

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

Name: Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

Type of Organization:

- Insurgent
- non-state actor
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Al-Qaeda affiliated group
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Qutbist
- Salafist
- Sunni

Place of Origin:

Syria and Iraq

Year of Origin:

Formed 2011, declared January 2012

Founder(s):

Abu Mohammad al-Golani, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

Places of Operation:

Syria and Lebanon

Overview

Also known as:

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Al-Nusrah Front¹• Al-Nusra Front to Protect the Levant²• Al Nusrah Front for the People of Levant³• Al Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant⁴• Al-Nusrah Front in Lebanon⁵• Ansar al-Mujahideen Network⁶• Jabhat al-Nusrah⁷• Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham⁸• Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham Min Mujahedin al-Sham fi Sahat al-Jihad⁹• Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham Min Mujahideen al-Sham fi Sahat al-Jihad¹⁰• Jabhet al-Nusra¹¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jabhet al-Nusrah¹²• Jabhat Fath al-Sham¹³• Levantine Conquest Front¹⁴• Levantine Mujahideen on the Battlefields of Jihad¹⁵• Support Front for the People of the Levant¹⁶• The Al Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant¹⁷• The Defense Front¹⁸• The Front for the Defence of the Syrian People¹⁹• The Front for the Defense of the Syrian People²⁰• The Support Front for the People of Syria from the Mujahideen of Syria in the Places of Jihad²¹• The Victory Front²² |
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Executive Summary:

The Nusra Front—also known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (“the Levantine Conquest Front”)—is an internationally sanctioned terrorist group, the second-strongest insurgent group in Syria after [ISIS](#), and a former [al-Qaeda](#) affiliate that seeks to replace the Assad regime with an Islamist state. The Nusra Front stands accused of serving as a base for global al-Qaeda

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operations, including plotting attacks against targets in the United States and Europe.²³ In the years since its formation in 2011, the Nusra Front has gradually amassed and sustained territory throughout Syria.²⁴ As of mid-2016, the Nusra Front controls territory in northern, western, and southern Syria, including the majority of Syria's Idlib province.²⁵

Before its formal dissociation from al-Qaeda, the Nusra Front had a long and proven history of serving as al-Qaeda's loyal affiliate in Syria. In July 2016, however, al-Qaeda leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) released an audio statement giving the Nusra Front formal permission to break ties with al-Qaeda if the link was "conflicting with [the Nusra Front's] unity and working as one body."²⁶ Hours later, Nusra Front leader [Abu Muhammad al-Golani](#) declared a formal split from al-Qaeda after thanking "our brothers, the commanders of al-Qa'eda," and announcing the group's name change from Jabhat al-Nusra ("the Victory Front") to Jabhat Fateh al-Sham ("the Levantine Conquest Front").²⁷ Analysts had long surmised that a formal break from al-Qaeda, however artificial, could allow the Nusra Front the opportunity to attract more funding from Gulf States, consolidate local support, and present itself as a legitimate insurgent group in Syria.²⁸

For years before the announcement, however, Golani had reaffirmed his group's allegiance to al-Qaeda. The Nusra Front's founder, current ISIS leader [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#), claims to have formed and dispatched Golani and others—then al-Qaeda fighters from Iraq—into Syria in 2011 in order to take advantage of the power vacuum stemming from the civil war.²⁹ The United States confirms this claim, maintaining that that the Nusra Front was formed by AQI to "hijack the struggles of the legitimate Syrian opposition to further its own extremist ideology."³⁰ In April 2013, after Baghdadi unilaterally claimed that the Nusra Front answered to his al-Qaeda in Iraq group (now ISIS), Golani broke ties with ISIS and reaffirmed his allegiance to al-Qaeda central.³¹

Despite the group's origins in Iraq, the Nusra Front has branded itself as a native rebel group with foreign experience. In Syria, the group continues to profess its goal of toppling the Assad regime and establishing an Islamic state in its place, albeit incrementally. In its effort to consolidate local support, the Nusra Front has adopted military and outreach strategies from al-Qaeda-linked jihadist Abu Musab al-Suri, participating in numerous Syrian-based coalitions and collaborating with other rebel groups to carry out attacks against Assad forces.³²

Although the group has succeeded in embedding itself in the Syrian insurgency, the Nusra Front remains committed to employing terrorist tactics in order to secure an Islamist state. Since its founding, the Nusra Front has conducted formal military campaigns, assassinations, hostage missions, and 'lone wolf' operations, including al-Qaeda's trademark suicide bombings. By June 2013, the Nusra Front had claimed responsibility for 57 out of 70 suicide attacks conducted during Syria's civil war.³³ The group has since continued to carry out its signature suicide bombings in Syrian cities into 2016.³⁴ The Nusra Front has also expanded its operations to Lebanon, where it stokes sectarian divisions and conducts attacks against the Lebanese military and the Iranian-backed terror group [Hezbollah](#).³⁵

As of mid-2016, the Nusra Front's paramilitary force is reportedly comprised of around 5,000 to 10,000 fighters, including an estimated 7,000 fighters in Idlib province alone.³⁶ The Nusra Front has attracted the largest contingency of foreign fighters to Syria after ISIS.³⁷

Doctrine:

The Nusra Front adheres to a Salafist, jihadist ideology with the professed aim of establishing Islamic governance in all areas under its control. In the group's January 2012 inaugural video, a masked representative outlined its regional objectives. He introduced the Nusra Front as "Syrian mujahideen" who have come "back from various jihad fronts to restore God's rule on the Earth [*shari'ah* law] and avenge the Syrians' violated honour and spilled blood."³⁸ Years later, when Abu Muhammad al-Golani announced the Nusra Front's formal split from al-Qaeda, Golani reaffirmed the group's objectives, saying that in separating from al-Qaeda, the Nusra Front (renamed Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) was not "compromising or sacrificing our solid beliefs or laxity in the necessity of the continuity of the Jihad of Al-Sham."³⁹ Golani reaffirmed that his group sought to use "Islamically legitimate means" to unify mujahideen (jihadists) in Syria and the

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“masses of people in Al-Sham [Syria]” in order to replace the Assad government with one based on sharia (Islamic law).⁴⁰

While the Nusra Front works to establish Islamic law in all areas under its control, it has done so incrementally, in order to sustain local support. In this way, the group follows the guidelines and strategy of al-Qaeda-linked writer Abu Musab al-Suri, who sought to win the hearts and minds of locals in order to pursue his Islamist objectives.⁴¹ In a statement posted online, Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani said, “Beware of being hard on [the locals]. Begin with the priorities and fundamentals of Islam, and be flexible on the minor parts of religion.”⁴² In December 2012 interview with the Dubai-based *National*, Golani said that his group’s “first goal is to get rid of Assad. Then we want a state where the Quran is the only source of law.”⁴³

Although the Nusra Front publicly emphasizes its regional aims, it has shown signs of a more expansionist ideology in line with al-Qaeda’s brand of global jihadism. Despite the group’s emphasis on its Syrian character, the Nusra Front has expanded operations into neighboring Lebanon, where it has succeeded in establishing a cell.⁴⁴ The group also stands accused of plotting attacks against the West,⁴⁵ seemingly through the elusive [Khorasan](#) group, or what one Dubai reporter has exposed as the Nusra Front’s ‘Wolf unit.’⁴⁶ When the Nusra Front was sent to Syria, one of its founding goals was reportedly to establish a safe haven for training recruits and stashing weapons,⁴⁷ allegedly on behalf of al-Qaeda in Iraq (now ISIS).⁴⁸

Organizational Structure:

The Nusra Front is both hierarchical and regionalized. Each region is equipped with an overall leader, a military commander, and a religious leader.⁴⁹ The group as a whole is directed by a small consultative council called *Majlis-ash-Shura*,⁵⁰ and headed by its emir (“commander” or “prince”), a man known by the alias “Abu Muhammad al-Golani.” For years, Golani has carefully avoided showing his face in public, releasing audio statements and providing in-person interviews to news outlets with his face blurred out. In July 2016, however, Golani appeared in a video to announce his group’s formal split from al-Qaeda.⁵¹

The Nusra Front’s paramilitary force is reportedly composed of around 5,000 to 10,000 fighters, including an estimated 7,000 fighters in Idlib province alone.⁵² The Nusra Front has also attracted the largest contingency of foreign fighters after ISIS.⁵³ The group’s military branch is responsible for conducting coordinated attacks against the Assad regime, loyalists, thugs, and perceived colluders, as well as rival groups like ISIS. The branch also conducts ‘lone wolf’ operations (including suicide bombings) and hostage missions. The Nusra Front also stands accused of plotting attacks against Western targets through its small and secretive ‘Wolf Unit.’⁵⁴

In addition to the group’s military branch, the Nusra Front manages a civilian program to govern areas under its control which, as of mid-2016, included areas in northern, western, and southern Syria.⁵⁵ This branch operates under the direction of its head of civilian programs, Hajji Rasoul.⁵⁶ In the past, the program has coordinated bread rations and enforced Islamist regulations on the Nusra Front’s de facto subjects.⁵⁷ As part of the group’s governance program, the Nusra Front levies taxes and supplies special permits to civilian vehicles.⁵⁸

For recruitment and publicity purposes, the Nusra Front has a media branch called al-Manara al-Bayda (“the White Minaret”). This branch manages the group’s public image and media program, disseminating videos and posting statements by the group on jihadist websites, as well as on encrypted messaging applications, video-hosting websites, and social media websites.⁵⁹

The Nusra Front has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda⁶⁰ and previously reported to the latter group’s leader, Ayman al-Zawahri. On July 28, 2016, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri released an audio statement giving the Nusra Front formal

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permission to break ties with al-Qaeda as needed.⁶¹ Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani accepted the offer, thanking al-Qaeda and its leaders and announcing that the group no longer has “any affiliation to any external entity.”⁶²

Financing:

The Nusra Front has been well-funded since its inception in 2011.⁶³ As of August 2016, the group reportedly receives streams of funding through a variety of means, including taxation, tariffs, fines, ransoms, international donations, oil sales, looting, and smuggling.⁶⁴

The most stable source of income for the Nusra Front is believed to come from taxes, tariffs, and fines that the group imposes on locals within its territory. Among the taxes levied by the group are income, business, services and utility taxes, including taxes on access to electricity and water. The Nusra Front also reportedly receives funding by leasing out homes, and is even reported to have levied a tax on internally displaced persons within Idlib province.⁶⁵ In addition to taxes, the group also seizes assets from religious minority groups within its territories and receives funding through an arms and weaponry tariff on other rebel groups. In this way, the Nusra Front is believed to receive roughly half of the ammunition and weapons sent to the Free Syrian Army in northern Syria.⁶⁶

Sources of funding for the group also reportedly include private donations from wealthy individuals in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, who are believed to launder the funds through small money transfers, or by dispatching the money with individuals who cross state borders into Nusra-held territory.⁶⁷

The Nusra Front has also secured revenue from oil sales and smuggling,⁶⁸ as well as through extortion. Although governments typically deny payment for the release of hostages, the Nusra Front is believed to have racked up millions of dollars through hostage exchanges negotiated by the Qatari government. In one hostage exchange, the group reportedly received \$4 million when it released four Greek Orthodox nuns in March 2014.⁶⁹ In another exchange, the Nusra Front reportedly received \$25 million when it released 45 U.N. peacekeepers.⁷⁰ U.S. citizen Peter Theo Curtis was believed to be released in August 2014 in exchange for anywhere between \$3 million and \$25 million, although the circumstances of Curtis’s release were not made public.⁷¹

Recruitment and Training:

The Nusra Front requires recruits to procure *tazkiyya* (a vouch on behalf of the recruit) from two commanders on the front line in order to join.⁷² The recruit must then take a 10-day religious training course followed by a 15 to 20 day military training program.⁷³ Once the recruit is accepted, he must swear *bay’ah* (an oath of allegiance) to the group, thereby cementing his religious commitment.⁷⁴

The Nusra Front recruits online and in private messaging applications through its media branch, al-Minara al-Bayda. Within Syria, the group has attracted recruits by appealing to the locals in a strategy adopted from al-Qaeda jihadist Abu Musab al-Suri.⁷⁵ When it comes to attracting recruits, the Nusra Front holds a financial advantage over competing rebel groups, as has historically been able to provide members with salaries and weapons.⁷⁶

¹ “ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF SPECIALLY DESIGNATED NATIONALS AND BLOCKED PERSONS (‘SDN List’),” U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.treasury.gov/ofac/downloads/sdnlist.txt>.

² “Islamist Group Claims Syria Bombs ‘to Avenge Sunnis’,” Agence France-Presse, March 21, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/21/202177.html>.

³ “ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF SPECIALLY DESIGNATED NATIONALS AND BLOCKED PERSONS (‘SDN List’),” U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.treasury.gov/ofac/downloads/sdnlist.txt>.

⁴ “Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of the Treasury,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/terror.txt>.

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- ⁵ "ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF SPECIALLY DESIGNATED NATIONALS AND BLOCKED PERSONS ('SDN List')," U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed December 12, 2014, <http://www.treasury.gov/ofac/downloads/sdnlist.txt>.
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Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

Key Leaders



Abu Muhammad al-Golani
Leader



Sami al-Oraidi
Religious leader



Maysar Ali Musa Abdallah al-Juburi
Shari'ah leader; religious and military
commander in eastern Syria



Hajji Rasoul
Head of civilian program



Anas Hassan Khattab
Civilian administrative leader

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History:

- July 28, 2016:** Al-Qaeda gives the Nusra Front permission to break ties with al-Qaeda as needed in order to continue its fight.
Source: Lisa Barrington and Suleiman al-Khaldi, "Al Qaeda tells Syrian branch Nusra Front it can drop links," Reuters, July 28, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-front-idUSKCN10819R>.
- July 2016:** The Nusra Front is blamed for attacks in southern Syria as well as the capture and kidnapping of Western-backed rebels in the north.
In early July, the group reportedly captures and takes hostage the commander of the Western-backed Jaish al-Tahrir rebel group as well as "scores" of the commander's aides and fighters, according to reports. Later in July, the Nusra Front is blamed for launching two rocket attacks in the southern Syrian town of Baath City, killing civilians. Sources: "Nusra captures leader, fighters of Western-backed rebels in northern Syria," Reuters, July 3, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-idUSKCN0ZJ0F3>; "Hezbollah says Golan explosions caused by Nusra Front rocket fire," Reuters, July 20, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-israel-hezbollah-idUSKCN10019L>.
- June 2016:** The Nusra Front continues its offensive against Assad forces, reportedly killing dozens of military and civilian targets in Aleppo.
In early June, a Russian ceasefire monitoring agency claims that the Nusra Front shelled down 40 people in Aleppo using rocket launchers, canons, mortars, and anti-aircraft missiles. Also in June, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry reportedly discuss joint efforts to combat the Nusra Front in Syria. Sources: "Russia says Al Nusra shelling military, civilian areas in Aleppo," Reuters, June 10, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia-aleppo-idUSKCN0YWF0R>; "Lavrov, Kerry discuss possible joint action against Nusra Front in Syria - Russian government," Reuters, June 1, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-lavrov-kerry-idUSL8N18T585>.
- May 2016:** Russia highlights increased violence in Aleppo by the Nusra Front, and claims that the group is responsible for the thwarting of an extended truce.
Later in the month an airstrike, believed to be carried out by the U.S. or Russia, kills 16 Nusra Front militants in northwestern Syria. Russia intensifies air strikes on Nusra Front-controlled oil and smuggling sites throughout the month. Sources: "UPDATE 1-Russia blames Nusra Front for wrecking planned truce in Syria's Aleppo," Reuters, May 4, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-russia-syria-aleppo-idUSL5N1814MD>; "Syrian Observatory: air strike kills 16 Nusra militants," Reuters, May 13, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-idUSKCN0Y40M0>; "Russia intensifies strikes on Nusra Front oil sites - military official," Reuters, May 27, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-russia-idUSR4N18K011>.
- April 2016:** The Nusra Front continues its offensive against Assad forces.
On April 1, the Nusra Front carries out three suicide bombings targeting Assad forces near a hillside south of Aleppo. On April 5, the group shoots down a Syrian warplane, capturing the pilot. Meanwhile, the group also suffers losses. Abu Firas al-Suri, former spokesman for the Nusra Front, is reported killed by U.S. airstrike in early April. Sources: "Nusra Front, Syrian rebels attack government forces near Aleppo, gain ground," Reuters, April 2, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0WZ005>; "Rebels shoot down second Syrian jet in a month," Reuters, April 5, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-jet-idUSKCN0X214E>; "U.S. behind strike that killed Nusra Front's Abu Firas: officials," Reuters, April 4, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKCN0X11R3>.
- March 2016:** The Nusra Front steals weaponry, releases a hostage video, and makes its first advance of the year.
On March 6, the Nusra Front and other Islamist insurgent groups launch at least 100 rockets on a Kurdish residential area of Aleppo, killing at least nine civilians and wounding dozens of others, according to SOHR. The Nusra Front later clashes with government forces south of Aleppo, gaining some ground. The group attacks government forces and briefly captures the village of al-Ais before government forces retake the village. Later in the month, the group seizes bases and weapons, including anti-tank missiles, from Western-backed rebel groups in northwest Syria. The Nusra Front releases a video of Japanese hostage Jumpei Yasuda on Yasuda's birthday, March 16. On March 21, the group loses control of a village in southern Syria to ISIS-linked rebels. A week later, ISIS and the Nusra Front again clash, this time in northern Lebanon. Sources: "At least 9 dead, dozens injured in attacks against Kurdish quarter in Aleppo," Reuters, March 6, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-idUSKCN0W80RU>; "Islamist fighters attack Syrian government forces south of Aleppo: Syrian Observatory," Reuters, March 7, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-aleppo-nusra-idUSKCN0W91Y8>; Tom Perry and Tom Miles, "Air strike hits Syrian market, opposition says truce must be respected," Reuters, March 8, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKCN0W91JQ>; "Syrian rebel commander says Nusra Front seized 'light weapons and ammunition,'" Reuters, March 14, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-rebels-idUSKCN0WG17D>; "Video of reported Japanese hostage surfaces with message to family," Reuters, March 16, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-japan-hostage-idUSL3N16O5QG>; "Fighting between militant groups in Syria border region spills into Lebanon," Reuters, March 28, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-fighting-idUSKCN0WU1G3>.
- February 20, 2016 - February 28, 2016:** The Nusra Front rejects a cease fire and calls for intensified attacks against Bashar al-Assad and his regime.
Source: "Nusra Front rejects Syria truce, urges stronger attacks: audio statement," Reuters, February 26, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-idUSKCN0VZ1ZZ>.
- November 16, 2015:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a suicide bombing that it says killed top commanders in the ISIS-affiliated Yarmouk Martyrs Brigades.
Source: "Nusra Front says kills Islamic State-linked Syrian rebel leaders," Reuters, November 16, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-south-idUSKCN0T517K20151116>.
- October 15, 2015:** The U.S. military kills Nusra Front higher-up Sanafi al-Nasr in an airstrike in northwest Syria.
Source: The U.S. military kills Nusra Front higher-up Sanafi al-Nasr in an airstrike in northwest Syria.
- October 12, 2015:** The Nusra Front calls for attacks against Syrian Alawites in retaliation for Russian airstrikes.
Source: Suleiman al-Khaldi and Ahmed Tolba, "Nusra Front urges attacks on Syria's Alawites to avenge Russian bombings," Reuters, October 12, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-nusra-idUSKCN0S625220151013>.
- September 9, 2015:** The Nusra Front seizes the Abu al-Duhur airbase from Assad regime forces, thereby capturing the

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final regime position in Idlib province.

Source: "Syria conflict: Rebels seize key Idlib airbase," BBC News, September 9, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34196438>.

- **August 25, 2015:**Two Lebanese sisters abducted by the Nusra Front arrive in Lebanon under a secret swap with Hezbollah.
Source: "Lebanese sisters abducted in Syria freed in Hezbollah swap deal," *Daily Star* (Beirut), August 25, 2015, <http://dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Aug-25/312673-lebanese-sisters-abducted-in-syria-freed-in-hezbollah-swap-deal.ashx>
- **August 16, 2015:**The Nusra Front releases a statement saying that it has released seven captured members of the U.S.-trained Division 30.
The Nusra Front releases a statement saying that it has released seven captured members of the U.S.-trained Division 30.Sources: "Al Qaeda releases abducted U.S.-backed Syrian rebels," CBS News, August 16, 2015, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/al-qaeda-releases-abducted-us-backed-syrian-rebels/>; Ben Hubbard and Maher Samaan, "Government Airstrikes on Market in Syria Kill More Than 80," *New York Times*, August 16, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/17/world/middleeast/government-airstrikes-on-syrian-market-in-damascus-kill-more-than-80.html>.
- **August 10, 2015:**The Nusra Front withdraws from its front-line positions against ISIS north of Aleppo, where Turkey and the United States announced plans to create a buffer zone free of ISIS extremists.
Source: Ben Hubbard, "Nusra Front Announces Withdrawal From Front Line Against ISIS in Syria," *New York Times*, August 10, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/11/world/middleeast/nusra-front-announces-withdrawal-from-front-line-against-isis-in-syria.html>; Reuters, "Nusra Front Withdraws From Frontline Against ISIS in Syria," NBC News, August 11, 2015, <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/nusra-front-withdraws-frontline-against-isis-syria-n407656>.
- **August 5, 2015:**Following the Nusra Front's kidnapping attacks against U.S.-trained rebels, members of Division 30 announce their refusal to fight the Nusra Front.
Source: Kareem Shaheen, "US-trained Syrian rebels refuse to fight al-Qaida group after kidnappings," *Guardian* (London), August 6, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/aug/06/syrian-rebels-nusra-front-al-qaeda-kidnapping>.
- **August 4, 2015:**The U.S. Pentagon says that the Nusra Front has captured members of the Free Syrian Army who were undergoing a U.S. training program.
Source: Associated Press, "Pentagon: More Syrian rebels captured by Nusra Front," Yahoo News, August 4, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/pentagon-more-syrian-rebels-captured-nusra-front-221727703--politics.html>.
- **August 3, 2015:**U.S. officials confirm an expanded bombing campaign against the Nusra Front in light of its attacks against U.S.-trained rebels over the weekend.
Source: Patrick J. McDonnell and W.J. Hennigan, "Pentagon ramps up airstrikes in Syria to help U.S.-backed rebels," *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-us-syria-20150803-story.html>.
- **August 1, 2015:**The Nusra Front releases a video of the July 31 attack and kidnapping operation against Division 30 rebels. In the video, one member boasts that the Nusra Front has "cut of the hands of the West and Americans." Meanwhile, a religious court run by the Nusra Front executes 10 people in Aleppo, two on charges of adultery and eight on charges of collusion with the Syrian government, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.Sources: Associated Press, "Syrian Rebel Group Leaves Their HQ After Clash With Al-Qaida," *New York Times*, August 1, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/01/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>; Agence France Presse, "Qaeda-led court executes 10 in Syria's Aleppo: monitor," Yahoo News, August 1, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/qaeda-led-court-executes-10-syrias-aleppo-monitor-164224807.html>.
- **July 31, 2015:**The Nusra Front attacks the U.S.-trained Division 30 (a.k.a. New Syrian Forces) rebel unit, killing five of its fighters, wounding 18, and kidnapping 20.
According to multiple rebel sources who spoke to McClatchy, the Nusra Front was tipped off by Turkish intelligence.Sources: Anne Barnard and Eric Schmitt, "Rivals of ISIS Attack U.S.-Backed Syrian Rebel Group," *New York Times*, July 31, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/01/world/middleeast/nusra-front-attacks-us-backed-syrian-rebel-group.html>; Associated Press, "Syrian Rebel Group Leaves Their HQ After Clash With Al-Qaida," *New York Times*, August 1, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/01/world/middleeast/ap-ml-syria.html>; Mitchell Prothero, "Syrian rebels: Turkey tipped al Qaeda group to U.S.-trained fighters Nusra quickly captured graduates of \$500 million train-and-equip program," McClatchy, August 24, 2015, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/world/middle-east/article32206167.html>.
- **July 18, 2015:**Key leaders of the Nusra Front—including Sami al-Oraidi—as well as leaders of other jihadist rebel groups (including Ahrar al Sham) sign a document vowing to continue the fight against ISIS.
Source: Key leaders of the Nusra Front—including Sami al-Oraidi—as well as leaders of other jihadist rebel groups (including Ahrar al Sham) sign a document vowing to continue the fight against ISIS.
- **July 15, 2015:**The Army of Conquest coalition—to which the Nusra Front belongs—announces its offensive against the towns of Fuaa and Kafraya, reportedly the last two Shiite localities held by the regime in Idlib.
Source: Agence France-Presse, "Qaeda, allies attack Shiite villages in northwest Syria," Yahoo News, July 15, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/qaeda-allies-attack-shiite-villages-northwest-syria-155644254.html>.
- **July 10, 2015:**After being held captive for a week—allegedly by Nusra Front members—a priest in Idlib province, Syria, is released by his captors.
Source: Agence France-Presse, "Kidnapped Franciscan priest released in Syria," Yahoo News, July 10, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/kidnapped-franciscan-priest-released-syria-195928867.html>.
- **July 8, 2015:**U.S. airstrikes in northwestern Syria kill seven Nusra Front members, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Source: Agence France-Presse, "US-led air strikes kill seven Al-Nusra members in Syria: monitor," Yahoo News, July 8, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/us-led-air-strikes-kill-seven-al-nusra-225008264.html>.

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- **July 3, 2015:** Twenty-five Nusra Front members are killed in a mosque explosion in Idlib province. No group claimed responsibility but Nusra Front supporters blame ISIS for the attack.
- **July 3, 2015:** The Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham announce the formation of a new coalition—Ansar al-Shariah—as they and other rebel groups fight government forces in Aleppo.
Source: Anne Barnard and Maher Samaan, “Aleppo Fighting Flares as Syria Insurgents Attack,” *New York Times*, July 3, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/04/world/middleeast/aleppo-fighting-flares-up-as-syria-rebels-renew-attacks.html>.
- **July 2, 2015:** Nusra Front and other rebel groups including Ahrar al-Sham launch a major offensive to gain control of the divided city of Aleppo, Syria.
Source: Reuters, “Syrian Islamist Insurgents Launch Battle to Seize Government-Held Aleppo,” *Newsweek*, July 2, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/syrian-islamist-insurgents-launch-battle-seize-government-held-aleppo-349792>.
- **June 23, 2015:** Abu Muhammad al-Golani releases an audio statement mourning the death of al-Qaeda deputy leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi.
Source: “Syria’s Nusra Front underlines Qaeda link in audio message,” Reuters, June 24, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/06/24/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-yemen-idUKKBN0P41DP20150624>.
- **June 10, 2015:** Members of the Nusra Front kills at least 20 Druze in the village of Qalb al-Lawzi in the north of Idlib’s province.
After international outcry, the Nusra Front released an official statement three days later acknowledging that its members attacked Druze but saying that they did so “in clear violation of the leadership’s views.” Sources: Anne Barnard, “Syrian Druze Reconsider Alliances After Deadly Attack,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/12/world/middleeast/nusra-front-druze-syria-attack.html>; Agence France-Presse, “Al-Qaeda Syria branch tries to reassure Druze after shoot-out,” Yahoo News, June 13, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-syria-branch-tries-reassure-druze-shoot-193647656.html>.
- **June 3, 2015:** Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani appears in an interview with Al Jazeera.
International Business Times notes that although the video is produced by Qatari news outlet Al Jazeera, “[t]he footage had all the makings of an al Qaeda propaganda video.” Source: Alessandra Masi, “Jabhat Al-Nusra Leader Interview: ‘No Solution’ To ISIS, Al Qaeda Tension In Syria, Americans Joined Nusra Front,” *International Business Times*, June 3, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/jabhat-al-nusra-leader-interview-no-solution-isis-al-qaeda-tension-syria-americans-1951584>.
- **June 2, 2015:** The Nusra Front announces that it has attacked two Hezbollah outposts in eastern Lebanon, killing several Hezbollah members.
Source: “Nusra Front attacks Hezbollah outposts near Aarsal,” *Daily Star* (Beirut), June 2, 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Jun-02/300248-nusra-front-attacks-hezbollah-outposts-near-aarsal.ashx>.
- **May 27, 2015:** Al Jazeera runs an exclusive interview with Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani.
Source: “Nusra leader: Our mission is to defeat Syrian regime,” Al Jazeera, May 28, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/nusra-front-golani-assad-syria-hezbollah-isis-150528044857528.html>.
- **May 22, 2015:** The Nusra Front is part of an offensive that seizes a hospital from government forces in Idlib province.
Source: “Insurgents in Syria seize hospital from army – monitor,” Reuters UK, May 22, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/22/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-idUKKBN0O70QK20150522>.
- **May 20, 2015:** A U.S. air raid in northwest Syria kills 15 Nusra Front fighters, according to monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Source: “U.S.-led air raid kills 15 al Qaeda fighters in Syria: monitor,” Reuters, May 20, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/05/20/us-mideast-crisis-syria-nusra-idUSKBN0O52B120150520>.
- **May 19, 2015:** The Army of Conquest coalition, including the Nusra Front, captures the Assad regime’s largest remaining military base in Idlib province.
Source: “Rebels take largest remaining army base in Syria’s Idlib: monitor,” i24 News, May 19, 2015, <http://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/middle-east/71756-150519-rebels-take-largest-remaining-army-base-in-syria-s-idlib-monitor>.
- **May 4, 2015:** Nusra Front fighters, including a suicide bomber, launch an attack in Damascus.
Source: Associated Press, “Nusra-linked Insurgents, Including Suicide Bomber, Strike Syrian Capital,” *Haaretz*, May 4, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.654916>.
- **April 15, 2015:** Reports from Palestinian refugee camp Yarmouk reveal that ISIS has pulled out of the camp, leaving the Nusra Front in charge.
Source: Johnlee Varghese, “Syria: Isis Pulls out of Yarmouk Camp, Leaving al-Nusra Militants in Charge,” *International Business Times*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/syria-isis-pulls-out-yarmouk-camp-leaving-al-nusra-militants-charge-629338>.
- **April 8, 2015:** The Nusra Front confirms the death of its northern Aleppo leader known as Abu Maria.
Source: Agence France-Presse, “Nusra confirms emir death, as Aleppo car bomb toll hits 32,” *Daily Star* (Beirut), April 8, 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Apr-08/293751-nusra-confirms-emir-death-as-aleppo-car-bomb-toll-hits-32.ashx>.
- **April 6, 2015:** The Nusra Front releases hundreds of Kurdish prisoners kidnapped over a period of two days.
Source: Oliver Holmes, “Syrian insurgents kidnap then release 300 Kurds - Kurdish official,” Reuters, April 6, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/04/06/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds-idUKKBN0MX0VK20150406>.
- **April 1, 2015:** The Nusra Front joins a rebel coalition to seize Nasib crossing, the only functioning border crossing with Jordan, as well as three military posts nearby.
Sources: Agence France-Presse, “Rebels seize Syria-Jordan border as IS storms Damascus,” Yahoo News, April 1, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/militants-seize-most-yarmuk-refugee-camp-damascus-001902378.html>; Associated Press, “Syrian Rebels Capture Border Crossing With Jordan,” *Voice of America*, April 2, 2015,

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<http://www.voanews.com/content/syrian-rebels-nusra-front-capture-jordan-border-crossing/2703815.html>.

- **March 27, 2015 - March 28, 2015:** The Nusra Front makes advances in Idlib city in northwest Syria, clashing with regime forces.
Dozens of militants and four regime soldiers die as a result of the clash, according to the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. By March 28, the Nusra Front has seized almost all of Idlib city from regime forces. Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Islamists advance in fierce clashes for Syria's Idlib: monitor," *Daily Mail* (London), March 27, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3014799/Islamists-advance-fierce-clashes-Syrias-Idlib-monitor.html>; Associated Press, "Islamic fighters led by al-Qaida in Syria seize major city," Yahoo News, March 28, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaida-syria-seizes-large-parts-northern-city-102702400.html>.
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Sources: Associated Press, "Al Qaeda in Syria is on the rise," *Business Insider*, March 24, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/al-qaeda-in-syria-is-on-the-rise-2015-3#ixzz3HMLFV4x>.
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Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Qaeda in Syria denies plan to break away," Yahoo News, March 9, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/qaeda-syria-denies-plan-break-away-194745608.html>.
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Sources: Reuters, "Top al-Qaida leader killed in air strike, says militant group in Syria," *Guardian* (London), March 5, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/05/top-al-qaeda-leader-killed-us-air-strike-says-militant-group>; Ben Hubbard, "Deaths Reported in Syria of Top Figures in Group Affiliated With Al Qaeda," *New York Times*, March 6, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/07/world/middleeast/4-nusra-front-leaders-said-to-be-killed-in-syria.html>.
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The Hazm movement announce its dissolution. Sources: Liz Sly, "Syrian rebel group that got U.S. aid dissolves," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-fighter-group-that-got-us-missiles-dissolves-after-major-defeat/2015/03/01/286fa934-c048-11e4-a188-8e4971d37a8d_story.html.
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Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Dozens dead as Nusra takes US-backed Syria rebel base: activists," *Daily Star* (Beirut), February 28, 2015, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2015/Feb-28/289135-dozens-dead-as-nusra-takes-us-backed-syria-rebel-base-activists.ashx>.
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The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad, "Explosion Kills at Least 6 on Bus of Lebanese Pilgrims Visiting Shrines in Syria," *New York Times*, February 1, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/02/world/middleeast/explosion-kills-at-least-6-on-bus-of-lebanese-pilgrims-visiting-shrines-in-syria.html?_r=0.
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Sources: "Al Qaeda says downs Syrian cargo plane, army says fog causes crash," Reuters, January 18, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/18/mideast-crisis-syria-plane-idUSL6N0UX05G20150118>.
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Sources: "Italian aid workers kidnapped in Syria Issue Video Plea," *Daily Mail*, January 2, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2894168/Women-kidnapped-ignoring-parents-pleas-not-travel-Syria-aid-workers-issue-video-plea-begging-lives.html#ixzz3QFgc4mLp>.
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Sources: "Jabhat al-Nusra deals Syrian regime major blow in Idlib," *Al Monitor*, December 16, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/syria-idlib-jabhat-al-nusra-control-loss-regime.html#ixzz3QFRyJAH>.
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Sources: AFP, "Turkey Blacklists Al-Nusra Front as Terror Group," Al-Akhbar English, June 3, 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20011>.
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Sources: "Syria Islamists Challenge ISIL Control of Town on Iraq Border," Reuters, June 28, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/28/us-syria-crisis-iraq-border-idUSKBN0F30B420140628>.
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Sources: "Nusra Front Kills 14-Year-Old Syrian in East Lebanon," *Daily Star*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jun-05/259007-nusra-front-kills-14-year-old-syrian-in-east-lebanon.ashx>.
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Sources: Oliver Holmes, "Government Forces Set to Control Homs, Cradle of Syrian Uprising," Reuters, May 8, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/08/us-syria-crisis-homs-idUSBREA4709U20140508>.

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- **February 3, 2014:**After a month of infighting between ISIS and the Nusra Front, al-Qaeda severs ties with ISIS.
Sources: "Al Qaeda Says Has No Link with Syrian Militant Group ISIL," Reuters, February 3, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/03/us-syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSBREA1207L20140203>.
- **February 2, 2014:**ISIS seizes the Koniko oil field in Deir el-Zour from the Nusra Front and other rebel forces.
Sources: Stephen Kalin, "UPDATE 1-Syrian Forces Kill 83 in Barrel Bomb Attacks in Aleppo -Activists," Reuters, February 2, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/02/syria-crisis-fighting-idUSL5N0L70GQ20140202>.
- **February 1, 2014:**A Nusra Front suicide bomber detonates a car bomb in eastern Lebanon, killing four and wounding 18.
Sources: "Deadly Car Bomb Strikes Eastern Lebanon," Al Jazeera America, February 1, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/2/1/deadly-car-bomb-strikes-eastern-lebanon.html>; Rakan al-Fakih and Thomas El-Basha, "Suicide Car Bomb Kills at Least Four in Lebanon's Hermel," *Daily Star*, February 1, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Feb-01/246080-sound-of-explosion-in-lebanons-hermel-al-manar.ashx>.
- **January 31, 2014:**A French court investigates two teenagers caught trying to join rebel groups in Syria on suspicion of planning terrorist acts.
Sources: "French Court Investigates Two Minors over Syria Trip," Reuters, January 31, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/31/us-france-syria-idUSBREA0U1M520140131>.
- **January 30, 2014:**Syrian state television claims the Nusra Front fired on U.N. workers as they delivered food to people in parts of rebel-held Damascus, where thousands were trapped by a Syrian army siege.
Sources: Patricia Zengerle and Mark Hosenball, "U.S. Spy Chiefs Say Number of Foreign Militants in Syria Rises," Reuters, January 29, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/29/us-usa-security-syria-idUSBREA0S1XL20140129>.
- **January 29, 2014:**U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper tells the Senate Intelligence Committee that the Nusra Front has aspirations to attack the U.S.
Sources: Patricia Zengerle and Mark Hosenball, "U.S. Spy Chiefs Say Number of Foreign Militants in Syria Rises," Reuters, January 29, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/29/us-usa-security-syria-idUSBREA0S1XL20140129>.
- **January 27, 2014:**A Saudi-born Nusra Front operative blows himself up at an army checkpoint in Syria's central Hama province, killing 13.
Sources: "Al Qaeda-Linked Rebels Bomb Syrian Defense Minister's Town," Reuters, January 28, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/28/us-syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSBREA0R0EB20140128>.
- **January 21, 2014:**The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a suicide bombing in Beirut that kills at least four and wounds 34.
Sources: "Nusra Front Lebanon Branch Claims Beirut Bombing," *Daily Star*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jan-21/244798-nusra-front-lebanon-branch-claims-latest-beirut-bombing.ashx>.
- **January 17, 2014:**The Nusra Front claims responsibility for launching rocket fire into the Lebanese town of Aarsal, killing seven and wounding 15.
Sources: Remi Bleibel, "Rocket Fired from Syria Kills Seven in Lebanese Border Town," Reuters, January 17, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/17/us-lebanon-syria-rocket-idUSBREA0G0IX20140117>.
- **January 16, 2014:**The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a car bomb attack in the Lebanese town of Hermel that kills four and wounds 43.
Sources: "Al-Nusra Front Claims Responsibility for Lebanon Attack," Press TV, January 16, 2014, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/01/16/345998/alnusra-responsible-for-lebanon-blast/>; "Nusra Branch Says Hermel Blast Response to Hezbollah in Syria," *Daily Star*, January 17, 2014, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Jan-17/244320-nusra-branch-says-hermel-blast-response-to-hezbollah-in-syria.ashx>.
- **January 14, 2014:**The Syrian government retakes parts of northern Aleppo as rebel factions are preoccupied with infighting in Raqqa.
Sources: Oliver Holmes, "Syrian Government Forces Advance as Rebel Infighting Rages," Reuters, January 14, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/14/us-syria-crisis-idUSBREA0D0NM20140114>.
- **January 12, 2014:**ISIS reclaims a portion of eastern Raqqa from competing rebel factions as infighting continues.
Sources: Oliver Holmes, "Syrian Government Forces Advance as Rebel Infighting Rages," Reuters, January 14, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/14/us-syria-crisis-idUSBREA0D0NM20140114>.
- **January 7, 2014:**Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani condemns ISIS for bloody rebel infighting and calls for a ceasefire.
Sources: "Syrian Al Qaeda Branch Calls for Truce to Halt Rebel Infighting," Reuters, January 7, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/07/us-syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSBREA060KQ20140107>.
- **January 6, 2014:**Clashes erupt between the Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham on one side, and ISIS on the other side, as the Islamist factions wrestle for control of the Syrian city of Raqqa.
Sources: Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Syria Islamists Fight Al Qaeda Allies in Raqqa," Reuters, January 6, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/06/us-syria-crisis-raqqa-idUSBREA050WP20140106>.
- **January 5, 2014:**Fighters from the Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham capture territory in northern Syria previously held by ISIS.
Sources: "Al Qaeda Affiliate Pull Out of Northern Syria Strongholds," Reuters, January 5, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/05/syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSL6N0KF0BM20140105>.

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- **December 25, 2013:** Iraqi intelligence reveals what it believes to be a Nusra Front plot to kidnap UN peacekeepers. Sources: Associated Press Reporter, "Scrawled Notes from Al-Qaida Leader Reveal Plot to Kidnap UN Peacekeepers in Syria," Daily Mail, December 25, 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2529327/Scrawled-notes-al-Qaida-leader-reveal-plot-kidnap-UN-peacekeepers-Syria.html#ixzz3MrUyFcaT>.
- **December 12, 2013 - December 13, 2013:** The Nusra Front is implicated in an attack that kills at least 15 civilians from the minority Alawite and Druze sects. Sources: "Islamists Kill 15 Alawite and Druze Civilians in Syria -Activists," Reuters, December 12, 2013, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/12/12/syria-crisis-adra-idNDEE9BB0AR20131212>.
- **December 11, 2013:** The Nusra Front executes six members of the Free Syrian Army rebel group for engaging in violent crimes. Sources: "Nusra Front Executes Members of FSA for Raping, Killing Activists," Daily Star, December 10, 2013, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Dec-11/240642-nusra-front-executes-members-of-fsa-for-raping-killing-activists.ashx>.
- **December 6, 2013:** Fighting breaks out between the Nusra Front and ISIS in the rebel-held city of Raqqa. Sources: Alexander Dziadosz and Dasha Afanasieva, "Syrian Islamists Seize Western-Backed Rebel Bases: Monitoring Group," Reuters, December 7, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/07/us-syria-crisis-fsa-idUSBRE9B607S20131207>.
- **December 2, 2013:** After several days of fighting, the Nusra Front captures the old city of Maaloula and hold several nuns hostage in a monastery, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group. Thirteen Greek Orthodox nuns are captured by the Nusra Front and held until March 2014. Sources: "Islamists Take Syrian Christian Town, Monastery: State Media," Reuters, December 2, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/02/us-syria-crisis-maaloula-idUSBRE9B10LD20131202>; Marwan Makdesi and Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Freed Nuns Reach Damascus as Prisoner Exchange Continues," Reuters, March 10, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/10/syria-crisis-nuns-idUSL6N0M71TK20140310>.
- **November 26, 2013:** The Nusra Front executes two government soldiers and three "collaborators," according to a statement published by the group's media branch. Sources: "Al-Nusra Front Executes Five Soldiers, 'Collaborators' in Syria," Agence France-Presse, November 26, 2013, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/17711>.
- **November 23, 2013:** The Nusra Front captures Syria's largest oil field (al-Omar oil field). Sources: "Islamist Rebels Say Seize Biggest Syrian Oilfield from Assad Forces," Reuters, November 23, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/23/syria-crisis-oil-idUSL5N0J804420131123>.
- **November 20, 2013:** Four suicide bombers detonate car bombs in northern Damascus. The Nusra Front and ISIS take credit for the attacks. Sources: Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Syria Opposition Forces Launch String of Suicide Attacks," Al Jazeera America, November 20, 2013, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/11/20/syria-rebels-launchstringofsuicideattacks.html>.
- **November 15, 2013:** Assad forces capture three towns close to Aleppo. The Nusra Front and other rebel forces retreat closer to Aleppo. Sources: Dominic Evans, "Assad's Forces Advance in Northern Syria Towards Aleppo," Reuters, November 15, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/15/us-syria-crisis-aleppo-idUSBRE9AE11X20131115>.
- **November 13, 2013:** Assad forces recapture the southern Damascus suburb of Hujaira, forcing the Nusra Front and other rebel groups to retreat to Hajar al-Aswad. Sources: Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Assad's Forces Make Further Gains Around Damascus," Reuters, November 13, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/13/us-syria-crisis-damascus-idUSBRE9AC0IC20131113>.
- **November 12, 2013:** A Pakistani native is indicted by a federal grand jury in North Carolina for trying to aid the Nusra Front. Sources: "Man Indicted in North Carolina for Trying to Aid Syria Rebel Group," Reuters, November 12, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/12/us-usa-northcarolina-indictment-idUSBRE9AB13320131112>.
- **November 8, 2013:** Canada adds the Nusra Front to its list of terrorist organizations. Sources: "Canada Brands Al-Nusra Front a Terrorist Organization," Voltaire Network, November 11, 2013, <http://www.voltairenet.org/article180973.html>; "Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, accessed December 21, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntrl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2049>.
- **October 17, 2013:** The Nusra Front executes 10 government soldiers from the Rashidiyah district, according to pro-opposition monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Sources: "UPDATE 1-Jets Bomb Syrian City After Intelligence General Killed," Reuters, October 18, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/10/18/syria-crisis-idUSL6N0I826U20131018>.
- **October 5, 2013:** Syrian state TV mistakenly announces the death of Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani. Sources: "Syria State TV: Leader of Nusra Front Killed," Al Arabiya News, October 26, 2013, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/10/26/Syria-state-TV-Leader-of-Nusra-Front-killed.html>.
- **September 28, 2013:** The Nusra Front teams up with other rebel and jihadist groups to take control of the Syrian Daraa border crossing to Jordan. Sources: Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front, Free Syrian Army seize border crossing to Jordan," Long War Journal, September 29, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/09/al_nusrah_front_free.php#ixzz3MZutjUTN.

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- **September 23, 2013:** ISIS fighters attack a Nusra Front base in Hasaka while Nusra fighters are preoccupied fighting Kurdish forces.
Sources: "Al Qaeda-Linked Fighters Killed in Clash with Syria Rebels," Reuters, September 23, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/23/syria-crisis-rebels-idUSL5N0HJ0RF20130923>.
- **September 11, 2013:** Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri urges Syrian Islamists not to cooperate with secular rebels and calls for 'lone-wolf' operations against the U.S. to weaken its economy.
Sources: "Gaining Ground: The Spread of Iraqi al Qaeda groups in Syria," *New York Times*, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324807704579082924138453120>.
- **September 10, 2013:** Nusra militants shoot 16 Alawites and six Arab Bedouins after storming a village in central Syria.
Sources: "Women and Children Among Dead in Syrian Alawite Village: Monitors," Reuters, September 12, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/12/us-syria-crisis-alawites-idUSBRE98B0F420130912>.
- **September 7, 2013:** The Nusra Front captures the ancient Christian town of Maaloula, Syria.
Sources: Hamdi Alkhshali and Nic Robertson, "Syria Islamist Rebels Take Control of Historic Christian Town of Maaloula," CNN, September 8, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/08/world/meast/syria-civil-war/>.
- **August 25, 2013:** The Nusra Front assassinates the governor of Syria's Hama province in a car bomb attack.
Sources: "Syria's al-Nusra Front Claims Assassination of Hama Governor," Al Arabiya, September 7, 2013, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/09/07/Syria-s-al-Nusra-Front-claims-assassination-of-Hama-governor.html>; "Syrian State TV: Hama Province Governor Assassinated in Car Bomb Blast," Al Arabiya, August 25, 2013, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/08/25/syria-car-bomb.html>.
- **August 13, 2013:** A U.S. citizen and a foreign national are charged in Miami courts with financing and providing recruits for the Nusra Front.
Sources: Zachary Fagenson, "Two Men Charged in Miami with Financing Foreign Terrorist Groups," Reuters, August 13, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/13/us-usa-florida-suspects-idUSBRE97C0ZL20130813>.
- **July 19, 2013:** The U.K. adds the Nusra Front to its list of terrorist organizations.
Sources: "UK bans Syria's Al-Qaida-Linked Nusra Front," Associated Press, July 19, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/uk-bans-syrias-al-qaida-linked-nusra-front>.
- **June 15, 2013:** The Nusra Front attacks a Kurdish patrol and takes a gunman hostage, according to pro-opposition monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Clashes between the Nusra Front and Kurdish fighters erupt in Ras al-Ain, near the border with Turkey. Sources: Oliver Holmes and Erika Solomon, "Syria Rebels Reinforce Key Suburb in Damascus Battle," Reuters, July 16, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/16/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE96F0EK20130716>.
- **June 2013:** Nusra militants are blamed for wrecking the Lebanese coastal city of Sidon in a battle with the Lebanese army.
Sources: Mitchell Prothero, Al Qaida-linked Nusra Front Rebels Blamed for Bloody Fight against Lebanese Army in Sidon," McClatchy DC, June 25, 2013, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/06/25/194944/al-qaida-linked-nusra-front-rebels.html>.
- **June 2, 2013:** A Nusra Front suicide bomber detonates a car bomb near a police station in Damascus, according to pro-opposition group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Sources: Dominic Evans, "Syrian Rebels, Hezbollah in Deadly Fight in Lebanon," Reuters, June 2, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/02/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE95105O20130602>.
- **May 30, 2013:** Turkish officials arrest 12 suspected members of the Nusra Front.
Sources: Mariam Karouny and Erika Solomon, "WRAPUP 3-Moscow Suggests Missiles Have Yet to Reach Assad," Reuters, May 30, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/30/syria-crisis-idUSL5N0EB33F20130530>.
- **May 30, 2013:** The United Nations Security Council amends its designation of al-Qaeda in Iraq to include the Nusra Front as an alias, thereby listing the Nusra Front as a group associated with al-Qaeda.
Sources: "Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Amends Entry of One Entity on Its Sanctions List," United Nations Security Council, May 30, 2013, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/sc11019.doc.htm>.
- **May 16, 2013:** A video released on May 16 shows Nusra Front militants executing 11 men for allegedly taking part in massacres on behalf of the Assad regime.
The video was likely recorded sometime in 2012, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group. Sources: "Video Shows Islamist Rebels Executing 11 Syrian Soldiers," Reuters, May 16, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/16/us-syria-crisis-executions-idUSBRE94F0AM20130516>.
- **May 16, 2013:** The U.S. Treasury Department designates the Nusra Front's leader, Abu Mohammed al-Golani, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.
Sources: "Syria Designations; Syria Designations Removals; Counter Terrorism Designations; Iran Sanctions Designations and Identifications," U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 16, 2013, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20130516.aspx>.
- **March 3, 2013 - March 6, 2013:** The Nusra Front, along with other rebel groups, capture the city of Raqqa from government forces.
Sources: Lauren Williams, "Rebels Look to Extend Gains from Raqqa," *Daily Star*, April 6, 2013, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Apr-06/212761-rebels-look-to-extend-gains-from-raqqa.ashx#axzz2Rbj820FI>.
- **March 2013:** A former U.S. soldier returns to the U.S. from Syria and is charged with conspiring to use a rocket-

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propelled grenade in Syria.

The soldier admits to fighting alongside the Nusra Front. Sources: "FBI Director Worried Americans Fighting in Syria Could Bring Tactics Home," Reuters, August 23, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/23/us-syria-crisis-americans-idUSBRE97M0S220130823>.

- **April 22, 2013:** Two Nusra Front suicide bombers detonate car bombs in the countryside surrounding Damascus, and other operatives launch mortar and rocket attacks, according to a statement released by the group.
Sources: Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front claims joint operations, including a suicide assault, with Syrian rebel groups," *Long War Journal*, June 29, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/al_nusrah_front_clai_14.php#ixzz3MYf2OCrA.
- **April 20, 2013:** The Nusra Front broadcasts a statement warning that rebel brigades will "move the battle into Lebanon" if Hezbollah continues to attack rebel forces in Homs province.
Sources: Oliver Holmes, "Lebanon Dragged in as Hezbollah Joins Syria War," Reuters, April 26, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/26/us-syria-crisis-hezbollah-idUSBRE93P09720130426>.
- **April 12, 2013:** Rebel groups, including the Nusra Front, battle Syrian forces in the city of Qamishli, bordering Iraq.
- **April 10, 2013:** Abu Mohammad al-Golani releases a statement rejecting the merger with AQI and officially pledging allegiance to al-Qaeda's Ayman al-Zawahiri, after more than a year of rumors surrounding the Nusra Front's ties to core al-Qaeda.
Sources: "Syria Crisis: Al-Nusra Pledges Allegiance to Al-Qaeda," BBC News, April 10, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22095099>.
- **April 9, 2013:** AQI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announces a merger with the Nusra Front to form the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham.
Sources: "Syria Crisis: Al-Nusra Pledges Allegiance to Al-Qaeda," BBC News, April 10, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22095099>.
- **March 7, 2013 - March 23, 2013:** The Nusra Front and other rebel groups battle with Assad's forces for control of the 38th division air defense base. The rebels gain control of the base on March 23.
Sources: Erika Solomon, "Syria Rebels Seize Southern Base, Border Area," Reuters, March 23, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/23/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE92M03K20130323>.
- **February 2013:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for 17 attacks around Damascus in the first half of February, including at least seven bombings.
Sources: Dominic Evans, "Car Bomb Kills Over 50 Near Damascus Ruling Party Office," Reuters, February 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/21/us-syria-crisis-blast-idUSBRE91K09W20130221>.
- **January 2013:** The Nusra Front captures a security agency in Deir el-Zour, according to an activist.
Sources: Alexander Dsiadosz and Oliver Holmes, "Sixty-Five People Executed in Syria's Aleppo: Activists," Reuters, January 29, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/29/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE90S0GU20130129>.
- **January 29, 2013:** 65 people are found bound and shot dead in Aleppo by Syrian opposition activists, who blame Assad loyalists for the executions.
The government blames the Nusra Front. Sources: Sylvia Westall, "UPDATE 5-Donors Meet Target of \$1.5 Bln Aid for Stricken Syrians -UN," Reuters, January 30, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/30/syria-crisis-aid-idUSL5N0AZFBU20130130>.
- **January 24, 2013:** A car bomb allegedly planted by the Nusra Front kills eight members of Syria's military intelligence. Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Syrian Troops and Militia Push to Take Sunni Homs Areas," Reuters, January 25, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/25/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE90O0EY20130125>.
- **January 24, 2013:** Masked men believed to be with the Nusra Front raid the headquarters of two secular civilian organizations in Saraqib.
Hania Mourta and Anne Barnard, "Jihadists and Secular Activists Clash in Syria," *New York Times*, January 26, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/world/middleeast/syria-war-developments.html>.
- **January 20, 2013:** The Nusra Front clashes with pro-government forces near the Wadi al-Deif military base.
Sources: Khaled Yacoub Oweis and Oliver Holmes, "Syrian Opposition Leaders Fail to Form Government," Reuters, January 21, 2013, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/01/21/uk-syria-crisis-idUKBRE90K0MN20130121>.
- **January 2, 2013:** The Nusra Front and other rebel groups attack a military airport near Taftanaz, according to pro-opposition monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Sources: Oliver Holmes, "Syrian Rebels Attack Military Airport in Northwest," Reuters, January 2, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/02/syria-crisis-idUSL5E9C21YA20130102>.
- **December 31, 2012:** Nusra operatives capture American photographer Matthew Schrier.
Sources: C. J. Chivers, "American Tells of Odyssey as Prisoner of Syrian Rebels," *New York Times*, August 22, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/23/world/middleeast/american-tells-of-odyssey-as-prisoner-of-syrian-rebels.html?pagewanted=all>.
- **December 21, 2012:** A video allegedly taken on December 21 and released by the Nusra Front shows dead bodies on a highway in Hama province.
The speaker on the video says 50 men, allegedly fighters for the Assad regime, were killed in an ambush. Sources: "WRAPUP 3-Syria to Discuss Brahimi Peace Proposals with Russia," Reuters, December 26, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/26/syria-crisis-idUSL5E8NQ3YS20121226>.
- **December 12, 2012:** Explosions outside Syria's interior ministry kill seven and wound 50, including Syria's interior

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minister.

The Nusra Front takes responsibility for the attack. Sources: "At Least Seven are Killed in Bombings outside Syrian Interior Ministry," Al Arabiya News, December 12, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/12/12/254765.html>; "Syrian Interior Minister in Beirut Hospital," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 20, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/Syrian_Interior_Minister_in_Beirut_Hospital/.

- **December 12, 2012:** Clashes between the Syrian regime and rebel forces, including the Nusra Front, take place by the Wadi al-Deif military base and the Za'lana checkpoint.
Sources: "Bombardment and Clashes in Aleppo and Idlib," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 12, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/bombardment_and_clashes_in_Aleppo_and_Idlib/.
- **December 10, 2012:** The U.S. designates the Nusra Front as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.
U.S. officials attribute nearly 600 attacks in major cities to the Nusra Front, blaming the group for killing numerous innocent Syrians. Sources: "[Billing Code: 4710-10] DEPARTMENT OF STATE [Public Notice 8104]," National Archives and Records Administration, December 11, 2012, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2012-29870.pdf>; "UPDATE 1-Obama: U.S. Now Recognizes Syrian Opposition Coalition," Reuters, December 11, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/12/syria-usa-idUSL1E8NBIMN20121212>.
- **December 9, 2012:** The Nusra Front, leading other rebel groups, seizes a government army command center in northern Syria.
Sources: "Rebels Seize Regiment Command Center in Northern Syria: Activists," Reuters, December 9, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/09/us-syria-crisis-base-idUSBRE8B805S20121209>; Erika Solomon, "U.S. and Russia Still Back Syria Settlement: UN Envoy," Reuters, December 9, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/09/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE8AJ1FK20121209>.
- **December 9, 2012:** The Nusra Front is among the groups that clash in Tripoli, Lebanon, leaving four people dead.
Sources: "Syrian Sectarian Fighting Spills into Lebanon," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 11, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/Syrian_sectarian_fighting_spills_into_Lebanon/.
- **November 29, 2012:** Footage of a man shooting 10 unarmed prisoners is uploaded to YouTube.
The gunman is heard saying, "God is great. Jabhat al-Nusra," referring to the Nusra Front. Sources: "UPDATE 1-Syrian Rebel Films Himself Shooting 10 Prisoners," Reuters, November 30, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/30/syria-crisis-execution-idUSL5E8MUD5920121130>.
- **November 5, 2012:** A Nusra Front suicide bomber detonates a car bomb in Hama province, killing at least 50, according to the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.
Sources: "'Suicide bomb kills 50 soldiers, Assad gunmen - Observatory," Reuters, November 5, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/05/syria-crisis-carbomb-idUSL5E8M58WV20121105>.
- **November 1, 2012:** Rebels kill 28 soldiers in attacks on three army checkpoints on Syria's main highway.
After storming the checkpoints, soldiers are rounded up and executed, according to video footage of the attack. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group, claims the Nusra Front is responsible for the attacks and executions. Sources: Oliver Holmes, "WRAPUP 1-Syrian rebels kill 28 soldiers, several executed," Reuters, November 1, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/01/syria-crisis-idUSL5E8M1BWH20121101>.
- **November 2012:** Over the course of 18 statements on jihadist forums, the Nusra Front claims responsibility for 45 attacks that reportedly kill dozens, including 60 in a single suicide bombing.
Nusra militants clash with the Kurds in the border town of Ras al-Ain. Sources: Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Al Qaeda Grows Powerful in Syria as Endgame Nears," Reuters, December 20, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/20/us-syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSBRE8BJ06B20121220>; Khaled Yacoub Oweis, "Al Qaeda Grows Powerful in Syria as Endgame Nears," Reuters, December 20, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/20/us-syria-crisis-qaeda-idUSBRE8BJ06B20121220>.
- **October 2012:** The Syrian government considers a ceasefire proposal.
Some rebel forces, including brigades from the Free Syrian Army accept the truce, while the Nusra Front rejects it, saying it is not a group "who accepts to play such dirty games." Sources: Oliver Holmes and Shaimaa Fayed, "Syria Undecided on Ceasefire Proposal, Rebels Divided," Reuters, October 24, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/24/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE88J0X720121024>; Oliver Holmes, "Syria Bombards Major Cities, Weakening Truce," Reuters, October 27, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/27/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE88J0X720121027>.
- **October 19, 2012:** The Nusra Front releases a series of statements claiming responsibility for the October 12 attack on a Syrian missile base, as well as an attack on the Hanano barracks in Aleppo that killed 10 government soldiers, and a raid in Raqqa that killed 32 government soldiers.
The Nusra Front also claims responsibility for a series of suicide bombings that killed 48 in Aleppo. Sources: "Militant Group Says Was Behind Aleppo Air Defense Base Assault," Reuters, October 20, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/20/us-syria-crisis-aleppo-idUSBRE89J04720121020>.
- **October 12, 2012:** The Nusra Front captures a Syrian missile base near Aleppo, killing 92 government soldiers.
Sources: "Syrian Rebels Capture Government Missile Base, Activists Say," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/10/syria-rebels-seize-government-missile-defense-base-activists-say.html; "Militant Group Says Was Behind Aleppo Air Defense Base Assault," Reuters, October 20, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/20/us-syria-crisis-aleppo-idUSBRE89J04720121020>.
- **October 9, 2012:** Suicide bombers attack a Syrian intelligence complex outside Damascus.
The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Anne Barnard and Christine Hauser, "Qaeda-Linked Group Claims Responsibility for Syrian Blasts," *New York Times*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/10/world/middleeast/qaeda-linked-group-says-it-struck-compound-on-edge-of-damascus.html>.
- **October 3, 2012:** Three suicide bombers detonate car bombs in Aleppo, killing dozens.
The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Nic Robertson and Paul Cruickshank, "Sources: Pro Al Qaeda Group Steps Up Suicide Bombings in Syria," CNN, October 4, 2012, <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/10/04/sources-pro-al-qaeda-group-steps-up-suicide-bombings-in-syria/>.

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- **September 26, 2012:** A suicide bomber detonates a car bomb near a military command center in Damascus, killing 14. Sources: "WRAPUP 2-Syria Rebels Say Launch 'Decisive Battle' in Aleppo," Reuters, September 27, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/27/syria-crisis-idUSL5E8KREHA20120927>.
- **September 2012:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for 38 attacks in Syria. In late September, the group reportedly releases a video showing that it captured 5 Yemeni troops. Sources: "Syria Islamists Claim Assault on Key Barracks, Monitors Report," Al Arabiya News, September 25, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/25/240185.html> "Syria Conflict: Al-Nusra Front 'Captures' Yemen Troops," BBC News, September 30, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-19780501>.
- **August 2012:** The Nusra Front launches a joint operation with the Sahaba Battalion against a police station in the Damascus countryside, according to a statement released by the group. Sources: Bill Roggio, "Al Nusrah Front claims joint operations, including a suicide assault, with Syrian rebel groups," *Long War Journal*, June 29, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/al_nusrah_front_clai_14.php#ixzz3MYf2OCrA.
- **July 19, 2012:** The Nusra Front kidnaps and ultimately kills Syrian state TV presenter Mohammed al-Saeed, according to a series of statements released by the group on August 3. Sources: "Militant Group Claims Kidnap, Killing of Syrian TV Presenter," Reuters, August 5, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/05/us-syria-crisis-presenter-idUSBRE87404Y20120805>.
- **June 2012:** The Nusra Front releases a series of statements claiming responsibility for dozens of attacks in Syria. Sources: Elizabeth A. Kennedy, "Jihadists Claim Syria Attacks," Associated Press, July 4, 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/monitor-group-says-jihadists-claim-syria-attacks>.
- **June 27, 2012:** The Nusra Front attacks a pro-Syrian government TV building, killing seven. Sources: Militant Group Claims Syrian TV Channel Attack," Reuters, July 4, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/04/syria-crisis-militant-claim-idUSL6E8I40FX20120704>.
- **June 24, 2012:** Syrian state TV says security forces arrest a would-be suicide bomber and member of the Nusra Front who was planning to detonate a bomb in a mosque the following day. Sources: Khaled al-Hariri, "Syrian Town Deserted, Burnt after Clashes," Reuters, June 24, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/14/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE85D0IS20120614>.
- **May 29, 2012:** The Nusra Front captures and kills 13 Syrian security officials, according to a statement released by the group. Sources: "Militant Group Claims Killing of 13 in Syria," Reuters, June 5, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/05/us-syria-crisis-militant-claim-idUSBRE8540LB20120605>.
- **May 2012:** The Nusra Front carries out twin bombings in Damascus, killing 55. Sources: "Militant Group Claim Damascus Army Command Bombing," Reuters, September 27, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/27/us-syria-crisis-militants-idUSBRE88Q12R20120927>.
- **May 10, 2012:** Two suicide bombers attack a Syrian military intelligence building in Damascus, killing 55 and wounding 372. A video purporting to represent the Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack, though the group later denies the video's authenticity. Sources: Andrew Tabler, "Fluid Alliances: The Syrian government's Support for and Complicity in Terrorism," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, June 2012, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Tabler20120630_Janes.pdf "Islamist Group Al-Nusra Front 'Behind Damascus Bombs'," BBC News, May 12, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18046333> "Al-Nusra Front denies Damascus bombings claim," BBC News, May 15, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18070085>.
- **April 27, 2012:** A suicide bomber attacks a mosque in Damascus, killing at least nine. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Ed Cropley, "Nine Dead in Suicide Bomb Near Damascus Mosque," Reuters, April 27, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/27/us-syria-idUSBRE83O0OL20120427> Dominic Evans, "Top U.N. Truce Monitor in Syria, Lull in Violence," Reuters, April 29, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/29/us-syria-idUSBRE83S09R20120429>.
- **March 17, 2012:** Suicide bombers attack two Syrian government facilities in Damascus, killing 27 and wounding nearly 100. The Nusra Front later claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: Nick Meo, "Bombings in Damascus Herald Beginnings of a Bloody New Stage of Syrian Insurgency," *Telegraph*, March 17, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9150449/Bombings-in-Damascus-herald-beginnings-of-a-bloody-new-stage-of-Syrian-insurgency.html> "Islamist Group Claims Syria Bombs 'to Avenge Sunnis,'" Al Arabiya News, March 21, 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/03/21/202177.html>.
- **February 27, 2012:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the January 6 attack in Damascus, and the February 10 attacks in Aleppo. Sources: R. Green, "The Global Jihad Movement versus the Assad Regime," Middle East Media Research Institute, March 16, 2012, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print6187.htm>.
- **February 12, 2012:** Clashes between the Syrian regime and rebel forces, including the Nusra Front, take place by the Wadi al-Deif military base and the Za'lana checkpoint. Source: "Bombardment and Clashes in Aleppo and Idlib," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 12, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/bombardment_and_clashes_in_Aleppo_and_Idlib/.
- **February 12, 2012:** Ayman al-Zawahri, the leader of al-Qaeda, releases a video in support of the Syrian rebels, and calls on them to fight until they establish "an independent government that rules according to Islam." Sources: R. Green, "The Global Jihad Movement versus the Assad Regime," Middle East Media Research Institute, March 16, 2012, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print6187.htm>.

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- **February 10, 2012:**Two car bombs explode in Aleppo, killing 28.
On February 27, the Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack..Sources: Neil MacFarquhar "2 Security Complex Car Bombings Kill Dozens, Syria Says," New York Times, February 10, 2012,,
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/11/world/middleeast/blast-in-aleppo-syria-homs-violence-said-to-continue.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.
Green, "The Global Jihad Movement versus the Assad Regime," Middle East Media Research Institute, March 16, 2012,
<http://www.memri.org/report/en/print6187.htm>.
- **January 23, 2012 - January 24, 2012:**The Nusra Front releases a video announcing its formation.
Sources: AFP, "Unknown Islamist Group Claims Suicide Attacks in Syria," Al Arabiya News, February 29, 2012,
<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/02/29/197781.html>.
- **January 6, 2012:**A suicide bomber detonates bus bombs in Damascus, killing 26 and wounding 63.
The Nusra Front later claims responsibility for the attack.Sources: Erika Solomon, "Suicide Bomb Kills 26 in Syria: Interior Minister," Reuters, January 6, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/06/us-syria-idUSTRE8041A820120106>. Green, "The Global Jihad Movement Versus the Assad Regime," Middle East Media Research Institute, March 16, 2012, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print6187.htm>.
- **December 23, 2011:**Two car bombs explode outside Syrian government security offices in Damascus, killing at least 44.
The Nusra Front later claims responsibility for the attack.Sources: Kareem Fahim, "Syria Blames Al Qaeda After Bombs Kill Dozens in Damascus," New York Times, December 23, 2011,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/24/world/middleeast/syria-says-suicide-bombers-attack-in-damascus.html>;Myra MacDonald, "Analysis: Egyptian Crackdown Hands Al Qaeda New Lease on Life," Reuters, August 19, 2013,
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/19/us-egypt-protests-qaeda-analysis-idUSBRE97I0I020130819>.

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Violent history:

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- **January 6, 2012:** A suicide bomber detonates bus bombs in Damascus, killing 26 and wounding 63. The Nusra Front later claims responsibility for the attack.⁷⁸
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- **April 27, 2012:** A suicide bomber attacks a mosque in Damascus, killing at least nine. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack.⁸⁰
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- **May 2012:** The Nusra Front carries out twin bombings in Damascus, killing 55.⁸²
- **May 29, 2012:** The Nusra Front captures and kills 13 Syrian security officials, according to a statement released by the group.⁸³
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- **August 2012:** The Nusra Front launches a joint operation with the Sahaba Battalion against a police station in the countryside of Damascus, according to a statement released by the group.⁸⁷
- **September 26, 2012:** A suicide bomber detonates a car bomb near a military command center in Damascus, killing 14. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack.⁸⁸
- **October 3, 2012:** Three suicide bombers detonate car bombs in Aleppo, killing dozens. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack.⁸⁹
- **October 9, 2012:** Suicide bombers attack a Syrian intelligence complex outside Damascus. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack.⁹⁰
- **October 12, 2012:** The Nusra Front captures a Syrian missile base near Aleppo, killing 92 government soldiers.⁹¹
- **November 2012:** Over the course of 18 statements on jihadist forums, the Nusra Front claims responsibility for 45 attacks that reportedly kill dozens, including 60 in a single suicide bombing. Nusra militants clash with the Kurds in the border town of Ras al-Ain.⁹²
- **November 1, 2012:** Rebels kill 28 soldiers in attacks on three army checkpoints on Syria's main highway. After storming the checkpoints, soldiers are rounded up and executed, according to video footage of the attack. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group, claims the Nusra Front is responsible for the attacks and executions.⁹³
- **November 5, 2012:** A Nusra Front suicide bomber detonates a car bomb in Syria's Hama province, killing at least 50, according to the pro-opposition Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.⁹⁴
- **November 29, 2012:** Footage of a man shooting 10 unarmed prisoners is uploaded to YouTube. The gunman is heard saying, "God is great. Jabhat al-Nusra," referring to the Nusra Front.⁹⁵

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- **December 9, 2012:** The Nusra Front is among armed groups that clash in Tripoli, Lebanon, leaving four people dead.⁹⁶
- **December 9, 2012:** The Nusra Front, leading other rebel groups, seizes a government army command center in northern Syria.⁹⁷
- **December 12, 2012:** Clashes between the Syrian regime and rebel forces, including the Nusra Front take place by the Wadi al-Deif military base and the Za'lana checkpoint.⁹⁸
- **December 12, 2012:** Explosions outside Syria's interior ministry kill seven and wound 50, including Syria's Interior Minister. The Nusra Front takes responsibility for the attack.⁹⁹
- **December 21, 2012:** A video allegedly taken on December 21 and released by the Nusra Front shows dead bodies on a highway in Hama province. The speaker on the video says 50 men, allegedly fighters for the Assad regime, were killed in an ambush.¹⁰⁰
- **December 31, 2012:** Nusra operatives capture American photographer Matthew Schrier.¹⁰¹
- **January 2, 2013:** The Nusra Front and other rebel groups attack a military airport near Taftanaz, according to pro-opposition monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.¹⁰²
- **January 20, 2013:** The Nusra Front clashes with pro-government forces near the Wadi al-Deif military base.¹⁰³
- **January 24, 2013:** Masked men believed to be with the Nusra Front raid the headquarters of two secular civilian organizations in Saraqib.¹⁰⁴
- **January 24, 2013:** A car bomb allegedly planted by the Nusra Front kills eight members of Syria's military intelligence.¹⁰⁵
- **January 29, 2013:** 65 people are found bound and shot dead in Aleppo by Syrian opposition activists, who blame Assad loyalists for the executions. The government blames the Nusra Front.¹⁰⁶
- **February 2013:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for 17 attacks around Damascus in the first half of February, including at least seven bombings.¹⁰⁷
- **March 7-23, 2013:** The Nusra Front and other rebel groups battle against Assad's forces for control of Syria's 38th division air defense base. The rebels gain control of the base on March 23.¹⁰⁸
- **April 12, 2013:** Rebel groups, including the Nusra Front, battle Syrian forces in the city of Qamishli, bordering Iraq.
- **April 22, 2013:** Two Nusra Front suicide bombers detonate car bombs in the countryside of Damascus, and other operatives launch mortar and rocket attacks, according to a statement released by the group.¹⁰⁹
- **May 16, 2013:** A video released on May 16 shows Nusra Front militants executing 11 men for allegedly taking part in massacres on behalf of the Assad regime. The video is believed to have been taken sometime in 2012, according to pro-opposition monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.¹¹⁰
- **June 2013:** Nusra militants are blamed for wracking the Lebanese coastal city of Sidon in a battle with the Lebanese army.¹¹¹
- **June 2, 2013:** A Nusra Front suicide bomber detonates a car bomb near a police station in Damascus, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group.¹¹²
- **July 15, 2013:** The Nusra Front attacks a Kurdish patrol and takes a gunman hostage, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group. Clashes between the Nusra Front and Kurdish fighters erupt in Ras al-Ain, near the border with Turkey.¹¹³
- **August 25, 2013:** The Nusra Front assassinates the governor of Syria's Hama province in a car bomb attack.¹¹⁴
- **September 10, 2013:** Nusra militants shoot 16 Alawites and six Arab Bedouins after storming a village in central

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Syria.¹¹⁵

- **October 17, 2013:** The Nusra Front executes 10 Syrian government soldiers from the Rashidiyah district, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitoring group.¹¹⁶
- **November 20, 2013:** Four suicide bombers detonate car bombs in northern Damascus. The Nusra Front and ISIS take credit for the attacks.¹¹⁷
- **November 26, 2013:** The Nusra Front executes of two government soldiers and three “collaborators,” according to a statement published by the group’s media branch.¹¹⁸
- **December 2, 2013:** After several days of fighting, the Nusra Front captures the old city of Maaloula and hold several nuns hostage in a monastery, according to pro-opposition monitoring group, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Thirteen Greek Orthodox nuns are captured by the Nusra Front and held until March 2014.¹¹⁹
- **December 6, 2013:** Fighting breaks out between the Nusra Front and ISIS in the rebel-held city of Raqqa.¹²⁰
- **December 10, 2013:** The Nusra Front executes six members of the Free Syrian Army rebel group for engaging in violent crimes.¹²¹
- **December 12-13, 2013:** The Nusra Front is implicated in an attack that kills at least 15 Syrian civilians from the minority Alawite and Druze sects.¹²²
- **January 16, 2014:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a car bomb attack in the Lebanese town of Hermel that kills four and wounds 43.¹²³
- **January 17, 2014:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for launching rocket fire into the Lebanese town of Aarsal, killing seven and wounding 15.¹²⁴
- **January 21, 2014:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a suicide bombing in Beirut that kills at least four and wounds 34.¹²⁵
- **January 27, 2014:** A Saudi-born Nusra Front operative blows himself up at a Syrian army checkpoint in the central Hama province, killing 13.¹²⁶
- **January 30, 2014:** Syrian state television claims the Nusra Front fired on UN workers as they delivered food to people in parts of rebel-held Damascus, where thousands were trapped by a Syrian army siege.¹²⁷
- **February 1, 2014:** A Nusra Front suicide bomber detonates a car bomb in eastern Lebanon, killing four and wounding 18.¹²⁸
- **February 8, 2014:** According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Nusra Front operative detonates a car bomb at a checkpoint in al-Jalma village, Hama province, killing 20 members of the security forces and the National Defense Force.¹²⁹
- **February 22, 2014:** A suicide bomber detonates a car bomb in Lebanon, killing two Lebanese soldiers and one civilian. The Nusra Front in Lebanon claims responsibility for the attack.¹³⁰
- **March 5, 2014:** The Nusra Front in Lebanon claims responsibility for firing three rocket attacks near the border with Syria.¹³¹
- **March 5, 2014:** UN human rights investigators release a report holding the Nusra Front and other rebel groups responsible for besieging 45,000 people in two Shi’ite towns in Syria’s Aleppo province.¹³²
- **March 9, 2014:** The Nusra Front releases 13 nuns held hostage since December 2013 in exchange for 150 female prisoners.¹³³
- **March 15, 2014:** The Nusra Front fights the Syrian army to defend the former’s hold on Yabroud, a city north of Damascus near the border with Lebanon.¹³⁴

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- **March 16, 2014:** A suicide bomber detonates a car bomb in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, killing two and injuring 14. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack.¹³⁵
- **March 27, 2014:** The Nusra Front releases a video showing the group preparing to execute two Saudi fighters.¹³⁶
- **May 5, 2014:** The Nusra Front and allied rebel groups gain control of the Syrian village of al-Sabha, killing five civilians. Clashes continue between the Nusra Front and ISIS in the outskirts of Deir el-Zour.¹³⁷
- **May 25, 2014:** Four suicide bombers attack targets in Syria's Idlib province, reportedly on behalf of the Nusra Front. One of the suicide bombers is a U.S. citizen.¹³⁸
- **Late May 2014:** The Nusra Front briefly kidnaps and tortures three teens in eastern Lebanon over an incident linked to trading cigarettes.¹³⁹
- **June 5, 2014:** The Nusra Front kills a 14-year-old Syrian and throws his body onto the side of the road in east Lebanon, according to security sources.¹⁴⁰
- **June 20, 2014:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a car bomb attack in Syria's Hama province that kills at least 34 and wounds more than 50.¹⁴¹
- **August 24, 2014:** The Nusra Front releases a U.S. hostage kidnapped in 2012.¹⁴²
- **August 27, 2014:** The Nusra Front takes control of the Quneitra border crossing with Israel from Syrian forces.¹⁴³
- **August 28, 2014:** The Nusra Front kidnaps 45 UN peacekeepers from the Golan Heights.¹⁴⁴
- **September 19, 2014:** The Nusra Front kills one of 10 Lebanese soldiers held captive, according to a Twitter statement by the group.¹⁴⁵
- **September 23, 2014:** The U.S. launches airstrikes against the Khorasan group hit Nusra Front bases in Idlib. The U.S. is careful to emphasize that the strikes are against Khorasan and not the Nusra Front.¹⁴⁶
- **October 5, 2014:** The Nusra Front attacks Hezbollah bases in Lebanon, killing 10 of its fighters.¹⁴⁷
- **December 5, 2014:** The Nusra Front kills a captured Lebanese soldier.¹⁴⁸
- **January 8-9, 2015:** Nusra militants fight to capture two Shiite villages in Syria but are repelled.¹⁴⁹
- **January 10, 2015:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a double suicide attack in Tripoli, Lebanon, killing at least seven and wounding three dozen. Lebanon's interior minister says that ISIS carried out the attack.¹⁵⁰
- **January 12, 2015:** After a raid targeting Islamists in Lebanon's prisons, the Nusra Front threatens captive Lebanese soldiers.¹⁵¹
- **January 18, 2015:** The Nusra Front claims it shot down a Syrian army plane, killing 35. The cargo plane was carrying food and ammunition.¹⁵²
- **January 29, 2015:** The Nusra Front attacks a Western-backed Syrian rebel group west of Aleppo.¹⁵³
- **February 1, 2015:** A bomb explodes on a bus carrying Shiite Lebanese pilgrims to shrines in Damascus, killing at least six and wounding 27. The Nusra Front claims responsibility for the attack.¹⁵⁴
- **February 28, 2015:** The Nusra Front kills dozens of U.S.-backed rebels as it captures a military compound in northern Syria.¹⁵⁵
- **March 1, 2015:** The Nusra Front boasts that it has captured U.S.-made TWO anti-tank missiles as well as the headquarters of the U.S.-backed Hazm movement in Aleppo, Syria. The Hazm movement announce its dissolution.¹⁵⁶
- **March 12, 2015:** Fifty are left dead when the Nusra Front rebels clash with the Assad regime in Latakia province,

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northwest Syria.¹⁵⁷

- **March 27, 2015—March 28, 2015:** The Nusra Front makes advances in Idlib city in northwest Syria, clashing with regime forces. Dozens of militants and four regime soldiers die as a result of the clash, according to the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.¹⁵⁸ By March 28, the Nusra Front has seized almost all of Idlib city from regime forces.¹⁵⁹
- **April 1, 2015:** The Nusra Front joins a rebel coalition to seize Nasib crossing, the only functioning border crossing with Jordan, as well as three military posts nearby.¹⁶⁰
- **April 24, 2015:** The Nusra Front and other Islamist groups take control of Jisr al-Shughur, the last major regime-held town in Idlib province.¹⁶¹
- **May 4, 2015:** Nusra Front fighters, including a suicide bomber, launch an attack in Damascus.¹⁶²
- **May 19, 2015:** The Army of Conquest coalition, including the Nusra Front, captures the Assad regime's largest remaining military base in Idlib province.¹⁶³
- **May 22, 2015:** The Nusra Front is part of an offensive that seizes a hospital from government forces in Idlib province.¹⁶⁴
- **June 2, 2015:** The Nusra Front announces that it has attacked two Hezbollah outposts in eastern Lebanon, killing several Hezbollah members.¹⁶⁵
- **June 10, 2015:** Members of the Nusra Front kills at least 20 Druze in the village of Qalb al-Lawzi in the north of Idlib's province.¹⁶⁶ After international outcry, the Nusra Front released an official statement three days later acknowledging that its members attacked Druze but saying that they did so "in clear violation of the leadership's views."¹⁶⁷
- **July 2, 2015:** Nusra Front and other rebel groups including Ahrar al-Sham launch a major offensive to gain control of the divided city of Aleppo, Syria.¹⁶⁸
- **July 3, 2015:** The Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham announce the formation of a new coalition—Ansar al-Shariah—as they and other rebel groups fight government forces in Aleppo.¹⁶⁹
- **July 10, 2015:** After being held captive for a week—allegedly by Nusra Front members—a priest in Idlib province, Syria, is released by his captors.¹⁷⁰
- **July 15, 2015:** The Army of Conquest coalition—to which the Nusra Front belongs—announces its offensive against the towns of Fuaa and Kafraya, reportedly the last two Shiite localities held by the regime in Idlib.¹⁷¹
- **July 31, 2015:** The Nusra Front attacks the U.S.-trained Division 30 (a.k.a. New Syrian Forces) rebel unit, killing five of its fighters, wounding 18, and kidnapping 20.¹⁷² According to multiple rebel sources who spoke to McClatchy, the Nusra Front was tipped off by Turkish intelligence.¹⁷³
- **August 1, 2015:** The Nusra Front releases a video of the July 31 attack and kidnapping operation against Division 30 rebels. In the video, one member boasts that the Nusra Front has "cut of the hands of the West and Americans."¹⁷⁴ Meanwhile, a religious court run by the Nusra Front executes 10 people in Aleppo, two on charges of adultery and eight on charges of collusion with the Syrian government, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.¹⁷⁵
- **September 9, 2015:** The Nusra Front seizes the Abu al-Duhur airbase from Assad regime forces, thereby capturing the final regime position in Idlib province.¹⁷⁶
- **October 12, 2015:** The Nusra Front calls for attacks against Syrian Alawites in retaliation for Russian airstrikes.¹⁷⁷
- **November 16, 2015:** The Nusra Front claims responsibility for a suicide bombing that it says killed top commanders in the ISIS-affiliated Yarmouk Martyrs Brigades.¹⁷⁸
- **Late February 2016:** The Nusra Front rejects a cease fire and calls for intensified attacks against Bashar al-Assad and

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his regime.¹⁷⁹

- **Early-Mid March 2016:** The Nusra Front and other Islamist insurgent groups launch at least 100 rockets on a Kurdish residential area of Aleppo, killing at least nine civilians and wounding dozens of others, according to SOHR.¹⁸⁰ The Nusra Front later attacks government forces and briefly captures the village of al-Ais before government forces retake the village.¹⁸¹ The group later seizes bases and weapons, including anti-tank missiles, from Western-backed rebel groups in northwest Syria.¹⁸²
- **March 16, 2016:** The Nusra Front releases a video of Japanese hostage Jumpei Yasuda on Yasuda's birthday, March 16.¹⁸³
- **April 1, 2016:** The Nusra Front carries out three suicide bombings targeting Assad forces near a hillside south of Aleppo.¹⁸⁴
- **April 5, 2016:** The Nusra Front shoots down a Syrian warplane, capturing the pilot.¹⁸⁵
- **Early May 2016:** Russia highlights increased violence in Aleppo by the Nusra Front, and claims that the group is responsible for the thwarting of an extended truce.¹⁸⁶
- **June 2016:** The Nusra Front continues its offensive against Assad forces, reportedly killing dozens of military and civilian targets in Aleppo. In early June, a Russian ceasefire monitoring agency claims that the Nusra Front shelled down 40 people in Aleppo using rocket launchers, canons, mortars, and anti-aircraft missiles.¹⁸⁷
- **Early July 2016:** The Nusra Front reportedly captures and takes hostage the commander of the Western-backed Jaish al-Tahrir rebel group as well as "scores" of the commander's aides and fighters, according to reports.¹⁸⁸
- **Mid-July 2016:** The Nusra Front is blamed for launching two rocket attacks in the southern Syrian town of Baath City, killing civilians.¹⁸⁹

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Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

Designations:

Designations by the U.S. Government:



December 10, 2012: The Department of State designates the Nusra Front as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (under Executive Order 13224).¹⁹⁰

May 16, 2013: The Department of the Treasury designates Mohammed al-Golani as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.¹⁹¹

May 14, 2014: The Department of the Treasury designates the Nusra Front as a Specially Designated National.¹⁹²

August 18, 2014: The Department of State designates Said Arif as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (under Executive Order 13224).¹⁹³

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:



European Union— designated the Nusra Front as a sanctioned group of persons, groups, and entities on May 28, 2014.¹⁹⁴



Australia— listed the Nusra Front as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on June 23, 2013.¹⁹⁵



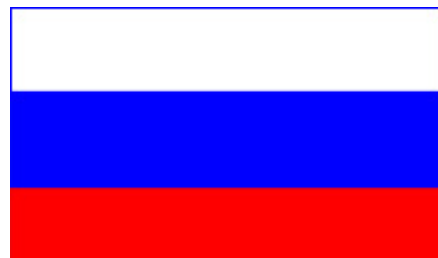
Canada—listed the Nusra Front as a terrorist entity on November 7, 2013.¹⁹⁶



France—listed the Nusra Front as a terrorist entity on May 30, 2013.¹⁹⁷



New Zealand—listed the Nusra Front as an organization associated with Al-Qaeda on May 15, 2013.¹⁹⁸



Russia—listed the Nusra Front as a terrorist group on December 29, 2014.¹⁹⁹

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Saudi Arabia—listed the Nusra Front as a terrorist group on March 7, 2014.²⁰⁰



Turkey—listed the Nusra Front as a terrorist organization on June 13, 2014.²⁰¹



United Arab Emirates—listed the Nusra Front as a terrorist organization on November 15, 2014.²⁰²



United Nations—listed the Nusra Front as an entity associated with Al-Qaeda on May 30, 2013.²⁰³



United Kingdom—listed the Nusra Front as a foreign terrorist group on July 19, 2013.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁰ Department of State, Public Notice, “In the Matter of Amendment of the Designation of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, aka Jam’at al Tawhid wa’al-Jihad, aka The Monotheism and Jihad Group, aka The al-Zarqawi Network, aka al-Tawhid, aka Tanzim Qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad alRafidayn, aka The Organization of alJihad’s Base of Operations in Iraq, aka al-Qaida of Jihad in Iraq, aka al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, aka al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka al-Qaida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka al-Qaida of Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka al-Qaida Group of Jihad in Iraq, aka al-Qaida Group of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization of Jihad’s Base in the Country of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization Base of Jihad/ Country of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization of al-Jihad’s Base in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization Base of Jihad/ Mesopotamia, aka The Organization of al-Jihad’s Base of Operations in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka Tanzeem qa’idat al Jihad/Bildad al Raafidaini, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act; To include the aliases Al-Nusrah Front, Jabhat al-Nusrah, Jabhet al-Nusra, The Victory Front, Al Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant, Public Notice 8104,” Federal Register 77, no. 238 (December 11, 2012): 73732, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-12-11/pdf/2012-29870.pdf>; Department of State, Public Notice, “In the Matter of the Amendment of the Designation of al-Qa’ida in Iraq, aka Jam’at al Tawhid wa’al-Jihad, aka The Monotheism and Jihad Group, aka The al-Zarqawi Network, aka al-Tawhid, aka Tanzim Qa’idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn, aka The Organization of al-Jihad’s Base of Operations in Iraq, aka al-Qaida of Jihad in Iraq, aka al-Qaida in Mesopotamia, aka al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka al-Qaida of the Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka al-Qaida of Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka al-Qaida Group of Jihad in Iraq, aka al-Qaida Group of Jihad in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization of Jihad’s Base in the Country of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization Base of Jihad/Country of the Two Rivers, aka The Organization Base of Jihad/Mesopotamia, aka The Organization of al-Jihad’s Base of Operations in the Land of the Two Rivers, aka Tanzeem qa’idat al Jihad/Bildad al Raafidaini, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity pursuant to Executive Order 13224; To include the aliases Al-Nusrah Front, Jabhat al-Nusrah, Jabhet al-Nusra, The Victory Front, Al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant, Public Notice 8105,” Federal Register 77, no. 238 (December 11, 2012): 73732, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-12-11/pdf/2012-29870.pdf>.

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¹⁹⁷ "Liste Terroriste Unique au 23 Décembre 2014," Trésor Direction Générale, accessed on December 25, 2014, <http://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/File/409144>.

¹⁹⁸ "Designated Individuals and Organisations," New Zealand Policy, November 26, 2014, <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/designated-entities-26-11-2014.pdf>.

¹⁹⁹ "Supreme Court bans Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra in Russia as terrorist organizations," Tass Russian News Agency, December 29, 2014, <http://itar-tass.com/en/russia/769731>.

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²⁰⁴ "UK bans Syria's Al-Qaida-Linked Nusra Front," Associated Press, July 19, 2013, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/uk-bans-syrias-al-qaida-linked-nusra-front>; "Proscribed Terrorist Organisations," Britain's Home Office, last modified January 23, 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380939/ProscribedOrganisations.pdf.

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:



Khorasan

According to the United States, the Khorasan group, allegedly a collection of core al-Qaeda veterans, has worked with the Nusra Front, possibly as a subset of the group. Former CIA deputy director Mike Morrell said that the Khorasan group functions as an “external operations arm” of the Nusra Front,²⁰⁵ with Khorasan’s attacks directed internationally. Documents at the scene of a U.S. airstrike in Syria indicate that the Khorasan group, if extant, may be a special unit fully embedded within The Nusra Front called “the Wolf Unit of Jabhat al-Nusra.”²⁰⁶

The precise extent to which the Khorasan group is integrated within the Nusra Front remains unclear, but

U.S. officials maintain that the two groups are interconnected. On September 29, 2014, the U.S. State Department released a statement saying “The ‘Khorasan Group’ is a term sometimes used to refer to a network of al-Nusrah Front and al-Qai’da core violent extremists.”²⁰⁷



ISIS

The Nusra Front was allegedly formed as an extension of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, now ISIS), and received a monthly salary from AQI leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. The relationship between the groups deteriorated in April 2013, when al-Baghdadi unilaterally announced a merger between the two groups. The two have since engaged in violent clashes, vying for control over rebel-held territory. Nonetheless, they have continued to cooperate on certain military campaigns against the Assad regime.²⁰⁸

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)



Al-Qaeda

The Nusra Front has a long and proven history of serving as al-Qaeda's loyal affiliate in Syria. In July 2016, however, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri released an audio statement giving the Nusra Front formal permission to break ties with al-Qaeda if the link was "conflicting with [the Nusra Front's] unity and working as one body."²⁰⁹ Hours later, Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani formally severed ties with al-Qaeda's central command.²¹⁰ Analysts have long surmised that a formal, or at least artificial, break from al-Qaeda could allow the Nusra Front the opportunity to attract more funding from Gulf states, consolidate local support, and present itself as a legitimate insurgent group in Syria.²¹¹ Even as the Nusra Front formally declared its independence from al-Qaeda, the group thanked al-Qaeda's leadership for giving "priority to the interests of the people of Al-Sham, their Jihad, [and] their revolution."²¹²

For years before the announcement, the Nusra Front had reaffirmed its allegiance to al-Zawahiri, even in the face of competing claims to its leadership. In April 2013, after al-Baghdadi unilaterally claimed that the Nusra Front answered to his al-Qaeda in Iraq group (now ISIS), Nusra Front leader Abu Muhammad al-Golani broke ties with ISIS and affirmed its allegiance to al-Qaeda central.²¹³

²⁰⁵ "What is Khorasan?," CBS News, September 18, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/khorasan-al-qaeda-al-nusra-external-operations-wing-in-syria/>.

²⁰⁶ Max Fischer, "Is Khorasan's Real Name 'The Wolf Unit of Jabhat al-Nusra'?" Vox, September 30, 2014, <http://www.vox.com/2014/9/30/6875671/is-khorasans-real-name-the-wolf-unit-of-jabhat-al-nusra>.

²⁰⁷ "'One and the Same'? Officials Give Conflicting Statements on Al Qaeda Ties to 'Khorasan,'" Fox News, September 30, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2014/09/30/one-and-same-officials-give-conflicting-statements-on-al-qaeda-ties-to-khorasan/>.

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²⁰⁹ Reuters, "Al Qaeda tells Syrian branch Nusra Front it can drop links," Thomas Reuters Foundation News, July 28, 2016, <http://news.trust.org/item/20160728110801-og117>.

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²¹¹ Bassem Mroue, "AP EXPLAINS: Why Syria's al-Qaida may be considering a split," Associated Press, July 27, 2016, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/d10d759d35824b70b47501d85f0ff8c3/ap-explains-why-syrias-al-qaeda-may-be-considering-split>; Reuters, "Al Qaeda tells Syrian branch Nusra Front it can drop links," Thomas Reuters Foundation News, July 28, 2016, <http://news.trust.org/item/20160728110801-og117>.

²¹² Orient News, "Nusra Front, Abu Mohammed Joulani commander officially announced the disengagement from al-Qaeda and the establishment of a new entity," YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oossAtDYbrs>.

²¹³ "Syria Crisis: Al-Nusra Pledges Allegiance to Al-Qaeda," BBC News, April 10, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22095099>.

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Media Coverage:

Qatar and the Nusra Front

Qatar stands accused of supporting and funding the Nusra Front.²¹⁴ The Qatari government helped broker the release of 13 nuns kidnapped by the group in December 2013. It brokered the August 2014 release of American hostage Peter Theo Curtis, as well as the September 2014 release of 45 U.N. peacekeepers.

On the release of the 45 U.N. peacekeepers, Qatar's state-owned Al Jazeera called the peacekeepers "Fijian soldiers" that were kidnapped and "held" for two weeks by the Nusra Front. The article emphasizes that the peacekeepers were reportedly in good condition and notes, "A UN spokesman said in New York on Thursday no ransom had been requested for the Fijian peacekeepers and none was paid."²¹⁵

Nonetheless, rumors that Qatar paid the group a ransom fee soon circulated. Qatar's foreign minister denied the claims,²¹⁶ but Israel's Channel 2 news station released video footage allegedly showing that Qatar paid the group \$25 million in ransom.²¹⁷

Al Jazeera did not cover any follow-ups to the story, including the Channel 2 report and the foreign minister's statement. The Al Jazeera article regarding the release of the peacekeepers ends by highlighting Qatar's seemingly helpful role in the hostage release process: "US officials have said that Qatar played a critical role in persuading the Nusra Front to free American journalist Peter Theo Curtis last month, whom the front had been holding hostage since 2012."²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Jay Solomon, "U.S.-Qatar Alliance Strains Coalition Against Islamic State," Wall Street Journal, October 10, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-qatar-alliance-strains-coalition-against-islamic-state-1412983181>.

²¹⁵ "Syria Rebels Free UN Peacekeepers," Al Jazeera, September 11, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/09/syria-rebels-free-un-peacekeepers-201491175643793356.html>.

²¹⁶ Daniel Bases, "Qatar's Foreign Minister Denies Paying Ransoms to Militant Groups," Reuters, September 29, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/30/us-mideast-crisis-qatar-idUSKCN0HP02720140930>.

²¹⁷ "Report: UN Had Qatar Pay Off Al-Qaida Fighters for Release of Fiji Peacekeepers," Haaretz, October 11, 2014, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.620228>.

²¹⁸ "Syria Rebels Free UN Peacekeepers," Al Jazeera, September 11, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/09/syria-rebels-free-un-peacekeepers-201491175643793356.html>.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights on the Nusra Front

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) is a pro-opposition monitoring group. A score of mainstream Western and Arabic media outlets rely on SOHR for on-site data. Although the monitoring group is pro-opposition, it tends to make a noticeable distinction between the Nusra Front and other rebel groups, and has acknowledged the group's links to al-Qaeda as far back as November 2012.²¹⁹ The group frequently uses descriptors like "radical"²²⁰ and "extremist,"²²¹ in addition to "al-Qaeda-linked"²²² and "al-Qaeda loyalist," when describing the Nusra Front.²²³

²¹⁹ Syria Rebels Take Swathe of East but Clash with Kurd Militia," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, November 23, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/11/Syria_rebels_take_swathe_of_east_but_clash_with_Kurd_militia/.

²²⁰ "Friends of Syria Heading to Morocco to Boost Opposition," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 11, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/Friends_of_Syria_heading_to_Morocco_to_boost_opposition/.

²²¹ "Syrian Sectarian Fighting Spills into Lebanon," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 11, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/Syrian_sectarian_fighting_spills_into_Lebanon/.

²²² "Syria Rebels Hope Arms Will Flow to New Fighter Command," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, December 11, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/12/Syria_rebels_hope_arms_will_flow_to_new_fighter_command/.

²²³ "Syria Rebels Take Swathe of East but Clash with Kurd Militia," Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, November 23, 2012, http://syriahr.com/en/2012/11/Syria_rebels_take_swathe_of_east_but_clash_with_Kurd_militia/.

The Nusra Front Pledges Allegiance to Al-Qaeda

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

On April 10, 2013, Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani released a statement rejecting Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's claim that al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Nusra Front had merged. In the statement, al-Golani pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

The New York Times covered al-Baghdadi's announcement, but did not immediately address al-Golani's response, including his public pledge of fealty to Ayman al-Zawahiri.²²⁴ *The Wall Street Journal* covered both al-Baghdadi's claim and al-Golani's response in one article titled, "Al Qaeda Declares Stake in Syrian Rebellion." Its author, Nour Malas, predicted that al-Qaeda's now-open involvement in Syria would bring a schism to the rebel movement.²²⁵

Al Jazeera reported on al-Baghdadi's April 9 declaration,²²⁶ as well as al-Golani's pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.²²⁷ The article on al-Golani's response seemed to cover the announcement with a number of qualifiers: "A man claiming to be the head of a key group fighting the Syrian government has purportedly pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda..."²²⁸ In covering the Nusra Front's declaration of allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri, CNN seemed to temper al-Golani's pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda by emphasizing that al-Golani had rejected the merger with al-Qaeda in Iraq and stated his intention to continue cooperating with other rebel groups. The article opens: "A Syrian jihadist group appears to have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda's leader—but also stressed it can achieve a Syrian Islamic state only by working with other rebels, including secularists. The group, al-Nusra Front, also denies an earlier claim that it has merged with Iraq's al-Qaeda affiliate, according to an audio message purported to be from al-Nusra general commander Abu Muhammad al-Joulani."²²⁹

²²⁴ Hania Mourtada and Rick Gladstone, "Iraq's Branch of Al Qaeda Merges With Syria Jihadists," *New York Times*, April 9, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/10/world/middleeast/Iraq-and-Syria-jihadists-combine.html>.

²²⁵ Nour Malas, "Al Qaeda Declares Stake in Syrian Rebellion," *Wall Street Journal*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323550604578412280884558740>.

²²⁶ "Iraqi al-Qaeda and Syrian group 'merge,'" *Al Jazeera*, April 9, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/04/201349194856244589.html>.

²²⁷ "Syria Group 'Pledges Allegiance' to Al-Qaeda," *Al Jazeera*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/04/2013410114851988704.html>.

²²⁸ "Syria Group 'Pledges Allegiance' to Al-Qaeda," *Al Jazeera*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/04/2013410114851988704.html>.

²²⁹ Saad Abedine and Jason Hanna, "Syrian Jihad Group Pledges Allegiance to Al Qaeda, Denies Merger," *CNN*, April 10, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/04/10/world/meast/syria-al-nusra-front/index.html>.

Responses to U.S. Designation of the Nusra Front

On December 10, 2012, the U.S. listed the Nusra Front as an alias for al-Qaeda in Iraq (now ISIS). The designation was met with a mixed response from Western and Arab media outlets. In the aftermath of the designation through December 2012, Al Jazeera published 14 articles that mentioned the Nusra Front. Seven of the articles qualified the U.S. designation by putting 'terrorist' or 'terrorist organization' in quotation marks.²³⁰ Three referenced the designation without the quotation marks, while the remaining four did not reference the designation at all.²³¹ In an op-ed titled "The 'War on Terror' and the Arab Spring," Al Jazeera correspondent Mark Perry claimed that the U.S. designation reflects "a profound misunderstanding" of current events in the Arab world. Perry recommends that "Instead of being afraid, we should be filled with pride: These people are so dedicated to the idea of liberty that they're actually fighting for it."²³² *The New York Times* did not use quotation marks to describe the terrorist designation,²³³ nor did *The Wall Street Journal*²³⁴ or *The Washington Post*.²³⁵

In Time's first article covering the terrorist designation, the author put 'terrorist' in quotation marks while describing the designation.²³⁶ The article's sub-headline states, "One of the most effective anti-Assad militias has just been designated a 'terrorist' organization by the U.S."²³⁷

²³⁰ "Syria Rebels 'Seize Key Aleppo Army Base,'" *Al Jazeera*, December 11, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/20121210104312760502.html>; "Scores Reportedly Killed in Syria's Hama," *Al Jazeera*,

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December 11, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/20121211102930540995.html>; "'Friends of Syria' Recognise Opposition," Al Jazeera, December 12, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212124541767116.html>; "Scores Reportedly Killed in Syria's Hama," Al Jazeera, December 11, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212124541767116.html>; "Syrians Back Al-Nusra Despite 'Terrorist' Tag," Al Jazeera, December 14, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/video/middleeast/2012/12/20121214164411696160.html>; "Syrians Decry US Blacklisting of Rebel Group," Al Jazeera, December 15, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212157416500378.html>; Mark Perry, "The 'War on Terror' and the Arab Spring," Al Jazeera, December 17, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/12/2012121674256897741.html>; "Syria 'Secures Chemical Weapons Stockpile,'" Al Jazeera, December 23, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/201212221532021654.html>.

²³¹ Zeina Khodr, "Stalemate Stokes Anger at Rebels in Aleppo," Al Jazeera, December 11, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/12/20121211125010153551.html>; "UN Says Syria Conflict Is 'Overtly Sectarian,'" Al Jazeera, December 11, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/2012122015525051365.html>; "Brahimi Meets Syria's Assad Amid Violence," Al Jazeera, December 24, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/20121224101635166809.html>; "Children 'Killed' in Syria Army Tank Attack," Al Jazeera, December 26, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/20121226102221539127.html>.

²³² Mark Perry, "The 'War on Terror' and the Arab Spring," Al Jazeera, December 17, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/12/2012121674256897741.html>.

²³³ Michael R. Gordon and Anne Barnard, "U.S. Places Militant Syrian Rebel Group on List of Terrorist Organizations," New York Times, December 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/world/middleeast/us-designates-syrian-al-nusra-front-as-terrorist-group.html>; "Al Qaeda in Syria," New York Times, December 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/11/opinion/al-qaeda-in-syria.html>; Mark Landler, Michael R. Gordon and Anne Barnard, "U.S. Will Grant Recognition to Syrian Rebels, Obama Says," New York Times, December 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/12/world/middleeast/united-states-involvement-in-syria.html>; Mark Landler and Michael R. Gordon, "Obama Says U.S. Will Recognize Syrian Rebels," New York Times, December 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/12/us/obama-says-us-will-recognize-syrian-rebels.html>; Michael R. Gordon and Eric Schmitt, "Syria Uses Scud Missiles in New Effort to Push Back Rebels," The New York Times, December 11, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/13/world/middleeast/syria-war-developments-assad.html>.

²³⁴ Nour Malas, "Syrian Rebels Win Broader Support," The Wall Street Journal, December 12, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324296604578175311307111792>; Nour Malas and Jay Solomon, "U.S. Formally Recognizes Syria's Main Rebel Group," The Wall Street Journal, December 12, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324339204578173272657834096>; Samuel Rubinfeld, "US Lists Syrian Al-Qaeda Linked Group as Foreign Terror Organization," The Wall Street Journal, December 1, 2012, <http://blogs.wsj.com/corruption-currents/2012/12/11/us-lists-syrian-al-qaeda-linked-group-as-foreign-terror-organization>; Alan Cullison, Nour Malas and Jay Solomon, "Russia, in Shift, Sees Rebel Victory in Syria," The Wall Street Journal, December 13, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323981504578176752775162778>.

²³⁵ Anne Gearan and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Embracing New Syrian Opposition Group," Washington Post, December 10, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-designates-syrian-group-as-terrorist-organization/2012/12/10/6544b6d0-42e4-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532_story.html; Jennifer Rubin, "No Good Options in Three Hot Spots," Washington Post, December 11, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2012/12/11/no-good-options-in-three-hot-spots/>; Karen DeYoung and Babak Dehghanpisheh, "Dozens Killed in Attack in Central Syria," Washington Post, December 11, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/dozens-killed-in-attack-in-central-syria/2012/12/11/021d3440-43d6-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532_story.html; Jennifer Rubin, "Morning Bits," Washington Post, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2012/12/12/morning-bits-9/>; Allen McDuffee, "Syria and Chemical Weapons: What Can the U.S. Do Now?" Washington Post, December 12, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/thinktanked/wp/2012/12/12/syria-and-chemical-weapons-what-can-the-u-s-do-now/>; Karen DeYoung, "U.S., NATO: Syrian Forces Fired Short-Range Ballistic Missiles at Rebels," Washington Post, December 13, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/syrian-forces-fire-scd-missiles-at-rebels/2012/12/12/ee60e58a-448b-11e2-8061-253bccfc7532_story.html; Walter Pincus, "Sorting the Terrorists," Washington Post, December 12, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/sorting-the-terrorists/2012/12/12/38d06ede-4314-11e2-9648-a2c323a991d6_story.html; Max Fisher, "Qaeda-linked Syrian rebel group is feuding with WordPress on Twitter," Washington Post, December 13, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2012/12/13/qaeda-linked-syrian-rebel-group-is-feuding-with-wordpress-on-twitter/>.

²³⁶ Tony Karon, "While U.S. Recognizes Syrian Opposition, It Designates One Anti-Assad Group as 'Terrorist'," Time, December 11, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/12/11/why-the-u-s-has-designated-one-anti-assad-group-as-terrorist/>.

²³⁷ Tony Karon, "While U.S. Recognizes Syrian Opposition, It Designates One Anti-Assad Group as 'Terrorist'," Time, December 11, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/12/11/why-the-u-s-has-designated-one-anti-assad-group-as-terrorist/>.

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

Rhetoric:



[Abu Sulayman, May 8, 2015](#)

"Jihad is not in need of us, we are in dire need of jihad."²³⁸



[Abu Sulayman, May 2015](#)

"I do believe that our affiliation with a global jihad (al-Qa'ida) is more positive than negative."²³⁹



[Abu Ahmed, December 2012](#)

"Our faith is very strong and we're not afraid of death, of becoming martyrs. This is what drives us, what makes us brave. We will not stop until the regime falls. And I advise all my people to be good Muslims to help win this war."²⁴⁰



[Abu Ahmed, On al-Qaeda, December 2012](#)

"I like them because they are mujaheddin who want to apply Sharia."²⁴¹



[Abu Ahmed, December 2012](#)

"We are underdeveloped now because we left the path of Allah. Perhaps this is why this war is so cruel: as a punishment for our sins."²⁴²



[Abu Ahmed, December 2012](#)

"Our first goal is to get rid of Assad. Then we want a state where the Quran is the only source of law. Sharia is the right path for all humanity - all other laws make people unhappy."²⁴³



[Abu Ahmed, December 2012](#)

"We don't want to leave modernity behind. We will not get out of our cars and ride donkeys from now on. We simply want our judges to apply Sharia [law] and not the civil code."²⁴⁴



[The Nusra Front Media Wing, January 2015](#)

"As a result of the deterioration of security in Lebanon, you will hear about surprises regarding the fate of the prisoners with us."²⁴⁵



[Abu Lokman, Nusra Front Senior Commander, January 2013](#)

"When the US placed us on their list of terrorists, it did us no harm, it elevated our reputation. The Syrian people hate the American government. Thanks be to God, we consider this a medal of honour."²⁴⁶

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)



[The Nusra Front Statement, August 3, 2012](#)

"Perhaps this operation [kidnapping and killing of Syrian state television presenter Mohammed al-Saeed] and others will serve as an example to all who support this tyrannical regime, so that they may repent to God. Otherwise, the swords of the mujahideen will cut off their heads and purify the Levant (Syria) from their obscenity."²⁴⁷



[The Nusra Front Statement, June 30, 2012](#)

"Let no one condemn us for this operation [attack at Syrian state television building, killing seven] and say it is not proper to attack the media or media people, especially since we had already presented that this lying channel fights and may be even more effective than military power, and it was the one that was glorifying the tyrant day and night."²⁴⁸



[Nusra Front Statement, June 2012](#)

"God enabled the lions of the east in Deir al-Zor... to get the necks of a group of dogs from the security agencies and the thugs. Thirteen of those criminals were detained ... each of them faced his end in the worst killing and the very worst fate."²⁴⁹



[Abu Adnan, Nusra Front Shariah Law Official, Date Unknown](#)

"We detained them [unarmed regime loyalists], lined them up and killed them. They were fighters fighting us."²⁵⁰



[Sami al-Oraidi, Tweet, June 29, 2014](#)

"Whoever heard [ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-] Adnani's speech announcing the Caliphate, will actually find it to be a war announcement on the Muslim and not Annon about the Caliphitte." (Tweet)²⁵¹



[Sami al-Oraidi, Tweet, June 29, 2014](#)

ISIS spokesman Abu Muhammad "Al-'Adnani does not know what comes out of his head." (Tweet)²⁵²



[Sami al-Oraidi, May 19, 2014](#)

"God willing, we will not concede Sharia. It is either Sharia or martyrdom."²⁵³



[Sami al-Oraidi, May 19, 2014](#)

"Most battalions on the ground are fighting to establish Sharia, and they are all our brothers even if their names are different."²⁵⁴

[Sami al-Oraidi, May 19, 2014](#)

"As for those who want a secular state, they are a minority, and we kindly ask for them to

Nusra Front (Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)



return to their senses, and be wary of what has happened in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya.”²⁵⁵



[Sami al-Oraidi, May 19, 2014](#)

“Life in mountains and caves under Sharia, is better than a life in palaces under else.”²⁵⁶



[Sami al-Oraidi, May 19, 2014](#)

“He who is too embarrassed, in writing or in speech, to admit to wanting Sharia is in no state to effectively govern such a state.”²⁵⁷



[Sami al-Oraidi, May 19, 2014](#)

“We say only say as Sheikh Al-Joulani said ‘People of the Levant, our lives for you, will be sacrificed.’”²⁵⁸



[Abu Sulayman, 2014](#)

“The cowardly strikes of the US, planes roaring over our heads and drones spying on the Muslims will not deter us from our path.”²⁵⁹

²³⁸ Mark Schliebs, “Top Aussie terrorist warns of ‘perpetual war’ on Twitter,” *Australian* (Surry Hills), May 14, 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/terror/top-aussie-terrorist-warns-of-perpetual-war-on-twitter/story-fnpdbcmu-1227354039977>.

²³⁹ Mark Schliebs, “Top Aussie terrorist warns of ‘perpetual war’ on Twitter,” *Australian* (Surry Hills), May 14, 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/terror/top-aussie-terrorist-warns-of-perpetual-war-on-twitter/story-fnpdbcmu-1227354039977>.

²⁴⁰ Balint Szlanko, “Jabhat Al Nusra's new Syria,” *National* [UAE], December 15, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/jabhat-al-nusras-new-syria#ixzz2F8FanNW5>.

²⁴¹ Balint Szlanko, “Jabhat Al Nusra's new Syria,” *National* [UAE], December 15, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/jabhat-al-nusras-new-syria#ixzz2F8FanNW5>.

²⁴² Balint Szlanko, “Jabhat Al Nusra's new Syria,” *National* [UAE], December 15, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/jabhat-al-nusras-new-syria#ixzz2F8FanNW5>.

²⁴³ Balint Szlanko, “Jabhat Al Nusra's new Syria,” *National* [UAE], December 15, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/jabhat-al-nusras-new-syria#ixzz2F8FanNW5>.

²⁴⁴ Balint Szlanko, “Jabhat Al Nusra's new Syria,” *National* [UAE], December 15, 2012, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/jabhat-al-nusras-new-syria#ixzz2F8FanNW5>.

²⁴⁵ “Lebanese soldiers after prison raid: Twitter account,” Reuters, January 12, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/12/us-mideast-crisis-lebanon-nusra-idUSKBN0KL0LJ20150112>.

²⁴⁶ Paul Wood, “Syria: Islamist Nusra Front gives BBC exclusive interview,” BBC News, last modified January 17, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21061018>.

²⁴⁷ “Militant Group Claims Kidnap, Killing of Syrian TV Presenter,” Reuters, August 5, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/05/us-syria-crisis-presenter-idUSBRE87404Y20120805>.

²⁴⁸ “Militant Group Claims Syrian TV Channel Attack,” Reuters, July 4, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/04/syria-crisis-militant-claim-idUSL6E8I40FX20120704>.

²⁴⁹ “Militant Group Claims Killing of 13 in Syria,” Reuters, June 5, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/05/us-syria-crisis-militant-claim-idUSBRE8540LB20120605>.

²⁵⁰ Rania Abouzeid, “Interview with Official of Jabhat al-Nusra, Syria’s Islamist Militia Group,” *Time*, December 25, 2012, <http://world.time.com/2012/12/25/interview-with-a-newly-designated-syrias-jabhat-al-nusra/>.

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²⁵¹ Rita Katz, "The 'Comical Caliphate,'" INSITE Blog on Terrorism & Extremism, July 1, 2014, <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/196-the-comical-caliphate>.

²⁵² "Rita Katz, "The 'Comical Caliphate,'" INSITE Blog on Terrorism & Extremism, July 1, 2014, <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/entry/196-the-comical-caliphate>.

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²⁵⁹ Geoff Chambers, "Aussie sheik Abu Sulayman is hunted by both IS and US forces," *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), October 15, 2014, <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/national/aussie-sheik-abu-sulayman-is-hunted-by-both-is-and-us-forces/story-fnpn0zn5-1227090642757>.