



1.2.5. ISIL

ISIL continued to exploit local instability, sectarian rifts and weak state control to regroup and conduct attacks. As of late 2025, the group's overall strength was estimated at 3 000 fighters across the Syrian and Iraqi region, most of them based in Syria.[217](#) Using the chaos that ensued the collapse of the Al-Assad regime, ISIL operatives moved into cities across Syria,[218](#) exploiting security vacuums to regroup and mount attacks.[219](#) As of late 2025, the group maintained sleeper cells in various urban zones including Damascus and networks encompassing all governorates.[220](#) The UN Sanctions Monitoring Team indicated that, according to Member States, ISIL had infiltrated government security forces, especially at mid-level and lower ranks, and created a special battalion for complex and high-profile attacks. The group has acquired new weaponry such as anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft systems and mortars after the fall of the Assad regime.[221](#) Attacks attributed to the group in 2025 involved IEDs, VBIEDs, ambushes and targeted killings. While Deir Ez-Zor remained ISIL's main theatre of operations,[222](#) such attacks were also reported in Raqqa,[223](#) Idlib,[224](#) Aleppo[225](#) and Palmyra city,[226](#) while the group apparently also re-emerged in the south.[227](#)

Since late November 2025, ISIL has expanded its previous focus on the SDF to target government military forces[228](#) with greater frequency.[229](#) On 21 February 2026 ISIL spokesperson Abu Hudhayfa al-Ansari declared a 'new phase of operations,'[230](#) calling for confronting the transitional government which he referred to as being 'secular'. Following this statement, the group's operations spiked temporarily.[231](#) Between mid-February and mid-May 2026, SOHR recorded that ISIL attacks in government-controlled areas killed 31 members of the government forces,[232](#) although the pace of attacks by the group has significantly decreased since late March/early April 2026.[233](#) Meanwhile, there continued to be some instances of the group targeting Shia Muslims.[234](#)

According to the UN, in 2025, the transitional government arrested at least 278 suspected ISIL members, foiled 45 planned attacks, and dismantled 23 cells, seizing weapons and explosives.[235](#) Between 8 December 2024 and January 2026, the transitional government reported that it arrested 620 ISIL members, most of whom were held in dilapidated facilities in need of renovation, and pending judicial reforms and related proceedings.[236](#) The transitional government attributed the 2025 attacks on Mar Elias church in Damascus and the Ali Bin Abi Talib Mosque in Homs to ISIL, stating that those responsible have been arrested.[237](#) Arrests of ISIL suspects continued to be reported, the authorities stating that investigations pertaining to detainees are ongoing under legal procedures before any judicial action is taken.[238](#)

There were large-scale operations by the US-led Global Coalition against ISIL,[239](#) especially in response to a 13 December 2025 deadly attack on US forces.[240](#) By mid-February 2026, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) stated that its forces had struck over 100 ISIL targets and

arrested or killed 50 ISIL fighters since December 2025.[241](#) Counter-terrorism operations were conducted jointly with the SDF and, from August 2025, with some participation of transitional government forces.[242](#)

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