

# Security Council

## The question of the Islamic State



<b>Forum:</b>	Security Council
<b>Issue:</b>	The question of the Islamic State
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## Introduction

It was in 2011 that pro-democracy demonstrations in Syria escalated into a full civil war. Amid a power vacuum in many parts of the country, the Syrian government led by the current president, Bashar Al-Assad lost control over many of the country's cities and territories. A radical Sunni-Islamist group sent delegates to join the Syrian civil war the same year. It is within a timespan of four years that the same group, now known as Islamic State (IS), has torn the Middle East apart by pernicious use of force. The extremist group has flourished since and has played a major role on the world stage. IS has driven governments into a corner and by now, uncertainty boggles the minds of many world leaders on the question of how the up rise of the IS should be tackled. A United States-led coalition was established in late 2014 and frequently bombs territories in both Syria and Iraq. However, allies in the United States-led coalition against IS refuse to cooperate with Bashar Al-Assad, a man that could possibly play an important role in the fight against IS. The question that you will have to take up is that of how to withstand the aggression IS is using.

While researching this topic it is important to take into account that this research report is accurate up until June 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2015. As it is highly unlikely that the situation in the Middle East will improve due to the rapid successes obtained by IS, it is advisable to maintain steady research until the conference that will take place in November in order to guarantee a de facto debate. Also take into consideration while preparing for this issue the responsibility that the United Nations Security Council bares to decide over actions taken to actively protect and carry out four primary mandates of the United Nations, of which the most applicable one to *The question of the Islamic State* is to maintain peace and security globally.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Caliphate

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An area that is ruled by the jurisdiction of a Muslim-chief or *caliph*.

### Power vacuum

The absence of an executive or leading power in a region or jurisdiction after it has been lost.

### Civil war

A war between citizens or political factions within a country or region.

### Jihad

Amongst Muslims a holy war or fight against unbelievers.

### Sharia

Islamic canonical law derived from teachings of the Koran.

### Sunni Islam

Most prominent and orthodox out of two branches of Islam.

### Shia Islam

Less prominent branch of Islam which is the official religion of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## General Overview

In 2002 a Jordanian man, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, set up Tawhid wa al-Jihad, a militant Jihadist group with the goal of overthrowing the Kingdom of Jordan. After the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, al-Zarqawi pledged allegiance to another Jihadist leader, Osama Bin Laden, and formed a new militant group called al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). After al-Zarqawi died in 2006, AQI established a new organization called Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). However, the organization became strongly weakened by its struggle against US troops in Iraq and Sunni tribes that rejected ISI's savagery. ISI then was led by the Iraqi Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who managed to rebuild ISI's strength and capabilities in Iraq. By 2011, Baghdadi was taking advantage of a power vacuum between Baghdad and the Iraqi province of Anbar. This allowed ISI to cross the Iraqi-Syrian border and allowed Baghdadi to send militants to Syria where they were to fight against the Syrian regime in the Syrian Civil War which had

erupted the same year. The ISI fighters in Syria formed a new organization in 2012, called the al-Nusra Front. The organization established cells throughout the country and began to recruit its own fighters.

In April 2013, Baghdadi released an audiotape in which he announced the merger of his Iraqi and Syrian forces into one organization. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (known as ISIS and ISIL) was formed, but not through concession between AQL and al-Nusra. Leaders of both al-Qaeda and al-Nusra renounced the merger, but fighters from both organizations loyal to Baghdadi split and joined the newly established ISIS.

After ISIS expanded rapidly during the Syrian Civil War, it shifted its focus back to Iraq in late 2013. ISIS took advantage of the Iraqi Shia-led government's standoff against minority Sunni tribes and took over the centrally located city of Falluja after ISIS had defeated a faction of the Iraqi army.

In 2014, ISIS rapidly advanced to northern Iraq, fighting both the Iraqi army and Kurdish fighters. In June 2014, ISIS took control of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul and expanded south, advancing towards Baghdad. While ISIS tightened its grip over the area in the weeks to come, Baghdadi declared the establishment of a self-proclaimed caliphate at the end of June. The caliphate would be named Islamic State.

The turning point against Islamic State was thought to be in October 2014, when the United States of America formed a coalition called the Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR). The coalition was formed out of numerous US NATO-allies and Asian countries, mainly Arab ones. The coalition's purpose is to combat and to ultimately eliminate IS, achieved by conducting airstrikes on both Syrian and Iraqi territories. Targets of the airstrikes are, according to the US Central Command, firing positions, IS checkpoints, bases and armed vehicles operated by IS militants. Other targets include IS-controlled oil refineries in order to curb IS revenues.

Because of the ongoing civil war in Syria and violence posed by Islamic State, The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) estimates that as of 17 June 2015, almost 4 million Syrians have been displaced and fled the country, seeking refuge in neighboring countries including Jordan (629,128 registered individuals), Lebanon (1,174,690 registered individuals) and Turkey (1,772,535 registered individuals). UNCHR has called the refugee situation to be deteriorating rapidly and is calling for intervention as a lost generation is to be confronted with a harrowing future as Islamic State expands throughout the region.



## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Islamic State

Islamic State is a radical Islamist group that has its history dating as far back as the 1999's. It follows a distinctive form of Islam based on Salafism, known for its strict approaches to Islam. The organization believes it has the right to establish a large caliphate government under Sharia law, covering several sovereign states, including Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and large parts of Iraq. IS's strength is unclear, but estimates for the number of IS fighters range from thousands to hundreds of thousands. However, aforementioned numbers clash with the number that experts estimate the Islamic State to have in fighters, namely 10,000. Islamic State has also seized much military equipment in their fight against the Syrian and Iraqi armed forces, including armed vehicles, artillery and other weaponry, and possibly fighter jets.

The organization generates most of its revenue through occupied oil fields in Northern Syria, as well as in Iraq occupied territory. Islamic State is also accused of selling historical artifacts and art obtained from museums in occupied areas on the black market.

### Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR)

The CJTF-OIR is the US-led coalition conducting airstrikes on IS targets on Syrian and Iraqi soil, or for some aiding the coalition by logistical support or non-combatant troops.

The coalition was set up with the intention to eliminate ISIL in order to remove the threat the organization poses to Iraq and Syria. The coalition was also set up with an eye on preserving security for the international community by eliminating ISIL. According to the US Central Command, the coalition had conducted 4,273 airstrikes up to June 2015.

### Iran

The Iranian government started providing military aid against ISIL after the organization had advanced into northern Iraq during summer 2014. The Iranian government has deployed 500 special Quds Forces, part of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, to cooperate with the Lebanese Hezbollah movement and to train, equip and advise Iraqi Shia militia in northern Iraq.

Iran's objectives to intervene against IS fighters are to stabilize its border with Iraq and to keep Iraq's Shia-led government in power.



## Iraqi and Syrian Kurdistan

Both having de facto autonomous governments from their national governments has led to both regions having their own armies. IS has been attacking various Kurdish territories, most notably being the Syrian town of Kobani. Kurdish fighters have been travelling into Syria and Iraq to fight the advancement of IS fighters towards their territories. Kurdish Peshmerga, the military force of Iraqi Kurdistan, have been trained by Turkish and other coalition members to strengthen the forces' capabilities in their struggle against IS's advancement in northern Iraq.

## Syrian Arab Republic

The Syrian government led by Bashar al-Assad has lost complete control over many parts of the country, especially in the north, due to the ongoing civil war. A power vacuum is taking place in the north, and many rebel groups are now fighting for power. While Islamic State has also been advancing in the country and has declared the Syrian town of Raqqa as its capital, the Syrian government is not part of the CJTF-OIR. The Russian government, logistical partner in the coalition, backed the Syrian government by stressing the importance of Syrian participation in the coalition. US-president Barack Obama however has ruled out the option of Syrian participation in the coalition.

## Iraq

Iraq has suffered heavily under IS violence. It has been since the presence of ISI and al-Qaeda that Iraq has suffered from terrorist attacks against its civilians, army and government. The US intervention in 2003 was aimed at creating peace and stability in the country, but has led to hundreds of thousands of casualties. Now, as of June 2015, many important Iraqi cities and resources have fallen into the hands of IS. The Iraqi army withdrew their troops from key cities, such as Mosul, when they were about to fall to Islamic State. The armed forces abandoned a large amount of armed vehicles, artillery pieces and tanks at their bases in the midst of their withdraw, and have now fallen into the use of IS fighters.

In the fight against IS, the Iraqi armed forces have been trained and supported by members of the coalition and the Iranian government. While US president Obama ordered more troops to Iraq at June 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, the Iraqi army is rebuilding its strength and capabilities to capture key cities like Ramadi and Mosul which have fallen to IS.

## Timeline of Events



The timeline of events will outline major events leading up the rise of Islamic State since its foundations were laid in 1999 by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The timeline will be up-to-date as to 21 June, 2015.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
1999	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi lays the foundations for a militant Islamist Group in Iraq.
July 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2000	Bashar al-Assad appointed as President of Syria by an unopposed Referendum.
March 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2003	US-led forces invade Iraq and topple the Hussein-regime ushering A nine-year war and presence of US and allied troops in Iraq.
October 2004	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi pledges allegiance to Osama Bin Laden Forming a new militant group called al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI).
June 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2006	Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is killed by an US-airstrike in Iraq.
October 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2006	Al-Qaeda in Iraq forms a new militant group called the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI).
March 2011	Uprisings and demonstrations in Syria begin.
Late 2011	ISI sends delegates to Syria to fight against the Assad regime.
January 23, 2012	The al-Nusra Front, or Jabhat al-Nusra, announces itself.
June 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2012	The Geneva I Conference on Syria is initiated by the then UN Peace envoy to Syria Kofi Annan.
April 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2013	ISI splits from al-Qaeda and Jabhat al-Nusra, rebranding itself Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (known as ISIL, ISIS and IS).
May 2013	ISIS conquers the Syrian province of Raqqa from rebels, including its Former organization Jabhat al-Nusra.
January 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2014	The Geneva II Conference on Syria is held in Switzerland.
June 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	The Iraqi city of Mosul falls to the hands of ISIS fighters.
June 29 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	ISIS declares an Islamic caliphate covering areas in both Syria and Iraq, with the Syrian city of Raqqa as its capital. The organization is Renamed Islamic State (IS).
September 10th, 2014	United States president Barack Hussein Obama presents its Strategy and coalition against IS.
September 23th, 2014	Airstrikes on IS targets in Syria commence. Led by the United States, Military aircraft from Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates form a coalition.
October 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2014	Australian prime-minister Tony Abbott that Australia will join



	The coalition against IS.
October 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Canada joins coalition against IS, conducting airstrikes in Iraq.
October 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Spain joins coalition against IS by sending 300 troops in a Non-combatant role.
October 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Coalition against IS named Operation Inherent Resolve.
October 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Italy sends 280 troops to train Kurdish fighters.
December 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2014	Moroccan fighter jets join the coalition against IS.
February 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	IS fighters take over the Libyan town of Nofaliya, expanding Their territory to Libya.
March 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2015	Iraqi forces recapture the city center of Tirkit.
May 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	IS forces capture the Iraqi city of Ramadi, former capital of ISI.
May 21 <sup>st</sup> , 2015	IS forces capture the ancient city of Palmyra.
May 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2015	IS carries out an attack on a Shiite mosque in Sadia Arabia, killing 21.
June 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	IS claims attacks on a Shiite mosque in Kuwait City, killing 27, and a beach resort in Sousse, Tunisia, killing 38 of which most were western tourists.
July 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	IS claims a car-bomb attack on the Italian consulate in Cairo, Egypt.
July 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2015	IS claims attack on a marketplace in Khan Bani Saad, Iraq, killing at least 120.

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations, and especially the UN Security Council, has been very committed to the issue of combatting Islamic State. At the issue at hand, the United Nations has been devoted to tackle issues such as widespread human rights violations by Islamic State and the financing of IS. United Nations investigators have also stated that Islamic State is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity as part of the attacks on the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Raqqa. Several resolutions have been adapted regarding Islamic State. These include:

- Resolution 2170, adopted by the Security Council on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014 (**S/RES/2170**)
- Resolution 2178, adopted by the Security Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014 (**S/RES/2178**)



- Resolution 2199, adopted by the Security Council on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015  
**(S/RES/2199)**
- Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR), launched by the United States on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2014 until present.
- Multiple Security Council Presidential Statements on the issue, between 10<sup>th</sup> January 2014 to 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

## Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

When coalition forces commenced their intervention against IS, a resolution to the conflict seemed hopeful. After a few months, rebels supported by the coalition and Kurdish fighters had recaptured Kobani, a town near the Syrian-Turkish border that had been heavily sieged by IS forces. The Iraqi city of Tirkrit had also been recaptured by Iraqi armed forces with the help of US-airstrikes. International agreement on the issue of IS seemed hopeful, but IS has been reclaiming and capturing large cities in both Iraq and Syria since spring 2015, one recent win for IS being the ancient city of Palmyra. IS has also been expanding abroad due to organizations in both Libya and northern Nigeria pledging their allegiances to Islamic State and the caliphate. As of June 2015, a near resolution to the issue seems to be far from realizable. Millions of refugees, pernicious use of force by Islamic State and no coordination from within the self-proclaimed caliphate make a cursory resolution inconceivable.

The Security Council has been adapting resolutions on creating frameworks against terrorist organization, including the prevention of foreign financial contribution to terrorist organizations, mainly aimed at ISIL.

## Possible Solutions

Diplomacy, the United Nations most primary weapon, seems to be implausible in finding a peaceful resolution on the issue. Therefore, unconventional measures such as continuing allied airstrikes on IS targets should be considered. As many members of the coalition have out ruled any cooperation or coordination with the Syrian government, it might be an option to be considered. Syria heavily suffers under the ongoing civil war and the up rise of Islamic State on Syrian territory. Opening lines of communication between the Assad-regime and CJTF-OIR might not only contribute to a better response against Islamic State on



Syrian-soil, but could also contribute to talks between the Syrian government and CJTF-OIR governments regarding the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria as result of four years of civil war.

The main focus on combatting IS by non-violence ways could be to quench IS's propaganda war, one the organization has been winning online. 5000 foreign fighters from Western Europe are estimated to have joined IS forces in Syria in Iraq, recruited mainly via the digital battleground. Although the organization's profound hate towards the West, it has been using Western-based social media, mainly micro-blogging medium Twitter, to recruit young men and women to join the caliphate. The organization also uses memes, humorous images spread by internet users, to romanticize fighting in the Jihad. IS's Al Hayat Media Center, the organization's public relations and media center, has also published a glossy online magazine, Dabiq, to romanticize the Jihad alongside well-produced videos, targeted at mainly non-Arabic speakers by producing videos in French, German and English.

Stressing more conventional measures in the struggle against Islamic State may be to re-intensify economic sanctions on anything or anybody contributing financially to Islamic State. However, as this is already tackled by the Security Council in recently adapted resolution it is highly advised to seek for solutions beyond conventional lines.

Could the CJTF-OIR use more force in the struggle against Islamic State or should the CJTF-OIR or the UN Security Council focus on quenching IS's propaganda war? Is the current use of force against Islamic State justified or does the CJTF-OIR violate international law? There are many difficulties and questions to look at while combatting Islamic State. In a region so broken by wars, with a lack of infrastructure as result, and millions of refugees now forming a perhaps broken generation, ways to rid the world from the horrors Islamic State has demonstrated must be carefully observed by the members of this council.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I

Useful links:

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11520.doc.htm>

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/iraq/>

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50067#.VYft8vmgqkp>

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/03/daily-chart-10>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28850956>

