

# ISIS Fast Facts

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**(CNN)** — Here's a look at [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria \(ISIS\)](#).

### **Facts:**

Started as an al Qaeda splinter group.

Also known as [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL\)](#) and [Islamic State \(IS\)](#).

ISIS aims to create an Islamic state called a caliphate across [Iraq](#), [Syria](#) and beyond.

The group is implementing Sharia Law, rooted in eighth century Islam, to establish a society that mirrors the region's ancient past.

ISIS is known for killing dozens of people at a time and carrying out public executions, crucifixions and other acts.

[READ: ISIS goes global: 90 attacks in 21 countries have killed nearly 1,400 people](#)

ISIS uses modern tools like social media to promote reactionary politics and religious fundamentalism. [Fighters are destroying holy sites and valuable antiquities](#) even as their leaders propagate a return to the early days of Islam.

In 2014, ISIS controlled more than 34,000 square miles in Syria and Iraq, from the Mediterranean coast to south of Baghdad. At the end of 2016, ISIS territory had shrunk to [about 23,320 square miles, according to IHS Jane's](#).

In 2015, ISIS was believed to be holding [3,500 people as slaves](#), according to a [United Nations](#) report. Most of the enslaved were women and children from the Yazidi community, but some were from other ethnic and religious minority communities.

Dabiq, Syria, "is where the Prophet Mohammed is supposed to have predicted that the armies of Islam and 'Rome' would meet for the final battle that will precede the end of time and the triumph of true Islam," according to [CNN National Security Analyst Peter Bergen](#).

ISIS's [strategy for revenue](#) includes oil production and smuggling, taxes, ransoms from kidnappings, selling stolen artifacts, extortion and controlling crops.

[READ: Inside the \\$2 billion ISIS war machine](#)

Unable to serve under the new Iraq government after [Saddam Hussein's](#) military was disbanded, some [former Iraqi soldiers became ISIS fighters](#), according to Middle East expert Fawaz Gerges.

### **Leader:**

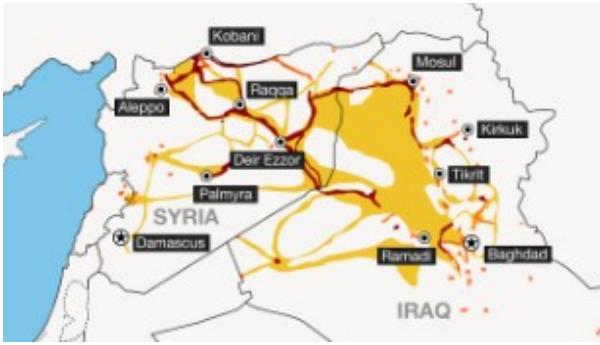
[Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#); also goes by the name [Abu Du'a](#).

Is currently based in Syria.

Al-Baghdadi was detained for several months in Camp Bucca, which was a US-run prison in southern Iraq. He was released in 2004.

After now Ibrahim, and

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### Timeline:

**2004** - Abu Musab al-Zarqawi establishes al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).

**2006** - Under al-Zarqawi, [al Qaeda in Iraq](#) tries to ignite a sectarian war against the majority Shia community.

**June 7, 2006** - Al-Zarqawi is killed in a US strike. Abu Ayyub al-Masri, also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajer, takes his place as leader of AQL.

**April 2010** - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi becomes leader of ISI after Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri are killed in a joint US-Iraqi operation.

**April 2013** - ISI declares its absorption of an al Qaeda-backed militant group in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, also known as the al-Nusra Front. Al-Baghdadi says that [his group will now be known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIS\)](#). Al-Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani rejects ISIS's attempt to merge with the group.

**January 2014** - ISIS takes control of Falluja.

**February 3, 2014** - Al Qaeda renounces ties to ISIS after months of infighting between al-Nusra Front and ISIS.

**May 2014** - [ISIS kidnaps more than 140 Kurdish schoolboys in Syria](#), forcing them to take lessons in radical Islamic theology, according to London-based monitoring group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

**June 9-10, 2014** - Monday night into Tuesday, militants seize Mosul's airport, its TV stations and the governor's office. ISIS frees up to 1,000 prisoners.

**June 10-11, 2014** - ISIS takes control of Mosul and Tikrit.

**June 20, 2014** - The United Nations announces that [more than one million Iraqis have been displaced](#).

**June 21, 2014** - ISIS takes control of Al-Qaim, a town on the border with Syria, as well as three other Iraqi towns.

**June 28, 2014** - Iraqi [Kurdistan](#) restricts border crossings into the region for refugees.

**June 29, 2014** - ISIS announces the creation of a caliphate (Islamic state) that erases all state borders, making al-Baghdadi the self-declared authority over the world's estimated 1.5 billion Muslims. The group also announces a name change to the Islamic State (IS).

**June 30, 2014** - The [United Nations](#) announces that an [estimated 1.2 million Iraqis](#) have been forced from their [homes](#).

**June 30, 2014** - The Pentagon announces the United States is sending an additional 300 troops to Iraq, bringing the total US forces in Iraq to nearly 800. Troops and military advisers are sent to Iraq to support Iraqi security forces and help protect the US Embassy and the airport in Baghdad.

**July 2014** - ISIS takes control of Syria's largest oilfield and seizes a gas field in the Homs Province, storming the facility and killing dozens of workers. [Militants conquer a 90-mile stretch of Syrian towns](#), from Deir Ezzor to the Iraq border. In Mosul, [they blow up Jonah's tomb](#), a holy site dating back to the 8th century BC.

**August 6, 2014** - [ISIS fighters attack the northern Iraqi town of Sinjar](#), home of a religious minority group called the Yezidis. [1,200 women and children](#) were rescued from the town, but [thousands of others](#) are still being held captive.

**August 8, 2014** - [Two US F/A-18 jet fighters bomb ISIS artillery units in Iraq](#). President Barack Obama has authorized "targeted airstrikes" if needed to protect US personnel from fighters with ISIS. The US military also could use airstrikes to prevent what officials warn could be a genocide of minority groups by the ISIS fighters.

**August 19, 2014** - In a video posted on YouTube, [US journalist James Foley, missing in Syria since 2012, is decapitated by ISIS militants](#). The militants then threaten the life of another captured US journalist, believed to be Steven Sotloff.

**September 2, 2014** - ISIS releases a video showing the beheading of [US journalist Steven Sotloff](#). Sotloff's apparent executioner speaks in the same British accent as the man who purportedly killed Foley.

**September 11, 2014** - The CIA announces that the number of [people fighting for ISIS](#) may be more than three times the previous estimates.

**September 13, 2014** - [ISIS militants post video on a website associated with the group, showing the apparent execution of British aid worker David Haines](#). This makes him the third Western captive to be killed by the Islamist extremist group in a single month. At the end of the video, another British captive, Alan Henning, is shown and apparently threatened.

**September 23, 2014** - [The United States carries out airstrikes against ISIS](#).

**October 3, 2014** - ISIS releases a [video showing the apparent beheading of hostage Alan Henning](#). In the same video, the group threatens the life of American aid worker Peter Kassig, also known as Abdul-Rahman Kassig.

**November 3, 2014** - The Iraqi government announces [ISIS militants have killed 322 members of the Albu Minr tribe in a recent series of executions](#).

**November 14, 2014** - [The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria concludes that ISIS has committed war crimes and crimes against humanity](#).

**November 16, 2014** - [ISIS militants claim to have beheaded American hostage Peter Kassig in a video published to the Internet](#). Peter Kassig, also known as Abdul-Rahman Kassig, is the fifth Westerner whom ISIS claims to have beheaded via video messages.

**January 17, 2015** - According to an Iraqi Kurdistan official, [ISIS has released about 250 Yazidis](#). Many are children and the elderly.

**January 20, 2015** - [ISIS demands \\$200 million from Japan](#) in exchange for the lives of two Japanese hostages, Kenji Goto and Haruna Yukawa.

**January 22, 2015** - [US diplomatic officials say that coalition airstrikes have killed an estimated 6,000 ISIS fighters to date](#), including half of the top command of the terror group. US intelligence officials estimate that ISIS still has 9,000 to 18,000 fighters and thousands of sympathizers.

**January 24, 2015** - An ISIS supporter posts an online video of [hostage Kenji Goto, holding a photo of beheaded hostage Haruna Yukawa](#). The video includes a demand for the release of terror suspect Sajida al-Rishawi, from Jordan, in exchange for Kenji Goto.

**January 31, 2015** - ISIS releases a video online showing the decapitated body of journalist [Kenji Goto](#).

**February 3, 2015** - [Video and still images posted online by ISIS supporters](#) apparently show [Jordanian military pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh](#) being burned alive while confined in a cage.

**February 5, 2015** - [Jordanian fighter jets carry out airstrikes over Syria, reportedly hitting ISIS training centers and arms and ammunition depots](#) in ISIS's de facto capital, Raqqa.

**February 11, 2015** - [A video posted online by ISIS supporters](#) shows [Jordanian military pilot Moath al-Kasasbeh](#) being burned alive while confined in a cage. There

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cousin was reportedly buried.

**June 26, 2015** - [A gunman kills at least 38 people at a beachfront Tunisian hotel](#), and a bomb kills at least 27 people at a mosque in [Kuwait](#). ISIS claims responsibility for the attacks.

**July 1, 2015** - [ISIS launches simultaneous attacks on five Egyptian military checkpoints, reportedly killing 17 Egyptian soldiers](#) and injuring 30 others. According to the Egyptian military, 100 terrorists are killed in the fighting.

**July 4, 2015** - The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports it has received a video showing [ISIS militants executing 25 captives in the Syrian city of Palmyra](#).

**July 17, 2015** - As Iraqi civilians celebrate Eid al-Fitr, a holiday marking the end of the fast for [Ramadan](#), ISIS detonates an ice truck in a crowded marketplace in Khan Bani Saad, killing at least 120 people and wounding at least 140 more.

**August 2015** - [ISIS destroys antiquities in the historic city of Palmyra](#) in Syria, including the nearly 2,000-year-old Temple of Baalshami. UNESCO, the UN's cultural organization, calls the destruction of the temple a "war crime."

**November 12, 2015** - The Pentagon announces that a [remote control drone strike targeting Islamist militant Mohammed Emwazi, also known as "Jihadi John,"](#) struck a vehicle that Emwazi was seen getting into. The strike took place in Raqqa, Syria, the de facto ISIS capital. [ISIS later confirms the death of "Jihadi John."](#)

**November 12, 2015** - [Two suicide bombs hit the Bourj al-Barajneh district of southern Beirut](#), killing over 40 people and wounding hundreds. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack stating that the attackers had arrived in Lebanon from Syria two days before.

**November 13, 2015** - After a two-day battle, [the Peshmerga Iraqi Kurdish military force declares victory in liberating the Iraqi town of Sinjar from ISIS](#). The battle was backed by the US coalition air power.

**November 13, 2015** - Three teams of gun-wielding [ISIS suicide bombers hit six locations around Paris](#), killing at least 129 people and wounding hundreds.

**December 10, 2015** - A spokesman for the US-led coalition confirms that [ISIS Finance Minister Abu Saleh was killed in an airstrike](#) in late November in Iraq.

**December 28, 2015** - [Iraqi troops retake the city of Ramadi](#) from ISIS and raise the Iraqi flag on top of the government compound in the city's center, according to an Iraqi military spokesman.

**January 24, 2016** - [ISIS releases a video](#) that purports to show final messages from the [Paris attackers](#).

**February 21, 2016** - Multiple [attacks in Homs and southern Damascus kill at least 122](#) and injure scores, according to Syria's state-run SANA news agency. ISIS claims responsibility for the attacks.

**March 22, 2016** - [Attacks on the airport and a subway station in Brussels, Belgium](#) kill more than 30 people and wound about 270 more. ISIS claims its "fighters" launched the attacks.

**March 25, 2016** - [The Pentagon confirms that US military forces have killed ISIS' finance minister, Abd al-Rahman Mustafa al-Qaduli, whom many analysts consider the group's No. 2 leader.](#) While Defense Secretary Ash Carter would not give details on the operation, another US official told CNN that special operations forces intended to capture al-Qaduli alive, but the plan was modified at the last moment.

**June 26, 2016** - [A senior Iraqi general announces on state TV that the battle for Falluja is over](#), as Iraqi troops retook the final ISIS holdout in the city.

**June 28, 2016** - [At least 44 people die and more than 230 are injured](#) when three attackers armed with firearms and explosives arrive at Turkey's Istanbul Ataturk Airport in a taxi, then open fire before blowing themselves up. US official in Turkey says the attackers were from Syria's North Caucasus region.

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**July 1-2, 2016** - Attackers invade the Holey Artisan Bakery cafe in a diplomatic enclave of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. [Gunmen kill 20 hostages and two police officers before authorities raid the restaurant and end the nearly 11-hour standoff.](#) ISIS claims responsibility for the attack, but Bangladeshi officials say the attack was carried out by homegrown militants. US officials focus on ISIS as the perpetrator after photos purportedly showing the inside of the cafe and dead hostages are posted on an ISIS-affiliated website.

**July 3, 2016** - [A suicide car bomb detonates in a busy shopping district in Baghdad, killing at least 292 people and injuring another 200.](#) It is the deadliest single attack in Iraq since 2003. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack.

**August 30, 2016** - According to a statement from the terror group and its Amaq news agency, [ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani is killed](#) in the area of Aleppo, Syria. Without confirming al-Adnani's death, [the Pentagon confirms that coalition forces conducted an airstrike in al Bab, Syria, targeting him.](#)

**September 16, 2016** - Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook says a [US air strike targeted and killed Wael Adel Salman](#), aka Abu Muhammad al-Furqan, ISIS's chief spokesman, just days after killing his predecessor. Salman was the ISIS "minister of information" and responsible for overseeing the production of "terrorist propaganda videos showing torture and executions," Cook says.

**October 17, 2016** - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi makes a televised statement announcing the [start of the mission to retake the key city of Mosul](#), Iraq's second largest city and the [last remaining ISIS stronghold](#). He says a coalition of about 100,000 troops will play a role in the operation, though some will have a holding role behind the front lines or other support roles. The force includes about 54,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces, 40,000 Kurdish Peshmerga fighters, 14,000 members of paramilitary units - 9,000 Sunni fighters and 5,000 from other minorities including Christians, Turkmen and Yazidis - and approximately 500 US service members who will serve mainly in a logistical capacity. US military officials have estimated up to 5,000 ISIS fighters are in Mosul, but the terror group's supporters say there are 7,000.

**October 24, 2016** - [Suicide bomb-wielding militants attack sleeping cadets at a police training academy in Pakistan, killing 61 and injuring 117.](#) ISIS releases a claim of responsibility for the attack via its Amaq media wing, including a photo of the three purported attackers, but Maj. Gen. Sher Afgan, chief of the paramilitary Frontier Corps, tells reporters that military officials believe Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi was behind the attack.

**April 9, 2017** - [ISIS claims responsibility for two deadly bombings targeting Coptic Christian churches on Palm Sunday in Egypt.](#) At least 49 people were killed and 119 others injured in the blasts.

**April 13, 2017** - The US military drops its [most powerful non-nuclear bomb](#) on an ISIS compound in Afghanistan. An Afghan official later tells CNN that [94 militants were killed in the blast.](#)

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### Photos: The ISIS terror threat

Wounded passengers are treated following a suicide bombing at the Brussels Airport on March 22, 2016. [The attacks on the airport and a subway](#) killed 32 people and wounded more than 300. ISIS claims its "fighters" launched the attacks in the Belgian capital.

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Photos of 1970s Asia street scenes put on Instagram



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