

Terrorist attacks more deadly, despite decline in the West

- Attacks have become more deadly with the lethality rising by 26%.
- Terrorism deaths are down 9%, although this is attributed to the Taliban's transition from terror group to state actor*.
- Outside Afghanistan, terrorism deaths rose 4% in the rest of the world.
- Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates remained the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2022 for the eighth consecutive year, with attacks in 21 countries.
- Deaths from attacks by unknown Jihadists globally are eight times higher than 2017, representing 32% of all terrorism deaths and 18 times higher in the Sahel.
- The Sahel is the most impacted region, representing 43% of global terrorism deaths, 7% more than the year prior.
- Declining terrorism in the West is met with intensified attacks in other regions.
- Terrorism thrives in countries with poor ecologies and climate induced shocks.
- Drone technology and its use continues to rapidly evolve, especially with groups such as IS, Boko Haram and Houthis.

LONDON, 14 March 2023: The tenth annual edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) reveals attacks are more deadly with 26% more people dying in each incident - the first rise in lethality in five years.

After substantial improvements in terrorism activity between 2016 and 2019, progress has plateaued with both attacks and deaths remaining roughly the same since 2019. The number of countries recording a death ranged from 43 in 2020 to 42 in 2022.

The hub of terrorism is rapidly changing and moving towards countries facing political instability, conflict, and ecological degradation, particularly in the Sahel. Eight out of the ten countries within this region have the worst scores for food and water scarcity according to the [2022 ETR](#). Burkina Faso is an illustration of this shift, where deaths caused by terrorism rose by 50% to 1,135, and the number of deaths per attack increased by 8%, leaving the country with the highest death toll.

Last year, terrorism resulted in 6,701 deaths, 38% lower than at their peak in 2015. However, the lethality rate of the two deadliest terrorist groups is increasing. IS, the deadliest, saw an increase of 12% to 2.9 deaths per attack, while al-Shabaab's lethality rate is at its highest level since 2017, increasing by 32% to 2.5 persons per attack. This highlights that the effectiveness of these two groups is rising. The next two deadliest terrorist groups were Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM). IS remained the deadliest terrorist group for the eighth consecutive year, while the BLA, operating in Pakistan, is now the fastest growing terrorist group in the world, with terrorism deaths increasing nine times to 233 deaths in 2022.

Deaths from terrorism in the Sahel increased by 7% and are now higher than South Asia and MENA combined. The area is also the most impacted region in the world, representing 43% of deaths from terrorism globally. The region also faces some of the worst ecological degradation, which is amplified by climate change. The challenges are systemic and include poor food security, lack of adequate water, weak governance, rampant criminality, and some of the fastest population

growth rates globally. The region has suffered from six coup attempts since 2021, of which four were successful.

In MENA the overall score continued to improve, building on the last six years with the proportion of global terrorism deaths substantially dropping, from 57% in 2016 to just under 12% in 2022. The region recorded 791 deaths in 2022, a fall of 32% and the lowest number in the region since 2013. Attacks almost halved to 695. There has also been a substantial drop in suicide bombings in MENA, in 2016, suicide bombings resulted in 1,947 deaths. In 2022, there were only six suicide bombings that killed eight people.

In the West, the number of attacks continues to fall, with successive falls each year since 2017. Forty attacks were recorded in 2022, a decrease of 27% when compared to the 55 attacks in 2021. However, the number of deaths more than doubled, rising from a low base of nine in 2021 to 19 in 2022. Ten of the deaths were caused by one attack in the US when a gunman killed civilians at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York. This is the first increase in deaths in the West since 2019. Ideologically motivated terrorism, meaning those related to political extremism, continues to be the most common type of terrorism in the West, with religiously motivated terrorism declining by 89% since the peak in 2016.

The dynamics of terrorism are changing with unclaimed attacks becoming more common. Of the 3,955 terrorist attacks recorded in 2022, 33% were not attributed to a group. The fastest growing segment was unknown Jihadists, especially in the Sahel, with deaths eighteen times higher than in 2017.

Steve Killelea, Founder & Executive Chairman, IEP: *“Terrorism remains a serious threat to peace with minimal gains made over the last three years. Islamic jihadists have proven adaptable, seeking out areas of instability in which they can operate. It is becoming increasingly obvious that to tackle terrorism, systemic approaches are needed, including addressing poor governance, low levels of government capacity, poverty, group grievances, and the use of kinetic force.”*

“As the conflict in Ukraine consumes the world’s attention and its resources, it is crucial that the global fight against terrorism remains high on the political agenda. As its nature evolves it is imperative that the response of the international community continues to evolve. This is no time for complacency and a loss of focus will lead to an increased threat of terrorism in the future. Fighting terrorism is one of the few remaining areas where the world’s superpowers have a common goal.”

It is evident that the war in Ukraine has diverted military resources – leading to increased instability, including in the Sahel, where Russia and France have wound down their military presence. Contrary to the overall MENA trend in Syria, IS activity is on the rise, causing 42% more terrorism deaths than in 2021, resulting from slightly fewer attacks. The earthquake in the region will lead to increased instability, as it occurred in areas where IS operate. The 344 terrorism deaths caused by IS in Syria in 2022 is also likely to increase.

Violent conflict and war are the most significant drivers of terrorism, with 88% of terrorist attacks and 98% of deaths occurring in countries with active conflicts.

Several countries are currently experiencing significant ecological and climate induced changes, particularly in conflict-prone areas, exacerbating these problems. According to the [2022 ETR](#), 27 countries face catastrophic ecological threats, while also having low levels of societal resilience.

These hotspot countries are clustered in three regions: sub-Saharan Africa, MENA, and South Asia, they are also the most affected regions by terrorism.

The evolution of drones is rapidly transforming the nature of conflict and emerged as a new trend in attacks with groups like IS, Boko Haram, and the Houthis using the technology. The latest estimates suggest that 65 non-state actors can now deploy drones, which have a range from a few kilometres up to 1,500 kilometres for military grade drones. Their use in the 2019 Houthi-Saudi Aramco attack illustrates the power of this technology, with drones launched from Yemen, more than 800km away. The current lack of existing countermeasures means that drones are likely to be used more frequently.

The Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), the prominent international think tank, has released the 10th annual Global Terrorism Index – offering the most extensive resource on the latest terrorism trends worldwide. The Index evaluates various factors to determine its score, including the number of incidents, fatalities, injuries, and hostages, and integrates conflict and socio-economic data to provide a comprehensive understanding of terrorism.

ENDS

** The Taliban assumed control of the government in 2021, therefore their actions are not reflected in this year's data.*

Notes to Editors

The full GTI 2023 report and interactive map are available at: visionofhumanity.org

Twitter: @GlobPeaceIndex

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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 15 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 65,000 terrorist incidents for the period 2007 to 2022.

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.