



TRAIL OF DARKNESS

ORIGINS

1999
Originally called Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (The Group of Monotheism and Jihad) or JTJ, and founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian national living in Iraq, the Sunni Islamist group forms with the purpose of overthrowing the government of Jordan.

2004-06
After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, al-Zarqawi pledges his loyalty to Osama bin Laden. The group now calls itself Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn or "Organisation of Jihad's Base in the Land of the Two Rivers," although it is often described as "al-Qaeda in Iraq." The group's new stated objective is to fight US coalition troops and their Iraqi allies. Beginning in 2006, Nuri al-Maliki's predominantly Shia government begins to exclude Sunnis from government positions.

2005-09
Although the US Department of

Defense claims that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was held in Camp Bucca, a detention camp in southeastern Iraq, for only a matter of months in 2004, newspapers including the Washington Post and New York Times say it was four years.

2011
As the US finishes its withdrawal from Iraq, the "Islamic State of Iraq" sees its ranks double in size. The group continues to launch attacks against Shia tribal militias, Iraqi police and the Iraqi army, which is largely Shiite. Next door, the Syrian Civil War begins in March.

BREAK UP

October 2013
Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri demands that the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" disband and leave the formerly allied Syrian rebel group the al-Nusra Front in charge of operations against Bashar al-Assad's government. Al-Baghdadi refuses.

February 2014

Following months of internal strife, ISIL or ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) breaks away from al-Qaeda and al-Nusra. ISIS changes its focus from challenging al-Assad's government to creating an Islamic caliphate that covers the region.

VIOLENT PROFILE

June 7, 2014

ISIS fighters storm Anbar University in Ramadi, blowing up a bridge on campus and detaining dozens of students.

June 10

ISIS militants seize Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, overnight. They take control of government buildings, prisons, and TV stations.

June 11

ISIS fighters capture the city of Tikrit. Refugees flee to Iraqi Kurdistan.

June 15, 2014

ISIS posts pictures on the Internet of

thousands of bodies, those of Iraqi soldiers who fled a nearby base for fear of the extremists.

June 29, 2014

The terrorist group shortens its name to "Islamic State" and declares al-Baghdadi caliph of all Muslims. Still many call it ISIS.

August 8

The US military begins a series of airstrikes on ISIS targets in Northern Iraq.

September 2

ISIS releases a video they claim shows the beheading of US citizen and journalist Steven Sotloff. Like Foley, Sotloff was forced to read an anti-American statement.

September 10

Speaking the night before the 13th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, Obama promises to "degrade and ultimately destroy" Islamic State and announces a broader anti-terrorism strategy that will expand to include targets in Syria.

SOURCE: DEUTSCHE WELLE

THE SHOCKING NUMBERS

Here is an update by numbers that will make you pay attention to what ISIS is doing in Iraq

13,000

The number of square miles thought to be under Islamic State control, a stretch between Syria and Iraq that is roughly the size of Belgium. Other estimates suggest the Islamic State controls an area closer to 35,000 square miles, or roughly the size of Jordan.

1,922

The number of people killed in Iraq in June, according to government figures, making it the deadliest month since May 2007. Official figures report 1,393 civilians, 380 soldiers and 149 policemen among the dead. Another 2,610 people were wounded, the majority of them civilians.

30,000 - 50,000

The number of militants now fighting with the Islamic State, according to a recent estimate by Dr. Hisham al-Hashimi, an expert on the group. Many former Iraqi Army soldiers have been forced to join and others have been recruited from around the region and beyond.

5

The number of nations with which the Islamic State has engaged in direct fighting. In an effort to expand its holdings, insurgents have attacked soldiers from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey this summer alone. The group is currently pursuing a large offensive against the Syrian Arab Army in the northeast of the country, snatching up large quantities of munitions from military bases.

\$2,000,000,000

The approximate value of the Islamic State's cash and assets, according to estimates from terrorism experts. In the midst of its most substantial campaign in June, Islamic State fighters captured the city of Mosul, looting hundreds of million of dollars from banks and acquiring hundreds more in military assets from the Iraqi Army.

\$3,000,000

The estimated daily revenue of the Islamic State, from its oil and gas resources alone. Fighters with the group have taken control of oil and gas fields across northern Iraq and Syria, and it "now controls a volume of resources and territory unmatched in the history of extremist organizations," according to Janine Davidson of the Council of Foreign Relations.

3

The number of high-profile jailbreaks carried out by Islamic State forces in the past several months, which led to the freeing of at least 1,500 insurgents, likely including leaders, bomb makers and other militants, according to reports. In an apparent response to these incidents and widespread brutality by Islamic State fighters, Human Rights Watch accused Shiite militia members and other Iraqi Army soldiers last month of having illegally executed at least 255 Sunni prisoners in at least five different massacres.

Up to 40,000

The number of civilians initially estimated to have been trapped on Mount Sinjar last week after the Islamic State captured the town of Sinjar, near the Kurdish region in northern Iraq, and drove people out of the surrounding areas. While at least 20,000 were reportedly rescued over the weekend by Kurdish rebels from neighboring Syria, the remaining Yazidis are still trapped.

2

The number of towns reclaimed by Kurdish forces on Sunday following U.S. airstrikes to protect the area from Islamic State militants.

SOURCE: THE HUFFINGTON POST

EXCLUSIVE: TOP ISIS LEADERS REVEALED

Exclusive information obtained by Al Arabiya News Channel show how top commanders of al-Qaeda affiliate - the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) - all came from Iraq, with some of them previously imprisoned there.



**ABU BAKR
AL-BAGHDADI**

His real name is Ibrahim al-Badri, also formerly known as Abu Douaa, was a lecturer of Islamic studies and an Imam at mosques in Baghdad and Falluja before he was detained by American forces on June 4, 2004. After his release, he established the "Sunni Army" militia and joined al-Qaeda. He became the group's third in command.



**ABU AYMAN
AL-IRAQI**

Al-Iraqi is one of the main leaders of ISIS and a member of the organisation's military council. He was detained for three years in 2007. Following his release, he moved to Syria and is currently commanding ISIS fighters in the cities of Edib, Aleppo and the mountains of Lattakia.



**ABU AHMED
al-ALWANI**

A former member of Saddam's army, al-Alwani is currently a member of the ISIS military council. His real name is Waleed Jassem al-Alwani.



**ABU ABDUL-RAHMAN
AL-BILAWI**

Al-Bilawi was one of the four members of the ISIS military council and former head of the group's Shura council. Hailing from al-Khalidiya in Iraq's Anbar province, he was detained on Jan. 27, 2005 in the American military detention centre, Camp Bucca. He was later killed in al-Khalidiya, Anbar. His real name was Adnan Ismael Najm.



**HAJI
BAKR**

Bakr was a former officer in Saddam's army, charged with handling the development of weapons. He was later imprisoned at Camp Bucca and joined al-Qaeda after his release. Bakr was reportedly the strongest ISIS commander in Syria up until his recent death. His real name was Samir Abd Mouhammad al-Khleifawi.



**ABU FATIMA
AL-JAHEISHI**

Al-Jaheishi was initially in charge of the ISIS operations in southern Iraq before he moved to the northern city of Kirkuk. His real name is Ni'ma Abd Nayef al-Jabouri.

Isis reconciles with al-Qaida group

Air strikes continued to target Isis positions near the Kurdish town of Kobani and hubs across north-east Syria on Sunday, as the terror group moved towards a new alliance with Syria's largest al-Qaida group that could help offset the threat from the air.

Jabhat al-Nusra, which has been at odds with Isis for much of the past year, vowed retaliation for the US-led strikes, the first wave of which a week ago killed scores of its members. Many al-Nusra units in northern Syria appeared to have reconciled with the group, with which it had fought bitterly early this year.

A senior source confirmed that al-Nusra and Isis leaders were now holding war

planning meetings. While no deal has yet been formalised, the addition of at least some al-Nusra numbers to Isis would strengthen the group's ranks and extend its reach at a time when air strikes are crippling its funding sources and slowing its advances in both Syria and Iraq.

Al-Nusra, which has direct ties to al-Qaida's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, called the attacks a "war on Islam" in an audio statement posted over the weekend. A senior al-Nusra figure told the Guardian that 73 members had defected to Isis last Friday alone and that scores more were planning to do so in coming days.

"We are in a long war," al-Nusra's spokes-

man, Abu Firas al-Suri, said on social media platforms. "This war will not end in months nor years, this war could last for decades."

In the rebel-held north there is a growing resentment among Islamist units of the Syrian opposition that the strikes have done nothing to weaken the Syrian regime. "We have been calling for these sorts of attacks for three years and when they finally come they don't help us," said a leader from the Qatari-backed Islamic Front, which groups together Islamic brigades. "People have lost faith. And they're angry." British jets flew sorties over Isis positions in Iraq after being ordered into action against the group fol-

lowing a parliamentary vote on Friday.

David Cameron has suggested he might review his decision to confine Britain's involvement to Iraq alone, but for now the strikes in support of Kurdish civilians and militants in Kobani were being carried out by Arab air forces from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE and Bahrain.

The US was reported to have carried out at least six strikes in support of Kurdish civilians near the centre of Kobani, where the YPG, the Kurdish militia, is fighting a dogged rearguard campaign against Isis, which is mostly holding its ground despite the aerial attacks.

SOURCE: GUARDIAN