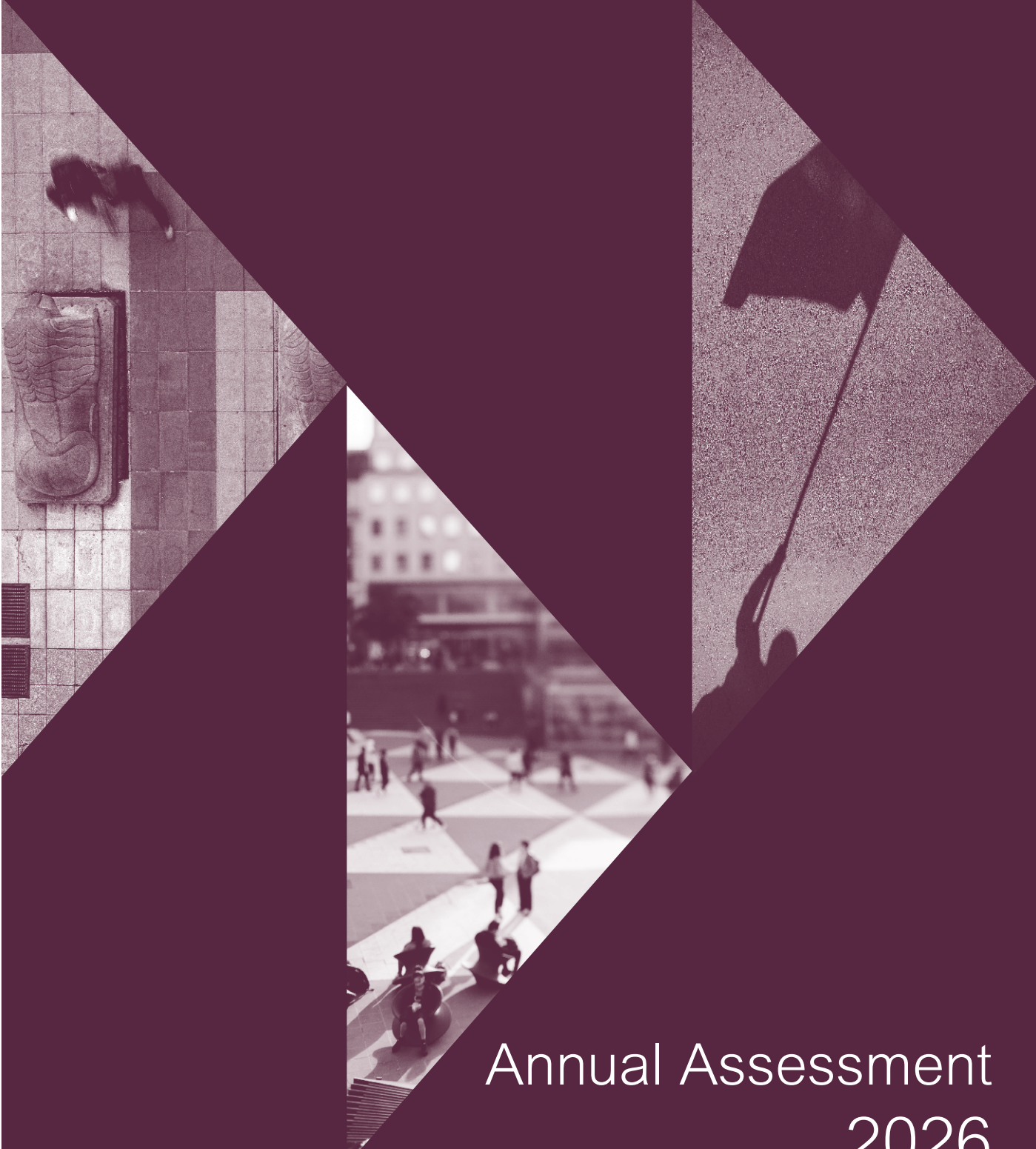


**NCT** National Centre for Terrorist  
Threat Assessment



Annual Assessment  
2026

# Content

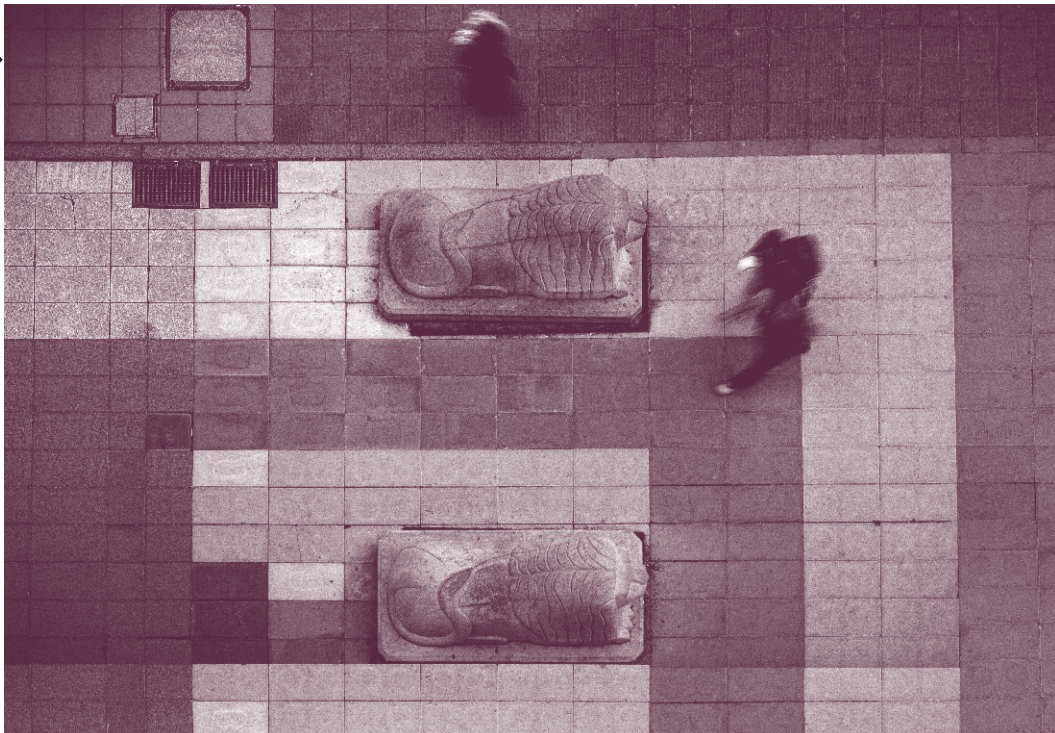
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The National Centre for Terrorist Threat Assessment (NCT) is staffed by personnel from the National Defence Radio Establishment, the Military Intelligence and Security Service, and the Swedish Security Service. Each year, the NCT presents a strategic assessment of the terrorist threat to Sweden and Swedish interests abroad. This report is a one-year assessment for the year 2026.



## Summary

- In May 2025, the terrorist threat level in Sweden was reduced from high (4) to elevated (3). The terrorist threat to Sweden remains at the elevated level. The terrorist attack threat to Sweden in 2026 will predominantly continue to be posed by violent Islamists and violent right-wing extremists.
- The main threat-inducing factor is actors in the West who consume and spread propaganda and other violent narratives online. This type of content serves as a source of inspiration, and affects the immediate threat of terrorist attacks. It also serves as a basis for radicalising and recruiting individuals to violent extremism.
- Even if most actors belong to a digital community, it is highly likely that actors will continue to plan and carry out attacks individually or in small groups. It is highly likely that simple means, such as bladed weapons, would be used to carry out attacks.
- The terrorist threat continues to be characterised by ideological diversification, which entails that actors' participation in extremist contexts is not driven by the same deep-rooted and uniform ideology as before. Individual motives for terrorist attacks are thus increasingly common, as are actors creating and disseminating their own propaganda.
- Terrorist organisations still have a general intent to conduct terrorist attacks in the West. However, several terrorist organisations prioritise activities in other parts of the world. The terrorist threat is also hampered by a limited capability to conduct what is referred to as directed and guided attacks in the West, i.e. the capability of the terrorist organisations to provide concrete help in planning and designing attacks.
- With the 2026 Swedish general election, it is expected that violent extremists will attempt to exploit the attention given to various issues in order to fuel radicalisation. However, it is unlikely that the election year will lead to an increase in activity aimed at planning or carrying out terrorist attacks.
- State actors continue to conduct plausibly deniable violence against targets in the West. In an isolated number of cases, such attacks may be tried under Swedish terrorism legislation. Conditions for future terrorist attacks may also arise from contacts and modi operandi originating from cases of less serious use of violence.



## The terrorist threat to Sweden

Several external events in recent years continue to directly or indirectly affect the terrorist threat to Sweden. For example, terrorist organisations have been taking advantage of the inadequate or non-existent state functions in a number of African countries in order to further establish themselves or develop their activities. In certain regions of Africa, terrorist organisations have managed to establish a state-like presence.

The security situation in the Middle East continues to be affected by the conflict between Israel and Hamas and other terrorist organisations supported by Iran. The power shift in Syria has also affected the security situation in the region. Terrorist organisations and state actors have been taking advantage of the situation to benefit their own interests, which has led, among other things, to an increase in the threat to Jewish and Israeli interests in the West<sup>1</sup>. Simultaneously, the war in Ukraine has resulted in a substantial deterioration of the security situation in Europe, and Sweden's vicinity. Russia has, among other things, planned and carried out sabotage against targets in the West in order to affect support to Ukraine.

Over the course of the 2020s, the nature of the terrorist threat has also changed, particularly in terms of the underlying motives of lone perpetrators. This can be seen in e.g. the ideological diversification that has continued to characterise the terrorist threat. Because of this diversification, actors are not driven by the same deep-rooted and uniform ideology as before but are increasingly driven by individual motives. The situation is further complicated by the fact that both ideologically-motivated actors and state actors may take advantage of the wide extent of organised crime in order to e.g. gain access to weapons or to engage in plausibly deniable violence.

Overall, these developments clearly show that the terrorist threat is a part of a broader security threat. The converging nature of the various types of threats shows how complex the problem is.

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of the West refers in this report to parts of Europe (i.e. the EU, the EES, Switzerland and the UK), the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In the assessment of the terrorist threat, the occurrence of actor convergence, i.e. actors bridging the gap between each other in various ways, has also been noted. This convergence occurs e.g. when terrorist organisations act like states, and when states use terrorism as a modus operandi, often by proxies. Actors with various underlying motives are also taking advantage of the same topical issues and events around the world in order to promote their own goals and, in certain cases, legitimise attacks.

In Sweden, this convergence became clear in 2023 when the terrorist threat to Sweden increased due to international developments.<sup>2</sup> In light of Hamas' large-scale terrorist attack against Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, the violent Islamist propaganda shifted focus from the Qur'an burnings and Sweden to the conflict that had flared up in the Middle East. Because of this, the terrorist threat to Sweden gradually decreased in 2024. Partly because this decrease was assessed to be relatively permanent, the terrorist threat level in Sweden was reduced from high (4) to elevated (3) in May 2025.

Established organisations, including terrorist organisations, no longer have the same degree of control over individual actors and the ideological rhetoric that is spread in violent contexts. However, the influence of terrorist organisations is still evident, particularly because the actors continue to refer to the names of the organisations, official propaganda, and previous attacks.

In 2026, the main terrorist threat to Sweden is still posed by lone violent Islamist and violent right-wing extremist actors. Such actors derive inspiration for terrorist attacks from propaganda and other violent narratives. Online contact with like-minded individuals also contributes to radicalisation.

Terrorist organisations still have a general intent to conduct terrorist attacks in the West. However, several terrorist organisations prioritise activities in other parts of the world. The terrorist threat is also hampered by a limited capability to conduct what is referred to as directed and guided attacks in the West, i.e. the capability of the terrorist organisations to provide concrete help in planning and designing attacks.

## **Modi operandi and target choices**

When violent extremists plan terrorist attacks, there is often a high number of possible targets of symbolic value. It is often difficult to link actual terrorist attack planning to specific propaganda, even though there are times when the same targets feature in both the propaganda and in actual attack planning.

Since October 2023, Jewish and Israeli interests have been particularly pointed out as targets in violent Islamist propaganda. The number of attacks against these targets has also increased. Jewish and Israeli interests will likely be pointed out in the propaganda in 2026 as well.

Frequent target choices of violent Islamists include Christians and LGBTQ+ individuals, individuals who are perceived to be anti-Islamic, politicians, and people who work in the defence sector and the judicial system. Places that represent these interests are also mentioned as target choices. However, the majority of the Islamist-motivated terrorist attacks that have actually taken place over time were carried out against randomly selected individuals in public places.

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2 In 2023, Sweden was in the process of acceding to NATO while Qur'an burnings, as well as protests against alleged irregularities in the enforcement of the Care of Young Person Act (The "LVU" Act 1990:52 containing special provisions governing the care of young persons). Violent Islamist actors took advantage of the situation to suit their own interests, and singled out Sweden and Swedish interests as a potential target for terrorist attacks. These incidents/events were thus a factor that increased the terrorist threat, but they also had other repercussions, in that various actors, including states, used them to suit their own agendas. This included directing threats and violence against the Swedish social services during the "LVU campaign" (a disinformation campaign against the above-mentioned "LVU" Act, in which it was claimed that the Swedish Social Services were kidnapping Muslim children and taking them into state care). It also included mounting cyberattacks against targets in Sweden, while protests and violence against Swedish embassies were being carried out, in response to the Qur'an burnings.



Violent right-wing extremists plan and carry out terrorist attacks mainly against people perceived to be immigrants, Muslims, or Jews. Their other target choices include LGBTQ+ individuals, politicians, and people who work in the defence sector and the judicial system. Terrorist attacks against such individuals often occur in public places, particularly ones that are closely associated with the target choices.

Regardless of the ideological conviction of the actor, the modi operandi used for terrorist attacks is similar. In the planning stage, mention is often made of a number of different modi operandi, including firearms and explosives. However, in the last five years, the percentage of terrorist attacks in Europe that have been carried out with firearms has decreased while the percentage carried out with bladed weapons has increased. Currently, most terrorist attacks are carried out with bladed weapons, regardless of the motive behind the attack. Vehicle attacks do occur but are less common and are mainly carried out by violent Islamists.

Despite this development, the assessment is that those who plan terrorist attacks will still have the intent to use firearms to carry out the attacks. Terrorist attacks carried out with firearms are more fatal than attacks carried out with bladed weapons, both in terms of the likelihood of fatalities and the number of fatalities. In Europe, only a small percentage of the firearms used in terrorist attacks were acquired legally. Illegal weapons are usually acquired in the same manner as they are in criminal environments, meaning that actors who use firearms generally have a background or contacts in criminal environments. Weapons and weapons parts may also be produced by 3D printers. The interest in using 3D printers in this way has particularly been noted among violent right-wing extremists.

In recent years, technological developments have also led to drones now being used for a wide variety of purposes in society and in conflicts around the world. Despite this, drones have only been involved in a small number of cases of terrorist attack planning in the West. The intent has sometimes been to equip drones with explosives and use them as weapons. The use of drones that have been modified to carry weapons is however limited by actors' generally low level of knowledge about, and access to, explosives. It is assessed that drones will increasingly be used as a tool for reconnaissance of intended targets. Drones can also be equipped with mock devices or harmless chemical substances for intimidation purposes, or be used for other types of public disturbances or sabotage. While the use of drones is not limited to any specific environment or age group, it is mainly young actors that include this particular technology in attack planning.

## Motives

In 2025, thirteen terrorist attacks motivated by violent Islamism were carried out in the West and an additional fifteen attacks were thwarted, including one in Sweden<sup>3</sup>. The number of both successful and thwarted terrorist attacks is therefore in line with the statistics from the last two years. In most of the terrorist attacks that were motivated by violent Islamism in 2025, the suspected perpetrators were acting on their own after having consumed Islamic State propaganda or after having shown support for the ideology of the Islamic State. Besides Islamic State-associated motivators, actors have also been motivated by perceived insults of Islam or by the war in Gaza.

In 2025, three terrorist attacks motivated by violent right-wing extremism were carried out in the West and an additional nine attacks were thwarted. This is an increase from 2024. However, the number of successful and thwarted terrorist attacks with a right-wing extremist motive was particularly low that year. Terrorist attacks motivated by right-wing extremism are also planned and carried out mainly by lone perpetrators or, in certain cases, by relatively small groups. In several of the successful and thwarted terrorist attacks, actors have referred to, consumed, or spread accelerationist propaganda. Such propaganda encourages people to carry out acts of violence against society, the system as a whole, and minority groups. The aim of doing so is to accelerate a collapse of society that would enable the establishment of an ethnically homogeneous society. In cases where there is no indication that the actor has consumed accelerationist propaganda, violent narratives about immigration – and along with this a perceived Islamisation of society and increased crime – are a recurring motive behind successful and thwarted attacks.

As was the case last year, terrorist attacks have also been carried out by individuals motivated by specific issues with a more or less evident ideological influence. In 2025, nine such terrorist attacks were carried out in the West, and an additional one was thwarted. A small number of the terrorist attacks that were motivated by the war in Gaza were carried out by actors that had no links to violent Islamism or any of the parties involved in the conflict. Terrorist attacks have also been carried out by actors motivated by violent misogyny, Christianity, or resistance to modern society.

### **The terrorist threat and the 2026 general election**

Violent extremists often concern themselves with issues and developments that are reflected in the broader political debate. As far as violent Islamists are concerned, Qur'an burnings and a perceived support for Israel in the conflict with Hamas are themes that they incorporate into their overall narrative in which Sweden and the West are portrayed as anti-Islam. Similarly, violent right-wing extremists include immigration, integration, and criminality in their narrative about Sweden and the perceived decline of the West.

Issues that may potentially be incorporated into existing violent narratives might become part of the broader political debate in the 2026 election year, in which case violent extremists in Sweden would likely take advantage of the attention that these issues receive<sup>4</sup> likely in order to fuel radicalisation. For violent right-wing extremist actors, this may possibly result in an increase in offences like property damage or threats to and assault of ideological opponents or people perceived to be immigrants of non-European origin or Muslims. As a reaction to increased activity among violent right-wing extremist actors, it is also possible that violent left-wing extremist actors will become somewhat more active. However, it is unlikely that the election year will evoke an increase in activity associated with planning and carrying out terrorist attacks.

3 Stockholm City Court judgment on the 21 January 2026 in case no. B 2819-25

4 Islamist actors could for example present a picture in which the freedom of expression of pro-Palestinian demonstrators is limited, while right-wing extremist actors could present a picture in which the freedom of expression within their own ranks is limited in regards to migration and crime.



# Factors affecting the terrorist threat to Sweden

## Propaganda and violent narratives

It is highly likely that the main threat-inducing factor for the terrorist threat to Sweden in 2026 is actors in the West who, together with like-minded individuals, consume and spread propaganda and other violent narratives. The specific way in which this process affects the threat is by encouraging or inspiring actors to plan and carry out attacks. The contexts in which propaganda is spread and discussed also serve as a platform for radicalisation and recruitment of individuals into violent extremism.

In this process, terrorist organisations, especially the Islamic State, remain relevant. Terrorist organisations use propaganda for the purpose of drawing attention to their own successes and asserting their position among other actors. For example, the Islamic State has, in its official propaganda in recent years, placed special emphasis on its advances on the African continent. Measures were taken in 2024 to reduce the official propaganda of the Islamic State<sup>5</sup>. In the following months, Islamic State propaganda and its readership therefore dropped to the lowest level since the fall of the caliphate. In response to this, the Islamic State carried out a series of structural changes in 2025. For instance, it started using new communications platforms<sup>6</sup> that it deemed to be more secure, although these will possibly not succeed in fully replacing the platforms used earlier. The Islamic State has also worked on renewing the content of the propaganda it spreads, by e.g. focusing more on spreading video-based content, with a view to reaching out to new target groups. Because of the setbacks associated with the official propaganda, small fragmented groups of violent Islamists have now taken it upon themselves to spread their own content online.

5 For example, Islamic State propaganda was largely censored on Telegram following the March 2024 attack on Crocus City Hall in Moscow. In addition, websites that had served as archives for Islamic State-related propaganda were closed down that same year.

6 For example, the Islamic State has started to post content on GemSpace, Session, and SimpleX, as alternatives to Telegram.

There will therefore be a likely acceleration of an already ongoing trend in which violent rhetoric is being spread on a wider range of platforms.<sup>7</sup> By adapting content and rhetoric, the actors are able to bypass regulations and post content in a format that appeals to a younger generation, with videos, memes, and references to online games.

Regarding violent right-wing extremist propaganda, there is no central producer. In the violent right-wing extremist digital network Terrorgram<sup>8</sup>, key actors who for several years produced various written content have been prosecuted. This network is therefore no longer producing new manifestos and manuals. The content remains however, and continues to be reposted on various channels in spite of being continually removed from digital platforms. Terrorgram not only encourages terrorist attacks but also property damage as a first step towards more serious use of violence.<sup>9</sup> The focus often lies on “propaganda by the deed”, meaning that sympathisers are encouraged to carry out and document ideologically motivated acts of violence for the purpose of inspiring like-minded individuals. Individuals who have carried out right-wing extremist-motivated terrorist attacks are idolised as “saints”. One intent of the jargon used is to attract young individuals, and it is often similar to that used in the gaming culture, for example, by perpetrators being ranked according to how many people they have killed.

Because radicalisation now mainly takes place online, on platforms where violent content is easily accessible, the radicalisation process may occur quickly and without the need for guidance by more senior mentors. This means that young individuals in the West, including in Sweden, could themselves, at an early stage, assume responsibility for radicalising and recruiting others, by, for example, encouraging others to carry out acts of violence and listing potential *modi operandi* and targets. These actors could pose as representatives of terrorist organisations without actually having any formal links to such organisations. Such a situation would likely lead to an increase in content focusing on specific issues and global developments, rather than on ideological unity which, in turn, would be expected to further increase ideological diversification in the future.

## **Local priorities of international terrorist organisations**

Attempts to use propaganda to motivate individuals in the West to commit terrorist attacks show that organisations such as the Islamic State and al-Qaida have a general attack intent. However, the limited capability of these organisations, and their local priorities in other geographical areas, will have a threat-reducing effect on directed and guided attacks against the West in the coming year.

Instead of sending out individuals who have been trained to carry out terrorist attacks, it is highly likely that the Islamic State, in its attack planning, relies heavily on being able to mobilise actors who are already in the West. An Islamic State province that has previously taken advantage of such contacts in order to enable external terrorist attack planning is the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), whose core geographic area is located in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 2024 and 2025 however, efforts were being made to counter the ISKP in this area, for example by arresting members who had been involved in external terrorist attack planning. This is one of the reasons why the terrorist threat posed by the ISKP

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7 For example, TikTok, Instagram, Discord, and Roblox.

8 Terrorgram is a loosely connected violent right-wing extremist digital network that is mainly active on the Telegram platform. It inspires and instructs users to carry out terrorist attacks and other acts of violence.

9 It has been established that a similar development is taking place in other ideological environments, such as in the violent misanthropic environment, which has members who strive to normalise the production, sharing, and possession of documented sexual exploitation of children and gross acts of violence in order to desensitise and thereby gradually radicalise and recruit children and young people to commit acts of violence, including acts that may be tried as terrorist offences. Such networks could, in turn, be exploited by violent right-wing extremists for the purpose of lowering the threshold for individuals' use of violence.

to Europe has decreased, and it is unlikely that the ISKP will have the capability in 2026 to concretely contribute to external planning of terrorist attacks against the West. Instead, the ISKP will probably prioritise stabilisation of its organisation in the areas in which it operates.

Ever since the power shift in Syria, the Islamic State in Syria has sought to take advantage of the situation and destabilise the new regime in order to strengthen its own position. For example, the Islamic State in Syria has in 2025 shown an intent to conduct terrorist attacks against Syria's new leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, and the Syrian security forces. Terrorist attacks have also targeted ethnic and religious minorities and Western interests, highly likely in order to undermine the current regime. The Islamic State has also carried out terrorist attacks against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in north-eastern Syria. It is highly likely that such targets will continue to be prioritised by the Islamic State in Syria in 2026. It is unlikely that the Islamic State in Syria will, at the same time, have the capability to conduct external terrorist attack planning against the West.

Both the Islamic State and al-Qaida continue to increase their presence in Africa, where their activities are aimed at gaining territorial control and establishing a state which is based on their own interpretation of Sharia laws. For example, Africa is where al-Qaida's strongest regional branches – al-Shabaab (AS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) – are based. In many respects, AS and JNIM serve as both political and military organisations, with the corresponding leadership and organisational structures. Al-Shabaab in Somalia is a particularly clear example of this. It is highly likely that the African branches of the terrorist organisations will pose only a limited terrorist threat to Sweden in 2026. However, because terrorist attacks against Western interests are regarded as legitimate by these terrorist organisations, they do pose a threat to international diplomatic missions.

### **Travellers to conflict zones**

During the year, an isolated number of actors were convicted of having travelled abroad for the purpose of joining the Islamic State in Somalia.<sup>10</sup> Such travel took place following encouragement by the Islamic State to its sympathisers to join its provinces in Africa. Although recruitment of individuals from the West does occur, the Islamic State focuses mainly on local and regional recruitment. Of the actors who have joined the Islamic State provinces in Africa, most come from African countries. It is unlikely that al-Qaida as an organisation holds the same appeal as the Islamic State does for actors in the West. Like the Islamic State however, al-Qaida often has a strategy focused on local recruitment.

If Swedish individuals join local branches of terrorist organisations, this would likely inspire more Swedes to travel to conflict zones, and thereby possibly precipitate terrorist attack planning in Sweden. Regarding actors who have joined violent Islamist groups in conflict zones and subsequently returned to Sweden, these could possibly pose a terrorist attack threat to the West. The most likely scenario in this regard however, is one in which such individuals affect the terrorist threat in the long-term mainly by being actively involved in radicalisation, recruitment, and financing.

### **Efforts by international terrorist organisations to create the conditions needed to operate**

Several terrorist organisations have a strategy which does not involve prioritising terrorist attacks in the West but that instead uses e.g. Europe as a platform for financing, etc. Such activity could partly be carried out via organised crime links and partly via organisations and companies that more or less openly work for the benefit of the terrorist organisation in question.

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<sup>10</sup> Attunda District Court judgment of 14 February 2025 in case no. B 6548-24; Attunda District Court judgment of 18 December 2025 in case no. B 10593-24.



Hamas has no record of having shown any intent to conduct terrorist attacks in Europe. Rather, its efforts have been focused on swaying political opinion in the direction of support for Hamas and obtaining financing. Since 7 October 2023, several intelligence operations have led European authorities to arrest individuals on suspicion of having handled firearms on assignment by Hamas. In at least one of these cases, there is information that the weapons handling was included in the planning for potential terrorist attacks against Israeli or US targets in Europe. In association with these arrests, information emerged about logistics facilitation networks, weapons caches, and collaborations. It is however unlikely that this indicates a strategic shift in Hamas' view about conducting terrorist attacks in Europe in 2026.

Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK) is an organisation that has had a clear non-violence policy in Europe, a policy that has highly likely meant to increase the political support for the PKK and to e.g. have the PKK removed from the EU list of designated terrorist organisations. In May 2025, the PKK leadership made an official decision to dissolve the PKK. The PKK does not currently pose any terrorist attack threat to Sweden, and it is highly unlikely that this will change in 2026.

### **Plausibly deniable state-sponsored violence**

Certain state actors carry out plausibly deniable acts of violence in other countries with the aim of achieving their own strategic goals. This may for instance be a matter of attempting to influence the actions of other states or of intimidating certain groups, e.g. dissidents in the diaspora. When proxies are assigned to carry out acts of violence, the perpetrator is sometimes unaware of who the actual instigator is and/or the actual intent behind the assignment. This is one of the ways that the instigating state attempts to make their involvement in the act plausibly deniable. Considering the harm that such violence may potentially cause, this must nevertheless be taken into account in the assessment of the terrorist threat to Sweden. Conditions for future terrorist attacks may also arise from contacts and *modi operandi* originating from cases of less serious use of violence.

Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian state actors have, with the help of proxies, carried out sabotage in Europe associated with the support going to Ukraine, likely with the aim of negatively affecting this support. There are indications that Russian state actors partly rely on hired perpetrators to carry out or support acts of sabotage in European countries.

Iran has also been known for carrying out or planning acts of violence in Western countries. Due to regional developments after the 7 October 2023 Hamas terrorist attack against Israel, there is now an increased threat from Iran to Jewish and Israeli targets in the West. Besides this, the threat of physical violence against dissidents in the Iranian diaspora remains, and targets particularly movements that Iran perceives as supporting Israel or threatening the Iranian regime in some other way. It is highly likely that if Iran were to conduct acts of violence in Sweden, these would be carried out by proxies, in order to maintain plausible deniability for Iran.

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