



Jund al-Aqsa



Jund al-Aqsa is a Salafist jihadist rebel group that has been active during the Syrian Civil War. Formerly known as Sarayat al-Quds, the group was founded by Abu Abdul 'Aziz al-Qatari as a subunit within the al-Nusra Front.

The group later became independent because al-Nusra was growing too rapidly for its resources and had suffered by fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The United States Department of State has designated Jund al-Aqsa a terrorist organization. The group was disbanded and integrated into Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.

Ideology:

In early 2014, the group was reportedly composed of mostly non-Syrian Arab fighters. By the end of the year, it had reportedly become a Syrian-majority group, partly because of defections from other Syrian rebel groups.

In February 2014 Jund al-Aqsa captured the town of Ma'an and massacred more than 21 Alawite civilians, half of them women and children. Jund al-Aqsa is part of the Muhajirin wa-Ansar Alliance, though as of 2015 this appears to no longer be the case.

On the 23 October 2015, Jund al-Aqsa left the Army of Conquest because it had misgivings about fighting against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, while reaffirming its loyalty to al-Qaeda. On 17 February 2016, over 400 fighters and senior leaders of Jund al-Aqsa defected to al-Nusra Front.

In the February 2016 Khanasir offensive, Jund al-Aqsa and ISIS temporarily cut off the Syrian government's supply route to Aleppo, sharing war booty captured from Syrian forces before retreating.

In late August 2016 Jund al-Aqsa announced an offensive in the northern Hama Governorate. During this offensive, it used a drone to drop a small bomb.

In October 2016, clashes between Jund al-Aqsa and Ahrar al-Sham escalated throughout the Idlib Governorate, with both sides expelling the other from several towns and villages. During the clashes 800 other rebels reportedly defected to Jund al-Aqsa, increasing the group's strength up to 1,600 fighters. As a result of the clashes, the group pledge allegiance to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham.

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