

# Iran's Elite Forces Enduring Rising Casualties in Syrian Offensive

A little good news. From [report](#) by Raz Zimmit of the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center.

Since the 2011 start of Syria's civil war, Iran has directed the military campaign to maintain the Assad regime's control over Damascus and strategic strongholds in the north. Until recently, Iran's presence in Syria resembled interventions in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen – involving several hundred advisors and thousands of Shi'ite fighters – including Hizballah – under the direction of the IRGC's Quds Force. However, Iran deployed 1,500-2,000 of its own troops to support Syria's northern military offensive launched in early October.

A joint Iranian-Syrian operations room was created in Aleppo to serve as a command and control center for the purposes of coordinating the offensive – involving the IRGC, Syria's military and Iranian sponsored Shi'ite militias under the cover of Russian aerial support. However by the end of October, rebel organizations including al-Qaeda's al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State, maintained control over key areas targeted by the Iranian-led offensive.

At least 53 IRGC troops have been killed since, marking a significant increase in Iranian casualties. According to the analysis, the vast majority of Iranians killed are from the IRGC's regular fighting units – including high-ranking officers – indicating that they are fighting on the front lines. Moreover, IRGC's elite Quds Force commander [diverting critical assets](#) from Iraq to the Syrian theater.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to enhance terrorist networks in the Golan Heights, using Hizballah, Druze, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives to strike Israel. In August, PIJ terrorists – reportedly under Iran’s directions – [refused to obey orders](#) to continue the military campaign in Syria. Growing defiance has forced Iran to court-martial several personnel for “mutiny and treason,” as the rising death toll contributes to deteriorating morale among the IRGC ranks. There may even be some disagreement among Iran’s leadership concerning continued involvement in Syria. In a recent address to a group of students, IRGC commander Mohammad-Ali Jafari suggested that some Iranian officials questioned Iran’s steadfast support for Assad.

Despite rising casualties and internal dissention, Iran’s leadership appears firmly committed to propping up the Assad regime in its bid to maintain a critical ally that serves the Islamic Republic’s expansion and regional hegemonic ambitions.