

Uli al-Baas (Part 1): A New Islamic Resistance Front in Syria?

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Part of a series: [Militia Spotlight \(https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight\)](https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/series/militia-spotlight)

or see [Part 1: How to Use Militia Spotlight \(/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight\)](/policy-analysis/how-use-militia-spotlight)

A newly formed "resistance" group emerged online in January, vowing to confront Israel's presence and Syria's interim president.

In a branding process trailing back to December, the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria-Possessors of Might (Uli al-Baas, or UAB) has emerged as the first major new *muqawama* (resistance) group in post-Assad Syria. But how real are they, and what can analysts infer from their propaganda and claimed activities so far? Part 1 of this two-part article lays out the chronology of UAB's emergence, while [Part 2 \(/node/19247\)](/node/19247) draws out some analytical findings about its likely role in the Iran threat network.

The Apparent Origin of UAB

On December 17, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) called for "the establishment of a front to liberate southern Syria" from "Jewish aggression" and "work toward liberating all the occupied territories [in Syria]" (Figure 1). SSNP is active in both Syria and Lebanon and has close ties with the Assad family's Baath Party and Lebanese Hezbollah.

On January 9, a new group calling itself Jabhat Tahrir al-Janoub (JTJ), or the Southern Liberation Front, announced its formation via Telegram in response to "the Israeli occupation's advance into our lands in southern Syria—specifically in the governorates of Quneitra, Deraa, and the western



Figure 1: SSNP statement, December 17, 2024.

countryside of Damascus." (/sites/default/files/2025-03/1.jpeg) The statement emphasized the group's independence, asserting that it "is not directed by any party, faction, or state" (Figure 2).

On January 11, JTJ rebranded by changing its name, logo, and declared objectives, adopting the new name Jabhat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya fi Suria-Uli al-Baas. The phrase "Uli al-Baas" may derive from religious text, since it appears three times in the Quran. It might also derive from the seventy-two-day clashes with Israel that Hezbollah secretary-general Naim Qassem called the "Battle of the Uli al-Baas." As will be discussed in Part 2,



Figure 2: JTJ announces its formation, January 9, 2025.



Figure 3: UAB "officially" announces the launch of kinetic operations against Israeli troops, January 17, 2025.

(/sites/default/files/2025-03/3.jpeg) of this analysis, the new logo adopted on January 11 strongly resembled the designs used by most militias linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, including Hezbollah. According to UAB, the group changed its name "due to the existence of multiple fronts with the same name." Despite the shift to new name that focuses on all of Syria, the group still refers to itself as "the sons of the south" and has mainly claimed activities in that part of the country so far.

Chaotic Early Claims of Kinetic Actions

On January 13, UAB claimed that it was mobilizing light armored vehicles and fighters to Quneitra, Suwayda, Deraa, Damascus, and the countryside surrounding the capital. Four days later, it "officially" announced "the launch of our military operations" against the Israeli presence in the south (Figure 3).

UAB's first attack claim was posted on January 24 and read as follows: "One of the groups affiliated with Kataib Uli al-Baas, part of the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria, shot down a drone in the Tal al-Ahmar area in the countryside of Quneitra on January 21" (Figure 4). The drone was reported to be Israeli.



Figure 5: UAB's second claim of a kinetic operation, January 31, 2025.

UAB's posted a second claim (/sites/default/files/2025-01/2025-01-31-kinetic-operation-03/4.jpeg) on January 31 alleging an attack on Israeli forces in the village of Taranja in the northern countryside of Quneitra (Figure 5). However, it failed to provide evidence of this attack, and the UAB's Telegram account later denied the incident on February 14 (see Part 2 (/node/19247)).

Cooperation with Other Fronts

On February 19, UAB announced the death of two of its high ranking members, Mohannad al-Buqari (Abu Bara) and Mohammed Mansour (Abu Zain). The claim suggested they were killed by the Israeli military after taking part in operations near Israeli forces, perhaps in Quneitra (Figure 6).

On February 21, three militia groups that identify with Iran's "axis of resistance" announced that they would henceforth be cooperating. A video clip showed a masked man introduced as Miqdad Fatiha, commander of the newly established Liwa Dir al-Sahel (Shield of the Coast Brigade), reading a statement. Known to be an army officer loyal to the former Assad regime, Fatiha's statement read as follows: "Joint statement issued by the leadership of Liwa Dir al-Sahel in coordination with the Islamic Resistance Front-Uli al-Baas in the southern region, and Dr. Abdulhamid al-Shamali, general commander of the Ghosts of the Spirit of Resistance Forces (Quwwat Ashbah Rouh al-Muqawama) in the eastern region. We hereby

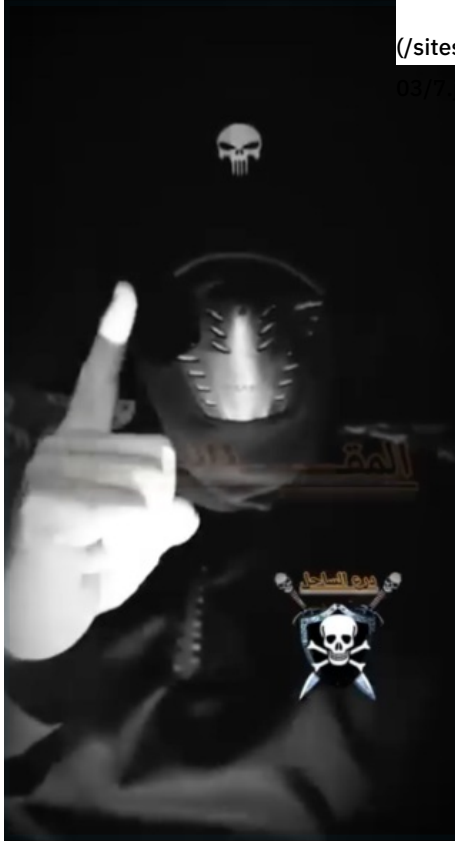


Figure 7: A man, allegedly Miqdad Fatiha, claims that three militia groups identifying with the "axis of resistance" have begun cooperating in Syria, February 21, 2025.



Figure 4: UAB makes its first claim of a kinetic operation, January 24, 2025.



Figure 6: UAB announces the death of two high-ranking members, February 19, 2025.

announce full cooperation and coordination in combating *takfiri* [apostate] terrorist organizations and the de facto government in

Damascus until victory is achieved across all parts of the Syrian Arab Republic" (Figure 7). ("Resistance" militias in Syria and elsewhere often use the term *takfiri* as a pejorative against groups with jihadist backgrounds, including those that lead the new Syrian government.) The video was reposted by the UAB Telegram channel, confirming the alliance and placing the group in direct confrontation with the new government.

On February 27, UAB posted a video featuring a blurred image of around twenty-five fighters. The men are seen wearing a mix of paramilitary attire and civilian clothing, carrying personal weapons and a few rocket-propelled grenades (Figure 8).



Figure 8: UAB video featuring a blurred image of fighters, February 27, 2025.

جبهة المقاومة الإسلامية في سوريا - اولي الباس

بسم رب الفتح المبين
 فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى
 وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ
 في هذه الأثناء تقوم جبهة المقاومة الإسلامية في سورية اولي الباس و المقاومة الشعبية السورية قوات درع الساحل بالتصدي والإشتباك مع عصابات الإرهاب التكفيري على عدة محاور في الجمهورية العربية السورية المحتلة محققة انتصار واضح وسنعلن قريبا ما تم تحريره من هذه العصابات موقعة قتلى و اصابات مباشرة بصفوفهم وأسر عدد كبير منهم .
 وما النصر الا صبر ساعة
 إخوتكم
 جبهة المقاومة الإسلامية في سورية اولي الباس
 المقاومة الشعبية السورية قوات درع الساحل
 2025/3/6

On March 6, as clashes between Assad loyalists and forces from the new government escalated in the coastal region, UAB made its first claim of a joint kinetic operation against the latter: "At this moment, the Islamic Resistance Front in Syria-Uli al-Bas and the Syrian Popular Resistance-Dir al-Sahel Forces are engaging and clashing with *takfiri* terrorist gangs on multiple fronts across the occupied Syrian Arab Republic" (Figure 9). At the same time, it

claimed to launch attacks against Israeli forces in Quneitra. On March 7, it claimed that one of its fighters, Mahdi Haj Ali (Abu Turab), was killed by government forces.

Again, little to no actual evidence has been presented of any UAB attack against Israeli forces or the new Syrian government. ❖

against the new Syrian government, March 6, 2025.

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