

## Security Implications of ISIS Discussed at Jerusalem Forum

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Jerusalem, Israel—The Jerusalem Peace and Security Forum gathered on April 27, 2015 to discuss the implications of and the security dangers Israel faces with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria’s (ISIS) expansion in the Middle East.

Mr. David Tzur, director general of the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center (IICC) and former commander of Israel’s Intelligence Corps, welcomed the attendees to the Center, where the event took place, and spoke about its origins and activities.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Reuven Ehrlich, head of the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the IICC. Dr. Erlich is also a lecturer for intelligence studies and was a deputy coordinator for Lebanese Affairs for the Israeli government, during which time he served as a member of the Israeli delegation to bilateral peace talks with Lebanon. Dr. Erlich spoke about ISIS’ origins in Iraq, its sources of financing, its vision, the United States’ campaign against ISIS, and the implications of ISIS’ expansion on the security of Israel (a summary of his presentation follows this report).

Professor Eliezer Glaubach, president of the Peace and Security Forum, concluded the meeting by saying that ISIS’ ideology attracts so many young people because it gives hope to frustrated second and third generation European-Muslims. Professor Glaubach also highlighted how ISIS is using media, including social media, to spread itself.



## **ISIS - The "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant"** **by Dr. Reuven Erlich**

ISIS is an Islamic Salafist-Jihadist organization. Salafism is an extremist Sunni political-religious movement within Islam that seeks to restore the golden era of the dawn of Islam through the establishment of a supranational Islamic state that would be ruled by Islamic law (Sharia law) in its most extreme interpretation. According to ISIS' vision, the future Islamic Caliphate will include vast stretches of North Africa, Asia and the Caucasus, as well as parts of Europe that were once under Muslim rule, such as Spain and the Balkans.

### Main Characteristics of ISIS:

ISIS has a large arsenal of weapons, most of it plundered from the Syrian and Iraqi armies. Today, ISIS controls territories containing between five to six million people. In the areas under its control, ISIS instituted alternative educational, judicial, and law enforcement administrations to the ones that existed. ISIS has an estimated 30,000 operatives in Syria and Iraq, and this number is growing.

### Financial Capabilities:

In Syria and Iraq, ISIS took control of the state infrastructure, including oil fields in eastern Syria and several oil fields in Iraq. This is significant as the export of petroleum products is the main source of ISIS' income, and its profits are estimated to be several million dollars a day.

### Establishment of Global Jihad in the Middle East:

ISIS' successes in Syria and Iraq transformed them into a new focus for the global jihad—supplanting the place of Afghanistan and Pakistan. It appears that the foothold gained by ISIS and the global jihad in Syria and Iraq both reflects and may aggravate the regional upheaval in the Middle East. Some of the jihadist networks in the Middle East have already taken a stand on and have declared an allegiance to ISIS. ISIS' capacity for subversion and terrorism is likely to destabilize countries in the Middle East and export jihadist terrorism to Israel and the West. Its influence may gradually spread to other Arab states.

### The American Campaign Against ISIS and the ISIS Response:

The Iraqi army, into which the United States invested enormous resources to establish, was exposed as weak, as was the Shiite-affiliated central government in Baghdad, supported by America. The Fall of Mosul, the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate and the significant increase in the number of foreign fighters in Iraq in 2014 prompted a change in American foreign policy that year. Media coverage on the slaughter and executions carried out by ISIS, which horrified and enraged Americans and the West, also contributed to a change in American policy.

On September 10, 2014, US President Barack Obama announced that a comprehensive strategy had been formulated for a campaign against ISIS. The objective of the new strategy was to "degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS. It did not include sending a significant number of ground forces to fight in either Syria or Iraq.

### The Israeli Aspect:

The establishment of ISIS is part of a larger picture of global jihad organizations forming in Syria and Iraq. This poses several threats and dangers to Israel:

The Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula might be turned into active terrorist fronts;

ISIS support for jihadist organizations and networks in the Middle East, especially the countries bordering on Israel, could lead to a strengthening of the operational capabilities of local jihadist organizations;

Cooperation between the United States-led coalition and Iran could occur at Israel's expense and harm Israel's vital interests (for example, interests relating to Iran's concessions on the nuclear issue). In addition, US-Iranian collaboration against ISIS could increase Iranian influence in Syria and Iraq, and might also strengthen Hezbollah's status in Lebanon, which could lead to an overall strengthening of the Iranian-led radical camp in the Middle East.