



Imagen obtenida de Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. (3 de Enero de 2022). ISIS' first attack in 2022, 25 regime soldiers and militias killed and wounded in ambush near oil stations in desert. Obtenido de SOHR: <https://www.syrianhr.com/en/233035>

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH ISIS?

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In 2019, the Kurdish forces proclaimed the territorial defeat of the terrorist organization ISIS, after the fall of their last bastion in Baghuz. However, there remained the sleeper cells, hidden in sympathizer places. Besides, there are more than 10.000 prisoners in Syria and Iraq, among them there also foreign fighters, and there are as well more than 75.000 women and children captive in detention camps, such as the Al-Hawl and Al-Roj<sup>1</sup>. They are all affiliated to ISIS and its ideology, that's why they are considered by experts as a "time bomb".

Almost three years later, in January 2022, the remanent caliphate has resurged in Syria. The aim of the attack was the liberation attempt of hundreds of jihadists prisoners from one of the penitentiaries under control of the Syrian Democratic Forces, the one situated in Al-Hasakah, at the northeast of Syria, in order to recruit the 3.500 exfighters to join the sleeper cells and reestablish what they were once.

To achieve the jailbreak, they detonated a petrol tanker, provoking the intervention of the American special forces, especially with the support of airstrikes. Dozens of jihadists prisoners managed to

<sup>1</sup> Sancha, N. (3 de Agosto de 20 19). Día cero tras la derrota del califato en Siria. *El País*.

escape from prison after the bomb attack, while others managed to snatch the guards' weapons and entrenched itself<sup>2</sup> with children as hostages and human shields<sup>3</sup>. The attack lasted six long days provoking more than 200 casualties<sup>4</sup>.

After this attack, in February 2022, a special operation from the US was planned and ended with the death of top ISIS leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, in the Syrian rebel enclave of Idlib. As Joe Biden stressed, the leader blew himself up in order not to be caught by the American forces and face justice for the crimes he committed, provoking the death of 13 people, including several of his family members<sup>5</sup>.

Despite that, experts stress that the prison attack is a clearly indicative of the renewed strength of the terror group<sup>6</sup> and that they will reappear, with a new leader again. In fact, they claim that there are already candidates to occupy the post. One of those is Abu Yasser al-Issawi, allegedly dead by an airstrike, who has hundreds of followers and a considerable experience in planning military attacks<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Sanz, J. (23 de Enero de 2022). El ISIS emerge en Siria con el mayor ataque desde su derrota en 2019. El País.

<sup>3</sup> Sanz, A. (31 de Enero de 2022). Asalto a la prisión de Al Sina plantea la reaparición del Daesh. Atalayar.

<sup>4</sup> Sanz, J. (26 de Enero de 2022). El ISIS despierta a sangre y fuego con el prolongado asalto a una cárcel en Siria. El País.

<sup>5</sup> Macías, A. (3 de Febrero de 2022). ISIS leader dies during U.S. counterterrorism raid in Syria, White House says. CNBC.

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<sup>7</sup> Gómez, E. (10 de Febrero de 2022). El Daesh se prepara para nombrar a su nuevo líder. Atalayar.