



Israel 'coordinates closely' with extremists to carry out Damascus strikes: Syria

Description

In a statement on 31 March condemning Israel's airstrikes on Damascus, the Syrian Foreign Ministry said that Israel's continuous attacks against the country are indicative of their close level of coordination with extremist militants.

According to the ministry's statement, yesterday's "barbaric" Israeli airstrikes were coordinated with militants, which launched an attack against the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) in the Al-Dana village near Maarat al-Naaman in the northern Idlib governorate on the same morning.

"These repeated attacks show the close coordination between ... Israel and terrorist groups ... The coordination proves beyond any doubt the deliberate intentions against Syria, which aim to prolong the crisis and deplete the country's capabilities," the Foreign Ministry statement said.

Syria is prepared to face this "fascist aggression" and reclaim sovereignty over the entirety of the country, the statement added.

In the past, there have been significant levels of coordination between Israel and extremist militants in Syria, particularly with Jabhat al-Nusra – the former Al-Qaeda branch in the country, which is now known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

A report by the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) claims that during the fierce clashes which took place in 2014 between Jabhat al-Nusra and the SAA in the Quneitra area near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, numerous instances of contact between Israel and the militants were recorded.

These instances included the treatment of wounded Jabhat al-Nusra fighters in the occupied Golan Heights as well as the delivery of packages to the militants on the Syrian side of the Golan. At the time, Syrian government forces also complained of being subjected to Israeli airstrikes while in battle against Jabhat al-Nusra in Quneitra.

In 2015, an anonymous opposition activist told *Al-Monitor* that the "battle to capture Quneitra ... was preceded by coordination and communications between ... Jabhat al-Nusra and the Israeli army to

pave the way for the attack.”

Friday’s Israeli attacks against the Syrian capital – which resulted in the death of an Iranian military advisor – was the second Israeli strike on the city in 24 hours.

In a statement released on 31 March, the day of the strikes, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) vowed to retaliate.

Category

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