

Fatah Islam Testimonies: Syrian Intelligence Behind Extremist Group and its Operations in Lebanon

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In response to confessions aired by Syria's state television, al-Mustaqbal newspaper on Saturday carried testimonies made by Fatah al-Islam detainees.

While the confessions broadcast on Syrian TV accused Mustaqbal Movement of financing Fatah al-Islam, written confessions showed that the detainees accuse Syrian intelligence services of supporting the al-Qaida style terrorist group, Al-Mustaqbal said.

It quoted one detainee identified as Youssef Darwish as saying that Syrian authorities tasked him with training a group of Fatah-Intifada after being dispatched to the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in north Lebanon.

Al-Mustaqbal said this group that was created by Syrian intelligence services not only was it made of Fatah-Intifada cadres and Syrian intelligence officers but also of Syrian and Palestinian prisoners who were released under a special pardon issued by President Bashar al-Assad.

That same group, according to the daily, was also composed of "Islamist Mujadideen" who came from various Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen and Morocco) to Damascus where they were being convinced to enter Lebanon instead of Iraq.

Another detainee identified as Ahmed Merhi also confessed that head of the Syrian Intelligence Counter Terrorism Bureau Brig. Gen. Jawdat al-Hasan "knows everything about (Fatah al-Islam leader) Shaker al-Abssi as well as his group in Lebanon and the tasks that they had been assigned."

Merhi said he was asked to "assist" Abssi, adding that he met twice with head of Syria's military intelligence Maj. Gen. Assef Shawkat in the presence of Jawdat al-Hasan at his office in Kfar Soussa.

He said the plots were postponed after uncovering the Ain Alaq crime.

According to confessions attributed to Abu Ritaj, a Saudi detainee, the Ain Alaq twin bus bombings were carried out under the instructions of the Syrian intelligence service.

Al-Mustaqbal also quoted Merhi as saying that "a very important person" under the name of Abu Ahmed who lives in Syria has traveled to Lebanon with a "complete plot" to blow up Lebanon, adding that Damascus has put 100 tons of explosives at his disposal.

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<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf/getstory?openform&E778562C497E7DA0C2257502003F79AB>