

Omar al-Shishani, Chechen jihadist leader

Omar al-Shishani, one of hundreds of Chechens who have been among the toughest jihadi fighters in Syria, has emerged as a prominent commander of the al-Qaeda-inspired Islamic State (IS)



Image of **Omar al-Shishani** from undated video released by IS in June

■ **1986:** Omar al-Shishani (Omar the Chechen), real name **Tarkhan Batirashvili**, born in ethnic Chechen community in Georgia's Pankisi Valley – former militant stronghold

■ **2006-2010:** Serves in Georgian army, sees action in 2008 war with Russia. Promoted to rank of sergeant. Deemed unfit for military duty and discharged in 2010 after being hospitalized with tuberculosis

■ **2010:** Arrested by Georgian police for illegal possession of arms. Freed from prison in early 2012 due to deteriorating health after serving 16 months of three-year jail term

■ **2012:** Joins fight to topple Syrian President **Bashar al-Assad**. Leads jihadist group **Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar (JMA)**, largely composed of Chechen fighters

■ **Aug 2013:** First shows battlefield prowess when his fighters prove pivotal in taking Menagh airbase in northern Syria

■ **Nov 2013:** Swears loyalty to **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi**, head of **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS)**



■ **2014:** Leads ISIS offensive against rival rebel groups in Syria's eastern Deir al-Zawr province. Becomes key ISIS military chief after death of Iraqi militant leader **Abu Abdulrahman al-Bilawi** in June

■ Area claimed by Islamic State (formerly known as ISIS)

