

- English

24. Okt. 2016

- von Hakim Khatib
- in Terrorismus
- Kommentare (0)

How Many Foreign Fighters Are In Syria

By Hakim Khatib

It is estimated that a number between 27,000 and 31,000 foreign fighters have been flocking to Iraq and Syria since the breakout of the war in 2011.

An updated assessment of the flow of foreign fighters into Syria and Iraq shows that there is a significant increase in the number of foreign fighters travelling to Syria. Data provided by the [Soufan Group in 2014](#) estimated that the identifiable number of foreign fighters is approximately 12,000 from 81 countries. It was also believed that the number of foreign Jihadists coming from Western countries does not exceed 3000: “Around 2,500 are from Western countries, including most members of the European Union, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand”, according to Soufan’s initial report on [Foreign Fighters in Syria](#). Now the number exceeds 27,000 foreign fighters from at least 86 countries.

Number of Foreign Fighters by Region

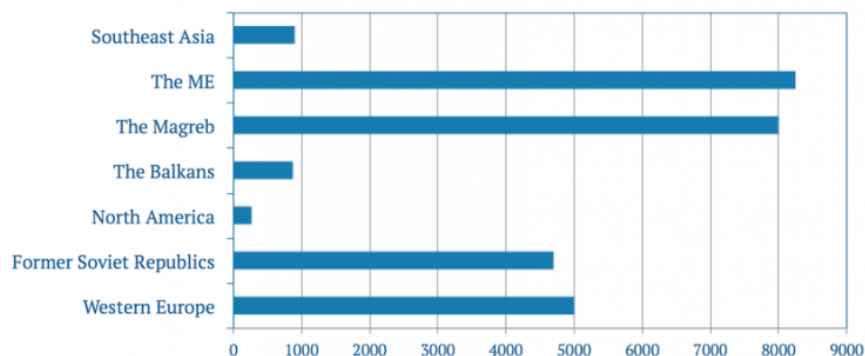


Figure 1: Illustration by the author (based on TSG report)

While the accurate numbers of foreign fighters in Syria are difficult to verify, and so are the numbers of them coming back to their home countries, the CIA spokesman [Ryan Trapani said](#): „This new total reflects an increase in members because of stronger recruitment since June [2014] following battlefield successes and the declaration of a caliphate, greater battlefield activity, and additional intelligence“.

The Soufan Group said that “despite sustained international effort to contain the Islamic State and stem the flow of militants traveling to Syria, the number of foreign fighters has more than doubled”. This shows that the impact of these increased efforts to contain the flow of foreign recruits to extremist groups in Syria is limited.

While some regions in the world witnessed a significant increase in the number of foreign fighters, some other regions witnessed a relative stagnation.

For instance, unlike North America, the number in Western Europe has more than doubled since June 2014. However, according to Soufan Group data the number of foreign fighters has increased in all regions in the world:

- In Western Europe from approximately 2,000 in 2014 to 5000 in 2015;
- in former Soviet republics from approximately 1,000 in 2014 to almost 5000 in 2015;
- in The Maghreb from approximately 5,000 in 2014 to 8,000 in 2015;
- in North America from a couple of hundreds in 2014 to almost 1,000 in 2015;
- in the Middle East from approximately 3000 in 2014 to 8,500 in 2015;
- in Southeast Asia from nearly 100 in 2014 to almost 1,000 in 2015 and in the Balkans from a couple of hundred to over 1,000 in 2015.

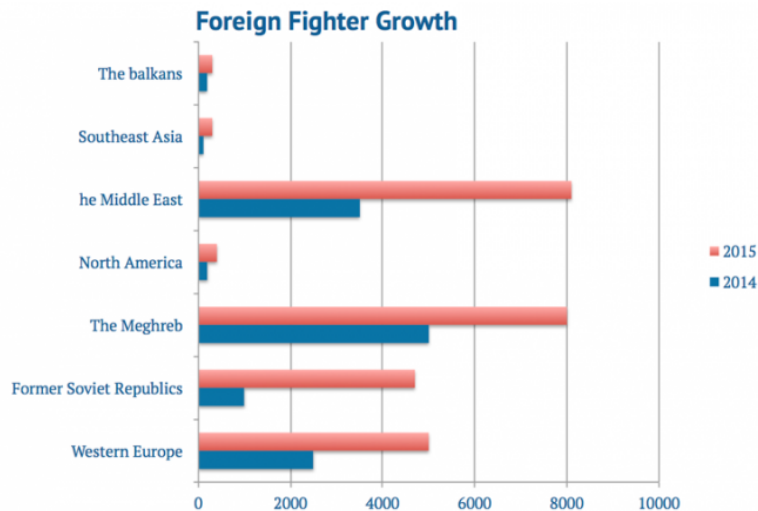


Figure 2: Illustration by the author (based on TSG report)

While Tunisians (6,000), Saudis (2,500), and Jordanians (2,000) in the Middle East and the Maghreb continue to outnumber other national contingents, Russians (2,400) and Turks (2,100) persist to remain on the top of the list.

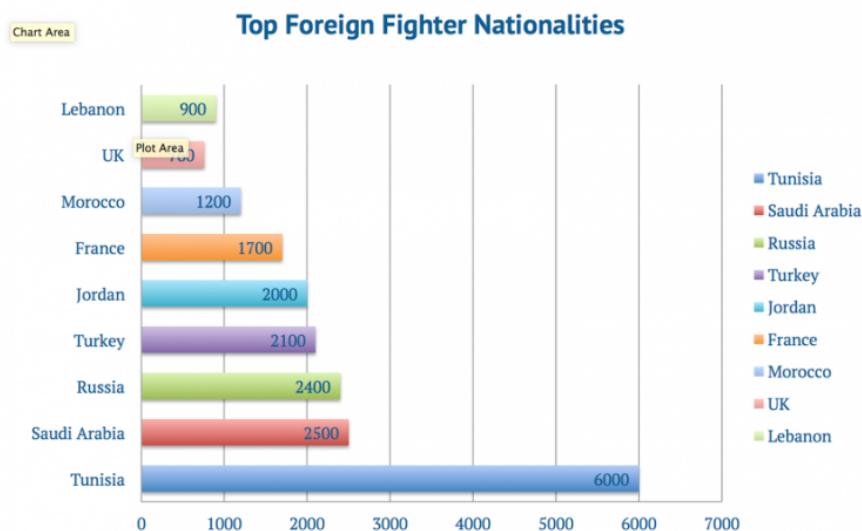


Figure 3: Illustration by the author (based on the TSG report 2015)

According to the same report, the average rate of returnees to Western countries is now at around 20-30%. This poses new security challenges. But what also the report concludes is that “The motivation for people to join violent extremist groups in Syria and Iraq remains more personal than political”.

The Syrian civil war, according to the evaluation of the report, “will not end soon”, and although ISIS is under more pressure than it was in June 2014, “it is likely to survive in some form for a considerable time to come”.

While the report focuses solely on foreign fighters joining extremist groups in Syria and Iraq, there are also thousands of foreign fighters joining the Assad regime coming from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. Should future

investigations estimate approximate numbers of foreign fighters joining all conflicting parties in Syria and Iraq, the numbers could skyrocket to not only outnumber the foreign fighters in the Afghan war but also to double them.

Hakim Khatib is a political scientist works as a lecturer for politics and culture of the Middle East, intercultural communication and journalism at Fulda University of Applied Sciences and Phillips University Marburg. Hakim is a PhD candidate in political science on struggle over ideological power in the Middle East and the link thereof to democracy at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the editor-in-chief of the Mashreq Politics and Culture Journal (MPC Journal).

Tags: [foreign fighters](#), [islamic state](#), [Jihadism](#), [syria](#)

[« Chinas interner Kampf gegen den Terrorismus](#)

Bislang keine Kommentare

Einen Kommentar hinterlassen

Name

Email

Webseite

Kommentar

Ich bin kein Roboter.

reCAPTCHA

[Datenschutzerklärung](#) - [Nutzungsbedingungen](#)

Benachrichtige mich über nachfolgende Kommentare per E-Mail.

Social Media



Suche

Twitter Feed

- How many foreign fighters are there in Syria? Hakim Khatib makea sense of the different numbers floating around <https://t.co/2s2lJUINjr>
[24. Oktober 2016, 10:26](#) from [Twitterrific](#)

- Der nächste Beitrag in unserer Reihe zu Antiterrorstrategien: Chinas interner Kampf gegen den Terrorismus
<https://t.co/zhQYIN8LrL>
19. Oktober 2016, 10:05 from [TweetDeck](#)
- Aus unserem Blogfokus zum Thema Rechtsextremismus ist ein sehr schöner Sammelband bei Transcript geworden
<https://t.co/hcWdtmHMRX>
17. Oktober 2016, 2:04 from [Twitterrific](#)

Tags

BELIEBT KOMMENTARE NEU

Waffenruhe und Flugverbot – ein Plädoyer für klare Worte

Linkhinweis: Berlinangst. Ein Podcast zum Umgang Berlins mit der Terrorbedrohung

Black sheep in a far-right zoo? Fethullah Gülen's strategy of 'non-violence'

Abortion as a contentious issue in Polish Culture war. Women and their rights in nationalists' strategies

Territorialkonflikte im Südchinesischen Meer: Zur globalen Bedeutung des Schiedsgericht-Urteils im Streit zwischen China und den Philippinen

Kategorien

- [Außenpolitik](#) (72)
- [Bürgerkriege](#) (27)
- [Cyber Security](#) (53)
- [Demokratisierung](#) (14)
- [Digitalisierung](#) (1)
- [Drohnen](#) (15)
- [Entwicklung](#) (1)
- [Europa](#) (2)
- [Flüchtlinge](#) (18)
- [Genozid](#) (1)
- [Humanitäre Interventionen](#) (15)
- [Innere Sicherheit](#) (34)
- [Interviews](#) (10)
- [Katastrophen](#) (4)
- [Konferenz](#) (32)
- [Militär](#) (31)
- [Pandemien](#) (3)

- [Podcast](#) (8)
- [Popkultur](#) (23)
- [Raketenabwehr](#) (1)
- [Rechtsradikalismus](#) (27)
- [Sanktionen](#) (8)
- [Security Culture](#) (27)
- [Sicherheits-Kommunikation](#) (16)
- [Sicherheitskultur](#) (244)
- [Sozialwissenschaft Online](#) (72)
- [Stellenangebote](#) (58)
- [Strategie](#) (12)
- [Terrorismus](#) (73)
- [Theorie](#) (5)
- [Umwelt](#) (2)
- [Versicherheitlichung](#) (23)
- [Visualisierung](#) (6)
- [Whistleblowing](#) (8)
- [WikiLeaks](#) (17)
- [WMD](#) (10)
- [Zivilgesellschaft](#) (67)

Blogroll

-  [Arbeitskreis soziale Bewegungen](#)
-  [Augen geradaus](#) [Augen geradaus](#)
-  [Dan Drezner](#)
-  [Dart-Throwing Chimp](#)
-  [David Campbell](#)
-  [de.hypotheses.org](#)
-  [Demokratieforschung Göttingen](#)
-  [Duck Of Minerva](#)
-  [Future and Politics](#)
- [Hylaeon Flow](#)
-  [Internet und Politik](#)
-  [IR Blog](#)
-  [Just Security Blog](#)
-  [justsecurity.org](#)
-  [Killer Apps](#)
- [Kings Of War](#)
- [MPC Journal – Muslim Politics and Culture](#)
-  [netzpolitik.org](#)
- [perception](#)
-  [shabka.org](#)
-  [Terrorismus in Deutschland](#)
-  [theorieblog.de](#)
-  [Verfassungsblog](#) [Verfassungsblog](#)

-  [Vom Bohren harter Bretter](#)
-  [whistleblower-net.de](#)

Archiv

Archiv



Dieses Werk bzw. Inhalt steht unter einer [Creative Commons Namensnennung-NichtKommerziell-KeineBearbeitung 3.0 Unported Lizenz](#).

Über diese Lizenz hinausgehende Erlaubnisse können Sie unter redaktion@sicherheitspolitik-blog.de erhalten

[Impressum](#) | [Datenschutz](#) | 