

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1854
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 – Al-Nusrah Front (ANF)
Udgivet:	27. februar 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	30. juni 2023

Document #2088162

USDOS – US Department of State (Author)

Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Al-Nusrah Front (ANF)

Aka Jabhat al-Nusrah; Jabhet al-Nusrah; the Victory Front; al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant; al-Nusrah Front in Lebanon; Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham min Mujahedia al-Sham fi Sahat al-Jihad; Support Front for the People of the Levant; Jabhat Fath al-Sham; Jabhat Fath al Sham; Jabhat Fatah al-Sham; Jabhat Fateh al-Sham; Front for the Conquest of Syria; the Front for Liberation of al Sham; Front for the Conquest of Syria/the Levant; Front for the Liberation of the Levant; Conquest of the Levant Front; Fatah al-Sham Front; Fateh al-Sham Front; Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham; Hay'et Tahrir al-Sham; Hayat Tahrir al-Sham; HTS; Assembly for the Liberation of Syria; Assembly for Liberation of the Levant; Liberation of al-Sham Commission; Liberation of the Levant Organization; Tahrir al-Sham; Tahrir al-Sham Hay'at

Description: Al-Nusrah Front (ANF) was designated as an FTO on May 15, 2014, and is al-Qa'ida's affiliate in Syria. It is led by Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani. The group was formed in 2011 when then-al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI) — now ISIS — then-leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi sent al-Jawlani to Syria to organize terrorist cells. In 2013 the group split from AQI and became an independent entity. ANF's stated goal is to oust Syria's Assad regime and replace it with a Sunni Islamic state. The group is concentrated in and controls a portion of territory in northwest Syria, where it is active as an opposition force and exerts varying degrees of influence over local governance and external plotting.

In 2017, ANF joined with four smaller Syrian factions and created Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) as a vehicle to advance its position in the Syrian insurgency and further its own goals as al-Qa'ida's affiliate in Syria.

Activities: ANF has been active in operations against other factions in the Syrian conflict. In 2016 the group carried out attacks in Aleppo and other parts of Syria controlled by the Syrian Army, killing both military officials and civilians.

Since 2017, ANF has continued to operate through HTS in pursuit of its objectives. In 2017 the group carried out multiple suicide bombings in Damascus, including suicide attacks using VBIEDs. ANF took control of significant portions of Idlib from 2017 to 2019, exerting severe military pressure over other local groups such as Ahrar al-Sham and Nur ad-Din al-Zinkias it fought against the regime and continued plotting against U.S. and allied interests.

In 2019 the group suffered heavy casualties, estimated in the hundreds, from engagement with Russian-backed Syrian government forces. Also that year, ANF bombed the Syrian town of Kafr Takharim, using heavy weaponry, and killing at least five persons. In 2020 an ANF member threw a grenade and opened fire into a group of civilians in Idlib city, Syria, killing two persons and injuring others.

In 2021, ANF remained an active terrorist group in northwest Syria's Idlib province.

Strength: ANF has between 5,000 and 10,000 fighters.

Location/Area of Operation: Syria

Funding and External Aid: ANF receives funding from a variety of sources, including kidnapping-for-ransom payments, taxes and fees on border crossings it controls, and donations from external Persian Gulf-based donors. The group also generates revenue by collecting fees from commercial traffic entering and exiting Idlib.

ecoi.net description:

Brief description of the Al-Nusrah Front (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2021)

Country:

Syrian Arab Republic

Source:

[USDOS – US Department of State](#) (Author)

Original link:

<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/#ANF>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

27 February 2023

Available on ecoi.net since:

7 March 2023

Document ID:

2088162

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of
Origin and Asylum Research and
Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041
Wien
T +43 1 589 00 583
F +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

