

ISIS-Libya (ISIS-L)



OVERVIEW

AS OF JUNE 2026

ISIS-Libya (ISIS-L) is one of several terrorist groups that emerged after Libya's two civil wars, seeking to establish an Islamic state in Libya. The group has conducted terrorist attacks, kidnappings, and executions against a wide range of targets in North Africa. It originated in 2012 as the Battar Brigade, a group of Libyans in Syria fighting for ISIS. Brigade members, who later returned to Darnah, Libya, formed the Islamic Youth Shura Council, which became ISIS-L in 2014. The group has also sought to expand ISIS's presence into other African countries.

After losing its base in Sirte to Libyan government forces in 2016, ISIS-L retreated into the desert areas of central Libya to rebuild its forces. By 2018, ISIS-L's reconstituted strength was sufficient for the group to resume attacks in major population centers. Since then, ISIS-L has focused on terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare involving small bands of fighters operating from ungoverned spaces in Libya, attacking mostly Libyan security forces.

Operating Area

Operates in rural central and southern Libya; in recent years, the group has operated from bases in ungoverned desert areas of Libya

Members

Approximately 100 to 500 fighters

Tactics And Targets

Since 2018, ISIS-L has operated in decentralized guerilla-style desert "brigades" and networked cells. The group targets military and security forces, oil facilities, and entities and individuals associated with Libya's competing governments. ISIS-L also targets symbolic state organizations and facilities, such as Libya's electoral commission headquarters and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. ISIS-L uses small arms, rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, light and heavy machineguns, landmines, and IEDs.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US Department of State designated ISIS-L as a foreign terrorist organization on 20 May 2016.



ISIS-Libya (ISIS-L) *(continued)*

KEY LEADERS



Abdul Qadr al-Najdi [DECEASED]

a.k.a. Abu Abdullah al-Libi

Leader, November 2015–September 2020; killed by Libyan National Army



Abu Nabil [DECEASED]

a.k.a. Wissam Abedzaid Al Zubaidi

Leader, October 2014–November 2015; killed in US airstrike

NOTABLE ATTACKS

10 April 2019

Al Fuqaha, Libya

ISIS-L attacks a town in central Libya, killing the head of the town's council and a security guard.

2 May 2018

Tripoli, Libya

ISIS-L attacks the High National Election Commission office in Tripoli, killing 16 people.

February 2015

Tripoli, Libya

ISIS-L kidnaps 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians from Sirte and beheads them on a beach near Tripoli.

27 January 2015

Tripoli, Libya

ISIS-L claims responsibility for a suicide attack on a luxury hotel, killing eight civilians, including one US contractor.

