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Global Terrorism Index 2022: Sub-Saharan Africa emerges as global epicentre of terrorism, as global deaths decline

- Despite global terrorist attacks increasing to 5,226 in 2021, deaths declined slightly by 1.2%.
- The Ukraine conflict is likely to drive a rise in traditional and cyber terrorism, reversing previous improvements in the region.
- Terrorism in the West declined substantially, with attacks falling by 68%. The US recorded its lowest score since 2012.
- Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 48% of global terrorism deaths.
- The Sahel is home to the world's fastest growing and most-deadly terrorist groups.
- Myanmar had the largest rise in terrorism with deaths increasing 20 times to 521 deaths in 2021.
- Islamic State (IS) replaces the Taliban as the world's deadliest terror group in 2021, with 15 deaths per attack in Niger.
- Terrorism has become more concentrated, with 119 countries recording no deaths, the best result since 2007.
- In the West, politically motivated attacks overtook religious attacks, which declined by 82%. There were five times more political attacks than religious attacks.
- Terrorists are using more advanced technologies including drones, GPS systems and encrypted messaging services.

LONDON, 2 March 2022: The 2022 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) reveals that despite an increase in attacks, the impact of terrorism continues to decline. In 2021, deaths from terrorism fell by 1.2% to 7,142, while attacks rose by 17%, highlighting that terrorism is becoming less lethal. Two thirds of countries recorded no attacks or deaths from terrorism – the best result since 2007 – while 86 countries recorded an improvement on their GTI score. The number of deaths has remained approximately the same for the last four years.

The Index highlights that terrorism remains a serious threat, with Sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 48% of total global deaths from terrorism. Four of the ten countries with the largest increases in deaths from terrorism were also in sub-Saharan Africa: Niger, Mali, the DRC and Burkina Faso.

Following military defeats in Syria and Iraq, IS shifted its attention to the Sahel, with deaths from terrorism rising ten times in the region since 2007. The Sahel has become the new epicentre of terrorism. Terrorism in the region is compounded by high population growth, lack of adequate water and food, climate change and weak governments. Adding to the complexity, many criminal organisations are representing themselves as Islamic insurgencies.

The annual Global Terrorism Index, now in its ninth year, is developed by leading international think tank the [Institute of Economics and Peace](https://www.economicsandpeace.org/) (IEP) and provides the most comprehensive resource on global terrorism trends. The GTI uses a number of factors to calculate its score,

including the number of incidences, fatalities, injuries and hostages, and combines it with conflict and socio-economic data to provide a holistic picture of terrorism.

The Index shows that terrorism is becoming increasingly concentrated, contracting into countries already suffering from violent conflict. Conflict zones accounted for 97% of all deaths. The ten countries most affected by terrorism are all in conflict zones. Only 44 countries recorded a death from terrorism in 2021, compared to 55 countries in 2015.

The largest increase in terrorism was in Myanmar, where deaths rose 23 times from 24 to 521, followed by Niger, where deaths doubled, increasing from 257 in 2020 to 588 in 2021. Mozambique had the largest drop in terrorism deaths, falling by 82% to 93. The success was largely driven by counter-insurgency operations against IS by Mozambican forces, with support from Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community.

Also on a positive note, counter insurgency has significantly decreased Boko Haram's activities, with the organisation recording only 64 attacks in 2021. Deaths dropped by 92% from 2,131 in 2015 to 178 in 2021. The decline of Boko Haram contributed to Nigeria recording the second largest reduction in deaths from terrorism in 2021, with the number falling by 47% to 448.

Ukraine is likely to see an uplift in terrorism. In the 2014 crisis, the country recorded 69 terrorist attacks. Of serious concern are the knock-on effects of cyber terrorism to other countries. In addition to cyberattacks on the Ukraine, Russia has been credited with attacks on many other countries. It is possible that the threat of cyber terrorism will rise globally alongside the escalation of the Ukraine conflict.

The Ukraine conflict is likely to reverse gains in Russia and Eurasia, which recorded the largest improvement on the GTI in 2021, followed by North America. The MENA region has improved substantially, moving up two places from the least peaceful region in 2018. For the second year in a row, South Asia is the region most impacted by terrorism, while Central America and the Caribbean region recorded the lowest impact.

Steve Killelea, Founder & Executive Chairman, IEP: *“Terrorism is becoming more centred in conflict zones, underpinned by weak governments and political instability, while in Europe and the US politically motivated terrorism has overtaken religiously motivated attacks. As conflict in the Ukraine dominates global attention it is crucial that the global fight against terrorism is not sidelined. Terrorist activity in the Sahel is increasing substantially, and is driven by Islamic militias.”*

“The decline of terrorism in the West coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on freedom of movement, travel and the immediate threat to personal health may explain some of the fall. Once the emergency measures are removed there is the possibility of an uptick in terrorism activity.”

As technology has advanced so has its use by terrorist groups. This includes missiles and drones, which extend the reach of their attacks and reduce their casualties. Affordable smartphones, social media and encryption are other technologies that also extend their networks, making the spread of propaganda and recruitment easier.

The report identifies IS and its affiliates as the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2021, despite deaths attributed to the group declining slightly from 2,100, to 2,066 deaths. The worst attack of 2021 occurred when an IS suicide bomber detonated two bombs at Afghanistan's Kabul International Airport, resulting in 170 deaths and more than 200 injuries.

Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen, who operate in the Sahel, is the world's fastest growing terrorist organisation and was responsible for 351 deaths in 2021, a 69% increase. The world's most lethal terrorist group was the Islamic State of West Africa, where in Niger each attack averaged 15 deaths.

Attacks in the West have declined significantly, dropping by 68% in 2021, from the peak in 2018. In total there were 113 attacks in Europe in 2021, and seven attacks in the US. The US recorded a significant improvement in the impact of terrorism, recording its lowest GTI score since 2012. There were three attacks by Islamic extremists in Europe, the lowest amount since 2014.

Over the last three years in the West there has been a significant shift in the instigators of terrorism. Acts of religious terrorism declined by 82% in 2021, and have been overtaken by politically motivated terrorism, which now accounts for five times as many attacks. Most attacks which are driven by a left or right ideology are perpetrated by individuals or groups with no formal affiliation to a recognised organisation. The targets of these attacks are often similar, typically government organisations or political figures, and the motivations are similar. Both cohorts are radicalised online and hold the existing system in contempt.

Attacks in the UK halved in 2021 to 12, the lowest number since 2008, with only one being religiously motivated. The US recorded seven attacks, with five being politically motivated and the remaining two unclassified. France recorded seven attacks down by 72% from the 25 recorded in 2020.

The conditions most closely associated with terrorism vary depending on the social and economic factors of a country. There is a clear link with political terror and a lack of acceptance of basic human rights for the majority of countries. For OECD countries, there is a strong relationship between increased terrorism and social inequalities, as well as easier access to weapons and higher militarisation. For other countries, weak institutions, group grievances and political terror are significant factors in driving terrorism.

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Notes to Editors

The full GTI 2022 report and interactive map are available at: visionofhumanity.org

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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 14 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 Terrorism Tracker and other sources. Terrorism Tracker provides event records on terrorist attacks since 1 January 2007. The dataset contains over 60,500 terrorist incidents for the period 2007 to 2021

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.