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Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - Al-Nusrah Front

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 Mujahedi 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) is al-Qa’ida’s affiliate in Syria and was designated as a FTO on May 15, 2014. It is led by Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, also known as alJulani. The group was formed in late 2011 when then-al-Qa’ida in Iraq (AQI) – now ISIS – 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 present throughout Syria, but 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 early 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. ANF used its Salvation Government in parts of Syria’s Idlib province to exert control and offer governance services.

Activities: ANF has been active in operations against other factions in the Syrian conflict. In 2016, the group carried out attacks in Aleppo and in other parts of Syria controlled by the Syrian army, killing both military officials and civilians. In July 2016, ANF leader Jawlani announced the group had adopted a new name, Jabhat Fath al-Sham, and would no longer be known as ANF. The Department of State amended the designation in November 2016 to add additional aliases, including Jabhat Fath al-Sham.

ANF continued to operate through HTS in pursuit of its objectives. In October, ANF launched an attack near the Turkish border against the Syrian army, killing several soldiers. In March, the group carried out multiple suicide bombings in Damascus,

including suicide attacks using VBIEDs. ANF took control of significant portions of Idlib during 2017 and 2018, exerting severe military pressure over other local groups such as Ahrar ash-Sham and Nur ad-Din al-Zinki as it continued plotting against U.S. and allied interests.

ANF also operated in and around East Ghouta and Homs, Syria. In 2018, the group engaged in numerous skirmishes with the Assad regime and other rebel forces.

Strength: ANF influence and capability is believed to have shrunk in 2018, but the group still has an estimated 12,000 members.

Location/Area of Operation: The group is based in Syria and Lebanon.

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 Gulf-based donors. It also generates revenue by collecting fees from commercial traffic entering and exiting Idlib.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of Al-Nusrah Front (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



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