

October 30, 2019



Syria: Casualties in Two Attacks by the International Coalition against Extremist Groups in Idlib and Aleppo

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*A civilian killed and four others hit by shrapnel in an attack on
headquarters for the Ansar al-Tawhid group, northern rural Idlib,
August 31, 2019*

Introduction

The US-led international coalition conducted two separate attacks on extremist groups headquarters located in rural Idlib and Aleppo provinces, in June and August 2019.

On August 31, 2019, the international coalition hit a [military headquarters](#) of the Ansar al-Tawhid insurgent group in northern rural Idlib, by six missiles took off from Turkey, according to air raid warning systems (sentries).¹ The attack resulted in the killing of 30 fighters of the group, including 8 recruited children under 18 years of age, and the injury of 36 others. Reportedly, the attack took place during a routine meeting of the group's field commanders in the headquarters, which was an [abandoned poultry farm](#) before being turned into a military training and Sharia teaching center for youths and children enlisted.²

The shrapnel resulted from the attack spread on long distances and hit a 70-year-old man called Ahmed Yassouf, while working in his land, which led to his death. Shrapnel also hit four locals from rural Idlib, including a woman; they were working in their land near the site attacked.

Earlier, on June 30, 2019 the US-backed coalition targeted a [Sharia institute](#) of the Guardians of Religion Organization/ *Hurras al-Din*,³ in the Rif Al-Muhandiseen suburb in western rural Aleppo, killing eight people, including three Sharia commanders and five commanders of the organization, and injuring 12, some of whom are in critical conditions. According to STJ field researcher, the Sharia commanders who killed were of Egyptian, Tunisian and Algerian nationalities, while among the commanders are, Libyans, Tunisians and Syrians. The attack was carried out by a jet fighter during a meeting of the organization's commanders, and it was the first against the extremists in Idlib and western rural Aleppo in the last two years. As the international coalition's last attack in Idlib was on March 16, 2017, when US jets targeted Umar ibn Al-Khattab mosque near the village of Al Jeineh in northern rural Aleppo, during a religious lecture prior to the Isha prayer, which was attended by 300 people. This attack killed 38, at the very least, and caused the total devastation of the services section in the mosque.

It's worth mentioning that the two targeted sites by the international coalition in Idlib and northern rural Aleppo are subject to the Astana understandings,⁴ between Russia, Turkey and Iran, which provides in one of its key items for the

¹ Local sources reported that they were cruise missiles.

² Some witnesses confirmed to STJ that the meeting was extraordinary, while others said it was a routinely one.

³ Some witnesses said that the facility attacked was a Sharia institute, while others confirmed that it was a military training center.

⁴ "Astana Agreement on De-escalation zones in Syria", RT, September 15, 2017 (last visit: September 16, 2019) <https://arabic.rt.com/middle-east/899088-%D8%A8%D9%86%D9%88%D8%AF->

“The determination to continue fighting ISIL, Al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda and other groups affiliated to them inside and outside the de-escalation zones”. And the Sochi agreement of April 17,⁵ 2018 which provided ten key items the most prominent of which was: “The establishment of a demilitarized zone at a depth of 15 to 20 km between the areas of the Syrian government and the Syrian armed opposition”. Besides, a unilateral ceasefire agreement had been reached in Idlib governorate, as of August 31, 2019, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.⁶

I. An attack on a military headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid in northern rural Idlib

On August 31, 2019 the US-backed international coalition jets fired six rockets at once on a headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid-which used to be a poultry farm with two floors- that located in northern rural Idlib, specifically on the Idlib- Ma'arrat Misrin road. The attack resulted in the killing of a civilian and 30 fighters of Ansar al-Tawhid group, including eight recruited children, and the injury of more than 36 people, including civilians. Local sources reported that the attack occurred during a routine meeting of the group’s field commanders in the headquarters.

Lt. Col. Earl Brown, US Central Command Chief of Media Operations, announced on August 31, 2019 that US forces had hit an al-Qaeda facility north of Idlib, saying: “This operation targeted AQ-S leaders responsible for attacks threatening U.S. citizens, our partners, and innocent civilians” ...“the destruction of the facility would further constrain al Qaeda’s ability

<https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D9%82%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A8-%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A/1258706>

⁵ See, for example, “The Sochi Summit and the Turkish Veto Averted Idlib a Humanitarian Catastrophe”, an analytical article by Mahmoud Othman, Anadolu News Agency, September 19, 2018 (last visit: September 16, 2019), <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9/%D9%82%D9%85%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%88-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A8-%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AB%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%84%D9%8A/1258706>

⁶ “Syrian Troops to Start Unilateral Cease-fire in Idlib Tomorrow”, RT, August 30, 2019, (last visit: September 16, 2019), https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/1041984-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%86-%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A5%D8%AF%D9%84%D8%A8-%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7/?fbclid=IwAR0TN-EcYGZwo7Opd_4QmULU3ybFZUbfIXaKoG6ogOodmoWcDmrz8l46B6s

to carry out attacks and destabilize the region.”... “With our allies and partners, we will continue to target violent extremists to prevent them from using Syria as a safe haven.”⁷

The Russian Ministry of Defense also commented on the attack saying: “the United States had mounted air strikes in Syria’s Idlib without forewarning Moscow or Ankara, endangering a ceasefire there.”⁸

In turn, Ansar al-Tawhid group released a statement on September 1, 2019, in which it said that a number of its fighters killed in a ‘Crusade Zionist attack’ on one of its headquarters in rural Idlib, and threatened to revenge them.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**بيان حول
(استشهاد عدد من المجاهدين)**

الحمد لله الذي هدانا للإسلام والجهاد، وعلّمنا الحكمة والقرآن، وجعلنا من خير أمة أخرجت للناس، وألبسنا لباس التقوى خير لباس، والصلاة والسلام على إمام المجاهدين الذي بعث بالسيف رحمة للعالمين
وبعد..

يقول الله تعالى في محكم التنزيل { مَنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَجَالَ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن قَتَلَ نَحْبَةً وَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَلُوا تَبْدِيلًا }

يزف إخوانكم في أنصار التوحيد كوكبة من الشهداء الذين نالوا شرف الشهادة بغارة طليبية صهيونية على أحد مقراتهم بريف إدلب، ونسال الله الكريم أن يتقبل الإخوة ويتغمدهم بواسع رحمته فهو القائل { وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْواتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ } ونسال الله أن يلهم أهلهم وذويهم الصبر والسلوان.

وهذه سنة الله في السائرين على درب الجهاد والاستشهاد { قُلْ هَلْ تَرَبَّصُونَ بِنَا إِلَّا إِحْدَى الْحُسِيِّينَ وَتَخُنْ تَرَبَّصْ بِكُمْ أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ أَوْ بِأَيْدِينَا فَتَرَبَّصُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُتَرَبَّصُونَ } التوبة (52)

وبإذن الله " لننأرن " لهم وشهداء المسلمين بعون وتأييد من الله.

وصلّى الله وسلّم على نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

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The statement released by Ansar al-Tawhid group on the killing of a number of its fighters in the attack of August 31, 2019. Photo credit: Telegram channels.

⁷ “Statement Statement from U.S. Central Command on U.S. Forces strike against al-Qaida in Syria leadership in Idlib, Syria”, August 31, 2019, (last visit: September 16, 2019)

<https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/1949406/statement-from-us-central-command-on-us-forces-strike-against-al-qaida-in-syria/>.

⁸ “The Russian Defense Ministry Comments on the US Airstrike on Idlib”, RT, August 31, 2019 (last visit: September 16, 2019) https://arabic.rt.com/middle_east/1042330-الدفاع-الروسية-تعلق-على-الضربة-الجوية-الأمر-بكية-1042330-ef6A-oeNGikYiZ9cwgV8E9z8/?fbclid=IwAR3PbgJ-ryFp6zburBrOkluikCkHZFK1qF-ef6A-oeNGikYiZ9cwgV8E9z8

a. About Ansar al-Tawhid Group

Ansar al-Tawhid is an armed insurgent group, established in March 2, 2018 by Abu Diyab al-Sarmini (hails from the town of Sarmin in rural Idlib). It has about 400 fighters deployed in Sarmin town in Idlib, Al-Nayrab village in Aleppo and Latakia mountains. This group was found by the reformation of Jund al-Aqsa group,⁹ which was categorized as a terrorist group and was dissolved in late January 2017 following infightings with armed groups, such as Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya. After which most of Jund al-Aqsa fighters fled to Raqqa where they pledged allegiance to ISIL.¹⁰

Ansar al-Tawhid group refused to pledge allegiance to HTS or to fight alongside it against other opposition armed groups. However, it took part in the latest battles against the Syrian Army in northern rural Hama and the towns of Khan Shaykhun and Al-Tamanah in southern rural Idlib. It also rejected the Sochi and Astana agreements, and even refused to withdraw from the demilitarized zone.

Ansar al-Tawhid group formed a coalition with the Guardians of Religion Organization under the name 'Nusrat al-Islam', aiming at 'upholding the true faith, and deterring the aggressive enemy', according to a joint statement by the two groups published on their official social media accounts.¹¹

In October 2018, Ansar al-Tawhid group, the Guardians of Religion Organization, the Supporters of Religion Front/*Jabhat Ansar al-Din*, the Supporters of Islam Front/*Jabhat Ansar al-Islam*, along with other armed groups, formed 'Rouse the Believers Operations Room' which mainly operated in northern rural Latakia and western rural Hama.

⁹ Jund al-Aqsa was a Salafi-jihadi organization founded by Muhammad al-Yousef al-Athamneh, nicknamed "Abu Abdul-Aziz al-Qatari, who is a former al-Qaeda leader, in early 2012. This group was active in the northern rural Hama, southern Idlib and parts of Aleppo.

In 2016, the number of its fighters reached 600. However, following a dispute between it and the Harakat Ahrar al-Sham al-Islamiyya group, the faction announced its pledge of allegiance to the Fatah al-Sham / Jabhat al-Nusra. Also, following an internal dispute in 2016, the Fateh al-Sham / Jabhat al-Nusra Front declared the split of Jund al-Aqsa from its ranks in March 2017, which prompted the latter to go to ISIL-controlled areas in the far east of Syria, where they pledged allegiance to ISIL. The US State Department designated it as a terrorist organization in 2016.

¹⁰ "U.S. sanctions jihadist Syrian rebel group Jund al-Aqsa", Reuters, September 20, 2016 (last visit: September 16, 2019) <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-jund-al-aqsa-idUSKCN11Q1LH>.

¹¹ For more info please check: <https://www.syria.tv/%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%81-%D9%86%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%AA%D8%B4%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D9%84%D9%80%D8%AA%D9%86%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A7>.

b. Details of the attack

At around 3:30 pm on August 31, 2019, residents of Ma'arrat Misrin heard explosions and saw clouds of smoke rising from the area between the cities of Idlib and Ma'arrat Misrin, according to a woman from Ma'arrat Misrin. She spoke to STJ, saying:

“We saw smoke rising from the Idlib-Ma'arrat Misrin road. We learned later that a group of young men and children aged 16-17 years were at the targeted site, doing military training and taking Sharia classes.”



Smoke rising from a military headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid on the Idlib- Ma'arrat Misrin road after being targeted on August 31, 2019. Photo credit: local activists.

A civil defense member confirmed hearing huge explosions from Idlib and its suburbs that afternoon, which made them to rush to the targeted site which they arrived at 3.30pm. Regarding this, he talked to STJ saying:

“The two-floor poultry farm; the headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid group, was razed to the ground by high explosive rockets. We rushed there right after the attack to pull out victims from under the rubble and help the injured. Among the casualties there were recruited children under 15 of age. The rescue operations were difficult and took so long, as we worked non-stop to 12:30am. and we had to use heavy machinery to remove the rubble. Shrapnel resulted from the attack sprayed over long distances, causing injuries to four farmers, while working in their lands, and killing another; hails from Idlib. The headquarters was rocked by six missiles at once, took off from southern Turkey, which resulted in the killing of 30 fighters of Ansar al-Tawhid group and the injury of 22 others.”





A side of the damage caused to the headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid group by the attack of August 31, 2019. Photo credit: media activists.

Amer Khalid, a relative of the victim Ahmed Yassouf, 70, said to STJ that Ahmed was hit by shrapnel in his abdomen while working in his land, which is 500m. away from the attack site. The ambulance couldn't reach him, so his sons took him to the hospital but he died on the way there. Fortunately, any of his family members who were working with him was hurt.

A worker at Idlib hospital also spoke to STJ saying that the attack left 30 deaths and 22 injuries among the fighters of Ansar al-Tawhid group. He also confirmed the death of a 70-year-old civilian, who was 500m. away from the site of the attack, from a shrapnel injury in his abdomen and the injury of four farmers, including a woman, while working in their land near the poultry farm. He went on to say:

“Half of the injures were admitted to Idlib hospital, while the other half were taken to another surgical hospital in the city. Seven bodies turned into pieces; thus, they weren't been identified. They were kept at the forensic medicine department.”

A monitor for a Sentry of aerial bombardment warning service in Idlib said to STJ that around 3:30 pm on August 31, 2019, huge explosions rocked Idlib from southern Ma'arrat Misrin. Those explosions resulted from hitting the city with six rockets, which took off from Turkey and headed south towards the Bab al-Salam border crossing and entered the town of Darat Izza from the west, then flew over Sarmada town in rural Idlib and took the south direction to land on a large abandoned poultry farm of two floors, which was turned by Ansar al-Tawhid into a military headquarters.

STJ field researcher documented the names of the civilian victims and Ansar al-Tawhid fighters, who fell in the attack:

The civilian deaths:

1. Ahmed Yousif Yassouf, 70, from Idlib.

The fighters fell:

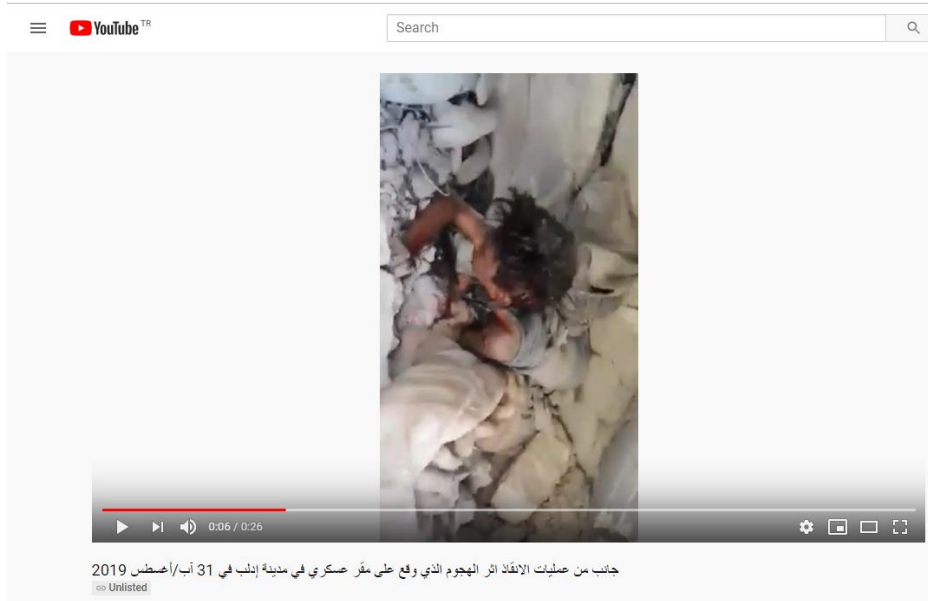
2. The recruited child Abdul Hameed Sattouf al-Sattouf,12, from the village of Khan Assubul.
3. The recruited child Kalid Muhammad Fadel,17, from the town of Ehsim.
4. The recruited child Suliman Khalid Khateeb, 15, from the town of Kafr Nabl.
5. The recruited child Mouth Sameer Fadel, 16, from the town of Ehsim.
6. The recruited child Abdul Salam Sayah, 12, from the village of Khan Assubul.
7. The recruited child Arif Hamjou, 15.
8. The recruited child Muhammad Omar Yahia, 12, from the town of Arihah.
9. Abdul Rahman Qandah, 19, from the town of Kafar Sijnah.
10. Sameer Ahmed Muhammad, 22, from the village of Baluon.
11. Moussa Jua'am, 21, from the town of Qalaat Al Madiq.
12. Basel al-Khalaf from the village of Ablin.
13. Amjad al-Abrash, 24, from the city of Saraqib.
14. Yacoub Ibrahim al-Rahman, 20, from the village of Jarjanaz.
15. Omar Mohammad Addani from the city of Binnish.
16. Ibrahim Mou'tasim Bareesh, 21, from the city of Saraqib.
17. Ibrahim Mahmoud Mohammad, 21, from the village of Baluon.
18. Nizar al-Shami, 20, from Damascus suburbs.
19. Yasir Khaddour, 23, from the village of Tell Dibis.
20. Khalid Abu Khattab, from the city of Saraqib.
21. Nasir Abdul Majeed, from the city of Saraqib.
22. Houthaifa Abu Abdul Hakeem, from the city of Saraqib..

In addition to seven unidentified bodies kept in the forensic medicine department.

A footage circulated on social media showed a side of the rescue operations with a recruited child stuck under the rubble.¹²

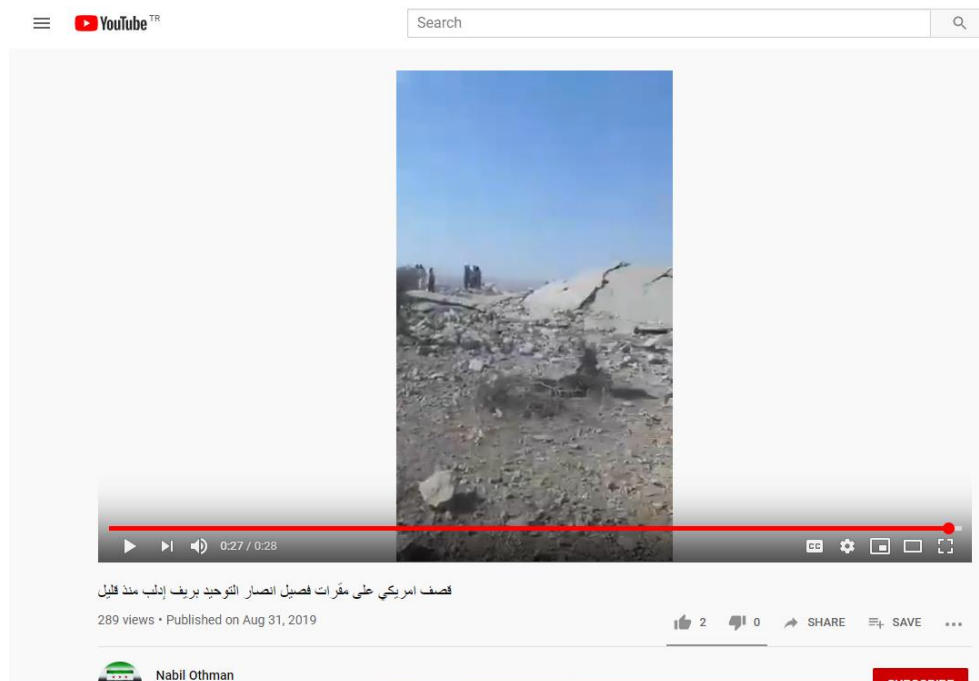
¹² For more, check the full footage on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=JutptSVTZxQ&feature=youtu.be>.



A screenshot from the aforementioned [footage](#) shows a recruited child stuck in the rubble after the attack by the international coalition on a military headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid group in Idlib, August 31, 2019.

Another footage shared by media activists, showed the situation of the military headquarters of Ansar al-Tawhid group in the minutes right after the attack of August 31, 2019.¹³



A screenshot from the aforementioned [footage](#) shows the devastation in the Anasar al-Tawhid headquarters caused by the attack of August 31, 2019.

¹³ For more, check the full footage on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37w-ID31Kh0>.



A screenshot from the previous footage shows a side of the rescue operations.



A Google Earth photo for the facility before being targeted and destroyed completely. The analysis of the available visual evidence about the attack; The photo shows the location of two ambulances near the site of the attack.

The Idlib Health Directorate published photos of Ansar al-Tawhid fighters fell in the attack by the international coalition on August 31, 2019.¹⁴ (STJ field researcher verified these photos).



Some of the Ansar al-Tawhid fighters who fell in the attack of August 31, 2019.

Photo credit: [Idlib Health Directorate](#).

¹⁴ The Facebook page of the Idlib Health Directorate <https://www.facebook.com/Idleb.Health.Directorate/>.



A satellite image shows the location of Ansar al-Tawhid headquarters on the Idlib- Ma'arrat Misrin road in northern rural Idlib.

II. Another attack on a military headquarters of the Guardians of Religion Organization:

In another incident, on June 30, 2019, US-led coalition forces carried out an aerial attack, according to air raid warning sentries, on a training facility belonging to the Guardians of Religion Organization in Rif Al-Muhandiseen suburb in western rural Aleppo. The US Central Command announced in a statement issued on the same date, saying that the US forces launched a strike on a training facility located near the Syrian province of Aleppo, targeting the leadership of al-Qaeda in Syria. The statement added that this operation targeted AQ-S leaders responsible for attacks threatening U.S. citizens, our partners, and innocent civilians.

With our allies and partners, we will continue to target violent extremists to prevent them from using Syria as a safe haven.¹⁵

The Guardians of Religion Organization, however, did not comment on the strike with any official statement.

a. About the Guardians of Religion Organization:

The Guardians of Religion Organization was formed in late February 2018, by the merge of several military formations, which had split from HTS, including Jaysh al-Malahim, Jaysh al-Sahel, Jaysh al-Badia, Saraya al-Kabul, Saraya al-Sahel and Jund al-Sharia. Extremists who had fought in Iraq and Afghanistan joined this organization, after it declared allegiance to al-Qaeda leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, bringing the number of its fighters to 1700.

The formation of this organization was a response to the floundering decisions and political orientations of Al-Nusra Front/*Jabhat al-Nusra*, al-Qaeda's branch in Syria. As the Al-Nusra Front tried to deviate from al-Qaeda by changing its name to Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and then to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which provoked resentment among the extremists and most of the foreign fighters who considered its behaviors a departure from the al-Qaeda approach.

This organization is led by Samir Hijazi, known as Abu Humam al-Shami, who was the military chief of al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate al-Nusra Front. He has a long history of jihadist work in Afghanistan and Iraq, and has strong ties with Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. He was imprisoned in Lebanon for five years and came to Syria in mid-2012.

This organization includes other leading figures such Sami al-Oraydi, a Jordanian, as well as well-known jihadist figures, such as Abu Abdul Rahman al-Makki, Abu al-Qassam al-Urduni, Abu Khadija al-Masri and Abu Abdul Karim al-Masri. However, the most prominent name among its members is Iyad al-Tubasi, nicknamed Abu Jilibib al-Urduni, the son-in-law of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and considered one of the al-Nusra Front founders in southern Syria. He had moved to northern Syria in 2015. He had a very tense relationship with Abu Mohammad al-Julani, who staged his death in late 2018, by hiring the smuggler who had dealt with the Tubasi to get him to southern Syria.

On September 10, 2019, the US Department of State designated the Guardians of Religion Organization, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) along with its leader Faruq al-Suri, also known as Abu Humam al-Shami. It said: "Today's actions seek to deny these terrorists the resources to plan and carry out attacks. All of their property and interests in

¹⁵ "Statement Statement from U.S. Central Command on U.S. Forces strike against al-Qaida in Syria leadership in Idlib, Syria", August 31, 2019, (last visit: September 16, 2019)
<https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/STATEMENTS/Statements-View/Article/1949406/statement-from-us-central-command-on-us-forces-strike-against-al-qaida-in-syria/>

property subject to U.S. jurisdiction are blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them."¹⁶

b. Details of the attack

At around 2:40 p.m. on June 30, 2019, an aerial attack struck a military headquarters of the Guardians of Religion Organization, which was established a year and two months ago on an abandoned farm. The attack took place during a secret meeting of the organization's commanders and resulted in the death of eight people, including three Sharia commanders of Egyptian, Tunisian and Algerian nationalities and five military commanders, among them Libyans, Tunisians and Syrians, according to a media activist from western rural Aleppo.

He added that up to 12 fighters of the organization were injured by the attack, most of them seriously. They were taken to a field hospital with total secrecy about their situations. The activist noted that the Guardians of Religion Organization routinely changes its headquarters every three months.



Remnants of the missile used by the international coalition in its attack on a military headquarters of the Guardians of Religion Organization on June 30, 2019. Photo credit: local activists.

¹⁶ "Terrorist Designations under Amended Executive Order to Modernize Sanctions to Combat Terrorism", US Department of State, September 10, 2019 (last visit: September 12, 2019) <https://translations.state.gov/2019/09/10/terrorist-designations-under-amended-executive-order-to-modernize-sanctions-to-combat-terrorism/>.

A local notable told STJ that the Sharia commanders who were killed in the attack had earlier issued a fatwa against the fighting in Hama province, considering it a nullifying to Astana talks. So, they were likely been eliminated, especially since there were disputes between the organization's members on several issues including the fighting in Abu Adh Dhuhur, and due to the extremism of some of them. It's also possible that the attack had been staged by members of the organization against their opposed co-members or maybe the HTS had given the location coordinates to the coalition to attack it, as said.

Local activists noticed that the Russian disabled the air defense system for two hours when the attack took place on the Guardians of Religion Organization headquarters.

STJ field researcher documented some names of those fell in the attack:

1. Abu Omar al-Tounsi (a Sharia commander)
2. Abu Dujana al-Jazaari (a fighter)
3. Abu Yahia al-Jazaari (a fighter)
4. Abu Ibrahim al-Shami (a Syrian fighter).
5. Abu Dhar al-Masri (a Sharia commander).
6. Abu al-Fidaa al-Tounsi (a Sharia commander).



An imagery from Google Earth shows the site before the attack, April 24, 2010.



A satellite image shows the site after the attack, late September 2019.

The analysis of the available visual evidence about the attack:



Photos' credit: [Bawaba Aleppo Facebook page](#).



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History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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