

## Organisation of Civilian Defense against terrorism in Syria

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### **The National Defense Forces**

The **National Defense Forces** in Syria are a popular army, supporting and assisting the Syrian national army, consisting of popular committees and civilian volunteers. They are tasked with maintaining security in areas volatile to terrorist attacks on civilians and public infrastructure.

They were set up late 2012 and at the beginning of 2013 by the regular army. The new force would be under the control and supervision of the Syrian army and its members would operate in local towns and villages in order to free up regular Syrian Arab Army forces for offensive actions.

The goal of setting up the National Defence Forces was to form an effective, locally based and highly motivated militia. Units mostly operate in their local areas and have a strong knowledge of the region.

The National Defence Forces played an important role in improving the military situation of the regular army in Syria.

The National Defence Forces have been increasingly active in and around the capital Damascus, the Northern city of Aleppo and the provinces of Homs and Hama as well as the coastal areas of Lattakia and Tartous.

As a testimony residents in Homs have said that Homs in general is quieter now as the military together with the the National Defence Forces has surrounded the rebels in the city, largely cutting them off from their supplies and reinforcements.

The National Defence Forces coordinate with the army and the security forces. Much of their equipment is provided by the national army.

A lot of talks have been going on about the links between the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah and the National Defence Forces but as a Hezbollah member from Beirut who said he'd been to Syria a few times in the past year testified, he acknowledged that Hezbollah was helping the The National Defence Forces with strategy but that the extent of Hezbollah's involvement in the conflict had been largely exaggerated.

Notable is the number of women active in the National Defense Forces which proves that the defense of the homeland is a common national interest exceeding gender, age, sectarian or social strata. The first female unit of the National Defence Force was founded in Homs and consisted of 450 volunteers.

### **The al Ba'ath Brigades**

The **al Ba'ath Brigades** is a volunteer paramilitary group which consists of members of the Syrian Ba'ath Party.

It was set up in Aleppo after rebels took most of the eastern half of Aleppo in summer 2012.

Units since have also been formed in Damascus, Latakia and Tartus.

The main mission of the al Ba'ath Brigades is to protect the state institutions infrastructure and public utilities but their role has expanded as their strength has grown. They played, for example, an important role in the offensive of the Syrian Arab Army in the old city of Aleppo at the beginning of 2014 and during the rest of the year as well as it continued its mission in 2015.