group will continue to cause significant damage wherever it is able to gain a foothold. After the fall of Baghuz, defense officials in the region reported that ISIS modified its strategy. Without centralized control, the insurgency has been carrying out small-scale attacks throughout rural territory along the porous border of Iraq and Syria and the informal border of Iraqi Kurdistan and the rest of Iraq.¹⁰⁵

On October 26, 2019, U.S. forces carried out an operation in Syria’s Idlib province that resulted in the death of Baghdadi. U.S. officials confirmed Baghdadi’s identity using DNA tests of his remains after he detonated an explosive vest.¹⁰⁶ ISIS did not immediately acknowledge Baghdadi’s death. Baghdadi’s likely successor, ISIS spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir, was reportedly killed in a U.S. strike in Syria the day after Baghdadi’s death.¹⁰⁷ On October 31, ISIS’s Amaq News Agency acknowledged Baghdadi’s death and announced [Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Quraishi](#) [4] as his successor and ISIS’s new

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caliph.¹⁰⁸

Despite losing its self-proclaimed caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2019, ISIS remains active beyond the borders it once claimed. U.S. intelligence reports claimed ISIS still had up to 18,000 fighters in Iraq and Syria at the time of Baghdadi's death.¹⁰⁹ American military officers believe that ISIS is a growing problem in Afghanistan, and if their operations are not curbed as soon as possible that the militant group could expand their attacks against the West. Afghan generals have even mentioned the increasing difficulty in fighting off the rebels. On August 17, 2019, a suicide bomber infiltrated a wedding in western Kabul and killed at least 63 people while also injuring another 182. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. The explosion came days before Afghanistan's 100th Independence Day on August 19, 2019, and also coincided with on-going peace talks between the U.S. government and the Taliban.¹¹⁰ Given the current negotiations, ISIS has positioned itself to take over territory and recruit former Taliban members if a peace deal transpires between the Taliban and the United States. Accordingly, if the U.S. implements a less than adequate military withdrawal strategy, it is likely that ISIS will exploit that security vacuum and assert control over Afghanistan's compromised defense environment.¹¹¹

It has also been reported that internally displaced people (IDP) camps have become ISIS's new frontier for recruitment and radicalization. Tens of thousands of former ISIS fighters and their families live in IDP camps in the Levant, which has provided former militants the opportunity to regroup. ISIS has taken over a few camps already—with al-Hol being their largest takeover. ISIS exerts more control at al-Hol than the guards stationed there and have enforced sharia law on all of the camp's inhabitants. The camp houses numerous women and children who are particularly vulnerable to deferring to the fundamental agenda that ISIS espouses. In some cases, women are reportedly enforcers for the camp's "morality brigade," or have even taken up arms in battle.¹¹²

Doctrine:

ISIS's overarching goals center on the reestablishment of a global, Islamic caliphate and fostering violent conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims.¹¹³ In October 2015, ISIS's then-spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani issued a statement urging Muslims around the world to engage in a "holy war" against Russia and the United States, which he claimed were leading a "crusaders' war against Muslims."¹¹⁴ Since the loss of Mosul in Iraq and its self-declared capital in Raqqa, Syria, in 2017, ISIS has transitioned from a territory-holding group to an insurgency in both those countries.¹¹⁵ Yet unlike al-Qaeda, which views a global caliphate as a long-term goal, establishing an Islamic caliphate remains ISIS's core objective.¹¹⁶ Since its official founding in June 2014, this doctrinal commitment led ISIS to hold territory for more than three years across Iraq and Syria, and continue to hold territory in Afghanistan, Libya, and Nigeria.

In his June 2014 speech announcing the creation of the caliphate, ISIS's late spokesman and director of external operations [Abu Muhammad al-Adnani](#) [5] declared that "Without [the caliphate], authority becomes nothing more than kingship, dominance and rule, accompanied with destruction, corruption, oppression, subjugation, fear, and the decadence of the human being and his descent to the level of animals."¹¹⁷ On the cover of the first issue of ISIS's online English magazine *Dabiq*, the title "The Return of Khilafah" is superimposed over an image of the Arabian Peninsula, literally illustrating the group's top priority.¹¹⁸ Its slogan, *baqiya wa tatamaddad* (remaining and expanding), similarly underscores the point.¹¹⁹

ISIS's self-proclaimed caliphate cannot function without a caliph, the key figurehead. That role was initially reserved for Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, whose so-called legitimacy was likewise established in ISIS's doctrine.¹²⁰ ISIS asserted that Baghdadi was a member of the Islamic prophet Muhammad's Quraysh tribe, "one of the key qualifications in Islamic history for becoming the caliph."¹²¹ In his "inaugural speech" launching the Islamic State on June 29, 2014, Baghdadi expanded further on the significance of the caliphate. Most important, he claimed, was that all Muslims submit and pledge allegiance (*bay'a*) to the caliphate.¹²² U.S. forces killed Baghdadi in a raid by U.S. forces in Syria on October 26, 2019.¹²³ ISIS appointed Amir Mohammed Abdul Rahman al-Mawli al-Salbi, a.k.a. Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi, as Baghdadi's successor.¹²⁴

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In January 2020, ISIS released an audio message featuring spokesman Abu Hamza al-Quraishi on behalf of Abu Ibrahim Hashemi al-Quraishi. The spokesman called on followers around the world to launch a “new phase” focused on “fighting the Jews and reclaiming what they have stolen from the Muslims....” He called on ISIS fighters in Syria and Egypt’s Sinai to turn Jewish settlements into a “testing ground” for their weapons.¹²⁵

Underpinning the allegiance to the caliphate, ISIS adheres to a literalist interpretation of Sunni Islam, specifically embracing beliefs according to an extremist Salafi vision.¹²⁶ Salafis believe that Islam has been tainted by centuries of human revision and interpretation. They call for a reversion to the practices and beliefs of the *salaf*, the first few generations of Muslims immediately following the Prophet. While Salafism under the Gulf monarchies tends to non-violent “quietism,” ISIS is explicitly willing to use violence in an attempt to return to the days of the *salaf*. This willingness is based on the conviction that violence is divinely ordained.¹²⁷

ISIS supplements its Salafist worldview with a belief in the revival of takfirist practices. As a Salafi-Takfiri group, the “enemies of Islam” may be Muslim too. Thus, according to ISIS doctrine, almost 200 million Shiite Muslims—as well as Sufis, Yazidis, and Ba’hai—are all apostates and deserving of death.

ISIS also cleaves to a form of millenarianism with the ultimate hope of “bringing about the apocalypse,” according to journalist Graeme Wood.¹²⁸ Indeed, ISIS frequently refers to the apocalypse in its various recruitment materials, including magazines, videos, and speeches.¹²⁹ According to ISIS’s aptly-named English-language magazine *Dabiq*, the apocalypse will be preceded by “One of the greatest battles between the Muslims and the crusaders” in the town of Dabiq, located northeast of Aleppo in the Syrian countryside.¹³⁰

Organizational Structure:

ISIS is led by its emir (commander, chieftain, or prince), whom the group proclaimed caliph of ISIS’s self-declared Islamic State in June 2014.¹³¹ Beneath the emir are two chief deputies, who oversaw ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq, respectively.¹³² These two deputies and a cabinet of advisers are reported to comprise ISIS’s executive branch, called “Al Imara” or “The Emirate.”¹³³ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi served as ISIS’s caliph from 2014 until his death in a U.S. raid in Idlib, Syria, on October 26, 2019.¹³⁴ Baghdadi’s likely successor, ISIS spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir, was reportedly killed in a U.S. strike in Syria the day after Baghdadi’s death.¹³⁵ ISIS’s Amaq News Agency eulogized Baghdadi on October 31, and announced Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Qurayshi as his successor. The appointment came after consultations of ISIS’s leadership council, according to Amaq. Amaq did not provide other details of Quraishi’s identity other than referring to him as “emir of the believers” and “caliph.”¹³⁶

Also directly underneath the caliph, but not part of the executive branch, are ISIS’s legislative councils, the Shura Council and Shariah Council. The nine-member Shura Council is reportedly responsible for ensuring that lower councils adhere to ISIS’s religious doctrine,¹³⁷ and is also responsible for relaying Baghdadi’s orders through the rest of the organization.¹³⁸ According to terrorism analyst Jasmine Opperman, the council approves lower council decisions that impact the caliphate. It also has the authority to force Baghdadi to step down if he deviates from ISIS doctrine.¹³⁹

ISIS’s six-member Shariah Council is the group’s “most powerful” body, according to Richard Bennett of the Soufan Group. It was responsible for enforcing its interpretation of sharia (Islamic law) within ISIS’s territory, as well as selecting the caliph.¹⁴⁰ When ISIS conquered new territory, the group’s Shariah Council was responsible for creating a sharia police force and courts to enforce its interpretation of Islamic law.¹⁴¹

According to a January 2015 report by CNN, Baghdadi’s two deputies each oversaw 12 governors in their respective territories in Iraq and Syria. The deputies also oversaw ministry-like councils that were responsible for day-to-day functions:¹⁴²

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- Financial Council: ISIS's treasury, which oversees oil and weapons sales and other revenue.
- Leadership Council: responsible for the organization's laws and policies. The council's decisions are approved by Baghdadi. The council also has the authority to depose al-Baghdadi if he strays from ISIS's ideology.
- Military Council: responsible for the organization's military operations.
- Legal Council: responsible for decisions on executions and recruitment. It also handles family disputes and religious transgressions.
- Fighters Assistance Council: responsible for providing aid and housing to foreign fighters who come to ISIS's territory, including moving them into and out of the territory.
- Security Council: responsible for police and security oversight of ISIS's territory. It also carries out executions.
- Intelligence Council: ISIS's intelligence-gathering wing.
- Media Council: manages ISIS's media strategy, including social media.

In addition to governing bodies, ISIS operates a secret service wing, previously run by the late Abu Muhammad al-Adnani. This wing, referred to as the Emni, reportedly serves as both an internal police and external operations unit, whose members seek to export terror abroad. According to an August 2016 report by the *New York Times*, multiple lieutenants are responsible for planning attacks in three distinct target regions: Europe, Asia, and the Arab world.¹⁴³ The unit is reportedly responsible for deploying operatives back into Europe, for the purpose of connecting with local ISIS sympathizers and plotting domestic attacks.¹⁴⁴

At its height in 2014, ISIS controlled approximately 40 percent of Iraq. In April 2017, the Iraqi military estimated that ISIS held only 6.8 percent of Iraqi territory.¹⁴⁵ By June 2017, U.S.-backed Iraqi forces were fighting to reclaim the last vestiges of ISIS-held Mosul, the group's last remaining territory in Iraq. In June 2017, ISIS blew up the historic Great Mosque of al-Nuri, where Baghdadi had declared his caliphate in 2014. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi called ISIS's destruction of the over-800-year-old mosque "an official announcement of their defeat."¹⁴⁶ Also in June 2017, U.S.-backed forces began an offensive to drive ISIS out of its declared capital in Raqqa, Syria.¹⁴⁷

On July 10, 2017, Abadi declared that U.S.-backed Iraqi forces had liberated all of Mosul. Iraqi officials tempered their celebrations, acknowledging that they still needed to clear away explosives and ISIS fighters hiding in parts of the city. According to the United Nations, almost 700,000 people in Mosul remained displaced since the beginning of the campaign. Authorities believed hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed the fighting, while thousands more were wounded. The United Nations estimated that ISIS used 100,000 people as human shields.¹⁴⁸

On October 17, 2017, American-backed forces in Syria announced that they had successfully liberated Raqqa from ISIS control, although similar concerns about explosives and ISIS fighters hiding in parts of the city remained. Approximately 270,000 people were displaced by the fighting in Raqqa, and more than 1,000 civilians killed in American-led airstrikes.¹⁴⁹

On November 21, 2017, Iranian president Hassan Rouhani announced that ISIS had been completely driven out of Syria while Abadi declared a military victory over ISIS in Iraq following the recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in the country, the previous week.¹⁵⁰ Despite these territorial losses, Iraqi security officials expect ISIS to revert to guerrilla warfare and continue carrying out sporadic attacks in the region as part of an insurgency.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, ISIS continued to capture and hold new territory in Syria through early 2018 as it engaged rebel and regime forces. On November 21, 2017, ISIS launched a new offensive targeting the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in north Hama, Syria.¹⁵² HTS accused the Syrian regime of aiding ISIS fighters against the rebel group in northern Hama in October 2017, a claim that the Carter Center finds "likely" to be true since the ISIS fighters that attacked HTS first traveled through regime-held territory in large numbers.¹⁵³ According to the Carter Center, Russian and regime planes have regularly bombed HTS along its frontline with ISIS while not attacking ISIS fighters in the area.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, ISIS has continued its offensive against the Syrian regime. That November, ISIS expanded into Idlib for the first time since 2014, as rebel groups were forced to fight both ISIS and the regime along the same front.¹⁵⁵ On December 12, 2017, ISIS launched an attack in southern Deir Ez Zor, capturing eight villages held by the Syrian regime along the Euphrates River.¹⁵⁶

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In May 2018, the U.S.-led coalition began Operation Roundup to eliminate ISIS's remaining presence. By December 2018, ISIS retained only a small foothold in the Syrian town of Baghuz along the Syrian-Iraqi border.¹⁵⁷ In March 2019, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launched an assault on ISIS forces in Baghuz. Hundreds of ISIS fighters and their families reportedly surrendered to the SDF, which declared days later that the battle to retake Baghuz was as "good as over."¹⁵⁸

ISIS's October 31, 2019, announcement of Quraishi as its new "caliph" signified that though the group had lost its territorial caliphate in Iraq and Syria, it still remained committed to the concept of an expansive caliphate.¹⁵⁹

Wilayat

Before its military defeats in Syria and Iraq in November 2017, ISIS controlled wilayat (provinces) in both countries including in Raqqa, Idlib, and Hama in Syria, and Ninawa, Kirkuk, and Anbar in Iraq.¹⁶⁰ The terror group also controls provinces across the Middle East and Africa. These provinces begin as local jihadist groups, which then pledge allegiance to ISIS's caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Since ISIS lost its last territorial hold in Iraq and Syria, ISIS has shifted its focus to its provinces in what could be an attempt to decentralize the group while reaffirming its global presence. In May 2019, ISIS announced the creation of new provinces in India and Pakistan.¹⁶¹ That July, ISIS announced the creation of a province in Turkey.¹⁶² ISIS's affiliates in Egypt and West Africa renewed their allegiances to Baghdadi in June 2019.¹⁶³ ISIS fighters in Mali and Burkina Faso also renewed their allegiance to Baghdadi that month.¹⁶⁴

Before accepting a pledge of allegiance and forming a new wilaya, ISIS must receive a proposal detailing the group's military and governance strategy, as well as identifying a collectively chosen leader. Issue 7 of ISIS's *Dabiq* magazine described the process in detail:

"This [approval] process includes documenting their bay'at [pledge of allegiance], unifying the jamā'at [assembly] who have given bay'ah, holding consultations to nominate a wālī [governor] and members for the regional shūrā assembly, planning a strategy to achieve consolidation in their region for the Khilāfah [caliphate] so as to implement the Sharī'ah [Islamic law], and presenting all this to the Islamic State leadership for approval."¹⁶⁵

Below is a list of official wilayat outside of Syria and Iraq:

Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia: Wilayat Khorasan

Jihadists in Afghanistan and Pakistan pledged allegiance to ISIS in November 2014. ISIS accepted the pledge in January 2015, officially forming Wilayat Khorasan, and appointed former Pakistani Taliban commander Hafiz Said Khan as leader.¹⁶⁶ The province also included parts of India, Iran, and other parts of Central Asia.¹⁶⁷ A September 2015 U.N. report alleged 70 ISIS militants traveled from Iraq and Syria to Afghanistan to form the core of the new wilaya.¹⁶⁸ Other members include former Taliban insurgents and dozens of foreign fighters.¹⁶⁹ In August 2015, the Afghanistan-based jihadist group Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) pledged allegiance to ISIS and was subsumed into Wilayat Khorasan.¹⁷⁰

Wilayat Khorasan claimed its first attack on Afghan forces in September 2015 when it killed three policemen at a checkpoint in eastern Afghanistan.¹⁷¹ The group has since continued to carry out deadly attacks and maintain a small stronghold in the region.¹⁷² On March 8, 2017, the group launched a suicide bomb and gun attack at a hospital in Kabul, killing 30 people.¹⁷³ As for intended targets, ISIS declared war on Afghanistan's Shiite, mostly Hazara, population and has regularly claimed responsibility for attacks against the ethnic and religious minority.¹⁷⁴

There were approximately 1,300 ISIS fighters in Afghanistan as of September 2016, according to General John Nicholson, the highest ranking U.S. military commander in the country. Nicholson said on September 23, 2016, that ISIS leaders in Syria provide the Afghanistan fighters with money, guidance, and communications support. According to Nicholson, ISIS's

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fighters are largely former members of the Pakistan Taliban and primarily based in Afghanistan's Nangarhar region.¹⁷⁵

ISIS restructured the Khorasan Province in May 2019 when it announced the creation of separate Pakistani and Indian provinces.¹⁷⁶ ISIS Khorasan continued to operate, claiming responsibility that month for several attacks in Afghanistan.¹⁷⁷ The U.N. Security Council designated the Khorasan Province in May 2019.¹⁷⁸

Algeria: Wilayat al-Jazair

In 2014, ISIS accepted the pledge of allegiance from Algeria-based terrorist group Jund al-Khilafah, and announced that the establishment of an Algerian governorate, Wilayat al-Jazair.¹⁷⁹ By December 2014, however, Wilayat al-Jazair leader Abd al-Malik Guri (a.k.a. Khalid Abu Sulayman) was killed by the Algerian military.

Wilayat al-Jazair is credited with the September 24, 2014, beheading of French tourist Hervé Gourdel but has been minimally active there in the months since. On October 21, 2015, Wilayat al-Jazair released an audio statement attempting to reassure its supporters that ISIS's presence in Algeria was secure. During the same statement, however, an ISIS militant urged fighters not to risk their lives unnecessarily, appearing to indicate the underlying vulnerability of ISIS's Algerian governorate.¹⁸⁰

Central Africa: Wilayat Central Africa

Baghdadi first mentions a Central Africa province in an August 2018 speech. On April 18, 2019, ISIS claimed responsibility through its Amaq News Agency for a shooting attack in Kamango, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), that killed three. ISIS credited the attack to its affiliate, Wilayat Central Africa. It was the group's first attack claimed in the Congo and the first attack credited to the Central Africa province. ISIS also credited an April 25 attack in the DRC to the group. That attack killed three soldiers. Later in the month, ISIS released a video featuring Baghdadi, who called on ISIS's supporters to seek revenge for the loss of the group's caliphate. Baghdadi was seen in the video handling documents, including one called Wilayat Central Africa.¹⁸¹

Egypt: Wilayat Sinai

In November 2014, Egypt's Ansar Beit al-Maqdis—a jihadist group based in the Sinai Peninsula—pledged allegiance to ISIS and became Wilayat Sinai, ISIS's Sinai province. The group grew amid the chaos of Egypt's 2011 revolution, and is known for killing hundreds of Egyptian soldiers and police officers.¹⁸²

Since its pledge of allegiance, Wilayat Sinai has accrued an estimated "several hundreds, if not over a thousand" fighters in the Sinai region, according to CIA Director John Brennan.¹⁸³ The group has claimed responsibility for an attack on an Egyptian vessel¹⁸⁴ and the downing of a Russian airliner over the Sinai that killed all 224 people on board.¹⁸⁵ On February 9, 2017, Wilayat Sinai claimed responsibility for a number of rocket attacks targeting an Israeli resort in Eilat, an attack that caused no damage or casualties.¹⁸⁶ Following the attack, Wilayat Sinai took to Telegram to claim responsibility and warn that "what is coming is graver and more bitter."¹⁸⁷

Beginning in December 2016, Wilayat Sinai launched a campaign against Egypt's Coptic Christian community. On December 11, 2016, ISIS claimed a suicide bombing at a chapel adjacent to St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo, killing at least 28 people during Sunday Mass.¹⁸⁸ On April 9, 2017, ISIS claimed a bombing of St. George's Church in Tanta and a suicide bombing at St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria that altogether killed at least 45 people.¹⁸⁹ On May 26, ISIS launched its first attack against a monastery when gunmen attacked two buses and a truck carrying Coptic Christians to the monastery of St. Samuel the Confessor south of Cairo, killing 29 people.¹⁹⁰ In February 2017, Wilayat Sinai released a propaganda video declaring Christians to be their "favorite prey."¹⁹¹

On November 24, 2017, militants carrying the ISIS flag carried out a bomb and gun attack on the al Rawdah mosque in Bir

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al-Abed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing at least 305 people and wounding at least 128 others in the deadliest attack in the country's history.¹⁹² Although Egyptian authorities suspect ISIS's Wilayat Sinai is responsible, the group has not claimed responsibility.¹⁹³

Israeli intelligence has accused Wilayat Sinai of cooperating with Hamas in the neighboring Gaza Strip. Hamas has reportedly used its underground tunnel system beneath the Gaza-Egypt border to transport aid to Wilayat Sinai, while also providing military training and medical aid to ISIS militants in the Sinai.¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, on January 4, 2018, Wilayat Sinai released an execution video of an alleged Hamas member and called on supporters to attack Hamas in Gaza because the group failed to stop U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017.¹⁹⁵

India: Wilayat al-Hind

On May 10, 2019, ISIS's Amaq News Agency announced the creation of a new province in India called Wilayah al-Hind, based in India-administered Kashmir.¹⁹⁶ ISIS claimed credit for clashes with Indian police earlier in the week. Indian police in Kashmir dismissed the claim of a new ISIS province based in Kashmir as propaganda. India formerly fell under the jurisdiction of ISIS's Khorasan Province, which former members of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan formed in 2015 after pledging allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Khorasan Province previously also included Afghanistan, Pakistan, parts of Iran, and other parts of central Asia. ISIS announced a separate province in Pakistan the following week.¹⁹⁷

Libya: Wilayat al-Tarabulus, al-Barqa, and al-Fezza

ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the creation of Libya's wilaya in November 2014.¹⁹⁸ Since then, ISIS in Libya has divided its control into three provinces: Wilayat al-Tarabulus (a.k.a. Wilayat Tripolitania) in the west, Wilayat Barqa in the east, and Wilayat Fezza in the south.¹⁹⁹ In January 2015, Wilayat al-Tarabulus attacked the five-star Corinthia hotel in Tripoli, killing nine people including five foreign nationals.²⁰⁰ The U.S. Department of State designated ISIS's Libya branch as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in May 2016.²⁰¹ Since then, a combination of Libyan forces and U.S. airstrikes are believed to have driven many ISIS fighters from its former stronghold in Sirte. Despite losing ground in Sirte, the group has a presence in other parts of the country.²⁰²

ISIS's roots in Libya can be traced back to the spring of 2014, when a group of Libyans fighting for ISIS in Syria and Iraq—the "Battle Brigade"—returned to Libya and established the Islamic Youth Shura Council, which then pledged allegiance to ISIS.²⁰³

Nigeria: Wilayat Gharb Ifriqiyya

ISIS accepted Nigerian-based terror group [Boko Haram](#) [6]'s pledge of allegiance in March 2015.²⁰⁴ Boko Haram, now called Wilayat Gharb Ifriqiyya (West Africa Province) has waged an insurgency to impose sharia in northern Nigeria since 2009, resulting in the death of approximately 4,000 civilians in 2015 alone.²⁰⁵ Its leader is [Abubakar Shekau](#) [7].²⁰⁶

North Caucasus: Wilayat Qawqaz

In June 2015, ISIS announced the creation of a governorate in Russia's North Caucasus, after months of garnering support in the region. The governorate is reportedly comprised of former al-Qaeda militants in the region who pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in the months leading up to the announcement.²⁰⁷ More than a dozen suspected ISIS fighters have been arrested in Russia since the announcement.²⁰⁸

Pakistan: Wilayat Pakistan

On May 14, 2019, ISIS's Amaq News Agency announced the creation of a Pakistan province, which claimed credit for killing a Pakistani police officer earlier in the week. Pakistan's government denied that ISIS had created a base in the

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country. Pakistan formerly fell under the jurisdiction of ISIS's Khorasan Province, which former members of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan formed in 2015 after pledging allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The Khorasan Province previously also included Afghanistan, India, parts of Iran, and other parts of central Asia. ISIS announced a separate province in India the previous week.²⁰⁹

Saudi Arabia: Wilayat al-Haramayn

ISIS declared a governorate in Saudi Arabia in November 2014.²¹⁰ Since then, ISIS has been involved in a number of attacks in Saudi Arabia, including the November 2014 targeting of a Shiite shrine in al-Dalwa village, the November 2015 shooting of a Danish resident in Riyadh, and a thwarted multiple car bombing attack east of Riyadh in April 2015.²¹¹ In May 2015, ISIS claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a Shiite mosque in eastern Saudi Arabia, killing more than 20 people and wounding more than 120 others.²¹² In August 2015, the group claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at a mosque in southern Saudi Arabia, killing 15 people.²¹³

The U.S. Department of State designated ISIS's Saudi branch as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in May 2016.²¹⁴

Turkey: Wilayat Turkey

On July 10, 2019, ISIS released a video of a group of fighters in Turkey pledging allegiance to Baghdadi and declaring a new province in Turkey. The speaker, identified as Abu Qatada at-Turki, threatens both Turkey and the United States. The militants appear in front of the ISIS flag with RPGs, machine guns, grenades, and assault rifles. ISIS has long had a presence in Turkey, which had previously served as a transit point for foreign fighters traveling to Syria. In the September 2015 edition of its propaganda magazine *Dabiq*, ISIS labeled the Turkish government apostates and called the country a "priority for ... jihad."²¹⁵

Prior to declaring a wilayah in Turkey, the Turkish government has suspected ISIS of responsibility for numerous attacks, including a triple suicide bombing at Ataturk Airport on June 28, 2016, that killed 45, and an August 21, 2016, suicide bombing that killed 51 people at a wedding.²¹⁶ ISIS claimed responsibility for a January 1, 2017, shooting at a nightclub in Turkey that killed 39.²¹⁷

Yemen: Wilayat Sana'a

A self-proclaimed ISIS affiliate, calling itself "Wilayat Sana'a" claimed responsibility for a deadly mosque bombing in Yemen in March 2015, in which at least 142 people were killed.²¹⁸ In late April 2015, the group formally announced itself as an ISIS governorate. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi confirmed the group's status as a governorate in November 2015.²¹⁹ The U.S. Department of State designated ISIS's Yemeni branch as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in May 2016.²²⁰

ISIS has not gained as much traction among Yemenis as al-Qaeda, according to Yemeni officials. Many of the leaders of ISIS in Yemen are Saudi nationals. Compounded with ISIS's centralized authority based in Syria, many in Yemen's tribal areas reportedly view the terror group as foreign and disconnected from Yemeni interests. Furthermore, AQAP has forged alliances and worked with local tribal authorities in power-sharing agreements while ISIS leadership has failed to make inroads in Yemeni tribal structure.²²¹

Financing:

At the height of its power in Iraq and Syria, ISIS was been called the richest terrorist organization in the world.²²² Months after the caliphate's formation in June 2014, analysts estimated the group's assets at \$1.3-2 billion, with a daily income of \$3 million.²²³ Since then, coalition airstrikes, military setbacks, and loss of territory have dampened the group's profits.²²⁴ ISIS's annual revenue reportedly fell from \$2.9 billion in 2014 to \$2.4 billion in 2015, according to the European think tank

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Center for the Analysis of Terrorism.²²⁵ In 2016, ISIS was estimated to have taken in \$870 million, according to findings by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.²²⁶ By June 2017, ISIS had reportedly lost 80 percent of its revenue sources. The group reportedly had a revenue stream of just \$16 million during the second financial quarter of 2017, compared with \$81 million during the same period in 2015, according to global data-monitoring company IHS Markit.²²⁷ The lost revenue forced ISIS to cut its fighters' wages by 50 percent in February 2016.²²⁸

Militant financing expert Patrick Johnson of the RAND Corporation credited ISIS's survival and evolution to its strong, diversified fundraising apparatus.²²⁹ As the group expanded through 2013 and 2014, ISIS derived the largest part of its revenue from the spoils of war, particularly as the group commandeered oil fields and weapons caches.²³⁰ While ISIS controlled territory in Iraq and Syria between 2014 and 2017, the group reportedly derived its income primarily from taxation, oil, looting, and extortion.²³¹

For years, ISIS controlled oil fields in its strongholds of eastern Syria and northern Iraq, smuggling crude oil by truck in exchange for cash and refined petroleum.²³² Customers reportedly included ISIS sympathizers, as well as those who formally opposed ISIS, including the Turkish and Syrian governments.²³³ For financial purposes, the group also targeted for seizure key infrastructure, including factories and power plants.²³⁴ ISIS's exploitation of the energy assets under its control was hamstrung by maintenance needs, which it reportedly addressed by intimidating on-site engineers.²³⁵

ISIS also reportedly fills its coffers through extortion, including bank looting, taxation, and kidnapping for ransom.²³⁶ The group has also collected profit from the sale of women and children as sex slaves.²³⁷ In 2014, ISIS allegedly collected at least \$25 million in ransom payments, a figure that may in fact be much higher.²³⁸ By December 2015, ISIS reportedly collected \$45 million annually through kidnapping ransoms, and more than \$360 million annually from tax collection.²³⁹ However in mid-2017 ISIS lost its last major population centers in Iraq and Syria, thus losing all tax revenue.²⁴⁰

ISIS has also illegally exported valuable antiquities from Iraq and Syria to Turkey.²⁴¹ In May 2015, the United Nations estimated that ISIS earned as much as \$100 million annually from the illegal sale of antiquities looted from captured territories.²⁴² Professor Michael Danti of Boston University noted that Islamic law specifies "exactly what to do with antiquities when you find them. You sell them and 20% of the profits goes as a tax."²⁴³ The United Nations has condemned ISIS's antiquities looting as "a form of violent extremism that seeks to destroy the present, past and future of human civilization."²⁴⁴

The group has also attracted donations from terrorist sympathizers worldwide. Wealthy individuals in the Gulf reportedly provided funding that helped to launch ISIS and other jihadist groups amid the turmoil of the Syrian civil war.²⁴⁵ For example, U.S.-designated Qatari national '[Abd al-Rahman bin 'Umayr al-Nu'aymi](#) [8] provided significant financial support to al-Qaeda in Iraq, ISIS's forerunner, according to the U.S. Treasury.²⁴⁶ Beyond that, ISIS uses its extensive presence on social media platforms to solicit both small- and large-scale donations.²⁴⁷

Recruitment and Training:

Online/Digital Recruitment

Since its inception, ISIS has maintained a powerful online media campaign aimed at recruiting members internationally.²⁴⁸ According to national security pundit John Little, ISIS "launched [its] offensive with a... media campaign well planned in advance. [The campaign] wasn't an afterthought."²⁴⁹ Recruitment methods include slickly produced videos,²⁵⁰ an online magazine,²⁵¹ and the use of social media outlets.²⁵²

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ISIS's Al-Hayat Media Center is responsible for much of the group's marketing and recruitment. The group has also released propaganda materials through media centers Al-Furqan and Al-I'tasim Media, news agencies Amaq Agency and Bayan Radio, as well as through more than a dozen regional media outlets that produce content on behalf of the group's various wilayas. The center's explicit goal is to "convey the message of the Islamic State in different languages with the aim of unifying Muslims under one flag."²⁵³ In addition to pursuing fighters, recruiters seek to attract doctors, accountants, engineers, and wives, in the interest of building a "new society."²⁵⁴

Social Media

ISIS recruiters have utilized social media outlets to "field questions about joining" the group, a process which resembles an "online version of [a] religious seminar."²⁵⁵ CEP has documented as ISIS recruiters exploit online platforms such as Twitter,²⁵⁶ Facebook,²⁵⁷ YouTube,²⁵⁸ Tumblr,²⁵⁹ Ask.fm,²⁶⁰ and Askbook,²⁶¹ to advertise and recruit for ISIS. Recruiters also use instant-messaging services such as Telegram,²⁶² WhatsApp,²⁶³ Wickr,²⁶⁴ KiK,²⁶⁵ and YikYak²⁶⁶ to provide advice about logistical issues—such as transportation and finances—regarding the trek to Syria as well as instructions on how to carry out domestic attacks on behalf of the terrorist group.²⁶⁷

Canadian national Mubin Shaikh, a Taliban recruiter turned security operative, claims that recruiters interview potential jihadists to ensure commitment to the cause, as well as to weed out spies.²⁶⁸ According to Shaikh, recruiters use whatever means possible. "If they can Skype you, they'll Skype you. They want to see what you look like. You can't be that secretive with them."²⁶⁹ Common interview tactics include testing the recruit's knowledge of Islamic scholars.²⁷⁰ Shaikh also describes a large net of jihadists, claiming that recruiters often contact established ISIS sympathizers within a potential recruit's city in order to vet recruits, "whether [the recruit is] American, Canadian or British."²⁷¹ To avoid detection, recruiters use encryption software and proxy servers during the interview process.²⁷²

High-Production Videos

ISIS's Al-Hayat Media Center produces much of the recruitment material disseminated by the terror group, though the group also releases high-production video content through Al-Faruq Media, Al-I'tisam Media, and through regional video producers dispersed throughout the group's various wilayas.²⁷³ In May 2014, the media center launched a video series called the Mujatweets, shot in HD quality, to show "snippets of day-to-day life in the Islamic State."²⁷⁴ The Mujatweets serve as explicit propaganda, aimed at depicting life in the Islamic State as bountiful and heroic.

In the first episode of Mujatweets, an ISIS fighter appeals to Western jihadists by singing in German.²⁷⁵ In the sixth episode, a member of ISIS speaks in French, claiming that it is an obligation for Muslims to immigrate to the Islamic State.²⁷⁶ In the third and seventh episodes, shots of a sandwich shop and a bustling marketplace aim to attract newcomers with scenes of abundance.²⁷⁷ According to the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), "the purpose [of the Mujatweets] is to show that life under ISIS rule is peaceful and normal, and to shatter the image of the jihad fighters as fierce religious fanatics by presenting them as ordinary, friendly people eager to help the local population."²⁷⁸

In addition to the Mujatweets series, the al-Hayat media center produces longer recruitment videos, the infamous beheading videos, and online propaganda magazines.²⁷⁹ Al-Hayat media center is notable for high video production quality and consistent circulation. *Long War Journal* editor Bill Roggio commented on the fast turnout of the al-Hayat's videos. "Al-Qaeda will issue a propaganda statement, what, once every month? With the Islamic State, I saw the aftermath of the battle of Tabqa that gave them full control of a province in Syria — I saw that video two days after the battle."²⁸⁰

Online Magazines and Newsletters: Dabiq, Rumiya, and al-Naba

Both *Dabiq* and *Rumiya* serve as another recruitment tool for the terror group. The group also releases text missives through its al-Naba newsletter, and through text releases from the group's propaganda news agency, Amaq.

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ISIS's released its first online, multi-language magazine on July 5, 2014, just one month after capturing the Iraqi city of Mosul. *Dabiq* was named after a small town in northern Syria where Islamic scriptures prophesized the final apocalyptic battle between Christians and Muslims would be held. The magazine provided English-language readers with battlefield updates, administrative reporting, and religious commentary.²⁸¹ ISIS also used *Dabiq's* 15 issues to promote religious propaganda to justify its crimes, such as enslaving and selling Yazidi women as sex slaves.²⁸² The magazine was available via pro-ISIS Telegram accounts, widely shared on Twitter and Facebook, and briefly available for purchase on Amazon.²⁸³

In September 2016, as it appeared that the town of Dabiq would soon fall to Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army forces, ISIS replaced its magazine with a new one, *Rumiyah*. The name change sought to shift emphasis away from a mythical final battle between Muslims and Christians that was to take place in Dabiq. The name *Rumiyah* refers to two hadiths that calls for Islam to conquer Constantinople and then Rome on its path to conquering the West, which ISIS referenced in a eulogy of its recently deceased spokesman Abu Muhammed al-Adnani in *Rumiyah's* first issue.²⁸⁴ ISIS has used the magazine to call for lone-wolf attacks in Western countries, including the United States and Australia.²⁸⁵ ISIS releases *Rumiyah* via pro-ISIS Telegram accounts and social media accounts.²⁸⁶

ISIS also releases a weekly newsletter called al-Naba. Distributed as a PDF via Telegram and other social media sites, Al-Naba often covers battlefield updates and interviews with high-ranking ISIS members.²⁸⁷

To reach a wide range of audiences, ISIS magazines are translated into a variety of languages, including Arabic, English, French, German, and Russian.²⁸⁸ ISIS's online magazines—released en masse through Telegram, Twitter, and other online outlets—are filled with propaganda detailing the group's strategy. *Dabiq* and *Rumiyah* initially encouraged all Muslims to migrate to the Islamic State or carry out domestic attacks, but the messaging has since shifted to encourage more domestic and lone-wolf-style attacks.²⁸⁹

Recruiters' Psychological Tactics

Some psychologists believe that potential jihadists joined ISIS in their quest for "personal significance" or due to the existential desire to matter and be respected, according to psychology professor Arie W. Kruglanski.²⁹⁰ According to this theory, ISIS recruitment measures directly appeal to disaffected and disillusioned individuals seeking to "make their mark."²⁹¹ MEMRI deputy director Eliot Zweig concurred, stating, "You see messages of camaraderie" rather than difficulty, gore and suffering. "It is 'come and join us, join me and we'll fight the good fight together.'"²⁹² Others claim that recruits are simply "thrill seekers," or young people craving a "fresh identity."²⁹³ According to terrorism expert Max Abrahms, recruitment over social media lures "ignorant people with respect to religion... [who] would probably fail the most basic test on Islam."²⁹⁴

The depiction of the Islamic State as a free and open society is another recruiting approach. According to John Horgan, a psychologist who studies terrorists, the exploitation of this image "makes radicalization and recruitment much easier." Recruits believe that ISIS "is an equal opportunity organization." Indeed, its recruitment tactics appeal to "everything from the sadistic psychopath to the humanitarian to the idealistic driven," says Horgan.²⁹⁵ Andrew Poulin, a Canadian who converted to Islam and immigrated to the Islamic State, was featured in one of the group's propaganda videos, saying: "Before I come here to Syria, I had money, I had a family, I had good friends. It wasn't like I was some anarchist or somebody who just wants to destroy the world and kill everybody. I was a regular person. We need the engineers, we need doctors, we need professionals. Every person can contribute something to the Islamic State."²⁹⁶

Recruiters also radicalize by exploiting grievances, declaring that the Muslim world has endured humiliation and victimization at the hands of the West.²⁹⁷ The recruiters paint the choice of every Muslim individual in black and white: either join ISIS and live in dignity, or continue living as a victimized Muslim in a secular land. ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in his speech introducing the creation of the "caliphate," declared, "by Allah's grace—you have a state and

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Khilafah [caliphate], which will return your dignity, might, rights, and leadership.”²⁹⁸ This Manichean approach feeds into the message of obligation. According to terrorism expert Paul Cruickshank, ISIS recruiters flood social media with the message of “you have to join. It’s your religious duty.”²⁹⁹ However, as ISIS lost its territory in Syria and Iraq, its propaganda shifted to encourage more domestic and lone-wolf-style attacks.³⁰⁰

On-the-ground Recruitment

ISIS’s on-the-ground recruitment strategies have been growing due to a mounting crackdown on the group’s online recruitment methods.³⁰¹ Operating mostly in European, American, and Canadian cities, on-the-ground recruiters are believed to include preachers, jihadist sympathizers, and fighters returning from Syria.³⁰² According to a leaked police report, recruiters operate out of mosques, cafes, restaurants, gyms and private homes and apartments.³⁰³ Similar to online recruitment, on-the-ground recruiters act as radicalizing agents who provide logistical support to those who wish to immigrate to the Islamic State.³⁰⁴

Some reports suggest that young Muslims are radicalized at “pop-up” meetings, which are never held in the same place twice.³⁰⁵ Others include extremists leafleting in European Muslim communities.³⁰⁶

On-the-ground recruitment is believed to take place in Canada also. Imam Syed Soharwardy, founder of the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada, claims that potential recruits are paired up with “jihadi mentors.”³⁰⁷ According to Soharwardy, the mentor-recruit relationship can form at “religious seminars, community activities or classes that might look normal to the average Westerner.”³⁰⁸ Other possible venues for radicalization include “student groups” at colleges and high schools.³⁰⁹

On-the-ground radicalization can be instigated by one’s emotional or physical proximity to an extremist. For example, U.S. citizen [Douglas McCain](#) [9]—who died in Syria as an ISIS fighter—had lived in the same building as a classmate who joined Somali militant group [al-Shabab](#) [10].³¹⁰ Similarly, a group of 10 Minnesotan acquaintances were found to have co-conspired to join ISIS abroad in a radicalization process that appeared in to have taken place largely in person.³¹¹

Training

The training to become an ISIS soldier is believed to include both ideological and physical components.³¹² During religious training, referred to as *sharii*, ISIS members receive what ISIS-affiliated Syrian cleric Abu Moussa referred to as “the basics about religion... [during which ISIS trainers] cleanse you from religious innovations and Ba’athist ideas.”³¹³ New recruits are also believed to undergo physical training. A video released by ISIS’s al-Hayat Media Center in October 2014 depicted recruits participating in training exercises in Iraq’s Nineveh province. The jihadists-in-training were filmed while completing weapons training, hand-to-hand combat exercises, and live-fire training.³¹⁴

At its peak in 2014 and 2015, foreign fighters arriving in ISIS-controlled territory reportedly complete anywhere between a few days of basic weapons training to a year-long intensive training course. The training program for an elite fighting unit, for example, is reported to require 10 levels of training. The first level is believed to include hours of strenuous physical activity such as running, jumping, pushups, and crawling, while higher levels may comprise aquatic training and celestial navigation.³¹⁵

In addition to training voluntary recruits, ISIS has also reportedly forced captured Syrian pilots to train ISIS fighters using stolen aircraft.³¹⁶ In October 2014, eyewitness reports claimed that ISIS had three military aircraft in its possession, and that its fighters had been flying the airplanes over captured military bases in northern Aleppo, Syria.³¹⁷

ISIS is also believed to force children to train as fighters, a war crime under international human rights law.³¹⁸ This training

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is reported to take place in camps with names such as “Zarqawi Cubs Camps,” in tribute to al-Qaeda in Iraq founder Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.³¹⁹ According to global security firm Flashpoint Intelligence, there have been multiple youth training camps in and around Mosul, as well as in Damascus, Aleppo, and al-Bukamal in eastern Syria.³²⁰

ISIS fighters also train children how to use AK-47s, and have reportedly used dolls to demonstrate beheadings. “Sometimes they force them to carry [real human] heads in order to cast the fear away from their hearts,” one Iraqi security official told NBC News.³²¹ A September 2014 United Nations report found that ISIS deploys children in “active combat during military operations, including suicide bombing missions.”³²² In February 2016, the Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point warned that ISIS was mobilizing children at an “increasing and unprecedented rate.”³²³

¹ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

² “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

³ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

⁴ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

⁵ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

⁶ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

⁷ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

⁸ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

⁹ Shounaz Meky, “Egypt’s Dar al-Ifta: ISIS extremists not ‘Islamic State,’” Al Arabiya News, August 24, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2014/08/24/Islamic-authority-Extremists-no-Islamic-State-.html> [13].

¹⁰ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

¹¹ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

¹² “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

¹³ “Sinai Province: Egypt’s most dangerous group,” BBC News, August 10, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-25882504> [14].

¹⁴ Frederic Wehrey and Ala’ Alrababa’h, “Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 5, 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=59268> [15].

¹⁵ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

¹⁶ Wassim Nasr, “French govt to use Arabic ‘Daesh’ for Islamic State group,” France 24, last modified December 5, 2015, <http://www.france24.com/en/20140917-france-switches-arabic-daesh-acronym-islamic-state> [16].

¹⁷ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

¹⁸ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

¹⁹ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

²⁰ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

²¹ “Islamic State,” Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

²² “What is Islamic State?,” BBC News, June 29, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29052144> [17].

²³ “Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012,

<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

²⁴ Ray Sanchez, "ISIS, ISIL or the Islamic State?," CNN, January 23, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/09/world/meast/isis-isil-islamic-state/> [18].

²⁵ Ray Sanchez, "ISIS, ISIL or the Islamic State?," CNN, January 23, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/09/world/meast/isis-isil-islamic-state/> [18].

²⁶ "Islamic State," Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

²⁷ "Islamic State," Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

²⁸ "Islamic State," Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

²⁹ Ayaz Gul, "Islamic State Announces 'Pakistan Province,'" Voice of America, last updated May 16, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/a/islamic-state-announces-pakistan-province/4918903.html> [19].

³⁰ Frederic Wehrey and Ala' Alrabab'a'h, "Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 5, 2015, <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=59268> [15].

³¹ "Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update," U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

³² "Islamic State," Australian National Security, accessed June 30, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicState.aspx> [12].

³³ "Anti-Terrorism Designations: Specially Designated Nationals Update," U.S. Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120126.aspx> [11].

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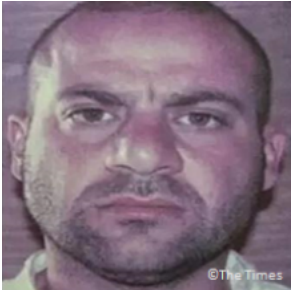
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Key Leaders



Amir Mohammed Abdul Rahman al-Mawli al-Salbi a.k.a. Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi
Caliph



Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
Caliph - deceased



Abu Hassan al-Muhajir
Spokesman - deceased



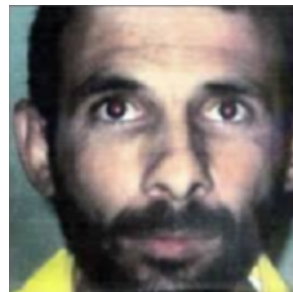
Abu Luqman
ISIS-appointed director of security and intelligence, Syria and Iraq



Abu Muhammad al-Shimali
Border Chief, Immigration and Logistics Committee, Leader of operations outside of Iraq and Syria



Faysal Ahmad Bin Ali al-Zahrani
Lead oil and gas division official in al-Barakah Governorate, Syria



Abu Fatima al-Jaheishi
Senior military leader and Emir of Iraq



Abu Ahmad al-Alwani
Chief of General Staff



Abdul Qadr al-Najdi
Emir in Libya



Abu Sufyan Bin Qumu
Senior leader in Libya



Abu Bilal al-Harbi
Emir in Yemen



Turki al-Binali
Former senior official, chief religious advisor, author, recruiter - deceased



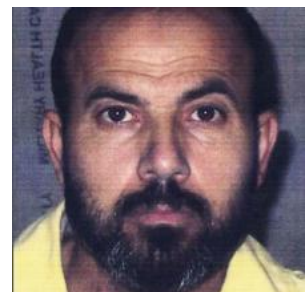
Abu Muhammad al-Adnani
Former spokesman, emir of ISIS in Syria, and head of ISIS's Emni unit - deceased



Omar al-Shishani
Former senior military commander, former member of ISIS's Shura Council - deceased



Abu Muslim al-Turkmani
Former deputy of ISIS-controlled Iraq - deceased



Abu Ayman al-Iraqi
Former military commander; former emir of Latakia province, Syria; former governor of ISIS's Anbar Province in Iraq - deceased

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Shaker Wahib al-Fahdawi a.k.a. Abu Wahib
Former military emir of Anbar - deceased



Wael Adel Salman al-Fayad
Former minister of information - deceased



Hafiz Saeed Khan
Former emir in AfPak - deceased



Abu Duaa al-Ansari
Former emir in Egypt - deceased



Rustam Aselderov
Former leader in the Caucasus - deceased



Ayad al-Jumaili
Former senior leader - deceased



Abu Suleiman al-Naser
Former minister of war - deceased



Gulmurod Khalimov
Minister of war - deceased

History:

- **January 2020:** ISIS releases an audio message featuring spokesman Abu Hamza al-Quraishi calling on followers around the world to launch a “new phase” focused on “fighting the Jews and reclaiming what they have stolen from the Muslims...”
He calls on ISIS fighters in Syria and Egypt’s Sinai to turn Jewish settlements into a “testing ground” for their weapons. Source: Agence France Presse and Times of Israel, “Islamic State announces ‘new phase’ of attacks: Mainly targeting Israel,” Times of Israel, January 27, 2020, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/islamic-state-announces-new-phase-of-attacks-mainly-targeting-israel/> [71].
- **October 2019:** On October 26, U.S. forces raid a compound in the village of Barisha in Syria’s Idlib province near the Turkish border and engage in a firefight with ISIS forces protecting Baghdadi.
U.S. forces chase Baghdadi into a tunnel where he detonates a suicide vest, killing himself and two of his children. Five other ISIS members are also killed during the raid. U.S. President Donald Trump confirms Baghdadi’s death on October 27, telling the U.S. public that officials identified Baghdadi through a DNA test of the remains. U.S. forces also capture intelligence and data from ISIS during the raid, according to Trump. ISIS does not immediately confirm Baghdadi’s death, nor is there a clear succession path. On October 31, ISIS’s Amaq News Agency eulogizes Baghdadi and announces Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Quraishi, a.k.a., Amir Mohammed Abdul Rahman al-Mawli al-Salbi, as the new “caliph” and “emir of the believers.” Sources: Steve Holland and Phil Stewart, “Trump hails death of ‘depraved’ Islamic State leader Baghdadi in U.S. raid,” Reuters, October 27, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi/trump-hails-death-of-depraved-islamic-state-leader-baghdadi-in-u-s-raid-idUSKBN1X602N> [78]; Raja Abdulrahim and Nazih Osseiran, “Islamic State Names New Leader to Succeed Baghdadi,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-names-new-leader-to-succeed-baghdadi-11572537863> [105]; Rick Gladstone, “Isis Names New Leader as It Confirms Al-Baghdadi’s death,” *New York Times*, October 31, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/31/world/middleeast/isis-al-baghdadi-dead.html> [106].
- **September 10, 2019:** The U.S.-led coalition conducts airstrikes against an ISIS “infested” island in Iraq. Qanus Island served as a safe haven for the terror group, dually operating as a “major transit hub for [ISIS] members moving from Syria and the Jazeera desert into Mosul, Makhmour, and the Kirkuk region” of Iraq, according to Operation Inherent Resolve.
Source: Elizabeth McLaughlin, “US-led coalition hits ISIS ‘infested’ island in Iraq with 80,000 pounds of munitions,” ABC News, September 10, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-led-coalition-hits-isis-infested-island-iraq/story?id=65510568> [252].
- **September 3, 2019:** Hungarian prosecutors charge F. Hassan, a 27-year-old Syrian man, with terrorism and crimes against humanity committed as a member of ISIS in 2015.
Hassan is charged with beheading and shooting people at least 25 people who refused to join the jihadist movement in 2015 in Syria’s Homs region. Source: “Hungary charges Syrian accused of beheading, killing for IS,” Reuters, September 3, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-isis-charges/hungary-charges-syrian-accused-of-beheading-killing-for-is-idUSKCN1V00T5> [253].
- **August 29, 2019:** U.S. authorities arrest a 19-year-old Pakistani-born Queens, New York resident.
The individual reportedly texted undercover agents that he planned to conduct a terror attack in the name of ISIS in Queens. Authorities allege he was inspired by ISIS and planned to conduct a stabbing or bombing attack in his home borough. Source: Shimon Prokupez, “Authorities arrest a Queens resident for allegedly plotting an ISIS-inspired attack,” CNN, August 29, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/29/us/alleged-isis-inspired-plot-arrest/index.html> [254].
- **August 19, 2019:** Five months after American-backed forces ousted ISIS from Syria, the terrorist group is gathering new strength and has been conducting guerrilla attacks across Iraq and Syria.
American and Iraqi military and intelligence officers report that ISIS has been retooling its financial networks and targeting new recruits at an allied-run tent camp. Source: Eric Schmitt, Alissa J. Rubin and Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “ISIS Is Regaining Strength in Iraq and Syria,” *New York Times*, August 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/19/us/politics/isis-iraq-syria.html> [77].
- **August 1, 2019:** ISIS releases a video of its members publicly beheading a Taliban member.
According to the Middle East Media Research Institute, “ISIS considers Taliban members to be apostates who can thus be lawfully killed.” Source: Rowan Scarborough, “ISIS shares shocking video of beheading as children cheer,” *The Washington Times*, August 1, 2019, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2019/aug/1/isis-shares-shocking-video-beheading-children-cheer/> [255].
- **July 30, 2019:** ISIS calls upon its supporters on the Telegram messaging app to carry out terrorist attacks in the major Western cities of San Francisco, New York, and London.
Source: Hunter Lovell, “ISIS urges followers to carry out attacks in major Western cities,” *Washington Examiner*, July 30, 2019, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/isis-urges-followers-to-carry-out-attacks-in-major-western-cities> [256].
- **July 23, 2019:** A Dutch court convicts a Netherlands-born man of being a member in a terrorist organization and sentences him to seven and a half years in prison.
Oussama Achraf Akhlafa fought alongside ISIS militants in Mosul and Raqqa. Source: “Dutch court convicts Islamic State militant of war crimes,” Reuters, July 23, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-syria-warcrimes/dutch-court-convicts-islamic-state-militant-of-war-crimes-idUSKCN1UI1FU> [257].
- **July 21, 2019:** Hundreds of ISIS militants who escaped the March 2019 defeat of their self-declared caliphate in Syria are reported to be slipping across the border into Iraq.
These fighters are mostly Iraqis returning home to join militant cells in rugged rural areas. Their intimate knowledge of the terrain provides them the ability to carry out sniper attacks and rudimentary roadside bombings against community leaders and security forces a few times a week. Source: Louisa Loveluck and Mustafa Salim, “Hundreds of Islamic State militants are slipping back into Iraq. Their fight isn’t over,” *Washington Post*, July 21, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/hundreds-of-islamic-state-militants-are-slipping-back-into-iraq-their-fight-isnt-over/2019/07/21/1f1be4262-a259-11e9-a767-d7ab84aef3e9_story.html [258].
- **July 19, 2019:** A U.S. citizen originally from Kazakhstan and living in New York, is charged with providing and attempting to provide material support, including training, services and personnel, to ISIS according to a statement

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from the U.S. Department of Justice.

From 2013 to 2018, Asainov lived in Syria where he rose through the ranks of ISIS and became in charge of training other members in the use of weapons. He faces up to 20 years in prison. Source: Elisha Fieldstadt, "U.S. citizen accused of becoming ISIS sniper and training fighters in Syria," NBC News, July 19, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-citizen-accused-becoming-isis-sniper-training-fighters-syria-n1031846> [259].

- July 17, 2019:** ISIS releases a propaganda video calling for more attacks in Tunisia. It is believed that the video was filmed within the country. Source: "ISIS video calls for attacks in Tunisia," Al Arabiya, July 17, 2019, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/north-africa/2019/07/17/ISIS-video-calls-for-attacks-in-Tunisia.html> [260].
- July 10, 2019:** ISIS releases a video of a group of fighters in Turkey pledging allegiance to al-Baghdadi and declaring a new province in Turkey, Wilayat Turkey. The speaker, identified as Abu Qatada at-Turki, threatens both Turkey and the United States. The militants appear in front of the ISIS flag with RPGs, machine guns, grenades, and assault rifles. Source: Rikar Hussein, Ezel Sahinkaya, Sirwan Kajjo, and Nafisa Hoodbhoy, "IS Decentralizing Into 'Provinces' in Bid to Return," Voice of America, July 21, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/decentralizing-provinces-bid-return> [28].
- June 3, 2019:** Saudi and Yemeni forces, aided by U.S. forces, capture Abu Osama Al-Muhajir, the accused leader of ISIS's branch in Yemen. Commandos also capture the branch's financial leader, weapons, money, and computers. Source: Jared Malsin, "Saudis Say Yemeni Islamic State Leader Captured," *Wall Street Journal*, last updated June 25, 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/saudis-say-yemeni-islamic-state-leader-captured-11561482261> [261].
- May 2019:** After clashes between militants and Indian police in Indian-administered Kashmir, ISIS announces through its Amaq News Agency on May 10 the creation of a new province in India called Wilayat al-Hind. A militant with alleged ties to ISIS is killed during the fighting. Indian police in Kashmir dismiss the claim of a new ISIS province based in Kashmir as propaganda. On May 14, ISIS announces the creation of a Pakistan province, which claims credit for killing a Pakistani police officer earlier in the week. Pakistan's government denies that ISIS has created a base in the country. Sources: Fayaz Bukhari and Alasdair Pal, "Islamic State claims 'province' in India for first time after clash in Kashmir," Reuters, May 11, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-kashmir-islamic-state/islamic-state-claims-province-in-india-for-first-time-after-clash-in-kashmir-idUSKCN1SH08J> [21]; "ISIL claims 'province' in India, officials call it 'propaganda,'" Al Jazeera, May 12, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/isil-claims-province-india-officials-call-propaganda-190512092230131.html> [152]; Ayaz Gul, "Islamic State Announces 'Pakistan Province,'" Voice of America, May 15, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/islamic-state-announces-pakistan-province> [27].
- April 2019:** On April 18, ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency for a shooting attack in Kamango, Democratic Republic of Congo, that killed three. ISIS credits the attack to its affiliate, Wilayat Central Africa. It is the group's first attack claimed in the Congo. Later in the month, ISIS releases a video featuring Baghdadi, who calls on ISIS's supporters to seek revenge for the loss of the group's caliphate. He also praises the April 21 bombings in Sri Lanka that killed more than 250 people, calling the attack revenge for ISIS's military defeat in Syria. Baghdadi is seen in the video handling documents, including one called Wilayat Central Africa. The video is Baghdadi's first appearance in an ISIS propaganda video since declaring the caliphate in June 2014. Sources: "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: IS leader appears in first video in five years," BBC News, April 30, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-48098528> [134]; Jon Gambrell and Krishan Francis, "Islamic State leader: Sri Lanka attack was revenge for Syria," Associated Press, April 29, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/54b095fc0e894790845f8b96292e0ab6> [135]; Robert Postings, "Islamic State recognizes new Central Africa Province, deepening ties with DR Congo militants," Defense Post, April 30, 2019, <https://thedefensepost.com/2019/04/30/islamic-state-new-central-africa-province/> [58]; "Islamic State claims its first Congo attack," Reuters, April 18, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-security/islamic-state-claims-its-first-congo-attack-idUSKCN1RU2KD> [29].
- March 2019:** The U.S.-backed SDF launch an assault on ISIS's last territorial hold in Baghuz, Syria, on March 10. ISIS releases a propaganda video claiming tomorrow we will be in paradise." At least 20 suicide bombers attack SDF positions during the fighting. On March 12, hundreds of ISIS fighters and their families reportedly surrender to rebel forces. The SDF declare that the battle to retake Baghuz is as "good as over." The SDF claim to have killed 112 ISIS fighters by March 13. Sources: Ellen Francis, "Islamic State counter-attacks out of final Syria enclave fall short -U.S.-backed SDF," Reuters, March 13, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamic-state/islamic-state-counter-attacks-out-of-final-syria-enclave-fall-short-u-s-backed-sdf-idUSKBN1OU0Y1> [42]; "Islamic State launches counter attacks at Syria enclave," Reuters, March 13, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamic-state-counter/islamic-state-launches-counter-attacks-at-syria-enclave-idUSKBN1OU1Z5> [43]; Rodi Said, "Hundreds surrender as Islamic State nears defeat in last enclave," Reuters, March 12, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamic-state/hundreds-surrender-as-islamic-state-nears-defeat-in-last-enclave-idUSKBN1QTVB> [44]; Martin Chulov, "Isis releases video of fighters in Baghuz as Kurdish forces advance," *Guardian* (London), March 12, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/12/isis-releases-video-fighters-baghuz-syria-kurdish-forces-advance> [45]; Ellen Francis, "Islamic State loses ground in final Syria enclave, hundreds surrender," Reuters, March 14, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-islamic-state/u-s-backed-syria-forces-advancing-into-islamic-state-enclave-idUSKCN1QV0WB?i=0> [46]; Jeff Seldin, "Final Battle Against IS Caliphate as 'Good as Over,'" Voice of America, March 12, 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/a/syria-sdf-islamic-state-baghuz/4825600.html> [47].
- December 2018 - January 2019:** On December 19, U.S. President Donald Trump tweets that ISIS has been defeated in Syria and the United States will soon remove its forces from the country. German, French, and British officials respond that ISIS has been pushed back in Syria but not been defeated. On January 16, 2019, an explosion in the U.S.-patrolled town of Manbij kills at least 16, including four U.S. citizens. ISIS claims responsibility. Afterward, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence repeats that ISIS "has been defeated." Sources: "Germany, France, UK: 'Islamic State' not defeated in Syria," *Deutsche Welle*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-france-uk-islamic-state-not-defeated-in-syria/a-46815250> [262]; Bassem Mroue, "2 US service members, 2 US civilians killed in Syria blast," Associated Press, January 16, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/0a8f9c71d59c4e8e8df33d0470654bfc> [263].
- May 2018 - December 2018:** On May 1, the U.S.-led coalition begins Operation Roundup to eliminate ISIS's remaining presence in Iraq and Syria. In June, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launch a ground offensive against ISIS targets in coordination with coalition and Iraqi airstrikes. By December 2018, ISIS retains only a small foothold in the Syrian town of Baghuz along the Syrian-Iraqi border. Sources: Falih Hassan and Rod Nordland, "Battered ISIS Keeps Grip on Last Piece of Territory for Over a Year," *New York Times*, December 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/09/world/middleeast/isis-territory-syria-iraq.html> [41]; "November 6: Operation Roundup targets ISIS remnants," U.S. Central Command, November 6, 2018,

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<http://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/1683075/november-6-operation-roundup-targets-isis-remnants/> [264]; "Coalition forces, partners initiate second phase of Operation Roundup," U.S. Central Command, June 3, 2018, <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/PRESS-RELEASES/Press-Release-View/Article/1538892/coalition-forces-partners-initiate-second-phase-of-operation-roundup/> [265].

- **March 2018 - May 2018:** On March 12, ISIS fighters attack the rebel-held al-Qadam neighborhood of southern Damascus. ISIS reportedly takes control of 25 percent of Qadam. On March 13, the Syrian government evacuates approximately 300 rebel fighters from Damascus to the Idlib province. The rebels turn their remaining territory over to the Syrian government, which takes control of approximately 70 percent of Qadam. ISIS attacks rebels during the evacuation. On March 14, ISIS forces attack Syrian army positions and gain ground in southern Damascus after several days of fighting. At least 62 Syrian army soldiers are killed. The Syrian army sends thousands of reinforcements to southern Damascus in April to force ISIS from Qadam and surrounding areas, including the nearby Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, which ISIS had occupied since 2015. On May 18, the Syrian government reportedly reaches a truce with the militants. On May 19, the government begins evacuating ISIS fighters in buses under a reported deal for the government to retake full control of southern Damascus, though Syria denies any deal exists. Sources: Leith Aboufadel, "Breaking: ISIS captures several areas in southern Damascus after launching new offensive," Al Masdar News, March 13, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-isis-captures-several-areas-in-southern-damascus-after-launching-new-offensive/> [266]; Leith Aboufadel, "Breaking: Syrian Army takes control of 70 percent of southern Damascus district despite ISIS attack," Al Masdar News, March 13, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/breaking-syrian-army-takes-control-of-70-percent-of-southern-damascus-district-despite-isis-attack/> [267]; "Syrian army evacuates militants from small rebel pocket near capital," Reuters, March 13, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-qadam/syrian-army-evacuates-militants-from-small-rebel-pocket-near-capital-idUSKCN1GP1ST> [268]; Angus McDowall, "Islamic State takes Damascus area after rebels pull out - monitor," Reuters, March 20, 2018, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-damascus/islamic-state-takes-damascus-area-after-rebels-pull-out-monitor-idUKKBN1GW0Q8> [269]; Agence France-Presse, "62 regime fighters dead in ISIS attack on Syria capital," Al Arabiya, March 21, 2018, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2018/03/21/62-regime-fighters-dead-in-isis-attack-on-syria-capital.html> [270]; Leith Aboufadel, "Syrian Army sends more troops to southern Damascus, thousands of soldiers surround area," Al Masdar News, April 15, 2018, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-sends-more-troops-to-southern-damascus-thousands-of-soldiers-surround-area/> [271].
- **January 4, 2018:** ISIS's Sinai affiliate releases a video declaring war on the Palestinian terror group Hamas while showing the execution of a Hamas member. Source: Loveday Morris, "Islamic State declares war on rival Hamas with video execution," *Washington Post*, January 4, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/04/islamic-state-throws-down-gauntlet-to-rival-hamas-with-video-execution/?utm_term=.c8702d61470e [272].
- **December 20, 2017:** ISIS issues a 17-point plan for supporters to carry out lone-wolf attacks on Christmas. The guide includes calling for derailing trains, burning churches, and a detailed bomb-making plan. Source: "ISIS issues 17-point plan to help lone wolves carry out attacks at Christmas days after poster showed a fanatic about to behead Santa in London," Daily Mail, December 20, 2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5198085/ISIS-issues-chilling-17-point-plan-help-lone-wolves.html> [273].
- **December 14, 2017:** ISIS releases a new propaganda poster aimed at the United States and New York Police Commissioner James O'Neill. The poster threatens "more Ops in your land, until the final hour and we will burn you with the flames of war." Source: Katherine Lam, "Pro-ISIS poster threatens more New York City attacks, beheading of NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill," Fox News, December 14, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/14/pro-isis-poster-threatens-more-new-york-city-attacks-beheading-nypd-commissioner-james-oneill.html> [274].
- **December 12, 2017:** ISIS forces launch a new offensive against Syrian, Iranian, and Hezbollah forces in Deir Ez Zor, Syria. ISIS media claims to capture up to eight villages and kill as many as 41 pro-regime fighters. Source: "After Putin's visit to Syria, the fighting escalates east of Deir Ezzor and ISIS increases its attacks against the regime forces west of the Euphrates," SOHR, December 12, 2017, <http://www.syriaahr.com/en/?p=80481> [275].
- **November 25, 2017:** Militants carrying the ISIS flag carry out a bomb and gun attack on the al Rawdah mosque in Bir al-Abed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing at least 305 people and wounding at least 128 others in the deadliest attack in the country's history. Although Egyptian authorities suspect ISIS's Wilayat Sinai is responsible, the group does not claim responsibility. Sources: Hamdi Alkshali et al., "Egypt mosque attack death toll climbs to above 300," CNN, November 25, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/25/africa/egypt-sinai-mosque-massacre/index.html> [145]; Charlene Gubash et al., "Egypt mosque attack: Death toll rises, officials say militants brandished ISIS flag," NBC News, November 25, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/egypt-reels-death-toll-rises-mosque-attack-which-militants-brandished-n823871> [146]; Omar Fahmy and Patrick Markey, "Gunmen in Egypt mosque attack carried Islamic State flag, prosecutor says," Reuters, November 24, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-security/gunmen-in-egypt-mosque-attack-carried-islamic-state-flag-prosecutor-says-idUSKBN1DO1AN> [147].
- **November 21, 2017:** Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announces that ISIS has been completely driven out of Syria. The same day, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi declares a military victory over ISIS in Iraq following the recapture of Rawa, the last ISIS-held town in the country, the previous week. Despite these announcements, ISIS launches a new offensive on the same day targeting the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Hama, Syria. Sources: Alex Lockie, "ISIS has been militarily defeated in Iraq and Syria," Business Insider, November 21, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-military-defeat-iraq-syria-2017-11> [34]; *Weekly Conflict Summary November 16-22, 2017*, The Carter Center, November 22, 2017, https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/syria-conflict/weekly-conflict-summary-2017.11.22.pdf [113].
- **November 10, 2017:** ISIS is driven out of its last stronghold in Iraq, the town of Rawa. Source: Alex Lockie, "ISIS has been militarily defeated in Iraq and Syria," Business Insider, November 21, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-military-defeat-iraq-syria-2017-11> [34].
- **November 3, 2017:** ISIS is driven from Deir Ezzor, its last major stronghold in Syria, by Syrian troops and allied forces. Source: Hamdi Alkshali et al., "ISIS ousted from last major city in Syria, state media reports," CNN, November 3, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/11/03/middleeast/syria-isis-deir-ezzor/index.html> [276].

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- October 31, 2017:** Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov, an Uzbek national living in the United States, drives a truck down a bike path in New York City in a vehicular attack that kills eight people and injures at least twelve others. He is shot and taken into custody. Saipov tells authorities that he was inspired to carry out the attack by ISIS propaganda videos. Source: Benjamin Mueller et al., "Terror Attack Kills 8 and Injures 11 in Manhattan," *New York Times*, October 31, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/31/nyregion/police-shooting-lower-manhattan.html> [277]; "Complaint Against Suspect in Manhattan Terror Attack," *New York Times*, November 1, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/11/01/us/document-U-S-v-Sayfullo-Saipov-Complaint.html> [278].
- October 17, 2017:** American-backed forces in Syria announce that they have successfully liberated Raqqa from ISIS control. Source: Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad, "Raqqa, ISIS 'Capital,' Is Captured, U.S.-Backed Forces Say," *New York Times*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/17/world/middleeast/isis-syria-raqqa.html> [40].
- October 4, 2017:** Gunmen and a suicide attacker kill at least four people and injure almost 40 others in an attack on a court complex in Misrata, Libya. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: Ahmed Elumami, "Islamic State claims deadly attack on court in Libya's Misrata," Reuters, October 4, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security/islamic-state-claims-deadly-attack-on-court-in-libyas-misrata-idUSKCN1C91CU> [279].
- October 2, 2017:** ISIS claims responsibility for the October 1, 2017, mass shooting in Las Vegas that killed at least 58 people, claiming that attacker Stephen Paddock was a "soldier of the Islamic State." Officials find this claim dubious, with the FBI stating that no links between Paddock and ISIS were found. Source: Tom Batchelor, "Las Vegas shooting: FBI says massacre has no connection to terrorism after Isis claims responsibility," *Independent* (London), October 2, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/las-vegas-shooting-isis-terror-claims-fbi-no-connection-links-latest-news-a7979276.html> [280].
- August 17, 2017 - August 18, 2017:** On August 17, a van crashes into a crowd of people on the Las Ramblas pedestrian walkway in Barcelona. The following morning, five attackers attempt to ram people in the resort city of Cambrils south of Barcelona, then begin to stab passersby before they are killed by police. Altogether, 16 people are killed and at least 130 others are wounded in both attacks. ISIS claims responsibility for both attacks. Source: "Barcelona attack: German woman dies in hospital," BBC News, August 27, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41066735> [281]; Jon Sharman, "Spain attacks: Isis claims responsibility for Cambrils car rampage after Barcelona atrocity," *Independent* (London), August 19, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/spain-attacks-isis-claims-responsibility-cambrils-barcelona-terror-car-rampage-latest-a7901731.html> [282]; Giles Tremlett et al., "Spain terror cell planned Barcelona bombing rampage," *Guardian* (London), August 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/18/accidental-blast-thwarts-huge-bomb-attack-by-spain-terror-cell> [283]; Andrés González et al., "Barcelona van attacker may still be alive, on the run: police," Reuters, August 17, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-barcelona/barcelona-van-attacker-may-still-be-alive-on-the-run-police-idUSKCN1AX1W6> [284].
- August 12, 2017:** A suicide bomber on a motorcycle carries out an attack on a Pakistani army truck in Quetta, Pakistan, killing 15 people and injuring at least 40 others. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: Salman Masood, "ISIS Claims Suicide Bombing That Killed at Least 15 in Pakistan," *New York Times*, August 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/13/world/asia/pakistan-suicide-bomber-motorbike.html> [285].
- July 10, 2017:** The Iraqi government declares victory against ISIS in Mosul after an almost-nine-month battle to recapture the city. Hundreds of Iraqi civilians are believed to have died in the fighting, while thousands more are wounded, according to authorities. Sources: "5 Things to Know About Mosul," Associated Press, July 10, 2017, <https://apnews.com/235d1fc9a02e4201a9532b0a11c924d75-Things-to-know-about-Iraq's-Mosul>; Isabel Coles and Stephen Kalin, "Iraqi PM declares victory over Islamic State in Mosul," Reuters, July 10, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-mosul-idUSKBN19V105?il=0>.
- June 21, 2017:** ISIS blows up Mosul's historic Great Mosque of al-Nuri, where Baghdadi had declared his caliphate in 2014. ISIS blames the mosque's destruction on U.S. warplanes, which U.S. officials vehemently deny. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi calls ISIS's destruction of the over-800-year-old mosque "an official announcement of their defeat." Source: Hamdi Alkshali, Barbara Starr, and Phil Gast, "US, Iraq say ISIS blew up famous Mosul mosque," CNN, June 22, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/21/world/mosul-iraq-mosque-destroyed/index.html>.
- June 6, 2017:** U.S.-backed Syrian and Kurdish forces begin an offensive to recapture the Syrian city of Raqqa, ISIS's de facto capital. Source: Anne Barnard, "U.S.-Backed Forces Begin Assault on Raqqa, ISIS Stronghold in Syria," *New York Times*, June 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/06/world/middleeast/us-backed-forces-begin-assault-on-raqqa.html>.
- May 26, 2017:** Gunmen attack two buses and a truck carrying Coptic Christians to the monastery of St. Samuel the Confessor south of Cairo, killing 29 people. It is ISIS's first attack against a monastery. Source: Bijan Hosseini, Angela Dewan, and Jason Hanna, "Egypt shooting: ISIS claims massacre of 29," CNN, May 27, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/27/middleeast/egypt-shooting-coptic-christians-isis-claim/>.
- April 9, 2017:** A bomb explodes at St. George's Church in Tanta, Egypt, while a suicide bomber targets St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria. The bombings kill a combined 45 people. Source: Maggie Michael, "Attacks test Egypt's president who orders state of emergency," Associated Press, April 10, 2017, <https://apnews.com/4b96a168a56441e2b66c41b797ef849e/egypts-christians-bury-dead-after-church-bombings>.
- March 8, 2017:** ISIS operatives launch a suicide bomb and gun attack at a hospital in Kabul, killing 30 people. Source: Mirwais Harooni, "Over 30 killed as gunmen dressed as medics attack Afghan military hospital," Reuters, March 8, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast-idUSKBN16F0GP>.

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- **February 15, 2017:** Iraq launches an offensive to retake western Mosul from ISIS.
Source: Rukmini Callimachi and Falih Hassan, "Iraq Starts Offensive to Retake Western Mosul From ISIS," *New York Times*, February 19, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/middleeast/iraq-starts-offensive-to-retake-western-mosul-from-isis.html>.
- **February 16, 2017:** ISIS suicide bombers attack an 800-year old Sufi Muslim shrine in Sehwan, Pakistan, killing at least 88 people—including 24 children—and wounding at least 200 others.
That same day, a car bomb planted by ISIS kills at least 48 people and wounds 60 more at an outside market in the southwestern al-Bayaa neighborhood of Baghdad. Sources: Lizzie Dearden, "Pakistan 'kills 100 terrorists' in crackdown after Isis shrine bombing," *Independent* (London), February 17, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/pakistan-isis-shrine-bombing-attack-terrorist-killings-latest-sehwan-sufi-shrine-death-toll-taliban-a7585901.html>; Beth McKernan, "Baghdad bombing: At least 48 killed in 'Isis attack' on Iraqi market," *Independent* (London), February 16, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/baghdad-bombing-car-isis-attack-market-iraq-death-toll-latest-a7584046.html>.
- **January 1, 2017:** A 34-year-old Uzbek national opens fire at a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey, killing 39 people and injuring 70 others.
ISIS claims responsibility. Turkish officials believe that the perpetrator had contact with ISIS militants inside Syria. Sources: "Istanbul new year Reina nightclub attack 'leaves 39 dead'," BBC News, January 1, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38481521>; Rengin Arslan, "Abdulkadir Masharipov: Who is Istanbul gun attack suspect?," BBC News, January 17, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38648350>.
- **December 19, 2016:** A 40-year-old Tunisian ISIS sympathizer drives a truck through a Christmas market in Berlin, Germany, killing 12 people and injuring 48 more.
ISIS claims responsibility. Source: Samuel Osborne, "Berlin attack: Isis claims responsibility for Christmas market massacre that killed 12," *Independent* (London), <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/berlin-isis-claim-responsibility-christmas-market-latest-updates-a7487746.html>.
- **November 6, 2016:** Syrian rebel groups begin an offensive to retake Raqqa from ISIS.
Sources: Rodi Said, "U.S.-backed Syrian alliance declares attack on Islamic State in Raqqa," Reuters, November 6, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/07/middleeast/raqqa-syria-operation-explainer/>.
- **October 24, 2016:** ISIS claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at a cadet training center in Quetta, Pakistan.
The attack leaves 60 people dead and more than 100 others injured. Source: Milo Comerford, "THE QUETTA ATTACK: IS ISIS EXTENDING INTO PAKISTAN?" *Newsweek*, October 25, 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/quetta-attack-isis-extending-pakistan-513417>.
- **October 17, 2016:** Iraqi soldiers and allied forces begin the battle to retake Mosul from ISIS.
Source: Nick Paton Walsh, Max Blau, Emanuella Grinberg and Tim Hume, "Battle for Mosul begins with gunfire and car bombs," CNN, October 17, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/10/17/middleeast/mosul-isis-operation-begins-iraq/index.html>.
- **August 12, 2016:** The U.S. military confirms the recent death of ISIS's leader in Wilayat Khorasan, Hafiz Saeed Khan.
Source: Jibran Ahmad and Yeganeh Torbati, "U.S. drone kills Islamic State leader for Afghanistan, Pakistan: officials," Reuters, August 13, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-islamicstate-idUSKCN10N21L>.
- **August 4, 2016:** Egypt's air force reportedly kills the leader of Wilayat Sinai, Abu Dua al-Ansari.
Source: "Leader of ISIS in Egypt's Sinai killed by air force, sources confirm," Fox News, August 4, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/08/04/leader-isis-in-egypts-sinai-killed-by-air-force-sources-confirm.html>.
- **August 1, 2016:** The U.S. military begins a new airstrike campaign against ISIS in Libya.
Source: Helene Cooper, "U.S. Conducts Airstrikes Against ISIS in Libya," *New York Times*, August 1, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/02/us/politics/us-conducts-airstrikes-against-isis-in-libya.html>.
- **May 19, 2016:** The State Department designates ISIS's Libya branch as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).
The State Department simultaneously designates ISIS's Libya branch—alongside ISIS's Yemen and Saudi Arabia branches—as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) pursuant to Executive Order 13224. Source: "Terrorist Designations of ISIL-Yemen, ISIL-Saudi Arabia, and ISIL-Libya," U.S. Department of State, May 19, 2016, <http://m.state.gov/md257388.htm>.
- **July 27, 2016:** A bombing carried out by ISIS militants kills 44 in the Syrian Kurdish-controlled city of Qamishli.
Source: "Syria: Deadly IS blast rocks Kurdish city of Qamishli," BBC News, July 27, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36902604>.
- **July 26, 2016:** ISIS operatives slit the throat of a priest in a church in Normandy, France.
Source: Kim Willsher, "France in shock again after Isis murder of priest in Normandy," *Guardian* (London), July 26, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/26/france-shock-second-isis-attack-12-days>.
- **July 18, 2016 - July 24, 2016:** ISIS claims responsibility for two attacks in Germany.
In the first attack, on July 18, a 17-year-old Afghan refugee armed with a knife and ax injures four people—all of them from Hong Kong—on a train traveling from Treuchlingen to Würzburg. In the second attack, on July 24, a 27-year-old Syrian refugee carried out a suicide bombing, injuring 12 people, outside of a music festival in Ansbach. Sources: "Germany axe attack: Assault on train in Würzburg injures HK family," BBC News, July 19, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36827725>; Niraj Chokshi, "Syrian Refugee Blows Himself Up at German Music Festival, Wounding 12," *New York Times*, July 24, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/25/world/europe/ansbach-germany-explosion-music-festival.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=second-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>.
- **July 14, 2016:** A Tunisian-French citizen named Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel drives a truck through a crowd celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France.
The attack leaves 84 people dead and more than 300 wounded. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: Alissa J. Rubin and Aurelien Breeden, "ISIS Claims Truck Attacker in France Was Its 'Soldier,'" *New York Times*, July 16, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/17/world/europe/isis-nice-france-attack.html>.

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- **July 3, 2016:** ISIS militants detonate a minivan packed with explosive in central Baghdad, killing at least 292 and wounding 200 others.
Sources: Falih Hassan, Tim Arango and Omar al-Jawshy, "Bombing Kill More Than 140 in Baghdad," *New York Times*, July 3, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/04/world/middleeast/baghdad-bombings.html>; Tim Hume, "Death toll from devastating ISIS truck bomb in Baghdad rises to nearly 300," CNN, July 7, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/07/middleeast/iraq-baghdad-bomb-toll-rises/index.html>.
- **July 1, 2016:** ISIS operatives kill 20 people in a café in Dhaka, Bangladesh, after taking them hostage.
Andrew Marszal and Chris Graham, "20 hostages killed in 'Isil' attack on Dhaka restaurant popular with foreigners," *Telegraph* (London), July 2, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/01/gunmen-attack-restaurant-in-diplomatic-quarter-of-bangladesh-ca/>.
- **June 28, 2016:** Three suicide bombers attack Turkey's Ataturk international airport, killing 45 people and wounding more than 230.
Turkish authorities allege ISIS leadership was involved in planning the attack. On the same day, ISIS militants carry out the group's first successful attack in Malaysia, launching a grenade at a nightclub in Kuala Lumpur. The attack wounds eight. Sources: Associated Press, "Istanbul Airport Attack Death Toll Rises to 45, Dozens Still Hospitalized," NBC News, July 2, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/istanbul-ataturk-airport-attack/istanbul-airport-attack-death-toll-rises-45-dozens-still-hospitalized-n602946>; Faith Karimi, Steve Almasy and Gul Tuysuz, "ISIS leadership involved in Istanbul attack planning, Turkish source says," CNN, June 30, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/30/europe/turkey-istanbul-ataturk-airport-attack/>; Marc Lourdes, "Islamic State launches first successful attack in Malaysia," CNN, July 4, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/04/homepage2/islamic-state-attack-malaysia/>.
- **June 26, 2016:** Iraqi forces retake Fallujah.
Source: Tamer el-Ghobashy and Ghassan Adnan, "Iraqi Forces Take Full Control of Fallujah From Islamic State," *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/iraqi-city-of-fallujah-fully-liberated-from-islamic-state-iraqi-commander-says-1466934423>.
- **June 13, 2016:** Larossi Abballa stabs to death two married French police officers, and pledges allegiance to ISIS directly after the attack. ISIS officially claims responsibility.
Source: Alissa J. Rubin, "ISIS Claims Responsibility for Killing of French Police Officer," *New York Times*, June 13, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/14/world/europe/france-stabbing-police-officer-magnanville.html>.
- **June 12, 2016:** In the deadliest mass shooting on American soil, U.S. citizen Omar Mateen murders 49 and wounds 53 at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida.
While carrying out the attack, Mateen calls 911 and pledges allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Later on June 12, ISIS claims responsibility for the shooting, writing on its Amaq news agency Telegram channel that "an Islamic State fighter" had "targeted a nightclub for homosexuals...." On June 13, ISIS releases another claim of responsibility on its official Al Bayan radio station, referring to Mateen as "one of the soldiers of the caliphate in America." Sources: "Orlando gay nightclub shooting: 50 killed, suspect is Omar Mateen," BBC News, June 12, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36512308>; Kevin Sullivan, Ellen Nakashima, Matt Zapotosky and Mark Berman, "Orlando shooter posted messages on Facebook pledging allegiance to the leader of ISIS and vowing more attacks," *Washington Post*, June 15, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/investigation-into-orlando-shooting-continues-no-impending-charges-expected/2016/06/15/c3eccf5e-3333-11e6-8758-d58e76e11b12_story.html; Jared Malsin, "What We Know About ISIS's Role in the Orlando Shooting," *Time*, June 12, 2016, <http://time.com/4365507/orlando-shooting-isis-claims-responsibility-terror/>; "IS Calls Orlando Nightclub Shooter 'One of the Soldiers of the Caliphate in America,'" SITE Intelligence, June 13, 2016, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/is-calls-orlando-nightclub-shooter-one-of-the-soldiers-of-the-caliphate-in-america.html>; Rukmini Callimachi, "ISIS Claims Responsibility for Orlando Attack in Radio Statement," *New York Times*, June 13, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/live/orlando-nightclub-shooting-live-updates/isis-radio-station/>.
- **June 8, 2016:** Two Palestinian terrorists, allegedly inspired by ISIS, kill four Israeli civilians and wound 15 at a food mall in Tel Aviv.
Sources: Yaniv Kubovich, Ido Efrati and Barak Ravid, "Four Killed, Six Wounded in Shooting Attack at Tel Aviv Shopping Center," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), June 8, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.723941>; William Booth, "Israel says Tel Aviv attackers were 'inspired' by ISIS — and planned to dip knives in rat poison," *Washington Post*, July 4, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/04/israel-says-tel-aviv-attackers-were-inspired-by-isis-and-dipped-their-knives-in-rat-poison/>.
- **June 7, 2016:** ISIS claims responsibility for its first car bombing in the largely Shiite city of Karbala, Iraq.
The attack leaves 10 people dead and 25 wounded.
- **June 5, 2016:** ISIS's Amaq News Agency claims the killing of a Christian in Northwestern Bangladesh and a Buddhist monk in the country's southeast.
Source: "Amaq Reports IS Fighters Killing Christian in Bonpara in Northwestern Bangladesh, Buddhist in Southeast," SITE Intelligence, June 5, 2016, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist-News/amaq-reports-is-fighters-killing-christian-in-bonpara-in-northwestern-bangladesh-buddhist-in-southeast.html>.
- **May 20, 2016 - May 31, 2016:** Iraqi forces—backed by Iranian militias in Iraq—push to retake Fallujah.
Source: Tim Arango, "Iran-led Push to Retake Fallujah From ISIS Worries U.S.," *New York Times*, May 28, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/29/world/middleeast/iran-led-push-to-retake-falluja-from-isis-worries-us.html>.
- **May 3, 2016:** A U.S. Navy SEAL identified as Charlie Keating IV is killed in a firefight with ISIS militants in northern Iraq.
Source: "US Navy SEAL killed by ISIS in Iraq firefight identified," Fox News, May 3, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2016/05/03/us-service-member-killed-in-northern-iraq.html>.
- **April 7, 2016:** ISIS militants kidnap over 300 cement workers from a cement plant near Damascus, Syria.
Source: Greg Botelho and Mohammed Tawfeeq, "ISIS captures hundreds of Syrian cement factory workers, report says," CNN, April 7, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/07/middleeast/syria-war/>.
- **April 2016:** ISIS executes at least 250 women for refusing to enter into temporary marriages with ISIS militants.
Source: Vishakha Sonawane, "ISIS Executes At Least 250 Women For Refusing 'Temporary Marriage' In Iraq's Mosul," *International Business Times*, April 24, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-executes-least-250-women-refusing-temporary-marriage-iraqs-mosul-2357113>.

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- March 25, 2016:**The Pentagon announces the death of top ISIS finance minister Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli as a result of a targeted airstrike earlier that week.
Source: Michael S. Schmidt and Mark Mazzetti, "A Top ISIS Leader Is Killed in an Airstrike, the Pentagon Says," *New York Times*, March 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/26/world/middleeast/abd-al-rahman-mustafa-al-qaduli-isis-reported-killed-in-syria.html>.
- March 22, 2016:**ISIS operatives carry out three bombings in Brussels, Belgium, in the worst attack in that country's history.
At 8 a.m., two bombs explode at the airport in Zaventem. At 9 a.m., one bomb detonates at the Maalbeek metro station. The attacks kill 32 and wound 270.Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Brussels airport delays reopening, as attacks toll lowered to 32," Yahoo News, March 30, 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/belgium-resumes-hunt-airport-suspect-criticism-mounts-004723635.html?ref=gs>; Patrick Sawyer and David Chazan, "British victim of Brussels attacks confirmed dead as slow identification of bodies continues," *Telegraph* (London), March 25, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/25/brussels-attacks-british-it-expert-david-dixon-confirmed-dead/>; Alissa J. Rubin, Aurelien Breeden, and Anita Raghavan, "Strikes Claimed by ISIS Shut Brussels and Shake European Security," *New York Times*, March 22, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/23/world/europe/brussels-airport-explosions.html>.
- March 2016:**Smugglers are increasingly requested to ship ISIS fighters from Libya to Europe, an unnamed smuggler tells CNN.
Source: Nick Paton Walsh, "ISIS on Europe's doorstep," CNN, May 26, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/05/26/middleeast/libya-isis-europe-doorstep/>.
- February 10, 2016 - February 15, 2016:**U.S. airstrikes target ISIS training camps in Libya.
Source: "Pentagon: U.S. warplanes hit ISIS training camp in Libya," CBS News, last updated February 19, 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-warplanes-hit-isis-targets-in-libya-official-says/>.
- January 10, 2016:**U.S. airstrikes target ISIS banks in Mosul, destroying tens of millions of dollars of cash.
Source: Jim Miklaszewski and Corky Siemaszko, "Millions in ISIS Cash Destroyed in U.S. Airstrike," NBC News, January 11, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/millions-isis-cash-destroyed-u-s-airstrike-n494261>.
- January 5, 2016:**ISIS releases a video in which a British-accented man, believed to be [Abu Rumaysah](#) [286], threatens the United Kingdom.
Source: Dana Ford, "Reports identify British-sounding militant in new ISIS video," CNN, January 5, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/05/middleeast/isis-propaganda-video-british-militant/>.
- January 1, 2016 - January 10, 2016:**ISIS launches counterattacks on Iraqi soldiers in Ramadi.
Source: Pat St. Claire, "ISIS suicide bombers attack Iraqi forces at base near Ramadi," CNN, January 3, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/02/middleeast/iraq-ramadi-isis-suicide-attack-on-army-base/>.
- December 26, 2015:**Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi releases an audio message in which he claims that ISIS is thriving.
He mocks the U.S. for refusing to put boots on the ground.Source: Elizabeth Chuck, "ISIS Leader Says Group Is Getting Stronger in Purported New Message," NBC News, December 26, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-leader-says-group-getting-stronger-purported-new-message-n486201>.
- December 20, 2015 - December 27, 2015:**Iraqi forces retake Ramadi.
On December 20, the Iraqi military asks residents of Ramadi to leave the ISIS-controlled Iraqi city. It is a suspected indication that Iraqi forces will soon try to retake the city. The next day, the Iraqi army chief of staff Lt. General Othman al-Ghanemi tells state TV: "There is an ongoing operation to control a sector in preparation of the onslaught on the [Ramadi] city center within the coming hours, God willing." Within four days, Iraqi troops have consolidated their positions on Ramadi before their "final push" against ISIS. On the 27th, The Iraqi army announces its capture of Ramadi from ISIS. Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declares that the Iraqi army will defeat ISIS in 2016.Sources: "Iraq military asks residents of ISIS-controlled Ramadi to leave city," Reuters, December 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKBN0U30K120151220>; "Iraqi army to start attack on ISIS-held Ramadi city in coming hours: Commander," Reuters, December 21, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-ramadi-idUSKBN0U41SA20151221>; "Iraqi forces consolidate position in Ramadi ahead of final push against Islamic State," Reuters, December 25, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKBN0U80R320151226>; "Iraqi army declares first major victory over Islamic State in Ramadi," Reuters, December 27, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKBN0UA0DH20151228>; Stephen Kalin and Maher Chmaytelli, "Iraq PM vows to defeat ISIS in 2016 after army's first major victory," Reuters, December 28, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-ramadi-idUSKBN0UB0TW20151228>.
- December 4, 2015:**German Parliament votes to join conduct airstrikes against ISIS.
Source: Alastair Jamieson, "Germany Votes to Join U.S.-Led Fight Against ISIS in Syria," NBC News, December 4, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/germany-votes-join-u-s-led-fight-against-isis-syria-n474161>.
- December 3, 2015:**Britain Parliament votes to conduct airstrikes against ISIS in Syria.
Source: Associated Press, "Britain joins fight against ISIS, launches airstrikes in Syria," Fox News, December 3, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/12/03/uk-lawmakers-vote-to-launch-airstrikes-against-isis-in-syria/>.
- December 3, 2015:**ISIS releases a video purporting to depict the beheading of a Russian spy.
The executioner addresses Russians, saying, "You will not find peace in your homes. We will kill your sons ... for each son you killed here. And we will destroy your homes for each home you destroyed here."Source: Greg Botelho, "ISIS video claims beheading of Russian spy, threatens Russian people," CNN, December 3, 2015, http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/02/middleeast/isis-russian-beheading-claim/index.html?eref=rss_latest.
- December 2, 2015:**Two shooters kill 14 at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California.
The perpetrators, a husband and wife named Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, are shot dead. The shooters were reportedly ISIS sympathizers. Malik pledged allegiance to ISIS via Facebook while carrying out the attack. Farook's later father told an Italian newspaper: "[Farook] said he shared the ideology of (ISIS leader Abu Bakr) al-Baghdadi to create an Islamic state...." The shooting represents the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil since 9/11.Sources: "San Bernardino shooter pledged allegiance to ISIS on Facebook during shooting," Fox 59, December 4, 2015, <http://fox59.com/2015/12/04/san-bernardino-shooter-pledged-allegiance-to-isis-in-facebook-post-as-shooting-was-happening/>; Faith Karimi, Catherine E. Schoichet, and Dana Ford, "San Bernardino shooters were radicalized 'for quite some time,' FBI says," CNN, December 7, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/07/us/san-bernardino-shooting/>; "San Bernardino shooting updates," *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 2015,

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<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-san-bernardino-shooting-live-updates-htmllstory.html>.

- November 18, 2015:**ISIS releases a propaganda video threatening New York City in the wake of the Paris attacks. A voice in the video says, "...What's coming next will be far worse and more bitter."Source: Shawn Cohen, Isabel Vincent and Tina Moore, "ISIS threatens NYC in new propaganda video," *New York Post*, November 18, 2015, <http://nypost.com/2015/11/18/isis-threatens-nyc-in-new-propaganda-video/>.
- November 13, 2015:**Eight assailants carry out multiple simultaneous attacks in Paris, killing 130 and seriously injuring more than 350. French President Francois Hollande labels the attacks an "act of war" and orders a national state of emergency. ISIS claims responsibility.Source: "Paris attacks: What happened on the night," BBC News, accessed December 9, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34818994>.
- November 12, 2015:**ISIS claims responsibility for a suicide bombing in Beirut that kills at least 43 and wounds more than 200. The group says it targeted Shiite Muslims in a Hezbollah-controlled area.Source: Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad, "ISIS Claims Responsibility for Blasts That Killed Dozens in Beirut," *New York Times*, November 12, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/13/world/middleeast/lebanon-explosions-southern-beirut-hezbollah.html?_r=0.
- November 9, 2015:**The Egyptian government announces it has killed the "most dangerous leader" of ISIS's Sinai province, Ashraf Ali Ali Hassanein al-Gharabali. Source: "Egypt says top terrorist in ISIS-linked group killed in shootout," CNN, November 9, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/09/middleeast/egypt-kills-terrorist-isis-sinai/>.
- October 31, 2015:**A Russian airliner crashes in Egypt's Sinai province, killing all 224 people on board. ISIS's Sinai province claims responsibility, and U.S. intelligence suggests the crash was caused by a bomb planted on the airplane by ISIS.Sources: Barbara Starr and Catherine E. Schoichet, "Russian plane crash: U.S. intel suggests ISIS bomb brought down jet," CNN, November 4, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/04/africa/russian-plane-crash-egypt-sinai/>; "Russian plane crash: investigation into cause begins - as it happened," *Guardian* (London), last modified November 2, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/oct/31/russian-passenger-plane-crashes-in-egypts-sinai-live>.
- October 21, 2015:**Canada's Prime Minister-elect Justin Trudeau says he will follow through on his policy to halt Canadian airstrikes against ISIS. Trudeau insists Canada will stay active in the U.S.-led coalition in a humanitarian capacity.Source: Jethro Mullen, "Trudeau to Obama: Canada to pull out of bombing campaign against ISIS," October 21, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/21/middleeast/syria-iraq-isis-fight/>.
- October 7, 2015:**The Iraqi military launches an operation to reclaim Ramadi. Source: M. Alex Johnson and Courtney Kube, "Iraqi Military Launches Operation to Retake Ramadi From ISIS," NBC News, October 7, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/iraqi-military-launches-operation-retake-ramadi-isis-n439746>.
- October 6, 2015:**U.S. counterterrorism officials investigate how ISIS managed to obtain a slew of Toyota vehicles. The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) reached out to Toyota to investigate the phenomenon after recognizing a number of Toyota trucks in ISIS's control.Sources: Matthew Mosk and Brian Ross, "US Officials Ask How ISIS Got So Many Toyota Trucks," ABC News, October 6, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-officials-isis-toyota-trucks/story?id=34266539>.
- October 3, 2015:**In a propaganda move, ISIS unveils two theme parks in its territory: one in Raqqa, Syria, and the other in Fallujah, Iraq. Source: Tom Wyke, "Welcome to the ISIS fanatics' fairground: Brutal jihadi group unveil two new theme parks to celebrate Eid in Iraq and Syria," *Daily Mail* (London), October 4, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3258899/Welcome-ISIS-fanatics-fairground-Brutal-jihadi-group-unveil-two-new-theme-parks-celebrate-Eid-Iraq-Syria.html>.
- September 16, 2015 - September 17, 2015:**ISIS releases five videos amid the refugee crisis in Europe, urging Syrian and other refugees to leave Europe and travel to the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Sources: Aaron Y. Zelin, "New video message from The Islamic State: 'A Message To the Refugees of the Abode of Infidelity - Wilāyat Hadramawt,'" Jihadology.net, September 16, 2015; Aaron Y. Zelin, "New video message from The Islamic State: 'Muslim Asylum Seekers to the Abode of the Disbelievers - Wilāyat Ḥimṣ,'" Jihadology.net, September 17, 2015, <http://jihadology.net/2015/09/17/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-muslim-asylum-seekers-to-the-abode-of-the-disbelievers-wilayat-%E1%B8%A5im%E1%B9%A3/>; Aaron Y. Zelin, "New video message from The Islamic State: 'To [Those That] Abandoned the [Refugee] Camps - Wilāyat al-Khayr,'" Jihadology.net, September 16, 2015, <http://jihadology.net/2015/09/16/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-to-those-that-abandoned-the-refugee-camps-wilayat-al-khayr/>; Aaron Y. Zelin, "New video message from The Islamic State: 'Warning To the Refugees From the Deceptions of the Crusaders - Wilāyat al-Janūb,'" Jihadology.net, September 16, 2015, <http://jihadology.net/2015/09/16/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-warning-to-the-refugees-from-the-deceptions-of-the-crusaders-wilay-at-al-janub/>.
- September 9, 2015:**Al-Qaeda releases a message from its Emir Ayman al-Zawahiri in which he derides ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, claiming that he is not qualified to lead Muslims. Analysts believe the message to have been recorded in March or April 2015.Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Zawahiri argues Islamic State's caliphate is illegitimate in newly released message," *Long War Journal*, September 9, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/09/zawahiri-says-islamic-states-caliphate-is-illegitimate-in-newly-released-message.php> [287].
- August 24, 2015:**A U.S. strike kills [Junaid Hussain](#) [288], a British citizen and hacker for ISIS. Until his death, Hussain had maintained a presence on Twitter.Source: Barbara Starr, "Prominent ISIS recruiter killed in airstrike," CNN, August 28, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/26/politics/isis-recruiter-targeted-in-airstrike/> [289].
- August 14, 2015:**U.S. officials confirm suspicions that ISIS used a mustard agent on its enemies in Syria. Source: Barbara Starr, Jim Sciutto and Elise Labott, "U.S. confirms ISIS used mustard agent," CNN, August 14, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/14/politics/isis-mustard-agent/index.html> [290].

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- **August 14, 2015:**U.S. officials tell the family of U.S. hostage Kayla Mueller—whose death was confirmed in February—that she was repeatedly raped by ISIS emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.
Source: Julia Zorthian, “ISIS Leader Sexually Abused American Hostage Kayla Mueller, U.S. Officials Claim,” *Time*, August 14, 2015, <http://time.com/3998992/isis-kayla-mueller-baghdadi-rape/> [291].
- **July 27, 2015:**The *Daily Express* reports that British ISIS executioner Mohammed Emwazi, a.k.a. Jihadi John, has fled ISIS.
Source: Jake Burman, “Petrieved Jihadi John ‘ABANDONS ISIS - fearing the terror group no longer has use for him,’” *Daily Express* (London), July 27, 2015, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/593683/jihadi-john-mohammed-emwazi-abandon-isis-sas-iraq-syria-islamic-state> [292].
- **July 17, 2015:**Kurdish officials, field investigators, and a Western technician report that ISIS militants have used rudimentary chemical weaponry against Kurdish territory in Iraq and Syria in recent weeks.
Source: C. J. Chivers, “ISIS Has Fired Chemical Mortar Shells, Evidence Indicates,” *New York Times*, July 17, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/18/world/middleeast/islamic-state-isis-chemical-weapons-iraq-syria.html?_r=0 [293].
- **July 17, 2015:**ISIS’s Sinai Province claims responsibility for an attack on an Egyptian vessel.
Source: Doug Bolton, “Isis claims responsibility for rocket attack against Egyptian navy ship in Mediterranean Sea,” *Independent* (London), July 17, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-claims-responsibility-for-a-rocket-attack-against-an-egyptian-navy-ship-in-the-mediterranean-sea-10394112.html> [294].
- **July 2, 2015:**ISIS militants decimate cultural artefacts in the Syrian city of Palmyra, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
The next day, ISIS releases a video of a row of young men being beheaded in Palmyra’s empty amphitheater. On August 18, ISIS militants publicly execute Palmyra’s archeologist.Sources: Salma Abdelaziz, “ISIS publicly smashes Syrian artifacts,” CNN, July 3, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/02/world/isis-syrian-artifacts/> [295];Kimberly Hutcherson, “ISIS video shows execution of 25 men in ruins of Syria amphitheater,” CNN, July 4, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/04/middleeast/isis-execution-palmyra-syria/>;Ben Hubbard, “Syrian Expert Who Shielded Palmyra Antiquities Meets a Grisly Death at ISIS’ Hands,” *New York Times*, August 19, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/20/world/middleeast/isis-palmyra-syria-antiquities-scholar-beheaded.html?_r=1.
- **June 26, 2015:**ISIS takes credit for an attack on tourists at the Imperial Marhaba Hotel and the Sofil Hostel in Sousse, Tunisia.
The attack kills 38 individuals, most of whom are British tourists.Sources: Harleen Gambhir, “ISIS-Linked Regional Activity: June 2015,” Institute for the Study of War, June 27, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-linked-regional-activity-june-2015> [296];Fiona Keating, “Tunisia hotel attack: Isis claim responsibility for the attack on Riu Imperial Marhaba Hotel,” *International Business Times*, June 27, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/tunisia-hotel-attack-isis-claim-responsibility-attack-riu-imperial-marhaba-hotel-1508243>.
- **June 22, 2015:**ISIS launches a Caucasus-based wilayat.
Source: Harleen Gambhir, “ISIS-Linked Regional Activity: June 2015,” Institute for the Study of War, June 27, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-linked-regional-activity-june-2015> [296].
- **June 17, 2015 - June 29, 2015:**ISIS’s Yemeni wilayat detonates VBIEDs at Shiite religious sites and Houthi political and military assets.
Source: Harleen Gambhir, “ISIS-Linked Regional Activity: June 2015,” Institute for the Study of War, June 27, 2015, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/isis-linked-regional-activity-june-2015> [296].
- **May 25, 2015:**ISIS wrests control of the ancient Roman city of Palmyra, in central Syria, from the Syrian army.
According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, ISIS executed more than 200 Syrians, civilian and military, during the offensive.Source: Ben Brumfield and Raja Razek, “ISIS executes 262, as it takes ancient Syrian city of Palmyra, group says,” CNN, May 25, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/25/middleeast/isis-killings-palmyra-syria/> [297].
- **May 17, 2015:**ISIS raises its banner over Ramadi, Iraq, which it conquered after a protracted struggle with the Iraq army and Shiite militias.
Source: Armin Rosen, “The Iraqi campaign to retake Ramadi from ISIS is a looming disaster,” *Business Insider*, May 31, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-campaign-to-retake-ramadi-from-isis-is-an-impending-disaster-2015-5#ixzz3eTyAYOBU> [298].
- **April 24, 2015:**Media reports surface that ISIS members are luring gay men out on dates in Syria and then publicly executing them.
Source: Deborah Hastings, “ISIS terrorists pose as gay men, lure victims on dates, then kill them: social media,” *New York Daily News*, April 24, 2015, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/isis-terrorists-lure-gay-men-deaths-article-1.2197555> [299].
- **April 8, 2015:**Canada launches its first airstrikes against ISIS in Syria, hitting a base near Raqqa.
Source: Jethro Mullen, “Canadian warplanes carry out first airstrike against ISIS in Syria,” CNN, April 9, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/09/middleeast/canada-isis-syria-first-airstrike/> [300].
- **April 3, 2015 - April 10, 2015:**ISIS reportedly sends an email to the personal account of Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan threatening his life.
According to media, the email came from a Gmail account and the author said ISIS paid him to kill Rajan but he would spare Rajan for more money.Source: Sneha Shankar, “ISIS Threatens To ‘Eliminate’ India’s Central Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan: Report,” *International Business Times*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-threatens-eliminate-indias-central-bank-governor-raghuram-rajana-report-1884373> [301].
- **April 2, 2015:**Twitter deletes 10,000 ISIS-related accounts.
Source: Rick Gladstone, “Twitter Says It Suspended 10,000 ISIS-Linked Accounts in One Day,” *New York Times*, April 9, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/10/world/middleeast/twitter-says-it-suspended-10000-isis-linked-accounts-in-one-day.html> [302].
- **March 7, 2015:**Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau pledges allegiance to ISIS in an audio recording.
Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi purportedly accepts Boko Haram’s pledge of allegiance five days later on March 12.Sources: “Boko Haram Leader

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Abubakar Shekau Pledges Allegiance to ISIS in New Audio," NBC News, March 7, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-starts-dismantle-ancient-iraqi-archaeological-site-hatra-n319231> [303]; Hamdi Alkhshali and Steve Almsay, "ISIS leader purportedly accepts Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance," CNN, March 12, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/12/middleeast/isis-boko-haram/>.

- March 5, 2015 - March 6, 2015:** ISIS attacks the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud in northern Iraq, razing the city and bulldozing archaeological ruins.
Sources: Michael Martinez and Mohammed Tawfeeq, "ISIS bulldozes ruins of ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud, Iraqi ministry says," CNN, March 6, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/03/05/world/iraqi-isis-destroys-ancient-city-nimrud/> [304]; Anne Barnard, "ISIS Attacks Nimrud, a Major Archaeological Site in Iraq," *New York Times*, March 5, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/world/middleeast/isis-attacks-iraqi-archaeological-site-at-nimrud.html?_r=0 [305].
- February 26, 2015:** The identity of "jihadi john,"—the British man featured in ISIS's beheading videos—is revealed as Londoner Mohammed Emwazi, a British citizen of Kuwaiti descent.
Source: Bill Chapell, "ISIS Extremist Who Beheaded Prisoners Is Identified As Man From London," NPR, February 26, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/02/26/389186094/isis-man-who-beheaded-prisoners-identified-as-london-man-by-bbc> [306].
- February 26, 2015:** In the culmination of a multi-day offensive on Assyrian Christian villages in northeastern Syria, ISIS militants kidnap further hostages, bringing the total number of Assyrian Christian hostages to 262.
Source: Laura Smith-Spark, "Activist: ISIS now holds 262 Christians hostages in Syria," CNN, February 26, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/26/middleeast/isis-syria-iraqi/> [307].
- February 23, 2015:** ISIS's media department releases a new video depicting caged Kurdish prisoners being paraded down ISIS-controlled streets.
Source: Yousuf Basil and Holly Yan, "New ISIS video shows Kurdish Peshmerga soldiers in cages in Iraq," CNN, February 23, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/02/22/middleeast/isis-crisis/> [308].
- February 23, 2015:** ISIS militants burn the Mosul public library, which reportedly housed over 8,000 rare books and manuscripts.
Source: Riyadh Mohammed, "ISIS Burns 8000 Rare Books and Manuscripts in Mosul," *Fiscal Times*, February 23, 2015, <http://www.thefiscaltimes.com/2015/02/23/ISIS-Burns-8000-Rare-Books-and-Manuscripts-Mosul> [309].
- February 15, 2015 - February 16, 2015:** ISIS uploads a video showing the gruesome killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christian laborers in Libya.
The men were kidnapped from the city of Sirt, led to a beach, and made to kneel before they were beheaded by multiple ISIS members. The group identifies its newly conquered land in Libya as the "Tripoli" Province of ISIS, leading analysts to believe that Libya is emerging as a 'second front' for the organization. Egypt retaliates with airstrikes against ISIS in Libya the following day. The Egyptian military targets training camps and armaments in Darna in eastern Libya, a jihadist hub. Sources: Jared Malson, "Beheading of Coptic Christians in Libya Shows ISIS Branching Out," *Time*, February 15, 2015, <http://time.com/3710610/libya-coptic-christians-isis-egypt/>; David D. Kirkpatrick, "Egypt Conducts Airstrikes on Islamic State Targets in Libya," *New York Times*, February 16, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/17/world/middleeast/isis-egypt-libya-airstrikes.html>.
- February 10, 2015:** The U.S. government confirms the death of Kayla Mueller, a 26-year-old humanitarian aid worker and the last American hostage held by ISIS.

ISIS claims that she was killed when a Jordanian fighter plane bombed a building where she was being held. The claim cannot be confirmed and no proof was offered. Mueller had been captured in August 2013 at a Doctors Without Borders hospital. ISIS had threatened to kill her if several million euros were not paid in ransom by her family.
Sources: Adam Goldman, "Kayla Mueller, American Hostage of the Islamic State, is confirmed dead," *Washington Post*, February 10, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-believes-kayla-mueller-hostage-of-islamic-state-is-dead/2015/02/10/76eef7f0-b12e-11e4-886b-c22184f27c35_story.html [310]. Adam Goldman, "Islamic State claims American hostage killed in bombing in Syria," *Washington Post*, February 6, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/islamic-state-claims-american-hostage-killed-bombing-syria/2015/02/06/0b37def6-70cd-11e4-893f-86bd390a3340_story.html/ [311].

- February 3, 2015:** ISIS posts a video and still images of Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh being burned alive in a cage.
Al-Kasasbeh was a member of an important Jordanian tribe and the first prisoner from the coalition bombing ISIS. Jordanian officials say that he was actually killed on January 3. In response to the group's most cruel execution to date, Jordan executes Sajida al-Riswahi, convicted of attempting a suicide bombing and the prisoner ISIS had earlier asked for in a prisoner swap for Japanese hostage Haruka Yukawa. Jordan also executes Ziad al-Karbouli, a top lieutenant of al-Qaeda in Iraq, convicted of helping to plan 2005 bombings in Amman that killed more than 57 people. Both were already sentenced to death for terrorism. Source: Rod Nordland and Ranya Kadri, "Jordanian Pilot's Death, Shown in ISIS Video, Spurs Jordan to Execute Prisoners," *New York Times*, February 3, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/world/middleeast/isis-said-to-burn-captive-jordanian-pilot-to-death-in-new-video.html?_r=0.
- January 27, 2015:** ISIS claims responsibility for an attack at the five-star Corinthia hotel in Tripoli, Libya.
Nine people are killed, including five foreign nationals. It is the first attack on western interests in Libya. ISIS's profile in Libya increases along with Islamic State Tripoli (IS Tripoli) in western Libya and ISIS-affiliated branches, Barqa in the east and Fezzan in the south. Many analysts attribute ISIS's rise in Libya to the anarchic state of the country. This is partly due to the ongoing battle between the internationally recognized government in the eastern city of Tobruk and Libya's National Salvation government, which is allied with the Islamist-backed Fajr Libya in Tripoli in the west.
Source: Jack Moore, "ISIS Attack on Tripoli Hotel Opens New Front Against West," *Newsweek*, January 27, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-attack-tripoli-hotel-opens-new-front-against-west-302567> [154].

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- **January 20, 2015 - January 31, 2015:** ISIS releases a video of two Japanese hostages, Kenji Goto and Haruka Yukawa.

The extremists demand \$200 million dollars in ransom, which is the same amount Tokyo pledged in non-military aid to ISIS victims, including refugees and displaced people in Iraq and Syria. Four days later, ISIS posts a video of Japanese hostage Kenji Goto holding a picture of what is purported to be Haruka Yukawa's dead body. A man is heard on the video pleading for his life in exchange for a suspected female militant imprisoned in Jordan, Sajida al-Rishawi. On January 31, Kenji Goto is reported executed. His killer states on video: "[Prime Minister] Abe, because of your reckless decision to take part in an unwinnable war, this knife will not only slaughter Kenji, but will also carry on and cause carnage wherever your people are round. So let the nightmare for Japan begin." Sources: Patrick J. Mconnell and Bathsheva Sobelman, "Islamic State threatens to kill Japanese hostages, demands \$200 million," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-islamic-state-japan-hostages-video-20150119-story.html>; Eline Gordts and Charlotte Alfred, "Alleged ISIS Video claims Japanese Hostage Haruna Yukawa was Executed, Issues New Demand," *Huffington Post*, January 24, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/24/isis-executed-haruna-yukawa_n_6511536.html; Steve Almsay, "ISIS: Japanese hostage beheaded," *CNN*, February 3, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/31/middleeast/isis-japan-jordan-hostages/>.

- **December 24, 2014 - February 5, 2015:** ISIS militants capture a Jordanian pilot flying over ISIS-controlled territory in northern Syria by shooting down his jet with an anti-aircraft missile.

The Jordanian pilot is identified as Moaz Youssef al-Kasasbeh. ISIS militants post photographs of the captured pilot surrounded by masked gunmen on Twitter. On February 3, ISIS posts a video and still images of al-Kasasbeh being burned alive in a cage. Two days later on February 5, Jordan launches Operation Martyr Moaz against ISIS in Syria and Iraq in response to Moath al-Kasasbeh's murder. Sources: Ben Hubbard, "ISIS Captures Jordanian Fighter Pilot in Syria," *New York Times*, December 24, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/25/world/middleeast/isis-syria.html>; Rod Nordland and Ranya Kadri, "Jordanian Pilot's Death, Shown in ISIS Video, Spurs Jordan to Execute Prisoners," *New York Times*, February 3, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/world/middleeast/isis-said-to-burn-captive-jordanian-pilot-to-death-in-new-video.html?_r=0; "IS captures Jordanian pilot after warplane crashes in Syria," *BBC News*, December 24, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30596474>; John Hall, Tom Wyke and Stephanie Linning, "It's payback time: Jordan releases slick video of strikes against ISIS - in Operation Martyr Moaz named after murdered pilot," *Daily Mail* (London), February 5, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2941123/Jordan-s-air-force-fly-home-town-pilot-murdered-ISIS-returning-sortie-Syria-nation-s-king-visit-s-mourning-family.html>.

- **December 17, 2014:** A mass grave containing over 230 bodies is discovered in eastern Syria.

The dead are believed to have belonged to al-Sheitaat, a Sunni tribe against ISIS. The deaths bring the number of al-Sheitaats killed by ISIS over 900.

Source: Jack Moore, "Isis massacre: 230 al-Sheitaat tribesman found in mass grave in eastern Syria," *The International Business Times*, December 17, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/isis-massacre-230-al-sheitaat-tribesmen-found-mass-grave-eastern-syria-1480000> [312].

- **November 21, 2014:** ISIS releases another video with hostage John Cantlie.

Cantlie speaks to the camera, describing a failed rescue attempt by the U.S. He encourages the United States and Britain to negotiate with ISIS fighters regarding the release of Western hostages.

Source: Ben Hubbard, "ISIS Taunts United States and Britain in New Video," *New York Times*, November 21, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/22/world/middleeast/isis-taunts-united-states-and-britain-in-new-video.html> [313].

- **November 16, 2014:** ISIS releases a video showing that they have beheaded American hostage Peter Kassig.

Kassig's death appears at the end of a 16-minute video titled "Although the disbelievers dislike it," in which ISIS members behead a group of Syrian soldiers. The scenes in which the soldiers are beheaded are edited in a way to increase the viewer's horror: slow-motion shots of the beheadings and sound effects of panicked breathing and slitting throats. In the video, Jihadi John speaks over Peter Kassig's beheaded corpse: "This is Peter Edward Kassig, a U.S. citizen of your country. Peter, who fought against the Muslims in Iraq while serving as a soldier under the American Army, doesn't have much to say. His previous cellmates have already spoken on his behalf... You claim to have withdrawn from Iraq four years ago. We said to you then that you are liars." Jihadi John continues: "your forces will return greater in number than they were before. We also remind you of the haunting words of our Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who told you: 'The spark has been lit here in Iraq and its heat will continue to intensify by Allah's permission until it burns the crusader army.'"

Sources: "Gruesome Islamic State video Announces Death of Peter Kassig," *The Clarion Project*, November 16, 2014, <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/gruesome-islamic-state-video-announces-death-peter-kassig> [314]. Rukmini Callimachi, "Obama Calls Islamic State's Killing of Peter Kassig 'Pure Evil'," *New York Times*, November 16, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/17/world/middleeast/peter-kassig-isis-video-execution.html> [315].

- **November 13, 2014:** Rumors of al-Baghdadi's death are put to rest following a speech in which the leader calls for "volcanoes of jihad."

It is unclear if the video was made before or after the airstrike carried out on November 8, in which many high-level ISIS militants were killed. In the video, Baghdadi mocks the U.S. for sending its soldiers "to their death and destruction." Baghdadi also shares the "good news" of the expansion of the caliphate. According to Baghdadi, jihadist groups from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Algeria have pledged allegiance to ISIS.

Sources: Erin Cunningham, "Islamic State leader al-Baghdadi calls on followers to unleash 'volcanoes of jihad,'" *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/defiant-message-from-islamic-state-leader-but-silence-over-airstrike-injury-reports/2014/11/13/a19f4d9e-6b54-11e4-9fb4-a622dae742a2_story.html [316]. Leila Fadel, "With Cash and Cachet, The Islamic State Expands Its Empire," *NPR All Things*

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Considered, November 18, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=364942091> [317].

- **November 10, 2014:** Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, a Sinai-based jihadist group with a history of violent attacks against Egyptian military and police forces- pledges allegiance to ISIS.

In return, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis receives increased funding, recruits and weaponry.

Sources: Khalil al-Anani, "ISIS Enters Egypt," Foreign Affairs, December 4, 2014, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142423/khalil-al-anani/isis-enters-egypt?cid=nlc-foreign-affairs-this-week-121114-isis-enters-egypt-5-1-21114&sp_mid=47611240&sp_rid=YWdvbGRzbWlAeXUuZWRI50 [318]. David D. Kirkpatrick, "Militant Group in Egypt Vows Loyalty to ISIS," *New York Times*, November 10, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/11/world/middleeast/egyptian-militant-group-pledges-loyalty-to-isis.html> [137].

- **October 31, 2014:** ISIS fighter claims the group controls 90% of the city of Kobani. That same day, the United Nations releases a press statement condemning ISIS and expressing "deep outrage" at the group's actions. Sources: "ISIS Bomb Threat to Kurdish Forces Bound For Syria's Kobani," NBC News, October 31, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-bomb-threat-kurdish-forces-bound-syrias-kobani-n238406> [319]. "U.N. Expresses 'Deep Outrage' at ISIS," CBS News, October 31, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/u-n-expresses-deep-outrage-at-isis/> [320].
- **October 24, 2014:** Iraqi forces regain control of the area of Jurf al-Sakhar, south of Baghdad. Meanwhile, Kurdish peshmerga forces liberate the northern Iraqi town of Zumar, west of the Mosul Dam. Coalition forces conduct 22 airstrikes against ISIS from October 22-October 23. Source: Laura Smith-Spark and Kareem Khadder, "Iraqi Forces, Peshmerga Claim Gains Against ISIS; Battle for Kobani Continues," CNN News, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/25/world/middleeast/isis-threat/> [321].
- **October 14, 2014:** An ISIS bomber kills 24 and wounds 40 at a crowded checkpoint into a majority Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad. Among the dead was Ahmed al-Khafaji, a Shi'ite member of Parliament as well as the Shi'ite military group, the Badr Organization. Source: Kirk Semple and Omar al-Jawoshy, "ISIS Bomber Hits Baghdad, Killing 24," *New York Times*, October 14, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/15/world/middleeast/isis-bomber-hits-baghdad-killing-24-.html> [322].
- **October 12, 2014:** ISIS releases its third propaganda video with British hostage John Cantlie. Cantlie warns that "anyone hoping for a nice neat surgical operation without getting their hands dirty is in for a horrible surprise once it gets under way." He speaks about the beheading videos, and how ISIS profits from them. He says, "If these executions force public outcry or a policy change, that is a huge victory. And if they only goad our governments into dropping more bombs and spending millions more dollars, making our countries weaker in the process, that is a victory, too." Cantlie continues to explain the group's actions and reasoning. The video ends on a grim note, when Cantlie says, "Unless something changes very quickly and very radically, I await my turn." Source: Shiv Malik, "British hostage John Cantlie appears in fourth ISIS propaganda video," *Guardian* (London), October 12, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/12/british-hostage-john-cantlie-fourth-isis-video> [323].
- **October 10, 2014:** At least a third of the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani is reported to be under the control of ISIS, despite continued airstrikes on the group. Turkey continues to call for a no-fly buffer zone on the Syrian border, which would prevent Syrian government aircraft from flying overhead. Turkey's reasoning includes humanitarian motives such as protecting refugees, as well as Turkey's border. The more private argument is made that the buffer zone would be used to train moderate rebels in fighting Assad's government, something that the United States may not want to get involved in. Source: Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, "Turkey seeks buffer zone on the border with Syria," *New York Times*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/10/world/middleeast/turkish-support-of-coalition-fighting-isis-centers-on-border-buffer-zone-.html> [324].
- **October 8, 2014:** ISIS militants shoot down an Iraqi military helicopter with a shoulder-fired missile, killing two onboard, for the second time in less than a week. The helicopter was believed to be a Bell 407 aircraft, generally used for surveillance. Source: Kirk Semple and Omar al-Jawoshy, "ISIS Militants Shoot Down Iraqi Helicopter, Killing 2," *New York Times*, October 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/09/world/middleeast/isis-iraq-violence.html?partner=rss&emc=rss> [325].
- **October 3, 2014:** Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott tells the public that Australia will join the U.S.-led coalition in launching airstrikes in Iraq, but not Syria. He also offers special operations personnel to advise Iraqi troops on the ground. Australia had already sent several military aircraft and hundreds of personnel to friendly countries neighboring Iraq and Syria in anticipation of the growing campaign against ISIS. Source: Michelle Innis, "Australia Says It Will Join Airstrikes Against Islamic State in Iraq," *New York Times*, October 3, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/04/world/asia/australia-says-it-will-join-airstrikes-against-islamic-state-in-iraq.html?_r=0 [326].
- **October 3, 2014:** ISIS releases a video depicting the beheading of English taxi-driver Alan Henning. The video takes place in the same area that James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and David Haines were beheaded. In the video, Henning, wearing the usual orange jumpsuit, says: "Hi, I am Alan Henning. Because of our Parliament's decision to attack the Islamic State, I — as a member of the British public — will now pay the price for that decision." Right before the decapitation, 'Jihadi John', the executioner, says: "Obama, you have started your air bombardment in Sham [an area referring to greater Syria] which keeps on striking our people. It is only right that we continue to strike the necks of your people." According to some analysts, ISIS seems to have waited to behead Henning until after the start of Britain's airstrikes on the group. The video ends with Jihadi John threatening the execution of American hostage Peter Kassig if the airstrikes on ISIS do not cease. Source: Rukmini Callimachi and Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, "ISIS releases video of execution of British aid worker," *New York Times*, October 3, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/04/world/middleeast/islamic-state-releases-video-of-execution-of-alan-henning-british-aid-worker.html> [327]; "ISIL release beheading video of aid worker," *Al Jazeera*, October 3, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/10/3/video-islamic-stategroupbeheadsbritishhostage.html> [328].
- **October 2, 2014:** The UN publishes a report stating that upwards of 5,500 people have been killed by ISIS in Iraq alone since June, 2014. This includes hundreds of Yazidis who were "slaughtered en masse." Source: Nick Cumming-Bruce, "5,500 Iraqis Killed Since Islamic State Began Its Military Drive, U.N. Says," *New York Times*, October 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/world/middleeast/un-reports-at-least-26000-civilian-casualties-in-iraq-conflict-this-year.html?_r=0 [329].

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- October 2, 2014:**The Turkish parliament votes 298-98 in favor of military operations against ISIS. This vote includes the potential use of Turkish bases by US-led coalition troops. However, it remains unclear if this vote will lead to deliverable military action. Defense Minister Ismet Yilmaz says to not expect "immediate steps." Source: Ceylan Yeginsu, "Turkey Votes to Allow Operations Against ISIS," *New York Times*, October 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/world/europe/turkey-votes-to-allow-operations-against-isis.html?_r=0 [330]; "Turkish parliament approves military operations in Syria, Iraq," *Al Jazeera*, October 2, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/10/2/turkey-parliamentisil.html> [331].
- September 26, 2014:**ISIS militants persist in their conquest of the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani, amid airstrikes. Mass numbers of Kurdish Syrian refugees continue to pile into Turkey. Growing anger from Turkish and Syrian Kurds towards the Turkish government's apparent lack of action concerning ISIS result in clashes between Turkish Kurds and Turkish military.
- September 25, 2014:**Joint airstrikes led by the United States, Saudi Arabia and the UAE attack ISIS's 12 oil refineries in Syria. Airstrikes also continue in Iraq on ISIS militants, armed vehicles, Humvees, checkpoints, guard towers and a command post. Additionally, James B. Comey, the director of the FBI, announces that the militant in the beheading videos has been identified. Comey would not release the name of the British citizen while agents search for him. Sources: Helene Cooper and Anne Barnard, "Warplanes blast militants' refineries in Syria, targeting a source of cash," *New York Times*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/world/middleeast/isis-revenue-sources-remain-crucial-target-us-says.html> [332]; David E. Sanger, "Militant in beheading videos has been identified, F.B.I. chief says," *New York Times*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/26/world/middleeast/militant-in-beheading-videos-has-been-identified-fbi-chief-says.html> [333]
- September 23, 2014:**An 18-year old terror suspect in Australia is fatally shot by police after he attempts to stab two counter-terrorism officials. The suspect had displayed an ISIS flag and was shouting insults about Prime Minister Tony Abbott before his death. Source: Reuters, "Man shot in attack on counterterrorism officials in Australia," *New York Times*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/world/asia/man-shot-in-attack-on-counterterrorism-officers-in-australia.html> [334].
- September 22, 2014:**ISIS releases John Cantlie's second propaganda video, in which Cantlie questions Obama's strategy of funding Syrian rebels, and picks apart several claims that are made about the group. He says, "The Free Syrian Army are proven to be an undisciplined, corrupt, and largely ineffective fighting force...Giving the FSA 500 million [dollars] now is a completely pointless exercise." He continues by saying, "Never mind the fact that the FSA sells the weapons the West gives them to arms dealers and smugglers, and much of it then ends up with the Islamic State." Source: "Second video of British hostage John Cantlie released," BBC, September 23, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29323283> [335].
- September 21, 2014:**The U.S.-led coalition against ISIS begins airstrikes in Syria, hitting the towns of Raqqa, Dayr az Zawr, Al Hasakah, and Abu Kamal. The targets include ISIS fighters, headquarters, command and control facilities, training compounds, supply trucks, armed vehicles and finance centers, according to a release from the U.S. Central Command. The coalition did inform Syria of the airstrikes before they took place, but did not ask for permission. By 10 pm ET on September 22, 2014, it is reported that at least 20 ISIS fighters have been wounded or killed. Source: "Pentagon: US and partner nations launch airstrikes in Syria against ISIL," *Al Jazeera*, September 22, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/9/22/us-launches-airstrikesinsyriaagainstisil.html> [336].
- September 20, 2014:**Turkey's 49 citizens, who had been held hostage for more than three months by ISIS, are freed. The hostages include diplomats and their families, as well as soldiers. They had been taken hostage in June at the Turkish consulate in Mosul, Iraq. Although Turkey did not initially give details surrounding the negotiations that led to the release, Turkish media claimed there was an exchange of ISIS prisoners held by a moderate Syrian rebel group with ties to Turkey. Sources: "ISIL released Turks held hostage in Iraq," *Al Jazeera English*, last modified September 21, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/09/turkish-hostages-seized-iraq-freed-201492035248486996.html> [337]; Mustafa Akyol, "Will Turkey Fight ISIS?" *New York Times*, September 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/24/opinion/mustafa-akyol-will-turkey-fight-isis.html> [338]
- September 18, 2014:**In a near-total vote, the U.S. Congress gives tremendous approval to President Obama's plan to aid moderate Syrian rebels. The bill, in the following days, is signed into law. Source: Johathan Weisman and Jeremy Peters, "Congress gives final approval to aid rebels in fight with ISIS," *New York Times*, September 18, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/19/world/middleeast/senate-approves-isis-bill-avoiding-bigger-war-debate.html> [339].
- September 18, 2014:**ISIS releases a video featuring John Cantlie, a British journalist being held hostage by ISIS. Vastly different from previous beheading videos, this video depicts Cantlie arguing against Western military involvement against ISIS. Sources: "John Cantlie Lend Me Your Ears - "عزيمتي معكم" "عزيمتي معكم", YouTube video, 3:21, posted by "Times of Lebanon," September 18, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vcew3qmidRI> [340]; Shiraz Maher and Peter Neumann, "Analysis: What was the aim of IS' John Cantlie video," BBC News, September 23, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-29331757> [341]
- September 17, 2014:**ISIS releases a video warning against the possibility of U.S. troops on the ground in Iraq and Syria, an action that Obama had repeatedly promised to not undertake. The video depicts Obama's speech from September 10th, and then the words "Flames of War" appear on the screen, followed by "Fighting has just begun." The video ends with the text "Coming soon." Source: Michael S. Schmidt, "Islamic State issues video challenge to Obama," *New York Times*, September 17, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/17/world/middleeast/isis-issues-video-riposte-to-obama.html> [342].
- September 14, 2014:**A group calling themselves the "Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria" splits from AQIM and pledges allegiance to ISIS and its caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Source: "Algeria's al-Qaeda defectors join IS group," *Al Jazeera*, September 14, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/09/algeria-al-qaeda-defectors-join-group-201491412191159416.html> [52].
- September 13, 2014 - January 27, 2015:**ISIS militants wage a vigorous battle for the northern Syrian city of Kobani. By October 9, at least a third of Kobani is reported to be under the control of ISIS despite continued U.S. airstrikes on the group. On October 20, the U.S. drops weaponry and other lethal aid to Kurdish fighters struggling to keep hold of Kobani. On October 24, Turkey pledges to allow a maximum of 150 peshmerga militants to travel through Turkey to defend the Syrian town of Kobani. By the end of October, ISIS claims the

group controls 90% of the city of Kobani. Sources: "SYRIA KOBANE IS OFFENSIVE (13 SEPT 2014 - 26 JAN 2015)," Agathocle de Syracuse, January 27, 2015, <http://www.agathocledesyracuse.com/archives/52>; Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, "Turkey seeks buffer zone on the border with Syria," *New York Times*, October 9, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/10/world/middleeast/turkish-support-of-coalition-fighting-isis-centers-on-border-buffer-zone.html>; "US Sends Lethal Aid to Kurdish Forces Fighting ISIS in Kobani," Reuters, October 20, 2014, <http://rt.com/news/197360-isis-kobani-usa-weapons/>; Laura Smith-Spark and Kareem Khadder, "Iraqi Forces, Peshmerga Claim Gains Against ISIS; Battle for Kobani Continues," CNN News, <http://www.cnn.com/2014/10/25/world/meast/isis-threat/>; "ISIS Bomb Threat to Kurdish Forces Bound For Syria's Kobani," NBC News, October 31, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/isis-bomb-threat-kurdish-forces-bound-syrias-kobani-n238406>.

- **September 13, 2014:** ISIS releases another video, "A Message to the Allies of America," in which British aid worker David Cawthorne Haines is executed. Some analysts see it as a warning to the British Government for supporting the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS. The video is filmed in the same setting as the previous videos that ISIS has created: a nondescript area of what seems to be arid land beneath a blue sky. As in the other beheading videos disseminated by ISIS, "Jihadi John", stands by a kneeling Haines. The still anonymous British terrorist says to the camera that "this British man has to pay the price for your promise, Cameron, to arm the peshmerga against the Islamic State. Ironically, he has spent a decade of his life serving under the same Royal Air Force that is responsible for delivering those arms." At the end of the video, "Jihadi John" names the next victim as British citizen Alan Henning. Source: Rukmini Callimachi and Kimko de Freytas-Tamura, "ISIS Video Shows Execution of David Cawthorne Haines, British Aid Worker," *New York Times*, September 13, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/14/world/middleeast/islamic-state-says-it-has-executed-david-cawthorne-haines-british-aid-worker.html> [343].
- **September 11, 2014:** Secretary of State John Kerry seeks broad support from Arab states against ISIS. He starts his tour in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, whose government agrees to provide bases in Syria for the training of moderate rebels. Other regional countries already in the coalition at this point include the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Source: Michael R. Gordon, "Kerry Seeks Arab Consensus in Campaign Against ISIS," *New York Times*, September 11, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/12/world/middleeast/john-kerry-saudi-arabia-isis-strategy.html> [344].
- **September 10, 2014:** "We will degrade, and ultimately destroy ISIL." Using the acronym ISIL, President Obama makes a speech on primetime television in which he lays out his coalition-based plan to defeat ISIS. The President's plan includes: 1) expanding the airstrike campaign in Iraq against Islamic State militants, 2) training and equipping the Iraqi army, Kurdish troops and moderate Syrian rebels, 3) expanding the U.S.-led coalition to include necessary regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, as well as relevant EU actors, and 4) the refusal to work with either the Syrian or Iranian governments. President Obama also reiterates his unwillingness to commit U.S. ground troops in either Iraq or Syria. Sources: Zack Beauchamp, "Obama's 6-point plan for defeating ISIS," *Vox*, September 10, 2014, <http://www.vox.com/2014/9/10/6132815/obama-isis-syria-iraq-war-strategy> [345]; "A Timeline of ISIS Terror," *World Watch Monitor*, August 15, 2014, https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2014/08/article_3288644.html/ [346]; "Transcript of Obama's Remarks on the Fight Against ISIS," *New York Times*, September 10, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/world/middleeast/obamas-remarks-on-the-fight-against-isis.html?_r=0 [347].
- **September 8, 2014:** United States Secretary of State Chuck Hagel meets with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss Turkish participation in the growing U.S.-led coalition against ISIS. Hagel describes Turkey as "absolutely indispensable" in the fight against ISIS, but Erdogan expresses concern for the 49 Turkish citizens being held hostage by ISIS. Source: Helene Cooper, "Turkey is courted by US to help fight ISIS," *New York Times*, September 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/09/world/europe/turkey-is-courted-by-us-to-help-fight-isis.html> [348].
- **September 6, 2014:** The U.S. launches a new series of airstrikes on ISIS to prevent the group from taking the Haditha Dam and having the ability to release its floodwaters toward Baghdad. Source: Helene Cooper, "U.S. Launches New Airstrikes on ISIS to Protect Dam in Iraq," *New York Times*, September 7, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/08/world/middleeast/iraq.html> [349].
- **September 5, 2014:** The Canadian government announces it will send 50 to 100 military advisers to Iraq to join U.S. military personnel in advising Kurdish forces in northern Iraq on how to fight ISIS militants. Then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper says the deployment was made in response to U.S. President Barack Obama's request and would last 30 days, subject to reassessment thereafter. Source: "Remarks by President Obama at NATO Summit Press Conference," The White House, September 5, 2014, http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/C/CN_CANADA_IRAQ_MILITARY?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT [350].
- **September 5, 2014:** The U.S. government assembles what U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel calls a "core coalition" of ten countries to fight ISIS: the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Turkey. Source: Helene Cooper, "Obama Enlists 9 Allies to Help in the Battle Against ISIS," *New York Times*, September 5, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/06/world/middleeast/us-and-allies-form-coalition-against-isis.html?partner=rss&emc=rss> [351].
- **September 3, 2014:** Israel designates ISIS as an "unauthorized organization," enabling the Israeli government to crack down on ISIS operations and fundraising if discovered in Israel or the West Bank. Source: Gili Cohen, "Israel prepares for possibility of local Islamic State cells," *Haaretz*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/premium-1.613958> [352].
- **September 3, 2014:** ISIS releases another video, entitled "A Second Message to America," showing a masked ISIS militant beheading kidnapped American journalist Steven Sotloff, as previously threatened. Before being killed, Sotloff is made to say that he is "paying the price" for U.S. military intervention in Iraq. After the beheading, the ISIS militant, speaking with a British accent, said to U.S. President Barack Obama, "Just as your missiles continue to strike our people, our knife will continue to strike the necks of your people." The militant also "warn[s] those governments who've entered this evil alliance of America against the Islamic State to back off and leave our people alone." He threatens another captive, David Cawthorne Haines, a British aid worker kidnapped last year on the Turkish-Syrian border. The *Washington Post* reported that the U.S. government believes "as many as a dozen Americans may be fighting alongside [ISIS] and that the group holds at least two other American hostages, both aid workers." Sources: Chelsea J. Carter and Ashley Fantz, "ISIS video shows beheading of American journalist Steven Sotloff," CNN, September 3, 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/02/world/meast/isis-american-journalist-sotloff/index.html?iid=article_sidebar [353]; Greg Miller, "U.S. confirms authenticity of second journalist beheading video," *Washington Post*, September 3, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/islamic-state-claims-to-have-beheaded-american-journalist-steven-sotloff/2014/09/02/ae5e8ffa-32c3-11e4-9e92-0899b306bbea_story.html [354].

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- September 2014:** “The Islamic State is coming” is spray-painted on the walls of two churches in northern Lebanon, deepening worries among Lebanese citizens that the country will be ISIS’s next target. Groups of Lebanese Christians begin rearming and establishing self-defense units to protect against an attack by ISIS or other Islamist militant groups in Syria. Sources: Donna Abu-Nasr, “Islamic State Is Coming, Graffiti Warns Lebanese, as the Band Plays On,” September 4, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-09-03/lebanon-band-plays-on-as-fears-mount-islamic-state-lies-in-wait.html> [355]; Bassem Mroue and Zeina KAraram, “Some Christians arm as Mideast perils mount,” Associated Press, September 5, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/christians-arm-mideast-perils-mount-053505095.html> [356].
- August 28, 2014:** U.S. President Barack Obama states that the U.S. does not yet have a strategy to deal with ISIS, spurring criticism. Sources: Karen DeYoung, “Obama: U.S. doesn’t ‘have a strategy yet’ to comprehensively respond to Islamic State,” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/obama-us-doesnt-have-a-strategy-yet-to-comprehensively-respond-to-islamic-state/2014/08/28/25513d94-2ed5-11e4-994d-202962a9150c_story.html [357]; “Transcript: President Obama’s Aug. 28 remarks on Ukraine, Syria and the economy,” *Washington Post*, August 28, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/transcript-president-obamas-aug-28-remarks-on-ukraine-and-syria/2014/08/28/416f1336-2eec-11e4-bb9b-997ae96fad33_story.html [358]; “Remarks by President Obama and President Ilves of Estonia in Joint Press Conference,” The White House, September 3, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-and-president-ilves-estonia-joint-press-confer-0> [359]
- August 20, 2014:** ISIS releases a video, entitled “A Message to America,” showing a masked ISIS militant beheading kidnapped American journalist James Foley and, speaking with a British accent, threatening to kill another such journalist, Steven Sotloff, if U.S. President Barack Obama does not stop U.S. military operations in Iraq. Obama responds by condemning ISIS as a “cancer” engaging in “hateful terrorism,” saying that “[t]hey terrorize their neighbors and offer them nothing but an endless slavery to their empty vision, and the collapse of any definition of civilized behavior.” Obama pledges that the U.S. “will continue to do what we must do to protect our people. We will be vigilant and we will be relentless. When people harm Americans, anywhere, we do what’s necessary to see that justice is done. And we act against ISIL, standing alongside others.” Sources: Chelsea J. Carter, “Video shows ISIS beheading U.S. journalist James Foley,” CNN, August 20, 2014, http://edition.cnn.com/2014/08/19/world/meast/isis-james-foley/index.html?hpt=hp_t1 [360]; “Statement by the President,” The White House, August 20, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/20/statement-president> [361].
- August 18, 2014:** Aided by the continuing U.S. airstrike campaign, Iraqi and Kurdish forces take back control of the Mosul Dam from ISIS. Source: “Key events on Sunni militants surge in Iraq,” Associated Press, August 18, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/key-events-sunni-militants-surge-iraq> [362].
- August 12, 2014:** The United States sent 130 military advisers to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region in northern Iraq, to assess how else the U.S. could aid the Yazidis besieged on Mount Sinjar. The 130 advisers join 40 U.S. military personnel already in Erbil staffing a Joint Operations Center together with Kurdish forces. U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel stresses that the new advisers do not constitute “a combat boots on the ground operation. As the president has made very clear, we are not going back into Iraq in any of the same combat missions dimensions that we once were in in Iraq.” Source: Luis Martinez and Elise Widerlite, “U.S. Sends 130-Member Military Assessment Team to Erbil,” ABC News, August 12, 2014, <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2014/08/u-s-sends-130-member-military-assessment-team-to-erbil> [363].
- August 11, 2014:** The U.S. government announces that it has begun taking the unprecedented step of providing weapons directly to Kurdish peshmerga forces fighting ISIS, instead of solely to the Iraqi government. The arms transfers are going through a CIA back channel. The peshmerga has been losing ground to ISIS fighters, partly due to ammunition shortages and inferior weaponry. The Iraqi federal government has largely failed to transfer arms bought from the U.S. to the peshmerga in recent years. The new direct transfers of U.S. arms to the Kurds consist mainly of light arms and ammunition. The State Department plays down the significance of the policy shift, but Lt. Gen. William Mayville, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, acknowledges the importance of the new U.S. move and says that the U.S. wanted to do more. However, Mayville said, “There are no plans to expand the current air campaign” to include targeting ISIS leaders or logistical centers. Mayville reiterates the Obama administration’s policy that the purpose of the U.S. airstrikes is to prevent ISIS from advancing towards Erbil or on Mount Sinjar. Sources: Craig Whitlock and Greg Jaffe, “U.S. sending weapons directly to Kurdish forces, officials say,” *Washington Post*, August 11, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-sending-weapons-directly-to-kurdish-forces-officials-say/2014/08/11/7055b98c-2165-11e4-8593-da634b334390_story.html [364]; Julie Pace and Nedra Pickler, “Obama welcomes new Iraqi leaders as ‘step forward,’” Associated Press, August 11, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/apnewsbreak-us-sending-arms-kurds-iraq> [365].
- August 11, 2014:** Iraqi President Fouad Massoum acts to replace polarizing Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, nominating Haider al-Abadi, deputy speaker of Iraq’s parliament and a member of Maliki’s Dawa Party, as the new prime minister. The United States backs Massoum’s decision, with President Barack Obama calling the leadership change “a promising step forward,” speaking to Abadi by telephone, and emphasizing that “[t]he only lasting solution is for Iraqis to come together and form an inclusive government.” However, Maliki refuses to step aside, going on national television to call the move “a coup against the constitution and the political process.” Maliki supporters protest in the streets. Sources: Patrick J. McDonnell, “Iraq’s Maliki defiant as new prime minister nominated to succeed him,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-iraq-leadership-20140811-story.html> [366]; Julie Pace and Nedra Pickler, “Obama welcomes new Iraqi leaders as ‘step forward,’” Associated Press, August 11, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/apnewsbreak-us-sending-arms-kurds-iraq> [365].
- August 7, 2014:** ISIS fighters take control of Qaraqosh, the largest Christian municipality in Iraq. Tens of thousands of its residents flee. Source: “The jihadist offensive in Iraq: a timeline,” Agence France-Presse, August 15, 2014, <http://www.afp.com/en/node/2730918> [367].
- August 5, 2014:** Fighters from the Indonesian militant group Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid pledge allegiance to ISIS, and raise the ISIS flag on the grounds of a mosque in Pekayon Jaya, South Bekasi district. The fighters also announce the creation of a jihadist group, “Khilafah Ibrahim,” in support of ISIS’ activities. Source: “Bekasi Group Swear Allegiance to ISIS,” *The Jakarta Post*, August 5, 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/08/06/bekasi-group-swear-allegiance-isis.html> [65].

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- August 3, 2014 - August 13, 2014:** ISIS seizes several Kurdish towns in Iraq including Sinjar and Zumar. ISIS begins murdering Yazidis, ethnic Kurds whom ISIS despises as “devil worshipers” and heretics subject to death for practicing an ancient, pre-Abrahamic religion. As many as 200,000 local residents flee. Upon entering Sinjar, ISIS explodes a Shiite shrine and demands that Sinjar residents convert to Islam or be killed. Many of the Yazidis (estimates range from 10,000 to 50,000) take refuge on Mount Sinjar. There, they lack sufficient food, water, and medicine. They are besieged by ISIS and threatened with death if they attempt to come down from the mountains. On August 7, Syrian Kurdish fighters successfully establish an escape route for the Yazidis, and U.S. President Barack Obama approves U.S. airstrikes in Iraq. The same day, ISIS takes the strategically vital Mosul dam, driving out peshmerga forces from several towns. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis flee the area. U.S. airstrikes begin on August 8, representing the first American military operation in Iraq since the Obama administration withdrew U.S. troops from Iraq in 2011. On August 10, tens of thousands of Yazidis escape to Iraq’s Kurdistan Region from Mount Sinjar. On August 13, the U.S. announces that ISIS’s besiegement of the Yazidis on Mount Sinjar has been broken by a combination of U.S. air strikes and humanitarian airdrops, as well as Kurdish peshmerga forces. It is not until December 19, 2014, that Kurdish peshmerga forces claim victory, ending the terror group’s siege of Mount Sinjar. However, ISIS militants move back in to retake the mountain. In November 2015, the U.S. forces and the Kurds begin an effort to reclaim Mount Sinjar from ISIS. Sources: Loveday Morris, “Islamic State seizes town of Sinjar, pushing out Kurds and sending Yazidis fleeing,” *Washington Post*, August 3, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/islamic-state-seize-town-of-sinjar-pushing-out-kurds-and-sending-yazidis-fleeing/2014/08/03/52ab53f1-48de-4ae1-9e1d-e241a15f580e_story.html; Mohammed A Salih and Wladimir van Wilgenburg, “Surrounded by Islamic State fighters, members of the Yazidi religious minority fear an onslaught of violence,” *Al Jazeera*, last modified August 5, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/iraqi-yazidis-if-move-they-will-kill-us-20148513656188206.html>; Associated Press, “Syrian Kurdish fighters rescue stranded Yazidis,” *Yahoo News*, August 12, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-kurdish-fighters-rescue-stranded-yazidis-172250184.html>; “Key events on Sunni militants surge in Iraq,” Associated Press, August 18, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/key-events-sunni-militants-surge-iraq>; Liz Sly, “Exodus from the mountain: Yazidis flood into Iraq following U.S. airstrikes,” *Washington Post*, August 10, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/exodus-from-the-mountain-yazidis-flood-into-iraq-following-us-airstrikes/2014/08/10/f8349f2a-04da-4d60-98ef-85fe66c82002_story.html; Richard Spencer, “Isil carried out massacres and mass sexual enslavement of Yazidis, UN confirms,” *Telegraph* (London), October 14, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11160906/Isil-carried-out-massacres-and-mass-sexual-enslavement-of-Yazidis-UN-confirms.html>; “Iraqi Kurds say siege of Mount Sinjar broken,” *Al Jazeera*, December 19, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/12/kurds-retake-ground-from-isil-iraq-20141218171223624837.html>; Michael R. Gordon, “Kurds, Backed by U.S. Air Power, Try to Regain Sinjar From ISIS,” *New York Times*, November 11, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/12/world/middleeast/isis-iraq-syria.html?_r=1.
- August 2, 2014 - August 3, 2014:** ISIS defeats Kurdish peshmerga fighters and takes over several Kurdish towns, Sinjar and Zumar near Iraq’s border with Syria, as well as two small oil fields. During its conquest, ISIS kills up to 500 Yazidis, ethnic Kurds whom ISIS despises as “devil worshipers” and heretics subject to death for practicing an ancient, pre-Abrahamic religion. Upon entering Sinjar, ISIS notes the occasion by exploding a Shi’ite shrine and demanding that Sinjar residents convert to Islam or be killed.¹⁷⁵ As many as 200,000 local residents flee, including other Yazidis. Many of the Yazidis (estimates range from 10,000 to 50,000) take refuge on Mount Sinjar. There, the Yazidis lack sufficient food, water, and medicine. They are besieged by ISIS and threatened with death if they attempt to come down from the mountains. The UN warns of a pending “humanitarian tragedy.” As one besieged Yazidi notes, “We cannot get out of here; we cannot move. It’s all [ISIS] fighters around us. If we move down they will kill us.” Sources: Loveday Morris, “Islamic State seizes town of Sinjar, pushing out Kurds and sending Yazidis fleeing,” *Washington Post*, August 3, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/islamic-state-seize-town-of-sinjar-pushing-out-kurds-and-sending-yazidis-fleeing/2014/08/03/52ab53f1-48de-4ae1-9e1d-e241a15f580e_story.html [368]; Daa Hadid and Basssem Mroue, “Syrian Kurdish fighters rescue stranded Yazidis,” Associated Press, August 12, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/syrian-kurdish-fighters-rescue-stranded-yazidis-172250184.html> [369]; “UN warns of ‘humanitarian tragedy’ as militants seize town in northern Iraq,” UN News Centre, August 3, 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48397#.VAmZFGdVXa> [370]; Mohammed A Salih and Wladimir van Wilgenburg, “Surrounded by Islamic State fighters, members of the Yazidi religious minority fear an onslaught of violence,” *Al Jazeera*, last modified August 5, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/iraqi-yazidis-if-move-they-will-kill-us-20148513656188206.html> [371].
- August 1, 2014 - August 5, 2014:** Around this time, ISIS militants crucify, behead and shoot over 700 members of the Shaitat tribe in eastern Syria, in what is one of ISIS’s bloodiest advances. Source: Liz Sly, “Syria tribal revolt against Islamic State ignored, fueling resentment,” *Washington Post*, October 20, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syria-tribal-revolt-against-islamic-state-ignored-fueling-resentment/2014/10/20/25401beb-8de8-49f2-8e64-c1cfbee45232_story.html [372].
- July 25, 2014:** ISIS blows up the shrine at the reputed burial site of the Biblical prophet Jonah in Mosul. ISIS has destroyed numerous shrines and mosques that it considers in conflict with early Islamic principles. Source: “Iraq jihadists blow up ‘Jonah’s tomb’ in Mosul: official,” *Agence France-Presse*, July 24, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/iraq-jihadists-blow-jonahs-tomb-mosul-official-220531959.html> [373].
- July 23, 2014:** The Filipino jihadist group Aby Sayyaf pledges allegiance to ISIS through a video posted online. Source: Maria A. Ressa, “Senior Abu Sayyaf leader swears oath to ISIS,” *Rappler*, August 4, 2014, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/65199-abu-sayyaf-leader-oath-isis> [62].
- July 18, 2014:** Virtually the entire remaining Christian community in ISIS-controlled Mosul flees after receiving an ultimatum that Christians convert to Islam, pay the special *jizya* task for non-Muslims, leave, or be killed. ISIS members are observed marking Christian-owned houses with the Arabic letter *nun*, short for the Arabic word for “Christian.” Sources: “The jihadist offensive in Iraq: a timeline,” *Agence France-Presse*, August 15, 2014, <http://www.afp.com/en/node/2730918> [367]; “Iraqi Christians flee after Isis issue Mosul ultimatum,” *BBC News*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28381455> [374]; Fazel Hawramy, “‘They are savages,’ say Christians forced to flee Mosul by Isis,” *Guardian*, July 24, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/24/iraqi-christians-mosul-isis-convert-islam-or-be-executed> [375]; Alissa J. Rubin, “ISIS Forces Last Iraqi Christians to Flee Mosul,” *New York Times*, July 18, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/19/world/middleeast/isis-forces-last-iraqi-christians-to-flee-mosul.html> [376].
- July 5, 2014:** A man claiming to be ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi makes his first public appearance, speaking at a mosque in Mosul and calling for Muslims to wage jihad and accept the authority of ISIS’s self-proclaimed caliphate. Sources: “Key Events on Sunni Militants Surge in Iraq,” Associated Press, August 18, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/key-events-sunni-militants-surge-iraq> [362]; Aaron Y. Zelin, “al-Furqan Media presents a new video message from the Islamic State’s Abu Bakr al-Hussayni al-Qurayshi al-Baghdadi: ‘Khuṭbah and Jum’ah Prayer in the Grand Mosque of Muṣul (Mosul),’ *Jihadology*, last modified July 27, 2014, <http://jihadology.net/2014/07/05/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-states-abu-bakr-al-%E1%B8%A5ussayni-al-qurayshi-al-baghdadi-khu%E1%B9%ADbah-and-jumah-prayer-in-the-grand-mosque-of-mu> [377].

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- **July 4, 2014:** Spokesman Seifeddine Raïse of the Tunisian terror group Ansar al-Sharia declares loyalty to ISIS caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, essentially pledging allegiance to ISIS.
Source: Jamel Arfaoui, "Ansar al-Sharia Tunisia spokesman backs ISIS," *Magharebia*, July 8, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/key-events-sunni-militants-surge-iraq> [61].
- **July 1, 2014:** The UN states that more than 2,400 Iraqis were killed in June, the most fatalities in one month in Iraq since April 2005.
Source: "Key Events on Sunni Militants Surge in Iraq," Associated Press, August 18, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/key-events-sunni-militants-surge-iraq> [362].
- **June 29, 2014:** ISIS declares an "Islamic caliphate" from Diyala province in Iraq to Aleppo in northern Syria, and renames itself simply the "Islamic State."
ISIS proclaims the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as caliph, and urges Muslims to pledge their allegiance to him. Sources: "The jihadist offensive in Iraq: a timeline," Agence France-Presse, August 15, 2014, <http://www.afp.com/en/node/2730918> [367]; "Sunni rebels declare new 'Islamic caliphate,'" Al Jazeera, last modified June 30, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/06/isis-declares-new-islamic-caliphate-201462917326669749.html> [378].
- **June 23, 2014:** Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani urges Iraqis to join Iraq's security forces in order to combat ISIS.
Source: "Key events on Sunni militants surge in Iraq," Associated Press, August 18, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/key-events-sunni-militants-surge-iraq> [362].
- **June 20, 2014:** Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the leading Iraqi Shiite cleric, urges the speedy expulsion of the insurgents and says that the next Iraqi government must steer clear of "past mistakes."
This is perceived as a reference to Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's purported bias against Iraq's Sunni minority. Maliki's bias is widely considered to have exacerbated Sunnis' alienation from and grievances against the Iraqi government, creating an opening that ISIS has exploited. Source: "The jihadist offensive in Iraq: a timeline," Agence France-Presse, August 15, 2014, <http://www.afp.com/en/node/2730918> [367].
- **June 17, 2014:** ISIS tries but fails to seize Iraq's largest oil refinery outside the northern Iraqi town of Baiji.
Further such attempts in the ensuing weeks also do not succeed. Source: Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq says it has repelled insurgent attack on oil refinery," Associated Press, June 18, 2014, <http://www.pressherald.com/2014/06/18/militants-lay-siege-to-iraqs-largest-oil-refinery> [379].
- **June 11, 2014:** ISIS insurgents take over Tikrit, home town of Saddam Hussein and his clan.
Source: "The jihadist offensive in Iraq: a timeline," Agence France-Presse, August 15, 2014, <http://www.afp.com/en/node/2730918> [367].
- **June 10, 2014:** ISIS insurgents take over Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, as Iraqi soldiers flee on foot and leave behind their weapons, vehicles, and uniforms.
After seizing Mosul and securing its hold over Nineveh Province, the militants move south toward Baghdad, taking over parts of Salahuddin Province along the way. Five days after its offensive, ISIS claims that it had executed 1,700 Iraqi soldiers, many of whom are Shiites. Those claims could not be immediately verified, though the Iraqi military admitted that at least 800 soldiers had been taken prisoner. ISIS also robs local banks and seizes U.S. military equipment left for the Iraqi army. Sources: Suadad Al-Salhu and Tim Arango, "Sunni Militants Drive Iraqi Army Out of Mosul," *New York Times*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/world/middleeast/militants-in-mosul.htm> [380]; Rod Nordland and Alissa J. Rubin, "Militants Claim Mass Execution of Iraqi Forces," *New York Times*, June 15, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/16/world/middleeast/iraq.html?hp> [381]; Jack Moore, "Mosul Seized: Jihadis Loot \$429m from City's Central Bank to Make Isis World's Richest Terror Force," *International Business Times*, June 11, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/mosul-seized-jihadis-loot-429m-citys-central-bank-make-isis-worlds-richest-terror-force-1452190> [382].
- **May 2014:** American citizen Moner Mohammad Abusalha, who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Huraira al-Amriki, reportedly carries out a suicide truck bombing on a mountaintop restaurant in Syria that had been a gathering spot for Syrian soldiers.
Also in May, French citizen Mehdi Nemmouche, who reportedly fought in Syria with ISIS, shoots and kills three people at a Jewish museum in Brussels. The attack is the first instance of a European Islamist fighter returning home from the conflict in Syria to commit acts of violence. Sources: Frances Robles and Emma G. Fitzsimmons, "Before Syrian Suicide Blast, a Quiet Life in the Suburbs," *New York Times*, May 31, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/Moner-Mohammad-Abusalha-Vero-Beach-Florida-Syria.html> [383]; Scott Sayare, "Suspect Held in Jewish Museum Killings," *New York Times*, June 1, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/02/world/europe/suspect-arrested-in-jewish-museum-killings-in-belgium.html> [384].
- **February 23, 2014:** A suicide bomber from ISIS reportedly launches an attack against a rebel base that kills Abu Khalid al-Suri, who was chosen by Ayman al-Zawahiri to mediate disputes between the Nusra Front and ISIS.
Source: Ben Hubbard, "Jihadist Mediator Killed in Suicide Attack by Rival Extremists," *New York Times*, February 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/24/world/middleeast/jihadist-mediator-killed-in-suicide-attack-by-rival-extremists.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=Middle%20East&action=keypress®ion=FixedLeft&pgtype=article> [385].
- **February 22, 2014:** A Kurdish rebel group recaptures the northeastern town of Tell Brak from ISIS after a battle that killed at least 25 Islamist fighters.
Source: "Nearly 30 Die as Kurds Take a Syrian Town," Reuters, February 22, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/world/middleeast/syria.html> [386].
- **February 3, 2014:** Al-Qaeda's senior leadership issues a statement formally severing ties with ISIS, saying that the group is "not an affiliate with the [al-Qaeda] group and has no organizational relation with it."
Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Al Qaeda's General Command Disowns the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham," *Long War Journal*, February 3, 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/al-qaedas-general_co.php [387].
- **February 2014:** British Islamist fighter Abdul Waheed Majeed reportedly carries out a suicide truck bombing at the Aleppo Central Prison.
If true, Majeed's attack becomes the "first known case of a British suicide bomber in Syria." Source: Robert Mackey and Christine Hauser, "Deferential Remarks in Martyrdom Video Said to Show Briton's Last Words before Suicide Attack in Syria," *New York Times*, February 14,

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2014,
<http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/14/deferential-remarks-in-martyrdom-video-said-to-show-britons-last-words-before-suicide-attack-in-syria> [388].

- **January 2014:**After days of intense fighting, ISIS militants take over major parts of Fallujah, destroy the police headquarters, and declare the city an Islamic state.
ISIS is accused of carrying out mass executions against civilians, prisoners, and other rebel fighters in Aleppo, Idlib, and Raqqa. According to reports, bodies were found handcuffed and blindfolded at a children's hospital used as a base by ISIS. In early January, after ISIS had asserted control over Aleppo for months, opposing Syrian rebel factions drive the group from its headquarters in the city. However, by mid-January, ISIS has reclaimed much of its territory. On January 23, Ayman al-Zawahiri releases an audio statement pleading with jihadist factions to stop fighting each other, and to set up an Islamic arbitration court. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that during two weeks of intense fighting between rebel groups and ISIS, approximately 1,400 people were killed. After taking control of Syria's oil and gas resources, reports surface in late January that the Nusra Front and ISIS are selling those resources back to the Assad regime. According to one intelligence source, "The regime is paying al-Nusra to protect oil and gas pipelines under al-Nusra's control in the north and east of the country..." Sources: Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango, "Iraq Fighters, Qaeda Allies, Claim Falluja as New State," *New York Times*, January 3, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/world/middleeast/iraqi-fighters-claim-falluja-as-new-state.html> [389]; Nick Cumming-Bruce, "U.N. Says Executions in Syria by Rebels May Be War Crimes," *New York Times*, January 16, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/17/world/middleeast/syria.html> [390]; Ben Hubbard, "Syrian Rebels Deal Qaeda-Linked Group a Reversal," *New York Times*, January 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/09/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-deal-qaeda-linked-group-from-its-aleppo-headquarters.html> [391]; Ben Hubbard, "Al Qaeda Calls for Rebel Unity in Syria," *New York Times*, January 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-calls-for-rebel-unity-in-syria.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=MiddleEast&action=keypress®ion=FixedLeft&pgtype=article> [392]; Ruth Sherlock and Richard Spencer, "Syria's Assad Accused of Boosting Al-Qaeda with Secret Oil Deals," *Telegraph*, January 20, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10585391/Syrias-Assad-accused-of-boosting-al-Qaeda-with-secret-oil-deals.html> [393].
- **December 25, 2013:**After Prime Minister al-Maliki's visit to Washington, the U.S. reportedly begins "quietly rushing dozens of Hellfire missiles and low-tech surveillance drones to Iraq to help government forces combat an explosion of violence" by ISIS in western Iraq.
Source: Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Sends Arms to Aid Iraq Fight with Extremists," *New York Times*, December 25, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/26/world/middleeast/us-sends-arms-to-aid-iraq-fight-with-extremists.html> [394].
- **December 19, 2013:**Nusra Front leader Abu Mohamed al-Golani conducts his first televised interview with Al Jazeera, telling the network that he believed victory was near.
Golani also says that his organization is "not seeking to rule the country...We want the Islamic Shariah to prevail." Source: Anne Barnard, "Jihadist Leader Envisions an Islamic State in Syria," *New York Times*, December 19, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/20/world/middleeast/jihadist-leader-envisions-an-islamic-state-in-syria.html?ref=middleeast> [395].
- **October 31, 2013:**Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki travels to Washington, D.C. to request increased military assistance from the U.S., including "Apache helicopter gunships, more American intelligence and other forms of counterterrorism support like reconnaissance drone that would be operated by Americans."
Source: Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "As Security Deteriorates at Home, Iraqi Leaders Arrives in U.S. Seeking Aid," *New York Times*, October 31, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/01/world/middleeast/iraqi-leader-on-fighting-terrorism.html?pagewanted=all> [396].
- **September 2013 - October 2013:**ISIS and a rebel brigade called Northern Storm battle for control of Azaz, a Syrian town strategically located along the Turkish border.
In late September, ISIS wrestles control of Azaz from Northern Storm. Source: Ben Hubbard, "Fighting between Rebels Intensifies over a Strategic Town in Syria," *New York Times*, October 3, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/04/world/middleeast/syria.html> [397].
- **September 12, 2013:**Ayman al-Zawahiri releases a message the day after the 12th anniversary of the September 11 attacks.
He calls on his followers to carry out "a few disparate attacks" against the American homeland and to "bleed America economically." Part of his message refers to the war in Syria, where he tells Islamist fighters not to cooperate with secular rebel forces. Source: Alan Cowell, "Attack U.S., Qaeda Chief Tells Muslims in a Speech," *New York Times*, September 13, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/world/al-qaeda-leader-ayman-al-zawahiri-urges-muslims-to-attack-america.html> [398].
- **August 28, 2013:**A series of more than a dozen explosions hit Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad during the morning commute, killing at least 65 and wounding dozens more.
The attacks follow a string of recent beheadings that are claimed by ISIS. Source: Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango, "Deadly Blasts Stoke Fears of Sectarian Strife in Iraq," *New York Times*, August 28, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/29/world/middleeast/iraq-explosions.html> [399].
- **July 26, 2013:**Fighters from the Nusra Front and Ansar al-Khalafa al-Islamiya Brigade kill as many as 150 Syrian soldiers during a battle in Khan al-Assal, a suburb of Aleppo.
51 of the soldiers are summarily executed after surrendering, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Source: Hania Mourta and Rick Gladstone, "Soldiers' Mass Execution Reported by Syria Group," *New York Times*, July 26, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/27/world/middleeast/soldiers-mass-execution-reported-by-syria-group.html> [400].
- **July 23, 2013:**As part of its "Breaking the Walls" campaign, ISIS militants stage "carefully synchronized operations" to break members of the organization out of the Abu Ghraib and Taji prisons.
Al-Qaeda claims that 500 inmates have been freed from the prisons, while Iraqi officials put the total at 800 - with 400 of them recaptured or killed. Source: Michael R. Gordon and Duraid Adnan, "Brazen Attacks at Prisons Raise Worries of Al Qaeda's Strength in Iraq," *New York Times*, July 23, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/24/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-asserts-responsibility-for-iraqi-prison-breaks.html> [401].
- **June 2013 - July 2013:**ISIS escalates attacks against members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in an apparent attempt to take out the FSA's leadership. ISIS reportedly kills "prominent" FSA commander Kamal Hamami for planning operations without consulting it.
The organization also beheads two FSA soldiers and leaves their heads next to a garbage can. Source: Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad, "Syrian Rebel Infighting Undermines Anti-Assad Effort," *New York Times*, July 12, 2013,

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/13/world/middleeast/syrian-rebel-infighting-undermines-anti-assad-effort.html?pagewanted=all> [402].

- **June 15, 2013:** AQI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi releases a message rejecting Ayman al-Zawahiri's orders to dissolve his group's merger with the Nusra Front.
Baghdadi says that ISIS "will remain, as long as we have a vein pumping or an eye blinking. It remains and we will not compromise nor give it up." Source: "Iraqi Al-Qaeda Chief Rejects Zawahiri Orders," Al Jazeera, June 15, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/2013615172217827810.html> [403].
- **June 9, 2013:** Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri issues a letter nullifying the merger between the Nusra Front and ISI, notifying each side where they are to operate.
"The seat of the Islamic State in Iraq is in Iraq. The seat of Jabhat al-Nusra for the people of al-Sham, is in Syria." Source: Basma Atassi, "Qaeda Chief Annuls Syrian-Iraqi Jihad Merger," Al Jazeera, June 9, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/06/2013699425657882.html> [404].
- **April 9, 2013:** ISI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announces that his organization has officially merged with the Nusra Front in Syria, forming the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).
Source: Hania Mourtada and Rick Gladstone, "Iraq's Branch of Al Qaeda Merges with Syria Jihadists," *New York Times*, April 9, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/10/world/middleeast/Iraq-and-Syria-jihadists-combine.html> [405].
- **February 11, 2013:** Syrian rebels, including battalions from the Nusra Front, take control of the Tabqa Dam, Syria's largest hydroelectric dam, in Raqqqa Province.
Source: Hwaida Saad and Rick Gladstone, "Syrian Insurgents Claim to Control Large Hydropower Dam," *New York Times*, February 11, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/12/world/middleeast/syrian-insurgents-claim-to-control-large-hydropower-dam.html> [406].
- **January 11, 2013:** The Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham lead an offensive on the Taftanaz air base in Idlib province, seizing large caches of weapons and ammunition—and also taking out the base that served as the launching point for "barrel bomb" attacks against civilians.
Source: Anne Barnard, "Syrian Rebels Say They Seized Helicopter Base in the North," *New York Times*, January 11, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/12/world/middleeast/syria-war-developments.html> [407].
- **December 11, 2012:** The U.S. Department of the Treasury designates Nusra Front leaders Maysar Ali Musa Abdallah al-Juburi and Anas Hasan Khattab for "acting on behalf of [al-Qaeda] in Iraq (AQI)."
Source: "Treasury Sanctions Al-Nusra Front Leadership in Syria and Militias Supporting the Assad Regime," U.S. Department of the Treasury, December 11, 2012, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg1797.aspx> [408].
- **October 9, 2012:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for multiple suicide attacks against an air force intelligence branch in Harasta, a suburb of Damascus.
The group claims that one suicide bomber detonated a vehicle packed with 9 tons of explosives, while another attacker drove an ambulance loaded with explosives to the scene 25 minutes later. Source: Anne Barnard and Christine Hauser, "Qaeda-Linked Group Claims Responsibility for Syrian Blasts," *New York Times*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/10/world/middleeast/qaeda-linked-group-says-it-struck-compound-on-edge-of-damascus.html> [409].
- **September 8, 2012:** A suicide bomber from the Nusra Front attacks al-Haya hospital in Aleppo.
The group claims that it killed more than 200 military officers and soldiers, while the Syrian government reports that 27 soldiers died and 64 were wounded. Source: Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front Claims 5 Suicide Attacks in Syria in Past Month," *Long War Journal*, September 25, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/09/al_nusrah_front_clai_4.php# [410].
- **July 19, 2012:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for kidnapping and executing Syrian television presenter Mohamed al-Saeed.
The group warned supporters of the Syrian regime that "...the swords of the mujahideen will cut off their heads and purify the Levant from their obscenity." On the same date, the Nusra Front claims that it conducted a suicide bombing on a security post in Ma'arat al-Nu'man, killing 60 Syrian soldiers. Sources: "Mohammed Al-Saeed Dead: Militant Group Claims Kidnapping, Killing of Syrian TV Presenter," Reuters, August 5, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/05/mohammed-al-saeed-dead-militant-group-kidnapping-killing_n_1743392.html [411]; Thomas Joscelyn, "Suicide Bombings Become Commonplace in Syria," *Long War Journal*, August 24, 2012, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/suicide-bombings-become-commonplace-in-syria> [412].
- **June 1, 2012:** The Nusra Front carries out multiple attacks on Syrian military targets.
This is in retaliation for the Syrian government's massacre in Houla. The attacks include a suicide attack on the al Nayrab Camp in Idlib, as well as ambush and IED attacks on military units responding to the attack at al Nayrab. Source: Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front Claims Latest Suicide Attack in Syria," *Long War Journal*, June 13, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/06/al_nusrah_front_clai_2.php# [413].
- **April 24, 2012:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a suicide bombing attack on the Iranian Cultural Consulate in Damascus.
According to the group, one of its security battalions attached explosives to a Syrian army vehicle and detonated them when it arrived at the Consulate. Source: "Islamist group says behind Damascus bombing," Reuters, May 1, 2012, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-05-01/news/sns-rt-syria-bombclaim15e8q196r-20120501_1_al-nusra-front-syrian-president-bashar-al-assad-islamist-group [414].
- **February 10, 2012:** Several car bombs explode minutes apart from each other at a military security headquarters and police compound in Aleppo, Syria, killing 28 people and wounding more than 200.
The Nusra Front eventually claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Neil MacFarquhar, "2 Security Complex Car Bombings Kill Dozens, Syria Says," *New York Times*, February 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/middleeast/ blasts-in-aleppo-syria-homs-violence-said-to-continue.html?pagewanted=all> [415]; "Unknown Islamist group claims suicide attacks in Syria," Agence France-Presse, February 29, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/29/197781.html> [416].
- **January 24, 2012:** The Nusra Front, al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, officially announces its formation with a video

statement, claiming it is “bringing the law of Allah back to His land.”

The group carries out numerous attacks against diplomatic, military, and civilian targets inside Syria. Source: Noman Benotman and Roisin Blake, “Jabhat al-Nusra: A Strategic Briefing,” Quilliam Foundation, January 8, 2013, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/jabhat-al-nusra-a-strategic-briefing.pdf> [417]; “Islamist group says behind Damascus bombing,” Reuters, May 1, 2012, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-05-01/news/sns-rt-syria-bombclaim15e8g196r-20120501_1_al-nusra-front-syrian-president-bashar-al-assad-islamist-group; J. David Goodman and Hwaida Saad, “Suicide Attack Kills 9 Near Damascus as Cease-Fire Erodes,” *New York Times*, April 27, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/28/world/middleeast/suicide-attack-kills-9-near-damascus-as-cease-fire-erodes.html>.

- **December 2011:** U.S. forces complete their withdrawal from Iraq.
Source: Joseph Logan, “Last U.S. Troops Leave Iraq, Ending War,” Reuters, December 18, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/18/us-iraq-withdrawal-idUSTRE7BH03320111218> [418].
- **August 20, 2011:** ISI announces that it is launching a campaign, called “the battle of revenge for Sheik Osama bin Laden and other senior leaders,” whereby it would carry out 100 attacks.
Source: Michael S. Schmidt, “Iraq Militants Say Violence Is to Avenge Bin Laden,” *New York Times*, August 20, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/21/world/middleeast/21iraq.html> [419].
- **August 15, 2011:** ISI is suspected of carrying out a series of 42 “apparently coordinated” attacks using suicide bombs, car bombs, and gunmen.
At least 89 people are killed and 315 wounded. The attacks target Iraqi policemen and soldiers, as well as a market in Kut, and a mosque in Yusufiya. Source: Michael S. Schmidt, “Threat Resurges in Deadliest Day of Year for Iraq,” *New York Times*, August 15, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/16/world/middleeast/16iraq.html> [420].
- **September 1, 2010:** The U.S. military officially marks the end of combat operations in Iraq and begins the “post-combat” phase (called Operation New Dawn).
Source: Michael R. Gordon and Elisabeth Bumiller, “In Baghdad, U.S. Officials Take Note of Milestone,” *New York Times*, September 1, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/02/world/middleeast/02iraq.html> [421].
- **June 4, 2010:** The top U.S. commander in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, announces that Iraqi and American forces have killed or captured 34 of AQI’s top 42 leaders.
Odierno tells reporters, “I think they’re struggling now, and I think it’s going to be difficult for them to continue to recruit.” Source: Steven Lee Myers, “Coordinated Attacks in Iraqi Cities Kill More Than 100,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/11/world/middleeast/11iraq.html> [422].
- **April 20, 2010:** Iraqi and American officials announce the deaths of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the top leaders of al-Qaeda in Iraq.
Shortly thereafter, AQI promotes Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was detained for four years by American troops at Camp Bucca before being released in 2009, to lead the organization. Sources: Tim Arango, “Top Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Reported Killed in Raid,” *New York Times*, April 20, 2010, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F0CE7DA1F3DF933A15757C0A9669D8B63> [423]; “Profile: Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi,” BBC News, June 11, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27801676> [424].
- **January 25, 2010:** Three bombs explode within 10 minutes of each other in Baghdad during rush hour.
Striking the Ishtar Sheraton, Babylon Hotel, and Hamra Hotel—all popular hotels for foreign businessmen and journalists. The blasts kill 36 and wound more than 70. Source: Anthony Shadid and John Leland, “Baghdad Blasts Shatter Sense of Security in Capital,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/26/world/middleeast/26iraq.html> [425].
- **October 25, 2009:** ISI claims responsibility for two car bombings that strike the Iraqi Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works.
Killing more than 155 and injuring more than 500. Source: Rod Nordland, “Iraq Reaches Voting Deal as Toll Rises in Bombings,” *New York Times*, October 26, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/world/middleeast/27iraq.html> [426].
- **April 23, 2009 - April 24, 2009:** Three separate suicide bombings in Baghdad and Muqdadia kill at least 80 and injure 120.
The attack in Baghdad is perpetrated by a woman who detonates herself among a group of women and children waiting for emergency food aid. The next day, two suicide bombings near the revered Shi’ite shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim and his grandson kill at least 60. Sources: Timothy Williams, “80 Are Killed in 3 Suicide Bombings in Iraq,” *New York Times*, April 23, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/24/world/middleeast/24iraq.html> [427]; Steven Lee Myers and Sam Dagher, “Storm of Violence in Iraq Strains Its Security Forces,” *New York Times*, April 24, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/25/world/middleeast/25iraq.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> [428].
- **February 9, 2009:** Four American soldiers are killed in Mosul when a suicide bomber detonated his vehicle near the soldier’s Humvee.
The attack is the “deadliest single loss in nine months” for U.S. forces in Iraq. Source: Alissa J. Rubin, “Northern Iraq Suicide Blast Kills 4 American Soldiers,” *New York Times*, February 9, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/10/world/middleeast/10iraq.html> [429].
- **2009:** As U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq amidst relatively low levels of violence at the end of 2008, car bombings and suicide attacks make a comeback in 2009.
While the nature of the attacks fit the profile of AQI/ISI-style bombings, the group’s culpability is unclear.
- **December 2008:** U.S. forces pull out of Fallujah, handing over control to the Iraqi Army.
Source: Timothy Williams, “American Exit Increases Optimism in Falluja,” *New York Times*, December 29, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/30/world/middleeast/30falluja.html?pagewanted=all> [430].
- **October 16, 2008:** The U.S. military announces that it has killed Abu Qaswarah, al-Qaeda in Iraq’s second-in-command, during an operation in Mosul.
Source: Ernesto Londoño, “No. 2 Leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Killed,” *Washington Post*, October 16, 2008,

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/15/AR2008101500682.html> [431].

- **September 1, 2008:** U.S. forces transfer responsibility for maintaining security in Anbar Province back to Iraqi forces. As of 2006, Anbar has been the “most lethal place for Americans in Iraq,” with more than 1,000 U.S. troops killed. Source: Dexter Filkins, “U.S. Hands Off Pacified Anbar, Once Heart of Iraq Insurgency,” *New York Times*, September 1, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/02/world/middleeast/02anbar.html?pagewanted=all> [432].
- **January 2008 - July 2008:** By early 2008, Coalition and Sunni Awakening forces have killed around 2,400 members of AQI/ISI, and captured 8,800. Between March and April, U.S. and Iraqi forces have “killed or captured 53 senior members of AQI’s network,” including numerous provincial leaders, cell leaders, and facilitators who are “in charge of moving men, weapons, explosive, and money to allow al Qaeda to continue operations.” In addition to General Petraeus, other high level U.S. officials state publicly that AQI has been severely degraded. In May, CIA Director Michael Hayden reports that al-Qaeda is on “the verge of a strategic defeat in Iraq,” and in August, Marine Corps Commandant General James Conway says that AQI has been driven from large parts of Iraq, its leaders turning their attention to Afghanistan. Sources: M.J. Kirdar, “Al Qaeda in Iraq,” *The Future of Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM)* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2011, 5, http://csis.org/files/publication/110614_Kirdar_AlQaedaIraq_Web.pdf [433]; Bill Roggio, “Targeting Al Qaeda in Iraq’s Network, March-April 2008,” *Long War Journal*, April 16, 2008, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/04/targeting_al_qaeda_i.php# [434]; Kenneth Katzman, “Al Qaeda in Iraq: Assessment and Outside Links,” Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2008, 15, <http://fas.org/spp/crs/terror/RL32217.pdf> [435].
- **December 2007:** Petraeus claims the number of high profile attacks in Iraq is down. The top U.S. commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, claims that the “number of high-profile attacks, that is car bombs, suicide car bombs and suicide vest attacks, is...down, roughly 60 percent” since March. A spokesman for Iraq’s Interior Ministry claims that “75 percent of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia’s networks and safe havens [were] destroyed,” noting that 18,000 people have been killed in 2007. Source: Stephen Farrell and Solomon Moore, “Iraq Attacks Fall 60 Percent, Petraeus Says,” *New York Times*, December 30, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/30/world/middleeast/30iraq.html?pagewanted=print> [436].
- **August 16, 2007:** Suicide bombers simultaneously detonate five fuel trucks. This occurs in the Yazidi Kurdish villages of al-Qataniyah and al-Adnaniyah, killing more than 300 Iraqis, injuring several hundred, and destroying dozens of homes. It is reportedly the worst terrorist attack in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Source: Tim Butcher, “Iraq Bombs: 250 Die in Worst Terror Attack,” *Telegraph*, August 16, 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1560477/Iraq-bombs-250-die-in-worst-terror-attack.html> [437].
- **July 7, 2007:** Suicide bomber detonates a truck carrying 4.5 tons of explosives in the Shiite Turkmen village of Amerli, killing as many as 150 people. Source: Stephen Farrell, “Around 150, Death Toll in Iraq Attack among War’s Worst,” *New York Times*, July 9, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/09/world/middleeast/09iraq.html> [438].
- **February 3, 2007:** A suicide bomber detonates a truck bomb in a heavily Shiite populated neighborhood of Iraq, killing 135 in what is then the “deadliest single bombing” since the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003. Source: “CHRONOLOGY: The Deadliest Bomb Attacks in Iraq,” *Reuters*, February 3, 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/02/03/us-iraq-bombings-idUSL0340037820070203> [439].
- **2007:** ISI continues its deadly bombing campaign, targeting predominantly Shiite populations. In January 2007, the U.S. begins its “surge,” deploying an additional 30,000 troops to Iraq, completing the deployment in June that year, and bringing the total number of troops in Iraq to 150,000. Source: Thom Shanker and Michael R. Gordon, “G.I.’s in Iraq Open Big Offensive against Al Qaeda,” *New York Times*, June 17, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/17/world/middleeast/17iraq.html> [440].
- **November 23, 2006:** Car bombs and mortar attacks in Sadr City kill 215, setting off more sectarian violence. Source: Greg Bruno, “Profile: Al-Qaeda in Iraq (a.k.a. Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia),” *Washington Post*, November 19, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/11/19/AR2007111900721.html> [441].
- **October 15, 2006:** Due to a lack of support for the MSC, AQI formally rebrands for a second time, becoming the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). Its new leader is Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. Source: M.J. Kirdar, “Al Qaeda in Iraq,” *The Future of Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM)* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2011, 5, http://csis.org/files/publication/110614_Kirdar_AlQaedaIraq_Web.pdf [433].
- **July 2006:** A Sunni tribesman from Anbar Province begins coordinating attacks against AQI in what became known as the Sunni Awakening. The Awakening campaign is formally announced in September. Source: M.J. Kirdar, “Al Qaeda in Iraq,” *The Future of Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM)* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2011, 5, http://csis.org/files/publication/110614_Kirdar_AlQaedaIraq_Web.pdf [433].
- **June 7, 2006:** After weeks of tracking al-Zarqawi’s spiritual adviser, Sheikh Abdul Rahman, U.S. forces pinpoint al-Zarqawi’s location at a house near Baghdad. U.S. planes drop two 500-pound bombs on the location, killing al-Zarqawi and Rahman. AQI soon replaces al-Zarqawi with Abu Hamzah al-Muhajir—otherwise known as Abu Ayyub al-Masri. Sources: Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, “Insurgent Leader Al-Zarqawi Killed in Iraq,” *Washington Post*, June 8, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/08/AR2006060800114.html> [442]; Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, “Al-Qa’ida’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, January 2, 2008 [the website erroneously lists the publication date as January 2, 2007], 5, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/aqs-foreign-fighters-in-iraq.pdf> [443].
- **February 22, 2006:** AQI bombs the Shiite al-Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq, one of the four major Shiite shrines in Iraq and the burial place for two of the 12 revered Shiite Imams. Reportedly, “a group of men dressed like Iraqi police commandos” walked into the shrine and set off the explosions. The mosque attack sets off a wave of intensified Shiite-Sunni attacks across Iraq. Sources: Bill Roggio, “Dome of the Golden Mosque Destroyed,” *Long War Journal*, February 22, 2006, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/02/dome_of_the_golden_m_1.php [444]; Robert F. Worth, “Blast Destroys Shrine in Iraq, Setting Off Sectarian Fury,” *New York Times*, February 22, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/22/international/middleeast/22cnd-iraq.html> [445].

- **January 2006:** AQI's extreme tactics under al-Zarqawi provoke a backlash among Iraqi nationalist insurgents. In an attempt to rebrand itself and minimize the damage from al-Zarqawi, AQI joins other affiliated groups under the coalition Mujahideen Shura Council (MSC) and name Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi as its leader. Source: Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 2, 2008 [the website erroneously lists the publication date as January 2, 2007], 5, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/aqs-foreign-fighters-in-iraq.pdf> [443].
- **2005:** AQI increases the frequency of attacks throughout the year, targeting Coalition forces and Iraqi Shiites. In late 2005, during operations in Iraq, U.S. forces confiscate a letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri that describes the organization's long-term global strategy. The letter also criticizes al-Zarqawi for videotaping and distributing footage of beheadings, saying that such violence could alienate the Islamic world from al-Qaeda's cause. Source: Douglas Jehl and Thom Shanker, "Al Qaeda Tells Ally in Iraq to Strive for Global Goals," *New York Times*, October 7, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/07/politics/07zarqawi.html> [446].
- **October 17, 2004:** Al-Zarqawi's group pledges allegiance to Bin Laden. Uniting under the name Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (the Organization of Jihad's Base in the Land of the Two Rivers), better known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) or, less commonly, al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia (AQM). Sources: Ty McCormick, "Al Qaeda Core: A Short History," *Foreign Policy*, March 17, 2014, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/03/17/al_qaeda_core_a_short_history [447]; "Terrorist Organization Profile: al-Qaeda Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, http://www.start.umd.edu/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4416 [448]; "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant / al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI): ISIL - Early History," GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/aqi-2.htm> [449].
- **May 2004:** In May, al-Zarqawi "inaugurated his notorious wave of hostage beheadings," making American citizen Nicholas Berg his first victim. Later that month, a suicide bomber with suspected ties to al-Zarqawi detonates himself near the U.S.-led coalition headquarters in Baghdad, killing the acting president of the Iraqi Governing Council, Ezzedine Salim. Salim's death comes 45 days before the occupation forces are set to transfer limited political control back to the Iraqis. Sources: Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true [450]; Ian Fisher, Christine Hauser, "The Struggle for Iraq: Political Violence; Suicide Bomber Kills President of Iraqi Council," *New York Times*, May 18, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/18/world/struggle-for-iraq-political-violence-suicide-bomber-kills-president-iraqi.html> [451].
- **August 2003:** Al-Zarqawi is allegedly responsible for the car bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad on August 7, which kills at least 10 and wounds about 40. Two weeks later, al-Zarqawi is reportedly behind the truck bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, which kills 17—including the UN representative—and injures 100. On August 29, al-Zarqawi is behind the car bombing outside of the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq—one of the holiest sites for Shiite Muslims—that kills revered cleric Ayatollah Mohamad Bakr al-Hakim and 100 others. Sources: "Baghdad Blast Kills 10 at Jordanian Embassy," CNN.com, August 7, 2003, <http://us.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/07/sprj.irq.main> [452]; "Truck Bomb Kills Chief U.N. Envoy to Iraq," CNN.com, August 20, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/19/sprj.irq.main> [453]; Ben Wedeman, Ingrid Formanek, David Ensor, Shirzad Bozorgmehr, "Najaf Bombing Kills Shiite Leader, Followers Say," CNN.com, August 30, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/29/sprj.irq.najaf/index.html?iref=mpstoryview> [454].
- **December 2001 - 2002:** Al-Zarqawi leaves Afghanistan with several hundred of his newly trained fighters. They first travel to Iran, and then move between Lebanon, Syria, and the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. In the lead up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, al-Zarqawi "mobilized his network of safe houses, weapons caches, and intelligence networks, preparing a trap for the coalition forces." Source: M.J. Kirdar, "Al Qaeda in Iraq," *The Future of Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM) | Center for Strategic and International Studies*, June 2011, 3, http://csis.org/files/publication/110614_Kirdar_AlQaedaIraq_Web.pdf [433].
- **2000 - 2001:** Al-Zarqawi secures \$5,000 in startup money from al-Qaeda, with help from the organization's security chief Seif al-Adel. He sets up a training camp in Herat that recruits Jordanian, Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian jihadists. When the U.S. military campaign begins in Afghanistan in October 2001, Zarqawi's camp allegedly has 2,000-3,000 trainees. Source: M.J. Kirdar, "Al Qaeda in Iraq," *Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM) Futures Project, Case Study Number 1 (2011): 2-3*.
- **1999:** Jordan's King Abdullah II issues a general amnesty upon assuming the throne and al-Zarqawi is released from prison. Soon after, he leaves Jordan and returned to Afghanistan, where he meets Osama Bin Laden in December 1999. Source: Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true [450].
- **1994 - 1998:** Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi are arrested by the Jordanian government for their activities related to Bayat al-Imam, and sentenced to prison (reports suggest that they received between 15 years to life). While incarcerated together at al-Sawaqa prison, al-Maqdisi and al-Zarqawi continue expanding Bayat al-Imam among the inmates, while al-Maqdisi's religious treatises are smuggled out of the prison and disseminated across the Middle East and Europe. In 1998, several of al-Zarqawi's own writings appeared on the Internet and are noticed by Osama bin Laden. Sources: Nibras Kazimi, "A Virulent Ideology in Mutation: Zarqawi Upstages Maqdisi," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology 2* (September, 2005): 63, http://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1368/kazimi_vol2.pdf [455]; M.J. Kirdar, "Al Qaeda in Iraq," *AQAM Futures Project, Case Study Number 1 (June 2011): 2-3*, http://csis.org/files/publication/110614_Kirdar_AlQaedaIraq_Web.pdf [433]; Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true [450].
- **1993:** Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi return to Jordan, and began plotting against the Hashemite monarchy. There, al-Zarqawi establishes an organization called al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, later changing the name to Bayat al-Imam (Allegiance to the Imam). The first mission that al-Zarqawi directs—against a movie theater in Zarqa that was showing pornographic films—fails when the bomber "forgot about his bomb. It exploded and blew off his legs." Source: Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true [450].
- **December 1989:** Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalaylah (also known as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) arrives in Peshawar, Pakistan to fight alongside the mujahideen against the Soviet Union. During his three-year stay in Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Zarqawi comes into contact with prominent jihadi ideologues, including radical Palestinian cleric Abu Mohamed al-Maqdisi. Source: Mary Anne Weaver, "The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi," *The Atlantic*, July

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1, 2006, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true [450].

Violent history:

- **1993:** Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Mohamed al-Maqdisi returned to Jordan, and began plotting against the Hashemite monarchy. There, Zarqawi established an organization named Bayat al-Imam (Allegiance to the Imam). The first mission that Zarqawi directed—against a movie theater in Zarqa that was showing pornographic films—failed when the bomber “forgot about his bomb. It exploded and blew off his legs.”³²⁴
- **August 2003:** Zarqawi was allegedly responsible for the car bombing of the Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad on August 7, which killed at least 10 and wounded about 40.³²⁵ Two weeks later, Zarqawi was reportedly behind the truck bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, which killed 17—including the UN representative – and injured 100.³²⁶ Finally, on August 29, Zarqawi was behind the car bombing outside of the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, Iraq—one of the holiest sites for Shiite Muslims—that killed revered cleric Ayatollah Mohamad Bakr al-Hakim and 100 others.³²⁷
- **May 2004:** In May, Zarqawi “inaugurated his notorious wave of hostage beheadings,” making American citizen Nicholas Berg his first victim.³²⁸ Later that month, a suicide bomber with suspected ties to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi detonated himself near the U.S.-led coalition headquarters in Baghdad, killing the acting president of the Iraqi Governing Council, Ezzedine Salim. Salim’s death came 45 days before the occupation forces were set to transfer limited political control back to the Iraqis.³²⁹
- **2005:** Al-Qaeda in Iraq increased the frequency of attacks throughout the year, targeting Coalition forces and Iraqi Shiites. In late 2005, during operations in Iraq, U.S. forces confiscated a letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri that described the organization’s long-term global strategy. The letter also criticized al-Zarqawi for videotaping and distributing footage of beheadings, saying that such violence could alienate the Islamic world from al-Qaeda’s cause.³³⁰ Major attacks conducted by AQI that year included:
 - **February 28:** A suicide bombing in Hilla reportedly targeted Shiite police and National Guard recruits, killing 125 and wounding hundreds.³³¹
 - **April 29:** Numerous suicide bombings across Iraq killed as many as 50 people³³²
 - **July 2:** Egypt’s envoy to Iraq, Ihab al-Sherif, was kidnapped and later executed³³³
 - **July 16:** A suicide bomber attacked a fuel truck in Musayyib, killing at least 98 and wounding at least 80.³³⁴
 - **July 29:** A suicide bombing on Iraqi army recruits in Rabia killed 52 and injured 57.³³⁵
 - **September 14:** A suicide bomber attacked a group of laborers in a predominantly Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad, killing 112.³³⁶
 - **September 29:** Three suicide bombers detonated car bombs at a market and busy streets in the town of Balad, killing at least 102.³³⁷
 - **November 9:** Coordinated suicide bombings at three hotels in Amman, Jordan killed 58 and injured more than 90.³³⁸
- **February 22, 2006:** Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) bombed the Shiite Al Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq, one of the four major Shiite shrines in Iraq and the burial place for two of the 12 revered Shiite Imams. Reportedly, “a group of men dressed like Iraqi police commandos” walked into the shrine and set off the explosions.³³⁹ The mosque attack set off a wave of intensified Shiite-Sunni attacks across Iraq.³⁴⁰
- **November 23, 2006:** Car bombs and mortar attacks in Sadr City killed 215, setting of more sectarian violence.³⁴¹
- **2007:** ISI continued its deadly bombing campaign, targeting predominantly Shiite populations. In January 2007, the U.S. began deploying an additional 30,000 troops to Iraq, completing the deployment in June that year and bringing the total number of troops in Iraq to 150,000.³⁴²
 - **January 22, 2007:** A suicide bomber and car bomb targeted a Shiite market in central Baghdad, killing 88.³⁴³

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- **February 3, 2007:** A suicide bomber detonated a truck bomb in a heavily Shiite populated neighborhood of Iraq, killing 135 in what was then the “deadliest single bombing” since the beginning of the Iraq war in 2003.³⁴⁴
- **March 6, 2007:** Two suicide bombers detonated themselves among Shiite pilgrims in Hillah, killing 93.³⁴⁵
- **April 18, 2007:** Five separate bombs, including 4 car bombs, targeted Shiite areas in Baghdad, killing more than 170. One of the bombs struck at a central bus station for Shiites travelling to Sadr City.³⁴⁶
- **June 19, 2007:** A truck bomb exploded outside the Shiite Khulani mosque in Baghdad, killing more than 80 people.³⁴⁷
- **July 7, 2007:** A suicide bomber detonated a truck carrying 4.5 tons of explosives in the Shiite Turkmen village of Amerli, killing as many as 150 people.³⁴⁸
- **August 16, 2007:** Suicide bombers simultaneously detonated five fuel trucks in the Yazidi Kurdish villages of al-Qataniyah and al-Adnaniyah, killing more than 300 Iraqis, injuring several hundred, and destroying dozens of homes. It was reportedly the worst terrorist attack in Iraq during the post-Saddam Hussein era.³⁴⁹
- **2009:** As U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq amidst relatively low levels of violence at the end of 2008, car bombings and suicide attacks made a comeback in 2009. While the nature of the attacks fit the profile of AQI/ISI-style bombings, the group’s culpability was unclear. The attacks included:
 - **January 2, 2009:** A suicide bomber detonated himself during a meeting of nearly 1,000 tribal leaders in Yusufiya, killing at least 24 and wounding about 40.³⁵⁰
 - **February 9, 2009:** Four American soldiers were killed in Mosul when a suicide bomber detonated his vehicle near the soldiers’ Humvee. The attack was the “deadliest single loss in nine months” for U.S. forces in Iraq.³⁵¹
 - **April 6, 2009:** Six car bombs detonated in Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad, killing at least 33 and wounding dozens.³⁵²
 - **April 10, 2009:** A suicide truck bomber struck the main military base in Mosul, killing 5 American soldiers and two Iraqis. It was “the deadliest attack against American soldiers [in Iraq] in 13 months...”³⁵³
 - **April 23-24, 2009:** Three separate suicide bombings in Baghdad and Muqadadiya killed at least 80 and injured 120. The attack in Baghdad was perpetrated by a woman who detonated herself among a group of women and children waiting for emergency food aid.³⁵⁴ The next day, two suicide bombings near the revered Shiite shrine of Imam Musa al-Kadhim and his grandson killed at least 60.³⁵⁵
 - **July 17, 2009:** 3 American soldiers were killed when militants attacked an army base in Basra with mortar rounds.³⁵⁶
 - **October 25, 2009:** ISIS claimed responsibility for two car bombings that struck the Iraqi Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, killing more than 155 and injuring more than 500.³⁵⁷
- **January 25, 2010:** Three bombs exploded within 10 minutes of each other in Baghdad during rush hour, striking the Ishtar Sheraton, Babylon Hotel, and Hamra Hotel – all popular hotels for foreign businessmen and journalists. The blasts killed 36 and wounded more than 70.³⁵⁸
- **April 23, 2010:** A series of bombings struck near the headquarters belonging to Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr in Sadr City, Baghdad, killing at least 59 and wounding dozens.³⁵⁹
- **May 10, 2010:** A series of shooting and bombing attacks in Baghdad, Fallujah, Samarra, Tarmiya, and Suwayra, killed more than 100 people and wounded hundreds.³⁶⁰
- **October 31, 2010:** Gunmen strapped with suicide vests attacked a Catholic church in Baghdad, taking more than 100 people hostage. During the ensuing siege, at least 30 hostages were killed and 41 wounded.³⁶¹

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- **November 2, 2010:** Militants set off a wave of car bombs and roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that targeted Sunni and Shiite area across Baghdad, killing at least 63 and wounding about 285.³⁶²
- **May 5, 2011:** A suicide bomber detonated himself at a police training center in the majority Shiite city of Hilla, killing 25 and wounding at least 75.³⁶³
- **August 15, 2011:** The Islamic State of Iraq was suspected of carrying out a series of 42 “apparently coordinated” attacks using suicide bombs, car bombs, and gunmen. At least 89 people were killed and 315 wounded. The attacks targeted Iraqi policemen and soldiers, as well as a market in Kut, and a mosque in Yusufiya.³⁶⁴
- **August 20, 2011:** AQI announced that it was launching a campaign whereby it would carry out 100 attacks, calling it “the battle of revenge for Sheik Osama bin Laden and other senior leaders.”³⁶⁵
- **December 23, 2011:** Two car bombs exploded near the State Security Directorate in Damascus, killing at least 44. Syria’s state news agency claimed that two suicide bombers affiliated with al-Qaeda were responsible for the attack, though members of the Syrian opposition accused the Assad regime of planning the attacks in order to crackdown harder on its opponents.³⁶⁶
- **January 6, 2012:** The Syrian government reported that a suicide bomber detonated himself in the Midan neighborhood in Damascus, killing 26 and wounding dozens. Again, the opposition accused the Syrian government of perpetrating the attacks to bolster its narrative that al-Qaeda was gaining influence among the opposition.³⁶⁷ The Nusra Front eventually claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁶⁸
- **January 14, 2012:** Militants detonated a bomb near a tent in Basra where Shiite pilgrims celebrating the holiday of Arbaeen were eating breakfast. The explosion killed at least 53 and wounded more than 130.³⁶⁹
- **February 10, 2012:** Several car bombs exploded minutes apart from each other at a military security headquarters and police compound in Aleppo, killing 28 people and wounding more than 200.³⁷⁰ The Nusra Front eventually claimed responsibility for the attack.³⁷¹
- **March 17, 2012:** Two powerful car bombs exploded near Syrian intelligence and security buildings in Damascus, killing more than 25 people and injuring nearly 100.³⁷²
- **April 17, 2012:** A suicide bomber detonated himself near a mosque in the Midan neighborhood of Damascus, killing at least 9 and wounding dozens.³⁷³
- **April 24, 2012:** Jabhat al-Nusra claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing attack on the Iranian Cultural Consulate in Damascus. According to the group, one of its security battalions attached explosives to a Syrian army vehicle and detonated them when it arrived at the consulate.³⁷⁴
- **April 30, 2012:** Two suicide bombers reportedly detonated vehicles laden with explosives near a Syrian military compound and the Carlton Hotel in Idlib, killing at least 9 and wounding dozens.³⁷⁵
- **May 10, 2012:** Two suicide bombers carried out car bombings that targeted “a notorious military intelligence compound” and another security building in Damascus, reportedly killing 55 and wounding 400.³⁷⁶
- **May 12, 2012:** Syrian security forces reportedly killed a suicide bomber who was attempting to drive a minibus packed with explosives into a densely populated neighborhood in Aleppo.³⁷⁷
- **May 19, 2012:** A suicide bomber reportedly detonated a car bomb near a Syrian military post in Deir Ezzor, killing 9 people and wounding nearly 100.³⁷⁸
- **June 1, 2012:** In retaliation for the Syrian government’s massacre in Houla, the Nusra Front reportedly carried out multiple attacks on Syrian military targets, including a suicide attack on the al Nayrab Camp in Idlib, as well as ambush and IED attacks on military units responding to the attack at al Nayrab.³⁷⁹
- **June 26, 2012:** The Nusra Front claimed responsibility for an attack on the private Syrian television station *Alikhbaria*, killing 7 people and reportedly destroying the station.³⁸⁰

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- **July 19, 2012:** The Nusra Front claimed responsibility for kidnapping and executing Syria television presenter Mohamed al-Saeed. The group warned supporters of the Syrian regime that “...the swords of the mujahideen will cut off their heads and purify the Levant from their obscenity.”³⁸¹ On the same date, the Nusra Front claimed that it conducted a suicide bombing on a security post in Ma’arat al-Nu’mān, killing 60 Syrian soldiers.³⁸²
- **September 8, 2012:** A suicide bomber from the Nusra Front reportedly attacked al-Haya hospital in Aleppo. The group claimed that it killed more than 200 military officers and soldiers, while the Syrian government reported that 27 soldiers died and 64 were wounded.³⁸³
- **October 9, 2012:** The Nusra Front claimed responsibility for multiple suicide attacks against an air force intelligence branch in Harasta, a suburb of Damascus. The group claimed that one suicide bomber detonated a vehicle packed with 9 tons of explosives, while another attacker drove an ambulance loaded with explosives to the scene 25 minutes later.³⁸⁴
- **January 11, 2013:** The Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham led an offensive on the Taftanaz air base in Idlib province, seizing large caches of weapons and ammunition – and also taking out the base that served as the launching point for “barrel bomb” attacks against civilians.³⁸⁵
- **March 11, 2013:** ISI claimed responsibility for ambushing and gunning down more than 40 Syrian soldiers in Anbar Province who had temporarily travelled to Iraq for safety.³⁸⁶
- **April 8, 2013:** A car bomb exploded near the Syrian Central Bank in Damascus, killing at least 15 and wounding 53.³⁸⁷
- **June 17, 2013:** A suicide bomber detonated a truck, allegedly laden with 6 tons of explosives, near a Syrian military base in Aleppo, killing up to 60 soldiers.³⁸⁸
- **June-July 2013:** ISIS escalated attacks against members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in an apparent attempt to take out the FSA’s leadership. ISIS reportedly killed “prominent” FSA commander Kamal Hamami for planning operations without consulting it. The organization also beheaded two FSA soldiers and left their heads next to a garbage can.³⁸⁹
- **July 23, 2013:** As part of its “Breaking the Walls” campaign, AQI militants staged “carefully synchronized operations” to break members of the organization out of the Abu Ghraib and Taji prisons. Al-Qaeda claimed that 500 inmates had been freed from the prisons, while Iraqi officials put the total at 800—with 400 of them recaptured or killed.³⁹⁰
- **July 26, 2013:** Fighters from the Nusra Front and Ansar al-Khalafa al-Islamiya Brigade reportedly killed as many as 150 Syrian soldiers during a battle in Khan al-Assal, a suburb of Aleppo. 51 of the soldiers were summarily executed after surrendering, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.³⁹¹
- **August 28, 2013:** A series of more than a dozen explosions hit Shiite neighborhoods of Baghdad during the morning commute, killing at least 65 and wounding dozens more. The attacks followed a string of recent beheadings that were claimed by AQI.³⁹²
- **September 12, 2013:** Ayman al-Zawahiri released a message the day after the 12th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, called on his followers to carry out “a few disparate attacks” against the American homeland and to “bleed America economically.” Part of his message referred to the war in Syria, where he told jihadists not to cooperate with secular rebel forces.³⁹³
- **December 21, 2013:** 18 Iraqi soldiers, including a high-ranking commander, were killed during a raid on a training camp where ISIS was teaching recruits how to make roadside explosives.³⁹⁴
- **January 2014:** After days of intense fighting, ISIS militants took over major parts of Fallujah, destroyed the police headquarters, and declared the city an Islamic state.³⁹⁵ ISIS was accused of carrying out mass executions against civilians, prisoners, and other rebel fighters in Aleppo, Idlib, and Raqq. According to reports, bodies were found handcuffed and blindfolded at a children’s hospital used as a base by ISIS.³⁹⁶
- **February 2014:** British jihadist Abdul Waheed Majeed reportedly carried out a suicide truck bombing at the Aleppo Central Prison. If true, Majeed’s attack was the “first known case of a British suicide bomber in Syria.”³⁹⁷
- **February 23, 2014:** A suicide bomber from ISIS reportedly launched an attack against a rebel base, killing Abu Khalid

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al-Suri, who was chosen by Ayman al-Zawahiri to mediate disputes between Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS.³⁹⁸

- **May 2014:** American citizen Moner Mohammad Abusalha, who went by the *nom de guerre* Abu Huraira al-Amriki, reportedly carried out a suicide truck bombing on a mountaintop restaurant in Syria that was a gathering spot for Syrian soldiers.³⁹⁹ On May 15, a car bombing carried out by ISIS near the Turkish border killed at least 43 people. The bombing was reportedly intended to target the Tawhid Brigade—part of the rebel coalition called the Islamic Front—which controlled the border crossing.⁴⁰⁰ Also in May, French citizen Mehdi Nemmouche, who reportedly fought in Syria with ISIS, shot and killed 3 people at a Jewish museum in Brussels. The attack was the first instance of a European Islamist fighter returning home from the war to commit acts of violence.⁴⁰¹
- **June 10, 2014:** ISIS insurgents took over Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, as Iraqi soldiers fled on foot and left behind their weapons, vehicles and uniforms. After seizing Mosul and securing its hold over Nineveh Province, the militants moved south toward Baghdad, taking over parts of Salahuddin Province along the way.⁴⁰² Five days after its offensive, ISIS claimed that it had executed 1,700 Iraqi soldiers, many of whom were Shiites. Those claims could not be immediately verified, though the Iraqi military admitted that at least 800 soldiers had been taken prisoner.⁴⁰³ ISIS also robs local banks and seizes U.S. military equipment left for the Iraqi army.⁴⁰⁴
- **June 11, 2014:** ISIS insurgents took over Tikrit, home town of Saddam Hussein and his clan.⁴⁰⁵
- **July 1, 2014:** The UN stated that more than 2,400 Iraqis were killed in June, the most fatalities in one month in Iraq since April 2005.⁴⁰⁶
- **August 1-5, 2014:** ISIS militants crucify, behead and shoot over 700 members of the Shaitat tribe in eastern Syria, in what is one of ISIS’s bloodiest advances.⁴⁰⁷
- **August 2-3, 2014:** ISIS defeated Kurdish peshmerga fighters and takes over several towns previously held by the Kurds, including the towns of Sinjar and Zumar near Iraq’s border with Syria, as well as two small oil fields. During its conquest, ISIS kills up to 500 Yazidis, ethnic Kurds whom ISIS despises as “devil worshipers”⁴⁰⁸ and heretics subject to death⁴⁰⁹ for practicing an ancient, pre-Abrahamic religion. Upon entering Sinjar, ISIS noted the occasion by exploding a Shiite shrine and demanding that Sinjar residents convert to Islam or be killed.⁴¹⁰ As many as 200,000 local residents fled, including other Yazidis.⁴¹¹ Many of the Yazidis (estimates range from 10,000 to 50,000) took refuge on Mount Sinjar. There, the Yazidis lacked sufficient food, water, and medicine, and were besieged by ISIS and threatened with death if they came down from the mountains. The UN warned of a “humanitarian tragedy.”⁴¹² As one besieged Yazidi noted, “We cannot get out of here; we cannot move. It’s all [ISIS] fighters around us. If we move down they will kill us.”⁴¹³
- **August 2-7, 2014:** Fighters from ISIS and the Nusra Front overrun the Lebanese town of Arsal by the Syrian border, killing several Lebanese soldiers, following repeated tensions with the Lebanese military.⁴¹⁴ The fighters withdraw from Arsal on August 7 after Sunni clerics negotiate a truce, but they take a reported 19 captive Lebanese soldiers with them.⁴¹⁵
- **August 7, 2014:** ISIS fighters took control of Qaraqosh, the largest Christian municipality in Iraq. Tens of thousands of its residents fled.⁴¹⁶
- **August 7, 2014:** ISIS took the strategically vital Mosul dam, driving out peshmerga forces from several towns. Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis flee the area.⁴¹⁷
- **August 11, 2014:** ISIS militants defeated Kurdish peshmerga forces in the municipality of Jalawla.⁴¹⁸
- **August 20, 2014:** ISIS released a video, entitled “A Message to America,” showing a masked ISIS militant beheading kidnapped American journalist James Foley and, speaking with a British accent, threatening to kill another such journalist, Steven Sotloff, if U.S. President Barack Obama did not stop U.S. military operations in Iraq.⁴¹⁹
- **August 30, 2014:** ISIS posted a video of their fighters beheading one of the Lebanese soldiers they kidnapped when they and the Nusra Front captured and briefly held the Lebanese border town of Arsal in early August. The soldier, Ali al-Sayyed, was a Sunni Muslim. ISIS also posted another video of nine other captive soldiers pleading for their lives and

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calling on their families to hold street protests to seek the release of Islamist prisoners by the Lebanese government. ISIS has sought the release of Imad Ahmad Jomaa, an ISIS commander (formerly in the Nusra Front) who was arrested in Arsal in early August, as well as several other imprisoned Islamists.⁴²⁰

- **September 2, 2014:** Amnesty International reports that ISIS “has carried out ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq... systematically target[ing] non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 others to flee the areas it has captured” since June 10, 2014.⁴²¹
- **September 3, 2014:** ISIS released another video, entitled “A Second Message to America,” showing a masked ISIS militant beheading kidnapped American journalist Steven Sotloff, as previously threatened. Before being killed, Sotloff said that he was “paying the price” for U.S. military intervention in Iraq. After the beheading, the ISIS militant, speaking with a British accent, said to U.S. President Barack Obama, “Just as your missiles continue to strike our people, our knife will continue to strike the necks of your people.” The militant also “warn[ed] those governments who’ve entered this evil alliance of America against the Islamic State to back off and leave our people alone.”⁴²² He also threatened another captive, David Cawthorne Haines, a British aid worker kidnapped last year on the Turkish-Syrian border.⁴²³ The *Washington Post* reported that the U.S. government believes “as many as a dozen Americans may be fighting alongside [ISIS] and that the group holds at least two other American hostages, both aid workers.”⁴²⁴
- **September 6, 2014:** Images on Twitter depict ISIS executing a second Lebanese soldier kidnapped when the group and the Nusra Front overran the Lebanese town of Arsal by the Syrian border last month. The soldier was identified as Abbas Medlij, a Shiite Muslim.⁴²⁵ ISIS and the Nusra Front reportedly continue to hold 17 Lebanese soldiers captive.
- **September 13, 2014:** ISIS releases another video in which British aid worker David Cawthorne Haines is executed. Some analysts see it as a warning to the British Government for supporting the US-led coalition against ISIS. The video is filmed in the same setting as the previous videos that ISIS has created: a nondescript area of what seems to be arid land beneath a blue sky. As in the other beheading videos disseminated by ISIS, “Jihadi John”, stands by a kneeling Haines. The still anonymous British terrorist says to the camera that “this British man has to pay the price for your promise, Cameron, to arm the pesh merga against the Islamic State. Ironically, he has spent a decade of his life serving under the same Royal Air Force that is responsible for delivering those arms.” At the end of the video, “Jihadi John” names the next victim as British citizen Alan Henning.⁴²⁶
- **September 18, 2014:** Australian police foil a “beheading plot” by Australian militants connected to ISIS.⁴²⁷
- **September 23, 2014:** The Algerian group linked to ISIS, Jund al-Khalifah, decapitates French mountaineer Hervé Gourdel, who they had held hostage for three days. The group say that they chose to behead Gourdel after the French government ignored the group’s call to end airstrikes on ISIS.⁴²⁸
- **September 23, 2014:** Fighting between incoming ISIS militants and Kurdish forces intensifies in the Kurdish town of Kobani in northern Syria along the Turkish border. By September 24, at least 140,000 Syrian Kurdish refugees had crossed the border into Turkey.⁴²⁹
- **September 23, 2014:** An 18-year old terror suspect in Australia is fatally shot by police after he attempts to stab two counter-terrorism officials. The suspect had displayed an ISIS flag and was shouting insults about Prime Minister Tony Abbott before his death.⁴³⁰
- **September 24, 2014:** On this same day, ISIS militants blow up the “Green Church” in Tikrit, Iraq, an ancient and holy site for Christians.⁴³¹
- **September 26, 2014:** Iraq’s Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi tells US officials that ISIS had planned to attack subways in Paris and the United States. Western officials were skeptical of the news, and al-Abadi was unable to provide concrete evidence for his claim.⁴³²
- **September 26, 2014:** ISIS militants persist in their conquest of the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani, amidst airstrikes. Mass numbers of Kurdish Syrian refugees continue to pile into Turkey.
- **September 29, 2014:** Shelling from ISIS during its attack on Kobani falls into Turkey, prompting the Turkish military to send tanks to its border with Syria.⁴³³
- **October 2, 2014:** The UN publishes a report stating that upwards of 5,500 people have been killed by ISIS in Iraq

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alone since June, 2014. This includes hundreds of the Yazidi minority who were “slaughtered en masse.”⁴³⁴

- **October 3, 2014:** ISIS releases a video depicting the beheading of English taxi-driver Alan Henning. The video takes place in the same area that James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and David Haines were beheaded. In the video, Henning, wearing the usual orange jumpsuit, says: “Hi, I am Alan Henning. Because of our Parliament’s decision to attack the Islamic State, I — as a member of the British public — will now pay the price for that decision.” Right before the decapitation, ‘Jihadi John’, the executioner, says: “Obama, you have started your air bombardment in Sham [an area referring to Syria and Lebanon] which keeps on striking our people. It is only right that we continue to strike the necks of your people.” According to some analysts, ISIS seemed to have waited to behead Henning until after the start of Britain’s airstrikes on the group. The video ends with Jihadi John threatening the execution of American hostage Peter Kassig if the airstrikes on ISIS do not cease.⁴³⁵
- **October 5, 2014:** A document found by Iraqi special forces, believed to be written by Abdullah Ahmed al-Meshedani, a member of ISIS’s six-man war cabinet, states that ISIS plans to steal Tehran’s ‘nuclear secrets’ and wage war on Iran’s Shiite government. Meshedani writes that ISIS will depend on Russia to “give up Iran and its nuclear.... secrets” by offering Russia access to Iraqi gas fields controlled by the group. First, Meshedani writes, Moscow must give up its support for Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria, and join in the Gulf States’ coalition against Iran. The document also lists 70 plans of ethnic cleansing to target Shiite Iraqi authorities- as well as Shiite Iran- in the interest of building the ‘new caliphate’. The manifesto also calls for the assassination of Iranian diplomats, teachers and businessmen, along with Iraqi military chiefs, Iranian-backed militias fighting for the Iraqi government, and Shiite officials.⁴³⁶
- **October 5, 2014:** The fighting in the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani intensifies, with ISIS sending rockets into the town and neither side claiming victory. Kurdish pesh merga forces state that Western-led airstrikes are not enough to stop ISIS militants from taking Kobani.⁴³⁷
- **October 8, 2014:** ISIS militants shoot down an Iraqi military helicopter with a shoulder-fired missile- killing two onboard- for the second time in less than a week. The helicopter was believed to be a Bell 407 aircraft, generally used for surveillance.⁴³⁸
- **October 14, 2014:** An ISIS bomber kills 24 and wounds 40 at a crowded checkpoint into a majority Shiite neighborhood in Baghdad. Among the dead was Ahmed al-Khafaji, Shiite member of Parliament and member of the Badr Organization, a Shiite group that controls a Shiite insurgency fighting ISIS.⁴³⁹
- **October 19, 2014:** A Syrian rebel commander is reportedly shot and wounded in a kidnapping attempt by ISIS militants within Turkish borders. In the southern Turkish city of Urfa, ISIS has safe houses and is believed to “operate without impunity.” It was in Urfa that ISIS militants kidnapped Abu Issa, but ultimately failed to bring him into Turkey. There is increasing international condemnation on Turkey concerning Turkey’s apparent relaxed stance on ISIS militants in the South of the country, including ISIS’s smuggling operations from Turkey into Syria.⁴⁴⁰
- **October 20, 2014:** 40 people are killed in Iraq by ISIS in a quadruple car bombing and a suicide bombing inside a mosque. Local officials remarked that the attacks were specifically aimed against Shiites, as they took place near holy Shiite shrines and a Shiite mosque.⁴⁴¹
- **October 21, 2014:** ISIS releases a video in which seventeen-year-old Australian Abdullah Elmir, *nom de guerre* Abu Khaled, speaks to the camera with dozens of young jihadists by his side. He says: “I say this about your coalition: you threaten us with your countries, bring every nation that you wish to us, bring every nation that you want to come and fight us... we will not put down our weapons until we reach your lands, until we take the head of every tyrant and until the black flag is flying high in every single land, until we put the black flag on top of Buckingham Palace, until we put the black flag on top of the White House.”⁴⁴² In Canada, a gunman whose photo is tweeted by an ISIS-linked account kills a reservist before storming into Ottawa’s parliament.⁴⁴³
- **October 26, 2014:** Casualties over the fight for Kobani reveal at least 302 Kurdish fighters and 21 civilians have been killed in 40 days of fighting over the town, two of the civilians killed by beheadings.⁴⁴⁴ Evidence surfaces that ISIS may be using advanced surface-to-air missile systems to shoot down coalition missiles.⁴⁴⁵
- **October 30, 2014:** Human Rights Watch releases a report on the group, saying that summary executions of ISIS prisoners “amount to war crimes and most likely crimes against humanity.”⁴⁴⁶
- **October 31, 2014:** ISIS fighter claims the group controls 90% of the city of Kobani.⁴⁴⁷ That same day, the United

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Nations releases a press statement condemning ISIS and expressing “deep outrage” at the group’s actions.⁴⁴⁸

- **November 1, 2014:** Turkey allows precisely 150 Iraqi Kurdish forces to arrive in the Syrian city of Kobani.⁴⁴⁹ ISIS summarily executes 50 members of the Sunni Al Bu Nimr tribe.⁴⁵⁰
- **November 2, 2014:** ISIS continues summarily killing members of the Sunni Al Bu Nimr tribe. 50 members are found dead in a water well. ISIS summarily executes 50 additional members of the tribe and kidnaps 65 members of the tribe. According to the Iraqi government, ISIS has thus far killed 322 members of the Al Bu Nimr tribe.⁴⁵¹ Canada launches its first airstrike against ISIS.⁴⁵²
- **November 3, 2014:** Human Rights Watch releases a report on ISIS’s practice of kidnapping and torturing child hostages from the city of Kobani.⁴⁵³
- **November 13, 2014:** Rumors of al-Baghdadi’s death are put to rest following a speech in which the leader calls for “volcanoes of jihad.” It is unclear if the video was made before or after the airstrike carried out on November 8, in which many high-level ISIS militants were killed. In the video, Baghdadi mocks the U.S. for sending its soldiers “to their death and destruction.”⁴⁵⁴ Baghdadi also shares the “good news” of the expansion of the caliphate. According to Baghdadi, jihadist groups from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Algeria have pledged allegiance to ISIS.⁴⁵⁵
- **November 16, 2014:** ISIS releases a video showing that they have beheaded American hostage Peter Kassig.⁴⁵⁶ Kassig’s death appears at the end of a 16-minute video titled “Although the disbelievers dislike it,” in which ISIS members behead a group of Syrian soldiers.⁴⁵⁷ The scenes in which the soldiers are beheaded are edited in a way to increase the viewer’s horror: slow-motion shots of the beheadings and sound effects of panicked breathing and slitting throats. In the video, Jihadi John speaks over Peter Kassig’s beheaded corpse: “This is Peter Edward Kassig, a U.S. citizen of your country. Peter, who fought against the Muslims in Iraq while serving as a soldier under the American Army, doesn’t have much to say. His previous cellmates have already spoken on his behalf...You claim to have withdrawn from Iraq four years ago. We said to you then that you are liars.”⁴⁵⁸ Jihadi John continues: “your forces will return greater in number than they were before. We also remind you of the haunting words of our Sheikh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who told you: ‘The spark has been lit here in Iraq and its heat will continue to intensify by Allah’s permission until it burns the crusader army.’”⁴⁵⁹
- **December 2, 2014:** ISIS supporters in Saudi Arabia release a video purportedly showing the shooting of a Danish national in Saudi Arabia. The video includes clips of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as well as ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammed al-Adnani calling on Saudis to “kill and spit upon” Westerners fighting ISIS.⁴⁶⁰
- **December 13, 2014:** ISIS militants shoot down an Iraqi helicopter, killing two pilots onboard. It is suspected that the militants used a shoulder-fired rocket launcher. ISIS shot down two other Iraqi military helicopters in October 2014.⁴⁶¹
- **December 15, 2014:** ISIS authorities release a penal code titled “Clarification [regarding] the *Hudud* [Koranic punishments].” The document details the appropriate punishment- according to sharia- for various illegal acts, including homosexuality: “death for the person committing the act, as well as for the one receiving it,” and banditry: “cutting of the right hand and the left leg.” ISIS claims to have distributed the penal code as a reminder to the people living in the “caliphate,” and warns that it will be vigilantly enforced.⁴⁶²
- **December 15, 2014:** Up to 40 people are taken hostage by an Islamist gunman at a Lindt Chocolate café in Sydney, Australia. The hostages are forced to hold a black flag with Arabic inscription to the window, raising fears that ISIS is responsible for the attack. Dozens of police surround and eventually storm the premises.⁴⁶³ After a shootout between police and the gunman, three people (including the gunman) are killed, with four injured. The gunman, Man Haron Manis, is described as a 50 year-old Iranian who had received political asylum in Australia in 1996.⁴⁶⁴
- **December 15, 2014:** ISIS militants capture two key army bases in the northwestern province of Idlib, Syria. The two bases, Wadi Deif and Hamidiyeh, are significant losses for the Syrian army, who had them under its control for more than two years. The battle results in dozens of casualties on each side.⁴⁶⁵
- **December 17, 2014:** A mass grave containing over 230 bodies is discovered in eastern Syria. The dead are believed to have belonged to al-Sheitaat, a Sunni tribe against ISIS. The deaths bring the number of al-Sheitaats killed by ISIS over 900.⁴⁶⁶

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- **December 17, 2014:** ISIS fighter Abu Anas Al-Libi murders over 150 women and girls- some of whom are pregnant- for refusing to partake in sexual acts and marriage with ISIS fighters. The women and girls' bodies are buried in mass graves west of Baghdad.⁴⁶⁷
- **December 18, 2014:** Tunisian militants aligned with ISIS appear in a video, threatening attacks before Tunisia's upcoming presidential runoff. The armed militants urge Tunisians to expand the Islamic State across North Africa, and claim that Tunisians "will not live secured as long as Tunisia is not governed by Islam." The militants also claim responsibility for the 2013 assassinations of left-wing politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmī.⁴⁶⁸
- **December 24, 2014:** ISIS militants capture a Jordanian pilot flying over ISIS-controlled territory in northern Syria by shooting down his jet with an anti-aircraft missile. The Jordanian pilot is identified as Moaz Youssef al-Kasabeh. ISIS militants post photographs of the captured pilot surrounded by masked gunmen on Twitter. They also upload photos of the jet's debris, as well as Kasabeh's military identification card.⁴⁶⁹ This represents the first US-led coalition aircraft to be lost on ISIS-controlled territory.⁴⁷⁰
- **January 27, 2015:** ISIS claims responsibility for an attack at the five-star Corinthia hotel in Tripoli, Libya. Nine people are killed, including five foreign nationals. It is the first attack on western interests in Libya. ISIS's profile in Libya increases along with Islamic State Tripoli (IS Tripoli) in western Libya and ISIS-affiliated branches, Barqa in the east and Fezzan in the south. Many analysts attribute ISIS's rise in Libya to the anarchic state of the country. This is partly due to the ongoing battle between the internationally recognized government in the eastern city of Tobruk and Libya's National Salvation government, which is allied with the Islamist-backed Fajr Libya in Tripoli in the west.⁴⁷¹
- **January 30, 2015:** ISIS attacks oil-rich Kirkuk in northern Iraq after months of fighting the Peshmerga, fighters protecting the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The attack is possibly a diversion against Kurdish efforts to take Mosul, ISIS's stronghold. Among those killed by ISIS are Brigadier General Shirko Fateh, the highest-ranking operational commander of the Peshmerga brigade.⁴⁷²
- **January 31, 2015:** The second Japanese hostage, journalist Kenji Goto, is reported executed. A video is released online showing his decapitated body. The video begins with the man known as "Jihadi Joe" brandishing his knife, stating, "[Prime Minister] Abe, because of your reckless decision to take part in an unwinnable war, this knife will not only slaughter Kenji, but will also carry on and cause carnage wherever your people are round. So let the nightmare for Japan begin."⁴⁷³
- **February 3, 2015:** ISIS posts a video and still images of Jordanian pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh being burned alive in a cage. Al-Kasasbeh was a member of an important Jordanian tribe and the first prisoner from the coalition bombing ISIS. Jordanian officials say that he was actually killed on January 3. In response to the group's most cruel execution to date, Jordan executes Sajida al-Riswahi, convicted of attempting a suicide bombing and the prisoner ISIS had earlier asked for in a prisoner swap for Japanese hostage Haruka Yukawa. Jordan also executes Ziad al-Karbouli, a top lieutenant of al-Qaeda in Iraq, convicted of helping to plan 2005 bombings in Amman that killed more than 57 people. Both were already sentenced to death for terrorism.⁴⁷⁴
- **February 10, 2015:** The U.S. government confirms the death of Kayla Mueller, a 26-year-old humanitarian aid worker and the last American hostage held by ISIS.⁴⁷⁵ ISIS claims that she was killed when a Jordanian fighter plane bombed a building where she was being held. The claim cannot be confirmed and no proof was offered. Mueller had been captured in August 2013 at a Doctors Without Borders hospital. ISIS had threatened to kill her if several million euros were not paid in ransom by her family.⁴⁷⁶
- **February 11, 2015:** U.S. President Barack Obama requests that Congress pass a bipartisan authorization for the use of military force (AUMF) against ISIS. The administration's draft AUMF only authorizes flexible ground operations with coalition support for three years.⁴⁷⁷ According to some congressional sources, the anti-ISIS AUMF will extend beyond Iraq and Syria.⁴⁷⁸
- **February 12, 2015:** ISIS makes advances on the western Iraqi province of Anbar where their first attack is a suicide bombing at a police station. This is only miles away from the Ayn al-Asad airbase, where 320 coalition personnel are training Iraqi troops and tribal fighters.⁴⁷⁹
- **February 13, 2015:** ISIS launches a suicide attack on the al-Asad airbase in Iraq's Anbar province, where U.S. and coalition troops are training Iraqi forces. A Pentagon spokesman states that an estimated 20-25 extremists, disguised as Iraqi soldiers, are involved in the attack. Most are killed by their suicide vests or by Iraqi government forces. No

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Iraqi or U.S. troops are killed, nor were U.S. soldiers involved in the gunfight. This comes after ISIS took control of a nearby town, their first territorial gain in months.⁴⁸⁰

- **February 15, 2015:** ISIS uploads a video showing the gruesome killing of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christian laborers in Libya. The men were kidnapped from the city of Sirt, led to a beach, and made to kneel before they were beheaded by multiple ISIS members. The group identifies its newly conquered land in Libya as the “Tripoli” Province of ISIS, leading analysts to believe that Libya is emerging as a ‘second front’ for the organization.⁴⁸¹
- **February 17, 2015:** ISIS militants burn to death 45 Iraqis, many of them suspected to be security forces.⁴⁸²
- **February 18, 2015:** A top Iraqi diplomat alleges that ISIS is harvesting and selling the organs of those it murders. Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations Mohamed Alhakim declares: “We have bodies. Come and examine them. It is clear they are missing certain parts.”⁴⁸³
- **February 23, 2015:** ISIS militants burn the Mosul public library, which reportedly housed over 8,000 rare books and manuscripts.⁴⁸⁴
- **February 23, 2015:** ISIS’s media department releases a new video depicting caged Kurdish prisoners being paraded down ISIS-controlled streets.⁴⁸⁵
- **February 26, 2015:** In the culmination of a multi-day offensive on Assyrian Christian villages in northeastern Syria, ISIS militants kidnap further hostages, bringing the total number of Assyrian Christian hostages to 262.⁴⁸⁶
- **March 1, 2015:** ISIS supporters threaten to kill Twitter employees as the company deletes some violent ISIS videos on the site and suspends a number of accounts.⁴⁸⁷
- **March 5-6, 2015:** ISIS attacks the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud in northern Iraq, razing the city and bulldozing archaeological ruins.⁴⁸⁸
- **March 7, 2015:** ISIS razes the ancient city of Hatra in northern Iraq, destroying archaeological ruins.⁴⁸⁹
- **March 11, 2015:** A new ISIS video shows a child executing what the group claims is an Israeli spy.⁴⁹⁰
- **March 21, 2015:** ISIS releases an online call to lone-wolf attacks against U.S. service members. The group reportedly releases the names of 100 targets in particular.⁴⁹¹
- **Early April 2015:** ISIS reportedly sends an email to the personal account of Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan threatening his life. According to media, the email came from a Gmail account and the author said he ISIS paid him to kill Rajan but he would spare Rajan for more money.⁴⁹²
- **April 6, 2015:** ISIS kills 52 men, mostly Iraqi police officers, at the al-Qaim border crossing with Syria. ISIS captured the victims when it overran the border area the year before.⁴⁹³
- **April 10, 2015:** ISIS launches an assault, including suicide and car bombers, on Ramadi, Iraq. The group seizes northern parts of the city by the end of the day. At least 10 Iraqi soldiers are killed and General Qassim al-Muhammadi, Iraq’s military head in Anbar province, is wounded.⁴⁹⁴
- **Mid-April 2015:** ISIS releases a propaganda video threatening a “9/11-style attack” on the United States. ISIS supporters spread the message on Twitter using the hashtag “We Will Burn America.”⁴⁹⁵
- **June 09-10, 2015:** ISIS’s Egyptian wilaya targets the Multinational Force and Observers airbase in North Sinai using rocket fire.⁴⁹⁶
- **June 12, 2015:** ISIS’s wilaya in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region conducts public beheadings, killing five.⁴⁹⁷
- **June 17- 29, 2015:** ISIS’s Yemeni wilaya detonates VBIEDs at Shiite religious sites and Houthi political and military assets.⁴⁹⁸
- **June 26, 2015:** ISIS’s Saudi wilaya attacks a Shiite mosque in Kuwait City.⁴⁹⁹

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- **June 26, 2015:** ISIS takes credit for an attack on tourists at the Imperial Marhaba Hotel and the Sofil Hostel in Sousse, Tunisia.⁵⁰⁰
- **June 30, 2015:** Yemen-based ISIS militants claim responsibility for a car bomb in Sanaa that kills 28.⁵⁰¹ In northern Syria, ISIS insurgents launch a renewed attack on the Kurdish town of Tal Abyad after being repelled two weeks prior.⁵⁰²
- **July 2, 2015:** ISIS militants decimate cultural artefacts in the Syrian city of Palmyra, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.⁵⁰³
- **July 3, 2015:** ISIS releases a video of a row of young men being beheaded in the empty amphitheater in Syria's Palmyra.⁵⁰⁴
- **July 16, 2015:** The *International Business Times* reports that ISIS has crucified 12 people for allegedly failing to fast during the holy month of Ramadan.⁵⁰⁵
- **July 17, 2015:** ISIS's Sinai Province claims responsibility for an attack on an Egyptian vessel.⁵⁰⁶
- **July 17, 2015:** Kurdish officials, field investigators, and a Western technician report that ISIS militants have used rudimentary chemical weaponry against Kurdish territory in Iraq and Syria in recent weeks.⁵⁰⁷
- **August 7, 2015:** ISIS captures and holds dozens of Christians in Syria's Homs province.⁵⁰⁸
- **August 9, 2015:** ISIS reportedly plots to assassinate the Queen of England.⁵⁰⁹
- **August 14, 2015:** U.S. officials confirm suspicions that ISIS used a mustard agent on its enemies in Syria.⁵¹⁰
- **August 18, 2015:** ISIS militants publically execute the archeologist of Syria's ancient city Palmyra.⁵¹¹
- **August 21, 2015:** ISIS fighters use chemical weapons during a battle near Aleppo, Syria, according to an August 23 finding by the *Wall Street Journal*.⁵¹²
- **August 25, 2015:** ISIS releases a video showing its members destroying the Baalshamin temple in Palmyra, Syria.⁵¹³ Satellite imagery confirms the destruction.⁵¹⁴
- **August 30, 2015:** ISIS fighters severely damage the Temple of Baal, another major religious shrine in Palmyra.⁵¹⁵ By August 31, the United Nations confirms that the Temple of Baal has been destroyed.⁵¹⁶
- **September 1, 2015:** The U.N. confirms that ISIS militants have destroyed the ancient Temple of Baal in Palmyra, Syria.⁵¹⁷
- **September 1, 2015:** ISIS releases a video depicting the burning alive of four Iraqi men accused of working with Shiite militias.⁵¹⁸
- **September 15, 2015:** Two car bomb attacks kill more than 20 and injure more than 100 others in Syria's northeastern Kurdish city of Hasakah. The local Kurdish forces blame the attack on ISIS.⁵¹⁹
- **September 15, 2015:** Danish teenager Lisa Borch receives nine years in prison for stabbing her mother to death after becoming radicalized by watching ISIS beheading videos online.⁵²⁰
- **September 16, 2015 - September 17, 2015:** ISIS releases five videos amid the refugee crisis in Europe, urging the Syrian and other refugees to leave Europe and travel to the self-proclaimed Islamic State.⁵²¹
- **September 15, 2015:** Two car bomb attacks kill more than 20 and injure more than 100 others in Syria's northeastern Kurdish city of Hasakah. The local Kurdish forces blame the attack on ISIS.⁵²²
- **November 13, 2015:** Eight assailants carry out multiple simultaneous attacks in Paris, killing 130 and seriously injuring more than 350. French President Francois Hollande labels the attacks an "act of war" and orders a national

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state of emergency. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵²³

- **November 18, 2015:** ISIS releases a propaganda video threatening New York City in the wake of the Paris attacks. A voice in the video says, "...What's coming next will be far worse and more bitter."⁵²⁴
- **December 2, 2015:** Two shooters kill 14 at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California. The perpetrators, a husband and wife named Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik, are shot dead. The shooters were reportedly ISIS sympathizers. Malik pledged allegiance to ISIS via Facebook while carrying out the attack. Farook's later father told an Italian newspaper: "[Farook] said he shared the ideology of (ISIS leader Abu Bakr) al-Baghdadi to create an Islamic state...." The shooting represents the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil since 9/11.⁵²⁵
- **December 3, 2015:** ISIS releases a video purporting to depict the beheading of a Russian spy. The executioner addresses Russians, saying, "You will not find peace in your homes. We will kill your sons ... for each son you killed here. And we will destroy your homes for each home you destroyed here."⁵²⁶
- **January 5, 2016:** ISIS releases a video in which a British-accented man, believed to be [Abu Rumaysah](#) [286], threatens the United Kingdom.⁵²⁷
- **Early January 2016:** ISIS launches counterattacks on Iraqi soldiers in Ramadi.⁵²⁸
- **March 22, 2016:** ISIS operatives carry out three bombings in Brussels, Belgium, in the worst attack in that country's history. At 8 a.m., two bombs explode at the airport in Zaventem. At 9 a.m., one bomb detonates at the Maalbeek metro station. The attacks kill 32 and wound 270.⁵²⁹
- **April 2016:** ISIS executes at least 250 women for refusing to enter into temporary marriages with ISIS militants.⁵³⁰
- **April 7, 2016:** ISIS militants kidnap over 300 cement workers from a cement plant near Damascus, Syria.⁵³¹
- **June 5, 2016:** ISIS's Amaq News Agency claims the killing of a Christian in Northwestern Bangladesh and a Buddhist monk in the country's southeast.⁵³²
- **June 7, 2016:** ISIS claims responsibility for its first car bombing in the largely Shiite city of Karbala, Iraq. The attack kills 10 and wounds 25.⁵³³
- **June 8, 2016:** Two Palestinian terrorists, allegedly inspired by ISIS, kill four Israeli civilians and wound 15 at a food mall in Tel Aviv.⁵³⁴
- **June 12, 2016:** In the deadliest mass shooting on American soil, U.S. citizen Omar Mateen murders 49 and wounds 53 at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida. While carrying out the attack, Mateen calls 911 and pledges allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁵³⁵ Later on June 12, ISIS claims responsibility for the shooting, writing on its Amaq news agency Telegram channel that "an Islamic State fighter" had "targeted a nightclub for homosexuals...."⁵³⁶ On June 13, ISIS releases another claim of responsibility on its official Al Bayan radio station, referring to Mateen as "one of the soldiers of the caliphate in America."⁵³⁷
- **June 13, 2016:** [Larossi Abballa](#) [456] stabs to death two married French police officers, and pledges allegiance to ISIS directly after the attack.⁵³⁸ ISIS officially claims responsibility.⁵³⁹
- **June 28, 2016:** Three suicide bombers attack Turkey's Ataturk international airport, killing 45 and wounding more than 230. Turkish authorities allege ISIS leadership was involved in planning the attack.⁵⁴⁰ On the same day, ISIS militants carry out the group's first successful attack in Malaysia, launching a grenade at a nightclub in Kuala Lumpur. The attack wounds eight.⁵⁴¹
- **July 1, 2016:** ISIS operatives kill 20 people in a café in Dhaka, Bangladesh, after taking them hostage.⁵⁴²
- **July 3, 2016:** ISIS militants detonate a minivan packed with explosive in central Baghdad, killing at least 292 and wounding 200 others.⁵⁴³
- **July 14, 2016:** A Tunisian-French citizen named Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel drives a truck through a crowd

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celebrating Bastille Day in Nice, France. The attack kills 84 people and wounds over 300. ISIS claims responsibility two days later.⁵⁴⁴

- **July 18, 2016 - July 24, 2016:** ISIS claims responsibility for two attacks in Germany. In the first, on July 18, a 17-year-old Afghan refugee armed with a knife and ax injures four people—all of them from Hong Kong—on a train traveling from Treuchlingen to Würzburg.⁵⁴⁵ In the second, on July 24, a 27-year-old Syrian refugee carried out a suicide bombing, injuring 12 people, outside of a music festival in Ansbach.⁵⁴⁶
- **July 26, 2016:** ISIS operatives slit the throat of a priest in a church in Normandy, France.⁵⁴⁷
- **July 27, 2016:** A bombing carried out by ISIS militants kills 44 in the Syrian Kurdish-controlled city of Qamishli.⁵⁴⁸
- **July 31, 2016:** ISIS operatives raid the Bai Hassan oil field near Kirkuk, Iraq, and take four employees hostage. The militants are killed by security personnel.⁵⁴⁹
- **August 7, 2016:** An Algerian man acting on behalf of ISIS wounds two policewomen in a machete attack in Charleroi, Belgium. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁵⁰
- **August 8, 2016:** A suicide bomber in Quetta, Pakistan, kills approximately 70 people and wounds more than 100. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁵¹
- **August 21, 2016:** A suicide bomber kills 51 people at a wedding in Gaziantep, Turkey. The Turkish government blames ISIS.⁵⁵²
- **August 29, 2016:** ISIS operatives carry out a suicide car bomb attack in Aden, Yemen, killing at least 60 people.⁵⁵³
- **September 12, 2016:** An Australian man loyal to ISIS stabs a 59-year-old man and attempts to attack a police officer in Sydney, Australia.⁵⁵⁴
- **September 17, 2016:** U.S. resident [Dahir Adan](#) [457] allegedly goes on a stabbing spree in a mall St. Cloud, Minnesota, injuring 10 people. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁵⁵
- **September 24, 2016:** Three suspected ISIS insurgents carry out coordinated suicide bombings at a security checkpoint in northern Baghdad, killing 11 security personnel.⁵⁵⁶
- **October 3, 2016:** ISIS suicide bombers target a Kurdish wedding party in northeast Syria, killing at least 36 people.⁵⁵⁷
- **October 4, 2016:** A bomb explodes in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, killing a U.S. service member. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁵⁸
- **October 21, 2016:** ISIS militants reportedly execute 284 men and boys who they had used as human shields on the outskirts of Mosul.⁵⁵⁹
- **October 24, 2016:** ISIS claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at a cadet training center in Quetta, Pakistan, killing 60 people and injuring more than 100 others.⁵⁶⁰
- **November 28, 2016:** U.S. resident and ISIS sympathizer Abdul Razak Ali Artan carries out a knife- and car-attack at Ohio State University where he is a student, wounding 11 people before he is shot dead. ISIS later claims responsibility.⁵⁶¹
- **December 11, 2016:** ISIS suicide bombers attack a Coptic cathedral in Cairo, killing 25 people. ISIS claims responsibility two days later.⁵⁶²
- **December 18, 2016:** ISIS gunmen carry out an attack at Karak Castle, a popular tourist destination in Karak, Jordan, leaving 10 people dead.⁵⁶³
- **December 19, 2016:** A 40-year-old Tunisian ISIS sympathizer drives a truck through a Christmas market in Berlin, Germany, killing 12 people and injuring 48. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁶⁴

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- **January 1, 2017:** A 34-year-old Uzbek named Abdulkadir Masharipov opens fire at a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey, killing 39 people and injuring 70 others. ISIS claims Turkish officials believe that Masharipov had contact with ISIS militants inside Syria.⁵⁶⁵
- **January 3, 2017:** ISIS suicide bombers kill at least 39 people at a market in Baghdad.⁵⁶⁶
- **February 16, 2017:** ISIS suicide bombers attack an 800-year old Sufi Muslim shrine in Sehwan, Pakistan, killing at least 88 people—including 24 children—and wounding at least 200 others. That same day, a car bomb planted by ISIS kills at least 48 people and wounds 60 more at an outside market in the southwestern al-Bayaa neighborhood of Baghdad.⁵⁶⁷
- **March 8, 2017:** ISIS operatives a suicide bomb and gun attack at a hospital in Kabul, killing 30 people.⁵⁶⁸
- **April 9, 2017:** A bomb explodes at St. George’s Church in Tanta, Egypt, while a suicide bomber targets St. Mark’s Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Alexandria. The bombings kill a combined 45 people.⁵⁶⁹
- **May 17, 2017:** A suicide attack on state-run the Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) broadcasting station in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, kills at least five people and wounds 24 others. Three other assailants are killed in a gun battle with security forces. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁷⁰
- **May 22, 2017:** Salman Abedi detonates a homemade bomb at an Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena in Manchester, England, killing himself and 22 other people and wounding more than 800. It is the deadliest terror attack in Britain since the July 2005 London bombings. ISIS claims responsibility for the Manchester attack on May 23, 2017, calling Abedi a “soldier of the caliphate.”⁵⁷¹
- **May 26, 2017:** Gunmen attack two buses and a truck carrying Coptic Christians to the monastery of St. Samuel the Confessor south of Cairo, killing 29 people. It is ISIS’s first attack against a monastery.⁵⁷²
- **August 12, 2017:** A suicide bomber on a motorcycle carries out an attack on a Pakistani army truck in Quetta, Pakistan, killing 15 people and injuring at least 40 others. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁷³
- **August 17-18, 2017:** On August 17, a van crashes into a crowd of people on the Las Ramblas pedestrian walkway in Barcelona. The following morning, five attackers attempt to ram people in the resort city of Cambrils south of Barcelona, then begin to stab passersby before they are killed by police. Altogether, 16 people are killed and at least 130 others are wounded in both attacks. ISIS claims responsibility for both attacks.⁵⁷⁴
- **October 4, 2017:** Gunmen and a suicide attacker kill at least four people and injure almost 40 others in an attack on a court complex in Misrata, Libya. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁷⁵
- **October 31, 2017:** Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov, an Uzbek national living in the United States, drives a truck down a bike path in New York City in a vehicular attack that kills eight people and injures at least twelve others. He is shot and taken into custody. Saipov tells authorities that he was inspired to carry out the attack by ISIS propaganda videos.⁵⁷⁶
- **November 25, 2017:** Militants carrying the ISIS flag carry out a bomb and gun attack on the al Rawdah mosque in Bir al-Abed in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, killing at least 305 people and wounding at least 128 others in the deadliest attack in the country’s history.⁵⁷⁷
- **December 11, 2017:** Akayed Ullah, a Bangladeshi native, detonates a pipe bomb in the subway tunnel under the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City. The bomb does not detonate properly and no one is seriously injured except for Ullah. Ullah had previously declared allegiance to ISIS, according to New York officials.⁵⁷⁸
- **December 27, 2017:** A small bomb in a supermarket locker wounds 13 in St. Petersburg, Russia. ISIS claims responsibility but provides no evidence that it is behind the attack. Police arrest Dmitry Lukyanenko, who reportedly belongs to a nationalist group and has received “psychiatric treatment” in the past.⁵⁷⁹
- **December 28, 2017:** ISIS claims responsibility after a suicide bomber kills at least 41 at a Shiite cultural center in Kabul, Afghanistan.⁵⁸⁰
- **January 4, 2018:** A suicide bombing at a market in Kabul, Afghanistan, kills at least 20 and wounds at least 24. ISIS

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claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency but doesn't provide direct evidence linking it to the attack.⁵⁸¹

- **January 5, 2018:** ISIS renews its offensive against Syrian rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (formerly Jabhat al-Nusra), capturing at least two villages in south-eastern Idlib, Syria.⁵⁸²
- **March 2018 - May 2018:** On March 12, ISIS fighters attack the rebel-held al-Qadam neighborhood of southern Damascus. ISIS reportedly takes control of 25 percent of Qadam. On March 13, the Syrian government evacuates approximately 300 rebel fighters from Damascus to the Idlib province. The rebels turn their remaining territory over to the Syrian government, which takes control of approximately 70 percent of Qadam. ISIS attacks rebels during the evacuation. On March 14, ISIS forces attack Syrian army positions and gain ground in southern Damascus after several days of fighting. At least 62 Syrian army soldiers are killed. The Syrian army sends thousands of reinforcements to southern Damascus in April to force ISIS from Qadam and surrounding areas, including the nearby Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, which ISIS had occupied since 2015. On May 18, the Syrian government reportedly reaches a truce with the militants. On May 19, the government begins evacuating ISIS fighters in buses under a reported deal for the government to retake full control of southern Damascus, though the government denies any deal exists.⁵⁸³
- **April 2, 2018:** Approximately 400 ISIS fighters attack Iranian-backed militias in the Syrian town of Boukamal, killing 11 pro-government fighters. Five ISIS militants are also killed.⁵⁸⁴
- **January 16, 2019:** An explosion in the U.S.-patrolled town of Manbij kills at least 16, including four U.S. citizens. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁸⁵
- **March 2019:** The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) launch an assault on ISIS's last territorial hold in Baghuz, Syria, on March 10. ISIS releases a propaganda video claiming "tomorrow we will be in paradise." At least 20 suicide bombers attack SDF positions during the fighting. On March 12, hundreds of ISIS fighters and their families reportedly surrender to rebel forces. The SDF declare that the battle to retake Baghuz is as "good as over." The SDF claim to have killed 112 ISIS fighters by March 13.⁵⁸⁶
- **April 12, 2019:** A suicide bomber explodes in a vegetable market in Quetta, Pakistan, killing at least 20 and wounding at least 48. At least nine of the dead are part of the minority Shiite Hazara community, which has been targeted in the past. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi initially claims responsibility. ISIS releases a conflicting claim of responsibility and a photo of the alleged bomber.⁵⁸⁷
- **April 18, 2019:** ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency for a shooting attack in Kamango, Democratic Republic of Congo, that killed three. ISIS credits the attack to its new affiliate, Wilayat Central Africa. It is the group's first attack claimed in the Congo.⁵⁸⁸
- **April 20, 2019:** A suicide bomber blows himself up at the entrance of the telecommunications ministry in Kabul, Afghanistan. Four gunmen then attack the ministry, killing 10 people during a three-hour gun battle with Afghan forces. The attackers are killed during the course of the battle. ISIS claims responsibility the following day.⁵⁸⁹
- **April 21, 2019:** Coordinated suicide bombings at three hotels and three Catholic churches across Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday kill at least 250 people and wound approximately 500 others. On April 23, ISIS releases a claim of responsibility through its Amaq News Agency, though the group does not provide evidence of its claim. Sri Lankan officials suspect two local Islamist groups of responsibility: National Thowheeth Jama'ath and Jammiyathul Millathu Ibrahim. Mohamed Atif Subhi Abu Sitta Ruwan Wijewardene, Separately on April 21, militants kill three soldiers and wound another in the Butembo area of the Democratic Republic of Congo. ISIS claims responsibility four days later.⁵⁹⁰
- **May 4, 2019:** ISIS militants attack a military training camp in Sabha, Libya, belonging to forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, killing at least nine. ISIS claims it killed or wounded at least 16.⁵⁹¹
- **May 9, 2019:** A suicide bomber blows up in a market in Baghdad, Iraq, killing at least eight and wounding 15. ISIS claims responsibility.⁵⁹²
- **May 14, 2019:** Militants ambush a military convoy in Niger near the Malian border, killing 28 soldiers. ISIS claims responsibility two days later.⁵⁹³
- **May 19 - 20, 2019:** Militants armed with knives spark a riot at a prison in Vakhdat, Tajikistan, leaving three guards and five prisoners dead. The militants also burn down the prison hospital and take several prisoners hostage in an attempt to escape. Prison authorities kill 24 of the militants while quelling the riot. Tajik authorities blame ISIS for

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instigating the riot.⁵⁹⁴

- **June 2 - 3, 2019:** On June 2, four bombings in Kabul kill at least two and wound 27. On June 3, a bomb explodes near a bus in Kabul, Afghanistan, killing at least four and wounding 10. ISIS claims responsibility for both days of bombings. Also on June 3, militants attack a security patrol in Tripoli, Lebanon, killing four. ISIS claims responsibility in July through its *Al-Nabaa* newspaper but does not provide evidence.⁵⁹⁵
- **June 4, 2019:** ISIS issues a statement claiming its Central Africa Province repelled an “attack” by the army in Mozambique. ISIS also claims its fighters captured weapons, ammunition, and rockets. It is ISIS’s first claim to be operating within Mozambique. Police deny that ISIS was responsible for the fighting.⁵⁹⁶
- **June 5, 2019:** ISIS militants attack a military checkpoint in Egypt’s northern Sinai Peninsula, killing at least eight policemen. Egyptian forces kill at least five of the militants after the attack.⁵⁹⁷
- **June 25, 2019:** ISIS militants attack four Egyptian police positions in el-Arish in Egypt’s Sinai, killing eight and wounding two. One of the attackers detonates an explosives belt during clashes with Egyptian forces after the attack. Three other militants are killed during the clashes. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency while claiming it carried out multiple simultaneous raids.⁵⁹⁸
- **June 27, 2019:** Two suicide bombers attack police positions in Tunis, killing two and wounding seven others. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency. The attack’s alleged mastermind, Aymen Smiri blows himself up in Tunis on July 2 after being surrounded by police. There are no other casualties from that explosion.⁵⁹⁹
- **June 28, 2019:** An explosion at a military base on the Philippine island of Jolo kills at least five and wounds nine. ISIS claims through its Amaq News Agency that multiple suicide bombers had infiltrated the base and killed or wounded 100 soldiers.⁶⁰⁰
- **July 1, 2019:** Militants blow up two cars at a military camp in Niger. Gunmen on motorcycles then open fire at the base, killing at least 18 soldiers. Four other soldiers are reported missing. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency.⁶⁰¹
- **July 5, 2019:** A bomb explodes at the Mohammadiya mosque in Afghanistan’s Ghazni province, killing at least two and wounding 20 others. ISIS claims responsibility and claims the bombing wounded 40 at the Shiite mosque.⁶⁰²
- **July 11, 2019:** A car bomb detonates outside of a Christian church in Qamishli, Syria. At least 11 people are injured in the attack. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack despite having lost its last stronghold of Baghuz in March.⁶⁰³
- **July 17, 2019:** Fighters from ISIS’s West Africa Province ambush a military patrol vehicle on near Jakana in Nigeria’s Borno State, killing all six soldiers on board. The militants then attack a military base in Jakana but are repelled by Nigerian forces, according to the military.⁶⁰⁴
- **July 17, 2019:** Four headless bodies are found in an empty street in the North Sinai town of Bir al-Abd. ISIS claimed responsibility for the beheadings, claiming the four were spies for the Egyptian military.⁶⁰⁵
- **July 18, 2019:** Militants from ISIS’s West Africa Province attack an aid convoy in Nigeria’s Borno State, killing one and taking hostage six aid workers from the NGO Action Against Hunger. A week later, ISIS releases a video of the one of the hostages begging Action Against Hunger and the Nigerian government to help them.⁶⁰⁶
- **July 18, 2019:** A suicide bomber detonates a bomb in a car park in Sheikh Zuweid, on Egypt’s border near the Gaza Strip. One civilian and one member of the Egyptian security forces are killed. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack.⁶⁰⁷
- **July 23, 2019:** An Indonesian couple carry out a suicide attack in a Cathedral in Jolo, the Philippines. At least 23 people are killed and more than 100 are wounded. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack.⁶⁰⁸
- **July 25, 2019:** A magnetic bomb attached to a bus in Kabul, Afghanistan, explodes. The bus is carrying employees of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. A suicide bomber on a motorbike then blows up nearby after emergency services arrive. The attack kills at least eight and wounds 27 others. ISIS claims responsibility. A third bombing less than two miles away wounds at least 17. The Taliban claim responsibility for the third bombing.⁶⁰⁹

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- **July 31, 2019:** Militants attacks a military post in Baga, Borno. The attack kills at least 15 soldiers. Later, the militants storm army barracks in the town of Benisheik where they kill another 25 soldiers. ISIS claims responsibility for the attacks via its Amaq News Agency.⁶¹⁰
- **August 1, 2019:** ISIS detonates a car bomb in a military camp for the Security Belt forces—the elite military wing of the Southern Transitional Council—in Aden, Yemen. The attack kills 13 policemen.⁶¹¹
- **August 17, 2019:** A suicide bomber infiltrates a wedding in Kabul and detonates his bomb-laden vest. The attack kills 63 and injures 182. ISIS’s Khorasan Province claims responsibility for the bombing. The attack was meant to target the Shiite community, but the fatalities included members of both Sunni and Shiite sects.⁶¹²
- **August 30, 2019:** An ISIS militant on a motorcycle targets a patrol from Yemen’s Security Belt group in Yemen. The attack kills six southern separatist fighters.⁶¹³
- **August 31, 2019:** Two cows harnessed to explosive vests wander into the outskirts of Al Islah, Iraq. The bombs detonate, killing the cows and damaging nearby houses, but not harming any people. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack as the militant group resorts to unconventional attack methods when lacking manpower.⁶¹⁴
- **September 7, 2019:** An ISIS militant detonates a bomb in a public market in the southern Philippines. The attack wounds at least seven Filipino Christians.⁶¹⁵
- **September 8, 2019:** A woman suspected of being a suicide bomber is killed in an explosion near a military detachment in the southern Philippines. No casualties or injuries are reported. If confirmed, the incident would be the fourth suicide bombing in the southern Philippines in 14 months.⁶¹⁶
- **February 2, 2020:** Masked gunman blow up a gas pipeline in Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. There are no casualties reported. The following day, ISIS’s Sinai Province claims responsibility, asserting that the pipeline connected to Israel’s offshore gas field. ISIS also claims the pipeline it targeted was in the Sinai village of Al Teloul. Egyptian authorities dispute the claim, saying the pipeline was a domestic one and connected to a power station in el-Arish.⁶¹⁷

³²⁴ Mary Anne Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi,” *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006,

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/07/the-short-violent-life-of-abu-musab-al-zarqawi/304983/?single_page=true [450].

³²⁵ “Baghdad Blast Kills 10 at Jordanian Embassy,” CNN, August 7, 2003, <http://us.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/07/sprj.irq.main/> [458].

³²⁶ “Truck Bomb Kills Chief U.N. Envoy to Iraq,” CNN, August 20, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/19/sprj.irq.main/> [459].

³²⁷ Ben Wedeman, Ingrid Formanek, David Ensor, Shirzad Bozorgmehr, “Najaf Bombing Kills Shiite Leader, Followers Say,” CNN, August 30, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/08/29/sprj.irq.najaf/index.html?iref=mpstoryview> [454].

³²⁸ Mary Anne Weaver, “The Short, Violent Life of Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi,” *The Atlantic*, July 1, 2006,

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Designations:

Designations by the U.S. Government:



October 15, 2004 : The State Department designates Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant Specially Designated Global Terrorists and Blocks all property in U.S. or under possession of control of U.S. persons; bans any property-related transactions by U.S. persons or within U.S., including giving or receiving contributions to the entity.⁶¹⁸

October 4, 2011: The State Department designates Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri, AKA Abu Du'a [AKA Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi] a Specially Designated Global Terrorist and blocks all property in U.S. or under possession of control of U.S. persons and bans any property-related transactions by U.S. persons or within U.S., including giving or receiving contributions to the entity.⁶²⁰

May 14, 2014: The State Department designates The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), ad-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi al-'Iraq wa-sh-Sham, Daesh, Dawla al Islamiya, and Al-Furqan Establishment for Media Production (as aliases for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) Specially Designated Global Terrorists.⁶²²

August 6, 2014: The Department of the Treasury designates 'Abd al-Rahman Khalaf 'Ubayd Juday' al-'Anizi a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.⁶²⁴

January 14, 2016: The State Department designates ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K)—ISIS's affiliate in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region—as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.⁶²⁶

December 17, 2004: The State Department designates Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant a Foreign Terrorist Organization and freezes of assets in U.S. financial institutions, bans admission of members to U.S., and bans providing "material support or resources" to entity.⁶¹⁹

December 11, 2012: The State Department designates the Nusra Front Specially Designated Global Terrorists and Blocks all property in U.S. or under possession of control of U.S. persons; bans any property-related transactions by U.S. persons or within U.S., including giving or receiving contributions to the entity.⁶²¹

May 14, 2014: The Department of the Treasury designates Abd Al-Rahman Muhammad Zafir Al-Dubaysi Al-Juhni (Al-Juhni) and 'Abd Al-Rahman Mustafa Al-Qaduli (Al-Qaduli) Specially Designated Global Terrorists.⁶²³

August 18, 2014: The State Department designates Abu Mohammed al-Adnani a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.⁶²⁵

May 19, 2016: The State Department designates ISIS's Libya branch as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). The State Department simultaneously designates ISIS's Libya branch—alongside ISIS's Yemen and Saudi Arabia branches—as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) pursuant to Executive Order 13224.⁶²⁷

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September 10, 2019: The Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) amends Executive Order 13224, resulting in secondary sanctions for all Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs). The sanctions also designate Marwan Mahdi Salah Al-Rawi, the Saksouk Company for Exchange and Money Transfer (Saksouk), Al Haram Foreign Exchange Co. Ltd., Al-Khalidi Exchange, Al-Hebo Jewelry Company, Muhamad Ali al-Hebo, Mohamad Ameen, Almaida Marani Salvin, to be targeted as ISIS financial facilitators. OFAC also designates Muhammad Ali Sayid Ahmad for his participation in training related to terrorism that was provided by ISIS.⁶²⁸

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:



Australia—listed ISIS as a terrorist organization on March 2, 2005⁶²⁹



Canada—listed ISIS as a terrorist organization on August 20, 2012⁶³⁰



Indonesia—listed ISIS as a terrorist organization on August 2, 2014⁶³¹



Saudi Arabia—listed ISIS as a terrorist organization on March 7, 2014⁶³²



Israel—Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai, Djamel Moustafa, Ismail Abdallah, and Mubarak Mushakhas Sanad Mubarak al-Bathali declared Individual under Article 2 of the Prohibition of Financing Terrorism on January 18, 2004⁶³³

Israel—Hamid Abdallah Ahmad al-Ali and Aschraf al-Dagma declared Individual under Article 2 of the Prohibition of Financing Terrorism on October 18, 2004⁶³⁴

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Israel—listed ISIS as an unauthorized organization on September 3, 2014^{635 636}



United Kingdom—listed Al-Qaida in Iraq as an Asset Freeze Target on October 18, 2004⁶³⁷

United Kingdom—listed Muthanna Harith al-Dari as an Asset Freeze Target on April 7, 2010⁶³⁸

United Kingdom—listed Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai as an Asset Freeze Target on October 17, 2011⁶³⁹

United Kingdom—listed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant as a Proscribed Terrorist Organization on June, 2014⁶⁴⁰

United Kingdom—listed Abou Mohamed al Adnani and Hamid al-'Ali as Asset Freeze Targets on August 15, 2014⁶⁴¹



United Nations—Al-Qaida in Iraq Listed under category “Entities and other groups and undertakings associated with Al Qaida” on October 18, 2004⁶⁴²

United Nations—Muthanna Harith al-Dari listed as individual associated with Al-Qaida on March 25, 2010⁶⁴³

United Nations—Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri al-Samarrai (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) listed as an individual associated with Al-Qaida on October 5, 2011⁶⁴⁴

United Nations—Abou Mohamed al Adnani and Abou Mohamed al Adnani listed as individuals associated with Al-Qaida on August 15, 2014⁶⁴⁵

United Nations—Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan (ISIL - K) added to the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List on May 14, 2019⁶⁴⁶

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Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:



[Al-Qaeda](#) [1]

ISIS was originally an al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq formerly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq. Under al-Qaeda’s auspices from October 2004⁶⁴⁷ until February 2014, ISIS was responsible for a score of terrorist bombings that resulted in the death of thousands. In February 2014, the two groups split over a leadership dispute when ISIS’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, refused to obey al-Qaeda’s leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri.⁶⁴⁹ Al-Zawahiri cut ties with ISIS due to the group’s repeated attempts to subsume al-Qaeda’s Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front, under its command.⁶⁵⁰ Despite losing its formal alliance with al-Qaeda, ISIS has the same ideology and goals and uses the same brutal tactics as its former parent organization.



[Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#) [677]

AQIM has a controversial relationship with ISIS in light of the rift between ISIS and al-Qaeda. AQIM leaders have expressed support for the group despite the break and AQIM’s official allegiance to al-Zawahiri. On July 1, 2014, AQIM posted an official message of congratulations to ISIS in light of the group’s military gains.⁶⁵¹ In the statement, however, AQIM tempered its congratulations with calls for reconciliation between ISIS and al-Qaeda as well as its affiliate in Syria, the Nusra Front. The statement also explicitly defers to al-Zawahiri, calling him “Our Sheikh and Emir.”⁶⁵² Two weeks later, AQIM posted a statement officially rejecting ISIS’s declaration of a caliphate. In the statement, AQIM refused to swear allegiance to ISIS leader and self-proclaimed caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁶⁵³ Some analysts have pointed to these two contradictory statements as evidence of internal rifts emerging within AQIM’s leadership over ISIS’s controversial declaration of caliphate.⁶⁵⁴ In September 2014, AQIM and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) released a joint statement calling on ISIS to reconcile with al-Qaeda.⁶⁵⁵ Also in September, AQIM members are reported to have splintered from the group to pledge allegiance to ISIS under a new name, “the Caliphate Soldiers in Algeria.”⁶⁵⁶ However, in May 2015, Algerian forces ambushed Caliphate soldiers, killing 25 men, including the group’s leader.⁶⁵⁷ In Nigeria, AQIM has a strong collaborative relationship with Boko Haram, ISIS’s purported wilaya (governorate) in West Africa as of March 2015.⁶⁵⁸ AQIM has reportedly assisted Boko Haram by providing training, resource-sharing and allegedly direct payments to execute crimes on AQIM’s behalf such as kidnap-ransom incidents in Nigeria. Some analysts believe that through Boko Haram, ISIS will build further ties with AQIM.⁶⁵⁹



[Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#) [678]

In August 2014, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula announced its support for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria via Twitter,⁶⁶⁰ and made operative recommendations to ISIS in a statement published on its website.⁶⁶¹ In November 2014, AQAP chief cleric Harith al-Nadhari accused ISIS of “planting... disunity” among Islamic factions fighting in Syria.⁶⁶² In an official AQAP statement, al-Nadhari criticized ISIS of “extending the caliphate to a number of countries in which [it has] no power.” Al-Nadhari’s criticism came one week after a November 13th declaration by ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in which Baghdadi claimed the ‘caliphate’ to have spread to Libya, Yemen, Algeria, Egypt and Qatar.⁶⁶³



[Ansar al-Sharia in Libya \(ASL\)](#) [679]

After al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) rejected ISIS in favor of a continued allegiance to al-Qaeda, ISIS looked to ASL as a possible partner in North Africa. Throughout 2014, the two groups seemed to have had some cooperation. For example, the June 2015 Tunisia gunman, Seifeddine Rezgui, was reported to have trained in both ASL and ISIS camps in Libya, indicating some crossover between the two groups.⁶⁶⁴ Additionally, it was reported that ISIS and ASL worked together in February 2015 to round up 35 Egyptian Coptic Christians living in Libya.⁶⁶⁵ These links led some analysts to speculate in spring 2015 that a pledge of allegiance from ASL to ISIS was imminent.⁶⁶⁶ In July 2014, jihadist militants associated with ISIS began posting statements on social media sites and jihadist forums hoping to push ASL to pledge allegiance to ISIS.⁶⁶⁷ That summer, the leader of ASL’s Derna’s branch, Abu Sufyan Bin Qumu, became the first of ASL’s leadership to break from ASL and pledge allegiance to ISIS.⁶⁶⁸ Similarly, in March 2015, ASL’s senior sharia official Abu Abdullah al-Libi pledged allegiance to ISIS and subsequently split from ASL, taking a group of fighters with him.⁶⁶⁹ ISIS’s growing popularity in Libya began to pose a major threat to ASL, and the mounting defections, along with ISIS seizure of the previously ASL-held cities of Sirte and Derna, gradually increased tensions between the two groups.⁶⁷⁰ Derna, previously one of ASL’s strongholds, was seized by ISIS affiliated militants in October 2014, pushing the Derna Mujahadeen Shura Council (MSC), a coalition of Islamists groups of which ASL is a part, to the outskirts of the city.⁶⁷¹ In June 2015, ISIS, looking to cement their control of Derna and eliminate competing Islamist groups in the area, assassinated a senior member of MSC leadership. ASL and the MSC fought back, killing dozens of ISIS militants⁶⁷² and pushing the group “30 or 50 kilometers to the east” of Derna.⁶⁷⁴ Fighting between the two groups has not spread to elsewhere in Libya.

ISIS



[Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia \(AST\)](#) [680]

AST has an ambiguous relationship with ISIS. While much of AST's leadership has declared support for the group, AST has not formally pledged allegiance to ISIS. AST is nonetheless heavily involved in exporting militants from Tunisia to fight in Syria, many with ISIS. In February 2014, it was estimated that more than 5,000 Tunisians had traveled to Syria to fight against Bashar al-Assad's government,⁶⁷⁵ an estimated 80% or more of whom join ISIS.⁶⁷⁶ A year later, the *International Business Times* reported that Seifallah Ben Hassine, the leader of AST, was running a "joint AST-ISIS operation in Tunisia" and had become "one of the main jihadi recruiters in the country."⁶⁷⁷ While it's unknown how many militants AST has trafficked to ISIS, Tunisians have featured heavily in ISIS propaganda, and both AST and ISIS have regularly eulogized Tunisian fighters and suicide bombers killed in Syria.⁶⁷⁸ In 2014, a group of AST's senior leadership pledged allegiance to ISIS. First, in February 2014, AST deputy leader Kamel Zarrouk traveled to Syria and joined ISIS. AllAfrica reported that, "Zarrouk is known in his [Tunisian] neighborhood as someone who encouraged young people to go for jihad in Syria, which he considers to be the springboard for establishing an Islamic state from the Gulf to the ocean."⁶⁷⁹ In July 2014, while speaking at a mosque in Kairouan, Tunisia, AST spokesman Seifeddine Rais swore loyalty to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.⁶⁸⁰ The same month, Al-Monitor reported that a number of AST leaders had gone to Syria and pledged allegiance to al-Baghdadi.⁶⁸¹ However, none of these pledges represented an official pledge of allegiance from AST to ISIS.

In the past, AST has more overtly endorsed its relationship with ISIS both through AST's social media postings and official communications. On April 9, 2013, AST posted a photo of ISIS militants on its website with a banner that read, "O lions of god in all the earth Call out Allah Akbar, for victory and conquest is ours. Rejoice, for the glorious caliphate is near. Our [sharia] will reign over every corner [or inch of land]."⁶⁸²



[Boko Haram](#) [681]

In March 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to ISIS in an audio message.⁶⁸⁴ In an audio message released the week after, ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi purportedly accepted his pledge.⁶⁸⁵



[Lashkar-e-Taiba \(LeT\)](#)

Indian media reported in July 2019 that ISIS in Afghanistan is reportedly working closely with LeT and the Pakistani army to attack Indian and U.S. interests in Afghanistan.⁶⁸³



[The Nusra Front](#) [682]

The Nusra Front was allegedly formed as an extension of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, now ISIS), and received a monthly salary from AQI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The relationship between the groups deteriorated in April 2013, when al-Baghdadi unilaterally announced a merger between the two groups. The two have since engaged in violent clashes, vying for control over rebel-held territory. Nonetheless, they have continued to cooperate on certain military campaigns against the Assad regime.⁶⁸⁶

ISIS



Taliban [683]

In mid-2016, the Taliban and ISIS militants in eastern Afghanistan reached a deal in which both groups agreed to prioritize fighting the government rather than each other.⁶⁸⁷ The agreement came after years of strain between the two organizations due to differing strategies and affiliations.⁶⁸⁸

Following al-Qaeda's example, the Taliban have advised ISIS to "avoid extremism" that risks splintering the violent Islamist movement across the broader Middle East.⁶⁸⁹ Though Taliban Emir Mullah Omar is believed to have died in April 2013,⁶⁹⁰ Taliban leadership issued a fatwa under his name in April 2015, in which they reaffirmed the Taliban's priority of establishing a unified Islamist movement to expel the "far enemy" (Western powers). The fatwa referred to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as a "fake caliph," asserting, "Baghdadi just wanted to dominate what has so far been achieved by the real jihadists of Islam after three decades of jihad. A pledge of allegiance to him is 'haram.'⁶⁹¹

ISIS has also expanded its operations in Afghanistan. In early 2015, the group announced the creation of an ISIS satellite there known as Wilayat Khorasan, and hinted at its ambitions to challenge the Taliban in the region (comprising Pakistan and Afghanistan).⁶⁹² As of January 2015, hundreds of Taliban members had joined Wilayat Khorasan. In April 2015, ISIS claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Jalalabad that marked its first serious attack in Afghanistan.⁶⁹³

As a result of ISIS's encroachment on its traditional territory, the Taliban have become more direct in their opposition to the terrorist group. In June 2015, the Taliban's late deputy leader [Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour](#) [684] sent a missive to al-Baghdadi, warning ISIS's caliph that "jihad against the Americans and their allies [in Afghanistan] must be conducted under one flag and one leadership."⁶⁹⁴ One year later, in mid-2016, the Taliban and local ISIS militants in eastern Afghanistan reached an ad hoc ceasefire, agreeing to focus on fighting U.S.-backed Afghan soldiers.⁶⁹⁵

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Media Coverage:

Arab Media Coverage

The Connection between Iraq and Al-Qaeda

In October 2002, the Saudi paper *Al-Riyadh* reported al-Qaeda's statements in response to the Bush administration's allegations that al-Qaeda and Iraq were connected. According to the paper, the organization claimed that Saddam Hussein was "on al-Qaeda's assassination list," and its spokesman, who called himself Abdulrahman al-Rashed, said that Saddam was just like Bush in terms of "barbarism, brutality, and [religious] disbelief," adding that Bush made allegations against Saddam "to control the oil of Iraq."⁶⁹⁶

Generally, the Arab media's coverage of alleged links between Saddam Hussein's regime and al-Qaeda was fairly neutral leading up to the Iraq war. Al Jazeera dedicated the bulk of its reporting to U.S. President George W. Bush's State of the Union address in late January 2003 on Iraq's suspected weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The only mention the network made of al-Qaeda was a brief portion of the speech where Bush claimed that there was intelligence and secret communications showing that Saddam "aids and protects terrorists, including members of al-Qaeda."⁶⁹⁷

Leading pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Hayat* also dedicated scant coverage to the al-Qaeda connection. On top of the same lines from Bush's speech that Al Jazeera reported, the paper included comments from the British Foreign Office saying that al-Qaeda agents had taken refuge in Iraq. "We believe that there have been al-Qaeda operatives in parts of Iraq controlled by Baghdad. It is hard to imagine that they are there without the knowledge and acquiescence of the Iraqi Government." *Al-Hayat* noted that it was the first time London had discussed connections between al-Qaeda and the Hussein regime. According to the paper, Prime Minister Blair had only spoken of the existence of "relationships" between the two, but that he "was not sure of the true extent of these relationships."⁶⁹⁸

Zarqawi Pledges Allegiance to Al-Qaeda

When Abu Musab al-Zarqawi pledged his allegiance to Osama bin Laden, Al Arabiya noted that the announcement reinforced analysts' reports that Zarqawi's organization was indeed subordinate to al-Qaeda's central leadership. The network said that Zarqawi's pledge represented a trump card for U.S. President George W. Bush's election campaign claims that he was fighting a war in Iraq against al-Qaeda. An analyst interviewed for the article noted that pledging allegiance to bin Laden would enhance Zarqawi's legitimacy among jihadi groups in Iraq.⁶⁹⁹

Middle East Online reflected several points of view in its coverage. The outlet quoted Yasser Sirri, director of the Islamic Observatory in London, who said that the pledge proved the "invalidity of American allegations about the relationship between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein [who are allegedly connected through] al-Zarqawi."⁷⁰⁰

However, Abdel Bari Atwan, who was then editor of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, said that the pledge removed all doubt about "al-Zarqawi's connection with Bin Laden... Al-Zarqawi is a graduate from Bin Laden's school, trained in Afghanistan. He went to Iraq and founded a wing of the organization... Al-Qaeda is a horizontal organization and not vertical. Bin Laden is the spiritual father."⁷⁰¹

Al-Zarqawi's Death

While Al Jazeera television reported details of the airstrike that killed al-Zarqawi in Diyala Province and remarks from Iraqi and U.S. leaders, the network also carried an acknowledgement of his death from the Mujahideen Shura Council. The report included a statement from the spokesman of the Islamic Army in Iraq, who said that his group and Zarqawi's were "brothers in religion and unity of purpose." Curiously, the network dedicated part of its reporting to his family's reaction in Jordan, noting that they set up a tent at their home where they could grieve his martyrdom. According to the network, Jordanian authorities also briefly detained Al Jazeera's Amman bureau chief and technical crew while they were interviewing Zarqawi's brother-in-law live in Zarqa.⁷⁰²

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Al Arabiya devoted even more space to the reactions from Zarqawi's family in Jordan. After first reporting on Mujahideen Shura Council's statements, the network transitioned to the scene in Zarqa where Zarqawi's elder brother was accepting condolences. The women at the family home were sobbing, wearing all black. Several of the men told them not to cry because "al-Zarqawi is a martyr, and [you] should not cry over the martyrs." According to the network's sources, the women described those who killed Zarqawi as "traitors and criminals."⁷⁰³

Coverage from London-based Arabic newspaper Asharq al-Awsat, in both English and Arabic, omitted the reaction from Zarqawi's grieving family. Instead, the paper reported statements from top U.S. and Iraqi officials and details of the raid. The paper wrote that "Suicide car bombers sent by Zarqawi have targeted Shiite mosques in the past as part of a campaign to plunge Iraq into sectarian civil war." The paper also noted a "boost of confidence among American and Iraqi officials" following his death.⁷⁰⁴

Al-Qaeda in Iraq's Decline

In May 2008, Al Arabiya reported that Iraqi military operations in Ninevah province, home to Mosul and one of the most dangerous cities in Iraq, had achieved their objectives of "dismantling al-Qaeda" and "weakening armed groups" by arresting senior leaders affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). According to Iraq's Interior Ministry spokesman, the army had arrested 1480 men during its operations, half of them from ISI, Ansar al Sunna, the Mujahideen Army, and the Naqshbandi Brigades. According to the spokesman, "large numbers of those wanted surrendered to our forces and were released after making pledges through clan elders."⁷⁰⁵

In February 2008, an article in Egypt's *Al-Ahram* highlighted the pros and cons of leveraging the Awakening Councils to weaken ISI. The article noted that the councils had become an important cornerstone of the Iraqi security equation by reducing levels of violence in certain areas by as much as 60 percent, and achieving unexpected success in defeating ISI.

However, the article raised several concerns about the councils. One worry was that the councils would turn against the Shiites after American forces withdrew from the country, noting that council formations had begun taking the place of regular military formations. Another concern was that arming thousands of Sunnis would prompt the rise of Shiite militias in response, while failing to integrate the Sunnis into the government may push them back into insurgency. Finally, the article cautioned that the councils could maintain their own agendas separate from the central government in Baghdad, imposing their control over provinces and further dividing Iraqi society.⁷⁰⁶

Death of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri

Unlike several reports on Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's death, Arab media reports on the deaths of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri offered little more than details on the raid and statements of praise from Iraqi and U.S. leaders. According to a statement from then Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki carried by Asharq al-Awsat, Iraqi and U.S. forces also arrested a majority of ISI's senior leaders who "were planning a large criminal act during the last two days, planning to target a large number of churches." Maliki also claimed that "[ISI] has become weaker than ever after this strike..."⁷⁰⁷

Egypt's *Al-Masri Al-Youm* carried slightly more hyperbolic statements from Prime Minister Maliki, including his assertion that the intelligence operation was able to "achieve a quality blow that broke the back of al-Qaeda." Furthermore, Maliki described their deaths as a "rush of good news to all of the Iraqi people and the civilized world..."⁷⁰⁸

Al Jazeera noted that the timing of the announcement was important for Maliki's credibility, pointing out that his government had declared al-Baghdadi dead the previous year on official TV, only to have those claims denied by al-Qaeda. Mustafa al-Ani, a security advisor from the Gulf Research Centre, was quoted saying that he didn't believe "Maliki is going to risk losing his credibility a second time without verifying the identity." At the same time, the article pointed to the importance of the operation for Maliki as he tried to gain support for his State of Law coalition after parliamentary elections.⁷⁰⁹

AQI: Neutralized or Resurgent?

ISIS

In June 2010, *Asharq al-Awsat* carried reporting from the *New York Times* that alleged AQI's communication with al-Qaeda Central in Pakistan had been cut off. The report ran General Ray Odierno's statement that due to losses inflicted on the network, "it would be difficult for them to continue to recruit new members." Iraqi Defense Minister Abdel Qader Jassim also noted in the story that security forces were in the final stages of clearing al-Qaeda members from Basra Province after numerous senior leaders were arrested.⁷¹⁰

After Osama bin Laden was killed on May 2, 2011, Egypt's Masrawy quoted Iraq's Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari saying that bin Laden "got what he deserved" and that his death would be a blow to his followers. Zebari alleged at the time that Iraq was weakening al-Qaeda there. "Al-Qaeda lost the ability to carry out terrorist campaigns permanently. Terrorists can no longer work from...liberated regions...They no longer have control over any cities - they now need a month or two for preparing attacks."⁷¹¹

However, by the following July, *Asharq al-Awsat* quoted Iraqi intelligence sources when stating that there had been a resurgence in al-Qaeda activities, particularly in western Iraq. The outlet pointed out that the organization's return to Iraq aligned with a recent statement from its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, calling on young Muslims to begin returning to parts of Iraq that the organization had left.

In October 2012, BBC Arabic highlighted an intelligence report from U.S. Inspector General Stuart Bowen that noted Iraq's security had deteriorated significantly over the past year amidst a revival of ISI. The report claimed that when American forces were leaving Iraq in late 2011, there were less than 800 al-Qaeda members in Iraq; as of late 2012, there were "at least 2,500" members who were living and training in five camps in Anbar Province and Salahuddin Province.⁷¹²

Emerging in Syria or Regime Propaganda?

Two weeks after car bombs struck the State Security Directorate in Damascus on December 23, 2011, *Asharq Al-Awsat* ran a story titled "Syria: The Lie of Al-Qaeda," which featured Syrian opposition members pinning the blame for the attacks on Bashar al-Assad's regime. The article quoted Hani al-Sibai, director of the Al-Maqrizi Studies Center in London, saying that the explosions were strange "in a country governed by a totalitarian regime based on a security machine," and that the regime was using the al-Qaeda boogeyman to suspend its failure in dealing with demonstrators peaceful requests. The article also featured the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's former Supreme Guide, Ali Sadr al-Deen al-Bayouni, who claimed that several days before the bombings, one of the regime's media outlets carried a fabricated intelligence report on al-Qaeda elements infiltrating Syria from Lebanon. According to al-Bayouni, there were also leaked reports inside Syria that the regime had transferred hundreds of civilian detainees to the security centers that were bombed, and then buried them before identifying the bodies.⁷¹³

Writing in *Al Arabiya* the day of the attacks, however, Faris Bin Hazam observed that the "presence of suicide bombers in the heart of Damascus is not a surprising step, and it is not possible for any sane person to rule it out. Didn't Damascus control the passage of suicide bombers to Iraq?" Hazam concluded by saying that it was only natural for the Syrian regime to reap what it sowed over the years, citing an "established fact that the regime, which supported and nurtured killing in Iraq, will one day live the same scene."⁷¹⁴

Islamic State of Iraq Merges with Nusra Front

One month after ISI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced his group's merger with the Nusra Front in Syria, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* reported that Nusra's influence was waning against the more extreme ISI. The article alleged that Nusra had been gaining support with other Syrian opposition groups because of its discipline and battlefield successes. In contrast, Baghdadi was not popular among the opposition due to his focus on enforcing Islamic rule instead of overthrowing the Assad regime. The article quoted one source close to Nusra Front leader Abu Mohamad al-Jolani stating, "We reject his presence in Syria... He should take his fighters and return to Iraq. We do not accept his methods."⁷¹⁵

When al-Qaeda Central leader Ayman al-Zawahri annulled the merger between the groups, *Al Jazeera* blamed Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for Nusra's hardships, noting al-Zawahiri's criticism that Baghdadi was wrong to announce the merger without consulting or notifying al-Qaeda's leadership. The network cited a Nusra militant who said that when the two groups

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merged, nearly 70 percent of its members—especially the non-Syrians—joined the new organization in Idlib. According to him, the defection rates were even higher in eastern regions of Syria.⁷¹⁶

Safe Haven for Foreign Fighters

In late 2013, Arabic media outlets picked up a report from the BBC that foreign jihadists were crossing into Syria via safe houses in southern Turkey. *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* cited the report's claim that more than 150 people stayed in one particular safe haven over the course of 90 days, including about 15 to 20 Britons. According to one fighter from the Free Syrian Army (FSA) that *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* interviewed, the jihadists were not only fighting the Assad regime, other rebel groups as well. The FSA fighter said that they had "undertaken a revolution for freedom and equality, but the jihadists don't want that. They have come to destroy Syria."⁷¹⁷

In May 2014, *Asharq Al-Awsat* reported Washington's increasing fears about the numbers of foreign fighters, including Americans, that were flooding into Syria. These jihadists were getting trained and potentially returning home as national security threats. At the time, intelligence estimates put the number of American citizens fighting in Syria at around 100, though sources indicate the number was likely higher. The report cited figures from *Le Monde*, which alleged that there were 300 French jihadists, 200 from Belgium, 100 from the Netherlands, 300-400 Britons, dozens of Germans, and 15,000 foreign fighters from 70 other countries.⁷¹⁸

Rebel Infighting

In January 2014, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* documented fighting in Raqqa between ISIS and the Islamic Front, an umbrella group of seven rebel factions. The paper's report cited numbers from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which claimed that almost 700 people were killed during nine days of fighting between ISIS and rebel groups. Like many other reports, *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* mentioned that other opposition fighters accused ISIS of kidnapping, detaining, and murdering opponents. The paper also reported that members of an unnamed fighting group attacked an ISIS commander's house, "kidnapped his mother and sister, and raped his mother..."⁷¹⁹

In addition to fighting each other on the battlefield, Al Jazeera reported that rebel groups were trading insults on social media sites like WhatsApp and Twitter. According to the network, social media accounts that either supported or were affiliated with ISIS would accuse people linked to the Mujahideen Army, Islamic Front, and Syrian Rebel Front, of not supporting jihad in Syria. ISIS targets for such shaming were also compared the Awakening Councils in Iraq, who took money from Arab regimes to fight al-Qaeda.⁷²⁰ Meanwhile, supporters of the anti-ISIS factions accused ISIS of being an Iranian agent, and call them Kharijites—a slanderous reference to early Muslims who rejected the rule of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Ali.

Nusra Front and ISIS supporters also clashed online, as ISIS supporters accused Nusra and its leader, Abu Mohamed al-Jolani, of betraying the mujahideen and standing on the sidelines while the other factions fought it. In opposition, the Nusra Front's followers focused on ISIS's executions of Nusra leaders and members.⁷²¹

Al-Qaeda Central Cuts Off ISIS

After al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri officially cut off ISIS from the organization, Al Arabiya's Institute for Studies published an article highlighting the damage the infighting among Syria's Islamist groups had done to the cause of jihad, similar to the Islamist infighting during Algeria's civil war in the 1990s. The author hypothesized that, after watching how infighting collapsed Islamist rule in Algeria, al-Qaeda Central decided to "pull the rug [out from underneath] ISIS early on." However, the author cautioned, ISIS maintains substantial influence inside Syria, and "90 percent of Arab and foreign fighters going to fight in Syria are joining under its banner," making it the largest fighting faction among all other rebel groups.⁷²²

Al Jazeera English reported the news with the headline, "Al-Qaeda Disowns ISIL (ISIS) Rebels in Syria."⁷²³ The article highlighted that ISIS "consolidated its grip" on Raqqa, "imposing their strict version of Sharia law on residents." According to the report, ISIS ordered women to "wear the niqab in public," banned the sale of cigarettes and tobacco products, and

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also banned music and made “attendance of Friday prayers compulsory.” Also noting ISIS’s in-fighting with other rebels, the article stated, “[I]nternecine fighting...has undermined the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad and dismayed Western powers pushing for peace talks.”⁷²⁴

Western Media

The Connection between Iraq and Al-Qaeda

In the lead up to the Iraq War, President George W. Bush used his State of the Union address to document a connection between Saddam Hussein’s government and al-Qaeda, stating, “Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody, reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of Al Qaeda.” As the *New York Times* reported, one of those links between al-Qaeda and Iraq was the “presence in Baghdad” of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who “had received medical treatment in Iraq for wounds supposedly suffered in Afghanistan.”⁷²⁵

Nearly one week after President Bush’s address, the paper reported that an “intelligence breakthrough,” gathered through interrogations and an intercepted phone call, “made it possible for Secretary of State Colin L. Powell to [present evidence that] a well developed cell of al-Qaeda operating out of Baghdad that was responsible for the assassination of the American diplomat Laurence Foley last October.”⁷²⁶

The British press was far more skeptical. As Colin Powell was set to present his case to the United Nations, the BBC reported that a leaked British intelligence report concluded there were “no current links” between Iraq and al-Qaeda. The article noted frustration among British “intelligence sources” that their work was being politicized to support the war, stating that the intelligence report’s conclusion “flatly contradicts one of the main charges” against Saddam Hussein.⁷²⁷

The *Guardian* was even more skeptical in its coverage of the Iraq-al-Qaeda link. For an article titled, “False Trails That Lead to the Al-Qaeda ‘Links,’” the outlet interviewed a former CIA analyst who said that his “sources at the CIA...are saying the evidence [of a link between al-Qaeda and Saddam] is simply not there.” The *Guardian* claimed that his view “summarizes what many in the intelligence community on both side of the Atlantic believe,” concluding bluntly, “The evidence on al-Qaeda is very flimsy. Claims of a meeting between an Iraqi intelligence officer and Mohamed Atta, one of the 9/11 suicide bombers, are shaky at best. So too is knowledge of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an alleged associate of Osama bin Laden’s, who is said to have been in Baghdad for medical treatment.”⁷²⁸

Zarqawi Pledges Allegiance to Al-Qaeda

When Zarqawi’s Tawhid and Jihad organization pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in October 2004, the Associated Press noted that al-Qaeda and Zarqawi had been in contact for eight months, and pointed out that “[Zarqawi’s] relationship to bin Laden and the al-Qaeda leadership has long been the subject of considerable speculation.”⁷²⁹ CNN noted that the report Colin Powell presented to the UN in 2003, which asserted a link between Zarqawi, al-Qaeda, and the Iraqi regime, “had been called into question,” and that reports of Zarqawi having his leg amputated in Iraq “appeared to have been incorrect.”⁷³⁰

The Associated Press also pointed out that “terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi” and al-Qaeda had been in contact for eight months, though it similarly noted the “considerable speculation” that had long surrounded his relationship with the organization.⁷³¹

The BBC hedged its report by referencing the “speculation before now about whether Zarqawi and Bin Laden are allies or rivals,” and noted that, “Some reports claim the two men have little connection at all.” Furthermore, the same report cautioned that “bogus messages” had been posted on Islamic websites before, though it cited analysts who said that the pledge “may well be genuine.”⁷³²

Zarqawi’s Death

ISIS

In its obituary for Zarqawi, the *Guardian* called him the “self-styled leader” of ISI that Britons would “forever associate” with the 2004 kidnapping and beheading of British citizen Ken Bigley. The obituary stated that Zarqawi “played a pivotal, if curious role, in the US decision to invade Iraq,” but also highlighted much of Zarqawi’s brutality in Iraq, and mentioned his plan for igniting civil war between Iraq’s Sunnis and Shiites.⁷³³

The Associated Press focused very little of its immediate coverage on the legacy and background of Zarqawi. Instead, the network reported details of the airstrike that killed him, while noting that his death “was not likely to end the insurgency” because another “foreign-born militant was poised to take over the terror network’s operations.”⁷³⁴

For its part, the BBC called Zarqawi “Iraq’s most notorious insurgent,” but highlighted that “most information on him is restricted to what his enemies and supporters have attributed to him.” The obituary for Zarqawi also hinted that the BBC remained unsure of Zarqawi’s links to Saddam Hussein’s regime. “Intelligence reports indicated he was in Baghdad and—according to Mr. Powell—this was a sure sign that Saddam Hussein was courting al-Qaeda, which, in turn, justified an attack on Iraq.” In conclusion, the obituary surmised that, “like so much else about Zarqawi’s life, the true facts seem likely to remain shrouded in uncertainty.”⁷³⁵

Al-Qaeda in Iraq Declines

By mid 2008, the media narrative shifted to the success of the Sunni Awakening as former insurgents turned against al-Qaeda, resulting in the decline of al-Qaeda’s strength in Iraq.

The Associated Press quoted General David Petraeus, then-commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, as saying, “We do think that there is some assessment ongoing as to the continued viability of Al Qaeda’s fight in Iraq.”⁷³⁶

When Coalition forces killed AQI’s deputy leader Abu Qaswarah in October 2008, CNN reported that the Sunni Awakening Councils had “turned against al Qaeda in Iraq, helping to diminish its presence in several parts of the country.” The article concluded by quoting military officials who said that the deputy leader’s death “will significantly degrade [ISI] operations in Mosul and northern Iraq, leaving the network without a leader to oversee and coordinate its operations in the region.”⁷³⁷

Deaths of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri

When Coalition forces killed top ISI leaders Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri in April 2010, Fox News highlighted statements from Vice President Joe Biden and General Ray Odierno regarding the organization’s status. According to Biden, the deaths of the two leaders marked a “potentially devastating” blow to the network, and the raid that killed them “demonstrates the improved security, strength and capacity of Iraqi security forces.” Odierno echoed similar sentiments, commenting, “The death of these terrorists is potentially the most significant blow to Al Qaeda in Iraq since the beginning of the insurgency.”⁷³⁸

The BBC noted the same comments from both men, but cautioned that “the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2006 did little to slow the insurgency...The militants’ fortunes in Iraq are at a low ebb...and the deaths of its leaders are no doubt a factor in that, but there are many other elements involved too.”⁷³⁹

The Associated Press wrote, “Though al-Qaida has shown it is still capable of staging its hallmark coordinated suicide attacks against high-profile targets in the heart of the capital, U.S. and Iraqi military operations have diminished its power since the height of the violence several years ago.” Furthermore, the network described their deaths as “a significant boost for [Iraqi Prime Minister] al-Maliki, who has staked his reputation on being the man who can restore stability to Iraq after years of bloodshed.”⁷⁴⁰

ISI: Neutralized or Resurgent?

In June 2010, the *New York Times* carried General Odierno’s reports that ISI had “lost connection” to its central leadership, and would “face difficulties as it tried to promote new officers for its efforts to topple the Iraqi government and establish havens.” That news prompted the paper to run with the headline, “Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Neutralized, U.S.

ISIS

Says.⁷⁴¹

The *Guardian* offered a starkly different take. In an article just two months later, the outlet wrote that al-Qaeda was “attempting to make a comeback in Iraq” and “exploiting the imminent departure of US fighting troops” by recruiting former Sunni Awakening fighters who were disgruntled that they had not collected their paychecks for more than two months. One of the Awakening Council leaders was quoted saying, “Al-Qaida has made a big comeback here. This is my neighborhood and I know every single person living here. And I know where their allegiances lie now.”

At the end of 2011, the *New York Times* offered a different assessment. The paper reported in November 2011 that, as U.S. combat troops prepared to leave the country, “senior American and Iraqi officials are expressing growing concern...[that ISI] is poised for a deadly resurgence.” The paper attributed ISI’s rebound to a change in tactics, allowing it to “exploit gaps left by the departing American troops....”⁷⁴²

By 2012, the Associated Press reported that ISI had established training camps for insurgents in western Iraq, drawing from a pool of men who either escaped or were released from Iraq’s prisons to double in size between late 2011 and late 2012. One “Shiite” government employee that the paper interviewed said that ISI “is much stronger than what the Iraqi officials are imagining...The terrorist group is able to launch big attacks and free its members from Iraqi prisons, and this indicates that al-Qaeda is stronger than our security forces.”⁷⁴³

Emerging in Syria or Regime Propaganda?

One of the problems with reporting on the Syrian civil war, especially in its early stage, was a relative dearth of media outlets actually reporting from inside the country. Journalists based in neighboring countries were still piecing together reports from accounts they were hearing from Syrian citizens on the ground and from the Syrian regime itself.

When al-Qaeda-style attacks began occurring more frequently in Syria between late 2011 and early 2012, reports from Syrian citizens and the regime tended to contradict each other entirely. When two car bombs hit the State Security Directorate in Damascus on December 23, 2011, the *New York Times* wrote that it “appeared to be the most brazen and deadly attack” against the Assad regime since the uprising began, and Syria’s deputy foreign minister Faisal Mekdad remarked, “We said it from the beginning, this is terrorism...They are killing the army and civilians.” The paper also published reactions from opposition members who accused the regime of playing a role, but state that they “offered no proof for that claim.”⁷⁴⁴

Reporting the same news, the *Guardian* gave substantially more space to the opposition’s claims against the government, raising their accusations in the second paragraph of the article. The *Guardian* highlighted the fact that the bombs detonated “shortly after the arrival of Arab League observers” to Damascus, noting that it was the first large bombing in the capital since the uprising began. According to one opposition activist the paper interviewed, “The presence of the Arab League advance team of observers pushed the regime to give this story in order to scare the committee from moving around Syria.” Adding further skepticism to the regime’s position, the article noted Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem’s prediction that the Arab League observers would “come and see that [terrorist groups] are present.”⁷⁴⁵

When the next major bombing struck on January 6, the *New York Times* seemed torn between which narrative to believe. The paper flatly noted that “Evidence was scant for either the government’s or the opposition’s narrative, but the bombing seemed to underline each party’s version of events: a dictatorial government so cynical as to kill its own people or a religiously inspired opposition bent on sowing anarchy in an increasingly combustible country.”⁷⁴⁶

Haaretz was markedly less torn in its coverage. The Israeli newspaper opened by saying that the Syrian opposition “demanded an independent investigation” of the bombing, and then quoted “eyewitnesses” in the neighborhood who reported that “tens of ambulances were in the area approximately three hours prior” and “added that state-run news crews began their on-site coverage of the attack almost immediately after it occurred.” Meanwhile, the report gave almost no space to the government’s side of the story.⁷⁴⁷

However, as bombings continued to strike Damascus and Aleppo, the media quickly turned their attention to al-Qaeda’s

ISIS

affiliates in the region. When car bombs hit security buildings in Aleppo in February 2012, the *New York Times* conceded that, while the perpetrators were still unknown, “it seemed Syria was facing the kind of violence it had long been accused of supporting in neighboring Iraq and Lebanon.” The report went as far as to say that the attacks “suggest that now foreign fighters may indeed be jumping into the conflict...”⁷⁴⁸

The day after the bombings, McClatchy cited unnamed U.S. officials who pinned responsibility on al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The report stated flatly that ISI “carried out two recent bombings” in Damascus, though noted it “likely was behind suicide bombings Friday that killed at least 28 people in the largest city, Aleppo...” According to one of the officials, the bombings in Aleppo were “[al-Qaeda leader] Zawahiri basically taking the shackles off.”⁷⁴⁹

ISI Merges with Nusra Front, Forming ISIS

When the Islamic State of Iraq merged with the Nusra Front to form the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) in April 2013, the *New York Times* reported that the union “appeared to strengthen the role of Islamic militants in the Syrian insurgency and further complicate Western assistance efforts.” But it also highlighted pushback from the secular Free Syrian Army (FSA) in response to ISIS’s leader telling Syrians to not “make democracy a price for those thousands among you who have been killed.” An FSA spokesman retorted that, “No one has the right to impose any form of state on Syrians. Syrians will go to the polls to choose their leaders and form their own state.”⁷⁵⁰

The *Financial Times* also reported that the merger would increase the power of “radical Islamist factions” and also “dismay western backers of the rebellion...”⁷⁵¹ London’s *Daily Telegraph* noted that the U.S. designation of the Nusra Front in December 2012 showed “the ambiguous attitude of the West to the revolution in Syria.” The *Telegraph* also claimed that the major dilemma for Western policy was embodied by Eric Harroun, a U.S. army veteran who fought alongside the Nusra Front in Syria before a Virginia court charged him with firing a rocket-propelled grenade while fighting with a terrorist group.⁷⁵²

Safe Haven for Foreign Fighters

During summer 2013, media outlets reported that jihadist groups had secured safe havens in Syria and posed a major terrorist threat. The *New York Times* reported that the West had lost an opportunity to influence the outcome of the conflict in Syria as more than 6,000 fighters had entered the country as a result of its “fear of militants coming to dominate the opposition...”⁷⁵³

In September, The Washington Post editorial board argued that, while U.S. members of Congress were rightfully worried that Western military action in Syria could strengthen extremists, “[T]he threat to both Syria and U.S. national interests from the jihadists” would worsen if they failed to act. As the board further noted, “...They are determined to create a safe haven for al-Qaeda in Syria...while imposing a Taliban-style fundamentalist regime.”

By October 2013, the *Washington Times* reported that “Syria has become al Qaeda’s largest safe haven, with more than 10,000 fighters” and “provides al Qaeda with a new base from which to attack Western targets.”⁷⁵⁴

Rebel Infighting

Media coverage of rebel in-fighting has centered on ISIS’s brutal attacks against the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and other local rebel brigades, which undermine rebel efforts against the Syrian regime. In July 2013, the *New York Times* reported that ISIS had shot and killed one of the FSA’s commanders and had beheaded several FSA foot soldiers. One FSA fighter told the paper that Syrians had “staged demonstrations to get freedom, not to have an emir ruling us.”⁷⁵⁵

When ISIS battled local rebel groups in Azzaz, a group of six rebel brigades reportedly “took a jab at the strict ideology of the ISIS jihadists,” telling them not “to shed the blood of Muslims and be hasty in calling them heretics and apostates.”⁷⁵⁶ After rebel brigades pushed ISIS out of its headquarters in Aleppo in January 2014, the *New York Times* highlighted opposition members “who have compared the group’s heavy-handed tactics to those of Mr. Assad’s government.” One

ISIS

activist said, “Now my neighborhood has been liberated twice. Once from the regime and the second time from ISIS.”⁷⁵⁷

Al-Qaeda Central Cuts Off ISIS

When al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri issued a statement cutting ties with ISIS in February 2014, multiple outlets interpreted the move to mean that ISIS was too extreme for its former mother organization.

CNN’s Peter Bergen wrote, “When even al Qaeda publicly rejects you because you are too brutal, it’s likely a reasonable indicator that you are.”⁷⁵⁸ Bergen also noted that al-Qaeda’s leadership has long been concerned about alienating Muslim populations—which became apparent when Ayman al-Zawahri asked al-Qaeda in Iraq to stop killing Shiite civilians in 2005 and when Osama Bin Laden told al-Shabab “to stop attacking in the central market” of Mogadishu.⁷⁵⁹

The *Huffington Post* explained that “[T]he blunt statement from al-Qaeda reinforced [ISIS’s] pariah status as a militant body so inflexible that it is shunned even by other hardline Islamists.”⁷⁶⁰ The article suggested that the move might isolate ISIS and boost the credibility of the Nusra Front, which “has gained a reputation as a pragmatic group” despite its “hardline Islamist doctrine.”⁷⁶¹

The *Daily Telegraph* continued with the same conclusion that al-Qaeda disavowed the group because it was “too extreme even for the organization founded by Osama bin Laden.”⁷⁶² Like the *Huffington Post*, it also claimed that the Nusra Front “has grown in popularity in Syria” because it has a smaller contingent of foreigners in its ranks, and “has used a more pragmatic, less dictatorial approach to imposing hardline Islamic law on the country.”⁷⁶³

Taking over Mosul

Taking over Mosul

When ISIS fighters took control over Mosul on June 10, 2014, the *New York Times* reported that the Iraqi Army “apparently crumbled in the face of the militant assault, as soldiers dropped their weapons, shed their uniforms for civilian clothes and blended in with the fleeing masses. The story painted a picture of utter terror and submission, as one soldier told the paper, “They took control of everything, and they are everywhere.”

According to Al Jazeera, “Not since Osama bin Laden has a leader been held in such reverence among Sunni fighters, scored such stunning and shocking victories, and threatened so much of the established order.” The report almost seemed to praise al-Baghdadi’s rise from modest means to emir of ISIS, writing that, “Baghdadi has literally fought his way from ordinary beginnings in northern Iraq to lead what is perhaps the Middle East’s most feared irregular force.”⁷⁶⁴

One week later, Al Arabiya general manager Abdulrahman al-Rashed pinned the debacle on Prime Minister al-Maliki. He wrote that, “Events once again proved that the problem lies with Nuri al-Maliki’s leadership. He is an ignorant and authoritarian prime minister who is in control of all jurisdictions...One of his current follies is that he’s attacking his rivals and provoking them to collectively act against him.”⁷⁶⁵

Meanwhile, as the U.S. moved several navy ships to the Persian Gulf, NBC News noted “heightened concerns over deepening U.S. involvement in a conflict that most Americans thought was behind them.” The network also raised several questions, including “can the assault by the Sunni militants be stopped, will the U.S. military bolster its presence in Baghdad and how will the instability in Iraq affect the rest of the Middle East.”⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁵⁶ “Al-Qaeda: Saddam ‘ala Qa’ima Al-Ightiyalat,” *Al-Riyadh*, October 11, 2002, http://www.alriyadh.com/Contents/11-10-2002/Mainpage/POLITICS_2637.php [722].

⁷⁵⁷ “Bush Yataham Al-Ra’is Al-Iraqi bi Izdira’ Al-Umam Al-Mutahida,” Al Jazeera, January 29, 2003, <http://aljazeera.net/news/pages/de0c2868-c172-46e0-ae10-96bb46f58c7d> [723].

⁷⁵⁸ Ragida Dargam, Jalal Al-Mashata, Basil Rifa’ia, Arafan Rasheed and Zaki Shahab, “Bush Yataham Baghdad bi Alaqa ma’ ‘Al-Qaeda’ wa Ya’idu Al-Amirkiyin bi Intidhar...” *Al Hayat*, January 30, 2003, http://daharchives.alhayat.com/issue_archive/Hayat%20INT/2003/1/30/000000-000000-0000-0000-724 [724].

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Rhetoric:



[780]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, April 2019](#) [780]

First video appearance since 2014:

“Our battle today is a battle of attrition with the enemy ... Jihad continues until judgment day, and God ordered us to jihad, but not to victory.”⁷⁶⁷



[781]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, August 21, 2018](#) [781]

“Oh Caliphate soldiers.... trust in God’s promise and His victory... for with hardship comes relief and a way out.”⁷⁶⁸



[782]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, August 21, 2018](#) [782]

“For the Mujahideen the scale of victory or defeat is not dependent on a city or town being stolen or subject to that who has aerial superiority, intercontinental missiles or smart bombs.”⁷⁶⁹



[783]

[Youssef Zaghba, March 15, 2016](#) [783]

During questioning by Italian authorities:

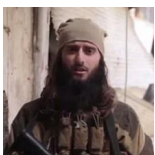
“I’m going to be a terrorist.”⁷⁷⁰



[784]

[Khuram Butt, 2015](#) [784]

“I’m ready to do whatever I need to do in the name of Allah. I am ready in the name of Allah to do what needs to be done including killing my own mother.”⁷⁷¹

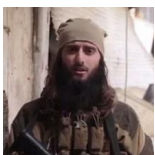


[785]

[Zulfi Hoxha, May 2017](#) [785]

In an ISIS propaganda video:

“America today is the one carrying the banner of the cross and waging war against the Muslims...It openly declares that its goal is only to wipe out the Islamic State. May they fail and lose.”⁷⁷²



[786]

[Zulfi Hoxha, May 2017](#) [786]

In an ISIS propaganda video:

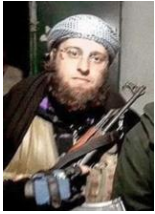
“Are you incapable of stabbing a *kaffir* [non-Muslim] with a knife, throwing him off of a building, or running him over with a car? Liberate yourself from hellfire by killing a *kaffir*.”⁷⁷³

[John Georgelas April 2016](#) [787]

In the article “Kill the Imam of Kufr in the West,” Dabiq Issue 14:

“It should then be no surprise that [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi] declared that any of the

ISIS



[787]

apostates from the sahwāt or otherwise who repent to Allah and surrender themselves to the Islamic State will be guaranteed amnesty, even if they had killed a million mujāhidīn. But those who are caught before they repent, then there is no amnesty for them and theirs shall be a painful - and fatal - punishment.”⁷⁷⁴



[788]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS Spokesman, June 23, 2015 \[788\]*](#)

Announcing a new ISIS wilayat (province, governorate) in the Caucasus: “[The Emir of ISIS, al-Baghdadi has] “accepted your bayat and has appointed the noble sheikh Abu Muhammad al Qadarī as Wali [or governor] over [the Caucasus].”⁷⁷⁵



[789]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS Spokesman, June 23, 2015 \[789\]*](#)

“[The Shiites] are advancing towards you... your war with them is undoubtedly approaching... either march forth,...drive [the Shiites] back, or remain asleep and wake up to what the people of Iraq, Sham [Syria], and Yemen awoke to of killing, imprisonment, exile, the destruction of their homes, the looting of their wealth, and the violation of their women.”⁷⁷⁶



[790]

[*ISIS propaganda video, mid-April 2015 \[790\]*](#)

“America thinks it’s safe because of the geographical location. Thus you see it invades the Muslim lands, and it thinks that the army of the Jihad won’t reach in their lands. But the dream of the American to have safety became a mirage. Today there is no safety for any American on the globe. The mujahideen before although they had less resources, attacked New York and bombed the Twin Towers in September Eleven attacks. That blessed incursion was a fatal blow ... by Allah’s willing the fear will spread among them again soon ... Today, it’s time for payback ... the mujahideen are much more stronger and they have more resources. Thus they are able to burn United States again.”⁷⁷⁷



[791]

[*ISIS leaflet banning Nike products, April 2015 \[791\]*](#)

“O youth, beware of foreign words and symbols of infidels on our clothes.”⁷⁷⁸



[792]

[*Masked ISIS fighter, February 15, 2015, “A Message Signed with Blood to the Nation of the Cross,” video showing the beheading of 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians in Libya \[792\]*](#)

“O people, recently, you’ve seen us on the hills of al-Sham and Dabiq’s plain, chopping off the heads that have been carrying the cross for a long time, filled with spite against Islam and Muslims. And today, we are on the south of Rome, on the land of Islam, Libya, sending another message... Therefore, we will fight you all together, until the war lays down its burdens and Jesus, peace be upon him, will descend, breaking the cross, killing the swine, and abolishing jizya [non-Muslim tax]. And the sea you’ve hidden Sheikh Osama bin Laden’s body in, we swear to Allah we will mix it with your blood.”⁷⁷⁹

ISIS



[793]

[*Masked ISIS Fighter, January 26, 2015, in "Bombardment of Peaceful Muslims in the City of Mosul," video showing the beheading of a Kurdish soldier*](#) [793]

"This is the fate of anyone who opposes Islam. Know, oh Obama, that we will reach America. Know also that we will cut off your head in the White House and transform America into a Muslim province. And this is my message to France and its sister, Belgium. We advise you that we will come to you with car bombs and explosive charges and we will cut off your heads...

"But as for you, oh Masoud [Kurdistan President Barzani], you dog, we are going to behead you and throw you into the trash bin of history. Know that we are men who fear no one. We will institute the laws of Allah, may he be exalted and praised. This is one of your soldiers' fate, and every time you launch a missile, we will send you back the head of one of your soldiers. You are killing children and bombarding civilians, while claiming that this is forbidden in your constitution."⁷⁸⁰



[794]

[*"Our State is Victorious" ISIS music video released December 10, 2014*](#) [794]

"You [enemies of ISIS] are crying out of help and distress, where as we wish to die, with the press of a button, everything blows up, our state is victorious!"

...

"We set out to battlefield, against kuffar [nonbelievers] and murtaddin [apostates], the enemies of this noble religion, our state is victorious!"

...

"We do everyone a favor, when we drop bombs on you, your system will collapse, our state is victorious!"

...

"You believe that you have power (shows clip of Barack Obama,) weapons, and a lot of might, but we will eventually kill you, our state is victorious."

...

"Because you worship Shaytan, without sense and concept, you have no chance against our religion, our state is victorious!"⁷⁸¹



[795]

[*Disguised ISIS fighter, October 3, 2014, in "Another Message to America and its Allies" video showing beheading of British citizen Alan Henning*](#) [795]

"The blood of David Haines was on your hands David Cameron. Alan Henning will also be slaughtered but his blood is on the hands of the British parliament."

...

"Obama you have started your aerial bombardment in Sham (Syria), which keeps on striking our people, so it is only right we keep on striking the necks of your people"⁷⁸²



[796]

[*Disguised ISIS fighter, September 13, 2014, in "A Message to the Allies of America" video showing beheading of British citizen David Haines \[796\]*](#)

"Your evil alliance with America which continues to strike the Muslims of Iraq and most recently bombed the Haditha Dam will only accelerate your destruction and playing the role of the obedient lapdog Cameron will only drag you and your people into another bloody and unwinnable war."

...

"If you Cameron, persist in fighting the Islamic state, then you, like your master Obama, will have the blood of your people on your hands."⁷⁸³



[797]

[*"Eid Greetings From the Land of the Caliphate," Video released by al-Hayat Media Center, August 2, 2014 \[797\]*](#)

"I congratulate Amirul-Mu'minin Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. And congratulate ourselves on the khilafah [caliphate]. Congratulations to us on the triumphs and great victories. We ask Allah to protect you. By Allah, we love you for Allah's sake. I say to [my family], perform hijrah [migration] to these lands that are ruled by Islam. Hijrah is now obligatory upon every Muslim. It is obligatory now because we are in the shade of Islam and rule by Allah's Shari'ah."

...

"The Shari'ah of our Lord is light, by it we rise over the stars. By it we live without humiliation, a life of peace and security."⁷⁸⁴



[798]

[*Disguised ISIS fighter, August 2014, in "A Second Message to America" video showing beheading of U.S. citizen Steven Sotloff \[798\]*](#)

"I'm back, Obama, and I'm back because of your arrogant foreign policy towards the Islamic State, because of your insistence on continuing your bombings and [unclear] on Mosul Dam, despite our serious warnings. You, Obama, have but to gain from your actions but another American citizen. So just as your missiles continue to strike our people, our knife will continue to strike the necks of your people... We take this opportunity to warn those governments that enter this evil alliance of America against the Islamic State to back off and leave our people alone."⁷⁸⁵



[799]

[*Disguised ISIS fighter, August 2014, in "A Message to America" video showing beheading of U.S. citizen James Foley \[799\]*](#)

"Obama authorized military operations against the Islamic State effectively placing America upon a slippery slope towards a new war front against Muslims... This is James Wright Foley, an American citizen of your country. As a government, you have been at the forefront of aggression towards the Islamic State. You have plotted against us and gone far out of your way to find reasons to interfere in our affairs. Today, your military airforce is attacking us daily in Iraq. Your strikes have caused casualties amongst Muslims. You're no longer fighting an insurgency, we are an Islamic army and a State that has been accepted by a large number of Muslims worldwide, so effectively, any aggression towards the Islamic State is an aggression towards Muslims from all walks of life who have accepted the Islamic Caliphate as their leadership. So any attempt by you, Obama, to deny the Muslims their rights of living in safety under the Islamic Caliphate will result in

ISIS

the bloodshed of your people. [Beheads Foley] [Fighter holds Steven Joel Sotloff] The life of this American citizen, Obama, depends on your next decision."⁷⁸⁶



[800]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 2014](#) [800]

"So let the world know that we are living today in a new era. Whoever was heedless must now be alert. Whoever was sleeping must now awaken. Whoever was shocked and amazed must comprehend. The Muslims today have a loud, thundering statement, and possess heavy boots. They have a statement that will cause the world to hear and understand the meaning of terrorism, and boots that will trample the idol of nationalism, destroy the idol of democracy and uncover its deviant nature."⁷⁸⁷



[801]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 2014](#) [801]

"Indeed the Muslims were defeated after the fall of their khilāfah (caliphate). Then their state ceased to exist, so the disbelievers were able to weaken and humiliate the Muslims, dominate them in every region, plunder their wealth and resources, and rob them of their rights. They accomplished this by attacking and occupying their lands, placing their treacherous agents in power to rule the Muslims with an iron fist, and spreading dazzling and deceptive slogans such as: civilization, peace, co-existence, freedom, democracy, secularism, [B]aathism, nationalism, and patriotism, among other false slogans."⁷⁸⁸



[802]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 2014](#) [802]

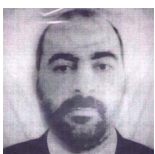
"Soon, by Allah's permission, a day will come when the Muslim will walk everywhere as a master, having honor, being revered, with his head raised high and his dignity preserved. Anyone who dares to offend him will be disciplined, and any hand that reaches out to harm him will be cut off."⁷⁸⁹



[803]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 2014](#) [803]

"And there is no deed in [Ramadan] or in any other month better than jihad in the path of Allah, so take advantage of this opportunity and walk the path of you[r] righteous predecessors. Support the religion of Allah through jihad in the path of Allah... Terrify the enemies of Allah and seek death in the places where you expect to find it, for the dunyā (worldly life) will come to an end, and the hereafter will last forever... So take up arms, take up arms, O soldiers of the Islamic State! And fight, fight!"⁷⁹⁰



[804]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 2014](#) [804]

"Therefore, rush O Muslims to your state. Yes, it is your state. Rush, because Syria is not for the Syrians, and Iraq is not for the Iraqis. The earth is Allah's... The State is a state for all Muslims. The land is for the Muslims, all the Muslims. O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing hijrah (emigration) to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because hijrah to the land of Islam is obligatory."⁷⁹¹



[805]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 5, 2014](#) [805]

"[T]ake advantage of this noble month [Ramadan,] O worshipper of Allah! Fight therein! This is the month in which the Prophet commanded armies to fight against the enemies of Allah. The month in which he would wage jihad against the polytheists... And Allah likes us to kill his enemies, and make jihad in his sake."

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“[Y]our brothers the mujahideen, indeed did Allah... give them victories and conquests... And they were firm against the enemies of Allah, and He made them powerful in the land until the declaration of the Caliphate and choice of an imam. And this is a matter obligatory upon all [M]uslims. It is [the highest level of obligation]! And it must be applied upon the earth entirely.”

“[I]f you are pleased with the promise of Allah, then make jihad in his sake! And call the believers to this, and have patience in the times of doubt. If you knew what was in the jihad, from the [air], [generous blessing], raising in rank, the honor in this life and the next, none of you would stray from the path of jihad!”

“O worshippers of Allah! Apply your religion and act upon it. And fear Allah... If you are given hardship, fear Allah! If you are bestowed with [pre-determined wealth], then fear Allah. And if you are given a life full of blessings fear Allah, and make jihad in his sake.”

“O Allah, give Islam victory over the disbelief and the disbelievers, and give victory to the mujahideen, in the East of this earth and [its] West.”⁷⁹²



[806]

[Al-Dabiq, ISIS magazine, July 2014 \[806\]](#)

“From amongst the polluted ideologies that have afflicted people the entire world over throughout the course of the tyranny carried out by the forces of kufr [unbelief], is the notion that the people can choose whether to follow the truth or embark upon falsehood. This ideology teaches that no one has the right, regardless of whom he may be, to impose any creed or set of morals on anyone else even if that creed or set of morals is the truth revealed by Allah.

“Until we return to the correct state of Islamic affairs, it’s upon us all to work together to eradicate the principle of ‘free choice,’ and to not deceive the people in an attempt to seek their pleasure... Rather, we must confront them with the fact that they’ve turned away from the religion [Islam], while we hold onto it... and that we’re completely ready to stand in the face of anyone who attempts to divert us from our commitment to making the religion of Allah triumphant over all other religions, and that we will continue to fight the people of deviation and misguidance until we die trying to make the religion triumphant.”⁷⁹³



[807]

[Al-Dabiq, ISIS magazine, July 2014 \[807\]](#)

“Many readers are probably asking about their obligations towards the [Caliphate] right now... The first priority is to perform *hijrah* [migration] from wherever you are to the Islamic State, from *dārul-kufr* [the abode of unbelief] to *dārul-Islām* [the abode of Islam]... Rush to the shade of the Islamic State with your [family]... You can be a major contributor towards the liberation of [Mecca], [Medina], and al-Quds [Jerusalem].”

“As for the massacres taking place in Gaza against the Muslim men, women, and children, then the Islamic State will do everything within its means to continue striking down every apostate who stands as an obstacle on its path towards Palestine... [ISIS’s] actions speak louder than words and it is only a matter of time and patience before it reaches Palestine to fight the barbaric [J]ews and kill those of them hiding behind the *gharqad* trees—the trees of the [J]ews.”⁷⁹⁴

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, July 2014 \[808\]](#)

“[L]isten, O ummah [community] of Islam. Listen and comprehend. Stand up and rise. For

ISIS



[808]

the time has come for you to free yourself from the shackles of weakness, and stand in the face of tyranny, against the treacherous rulers—the agents of the crusaders and the atheists, and the guards of the [J]ews. O ummah of Islam, indeed the world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present: The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy—the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the [J]ews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the [J]ews.”⁷⁹⁵



[809]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, declaring an Islamic caliphate, June 29, 2014](#) [809]

“Here the flag of the Islamic State, the flag of tawhid [monotheism] rises and flutters. Its shade covers land from Aleppo to Diyala. Beneath it, the walls of the *tawaghit* [tyrants] have been demolished, their flags have fallen, and their borders have been destroyed. Their soldiers are either killed, imprisoned, or defeated. The Muslims are honored. The kuffar [unbelievers]... are disgraced. Ahl Al-Sunna [Sunnis] are masters and are esteemed. The people of *bid’ah* [forbidden religious innovation]... are humiliated. The hudud [Koranic punishment] are implemented... Crosses and graves are demolished... Jizya [tax for non-Muslims] has been enforced... Courts have been established to resolve disputes and complaints. Evil has been removed.”⁷⁹⁶



[810]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, declaring an Islamic caliphate, June 29, 2014](#) [810]

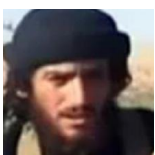
“[K]now that one of the biggest factors that brought about this victory that Allah...has blessed you with is your support of each other, the absence of disagreement, your listening to and obedience of your leaders, and your patience with them. So keep this factor in mind and preserve it. Unite with each other and do not disagree with each other. Accept each other and do not argue with each other. Be very wary of breaking the ranks... And if anyone wants to break the ranks, split his head with bullets and empty its insides, whoever he may be...”⁷⁹⁷



[811]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, declaring an Islamic caliphate, June 29, 2014](#) [811]

“By Allah, if you disbelieve in democracy, secularism, nationalism, as well as all the other garbage and ideas from the west, and rush to your religion and creed, then by Allah, you will own the earth, and the east and west will submit to you. This is the promise of Allah to you.”⁷⁹⁸



[812]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, declaring an Islamic caliphate, June 29, 2014](#) [812]

“As for you, O soldiers of the Islamic State, then congratulations to you. Congratulations on this clear victory, congratulations on this great triumph. Today the unbelievers are infuriated in such a manner after which there will be no similar infuriation. Many of them almost die from anger and sorrow... Today the hypocrites are degraded. Today the Rafidites [Shiite Muslims], Sahawat [awakening movement], and apostates are humiliated. Today the idols in the east and west are frightened. Today the nations of unbelief in the west are terrified.”“As for you, O soldiers of the Islamic State, then congratulations to you. Congratulations on this clear victory, congratulations on this

ISIS

great triumph. Today the unbelievers are infuriated in such a manner after which there will be no similar infuriation. Many of them almost die from anger and sorrow... Today the hypocrites are degraded. Today the Rafidites [Shiite Muslims], Sahawat [awakening movement], and apostates are humiliated. Today the idols in the east and west are frightened. Today the nations of unbelief in the west are terrified.”⁷⁹⁹



[813]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, declaring an Islamic caliphate, June 29, 2014*](#) [813]

“The time has come for those generations that were drowning in oceans of disgrace, being nursed on the milk of humiliation, and being ruled by the vilest of all people, after their long slumber in the darkness of neglect—the time has come for them to rise. The time has come for the ummah [community] of Muhammad...to wake up from its sleep, remove the garments of dishonor, and shake off the dust of humiliation and disgrace, for the era of lamenting and moaning has gone, and the dawn of honor has emerged anew. The sun of jihad has risen. The glad tidings of good are shining. Triumph looms on the horizon. The signs of victory have appeared.”

...

“We spilled rivers of our blood to water the seeds of the caliphate, laid its foundation with our skulls, and built its tower over our corpses. We were patient for years in the face of being killed, imprisoned, having our bones broken and our limbs severed... we took it forcibly at the point of a blade. We brought it back conquered and compelled. We established it in defiance of many. And the people’s necks were violently struck, with bombings, explosions, and destruction...Our caliphate has indeed returned with certainty.”⁸⁰⁰



[814]

[*ISIS statement, following the seizure of Mosul, June 11, 2014*](#) [814]

“Following the recent victories that Allah granted ISIS, and the arrival of additional manpower, funds, weapons and military vehicles of all kinds, your brothers in the Baghdad province—may Allah liberate it—in coordination with other [ISIS] provinces, announce the initiation of a new campaign that we have called ‘the March.’ The heroes of battle and raging lions already carried out the first surge of this campaign when two knights of Islam set out to demolish two strongholds of the Rafidi [Shiite] government and its lackeys from the [Shi’ite] militias...We say to the Safavid [Iranian-controlled] government and its parties, militias and security apparatuses: be aware that tragedies will befall you in the coming days, Allah willing...”⁸⁰¹



[815]

[*Disguised ISIS city charter for Mosul, June 2014*](#) [815]

“To those of you who ask, who are you? The answer: We are the soldiers of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria . . . who took it upon ourselves to bring back the glory of the Islamic Caliphate and turn back injustice and indignity.”

...

“Whoever hated us yesterday is safe, unless he rejects, fights or abandons Islam... [Those who oppose their new rulers will be] “killed, crucified or have their hands and feet cut off.”⁸⁰²

ISIS



[816]

[*ISIS statement, following the seizure of Mosul, June 11, 2014*](#) [816]

“Following the recent victories that Allah granted ISIS, and the arrival of additional manpower, funds, weapons and military vehicles of all kinds, your brothers in the Baghdad province—may Allah liberate it—in coordination with other [ISIS] provinces, announce the initiation of a new campaign that we have called ‘the March.’ The heroes of battle and raging lions already carried out the first surge of this campaign when two knights of Islam set out to demolish two strongholds of the Rafidi [Shiite] government and its lackeys from the [Shiite] militias...We say to the Safavid [Iranian-controlled] government and its parties, militias and security apparatuses: be aware that tragedies will befall you in the coming days, Allah willing...”⁸⁰³



[817]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, June 11, 2014*](#) [817]

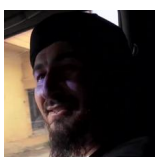
“Proceed with your jihad... Proceed to meet your Lord... Show no softness towards your enemies, although Allah has consigned them to you. Continue your forward march, since the true battle hasn't yet begun... It will rage in Baghdad and Karbala, so put on your [explosive] belts, and get ready, get ready. Do not relinquish [even] an inch [of the lands] you have liberated. The Rawafid [Shiite Muslims] shall not set foot in those areas again, unless it will be over your [dead] bodies... March towards the Baghdad [of Abbasid Caliph Haroun] Al-Rashid, the Baghdad of the Caliphate, since we still have a score to settle there. Wake [its people] in the morning by [storming] its walls, do not let them catch their breath, and be confident of victory from Allah. The Rawafid are a defeated nation, God forbid that He should grant them victory over you. They are polytheists, worshippers of animals and people.”⁸⁰⁴



[818]

[*Abu Moussa, ISIS press officer, June 2014*](#) [818]

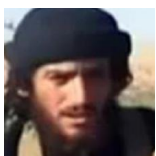
“I say to America that the Islamic State has been established. And we will not stop. Don't be cowards and attack us with drones. Instead send your soldiers, the ones we humiliated in Iraq. We will humiliate them everywhere, God willing, and we will raise the flag of Allah in the White House.”⁸⁰⁵



[819]

[*Abu Obida, ISIS Hisbah Patrol leader, June 2014*](#) [819]

“We told him: ‘This is your wife. She shouldn't be on display. Is she a product? Is she your wife, or are you sharing her with people? It doesn't make sense to share her with people. Aren't you a Muslim? God ordered women to wear a veil, we didn't invent that. So, we advise in a nice way, but those who don't obey will be forced.’”⁸⁰⁶



[820]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, April 2014*](#) [820]

“And whoever is thinking of entering into a war with us then he should consider this 1,000 times. O [Sunni Muslims] in Mesopotamia (Iraq), verily the battle today has become evidently clear, it is a battle between Truth and falsehood, between disbelief and belief, between polytheism and monotheism, a battle between all of the Rawāfiḍ and all [Sunni Muslims], and it will not end except with the supremacy of one of the two groups. So select which of the ranks you shall be among—and may Allah forbid—the people of polytheism be victorious over the people of monotheism.

“It is time that you O Sunnah of Iraq to know the way of honour and authority, the way of prosperity, security and happiness. It is time that you know there are no rights without Jihad, no justice without Jihad, no honour without Jihad, no security without Jihad, no

hope without Jihad, no life without Jihad.

“The caravan is moving, and the barking of the dogs does not harm it, and no fitnah shall harm its soldiers ever again after today inshā'Allāh... Victory is in this path and you are firmer than the mountains. It does not violently shake you nor violently move you. A glad tiding to you for you have been patient and have gained [sic]. Inshā'Allāh the conquests of 'Umar have began, if one of you were to travel today for hundreds of miles he would see only the flag of Tawhīd, flying high and waving. No rule beneath it except that of Allah, and no Religion except Allah's. The hypocrites are humiliated, despised and retreating, the Monotheists are honoured, victorious and conquering. So all praise is to Allah who kept us alive to realise this victory and this blessing, and it matters not to us if after today we should be killed or wiped out. It is sufficient for us that we meet Allah, to whom belongs might and majesty, with the courts that we have established and by these limits that we have set, and by this Shari'ah that we have implemented, in spite of USA hating it and the Jews hating it, in spite the Ṭawāghīt hating it, at the head of whom there is Āl Sa'ūd.”

“So O soldiers of the State, know that today you have entered into a new phase of the phases of struggle, for you have returned to the cities, and controlled the grounds, and let one of you be killed a thousand times before they think of going back. The cities and provinces that are under your control, on top of them Fallūjah, will not be ruled today, by the Will of Allah, except by the Law of Allah, and there will be no place in it for the secularists. Verily Fallūjah is Fallūjah of the Mujāhidīn, and Anbār is Anbār of the Mujāhidīn, and Nineveh, Kirkūk and Ṣalāḥuddīn are of the Muwaḥḥidīn (Monotheists), and Diyālah and Baghdād and its North and its South are of Ahlus-Sunnah. And verily, Baṣrah is our Baṣrah, for there is no place in it for the filthy Rafīdah.”

“O Soldiers of the State, remember always that you are fighting a forsaken people, if they seek help it is by 'Alī, and if they ask for aid it is by Al-Ḥusayn, and if they were to seek refuge it is by Al-'Abbās, and if they were to seek support it is by Fāṭimah, may Allah be pleased with them and her. They depend on humans and worship idols. Perfect is Allah, for he will never grant them victory over you, so let your weapons/tools be your 'Aqīdah, and your strength be your piety, and be certain of the victory of Allah, for verily you are the soldiers of Allah, fighting in the Path of Allah, and the Rāfiḍah are the soldiers of Shayṭān and they fight in the path of the Ṭāghūt. So fight the allies of Shayṭān, for indeed, the plot of Shayṭān has ever been weak, and so that Allah may grant you their shoulders, and so that by the Will of Allah you may break their strength, and so that you, by the will of Allah, eradicate their roots, and so that Allah will fill their hearts with fear and their feet with defeat, and make their weapons and equipment booty for you. So wait for them at every place of ambush and enter upon them from every gate, and slaughter them like how you slaughter sheep, and kill them like how you kill flies. For if they are supported by USA and reinforced by Iran, then know that your protector is The King The One Who Recompenses; Excellent is He the Protector, and Excellent is He the Helper.”⁸⁰⁷



[821]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, April 2014 \[821\]*](#)

“And to the secularists, the cowards of the tyrants, from the sons of our kin we say: We have promised to return to the areas that we withdrew from and more, and here we are returning to more, and today by the favour of Allah we are stronger than yesterday, and our enemy is by the grace of Allah in a state of weakness and collapse. Verily today you see the lions of the Islamic State from the Muhājirīn (emigrants) and Anṣār (supporters) and you see their sturdiness and strength. Yesterday these people were living in the desert seared by scorching heat. Its sands hurt them, they endured in it loneliness, alienation and suffering, and now here they are today wandering through the streets and

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squares of the cities happily socialising. They are being entertained in the rural fields and in their orchards shaded and pleased. So do not think that they shall leave this their day and they shall return to their previous day. So no place remains for you O secularists, it would be better for you to flee, for verily the Islamic State shall remain with the permission of Allah, steadfast by the Power of Allah, victorious inshā'Allāh."⁸⁰⁸



[822]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, April 2014*](#) [822]

“O Ahlus-Sunnah in Iraq, if your politicians approve of the humiliation, belittling and submission to the Rāfiḍah [Shiite Muslims], then we are not to approve of it and we are to keep steady in observation upon your enemies, whether you were to support us or forsake us. O Ahlus-Sunnah in Iraq, you have seen our military might and our strength, be aware that this strength and this weapon and military might are but munitions for you. For we are from you and you from us; if you were to see good from us, then it is for you, and if you were to see other than that, then advise us. We cannot see your sons be slaves for the Rafidhah, servants for them and their followers, and yet keep quiet from them.

...

“We cannot see them following the path of Jahannam (Hellfire) and let them be. We want nothing for you but pride and honour in this life, and salvation and happiness in the hereafter, and you will see nothing from us but mercy upon you and compassion towards you.”⁸⁰⁹



[823]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, April 2014*](#) [823]

“So O lions in Anbār, Nineveh, Ṣalāhuddīn, Kirkūk, Diyālī, Baḡhdād and the south, continue to expand and to redefine the maps. For verily today you complete the hope of the oppressed in all lands, and verily the prisoners await you in Baḡhdād, in Rūmiyyah (Lebanon), in Aleppo, in Al-Ḥā'ir (Saudi Arabia) and in Abū Za'abal (Egypt). And verily you have an appointment in Baḡhdād, in Damascus, in Al-Quds (Jerusalem), in Makkah and in Madīnah. Verily you have an appointment in Dābiq, in Al-Ghūṭah, and in Ar-Rūm inshā'Allāh. So let the entire world know that the era of humiliation and subservience has gone, never to return. Verily the rule of the world will be for none but the Muslims, by the edge of the sword.”⁸¹⁰



[824]

[*Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, April 2014*](#) [824]

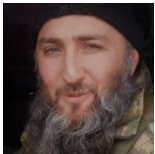
“Yes, verily the plot of Shayṭān is weak. America came to Iraq leading a frenzied crusade, in its sleeve a new map of what they call the ‘Middle East.’ It came with all its forcefulness and all of its iron (weaponry), with all of its pride and all of its arrogance. It gathered all of its allies and mobilised all of its aircraft and its fleets, and it brought its horses and its soldiers. The Crusaders thought that no one would be able to overcome them; however Allah the Mighty and Majestic disgraced them and showed us the weakness of their plot. The flame of Jihad was stoked, the Crusade campaign was broken and the Islamic State was established in spite of the villains, and America was expelled (from Iraq) disgraced and driven away, dragging their tails between their legs, defeated and broken, leaving in its wake a map of the Islamic State, ready to redraw the world upon the Prophetic manhaj (way) methodology of the [caliphate]. So verily, the [Islamic] State, with the favour of Allah alone, becomes stronger day after day. Its authority has not ceased since it was founded, by the favour of Allah, and its conquests shall not cease, with the permission of Allah, until the cross is smashed, the swine is killed and the Jizyah (tax for people of the book) is imposed, and there will be no fitnah (tribulation) on Earth

ISIS

and the Rule shall be for Allah alone completely.

“And so [Sunni Muslims] in Iraq, verily you should know the truth, and it is that there is no coexistence or peace with the Rawāfiḍ (Shiite Muslims.) You have seen the truth of this matter in the squares of Hawijah, in the mosques of Ba‘qūbah, in the market places of Mosul and

Samarrā', in the villages of Laṭfiyyah, in the neighbourhoods of Buhriz, Ramādī and Fallūjah, and what follows is more disastrous and more bitter. It is time that you be aware [sic] that the polytheist Rāfiḍah are the most evil to tread upon this earth, more evil than the Jews and the Crusaders. It is time that you disbelieve in democracy which will not bring better than what it has brought upon you in the past lean years. It will bring nothing upon you but shame and disgrace. It is time for you to know that democracy is nothing but a tool and method by which the Ṭawāghīt (tyrants) are empowered and by which they wage war upon the Religion of Allah. It is time that you reject your treacherous politicians, who have only been working for their own personal and private benefits, the ones who through voting for them, you gained nothing but humiliation, degradation and oppression.”⁸¹¹



[825]

[*Abu Jihad Shishani, senior ISIS military commander in Syria, February 2014*](#) [825]

“Therefore, brothers, let each of you remember Judgement Day, on which each of you will be asked about your actions, what you did and whether his brothers were killed before your eyes. What did he do to establish the Caliphate?... Brothers, we have never been so close to our goal of establishing the Caliphate, as we are now. The infidels understood that even faster than some Muslims, so everyone attacked us together. We need to stand. And if you do not support us in this battle, you will be judged for that on the Day of Judgement!”⁸¹²



[826]

[*Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, January 2014*](#) [826]

“This is a message to America. Beware you protector of the ‘Cross’ that the war by delegation won’t help you in Sha[m], as it didn’t in Iraq, and soon you will be in full confrontation, forced by the Will of Allah, and that the sons of Islam have prepared themselves for that day.”⁸¹³



[827]

[*Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, January 2014*](#) [827]

“We say to whoever has been involved in fights against the [Islamic S]tate from the battalions, reconsider, and repent to your Lord... Here the [Islamic S]tate is extending an arm to you to stop fighting it and it would stop fighting you, let’s be free to fight the Nusairies and Rafedha... The Nusairies are shedding your blood, attacking your honour, destroying your homes under the claim of fighting terrorism to protect you from Jews and Crusaders, collaborating against Islam and fixing up traps for the Mujahedeen and fighting them, [pretending] to cry for you while trading in your blood and cause...

...

“This is a message to America. Beware you protector of the ‘Cross’ that the war by delegation won’t help you in Sha[m], as it didn’t in Iraq, and soon you will be in full confrontation, forced by the Will of Allah, and that the sons of Islam have prepared themselves for that day.”⁸¹⁴

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[828]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, January 2014 \[828\]](#)

“And you sons of the state in Iraq... Be the spear head in fighting the Safawites, and be in the front rows, stand up against this Rafidi [those who reject Islamic authority] war, and advance towards Baghdad and the south, burn the Rafida in their backyard...”⁸¹⁵



[829]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, January 2014 \[829\]](#)

“So may Allah be with you O people of Sham, and congratulations to you if you have patience, the Lord has taken it upon Himself to care for you, but as for us we can only say to you: Blood O blood, and destruction O destruction.”

...

“And you sons of the state in Iraq... Be the spear head in fighting the Safawites [Shiites], and be in the front rows, stand up against this Rafidi [Shiite] war, and advance towards Baghdad and the south, burn the Rafida in their backyard...”⁸¹⁶



[830]

[Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, ISIS leader, April 2013 \[830\]](#)

“As for you our people in beloved Al-Sham... since you have experienced dictatorship and injustice for long years so beware from replacing these years of injustice by the injustice of democracy and the people of Iraq have preceded to it and it [has] been implemented in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya so look at their condition and what [has] become of them and beware that you be stung from the hole which the Muslims in those countries have been stung...do not make democracy the cost for the thousands who were killed from you, do not make democracy the cost for the carnage that are under the ruins of the homes that were demolished over the women, children and elderly...beware O’ people of Al-Sham from corruption, and from corruption is to be ruled by man-made laws after all these sacrifices...”⁸¹⁷



[831]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, ISIS spokesman, August 15, 2011 \[831\]](#)

“Do not worry, the days of Zarqawi are going to return soon...We have men who have divorced themselves from life and love death more than you love life, and killing is one of their wishes.”⁸¹⁸



[832]

[Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Leader and Founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, September 11, 2004 \[832\]](#)

“My nation, the nation of the sword and the pen, why is it that your sword is now broken and your pen has been laid down? You used to be prouder than the stars, and you have now become downtrodden under the feet of the invaders and under the hooves of the usurpers' horses. My dear nation - my words to you today are laden with sorrow. Don't you hear the serpents' hissing as they wind their way in the darkness of your apathy in order to assassinate your dawn? ... Let me tell you about our state of affairs, for we are at a turning point, so that you may understand the right course and combine forces, lest we regret, and this is no time for regrets. Both those who are far away and those who are near acknowledge the truth of the tri-partite Satanic coalition of heresy and deceit in the land of the two rivers. The first are the Americans who carry the banner of the cross; the second are the Kurds through their *pashmerga* forces... which are reinforced by Jewish military cadres; the third are the Shi'ites, the Sunnis' enemies...”

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"[The mujahideen] are the ones who made the international coalition drink the draught of humiliation, and they have struck them blows that will not quickly be forgotten, and they have taught them lessons which are still seared on their skin, and they are still convulsing from the pains of these lessons - lessons which lowered their flags to half-mast and shook their feet and confused their thoughts until fright wormed its way into their joints, and the worm of despair bored into their bones. It could not be otherwise, for our heroes massacred them, to the point where they saw the cowardice of the American soldier."

"O young Islamic man in Iraq and in all Muslim countries, you who are perplexed and seeking life, you who yearn to come to the aid of the religion of Allah, you who offer your life to your Lord, here is guidance to the right path, here is wisdom and probity, here is the ecstasy of self-sacrifice and the pleasure of *Jihad*..."

"As for you, fighters who came from afar, by Allah, missions of *da'wa* [the propagation of Islam] have never been a road lined with roses and sweet basil; the price of *da'wa* missions is heavy, and the price of bringing principles to the land of reality is a lot of torn limbs and blood. The light of dawn shall not be lit in this darkness save by *Jihad* fighters and *shahids* (martyrs)."⁸¹⁹



[833]

[Al-Dabiq, ISIS magazine, Issue 3, date unknown \[833\]](#)

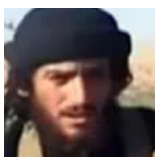
"May Allah grant success to the lions of the Islamic State and continue to disgrace and humiliate the lthy Radah and their allies."⁸²⁰



[834]

[Al-Dabiq, ISIS Magazine, date unknown \[834\]](#)

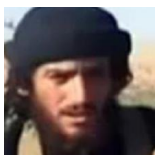
"[Obama's] decisions also expose the hypocritical politics of America that only serve the interests of their Jewish ally, Israel, and their own capitalist gluttony. So while genocide is committed by the Maliki, Asadi, and Israeli forces against the Muslims via systematic massacres, chemical warfare, rape, and starvation by siege, Obama watches with euphoria."⁸²¹



[835]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, September 22, 2014 \[835\]](#)

"O Americans, and O Europeans, the Islamic State did not initiate a war against you, as your governments and media try to make you believe. It is you who started the transgression against us, and thus you deserve blame and you will pay a great price. You will pay the price when your economies collapse. You will pay the price when your sons are sent to wage war against us and they return to you as disabled amputees, or inside coffins, or mentally ill. You will pay the price as you are afraid of travelling to any land. Rather you will pay the price as you walk on your streets, turning right and left, fearing the Muslims. You will not feel secure even in your bedrooms. You will pay the price when this crusade of yours collapses, and thereafter we will strike you in your homeland, and you will never be able to harm anyone afterwards. You will pay the price, and we have prepared for you what will pain you." (A speech titled "Indeed Your Lord is Ever Watchful")⁸²²



[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, September 22, 2014 \[836\]](#)

"Let us not forget before ending to praise our mujahidin brothers in the bold Sinai Peninsula, for hope has emerged in Egypt and good news has loomed with their blessed operations against the guards of the jews, the soldiers of Sisi, the new Pharaoh of Egypt."

[836] Carry on upon this path, for it is the correct path, may Allah bless you. Disperse those behind them wherever you may find them. Rig the roads with explosives for them. Attack their bases. Raid their homes. Cut off their heads. Do not let them feel secure. Hunt them wherever they may be. Turn their worldly life into fear and fire. Remove their families from their homes and thereafter blowup their homes. Do not say it is a fitnah (divide amongst Muslims). Rather the fitnah is that their tribes defend them and do not disavow them." (A speech titled "Indeed Your Lord is Ever Watchful")⁸²³



[837]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, July 2014](#) [837]

"Indeed the Muslims were defeated after the fall of their khilāfah (caliphate). Then their state ceased to exist, so the disbelievers were able to weaken and humiliate the Muslims, dominate them in every region, plunder their wealth and resources, and rob them of their rights. They accomplished this by attacking and occupying their lands, placing their treacherous agents in power to rule the Muslims with an iron fist, and spreading dazzling and deceptive slogans such as: civilization, peace, co-existence, freedom, democracy, secularism, [B]aathism, nationalism, and patriotism, among other false slogans."⁸²⁴



[838]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, July 2014](#) [838]

"The Islamic State is the one responsible for the right jihad. Becoming a caliph has conditions that are available in our leader al-Qurashi. Victory and establishing power and authority come from God, He bestows them on whomever He wills and on he who is worthy of them. And He has bestowed them on our caliph."⁸²⁵



[839]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, July 2014](#) [839]

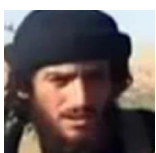
"[L]isten, O ummah [community] of Islam. Listen and comprehend. Stand up and rise. For the time has come for you to free yourself from the shackles of weakness, and stand in the face of tyranny, against the treacherous rulers—the agents of the crusaders and the atheists, and the guards of the [J]ews. O ummah of Islam, indeed the world today has been divided into two camps and two trenches, with no third camp present: The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy—the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the [J]ews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of kufr, all being led by America and Russia, and being mobilized by the [J]ews."⁸²⁶



[840]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, June 29, 2014](#) [840]

"[K]now that one of the biggest factors that brought about this victory that Allah...has blessed you with is your support of each other, the absence of disagreement, your listening to and obedience of your leaders, and your patience with them. So keep this factor in mind and preserve it. Unite with each other and do not disagree with each other. Accept each other and do not argue with each other. Be very wary of breaking the ranks... And if anyone wants to break the ranks, split his head with bullets and empty its insides, whoever he may be..." (Declaring an Islamic caliphate)⁸²⁷



[841]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, June 29, 2014](#) [841]

"By Allah, if you disbelieve in democracy, secularism, nationalism, as well as all the other garbage and ideas from the west, and rush to your religion and creed, then by Allah, you will own the earth, and the east and west will submit to you. This is the promise of Allah

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to you.” (Declaring an Islamic caliphate)⁸²⁸



[842]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, June 29, 2014 \[842\]](#)

“Here the flag of the Islamic State, the flag of tawhid [monotheism] rises and flutters. Its shade covers land from Aleppo to Diyala. Beneath it, the walls of the *tawaghit* [tyrants] have been demolished, their flags have fallen, and their borders have been destroyed. Their soldiers are either killed, imprisoned, or defeated. The Muslims are honored. The kuffar [unbelievers]... are disgraced. Ahl Al-Sunna [Sunnis] are masters and are esteemed. The people of *bid’ah* [forbidden religious innovation]... are humiliated. The hudud [Koranic punishment] are implemented... Crosses and graves are demolished... Jizya [the poll tax levied on non-Muslims living in Muslim lands] has been enforced... Courts have been established to resolve disputes and complaints. Evil has been removed.”

(Declaring an Islamic caliphate)⁸²⁹



[843]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, April 2014 \[843\]](#)

“America came to Iraq leading a frenzied crusade, in its sleeve a new map of what they call the ‘Middle East.’ It came with all its forcefulness and all of its iron (weaponry), with all of its pride and all of its arrogance. It gathered all of its allies and mobilised all of its aircraft and its fleets, and it brought its horses and its soldiers. The Crusaders thought that no one would be able to overcome them; however Allah the Mighty and Majestic disgraced them and showed us the weakness of their plot.”⁸³⁰



[844]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, April 2014 \[844\]](#)

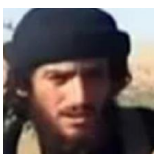
“...It is time that you disbelieve in democracy which will not bring better than what it has brought upon you in the past lean years. It will bring nothing upon you but shame and disgrace. It is time for you to know that democracy is nothing but a tool and method by which the *Ṭawāghīt* (tyrants) are empowered and by which they wage war upon the Religion of Allah. It is time that you reject your treacherous politicians, who have only been working for their own personal and private benefits, the ones who through voting for them, you gained nothing but humiliation, degradation and oppression.”⁸³¹



[845]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, April 2014 \[845\]](#)

“The flame of Jihad was stoked, the Crusade campaign was broken and the Islamic State was established in spite of the villains, and America was expelled (from Iraq) disgraced and driven away, dragging their tails between their legs, defeated and broken, leaving in its wake a map of the Islamic State, ready to redraw the world upon the Prophetic manhaj (way) methodology of the [caliphate]. So verily, the [Islamic] State, with the favour of Allah alone, becomes stronger day after day. Its authority has not ceased since it was founded, by the favour of Allah, and its conquests shall not cease, with the permission of Allah, until the cross is smashed, the swine is killed and the Jizyah (tax for people of the book) is imposed, and there will be no fitnah (tribulation) on Earth and the Rule shall be for Allah alone completely.”⁸³²



[846]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, April 2014 \[846\]](#)

“And so [Sunni Muslims] in Iraq, verily you should know the truth, and it is that there is no coexistence or peace with the Rawāfiḍ. You have seen the truth of this matter in the squares of Hawijah, in the mosques of Ba‘qūbah, in the market places of Mosul and

Samarrā', in the villages of Laṭfiyyah, in the neighbourhoods of Buhriz, Ramādī and Fallūjah, and what follows is more disastrous and more bitter. It is time that you be aware that the polytheist Rāfiḍah are the most evil to tread upon this earth, more evil than the Jews and the Crusaders. It is time that you disbelieve in democracy which will not bring better than what it has brought upon you in the past lean years. It will bring nothing upon you but shame and disgrace. It is time for you to know that democracy is nothing but a tool and method by which the Ṭawāghit (tyrants) are empowered and by which they wage war upon the Religion of Allah. It is time that you reject your treacherous politicians, who have only been working for their own personal and private benefits, the ones who through voting for them, you gained nothing but humiliation, degradation and oppression."⁸³³



[847]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, January 2014](#) [847]

"This is a message to America. Beware you protector of the 'Cross' that the war by delegation won't help you in Sham, as it didn't in Iraq, and soon you will be in full confrontation, forced by the Will of Allah, and that the sons of Islam have prepared themselves for that day."⁸³⁴



[848]

[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, April 2013](#) [848]

"As for you our people in beloved Al-Sham... since you have experienced dictatorship and injustice for long years so beware from replacing these years of injustice by the injustice of democracy and the people of Iraq have preceded to it and it [has] been implemented in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya so look at their condition and what [has] become of them and beware that you be stung from the hole which the Muslims in those countries have been stung...do not make democracy the cost for the thousands who were killed from you, do not make democracy the cost for the carnage that are under the ruins of the homes that were demolished over the women, children and elderly...beware O' people of Al-Sham from corruption, and from corruption is to be ruled by man-made laws after all these sacrifices..."⁸³⁵



[849]

[Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, February 24, 2012](#) [849]

"O people of the Sunnah. Stop the black extension that is coming towards you. Cut off the head of the [Shi'ite] snake, the tail of which is amongst you. Know that the coming stage is a stage of real confrontation and war against the despicable [Shi'ites], whether you like it or not, and that the war of the Sunnis with the [Shi'ites] is not a sectarian war, like people are braying about... The war of the Sunnis with the [Shi'ites] is a religious war, a holy war of faith, a war of faith and unbelief, a war of idolatry and monotheism. There is no way out of it and there is no swerving from it. The [Shi'ites] know this well."⁸³⁶

⁷⁶⁷ Nayera Abdallah Mahmoud and Ali Abdelaty, "Islamic State airs video purporting to be leader al-Baghdadi," Reuters, April 29, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi/islamic-state-airs-video-purporting-to-be-leader-al-baghdadi-idUSKCN1S51QB> [850].

⁷⁶⁸ "Islamic State chief, in rare speech, urges followers to fight on," Reuters, August 22, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi/islamic-state-chief-in-rare-speech-urges-followers-to-fight-on-idUSKCN1L722F> [851].

⁷⁶⁹ "Islamic State chief, in rare speech, urges followers to fight on," Reuters, August 22, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-baghdadi/islamic-state-chief-in-rare-speech-urges-followers-to-fight-on-idUSKCN1L722F> [851].

⁷⁷⁰ Giulia Paravicini, "Third London attacker told Italian police: 'I'm going to be a terrorist,'" Politico, June 7, 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/article/third-london-attacker-was-known-to-uk-security-services/> [852].

⁷⁷¹ Robert Booth, "London Bridge attacker named as Khuram Butt," *Guardian* (London), June 5, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/05/london-bridge-attacker-named-as-khuram-butt> [853].

⁷⁷² Craig R. McCoy et al., "From Atlantic City High to ISIS: the path of a homegrown terrorist," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 19, 2018,

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/nation_world/american-isis-commander-atlantic-city-margate-zulfi-hoxha-2-20180119.html [854].

⁷⁷³ Craig R. McCoy et al., “From Atlantic City High to ISIS: the path of a homegrown terrorist,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 19, 2018, http://www.philly.com/philly/news/nation_world/american-isis-commander-atlantic-city-margate-zulfi-hoxha-2-20180119.html [854].

⁷⁷⁴ “Kill the Imams of Kufr in the West,” *Dabiq*, April 2016, 9, <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/the-islamic-state-22dacc84biq-magazine-1422.pdf> [855]; Graeme Wood, “The American Climbing the Ranks of ISIS,” *Atlantic*, updated January 25, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/03/the-american-leader-in-the-islamic-state/510872/> [856].

⁷⁷⁵ Thomas Joscelyn, “Islamic State spokesman calls on other factions to ‘repent,’ urges sectarian war,” *Long War Journal*, June 23, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/islamic-state-spokesman-calls-on-other-factions-to-repent.php> [857].

⁷⁷⁶ Thomas Joscelyn, “Islamic State spokesman calls on other factions to ‘repent,’ urges sectarian war,” *Long War Journal*, June 23, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/islamic-state-spokesman-calls-on-other-factions-to-repent.php> [857].

⁷⁷⁷ Chris Perez, “ISIS threatens another 9/11-style attack on social media,” *New York Post*, April 13, 2015, <http://nypost.com/2015/04/13/isis-threatens-another-911-style-attack-on-social-media/> [858].

⁷⁷⁸ “Just don’t do it: ISIS bans Nike sports brand,” *Al Arabiya News*, April 25, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/variety/2015/04/25/Just-don-t-do-it-ISIS-bans-Nike-sports-brand.html> [859].

⁷⁷⁹ “IS Releases Video Showing the Beheading of Kidnapped Egyptian Christians in Libya,” *INSITE Blog on Terrorism & Extremism*, February 15, 2015, <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/359-is-releases-video-showing-the-beheading-of-kidnapped-egyptian-christians-in-libya> [860].

⁷⁸⁰ “ISIS Beheads Kurdish Fighter, Threatens to Behead Obama, Kurdistan President Barzani, Detonate Car Bombs In France, Belgium,” *MEMRI Jihad & Terrorist Threat Monitor*, January 26, 2015, <http://www.memrijttm.org/isis-beheads-kurdish-fighter-threatens-to-behead-obama-kurdistan-president-barzani-detonate-car-bombs-in-france-belgium.html> [861].

⁷⁸¹ “al-Hayāt Media Center presents a new nashīd from The Islamic State: ‘Our State Is Victorious,’” *Jihadology*, December 10, 2014, <http://jihadology.net/2014/12/10/al-%E1%B8%A5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-nashid-from-the-islamic-state-our-state-is-victorious/> [862].

⁷⁸² Gavin Allen, “Full transcript of ISIS video claiming to show beheading of Alan Henning,” *Mirror UK*, October 3, 2014, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/full-transcript-isis-video-claiming-4375219> [863].

⁷⁸³ Steve Robson, “David Haines beheading: Full transcript of ISIS video holding David Cameron responsible for execution,” *Mirror UK*, September 14, 2014, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/david-haines-beheading-full-transcript-4256996> [864].

⁷⁸⁴ Aaron Y. Zelin, “al-Hayāt Media Center presents a new video message from The Islamic State: “‘Īd Greetings From the Land Of the Caliphate” *Jihadology*, August 2, 2014, <http://jihadology.net/2014/08/02/al-%E1%B8%A5ayat-media-center-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-id-greetings-from-the-land-of-the-caliphate/> [865].

⁷⁸⁵ “IS Behead Steven Joel Sotloff, Threatens to Execute Briton David Cawthorne Haines | Jihadist News,” *SITE Monitoring Group*, last modified September 2, 2014, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/jihadist-News/is-behead-steven-joel-sotloff-threatens-to-execute-briton-david-cawthorne-haines.html> [866].

⁷⁸⁶ “IS Beheads Captured American James Wright Foley, Threatens to Execute Steven Joel Sotloff | Jihadist News,” *SITE Monitoring Service*, last modified September 3, 2014, <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/jihadist-News/is-beheads-captured-american-james-foley-threatens-to-execute-another.html> [867].

⁷⁸⁷ Aaron Y. Zelin, “al-Furqān Media presents a new audio message from the Islamic State’s Abū Bakr al-Ḥussaynī al-Qurayshī al-Baghdādī: ‘Message To the Mujāhidīn and the Islamic Ummah In the Month Of Ramaḍān,’ *Jihadology*, last modified July 1, 2014, <http://jihadology.net/2014/07/01/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-abu-bakr-al-%E1%B8%A5ussayni-al-quraysh-i-al-baghdadi-message-to-the-mujahidin-and-the-islamic-ummah-in-the-month-of-rama> [868].

⁷⁸⁸ Aaron Y. Zelin, “al-Furqān Media presents a new audio message from the Islamic State’s Abū Bakr al-Ḥussaynī al-Qurayshī al-Baghdādī: ‘Message To the Mujāhidīn and the Islamic Ummah In the Month Of Ramaḍān,’ *Jihadology*, last modified July 1, 2014, <http://jihadology.net/2014/07/01/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-abu-bakr-al-%E1%B8%A5ussayni-al-quraysh-i-al-baghdadi-message-to-the-mujahidin-and-the-islamic-ummah-in-the-month-of-rama> [868].

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