



التحالف الإسلامي العسكري لمحاربة الإرهاب
ISLAMIC MILITARY COUNTER TERRORISM COALITION
Planning and Coordination Department



Spotlight
On

Reverberations of Terrorism Across the European Union Countries in 2019



<https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat-report>





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Executive Summary

The European Police Agency (EUROPOL) has released its annual report titled **TERRORISM SITUATION AND TREND REPORT 2019**, which is part of an annual series which has been issued since 2007. The 2019 edition provides in-depth analyses and investigations into the terrorist threats experienced by the European Union (EU) in 2018 annotated with the current and potential trajectory of such terrorist trends.

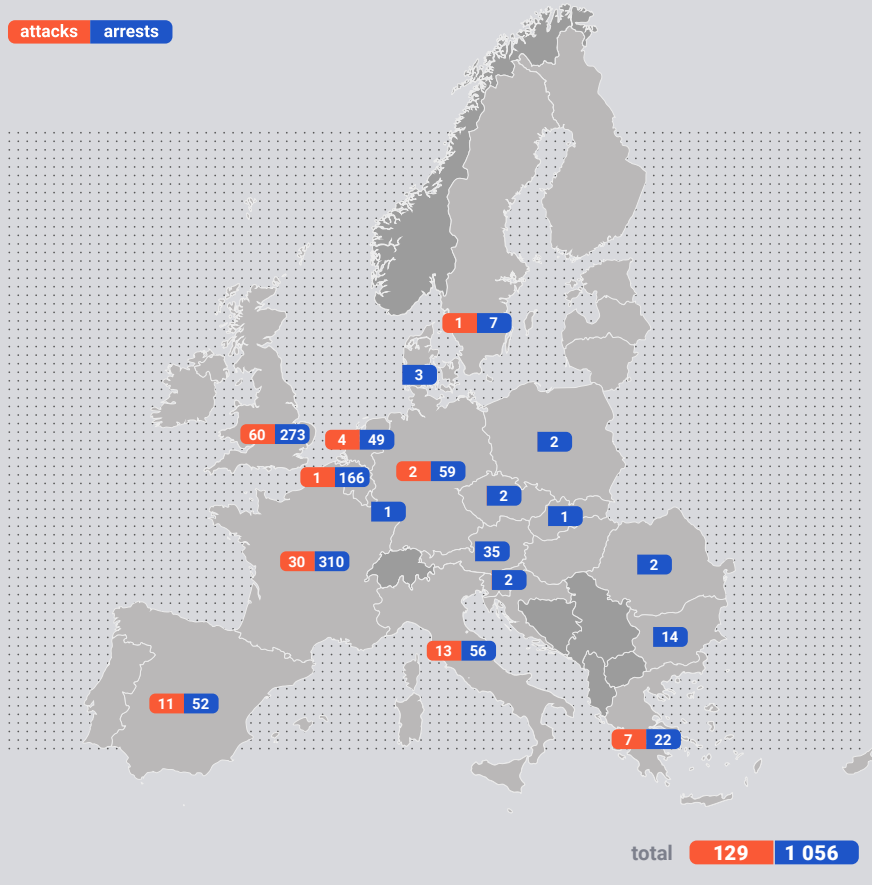
The Report reveals a considerable decrease in the number of injuries and casualties inflicted by terrorist attacks. In 2018, 13 people lost their lives, and 46 people were injured compared to 62 fatalities in 2017. Interestingly enough, the number of terrorist attacks plummeted from 205 attacks in 2017 to 129 attacks in 2018, of which 24 failed or perhaps were foiled and thwarted if not technically bungled.

In a similar vein, a total of 1056 individuals were arrested for terrorism-related offences in 2018. In contrast, the overall number of arrestees totaled 1219 individuals in 2017. Although the number of terrorism-related arrestees is remarkably decreasing, the Report still stresses that terrorism in Europe remains a ubiquitous rampant threat with a spate of terrorist attack plots thwarted by European security authorities, which amounted to 16 attacks, including 3 attacks that potentially used chemical or biological weapons. The stubborn threat posed by extremist groups such as Daesh and Al-Qaida, along with the escalation of extreme right-wing violence, glaringly reveals that much is left yet to be done, particularly in addressing the scourge of terrorist content that is rampant through the internet. Surprisingly enough, despite the deterioration of Daesh and the desperate attempts to shore up its organizational structures, its obstinate and persistent objective still remains number-one priority: to carry out more attacks outside of conflict zones, potentially using its former members or individuals affected by its propaganda to carry out terrorist acts in Europe. Alarmingly, a heightened and increasing risk still lurks behind the individuals deeply ingrained in criminal background, including those currently imprisoned who are at risk of recruitment by the Organization and may engage in terrorism anywhere anytime.

The Report also reveals that the situation of terrorism in Europe continued to be influenced by external developments. Ungoverned spaces in conflict areas, including Afghanistan, Libya, the Sahel region, Syria and Yemen provide opportunities for terrorist groups to establish control over territories that can later turn into safe havens. The year 2018 marked a decrease in the activities of Daesh in a number of regions outside the EU, which heralds a positive impact on Europe. The number of attacks by ethnonationalist and separatist terrorists in the European Union (EU) declined significantly from 137 in 2017 to 83 in 2018, making the ethnonationalist and separatist terrorists the most fatal group across Europe. The Report also reveals that the number of individuals arrested in relation to rightwing terrorist offences continued to increase in Europe for the second consecutive year (20 in 2017 and 44 in 2018).



Attacks and arrests by EU Member State in 2018.



○ ○ — Prosecution of Terrorism Suspects

The number of individuals who were convicted of participating in terrorist offences across the EU rose from 565 in 2017 to 653 in 2018 on multiple charges.

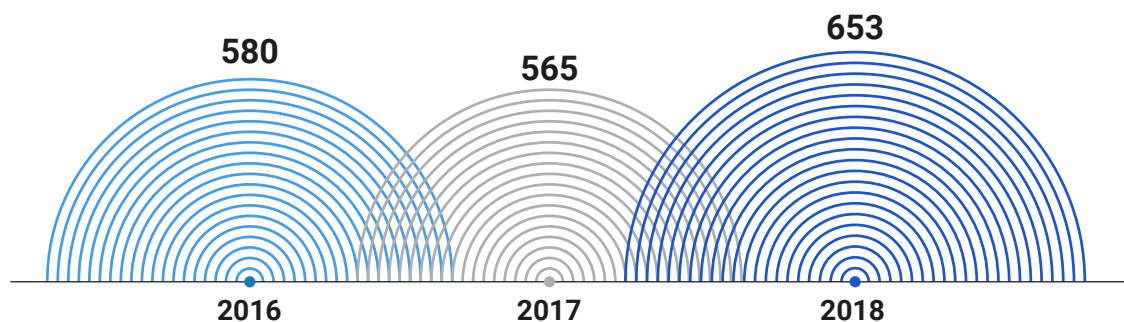
A smaller number of the defendants in 2018 were tried for glorification of terrorism and humiliation of victims of terrorism, recruitment and self-training for terrorist purposes, financing of terrorism, travel to a zone controlled by a terrorist group, instigation to commit terrorist acts or for attempting to commit such crimes. In some cases, terrorism charges were filed in parallel with charges for other offences, e.g. murder, manufacture, supply

and possession of explosives or weapons, migrant smuggling, aggravated damage to property, and forgery of official documents. The average imprisonment sentence for terrorist crimes in the EU was seven years, higher than in 2016 and 2017 as it was five years.

○ ○ — Typology and Weapons of Attackers

All terrorist attacks were committed by individuals acting alone, nicknamed LONE WOLVES, targeting civilians and symbols of authority. Often the motivation of the perpetrator and the links to other radicalized individuals or terrorist groups remained unclear. The attacks were carried out us-

Number of **individuals in concluded court proceedings** for terrorist offences in 2016, 2017 and 2018, as reported to Eurojust*.



ing firearms, readily available improvised weapons (such as knives). Surprisingly enough, in 2018, three incidents involving the use of chemical, biological, radioactive or other nuclear (CBRN) materials were reported in the EU. In parallel, an increased use of pyrotechnic mixtures (mainly fireworks) obtained legally or, more often, illegally was observed in terrorist attacks and plots. In order to reduce availability and misuse of illegal pyrotechnics, international law enforcement operations in 2018 targeted and successfully disrupted complex organized crime groups (OCGs) dealing with the illegal production and sale of pyrotechnics across the EU.

◦ ◦ — **Financing of Terrorism**

The majority of terrorist acts committed in 2018 required minimal or no financing, and were unsophisticated in their preparation and execution. The perpetrators themselves were able to provide the funds for such attacks in various ways, without leaving traces.

Whenever external funding is needed, diverse methods are employed, from the basic to the highly complex. Funds may be generated by terrorist organizations from illegal activities, e.g. extortion and the smuggling of migrants. Many terrorist organizations, however, have legitimate businesses from which the proceeds are diverted to terrorism purposes. Small-scale business ventures are also assessed to be

used for the financing of terrorism. Terrorist funding has also occurred through loans and credit which are not paid back.

The core of the 'underground banking' systems is the specifics of the financial and interpersonal relationships, and is highly adaptable to conditions of conflicts/war and economic sanctions. This manner of conducting business, ethnic-oriented and based on trust, is a suitable channel to move and provide finances for terrorist purposes. The connections and the possibility for support from 'underground banking' to terrorist organizations is undoubtedly an important aspect, but not the main purpose of existence of the 'underground' financial system.

A number of investigations in the EU Member States have demonstrated how the issues of money laundering, human trafficking and migrant smuggling and terrorism financing interlinked. Italy, for example, reported the arrests of four individuals in 2018 on suspicion of transferring money to Syria, originating both from spontaneous donations of Syrian individuals living in various European countries and from proceeds generated by smuggling of migrants from the Middle East to Northern Europe. Part of the money involved was to be used to fund a terrorist organization affiliated to Al-Qaeda operating in Syria. Both surface- and dark-web sites are used to request online donations, including virtual currencies. The most common crypto currency appears to be Bitcoin.

◦ ◦ — Virtual Confrontation Arenas

The military defeat of Daesh in Iraq and Syria had a significant impact on the Group digital capabilities. In parallel, the coherence of Daesh narratives was compromised by the Group inability to internally unify its ideological positions. Nevertheless, Daesh succeeded in maintaining an online presence and ubiquity largely; thanks go to unofficial supporter networks and pro-Daesh media outlets. Both Daesh and Al-Qaeda have continued to seek out new online vectors for their propaganda. In particular, they promoted the use of alternative platforms and open source technologies.

While Daesh online propaganda remained technologically advanced, and hackers appeared to be knowledgeable in encrypted communication tools, the group's cyber-attack capabilities and techniques were rudimentary. In addition, no other terrorist group with a demonstrated capacity to carry out effective cyber-attacks emerged in 2018. However, the threat of violent extremism constantly mushrooms over the internet, and the EU needs more than ever to take stricter measures to best counter it.

◦ ◦ — Moving to and Returning from Conflict Zones

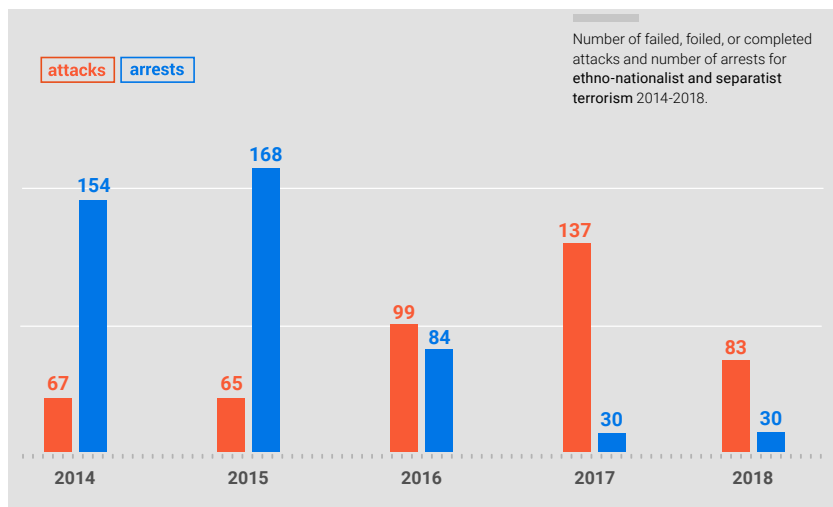
The number of European foreign terrorist fighters travelling, or attempting to travel to the Iraqi and Syrian conflict zone in 2018 was very low. Cases of traveling to alternative areas of conflict were reported, although current numbers also appear to be very low. Rather than attempting to travel to the conflict zone, the focus of jihadist networks in EU Member States has shifted towards carrying out activities in the EU – both online and offline. Jihadists continued to be inspired by Daesh propaganda, but also consumed propaganda produced by other groups claiming to defend Islam against a global attack, including Al-Qaeda.

The number of individuals returning to the EU remained very low, with hundreds of European citizens remaining in detention in Iraq and Syria. All men and some women are believed to have received weapons training, with men also acquiring combat experience. While minors are essentially victims, there are concerns among EU Member States that they have been exposed to indoctrination and training in former Daesh territories, and may pose a potential future threat. The abuse of migration flows by terrorists to enter the EU does not seem to be systematic.

◦ ◦ — Ethnonationalist and Separatist Terrorists

The number of attacks by ethnonationalist and separatist terrorists in the European Union (EU) declined significantly from 137 in 2017 to 83 in 2018. As for previous years, attacks occurred exclusively in France, Spain and the UK. In 2018, Dissident Republican (DR) groups continued to pose a significant threat to security in Northern Ireland. Separatist terrorist activity in Spain remained at low levels in 2018. In addition, law enforcement agencies in six EU Member States arrested a total of 30 individuals on charges related to ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorist activities.

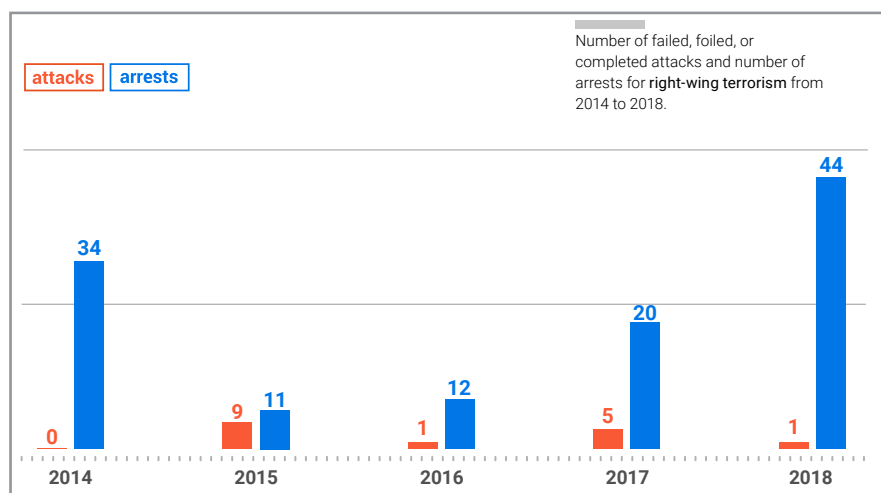
In 2018, no terrorist attacks by the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK) were reported in the EU. Nevertheless, a number of EU Member States pointed out that the PKK maintained an apparatus in Europe, which provided logistical and financial support to People's Defense Forces and carried out propaganda and recruitment activities. In this context, a Belgian court convicted four people in 2018 for engaging in PKK activities. Furthermore, the Turkish authorities also reported that PKK members were involved in various forms of serious organized crime and particularly in drug smuggling and dealing, migrant smuggling, trafficking in human beings and money laundering. In 2018, the situation in Turkey and Syria – in particular the Turkish intervention in Afrin, Syria at the beginning of the year – impact-

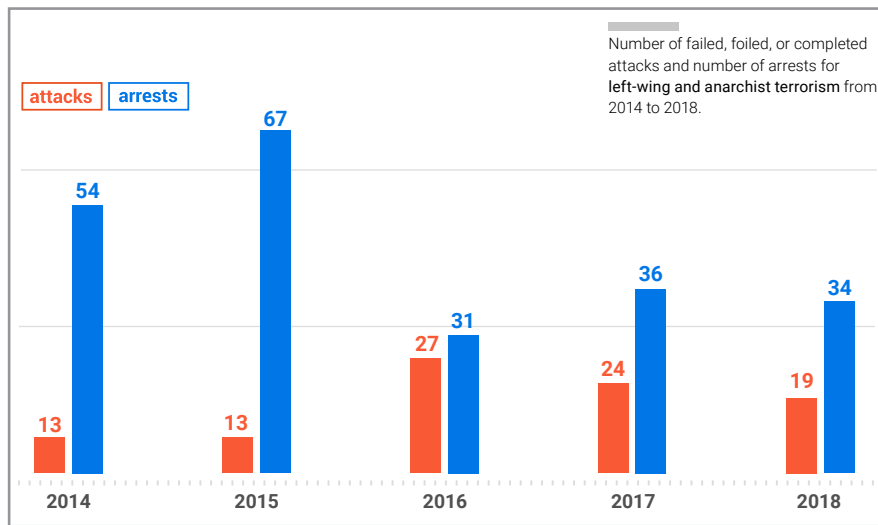


ed Kurdish activism in Europe, resulting in a number of protest events. These were largely peaceful, despite some sporadic clashes with Turkish counter-protesters. Tensions between Kurds and nationalist Turks in the EU generally increased. In Germany, there was a significant rise in the number of offences against Turkish facilities (associations, mosques, shops etc.). In March 2018, a mosque in Lauffen, Baden-Württemberg, was subject to an arson attack and six PKK-affiliated individuals were arrested on suspicion of being involved. Websites linked to the PKK described the attack as an act of vengeance for Afrin. By and large, ties between left-wing extremist and Kurdish organizations grew stronger in several European countries, reinforcing existing solidarity between the groups.

◦ ◦ — Left-Wing and Right-Wing Terrorism

Despite the increase of extreme right-wing sentiments across Europe, only one right-wing terrorist attack in the EU was reported in 2018 in Italy. The number of extreme right-wing people arrested has doubled: 20 in 2017 while 44 in 2018. The 44 people were arrested in Czechia, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands on suspicion of offences related to right-wing terrorism. While the vast majority of right-wing extremist groups across the EU have not resorted to violence, they nevertheless help entrench a climate of fear and animosity against minority groups. Such a climate, built on xenophobia, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and anti-immigration sentiments, may lower the threshold for some radi-





calized individuals to use violence against individuals and property of minority groups.

The number of left-wing and anarchist affiliated terrorist attacks continued to slightly decrease for the third consecutive year (from 27 in 2016, to 24 in 2017 and 19 in 2018). Similarly, to 2017, Greece, Italy and Spain were the targets of attacks carried out by left-wing and anarchist terrorists. In 2018, there appeared to be no direct contact or operational coordination between anarchist terrorists apart from online expressions of solidarity. The Internet remained the main platform for claiming responsibility, spreading propaganda and attempting to internationalize their scope. The number of arrests remained on the same level (36 in 2017 while 34 in 2018). Anarchists justified their violent acts by referring to typical themes of their ideology, such as police activities, squat evictions and solidarity with imprisoned terrorists along with sociopolitical issues.

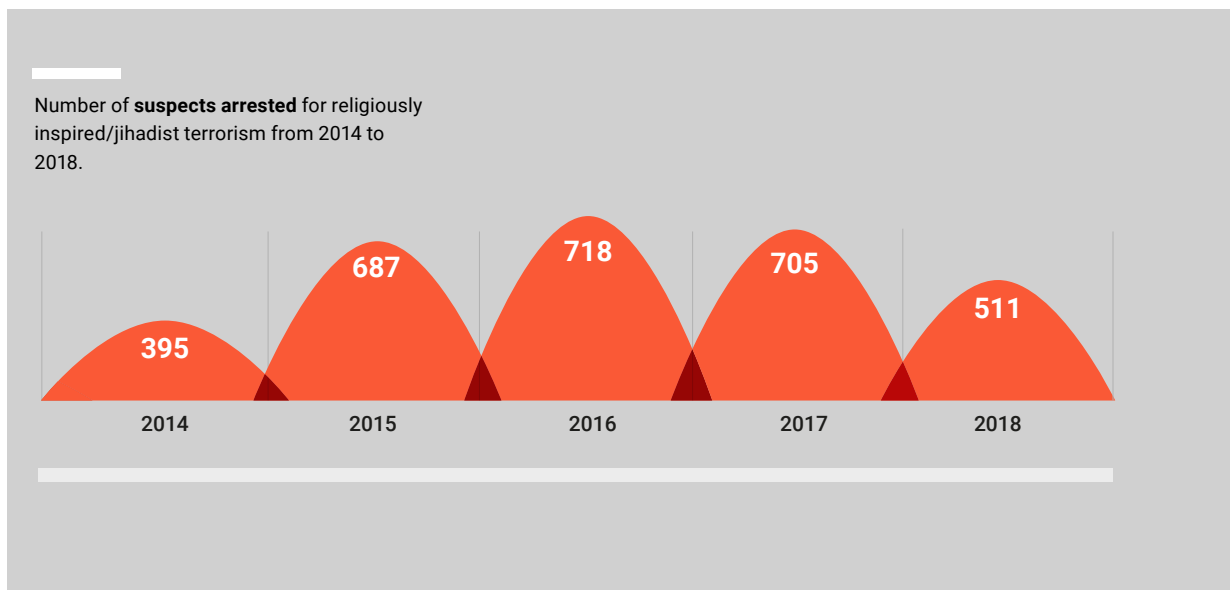
◦ ◦ — Jihadist Terrorism

In 2018, there were seven completed jihadist terrorist attacks: three in France, two in the Netherlands, one in Belgium and one in the UK; one jihadist attack failed in Spain. In addition, another 16 incidents were reported as foiled jihadist terrorist

plots. In addition, 16 incidents more were reported as foiled jihadist terrorist plots: a total of 24 attacks compared to 33 attacks in 2017 (10 attacks were carried out, 12 failed and 11 were foiled). Consequently, 13 people were killed and 46 injured in jihadist attacks in 2018. The casualties included 12 police officers, three of whom were killed. France, the Netherlands and the UK witnessed the highest number of attacks and the highest rate of successfully foiled terrorist plots.

The majority of the perpetrators were acting or were planning to act alone (lone wolves). The completed and failed jihadist attacks were mostly carried out using knives and firearms, and predominantly targeted civilians. All attack plots involving the use of explosives were disrupted. They often maintain relations in loose networks or small unstructured groups, and may receive material and/or moral support from like-minded individuals.

In 2018, a total number of 511 individuals were arrested on suspicion of offences related to jihadist terrorism. Most arrests occurred in France, the UK and Belgium, followed by the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, in descending order. More than half of the suspects, both men and women, were arrested on suspicion of being a member of a terrorist group, including while abroad, and participation in attack planning and preparation.



The average age of attackers was 26, while the individuals arrested for terrorist offences were older, with the average age being 32. The attackers were all male. Women accounted for 22% of arrestees suspected of jihadist terrorism, as compared to 16 % in 2017 and 26 % in 2016. The decrease in the number of completed jihadist terrorist attacks in the EU is at least partly the result of effective intelligence and law enforcement operations, illustrated by the relatively high number of reported foiled attacks. In September 2018, for example, the Netherlands successfully thwarted a major attack involving seven men who had reached an advanced stage in their planning. Three of the suspects had previously been arrested for attempting to travel abroad as foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs).

In 2018, as in previous years, the majority of EU Member States did not report any jihadist terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, these same EU Member States were aware of the potential threats emanating from the increase in numbers of adherents to jihadist ideology, the presence of extremist individuals with links to jihadist terrorist organizations,

and the potential of returning FTFs from the conflict areas in Iraq and Syria.

Terrorist networks continue to be detected in Europe. In October 2018, 25 inmates were identified in 17 different prisons all over Spain belonging to a jihadist network. The network was composed of prisoners with prior records for jihadist terrorism-related crimes and of inmates convicted of other criminal offences, who presumably became radicalized in prison. Italy reported that radicalization in prisons remains a matter of concern. Inside the Italian prisons in 2018, there was reportedly a further increase in the number of prisoners showing support for Daesh. In the same vein, Daesh was under intense pressure and had lost almost all of the territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria. The Group ability to direct external attacks against the West appears to be greatly reduced due to the consequent attrition of personnel and reduction in resources. However, despite the lack of capacity, the Daesh core maintains the intent to conduct such operations and might rely on former members, including those currently imprisoned, and sympathizers based in Europe.



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