

EMBARGOED: 05:00 UTC, Wednesday 5 March 2025

Terrorism Spreads as Lone Wolf Attacks Dominate the West

LONDON, March 05, 2025 – The number of countries recording a terrorist attack increased from 58 to 66, according to the 12th annual Global Terrorism Index (GTI) released today. This reverses nearly a decade of improvements, with 45 countries deteriorating and 34 improving. The four deadliest terrorist groups intensified their violence in 2024, driving an 11% rise in fatalities. In the West, lone wolf attacks now dominate, accounting for 93% of fatal attacks over the past five years.

Key Findings:

- The Sahel region remains terrorism's epicentre, accounting for over half of all global terrorism deaths
- Islamic State (IS) expands its operations to 22 countries and remains the deadliest organisation, causing 1,805 deaths, with 71% of its activity being in Syria and DRC
- Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) emerged as fastest-growing terrorist group, with 90% increase in attributed deaths
- Deaths in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding the Sahel) are now at their lowest since 2016, dropping by 10%
- Terrorist attacks jumped by 63% in the West, Europe was most affected where attacks doubled to 67
- In 2024, several Western countries reported one in five terror suspects as under 18, with teenagers accounting for most IS-linked arrests in Europe
- Seven Western countries are in the first 50 most impacted countries on the GTI
- Antisemitic and Islamophobic hate surged globally, with the US seeing a 200% rise in antisemitic incidents in 2024

The Gaza conflict has intensified instability in the Middle East and is fuelling hate crimes in the West, while terrorism deaths surged in Iran. Global terrorism deaths remained constant in 2024, after allowing for the October 7 attack. The four deadliest terrorist groups escalated their violence, causing an 11% rise in terrorism fatalities. The most deaths from terrorism were in Burkina Faso, Pakistan and Syria. Burkina Faso is responsible for one fifth of all deaths globally.

Islamic State (IS) remains the deadliest organisation, causing 1,805 deaths across 22 countries in 2024, one more than the prior year. IS was most active in Syria and the DRC. IS Khorasan Province (ISK) has emerged into one of the most active jihadist groups worldwide, conducting major attacks in Iran and Russia. Since 2020, ISK has expanded from one

country to five, producing propaganda in nine languages. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is the fastest-growing terrorist organisation, with deaths rising 90% to 558.

The GTI is produced by international think tank the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) and has been published annually for the last 12 years. It is the most comprehensive resource on global terrorism trends and uses multiple factors to calculate its score, including the number of incidences, fatalities, injuries and hostage numbers, before combining these with conflict and socioeconomic data to provide a holistic picture of terrorism.

Steve Killelea, Founder & Executive Chairman, IEP: *"This year's Global Terrorism Index highlights two key concerns; firstly, 98% of all terrorist deaths occurred in conflict zones, with 2024 recording the highest number of conflicts since the end of the WWII. Secondly, social tensions and dissatisfaction within the West are fuelling lone actor terrorism. 93% of all fatal terrorist attacks were caused by lone actors. The best way to control terrorism is to stop or reduce the number of conflicts. In addition, the Gaza conflict has been, and still is, a catalyst for antisemitism and Islamophobia."*

Western nations face new terror landscape

The majority of Western attacks are now carried out by individuals without formal group affiliations, who radicalise through social media, gaming platforms and encrypted messaging apps. The shift towards online radicalisation has enabled potential terrorists to access extremist content, and organise with minimal physical contact. Algorithmic radicalisation on popular social media sites can drive users toward progressively more extreme content over time.

The West saw its first major rise in terrorist incidents since 2017, with attacks increasing from 32 to 52. Sweden, Australia, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland registered their first attacks in more than five years. Germany was Europe's worst-performing nation, placing 27th globally following the Magdeburg Christmas market attack.

In the UK, under-18s accounted for 42% of 219 terror arrests last year¹, reflecting a broader Western trend where youths account for one in five terror suspects. They typically lack ties to established groups and can combine contradictory extremist ideologies.

Sahel remains global terrorism epicentre

Terrorism in the Sahel has increased significantly, with deaths rising nearly tenfold since 2009. Weak governance, ethnic tensions, and ecological degradation have created a conducive environment in which terrorism can flourish. The Sahel accounts for 51% of 2024's terrorism deaths, with Burkina Faso, while improving overall, remained the most affected nation for a second year. Six of the ten countries in the region recorded at least one

¹ Counter Terrorism Policing, UK, 2024 - <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/number-of-young-people-arrested-for-terrorism-offences-hits-record-high/>

fatality. Togo recorded its worst year for terrorism since the inception of the Index, reflecting the spread of terrorist activity beyond the Sahel.

Competition over the region's mineral resources has contributed to ongoing instability. Gold is a major flashpoint in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Niger supplies more than 25% of European uranium. Russian presence has grown significantly in the region while France is withdrawing.

Niger illustrates the fragility of progress in the region. After achieving the second-largest improvement in 2022, it experienced a reversal in the last two years, recording a 94% increase in terrorism deaths to 930 fatalities in 2024, the largest surge globally.

Terrorism in the Middle East

Although the Middle East recorded a 7% reduction in terrorist attacks in 2024 to 618, the resurgence of violence between Israel and Palestine continues to destabilise the region. Both Israel and Syria ranked among the ten most impacted countries globally.

Since 2020, traditional foreign influence in Syria has diminished, with Russia, China, and Iran reducing their roles while Turkey emerges as a dominant regional power. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), once a key partner of the US in the fight against IS, now faces mounting challenges. Turkey's opposition to a strengthened SDF, coupled with the potential scaling back of US support, has created conditions that IS could exploit to regain influence. The new US administration's position on the SDF is still unclear.

Hate speech and the US

Hate crimes escalated sharply for both the Jewish and Muslim communities in the US following the Gaza war, with FBI-recorded incidents targeting the Jewish community rising by 270% in just two months. Anti-Muslim hate increased at a similar rate, with reported incidents of Islamophobia rising by 300% in the same period. Similar patterns emerged in Europe and Australia, with 31% of all Western attacks motivated by antisemitic or anti-Israel sentiment.

While the US bucked the trend of other Western countries in 2024, with only one death from three attacks, 2025 will be a worse year. The January attack in New Orleans where an IS-pledged individual killed 15 people highlights that concerns remain about a resurgence of terrorist activity. Globally there were a total of 24 foiled plots linked to IS or affiliated groups, including a high-profile plot targeting Taylor Swift concerts in Vienna, but it is likely that many more were prevented.

Terror groups exploit technology surge

Terrorist organisations are rapidly adapting to emerging technologies, transforming their operations through artificial intelligence and encrypted communications. Intelligence

agencies report that ISK has markedly expanded its digital arsenal, producing AI-enhanced video content and sophisticated online magazines in multiple languages.

The group deploys encrypted messaging platforms and cryptocurrency for fundraising, whilst using AI to create localised propaganda aimed at foreign targets. Their reach now spans from Central Asia to North America, demonstrating how digital platforms have reshaped terrorist recruitment and operations.

This technological evolution poses new challenges for security services, as extremists increasingly exploit encrypted apps and dark web forums for radicalisation and operational planning. AI also creates opportunities for intelligence services to analyse larger amounts of information, and detect radicalisation earlier.

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Notes to Editors

The full GTI 2025 report and interactive map are available at: visionofhumanity.org

X: @GlobPeaceIndex

Facebook: facebook.com/globalpeaceindex

Global Terrorism Index (GTI)

The GTI by the Institute for Economics & Peace provides a comprehensive summary of the key global trends and patterns in terrorism over the last 17 years. The report ranks 163 countries (99.7 per cent of the world's population) according to the impact of terrorism. The indicators include the number of terrorist incidents, fatalities, injuries and hostages.

The GTI report is produced using data from TerrorismTracker and other sources. TerrorismTracker provides event records on terrorist attacks since 1 January 2007. The dataset contains over 73,000 terrorist incidents for the period 2007 to 2024.

Institute for Economics & Peace

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is the world's leading think tank dedicated to developing metrics to analyse peace and to quantify its economic value. It does this by developing global and national indices, including the annual Global Peace Index, calculating the economic cost of violence and understanding Positive Peace which is the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.