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<http://www.worldtribune.com/2014/05/28/syrian-opposition-christians-forming-militias-backing-assad-regime/>

Christians in Syria side with Assad, form militias against Al Qaida rebels

5/28/2014

The regime of President Bashar Assad has helped Christians form militias in Syria.

Opposition sources said the regime has helped the minority Christian community organize militias to protect their communities against attack by Sunni rebels.

“The Christians see the Assad regime as their only hope of staying in Syria.”

The sources said the regime was sending advisers and weapons to stave off raids by the Sunnis, particularly foreign Islamist fighters linked to Al Qaida.

“The Christians see the Assad regime as their only hope of staying in Syria,” a source said.

The sources said thousands of Christians were joining the Syrian Army as well as such regime militias as National Defense Forces and the Popular Committees. They said NDF helped organize Christian units to protect communities, particularly in eastern Syria.

A major unit has been called the Christian Resistance, said to operate in the Homs province. The militia, commanded by Ali Kayali, has been supported by the Melkite church, particularly Agnes Mariam, deemed close to the Assad regime.

Christians also joined special operations forces in the campaign to recapture Aleppo. Christians, often fighting alongside their Kurdish neighbors, were also said to have played a significant role in Syrian Army operations in the northern provinces of Dir Al Zour and Hasaka, strongholds of Al Qaida's Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

Som Christian groups close to Assad have urged the West for financial support. In 2014, the Syriac Military Council, which contains hundreds of fighters, joined Kurds against ISIL.

“We have considered the attempt by the extremist takfiri battalions — among them ISIL, Nusra Front for the Defense of the Levant and others — to enter the towns and villages in the A-Jazeera region to be among the greatest of threats facing the region with all its people of Syriacs, Kurds, Arabs and others, and its aim was not to fight the regime since most of the areas have been freed,” the council said in January 2014.