

# The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

The Rise and Goals of ISIS

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## Where did ISIS come from?

- The terrorist organization began in 2004 when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi creates Al Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI
- The group formed after Al Qaeda supporters fled Afghanistan and settled in a remote corner in Iraq after 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq
- AQI rebranded itself to ISIS - The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria - when it merged with the Syrian rebel group Jabhat al-Nusra in 2013



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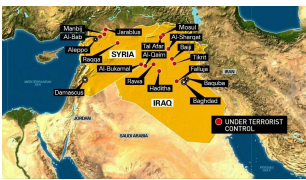
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## ISIS and the War in Iraq



- After the Obama Administration withdrew troops and U.S. state officials in Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki created an oppressive regime targeting Sunnis
- This created the perfect climate for ISIS to gain popularity, take advantage of the weak government by waging war and establishing a stronghold for their caliphate
- In northern Iraq, ISIS -- joined by Sunni insurgents, former Ba'athists and disbanded members of the Iraqi army -- quickly captured key cities: Mosul, Fallujah and Ramadi

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## Fast Facts about ISIS

ISIS puts governing structures in place to rule the territories it conquers. Implements Sharia Law, rooted in eighth century Islam, to establish a society that mirrors the region's ancient past.

ISIS uses modern tools like social media to promote reactionary politics, religious fundamentalism and lone wolf attacks.

Fighters are destroying holy sites and valuable antiquities even as their leaders propagate a return to the early days of Islam.

In 2014, ISIS controlled more than 34,000 square miles in Syria and Iraq, from the Mediterranean coast to south of Baghdad. At the end of 2016, ISIS territory had shrunk to about 23,320 square miles

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## What is the goal of ISIS?



ISIS makes no secret of its ultimate ambition: A global caliphate secured through a global war. To that end it speaks of "remaining and expanding" its existing hold over much of Iraq and Syria. It aims to replace existing, man-made borders, to overcome what it sees as the Shiite "crescent" that has emerged across the Middle East, to take its war -- Islam's war -- to Europe and America, and ultimately to lead Muslims toward an apocalyptic battle against the "disbelievers."

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## What is a caliphate?

A caliphate is an Islamic state of the Muslim faithful. It is NOT like a country like Germany or a state like Oregon, because it is not bound by international law or interactions with other nations. It doesn't necessarily even have borders.

After the Prophet Muhammad died in 632, Muslims formed the first caliphate to regulate and make official the prophet's teachings, led by a caliph.

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## ISIS calls for a Caliphate

- ISIS seeks to recreate a medieval-style caliphate or Islamic State. Their wish is to erase all borders from the Mediterranean to the Gulf.
- ISIS deems Shi'ite Muslims to be heretics (one who turns away from an accepted belief or doctrine : nonconformist) deserving death.
- By returning to the old ways and declaring a caliphate, ISIS is presenting itself as indisputable (unable to be challenged) because it has the authority and legitimacy that comes from it being an Islamic state.

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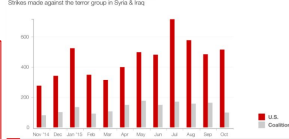
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## The Fight Against ISIS

A variety of military powers are engaged against ISIS -- the United States, France, Russia, the United Kingdom -- along with several Arab nations and the Kurds, who are fighting them in northern Iraq and Syria.

U.S. & Coalition airstrikes against ISIS



In October 2015, the United States struck ISIS 5,473 times, compared with 1,574 strikes by other countries in the coalition, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

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## What do the Crusades have to do with this?

Armies of Christians from Western Europe responded to Pope Urban II's plea to go to war against Muslim forces in the Holy Land [Jerusalem]. After the First Crusade achieved its goal with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, the invading Christians set up several Latin Christian states, even as Muslims in the region vowed to wage holy war (jihad) to regain control over the region.

*When ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks in Paris, they made direct reference to the Christian Crusades and the desire to rebuild a Caliphate. The ultimate goal of this extremist terrorist group is to establish an Islamic State as far reaching and established as the historic Ottoman Empire.*



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For the Islamic State, the term “Crusade” is instrumental in describing the West and its actions.

References to crusades and crusaders can be found repeatedly and frequently in statements, propaganda publications, and videos released by the group, as well as references to “Rome” and such crusade icons. In their rhetoric, the Crusades invoke a defensive war of Islam against an invader from the West, and crusaders are those who come to kill Muslims and rob them of their land and autonomy.

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“We will conquer you, Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah”

The repeated labelling of western coalition forces (especially the US) as crusaders and referring to them as “Rome” is not a mere label but a declaration of intent. ISIS’s propaganda piece, Dabiq, makes it clear: “We will conquer you Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women, by the permission of Allah” (Dabiq 4).

The repeated use of divine will to justify conflict is clearly reminiscent of the crusades, but ISIS goes further still – it helps to illustrate their apocalyptic vision of the world. The brutality of warfare and willingness to commit murder and even enslave people comes not only from the justification of “doing Allah’s work” but also in the knowledge that they are fighting towards the end of days.

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## Tracking ISIS Affiliated Terrorist Attacks Across the Globe

With your group, you will...

1. Gather the following information about your assigned terrorist attack
  - a. Who?
  - b. What?
  - c. When?
  - d. Where?
  - e. How?
2. Find 1-2 videos that are useful in explaining the attack that you could use in your presentation
3. Using the info and videos you gathered, create a Google Slides presentation
4. Prepare to present to the class

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