

# Syria Spillover: The Growing Threat of Terrorism and Sectarianism in the Middle East

by [Matthew Levitt \(/experts/matthew-levitt\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Articles & Testimony

**The scope of the war's regional fallout will become more apparent in the coming months as radicalized foreign fighters return to their home countries, sectarian strife increases in Lebanon, and massive refugee flows exacerbate public health problems.**

***The following is an excerpt from Dr. Levitt's prepared remarks; download the PDF to read more, or [watch video of the full hearing \(http://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/syria-spillover-the-growing-threat-of-terrorism-and-sectarianism-in-the-middle-east-and-ukraine-update\)](#).***

The war in Syria is a humanitarian catastrophe. It threatens to tear the region apart along sectarian lines. It has injected new oxygen into groups and movements driven by violent Islamist ideologies, including but by no means limited to groups formally associated with al-Qaeda. Indeed, we are now faced with a sharp rise in violent extremism from within both the radical Sunni and Shiite camps.

Over the past few weeks, much of the discussion related to the war in Syria has focused on either diplomatic talks in Switzerland (which appear to be going nowhere fast) or the potential threats to the West in general and the U.S. homeland in particular posed by the Syrian jihad. These are critical issues, to be sure, but I am very pleased that this committee is holding today's hearing on the regional implications of the war in Syria... ❖

*Senate Foreign Relations Committee*



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