

Abdullah Azzam Brigades



Ideology:

The Abdullah Azzam Brigades, or al-Qaeda in Lebanon, is a Sunni Islamist militant group, and the al-Qaeda's branch in Lebanon. The group, which began operating in 2009, was founded by Saudi Saleh Al-Qaraawi and has local networks in various countries, mainly in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

It is named after the late Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian from Jordan and a well known preacher and organizer who was among the first Arabs to volunteer to join the Afghan Jihad against the forces of the then Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Some other non-related terrorist organizations have been known to use the name Abdullah Azzam Brigades as a "name of convenience" for their operations.

After grave injuries al-Qaraawi received as a result of a drone attack in Pakistan, and his eventual capture upon his return to Saudi Arabia by the Saudi authorities, the leadership of the Brigades was assumed by Majid al-Majid, another Saudi affiliated with Fateh Al Islam and Al-Qaeda. Al-Majid was declared as leader and emir of

Abdullah Azzam Brigades in June 2012, until his capture by the Lebanese authorities on 27 December 2013 and eventual death by kidney failure on 4 January 2014. Al-Majid was succeeded by Sirajuddin Zureiqat.

The Abdullah Azzam Brigades has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United Nations, New Zealand, the UAE, the United Kingdom, the United States and Israel.

Organization:

The Abdallah Azzam Brigades was formed by the Saudi national Saleh Al-Qaraawi in 2009 as an offshoot of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and was tasked with hitting targets in the Levant and throughout the Middle East. Qaraawi is a Saudi citizen and is on the list of 85 most-wanted terrorists that was issued by the Saudi Interior Ministry in 2009. The group formally announced its establishment in a July 2009 video statement claiming responsibility for a February 2009 rocket attack against Israel.

After attacks by the Ziad al Jarrah Battalion, a Lebanese affiliate of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades, a communique was released clarifying that the Brigades operated on a wider scale. The communique said: "(The Abdullah Azzam Brigades) are not confined to Lebanon but there are targets that our fires will reach Allah-willing in the near future...the Brigades are formed of a number of groups that are spread in numerous places...and the groups of 'Ziad al-Jarrah' in Lebanon are only some of our groups, and we rushed to create these groups and announced them because of the urgency of the battle with the Jews and the priority of the initiative at the time and the place, but the rest of the groups are outside Lebanon."

In an interview to Al-Jazeera in August 2010, a Yemeni expert on Islamic movements asserted that although violent acts had been claimed by groups using Abdullah Azzam in their name, it was only in 2009 after the Gaza War that the Abdullah Azzam Brigades organization was established.

Branches

The Abdullah Azzam Brigades has branches active in multiple countries:

- The Lebanese branch has used the name the Ziad al Jarrah Battalion, and is named after Lebanese 9/11 hijacker Ziad al Jarrah who participated in the hijacking and crash of United Flight 93.
- The Abdullah Azzam Brigades branch in the Arabian Peninsula calls itself the Yusuf al-'Uyayri Battalions, named after Yusef al-Ayeri, the slain founder of Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia.
- In Gaza strip, the group had used the name Marwan Haddad division of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades in the Levant. On 10 April 2011, a Gazan group claimed responsibility for firing a Grad missile at the Israeli city of Ashkelon and two other projectiles at the Zikim military base. The group said in a statement that "operations would continue until the Palestinian land is liberated and Tawhid flag is raised."

Aliases

The group has used a number of aliases including:

- Martyr Abdullah Azzam Brigades / Abdullah Azzam Shaheed Brigades / Kataeb Shuhada' Abdullah Azzam

-Al-Qaeda in Lebanon

-Abdullah Azzam Brigades of the Land of Al-Sham

-Al-Qaeda in the Levant / Al-Qaeda in the Levant and Egypt / Al-Qaida in Syria and Egypt

-Al-Qa'idah organization - The Land of Al-Sham and Al-Kinanaah / Tanzim al-Qaida fi Bilad ash-Sham wa Ard al-Kinanaah

-The Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin

Campaign of violence:

Egypt

Even prior to the actual formation of the organization in 2009, a group calling itself Abdullah Azzam Brigades carried out devastating attacks in 2004 in the Sinai bombings and in 2005 in Sharm el-Sheikh bombings.

-On 7 October 2004, the Sinai Peninsula Egyptian resort of Taba was subject of three terrorist attacks targeting a hotel and two tourist campsites. The Hilton Taba bombing killed 31 people and wounded some 159 others. Ten floors of the hotel collapsed following the blast. Two campsites used by Israelis at Ras al-Shitan, near Nuweiba were also attacked killing two Israelis and an Egyptian. Twelve others were wounded. The bombings were claimed by an unknown group called Abdullah Azzam Brigades. According to Egyptian authorities, this was a

cover to the mastermind behind the bombings, the Palestinian Iyad Saleh. He and one of his aides, Suleiman Ahmed Saleh Flayfil died in the Hilton blast, apparently because their bomb timer had run out too fast. Three Egyptians, Younes Mohammed Mahmoud, Osama al-Nakhlawi, and Mohammed Jaz Sabbah were sentenced to death in November 2006 for their roles in the blast. According to investigators, there was no strong link to Al Qaeda in the blasts.

-On 23 July 2005, the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh was subject to a series of bombings killing 88 people, the majority of them Egyptians, and over 200 wounded, making it the deadliest terrorist action in Egypt's modern history. A group calling itself the Abdullah Azzam Brigades was the first to claim responsibility for the attacks. On a website, the group stated that "holy warriors targeted the Ghazala Gardens hotel and the Old Market in Sharm el-Sheikh" and claimed it has ties to Al-Qaeda. The Egyptian government said that the bombers were actually Bedouin militants from the same group that carried out the Taba bombings a year earlier. Arrested suspects claimed to have been motivated by the War in Iraq.

Jordan

In 2005, again much earlier than the official formation of the organization, its name appeared in relation to a series of rocket attacks from Jordan. Several Katyusha rockets were fired from within the Jordanian territory, some hitting near the Eilat Airport and two others hitting very close to two United States Navy ships docked in Aqaba, the USS Kearsarge (LHD-3), and the USS Ashland (LSD-48). A group linked with al-Qaeda claimed to have made that attack. One of the rockets hit a Jordanian military hospital, killing a Jordanian soldier. The attack is

regarded as having been perpetrated by the al-Zarqawi branch of Al Qaeda. A self-styled Abdullah Azzam Brigades also claimed responsibility.

Pakistan

A little-known Pakistani militant group, Fedayeen al-Islam, affiliated with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the Pearl Continental hotel bombing in Peshawar, Pakistan.

A spokesman for the group, Amir Muawiya, phoned media organizations claiming responsibility for the attack and promised more attacks were on the way. He further stated that the bombing was in retaliation for Pakistan army operations in Swat and Malakand division of the North West Frontier Province and the tribal areas of Darra Adam Khel and Orakzai Agency. However, on 11 June 2009, a previously unknown group calling itself the Abdullah Azzam Shaheed Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack, saying the attack was in response to attacks by Pakistani military forces on Taliban insurgents in the Swat Valley.

On 24 February 2012, this alleged group equipped with suicide bombers blew themselves up in an attack on a police station "C Division" in the heart of Peshawar. According to witnesses, total attackers were more than 10, armed with hand grenades and automatic weaponry with latest technology that had never been used before. Two Pakistani policemen were killed and six others injured. The Abdullah Azzam Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack. Spokesman Abu Zarar Said, speaking from an unknown location, said that the attack was a reaction to the killing of a top militant leader, Badar Mansoor, in a drone strike in Waziristan.

The Persian Gulf

There are also other operations claimed by the Brigades, but strong doubts whether they were actually involved. For example, on 3 August 2010, a man claimed to be a spokesman of the brigade made a video statement that the Brigades were involved in the attack on the Japanese oil tanker M. Star in the Strait of Hormuz in July 2010. But many analysts are skeptical about the claim that it was the Abdullah Azzam Brigades. A BBC correspondent asserted that the perpetrators were using the name as a "name of convenience".

Syria

The group denied all involvement in the 23 December 2011 suicide attack in the Syrian capital that killed 40 people. The terror group accused the Syrian government of attempting to deflect attention from its brutal crackdown on protesters that has killed more than 5,000 people. In a statement released on jihadist websites on 27 December 2011, the Abdullah Azzam Brigades denied responsibility for the suicide attacks.

In a statement issued by the group's emir, Majid bin Muhammad al-Majid, in June 2012, the group acknowledged its fight against the forces of President Bashar al Assad in the Syrian Civil War. Majid recommended that the rebels avoid use of car bombs and bomb belts inside cities for fear of harming and alienating Syrian civilians. This advice is in contrast to the actions of another Salafist Jihadist group active in the Syrian Civil War, the Al-Nusra Front.

Lebanon

On 19 November 2013, the Brigade claimed responsibility for a double suicide bombing outside the Iranian embassy in Beirut, which killed at least 22 people and wounded over 140. The group said the bombing was retaliation for Iranian support of Hezbollah, which fights on the Syrian government's side in the current Syrian civil war, and warned of further attacks should Iran's government not acquiesce.

On 19 February 2014, the brigade carried out an attack on the Iranian Cultural Center in Beirut's southern suburb of Bir-Hasan, killing 11 and wounding 130, their motive was the support of Iran in the Syrian war.

Source: /Wikipedia

Date: 22-11-2017