

Israel-Hamas war

FBI says Hamas attack on Israel inspiring 'new level' of terror threat against US

Christopher Wray says both Jewish and Muslim communities are at increased risk



FBI director Christopher Wray told Congress that Hamas's attacks on Israel on October 7 could inspire similar activity on US soil © AFP/Getty Images

Stefania Palma in Washington YESTERDAY

The head of the FBI warned a congressional hearing on Tuesday that the Hamas attack on Israel has given terrorists inspiration “the likes of which we haven’t seen” since the rise of Isis a decade ago.

Christopher Wray told the US Senate committee on homeland security and governmental affairs that while the terrorism threat had been high throughout 2023, “the ongoing [war in the Middle East](#) has raised the threat of an attack against Americans in the United States to a whole other level”.

“We assess that the actions of Hamas and its allies will serve as an inspiration the likes of which we haven’t seen since Isis launched its so-called caliphate years ago,” Wray said.

The director’s comments come amid fierce fighting in the north of the Gaza Strip, as Israel escalates its response to the attack by Hamas militants on October 7, which killed more than 1,400 Israelis. More than 8,500 Palestinians have since been killed in Israel’s bombardment of the strip, according to the Palestinian health ministry in Gaza.

Isis emerged from al-Qaeda groups in Iraq and Syria in 2013, capturing territory and

declaring a caliphate in the region until US, Syrian and Iraqi forces rolled back its gains over the following years.

Wray said the increased security threat stemmed from “multiple foreign terrorist organisations [that] have called for attacks against Americans and the west”. He cited threats from al-Qaeda, Isis and Iran-backed Hizbollah, and highlighted a jump in attacks on US bases overseas.

The US has moved more military capability to the Middle East in a bid to deter more activity by Iranian proxies in reaction to the Israel-Hamas conflict. Earlier this month, a US warship deployed to the region [shot down](#) cruise missiles and several drones fired by Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen that may have been aimed at targets in Israel, according to the Pentagon.

The US also [struck two facilities](#) in Syria last week that it identified as linked to Iran-backed militias and as posing a threat to American troops in the region.

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In the US, the FBI’s “most immediate concern” involved extremists “draw[ing] inspiration from the events in the Middle East to carry out attacks against Americans going about their daily lives”, Wray said, adding that Jewish and Muslim communities could be targets.

He referred to an arrest by US authorities last week of an individual in Houston, Texas, who had been researching how to build bombs and in online posts had supported the killing of Jews. Wray also highlighted the death of a six-year-old Muslim child in Illinois earlier this month, which the FBI is probing as a federal hate crime.

