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Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Ansar al- Islam (AAI)

Aka Ansar al-Sunna; Ansar al-Sunna Army; Devotees of Islam; Followers of Islam in Kurdistan; Helpers of Islam; Jaish Ansar al-Sunna; Jund al-Islam; Kurdish Taliban; Kurdistan Supporters of Islam; Partisans of Islam; Soldiers of God; Soldiers of Islam; Supporters of Islam in Kurdistan

Description: Ansar al-Islam (AAI) was designated as an FTO on March 22, 2004. AAI was established in 2001 in the Iraqi Kurdistan region through the merger of two Kurdish terrorist factions that traced their roots to the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan. AAI seeks to expel western interests from Iraq and establish an independent Iraqi state based on its interpretation of Sharia.

Activities: From 2003 to 2011, AAI conducted attacks against a wide range of targets including Iraqi government and security forces, and U.S. and Defeat-ISIS Coalition forces. The group also carried out numerous kidnappings, murders, and assassinations of Iraqi citizens and politicians. In 2012, AAI claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Sons of Martyrs School in Damascus, which was occupied by Syrian security forces and pro-government militias; seven persons were wounded in the attack.

During 2014, part of AAI issued a statement pledging allegiance to ISIS, although later reports suggest that a faction of AAI opposed joining ISIS. In 2019, AAI claimed its first attack in Iraq in five years, placing two IEDs in Iraq's Diyala province. AAI did not claim responsibility for any attacks in 2021.

Strength: Precise numbers are unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: Iraq and Syria

Funding and External Aid: AAI receives assistance from a loose network of associates in Europe and the Middle East.

