Policy Forum

The Islamic State's Resurgence in the COVID Era? From Defeat to Renewal in Iraq and Syria

Michael Knights and Aaron Y. Zelin

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Watch a live webcast with two experts on the Islamic State as they assess the current condition and future prospects of the once seemingly defeated movement.



Almost three years since it lost Mosul and more than a year since it last controlled territory, the Islamic State continues to conduct insurgent activities against its adversaries in Iraq and Syria, upending any notion that it has been "defeated." While the group's current status is a far cry from its zenith five years ago or its prior nadir more than a decade ago, the grievances and conditions that animated its resurgence in 2012-2014 remain, and the coronavirus pandemic has opened new opportunities for it to exploit vacuums. How has the group recovered? Where does it plan to go from here? And how will its operations affect local security and the U.S. role in preventing a fuller revival? To discuss these questions, The Washington Institute hosted a virtual Policy Forum with Michael Knights and Aaron Zelin.

Michael Knights, a senior fellow with The Washington Institute, has traveled to Iraq each year since 2003, working on the ground alongside security forces and militias. He regularly briefs U.S. policymakers, congressional committees, and military officers on regional security affairs.

Aaron Zelin, the Institute's Richard Borow Fellow, is a visiting research scholar at Brandeis University, author of the new book <u>Your Sons Are at Your Service: Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad</u>, and founder of the widely cited website <u>Jihadology.net</u> and its podcast, <u>JihadPod</u>.

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