

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

**(Also known as: Al-Qa'ida in Iraq; Al-Qa'ida in Iraq – Zarqawi;
Al-Qa'ida of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers;
Al-Qa'ida of Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers; Al-Tawhid;
Al-Tawhid and al-Jihad; Brigades of Tawhid; Islamic State of Iraq;
Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wa as-Shams;
Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham; Jama'at al-Tawhid wa'al-Jihad;
Kateab al-Tawhid; Mujahidin Shura Council;
Qaida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers;
Tanzeem Qa'idat al-Jihad/Bilad al Raafidaini;
Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn;
The al-Zarqawi network;
The Monotheism and Jihad Group;
The Organisation Base of Jihad/Country of the Two Rivers;
The Organisation Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia;
The Organisation of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers;
Unity and Holy Struggle; Unity and Holy War;
Unity and Jihad Group)**

This statement is based on publicly available information about the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, formerly listed as al-Qa'ida in Iraq. To the Australian Government's knowledge, this information is accurate and reliable and has been corroborated by classified information.

Basis for listing a terrorist organisation

Division 102 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* provides that for an organisation to be listed as a terrorist organisation, the Attorney-General must be satisfied on reasonable grounds that the organisation:

- (a) is directly or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, or assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur); or
- (b) advocates the doing of a terrorist act (whether or not a terrorist act has occurred or will occur).

Background to this listing

The name al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) has never been used by the group itself. It was devised by Western intelligence services to reflect the group's al-Qa'ida affiliation. The name has been adopted widely and continues to be used by many sources as the most convenient term for a group that has undergone several name changes since its inception.

The first listing of this group for proscription purposes was under the Arabic name it used, Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, in 2005. It was relisted in 2007 under the same name. Since then, the listing has appeared under the name AQI as the most commonly recognised label for the group. This statement has been prepared to support the continued listing of AQI under the Arabic name it now uses, Dawla al-Islamiya fi Iraq wa as-Shams, which means the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and which is the name in

common use in Western intelligence and open sources, especially in regards to its activities in Syria.

The use of ISIL in this statement does not represent a change in the leadership, membership or methods of the group, but reflects the expansion of its operating area to include both Iraq and Syria. Various sources will continue to use the name AQI separately or in conjunction with ISIL or other aliases, including those referred to above, but the references are to the same group that was originally proscribed in 2005.

Details of the organisation

Objectives

ISIL is an Iraq and Syria-based Sunni extremist group and al-Qa'ida affiliate that adheres to the global jihadist ideology. ISIL follows an extreme interpretation of Islam which is anti-Western, promotes sectarian violence and targets those that do not agree with its interpretations as infidels and apostates. ISIL aspires to overthrow both the Iraqi Government and the Syrian regime of President Bashar al-Assad. Concurrently, it aims to establish a Salafist-orientated Islamist state spanning Iraq, Syria and other parts of the Levant.

The group became an al-Qa'ida affiliate in October 2004 when its former leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, pledged allegiance to Usama bin Laden. In late 2011, ISIL established operations in Syria through its former subordinate organisation, Jabhat al-Nusra. In April 2013, ISIL leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced the creation of ISIL to replace the Islamic State of Iraq, subsume Jabhat al-Nusra and consolidate operations across Iraq and Syria.

Jabhat al-Nusra leader Abu-Muhammad al-Jawlani attempted to annul the announcement by pledging allegiance to al-Qa'ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. In June 2013, al-Zawahiri ruled that Jabhat al-Nusra was the only al-Qa'ida affiliate in Syria and annulled the creation of ISIL. However, al-Baghdadi refused to follow this ruling and confirmed the creation of ISIL, which continues to operate in both Syria and Iraq as one consolidated organisation, with its operations in Syria remaining separate to those of Jabhat al-Nusra.

Leadership

ISIL's current leader is Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim Ali al-Badri. He has many aliases and is usually known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi or Abu Du'a. Al-Baghdadi became the leader of ISIL following the May 2010 death of his predecessor, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir. He is currently located in Syria and continues to lead ISIL in both Iraq and Syria. In August 2013, al-Baghdadi appointed Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami as ISIL's Emir for Syria.

ISIL has a highly hierarchical structure, featuring an overall leadership council and provincial governments in both Iraq and Syria. Regional cells act with relative autonomy under general direction from ISIL senior leaders.

Membership

ISIL has around 2500 members in Iraq, mostly young Iraqi Sunni men. ISIL claimed responsibility for a prison break at Abu Ghraib in July 2013 that freed hundreds of ISIL members, many of whom are still at large.

ISIL has around 5000 members in Syria, drawn from both Syrian nationals and foreign fighters. Due to ISIL's Iraqi origins, a large number of its Syria-based senior operatives and leadership are Iraqi nationals.

Recruitment and funding

ISIL uses a combination of threats, incentives and ideology to recruit new members. It mostly targets young Sunni men, exploiting anger at the government's perceived mistreatment of Sunni Muslims. It also aims to recruit Iraqi security force members to gather intelligence and undermine the performance of its enemies.

ISIL continues to attract a large number of foreign fighters, including Westerners. Although foreign fighters with an extremist mindset were initially drawn to Jabhat al-Nusra, ISIL's establishment of independent operations in Syria resulted in the defection of some Jabhat al-Nusra members to ISIL.

ISIL uses funds donated for operations in Syria to also fund its activities in Iraq and transfers weapons and resources between the two countries. It also sources funding through extortion, kidnapping, theft, black marketeering, smuggling and legitimate businesses.

Terrorist activity of the organisation

Directly or indirectly engaged in the doing of terrorist acts

ISIL is one of the world's deadliest and most active terrorist organisations and conducts daily, often indiscriminate attacks. ISIL targets crowds and public gatherings during holidays and religious festivals to maximize casualties and publicity.

ISIL's operations in Iraq consist of daily attacks, mostly in central Iraq and the provinces to the north and west of the capital. Attacks in the Kurdish-controlled northern provinces and the Shia-majority provinces in the south are less common. ISIL's primary Iraqi targets are security forces; Shia civilians in public areas, including cafes, mosques and markets; political figures; community and tribal leaders who publicly condemn ISIL; and anti-ISIL militias. By attacking these targets, it hopes to undermine security force efforts to contain ISIL, destroy public confidence in the security forces and provoke a widespread revolt against the government.

ISIL's operations in Syria consist of suicide, sniping and small-arms attacks against the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad as well as the Syrian armed opposition, which it considers to be apostates and infidels. ISIL has also targeted Turkish militants in northern Syria.

Significant attacks either claimed by, or reliably attributed to ISIL since the group was last proscribed (under the name al-Qa'ida in Iraq in July 2013) include:

- 16 November 2013: ISIL carried out a series of executions throughout Syria, including six Free Syrian Army members and a sharia committee member in Lattakia, a youth in al-Bab and a militant in Aleppo;
- 29 September 2013: ISIL bombed the Kurdistan Democratic Party's Directorate of Security headquarters in Irbil, killing six people;

- 28 August 2013: ISIL claimed responsibility for a wave of bombings in public places in Baghdad that killed approximately 80 civilians;
- 21 September 2013: two ISIL suicide bombers attacked a funeral in a Shia neighbourhood of Baghdad, killing at least 60 people and injuring over 100 others;
- 18 September 2013: ISIL occupied the Syrian city of Azaz after clashes that killed at least five people; ISIL took at least 100 people captive;
- 24 August 2013: ISIL captured and executed three Syrian Alawite truck drivers in Iraq, posting a video of the murders online;
- 10 August 2013: ISIL claimed responsibility for a wave of bombings in Baghdad that killed approximately 52 people; and
- 21 July 2013: simultaneous attacks on prisons at al-Taji and Abu Ghraib killed approximately 29 people and freed hundreds of prisoners. Most are believed to be ISIL operatives, including senior leaders.

Directly or indirectly fostering and/or advocating the doing of terrorist attacks

Several media statements have been issued by the group that advocate the doing of terrorist acts, including:

- 29 July 2013: Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami, the official spokesman of ISIL, released a statement announcing the commencement of the *Soldier's Harvest* campaign. The statement claimed responsibility for a car bomb in Hamah and encouraged followers to '...strike with explosive belts and car bombs, and stun with the sticky and roadside EIDs [sic], and reap with the silences and snipers, and terrorise with the stormings'.
- January 2013: al-Adnani released a statement directing followers not to participate in the democratic process in Iraq, and to instead use violence to achieve their political goals.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above information, ASIO assesses the ISIL continues to be directly and/or indirectly engaged in, preparing, planning, assisting in and fostering the doing of terrorist acts and advocates the doing of terrorist acts, involving threats to human life and serious damage to property.

In the course of pursuing its objectives, ISIL is known to have engaged in acts that:

- cause, or could cause, serious damage to property, or the death of persons, or endanger a person's life or create a serious risk to a person's safety;
- are done with the intention of advancing ISIL's political, religious or ideological causes;
- are done with the intention of coercing or intimidating the government of a foreign country (be that Iraq or Syria); and
- are done with the intention of intimidating sections of the public globally.

This assessment is corroborated by information from reliable and credible intelligence sources.

Other relevant information

Links to other terrorist groups or networks

A number of terrorist organisations have conducted terrorist acts or issued statements in support of ISIL, including al-Qa'ida, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, Jabhat al-Nusra, salafists in Gaza and al-Shabaab. Likewise, ISIL has called on jihadists to support other terrorist organisations.

Proscription by the UN and other countries

ISIL is listed on the United Nations Security Council 1267 (al-Qa'ida) Sanctions Committee's consolidated list (as an alias) and as a proscribed terrorist organisation by Canada (AQI entry last updated in August 2012), New Zealand (as an alias) and the United States (which recognizes AQI and ISIL as the same organization).

Peace and mediation processes

ISIL is not engaged in any peace or mediation process.