

Islamic State of Iraq and Ash-Sham (ISIS)

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OVERVIEW

AS OF APRIL 2026

ISIS is a Salafi-jihadist group that has conducted or inspired thousands of terrorist attacks worldwide, killing and injuring tens of thousands of people. As of 2025, ISIS remains a global enterprise, overseeing at least 15 branches and networks in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as well as supporters worldwide. ISIS's most prominent branches and networks are detailed in separate entries on this website.

ISIS grew out of an insurgency in Iraq and Syria, where the group still operates clandestinely. In 2004, a network led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi merged with al-Qa'ida to form ISIS's predecessor group, al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI), which Zarqawi led until his death in 2006. Now-deceased amir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over the group in 2010 and expanded its reach into eastern Syria in 2011. In 2013, the group changed its name to ISIS and separated from al-Qa'ida. In 2014, ISIS declared itself a caliphate and took over vast swaths of territory in Iraq and Syria. In 2019, an international coalition retook ISIS's last overt stronghold in Syria.

Operating Areas

Worldwide, with significant presences in Iraq and Syria as well as Africa and South Asia

Members

Approximately 8,800 to 13,100 globally, including 1,500 to 3,000 in Iraq and Syria

Tactics And Targets

ISIS elements use ambushes, IED attacks, kidnappings, military-style assaults, suicide operations, and targeted killings. The group also encourages supporters worldwide to conduct operations in their own countries using readily available weapons. ISIS has deployed operatives from conflict zones to attack civilian targets in Europe, but the group's capabilities to train and deploy external operatives have been significantly degraded during the past decade. ISIS elements attack local infrastructure as well as aid workers, civilians, defense forces, and government personnel, whom the group perceives as working against ISIS or opposing its interpretation of Islamic law. When ISIS openly controlled territory in Iraq and Syria, the group used sulfur mustard munitions there.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated AQI, ISIS's predecessor group, as a foreign terrorist organization in December 2004; the designation carried over to ISIS when it formed in 2013. The Treasury Department has sanctioned several ISIS leaders following their designation as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.



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KEY LEADERS

**Abu Hafs al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi**

Appointed as ISIS's amir in August 2023

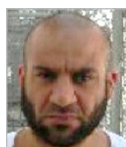
**Abu al-Husayn al-Husayni al-Qurayshi [DECEASED]**

Appointed as ISIS's amir in November 2022; was killed in northwest Syria in April 2023

**Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi [DECEASED]**

a.k.a. Sayf Baghdad

Appointed as ISIS's amir in March 2022; was killed in southern Syria in November 2022

**Amir Muhammad Said Abdal-Rahman al-Mawla [DECEASED]**

a.k.a. Hajji 'Abdallah

Succeeded al-Baghdadi as amir in October 2019; was killed in a US military raid in northwest Syria in February 2022; previously served as deputy amir

**Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri [DECEASED]**

a.k.a. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

Assumed control of the group in 2010 and declared himself caliph in 2014; was killed in a US military raid in northwest Syria in October 2019

**Abu Musab al-Zarqawi [DECEASED]**

Founder and amir of AQI from 2004 until his death in a US airstrike in Iraq in 2006



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NOTABLE ATTACKS

22 June 2025

Damascus, Syria

ISIS conducts a suicide bombing against a church, killing at least 25 people in the group's first major attack in Syria after the collapse of the Bashar al-Asad regime.

20-28 January 2022

Hasakah, Syria

ISIS launches an assault on a Syrian Democratic Forces prison holding ISIS fighters. The ensuing eight-day battle kills around 500 people, mostly ISIS members.

19 July 2021

Baghdad, Iraq

ISIS conducts a suicide bombing in a market on the eve of the Islamic holiday Eid al-Adha, killing at least 35 people and injuring more than 60 others in the group's last major attack in Baghdad.

16 January 2019

Manbij, Syria

ISIS conducts a suicide bombing outside a restaurant, killing 15 people, including four Americans, in the group's most recent attack that killed an American in Iraq or Syria.

June 2014

Mosul, Iraq

ISIS captures Mosul and announces the establishment of its self-declared caliphate. The group holds the city until July 2017.

January 2014

Fallujah, Iraq; and Raqqah, Syria

ISIS takes control of Fallujah and Raqqah and designates Raqqah as the group's capital. ISIS holds Fallujah until July 2016 and Raqqah until October 2017.

22 March 2024

Moscow, Russia

ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) operatives attack the Crocus City Hall, killing at least 137 people.

3 January 2024

Kerman, Iran

ISIS-K suicide bombers kill at least 84 people and injure 284 at the burial site of IRGC-QF Commander Qasem Soleimani.



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NOTABLE ATTACKS *(continued)*

26 August 2021

Kabul, Afghanistan

An ISIS-K suicide bomber kills 13 US military members and approximately 170 Afghan civilians at Hamid Karzai International Airport.

21 April 2019

Colombo and Batticaloa, Sri Lanka

ISIS supporters conduct six coordinated attacks on churches and hotels on Easter Sunday, killing at least 277 people, including five Americans, and injuring more than 500.

28 June 2016

Istanbul, Turkey

ISIS operatives attack Ataturk International Airport, killing 44 people and injuring more than 230.

12 June 2016

Orlando, Florida

An ISIS supporter kills 49 people and injures 53 at a nightclub. The attacker pledges allegiance to ISIS during the attack but does not communicate with ISIS members.

22 March 2016

Brussels, Belgium

ISIS operatives conduct coordinated bombings against a metro station and Zaventem International Airport, killing 32 people and injuring at least 300.

13 November 2015

Paris, France

ISIS operatives conduct coordinated suicide bombing and firearms attacks at a concert venue, several restaurants, and a soccer stadium, killing 130 people and injuring at least 350.

