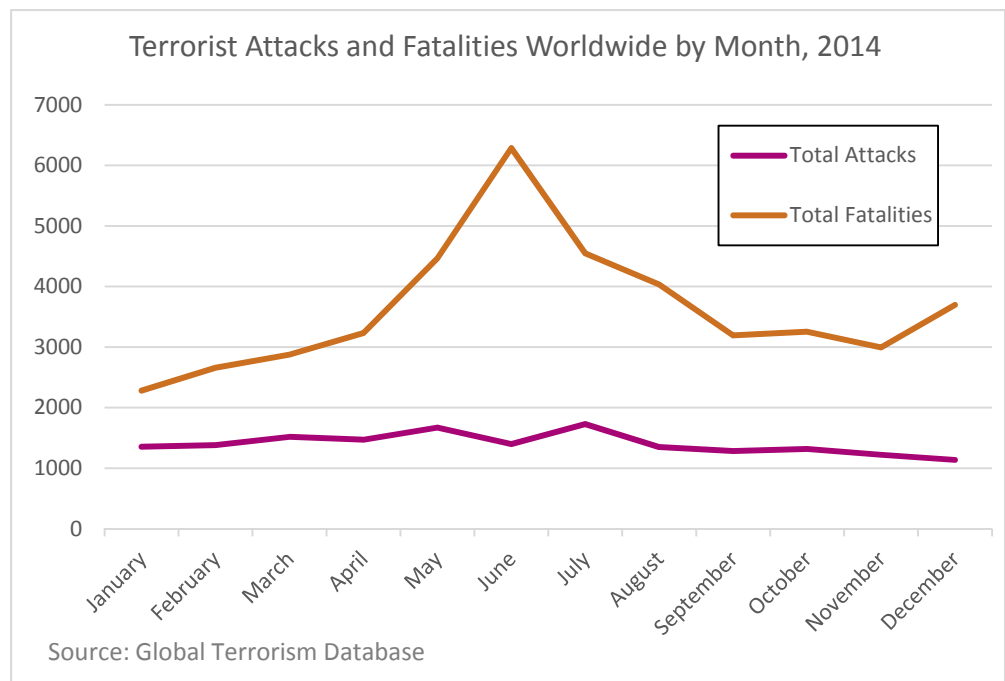# Overview: Terrorism in 2014

In 2014, more than 16,800 terrorist attacks took place worldwide, causing more than 43,500 deaths and more than 40,900 injuries, including perpetrator casualties. More than 11,800 people were taken hostage in terrorist attacks in 2014. This report provides a brief overview of patterns of terrorism in 2014, highlighting trends from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).[1]

SUMMARY

The total number of attacks each month ranged from a minimum of 1,137 in December 2014 to a maximum of 1,729 in July 2014. The total number of fatalities caused by terrorist attacks worldwide ranged from 2,280 in January 2014 to 6,287 in June 2014.

Worldwide patterns of terrorism in 2014 were heavily influenced by conflicts in key locations. Although terrorist attacks took place in 99 countries, nearly half of all attacks (47%) took place in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Likewise, more than half (60%) of all fatalities took place in Iraq, Nigeria, and Afghanistan.

Terrorist Attacks and Fatalities Worldwide by Month, 2014

Source: Global Terrorism Database

In addition, worldwide trends in casualties caused by terrorist attacks reveal several noteworthy developments. First, nearly one quarter (24%) of all fatalities that resulted from terrorist attacks in 2014 were perpetrator fatalities. This is by far the highest proportion of perpetrator fatalities recorded in the GTD, compared to an annual average of 5 percent of all fatalities between 1970 and 2013. Second, 28 attacks in 2014 caused more than 100 total fatalities, compared to an average of 3.7 such mass-fatality attacks each year between 1970 and 2013.

Several of the most active perpetrator organizations, including the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) experienced extreme increases in frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks in 2014. New perpetrator organizations—including the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic—emerged in Ukraine, carrying out hundreds of deadly attacks against both combatant and non-combatant targets.

Finally, patterns of terrorism in 2014 were marked by a dramatic increase in the number of hostages taken—11,821--more than four times as many as the annual average from 1970 to 2013. The analysis below describes these trends in greater detail.

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[1] For additional information on the inclusion criteria and data collection methodology for the Global Terrorism Database, please see the GTD Codebook.

Global trends in the frequency and characteristics of terrorist attacks have the potential to obscure diverse regional patterns. The table below shows the 20 countries that experienced the most terrorist attacks in 2014, along with details about the casualties of terrorism in these locations and the changes they saw between 2013 and 2014. Note that percent change statistics should be interpreted with caution, particularly for certain locations—such as Ukraine, Israel, and Bangladesh— that experienced few or no attacks or fatalities in 2013, rendering the percent change statistic extremely large or incalculable.

Country	Total Attacks 2014	Total Fatalities 2014	% Perpetrator Fatalities 2014	% Change Attacks 2013-2014	% Change Total Fatalities 2013-2014	% Change Perpetrator Fatalities 2013-2014
Iraq	3925	13076	13%	38%	86%	248%
Pakistan	2146	2409	22%	-3%	-16%	34%
Afghanistan	1820	5411	46%	26%	46%	106%
Ukraine	889	1396	30%	17680%	139500%	42300%
Somalia	862	1582	27%	158%	145%	171%
India	859	488	12%	24%	4%	82%
Yemen	760	1349	23%	79%	116%	183%
Libya	729	690	6%	149%	196%	207%
Nigeria	713	7774	20%	107%	286%	241%
Philippines	597	472	33%	-8%	9%	212%
Thailand	423	192	6%	-11%	-24%	-31%
Egypt	346	338	22%	9%	39%	85%
Syria[2]	326	3301	27%	17%	112%	908%
Israel	293	49	33%	692%	2350%	-
Colombia	230	143	11%	56%	6%	167%
Lebanon	204	115	13%	69%	-39%	-57%
Sudan	157	546	40%	241%	148%	76%
West Bank / Gaza Strip	135	67	30%	111%	458%	233%
Bangladesh	129	37	5%	-7%	270%	-
Kenya	115	315	8%	46%	53%	39%

Consistent with patterns from 2013 and 2012, Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan experienced the most terrorist attacks by a wide margin. However, while the frequency and lethality of terrorism increased in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2014, in Pakistan both the number of terrorist attacks (-3%) and the total number of fatalities (-16%) decreased.

[2] Given the limitations of media coverage in Syria, the data presented here are conservative estimates of terrorism in Syria. Consistent with START's practice of including in the GTD only those attacks that have been verified by at least one well-regarded source, these statistics represent those incidents that were reported by independent news outlets.

Among the 20 countries that experienced the most terrorist attacks in 2014, three were not among the top 20 in 2013. Most notably, while Ukraine experienced relatively few terrorist attacks in 2013, a growing conflict in the region involved hundreds of terrorist attacks in 2014. Violent attacks in Ukraine in 2014 primarily targeted the military (55%), private citizens and property (15%), government buildings and personnel (6%), police (5%), businesses (4%), transportation infrastructure (4%), and journalists and media targets (4%). These attacks resulted in more than 1,300 fatalities, including more than 400 perpetrator fatalities, and nearly 300 passengers who were killed when members of the Donetsk People's Republic purportedly launched a surface-to-air missile at a Malaysia Airlines commercial flight.

In addition, both Israel and Sudan experienced very large relative increases in number and lethality of terrorist attacks between 2013 and 2014. In Israel, one-third (33%) of all fatalities from terrorist attacks were perpetrator fatalities, and 61 percent of all fatalities were caused by attacks targeting the military. The most active perpetrator organizations in Israel were Hamas (51%), Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (10%), and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (9%).
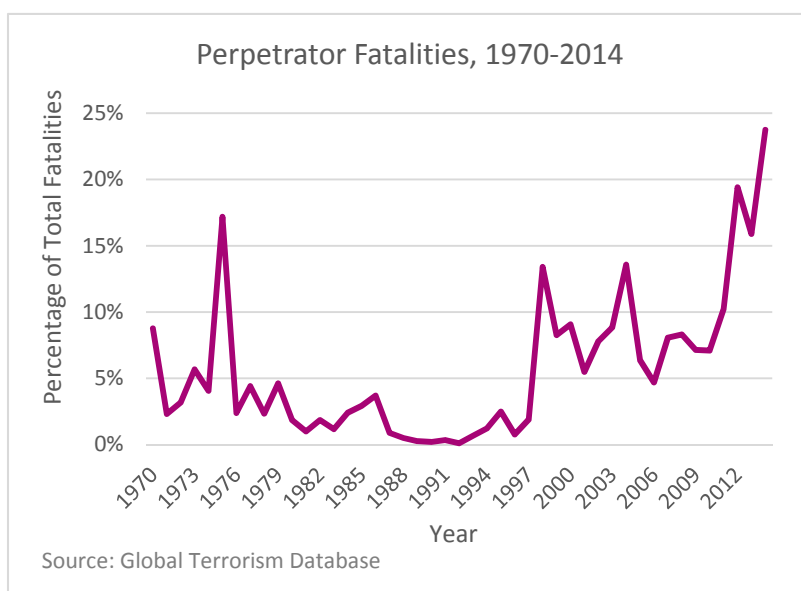
In Sudan, violence primarily targeted private citizens and property (39%) and refugee camps (15%), and military targets (7%). Nearly two-thirds (65%) of the attacks in Sudan were attributed to the Janjaweed militia. A particularly large proportion (40%) of the fatalities caused by terrorist attacks in Sudan were perpetrator fatalities. This is in part due to a single attack in which members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement- North attacked Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in Alatmur, resulting in the deaths of more than 100 assailants.

Countries that were ranked among those with the most terrorist attacks in 2013, but not in 2014 include Russia (which saw a 68% decrease in attacks and a 55% decrease in fatalities), Nepal (93% decrease in attacks; 100% decrease in fatalities), and the United Kingdom (25% decrease in attacks; 100% decrease in fatalities.
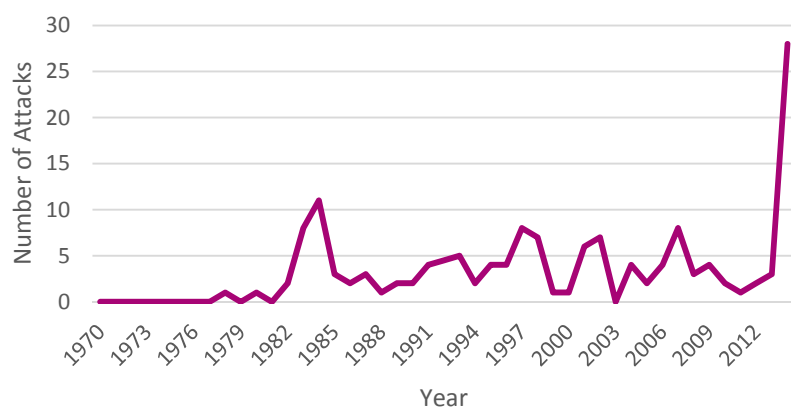
CASUALTIES

Several new trends emerged with respect to casualties of terrorist attacks in 2014. In particular, the proportion of total fatalities that were perpetrator fatalities (24%) is the highest recorded since collection of the GTD began in 1970. Perpetrator fatalities are a result of several different scenarios: suicide attacks in which the perpetrators intend to kill themselves; accidental deaths of perpetrators killed while attempting to carry out an attack; or attacks, targeting either combatants or non-combatants, in which security forces respond and a clash ensues.

Perpetrator Fatalities, 1970-2014

Source: Global Terrorism Database

In 2014, 39 percent of the attacks in which perpetrators were killed were suicide attacks, compared to 51 percent in 2013 and 42 percent in 2012. Of the remaining attacks, 45 percent targeted the military, and 30 percent targeted police. Among countries that experienced at least 50 fatalities from terrorist attacks in 2014, those with the highest proportion of perpetrator fatalities were Uganda (77% of 98 fatalities), Cameroon (73% of 788 fatalities), China (50% of 322 fatalities), and Afghanistan (46% of 5,411 fatalities).

A second trend regarding casualties in 2014 pertains to the frequency of extreme mass-fatality terrorist attacks. Worldwide, the number of attacks involving more than 100 fatalities increased to 28, from three in 2013. These attacks took place in Nigeria (9 attacks), Iraq (7), Syria (4), Cameroon (3), Ukraine (2), South Sudan (1), Sudan (1), and Pakistan (1). The most common perpetrator organizations were Boko Haram (11 attacks) and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; 11). Combined, these 28 attacks caused more than 7,300 fatalities (17% of all fatalities worldwide throughout 2014), including more than 2,000 perpetrator fatalities (20% of all perpetrator fatalities worldwide throughout 2014).

Terrorist Attacks Causing More Than 100 Fatalities, 1970-2014

Source: Global Terrorism Database

Several attacks in 2014 were the deadliest attacks in recent history. For example, in June, ISIL claimed responsibility for an attack in which assailants seized a prison in Badush, Iraq, and killed 670 Shi'a prisoners, while freeing Sunni prisoners. Also in June, members of ISIL abducted and killed at least 1,500 Iraqi soldiers at Camp Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq. In August, ISIL assailants attacked Yazidi civilians in Sinjar, Iraq, killing at least 500 and abducting 300 others, many of whom were ultimately released in 2015.

PERPETRATORS

Perpetrator Organization	Total Attacks 2014	Total Fatalities 2014	% Change Total Attacks 2013-2014	% Change Total Fatalities 2013-2014
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) / AQI	1263	9596	179%	411%
Taliban	1038	4194	34%	53%
Al-Shabaab	865	1783	170%	141%
Boko Haram	493	7112	111%	311%
Donetsk People's Republic	325	1005	-	-
New People's Army (NPA)	291	190	36%	22%
Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	285	889	99%	140%
Communist Party of India - Maoist / Maoists	324	204	52%	-1%
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	179	974	13%	30%
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	163	88	54%	-19%
Huthis	134	234	538%	284%
Luhansk People's Republic	110	173	-	-
Baloch Republican Army (BRA)	103	52	312%	79%
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM)	88	98	31%	72%
Al-Nusrah Front	82	838	82%	19%
Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist)	70	88	49%	1%
Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)	66	71	6500%	3450%
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	61	21	190%	50%
National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)	60	57	200%	50%
Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (Ansar Jerusalem)	60	157	329%	214%

The table above shows the 20 perpetrator organizations that carried out the most terrorist attacks in 2014. ISIL and the Taliban were responsible for the most terrorist attacks in 2014, with 28 percent of all attacks for which a perpetrator organization was identified. These organizations, along with Boko Haram, were also responsible for an increasingly disproportionate number of fatalities—59 percent of all fatalities caused by attacks in which a perpetrator organization was identified, compared to 46 percent in 2013.
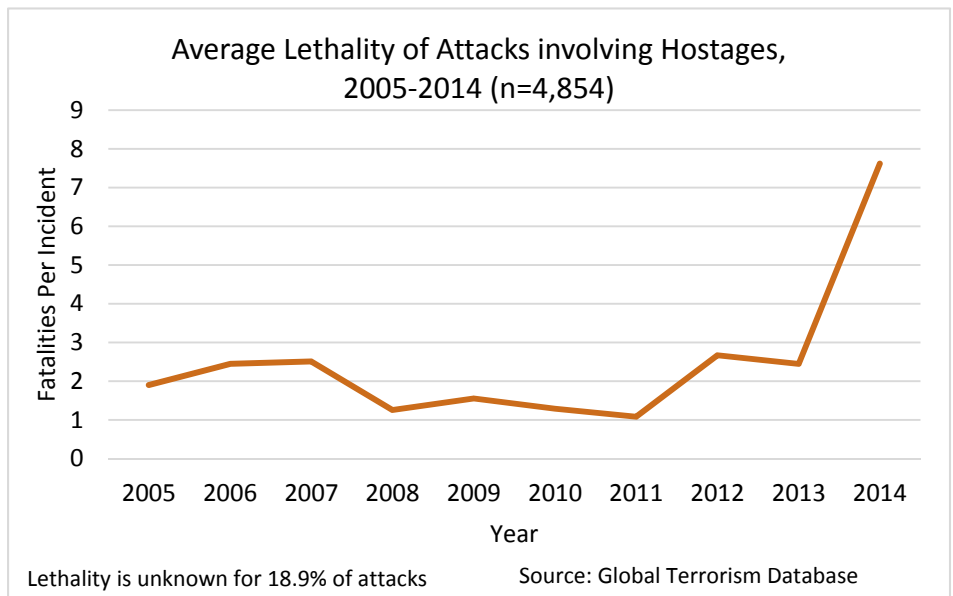
All of the top-ranked perpetrator organizations underwent substantial increases in terms of frequency of terrorist violence between 2013 and 2014. Although responsible for relatively fewer attacks, Hamas was attributed responsibility for 66 attacks in 2014, compared to only one in 2013. Only two organizations decreased the lethality of their terrorist activity: the Communist Party of India- Maoist (1% decrease in total fatalities) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC; 19% decrease in total fatalities).

While many of these organizations, including the New People's Army (NPA), FARC, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have been active for many years, if not decades, two new perpetrator organizations emerged in 2014 and immediately became highly active. The Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, both active in Ukraine, carried out bombings (38%), armed assaults (31%), kidnappings (15%), and facility/infrastructure attacks (9%) beginning in April 2014. The Donetsk People's Republic was attributed responsibility for more than 1,000 total fatalities, including the deaths of nearly 300 passengers killed by a surface-to-air missile launched at a Malaysia Airlines commercial flight.
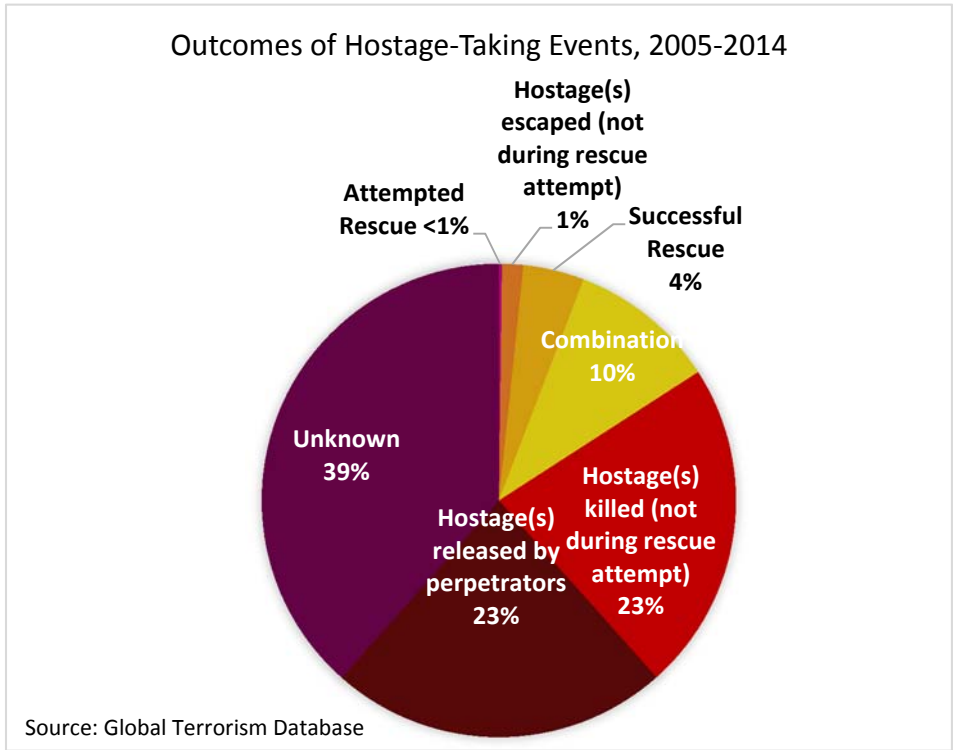
HOSTAGES

The past decade witnessed the continued, and at times rapid, increase in the number of terrorist attacks involving hostages or kidnap victims. From 1970 to 2004, there were on average 149 attacks per year that involved hostages. From 2005-2014, that number rose to an average of 485 hostage-taking events per year, a 225% increase. 2014 in particular was a watershed year for attacks involving hostages. There were more than 1,400 such incidents during the year, in which more than 11,800 people were kidnapped or held hostage. This represents a 121% increase in hostage-taking events between 2013 and 2014, and a 253% increase in the total number of hostages during this time period.

Despite the increase in the number of kidnappings and hostage taking events since 2005, the average fatality per attack of incidents involving hostages remained relatively stable between 2005 and 2013. This pattern changed significantly in 2014, however, when the average number of individuals killed in attacks involving hostages rose to more than 7 per attack. This increase was driven by a number of mass-fatality events involving hostages that took place during the year, including the attack on Camp Speicher Iraq in June by members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 Iraqi soldiers.

Average Lethality of Attacks involving Hostages, 2005-2014 (n=4,854)

Lethality is unknown for 18.9% of attacks   Source: Global Terrorism Database

Although hostage-taking and kidnapping events can end in a variety of ways, certain outcomes tend to be far more prevalent than others. From 2005 through 2014, there were more than 4,800 terrorist attacks that involved hostages, 61 percent of which have known outcomes. Of those, the majority ended when the perpetrators of the attacks either released or killed the hostages. In fact, during the past decade, the rate at which hostages were either released or killed by their captors was nearly identical (1,118 incidents ended when the hostages were released, while 1,091 ended when the victims were killed). Combination outcomes—incidents in which the hostages suffered a variety of fates (e.g. some were released while others were killed)—were the next most common during this period (487 incidents).

Outcomes of Hostage-Taking Events, 2005-2014

Source: Global Terrorism Database

In comparison to other outcome types, operations to rescue hostages occurred fairly infrequently during the past decade. However, when attempted, it was far more common for rescue operations to be successful (201 incidents) than it was for them to be outright failures (10 incidents). Rescue operations that ended in the deaths of the hostages represent less than 1 percent of all known hostage outcomes since 2005. It was also comparatively rare during this period for hostages to escape from their captors (70 total incidents). The remaining 39 percent of incidents (1,862) involving hostages in the GTD for this period have unknown outcomes. These events are either still ongoing or their outcomes were not reported by the news media.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The data presented here are drawn from START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and reports from news media. The GTD contains information on more than 140,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

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