

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Situation Regarding the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

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Introduction & Main Ideas

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, is a Salafi jihadist militant group that follows an Islamic fundamentalist, Wahhabi doctrine of Sunni Islam. The group has referred to itself as the Islamic State (IS) since it proclaimed a worldwide caliphate in June 2014 and named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as its caliph. As a caliphate, it claims religious, political, and military authority over all Muslims worldwide. As of December 2015, the group has control over vast landlocked territory in Iraq and Syria, with a population estimate ranging between 2.8 million and 8 million people and where it enforces its interpretation of sharia law. ISIL affiliates control over the small areas of Libya, Nigeria, and Afghanistan and operates in other parts of the world, including North Africa and South Asia. ISIL gained prominence, when in early 2014 it drove Iraqi government forces out of key cities in its Western Iraq offensive, followed by the capture of Mosul and the Sinjar massacre, almost causing a collapse of the Iraqi government and prompting a renewal of US military action in Iraq. In Syria, the group has conducted ground attacks on both government forces and rebel factions. The number of fighters the group commands in Iraq and Syria was estimated by the CIA at 31,000, with foreign fighters accounting for around two thirds, while ISIL leaders claim 40,000 fighters, with the majority being Iraqi and Syrian nationals. The ideology of the IS refers to Salafism, Salafi jihadism and Wahhabism. The Headquarters is in Al-Raqqah, Syria. Estimated total strength is 52,600 – 257,900 people. IS was originated as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad in 1999. The group has been designated a terrorist organization by the United Nations, the European Union and its member states, the United States, India, Indonesia, Israel, Turkey, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran and other countries. Over 60 countries are directly or indirectly waging war against ISIL.

Background information

Al-Qaeda was involved in the establishment of the ISIS. AQ firstly organized Mujahideen Shura Council with the help of international terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqwi and then several Islamic groups joined it, after that on 15th of October 2006 it was announced about the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq. The first leader was Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. On 9th of April 2013 the organization was named the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, because the militants of the ISI involved into the civil war in Syria as an independent force against Bashar al-Assad's regime. In February 2014 the General Headquarters claimed that ISIS is no more part of Al-Qaeda and they will not support it.

In 2015 former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said to the CNN that "he is sorry for "mistakes" made in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003", which is considered to be one of the main reasons of the ISIS emergence.

The main goal of ISIS is the elimination of borders established after the division of Ottoman caliphate and the creation of orthodox Sunni Islamic State at least on the territories of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt and as maximum to conquer the whole Islamic world.

Other goals can also be named:

- Destruction of Hamas
- Destruction of the State of Israel
- Destabilization of Central Asia

In Iraq and Syria, ISIL uses many of those countries' existing governorate boundaries to subdivide its claimed territory; it calls these divisions wilayah or provinces. As of June 2015, it had established official branches in Libya, Egypt (Sinai Peninsula), Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and the North Caucasus. Outside Iraq and Syria, it controls territory only in Sinai, Afghanistan, and Libya. ISIL also has members in Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Israel, but does not have any official branches in those areas. ISIL runs a soft power program in the areas under its control in Iraq and Syria, which includes social services, religious lectures, and da'wah—proselytising—to local populations. It also performs public services, such as repairing roads and maintaining the electricity and water supply. Welfare services are provided, price controls are established, and

taxes are imposed on the wealthy. On controlled territories ISIS authorities build hospitals and religious schools.

A UN report estimated a total of 15,000 fighters from over 80 countries in ISIL's ranks as of November 2014. US intelligence estimated an increase to around 20,000 foreign fighters in February 2015, including 3,400 people coming from Western countries.

According to the 2015 study by the Financial Action Task Force, ISIL's five primary sources of revenue are as followed:

- proceeds from the occupation of territory (including control of banks, oil and gas reservoirs, taxation, extortion, and robbery of economic assets)
- kidnapping for ransom
- donations from Saudi Arabia and Gulf states, often disguised as meant for "humanitarian charity"
- material support provided by foreign fighters
- fundraising through modern communication networks
- sale of antiques and artifacts
- illegal drug trade

ISIS Human rights abuse and war crime findings:

- religious and minority group persecution
- ill treatment of civilians
- child soldiers
- sexual violence and slavery
- attacks on members of press
- beheadings and mass executions
- use of chemical weapons
- destruction of cultural and religious heritage

ISIS is known for its extensive and effective use of propaganda. It uses a version of the Muslim Black Standard flag and developed an emblem, which has clear symbolic meaning in the Muslim world. In November 2006 it established the Al-Furqan Foundation for Media Production, which produces CDs, DVDs, posters, pamphlets, and web-related propaganda products and official statements. In mid 2014, ISIS established the Al-Hayat Media Center, which targets Western audiences and produces material in English, German, Russian, and French. ISIS also uses Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram for communication and recruitment. After the

November 2015 Paris attacks, the hacktivist group Anonymous tweeted that it had taken down "more than 5,500" Twitter accounts belonging to ISIL supporters.

Major countries and organisations involved

Around the world, the Islamic religious leaders have overwhelmingly condemned ISIL's ideology and actions, arguing that the group has strayed from the path of true Islam and that its actions do not reflect the religion's real teachings or virtues. The group has attracted widespread criticism internationally for its extremism, from governments and international bodies such as the United Nations and Amnesty International.

The Global Coalition to Counter the ISIS:

- Arab League
- European Union
- NATO
- Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf

Other opponents of Counter-ISIL Coalition:

- Iran
- Russia
- Azerbaijan
- Pakistan
- Al-Qaeda and several affiliates
- Taliban
- Hamas
- Kurdistan Workers' Party
- Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan
- Houthis – Shia faction in Yemen

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

In September 2015, Russian forces, at the request of the Syrian government, began hundreds of bombing raids against Syrian rebel groups, including the FSA and ISIL. In 100 days 217 settlements of civilians have been released. Many other countries also lead interventions but less successful.

Possible solutions

The development and extension of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is the biggest threat to the international peace and stability nowadays. The constant military operations in the region of Iraq and Syria have forced thousands of people to leave their homes and seek for asylum in Europe. In order to prevent further extension of the ISIS and the development of refugee crisis it is vital for the international community to take resolute steps against the Islamic State. It is also significant that all those countries willing to conduct or already conducting military operations against the ISIS should cooperate and coordinate their efforts.

Another important step is to search for and eliminate any of the ISIS media and social accounts in order to minimize the possibility of the organization to recruit new fighters. For the same purpose the condemnation of the ISIS by the Islamic religious leaders should be spread vastly around the world, and especially the Islamic world.

The UN Member States should also be alarmed by the recent terrorist attacks, and international cooperation and coordination is vital for the security level maintenance all over the world.