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# Laskar Jihad

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**Laskar Jihad**, or *Holy War Warriors*, is an Indonesian Jihadist organization formed in 2000 by Jafar Umar Thalib, who studied in Pakistan and fought with the mujahadeen in Afghanistan in the late 1980s. Jafar admits to having met Osama bin Laden there but dismisses him saying the al Qaeda chief "knew nothing about true religion". Jafar claims to have rejected al Qaeda funding in 2001.

Laskar Jihad was founded in Ambon, Moluccan Islands, Indonesia. Between May 2000 to December 2001, an estimated 10,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands had to flee their towns as Laskar Jihad burnt indigenous Melanesian Churches and communities on Ambon and other Moluccas islands as well as Christian communities in Sulawesi. A video of the group being welcome to Ambon by Indonesian authorities was later joined by allegations of murder, torture, forced conversion to Islam, and forced circumcision. During 2001 and 2002, Laskar Jihad began to expand its activities sending militants to the provinces of Aceh and Papua, at opposite ends of the country. Although the group had announced its alleged disbandment after the Bali bombings in October 2002, it made a new appearance as early as 2003 when it requested the Indonesian government to provide office space in Papua. In May 2003, reports smuggled out of Papua claimed arson and machetes had been used to destroy ten townships, their food gardens and live stock sending the surviving women and children into jungle hiding from their pursuers. Video footage of a Laskar Jihad training camp was broadcasted in May 2005, and during June 2006 witness statements were gathered concerning three jihad training camps with 2,500 troops allegedly training with Indonesian military assistance near the Papua New Guinea border.

Jafar, when asked (by Jessica Stern, in her book *Terror in the Name of God*) whether he promotes Wahhabism in Indonesia, responded: "No, not exactly. Sheik Muhammad ibn-Abdul Wahhab emphasizes some hadith that are weak [...] Ahle Sunnah-the Islamic teachings that we embrace-are more reliable, more fundamental. We are not taking Wahhab's point of view; we identify ourselves as people who follow Muhammad's friends. We criticize some of Wahhab's literature, as relying too heavily on weak hadith that may not be the word of Allah." He considers himself more fundamentalist than

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Osama bin Laden, though he makes a distinction between 'kafir' (infidels) who hurt Muslims and kafir who either help or do not harm Muslims. The former he is fighting against, the latter, he believes, ought not to be hurt. Television is banned in Laskar camps and women wear burqa; but Jafar determined that al Qaeda's ideology is not in line with true Islam.

## External links

- Terrorism in the Spotlight: Laskar Jihad (<http://www.cdi.org/terrorism/laskar.cfm>)
- Laskar Jihad, Alive and Well in Papua (<http://www.barnabasfund.org/News/Archive/Indonesia/Indonesia-20030305.htm>)
- West Papua Militia in May 2005 (<http://news.sbs.com.au/dateline/index.php?page=transcript&dte=2005-03-16&headlineid=940>)
- BBC - Who are the Laskar Jihad? (2000) (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/770263.stm>)
- TIMEAsia.com Photo essay on Laskar Jihad ([http://www.time.com/time/asia/photoessays/laskar\\_jihad/2.html](http://www.time.com/time/asia/photoessays/laskar_jihad/2.html))
- Para-military Background on Laskar Jihad (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/laskar-jihad.htm>)
- *Laskar Jihad* book by Noorhaidi Hasan, limited on-line preview ([http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&id=tPSqTxokJAcC&dq=Laskar+Jihad+By+Noorhaidi+Hasan&printsec=front-IG2QWFTvvgg4Rj8Q&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&resnum=1&ct=result](http://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&id=tPSqTxokJAcC&dq=Laskar+Jihad+By+Noorhaidi+Hasan&printsec=front-IG2QWFTvvgg4Rj8Q&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result))

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