Global Terrorism in 2018

In 2018, there were more than 9,600 terrorist attacks around the world, which killed more than 22,980 people, including 7,290 perpetrators and 15,690 victims, according to the Global Terrorism Database™. 2018 was the fourth consecutive year of declining global terrorism since terrorist violence peaked in 2014 at nearly 17,000 attacks and more than 45,000 total deaths. The total number of terrorist attacks worldwide decreased 43% between 2014 and 2018, and the total number of deaths decreased 48%. Regional trends varied substantially.

Islamic State’s Decline in Iraq and Expanding Global Impact

Global statistical trends were heavily impacted by patterns of terrorism in Iraq, which suffered more terrorist attacks than any other country each year from 2013 to 2017. The number of terrorist attacks in Iraq decreased 46% between 2017 and 2018 and the number of people killed in terrorist attacks decreased 78%.

For several years, there were numerous mass-casualty terrorist attacks in Iraq. For example, between 2014 and 2016 there were at least 100 attacks each year in which assailants killed more than 10 victims. In 2017, there were 64 such attacks, and in 2018 there were six.

GEOGRAPHIC REACH OF ISLAMIC STATE-RELATED TERRORISM

While Islamic State declined in Iraq, the group’s influence continued to expand geographically. Attacks carried out by Islamic State “core” operatives, affiliated organizations, or unaffiliated individuals who indicated allegiance to the group took place in 34 countries in 2018, bringing the total number of countries that have ever experienced Islamic State-related terrorist attacks to 53. Preliminary data for 2019 indicate that at least three additional countries—Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, and the Netherlands—experienced Islamic State-related attacks, bringing the total number of countries to 56.
In 2015, 2016, and 2017 there were multiple events in Western European countries in which assailants killed more than five people, including mass casualty attacks carried out by jihadists in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Berlin, Manchester, London, and Barcelona. In 2018, there were nine lethal terrorist attacks in Western Europe. The deadliest of these occurred in December, when an assailant who claimed allegiance to Islamic State attacked civilians at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, France, killing five people and injuring 11 others. The number of terrorist attacks in Western Europe decreased 31% between 2017 and 2018, while the number of deaths decreased 70%.

There were six lethal terrorist attacks in the United States in 2018, excluding one attack in which only the perpetrator died, compared to 18 in 2017. Although terrorism in the United States is ideologically and geographically diverse, all six lethal attacks shared in common far-right ideological elements including primarily white supremacy and in at least two cases, male supremacy.

Assailants targeted an election rally for Siraj Raisani, who was among the 150 people killed in the attack. More than 180 others were injured. Islamic State-Khorasan claimed responsibility for the attack, and authorities identified the bomber as an Islamic State operative.

Members of the Batende tribe attacked the Banunu community in four towns in Yumbi territory. The exceptionally violent attacks—which occurred in advance of an intensely disputed national election and contributed to the delay and suppression of voting—were a sudden escalation in a longstanding ethnic rivalry over territory and resources.