



HURRAS AL-DIN

Background

- Hurras al-Din, which means “Guardians of Religion Organization” and is also called al-Qa’ida in Syria or AQ-S, is an al-Qa’ida affiliate located in Idlib, a city in northwest Syria. In February 2018, the group became al-Qa’ida’s Syrian affiliate and merged with other Salafi-jihadist extremist groups after separating from Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, which strayed from al-Qa’ida’s doctrine.
- In February 2019, al-Qa’ida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri criticized infighting between Hurras al-Din and Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham, resulting in both groups agreeing to prevent future hostilities, discouraging public criticism, and creating an Islamic court to handle disputes among supporters.
- In March 2020, Hurras al-Din released a one-page statement praising terrorist attacks by al-Qa’ida allies, including the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia. When publicizing its support for al-Qa’ida affiliates, the group also reaffirmed its allegiance to Zawahiri.



Base of operation for Hurras al-Din in Idlib, Syria

Threat to New Jersey: Low

Hurras al-Din has threatened the United States and supports al-Qa’ida affiliates but continues to focus its efforts on conducting attacks in Syria and competing with regional Salafi-jihadist groups for territory and resources.

- Hurras al-Din has dedicated its resources to conducting attacks in Syria, attacking Hizballah and Russian forces, while also threatening other minorities, such as Jewish people and Shia Muslims.
- Hurras al-Din has not produced any English-language propaganda to inspire homegrown violent extremists to support its goals or encourage attacks in the United States. Additionally, no US citizen has been arrested for attempting to travel to Syria to join the group or provide material support.
- In March 2020, Hurras al-Din leader Faruq al-Suri encouraged supporters to remain committed to fighting on the battlefield and using guerrilla warfare against Syrian forces and their Iranian and Russian allies. While emboldening fighters to remain vigilant, Suri did not provide new terrorist tactics to attack the United States or specific targets.



The US State Department offered a reward for information on Hurras al-Din leaders.

US Nexus

- In September 2019, the US State Department designated Hurras al-Din a specially designated global terrorist and offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the identification of three leaders: Abu Abd al-Karim al-Masri, Sami al-Uraydi, and Suri.
- Suri was a senior al-Qa’ida trainer in the al-Faruq training camp in Afghanistan in the 1990s and trained fighters in Iraq from 2003 to 2005. He was previously detained in Lebanon from 2009 to 2013 and became the military commander of Nusra Front until he left in 2016.
- In response to the reward, *al-Hijrah*, a pro-al-Qa’ida media unit, posted on Telegram a statement titled, “Al-Qaeda is a Producer of Leaders,” stating any efforts to attack its leaders and weaken the group will fail because al-Qa’ida has a generation of supporters willing to attack the United States.
- In June 2019, US forces conducted an airstrike targeting Hurras al-Din operatives at a training facility near Aleppo Province in northern Syria for their role in “plotting external attacks threatening US citizens, our partners, and innocent civilians,” according to US Central Command. In August 2019, the military also conducted an airstrike against an al-Qa’ida leadership facility north of Idlib.

Additional Resources

[2020 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)

[Al-Qa’ida Leader Calls for Attacks on 9/11 Anniversary](#)

[Al-Qa’ida Affiliates Merge With Regional Extremists](#)