

Saraya Fursan al-Basil: Aleppo Local Defence Forces Unit

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The previous post in this series covered [Rijal al-Qa'im](#). I now turn to another Local Defence Forces (LDF) unit: Saraya Fursan al-Basil ("Knights of al-Basil Brigades").

Saraya Fursan al-Basil was formed at the beginning of April 2017 in Aleppo. Its first deployment was in the Manbij countryside area, stretching from al-Khafsa to al-Taiha, which marks an important boundary between the areas controlled by the Syrian government and the areas controlled by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The commander of Saraya Fursan al-Basil is Basil Ali Abdullah, who is a lieutenant in the Syrian army and will soon become a first lieutenant. Following *taswiyat al-wad'* ('regularizing of status') for members of the group, it became affiliated with the LDF. Basil oversaw the training of the members. This training has been exclusively under Syrian supervision and according to the system of the Syrian army. The 'friends' however have provided assistance in logistical support.

In addition to the Manbij countryside, Saraya Fursan al-Basil has participated in operations in the Idlib countryside at the beginning of 2018 (specifically, the Abu al-Dhuhur area). The group has no 'martyrs' in its ranks. At the present time, Saraya Fursan al-Basil maintains one squadron in the Manbij countryside area while the main base is in the al-Dhahabiya area in Aleppo province.

Saraya Fursan al-Basil has engaged in wider outreach work in the Manbij countryside area, such as overseeing the opening of the schools in the area, the extension of running water to households and the return of families from the SDF-held areas.



Outreach by the leader of Saraya Fursan al-Basil to tribal sheikhs in the Manbij countryside area.



Recruits for Saraya Fursan al-Basil come from a variety of areas including the Manbij countryside, the wider Aleppo area and the coastal region. The leader of Saraya Fursan al-Basil has no contact with the SDF. Instead, he only has contact with the tribes when he is present in the area.

Considering the Syrian army affiliation of its leader, Saraya Fursan al-Basil is an important case of the nature of the LDF as a joint project between the Syrian military and the 'friends'.