



# The Terror Years: From al-Qaeda to the Islamic State

*Lawrence Wright*

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## **The Terror Years: From al-Qaeda to the Islamic State** Lawrence Wright

With the Pulitzer Prize–winning *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright became generally acknowledged as one of our major journalists writing on terrorism in the Middle East. Here, in ten powerful pieces first published in *The New Yorker*, he recalls the path that terror in the Middle East has taken, from the rise of al-Qaeda in the 1990s to the recent beheadings of reporters and aid workers by ISIS.

*The Terror Years* draws on several articles he wrote while researching *The Looming Tower*, as well as many that he's written since, following where and how al-Qaeda and its core cultlike beliefs have morphed and spread. They include a portrait of the “man behind bin Laden,” Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the tumultuous Egypt he helped spawn; an indelible impression of Saudi Arabia, a kingdom of silence under the control of the religious police; the Syrian film industry, at the time compliant at the edges but already exuding a feeling of the barely masked fury that erupted into civil war; the 2006–11 Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza, a study in the disparate value of human lives. Other chapters examine al-Qaeda as it forms a master plan for its future, experiences a rebellion from within the organization, and spins off a growing web of worldwide terror. The American response is covered in profiles of two FBI agents and the head of the intelligence community. The book ends with a devastating piece about the capture and slaying by ISIS of four American journalists and aid workers, and our government's failed response.

On the fifteenth anniversary of 9/11, *The Terror Years* is at once a unifying recollection of the roots of contemporary Middle Eastern terrorism, a study of how it has grown and metastasized, and, in the scary and moving epilogue, a cautionary tale of where terrorism might take us yet.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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