



### [Violence Breaks Out After an ISIS Attack on a Prison in Syria](#)

A recent ISIS attack on a prison in northeast Syria has elicited concern and raised fears regarding a potential resurgence of the extremist group. Analysts and issue experts point to the sophisticated nature of the incident as an indication that ISIS is growing emboldened again and may still possess the ability to carry out attacks against hard targets. The prison assault marks the largest such one in several years, as more than 100 ISIS militants launched a coordinated attack on the facility located in the Al-Hasakah province which houses over 3,000 prisoners – many of whom are ISIS-affiliated. The course of events appears to have been initiated by the detonation of two car bombs parked along the prison's exterior walls. An attack by outside forces was then coupled with a riot within the prison whereby kitchen staff was taken hostage and the north wing of the prison fell under the control of ISIS. One of the troubling aspects of the assault was that it also forced tens of thousands of nearby residents in the area to flee their homes. Ultimately, U.S.-backed forces in Syria were able to re seize full control of the prison from ISIS in the preceding days.

A United States-supported coalition, comprising mostly of Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) troops, took the prison back on Wednesday of this week. The U.S. aided the SDF with airstrikes and armored ground forces. Human rights groups and organizations have expressed concern over the safety of the young boys inside the prison. The conditions inside the facility for the children being held hostage are disturbing, with Human Rights Watch releasing an audio message of a 17-year-old boy describing the bodies of children around the complex. The prison is believed to house roughly 850 children, some as young as 12. Observers have voiced anger that ISIS fighters used the children as tools in their attack, particularly considering that the situation dragged on for nearly a week until the prison was re-captured.

Though the attack itself did not come as a total surprise, the strength of it seems to have caught U.S.-backed forces off guard. In December of last year, the SDF carried out multiple raids on sleeper cells and captured Mohammed Abid al-Awad, who is an ISIS leader and the chief planner of the attack on the prison. The brazenness of this attack and the resurgence of ISIS could potentially be attributed to the lack of government authorities' ability to remedy social and political ills. Many senior U.S. officials had also been warning for years that the prison was vulnerable to attack, and this past week's assault could lead to increased funding to secure these types of facilities that house ISIS-affiliated prisoners. It may also lead to a renewed effort to combat the resurgence. Other attacks around the region, including the storming of an army post in Iraq and the seizure of a Syrian village, are further evidence that ISIS is once again becoming a legitimate threat, both regionally and nationally.

Analysts have also expressed concern with the fact that many of the ISIS fighters arrested in these attacks were younger and often related to others that are tied to the extremist group. The fear is that this new generation of ISIS militants could be the result of some countries detaining family members of ISIS fighters as well, as these detention camps have become a hotbed for radicalization. This factor combined with the lack of progress on societal issues in Syria under the dictatorial regime could spell the return of ISIS' territorial ambitions.