

Country Report on Terrorism 2021 - Chapter 5 - Army of Islam (AOI)

Aka Jaysh al-Islam; Jaish al-Islam

Description: Designated as an FTO on May 19, 2011, the Army of Islam (AOI), founded in late 2005, is a Gaza-based terrorist organization responsible for numerous terrorist acts against the Israeli and Egyptian governments and British, New Zealander, and U.S. citizens. The group, led by Mumtaz Dughmush, subscribes to a violent Salafist ideology.

Note: AOI is a separate and distinct group from the Syria-based Jaysh al-Islam, which is not a designated FTO.

Activities: AOI is responsible for the 2006 and 2007 kidnappings of civilians, including a U.S. journalist. AOI also carried out the 2009 attacks on Egyptian civilians in Cairo and Heliopolis, Egypt, and planned the 2011 attack on a Coptic Christian church in Alexandria that killed 25 persons and wounded 100. In 2012, AOI announced that it had launched rocket attacks on Israel in a joint operation with the Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem. In 2013 an Israeli official reported that AOI leader Dughmush was running training camps in Gaza.

In 2015, AOI reportedly released a statement pledging allegiance to ISIS. In a short post attributed to the group, AOI declared itself an inseparable part of ISIS-Sinai Province. Since then, AOI has continued to express support for ISIS. In 2017 the group released a video meant to encourage ISIS fighters defending Mosul. In 2019, AOI shared another video praising ISIS that included training information for individuals to conduct suicide attacks. In 2020, AOI published more than two dozen images of fighters conducting military training. AOI did not claim responsibility for any attacks in 2021.

Strength: Precise numbers are unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: Egypt, Gaza, and Israel

Funding and External Aid: AOI receives much of its funding from a variety of criminal activities in Gaza.