

Jihadi groups attack two Shia towns in Syria

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Damascus: The Jaish al-Fateh rebel group unleashed a wide-scale offensive against two besieged Shia towns in northwestern Syria.

Jaish al-Fateh, also known as the Conquer Army, mounted a violent offensive from three directions against the towns of Kafraya and Foa, two besieged Shia towns in the countryside of the northwestern province of Idlib, Xinhua news agency reported on Wednesday.

Kafraya and Foa, two of the very few remaining government strongholds in Idlib, were part of recent negotiations between an Iranian delegation, representing the Syrian government, and the Turkey-backed Ahrar al-Sham.

The negotiations were held in Turkey and tackled the issue of releasing the pressure on the two towns by the rebels and in return the Syrian army would allow the trapped rebels in the town of Zabadani, west of the capital Damascus, to back down to Idlib. So far, the talks saw no success.

Also , a rebel commander appeared in an online video footage from one of the nearest points to the towns, saying that his militants were shelling the Shia towns.

He promised to sweep the towns if the Syrian army "hurt" the people of Zabadani, where the Syrian army backed by the Lebanese Hezbollah group are so close to squash the Sunni-led insurgency in that town near the Lebanese borders.

The rebel leader said the Ahrar al-Sham Movement told the Iranian delegation that the militants would allow the women and children from the two Shia towns to evacuate, and in return they want the Syrian authorities to release 1,000 women detained in the government's jails.

He said the demand was rejected by the Iranian negotiators.

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