

Israel Seeks to Use Free Syrian Army to Establish 40km Deep 'Safe Zone' in Southern Syria - Report

By [South Front](#)

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Israel is using several Free Syrian Army (FSA) groups in a three phases-plan to impose a 40km-deep 'safe zone' in southern Syria, the Intercept reported on January 23.

According to the report, Israel already accomplished the first phase of its plan and it is currently working with different Israeli and American NGOs to accomplish the second phase. The goal of this effort is to push Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iranian-backed forces 40km away from the Israeli border. An unnamed officer of the FSA told the Intercept that Israel is even willing to push these forces "as far back as Hama."

A unnamed Syrian Arab Army (SAA) source revealed to the intercept that a small group of Israeli Army and intelligence personnel entered the western Dara countryside in July 2017 and met with commanders of the two FSA groups - Liwa Jaydour and Jaysh al-Ababil.

In September 2017, another meeting between Israeli representatives and commanders of Liwa Jaydour, the Golan Knights and the Syrian Revolutionaries Front took place in the border town of Rafid in the southern Quneitra countryside, according to the Intercept.



Abu Ahmad, a Syrian opposition activist, confirmed to the Intercept that several FSA groups in southern Syria are currently getting money and weapons from the Israeli side, especially after the US Military Operation Center (MOC) in Jordan had suspended its military support for FSA groups.

"Jordan stopped sending them weapons, so they turned to Israel instead," Abu Ahmad told the Intercept.

The Intercept report also revealed that the Israeli Army started training and equipping a border police force of around 500 FSA fighters from the Golan Knights group as a part of the second phase of the Israeli safe zone plan. This border force is expected to patrol the separation of forces line from south of the government-held Druze town of Hadar through FSA-held towns of Jabata Khashab, Bir Ajam, Hamadiyah, and Quneitra, all the way to Rafid in the southern Quneitra countryside, according to the report.

This was not the first time when the coordination between Israel and FSA groups in southern Syria became public. On December 2, 2017 [the Syrian pro-opposition news outlet Enab](#)

[Baladi revealed that the FSA and the Israeli Army are preparing a joint attack on the ISIS-affiliated Khalid ibn al-Walid Army](#) in the western Daraa countryside.

The FSA-Israeli joint attack may be launched in the end of January, according to several oppositions sources, and it's possible that this effort is a part of Israeli's safe zone plane.

Israel could indirectly control the FSA groups in southern Syria and eliminate the ISIS threat in the western Daraa countryside. However, it will be much more complicated to establish a 40km-wide safe zone in southern Syria because the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) controls large parts of Daraa governorate, including more than half of the city of Daraa.

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