
ISIS HAS BEEN MILITARILY DEFEATED IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

- 22.11.2017

Business Insider, 21 Nov 2017

The leaders of Iraq and Iran both declared the terrorist group ISIS defeated militarily in Iraq and Syria.

Iraqis and Syrians, with assistance from the US and other regional militias, took their countries back from the terror group that declared its sovereign territory in the summer of 2014.

ISIS still has territory in countries around the world but has been brutally disrupted by a US-backed bombing campaign and advancing ground forces.

Iraqi Prime Minister Hadr Al-Abadi declared military victory over the Islamic State in Iraq on Tuesday, just hours after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced that Iranian-backed forces had driven the terror group out of Syria.

ISIS's last Iraqi town of Rawa fell on Friday, and Abadi only awaits the clearing of a patch of desert along Iraq's border with Syria to declare final victory. Iran posted pictures of one its most famous military leaders in a Syrian border town, indicating Iranian-backed forces had driven the terror group out of the country.

Combine, the two statements from the two leaders amount to long-awaited news: ISIS's territory in Iraq and Syria is gone; the terror group has been defeated.

Iraqi, Kurdish, Syrian, Iranian, Afghani, Lebanese, and scores of other fighters gave their lives over more than three years since ISIS declared its caliphate, or sovereign territory, to be ruled under a brutal interpretation of Islam in the summer of 2014.

ISIS territory Business Insider

The rise and fall of ISIS

Initially, ISIS swept up large swaths of Iraq and neighboring Syria with a surprising military prowess and a potent brand of Sunni extremism, but on Tuesday those nations officially reclaimed their territory.

The US and 67 other nations from around the world formed a coalition to train, equip, and provide air support for the regional forces that confronted ISIS, mostly in Iraq. The US also supported Syrian forces fighting to defeat ISIS. Russia stepped in in late 2015 to provide air support for the Syrian government and allied Iranian militias, mainly backing the regime of President Bashar al-Assad against rebels threatening his rule, but also targeting some ISIS territory.

At its height, ISIS launched international terror attacks in Paris, London, Brussels, and across Asia. But its capability for carrying out such attacks has been hamstrung by the relentless assault on its home territory.

"If we can keep them declining and moving they have less time to sit and prepare," for attacks, Elaine Duke, the acting secretary of Homeland Security, said of terror groups in London last month.

In the span of just three years, ISIS went from attracting thousands of foreign fighters to its anti-Western cause and plotting devastating terror attacks all over the world, to surrendering en masse in their own territory.

Paris attacks

People mourn outside "Le Petit Cambodge" and "Le Carillon" restaurants a week after a series of deadly attacks in the French capital, in Paris, France, November 20, 2015. Benoit Tessier/Retuers

Threat from ISIS remains

But ISIS still controls territory in as many as a dozen other nations, as Libya, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and much of Africa battle their own ISIS cells or ISIS-linked terror groups.

The threat of ISIS remains far from over. Beside the many ISIS cells around the world — as well as ISIS' continued online presence — fighters from the terror group spread around the region and have threatened to return.

In the late days of the US-backed assault on Raqqa, ISIS' Syrian capital, forces partnered with the US allowed thousands of ISIS fighters to flee the city with weapons and ammunition. The fighters, many of them foreign-born, swore to smuggle themselves across borders and commit terror attacks around the world.

Meanwhile, neither Iraq or Syria can count themselves as whole even with the territory reclaimed. In Iraq, the Kurdish minority in the country's northeast voted to break away from Iraq. In Syria, the six-year long civil war continues with only a shaky vision of an end in sight.

Additionally, the preoccupation of the Syrian military with fighting its civil war in the western part of the country left a vacuum for Iranian forces to move in and fight ISIS in the east. It's likely an ISIS-free Syria will feature more Iranian influence, which will unsettle Tehran's regional rivals in Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Kaynak/Source: