

“Iranian Militias in Syria... Categorization, Dependency and Factors of Mobilization”

Preliminary Report Summary

Iranian support for the Assad regime began at an early time, especially after sensing the possibility of the Arab Spring revolts spreading to Syria. In the first days of the Syrian Revolution, Iran tried to secretly present military, intelligence and financial aid, as early reports from the U.S. Treasury in May 2011 have confirmed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard-affiliated Al-Quds Force’s participation in putting down the uprising in Syria which it considered a real threat to its interests in the region.

The forms of support from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard developed to presenting logistical support to put down the peaceful protests and pursue those wanted by the regime. They also mobilized and recruited fighters from outside Syria along sectarian lines to train, arm and move them to Syria. This included not only Iranian fighters, soldiers from Hezbollah and Iraqi Shia, but also Yemeni, Afghani and Pakistani Shias.

Iran also tried to invest all of its available forces on the ground it could throw into armed conflict, as it financed and organized and trained some military units and national defense committees and Palestinian factions present on the ground in combat tactics and guerilla warfare, and how to deal with sudden attacks through Arabic-speaking Iranian trainers in camps in Syria, Iran and Lebanon.

This preliminary report tries to study and break down the structure of the militias Iran either brought to Syria or supported through understanding the internal and ideological links which unite them. It aims to know the factors and causes which participated in mobilizing such huge numbers and exploiting them in a trans-border regional project, which threatens the region in general and aims to change its demographic make-up.

The report clarifies how the experience of Iranian military intervention in Syria demonstrated Iran’s real capability to mobilize new fighters from different nations reaching up to 150 thousand, and send them as trans-border forces loyal to Iran in regional conflicts that serve its project in the region.

Iran also proved its ability to spread to new areas by taking advantage of the political balances and conflicts, as in Syria it re-organized and re-mobilized the Alawi and Shia sects and transformed them to militias dependent upon them

for their decisions, using a more narrow sectarian affiliation rather than a national affiliation, and strengthened the connections of local Shia militias with different multi-sect Syrian militias, connecting them to a network of regional militias in Lebanon and Iraq.

Iran took advantage of all the ideological, political and financial links as factors to serve its project, and was able to take advantage of the indecisive international political climate and play on regional balances to shift the balance of power on the ground in the favor of the Assad regime, and solidify its presence in the region and threaten its neighboring countries and their interests in a real and direct manner.