

# THE BLACKLIST

Violations committed by the most prominent Syrian regime figures and how to bring them to justice



**PRO JUSTICE**  
مع العدالة

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Pro-justice is a non-profit that seeks to maintain the principle of accountability and preclude impunity for major war criminal and human rights violators in societies that suffer from or have just exited civil wars and natural disasters, with special focus on the Middles East and Syria.

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# Foreword

More than eight years have passed since Syrians took to the streets as part of a peaceful movement demanding freedom and human dignity. Since then, the Syrian government has continued to resist the laws of inevitable transformation, trying in vain to stop the process of political development and reform through its levers of killing and repression.

This document serves as a record of the sacrifices Syrians have honourably made to attain their freedom. In addition, it serves to document the violations that have been carried out against them, and as a means of holding the perpetrators to account for their crimes.

The first chapter of this report demonstrates the requirement to follow legal processes promoting social and political movement, as well as the opportunities offered by tools of international accountability to confront the Syrian regime, in order to end five decades of extensive violations against the Syrian people carried out on its behalf.

The second chapter summarises the most prominent violations by the Syrian regime against civilians, including murder and mass murder; the use of chemical weapons and internationally prohibited weapons; violations of the rights of women and children; the targeting of journalists; the policies of systematic torture, starvation and siege, enforced displacement and sectarian discrimination; targeting civilian areas with barrel bombs and air strikes; and other horrific crimes that violate International Humanitarian Law, Law of Armed Conflict and other international human rights treaties and conventions.

The third and final chapter is a continuation of the efforts already exerted to document these crimes by presenting a list of the most prominent leaders of the security and military apparatuses, their violations against Syrians, the consequences of which led to their inclusion in international sanctions lists. This chapter provides details that can assist in identifying the perpetrators and their crimes.

The ultimate objective of this work is to emphasise that the crimes

committed by Syrian officials should not be subject to a statute of limitations, and that international bargaining and the interests of the various stakeholders cannot change the principles of the 2011 national movement, namely freedom, dignity and accountability of all those involved in the violation of Syrian rights.

Pro-Justice members and volunteers have worked painstakingly to collect the material of this book, which is intended to complement the endeavours of other projects that worked to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes. Perpetrators include the leaders of extremist and terrorist groups, the heads of sectarian militias known to have committed many crimes, and foreign governments that stood by the Syrian regime and contributed, through military support, to the violation of international and humanitarian conventions and charters.

By placing this effort in the hands of the Syrians and of the international community as a whole, we aim to achieve cooperation and integration with other sincere efforts to achieve the legitimate demands of the Syrian people, and to bring all perpetrators of crimes to justice, so ensuring that the culprits do not escape with impunity.

*Riad Hijab*

# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>
<b>Map</b>	<a href="#"><u>12</u></a>
<b>Chapter 1: Efforts to hold the Syrian regime accountable, and mechanisms of accountability</b>	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
- Efforts to document the regime’s violations and to hold its officials accountable	<a href="#"><u>15</u></a>
- Mechanisms available for accountability	<a href="#"><u>23</u></a>
- Proceeding with the accountability process	<a href="#"><u>33</u></a>
<b>Chapter 2: Major violations committed by the Assad regime and its allies (2011–2018)</b>	<a href="#"><u>37</u></a>
- Premeditated murder and mass killing	<a href="#"><u>40</u></a>
- Use of Chemical Weapons against civilians	<a href="#"><u>50</u></a>
- Crimes and violations against Syrian women	<a href="#"><u>57</u></a>
- Crimes and violations against Syrian children	<a href="#"><u>66</u></a>
- Sectarian discrimination and sectarian militias	<a href="#"><u>72</u></a>
- Siege as a weapon against civilians	<a href="#"><u>82</u></a>
- Targeting of journalists	<a href="#"><u>87</u></a>
- The systematic use of torture	<a href="#"><u>89</u></a>
- Use of Biological Weapons against civilians	<a href="#"><u>96</u></a>
- Bombardement of residential areas with barrel bombs	<a href="#"><u>98</u></a>
- Arbitrary arrest and detention, and forced disappearance	<a href="#"><u>103</u></a>

- Enforced displacement [110](#)

**Chapter 3: The Blacklist** [119](#)

1. Field Marshal Bashar al-Assad. [121](#)

2. Major General Mahir al-Assad. [127](#)

3. Major General Zuhayr al-Assad. [131](#)

4. General Fahd Jassim al-Frayj. [134](#)

5. General Ali Abdullah Ayub. [138](#)

6. Major General Muhammad Rahmun. [143](#)

7. Major General Muhammad al-Sha'ar. [146](#)

8. Major General Wasil Khalid al-Samir al-Awayd [150](#)

9. Major General Salim Harba. [153](#)

10. Major General Ali Mamluk. [157](#)

11. Major General Jamil al-Hassan. [162](#)

12. Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun. [170](#)

13. Major General Husam Luka [173](#)

14. Major General Nasser al-Ali [175](#)

15. Major General Abd al-Fatah Sulayman Qudsiyyah [178](#)

16. Major General Nasser Dib. [181](#)

17. Major General Talal Shafiq Makhluuf. [183](#)

18. Major General Jamal Muhammad Yunis. [191](#)

19. Major General Rafiq Mahmud Shahadah [195](#)

20. Major General Wajih Yahya Mahmud. [201](#)

21. Major General Zaid Salih. [205](#)

22. Major General Ghassan Isma'il. [207](#)

23. Major General Ramadan Muhammad al-Ramadan.	<a href="#"><u>210</u></a>
24. Major General Muwaffaq Muhammad Asa'ad.	<a href="#"><u>213</u></a>
25. Major General Adib Nimr Salamah.	<a href="#"><u>216</u></a>
26. Major General Aws Ali Aslan.	<a href="#"><u>220</u></a>
27. Major General Shawki Yusuf.	<a href="#"><u>223</u></a>
28. Major General Jawdat Salibi Mawas.	<a href="#"><u>227</u></a>
29. Major General Muhammad Ibrahim Khaddur.	<a href="#"><u>231</u></a>
30. Major General Kifah Milhim	<a href="#"><u>237</u></a>
31. Major General Nazih Hassun.	<a href="#"><u>240</u></a>
32. Major General Tawfik Yunis.	<a href="#"><u>242</u></a>
33. General Muhammad Mahmud Mahla.	<a href="#"><u>245</u></a>
34. General Bassam Haydar.	<a href="#"><u>249</u></a>
35. Major General Ali Wannus.	<a href="#"><u>257</u></a>
36. Major General Riad Habib Abbas.	<a href="#"><u>259</u></a>
37. Major General Ahmad Muhammad Ballul.	<a href="#"><u>263</u></a>
38. General Bassam Mirhaj al-Hassan.	<a href="#"><u>266</u></a>
39. Major General Ghassan Khalil.	<a href="#"><u>270</u></a>
40. Major General Juma'a Muhammad al-Jassim.	<a href="#"><u>273</u></a>
41. Major General Hassan Mirhaj Mirhaj.	<a href="#"><u>277</u></a>
42. Major General Ali Ahmad Asa'ad.	<a href="#"><u>281</u></a>
43. Major General Muhammad Kanju Hassan.	<a href="#"><u>284</u></a>
44. Major General Malik Hassan.	<a href="#"><u>287</u></a>
45. Major General Fu'ad Ahmad Hamudah.	<a href="#"><u>289</u></a>
46. General Adnan Jamil Isma'il.	<a href="#"><u>293</u></a>
47. Major General Hikmat Musa Salman.	<a href="#"><u>297</u></a>

48. General Hassan Muhammad Muhammad.	<a href="#"><u>301</u></a>
49. Major General Akram Muhammad.	<a href="#"><u>304</u></a>
50. Major General Ali Muhammad Ghanim.	<a href="#"><u>307</u></a>
51. Major General Muhammad Ali Subuh.	<a href="#"><u>310</u></a>
52. Major General Badi'i Sulayman Mu'alla.	<a href="#"><u>313</u></a>
53. Major General Saji' Darwish.	<a href="#"><u>316</u></a>
54. Major General Hassan Ali.	<a href="#"><u>324</u></a>
55. Major General Imad Naffuri.	<a href="#"><u>327</u></a>
56. Brigadier General Jawdat Ibrahim Safi.	<a href="#"><u>329</u></a>
57. Brigadier General Jawdat al-Ahmad.	<a href="#"><u>331</u></a>
58. Brigadier General Hafiz Muhammad MakhluF.	<a href="#"><u>335</u></a>
59. Brigadier Qusay Ibrahim Mihub.	<a href="#"><u>338</u></a>
60. Brigadier Sayil Asa'ad Da'ud.	<a href="#"><u>342</u></a>
61. Brigadier Lu'ay al-Ali.	<a href="#"><u>345</u></a>
62. Brigadier General Mazin al-Kanj.	<a href="#"><u>349</u></a>
63. Brigadier Malik Alya.	<a href="#"><u>352</u></a>
64. Brigadier General Muhammad Zamrini.	<a href="#"><u>356</u></a>
65. Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr.	<a href="#"><u>359</u></a>
66. Brigadier General Mufid Wardah.	<a href="#"><u>363</u></a>
67. Brigadier Suhayl al-Hassan.	<a href="#"><u>367</u></a>
68. Brigadier Yassin Ahmad Dahi.	<a href="#"><u>372</u></a>
69. Brigadier Abd al-Salam Fajr Mahmud.	<a href="#"><u>376</u></a>
70. Brigadier General Ghassan Bilal.	<a href="#"><u>381</u></a>
71. Brigadier Dr. Ghassan Haddad.	<a href="#"><u>383</u></a>
72. Brigadier General Salih al-Abdallah.	<a href="#"><u>388</u></a>

73. Brigadier Fayiz Baddur.	<a href="#"><u>391</u></a>
74. Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf.	<a href="#"><u>393</u></a>
75. Brigadier General Shafiq Massa.	<a href="#"><u>397</u></a>
76. Brigadier General Naufal al-Husayn.	<a href="#"><u>400</u></a>
77. Colonel Salih Saqr.	<a href="#"><u>403</u></a>
78. Brigadier General Aktham Mahmud.	<a href="#"><u>405</u></a>
79. Brigadier Ibrahim al-Wa'iri.	<a href="#"><u>408</u></a>
80. Brigadier Iyad Iskandar Mandu.	<a href="#"><u>410</u></a>
81. Brigadier General Sulayman al-Tinawi.	<a href="#"><u>413</u></a>
82. Brigadier Adnan al-Ahmad.	<a href="#"><u>416</u></a>
83. Brigadier Muhammad Yusuf al-Hasuri.	<a href="#"><u>419</u></a>
84. Brigadier Malik Ali Habib.	<a href="#"><u>422</u></a>
85. Colonel Nizar Fandi.	<a href="#"><u>425</u></a>
86. Colonel Ghayath Dalla.	<a href="#"><u>430</u></a>
87. Colonel Saqr Rustum.	<a href="#"><u>435</u></a>
88. Lieutenant Colonel Duraid Isma'il Awad.	<a href="#"><u>438</u></a>
89. Lieutenant Colonel Firas Ghassan Jazaa.	<a href="#"><u>442</u></a>
90. Engineer Muhammad Ahmad al-Sa'id.	<a href="#"><u>444</u></a>
91. Fadi al-Mallah.	<a href="#"><u>450</u></a>
92. Ali al-Shali.	<a href="#"><u>452</u></a>
93. Musib Nimr Salamah.	<a href="#"><u>455</u></a>

# MAP OF SYRIA



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Source: Perry Castenada on-line map library<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) [https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/syria\\_rel-2007.jpg](https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/syria_rel-2007.jpg)

# **Chapter 1**

**Efforts to hold the Syrian regime accountable, and  
mechanisms of accountability**



## **Chapter 1**

### **Efforts to hold the Syrian regime accountable, and mechanisms of accountability**

#### **- Efforts to document the regime's violations and to hold its officials accountable**

##### **National initiatives**

Over the last eight years, the situation in Syria has been the focus of much work in the fields of human rights, accountability, and transitional justice. Many Syrian-led rights groups have joined forces to achieve certain humanitarian goals. One such coalition is the Transitional Justice Coordinating Group (TJCG), which brought together 18 Syrian non-governmental organisations working in the field of transitional justice, civic reconciliation and Human Rights. The TJCG is the first coalition of Syrian civil society groups working in the field of accountability and transitional justice. The groups that form its basis have coordinated their efforts with the aim of establishing a pathway for a comprehensive national project for transitional justice in Syria. The TJCG has studied and modeled its work on relevant experiences from other nations such as Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, Iraq and Lebanon, with members receiving specialised training from world-class experts in the field of transitional justice.

Since the outbreak of the revolution in Syria, several rights groups and NGOs have organised training and workshops for Syrian activists in the fields of criminal accountability and transitional justice. In 2012, the Syrian rights group The Day After spearheaded a project bringing together 50 Syrian intellectuals, rights activists and politicians to envisage a post-Asad transitional period.

In April 2013, a large number of Syrian politicians, civil society activists, and foreign experts participated in a conference on Syria organised by the Dawlaty rights group. The conference concluded with a unique

document on transitional justice and the possibilities consequent to applying it in Syria. Dawlaty's initiative highlighted the differences between the legal track and non-legal mechanisms of applying transitional justice, and the roles of fact-finding teams.

The Syrian Centre for Political and Strategic Studies has also worked on an integrated project for developing the effectiveness of Syrian opposition work, and managing the transitional period after the fall of the Assad regime. The project drew up a clear plan for building a modern Syrian state, with a focus on transitional justice. During a conference it held in January 2013, the Centre formed the National Preparatory Committee for Transitional Justice and developed a plan for democratic transition in Syria. An international advisory commission was also formed during the conference to offer advice to the Syrian members.

During the month of November 2013, the International Centre for Transitional Justice held several workshops on the Syrian situation. The workshops focused on applying the concept of accountability in Syria, relying on a credible national reference for a future truth commission, achieving justice, providing compensation, and introducing institutional reform.

In April 2017, the legal committee at the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) announced that the International Criminal Court (ICC) had accepted a lawsuit which SNC had filed against the Syrian government. The lawsuit had been filed with the ICC General Prosecutor against around 130 Assad regime officials, including Bashar al-Assad and his brother, Maher, for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to the SNC's legal committee, the ICC had registered the case procedurally, but had not yet decided to accept its merits in order to summon the accused. However, the ICC's decision to accept the filing of a lawsuit against President al-Assad had a significant symbolic value. For some time prior to the decision, the ICC had not accepted lawsuits filed against the Syrian government in the absence of a relevant UN Security Council resolution, which Russia had consistently vetoed.

In October 2018, the Pro-Justice group launched a campaign under the title 'No Legitimacy for Perpetrators.' As part of that campaign, the organisation published the names, pictures and biographies of more than 70 regime officials involved in carrying out crimes in Syria. These biogra-

phies included details of perpetrator's crimes and any international sanctions imposed on them.

Rather than referring to human rights violators in general terms, Pro-Justice focuses on the specific named individuals who were actually responsible for heinous crimes in Syria. Any future accountability process would certainly require a list of documented crimes and the names of their respective perpetrators. In this way, criminals can be pursued internationally and brought to justice. Pro-Justice has also highlighted the fact that any attempts to rehabilitate or re-legitimise the Assad regime is illegal due to the crimes and violations it has committed. Additionally, Pro-Justice has warned against international and / or political compromises and settlements at the expense of legal and humanitarian considerations. The organisation has also called for addressing the demands of the Syrian people, which were voiced back in 2011: ending to the crimes and violations of the Assad regime, and delivering freedom and dignity back to the people.

### **International initiatives**

On the international level, UN Human Rights Council Resolution S-17/1 of 22 August 2011 provided for the establishment of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria. The resolution was adopted at the Council's 17th special session with a mandate to investigate all violations of international human rights law in Syria since March 2011. The Commission was also tasked to establish the facts and circumstances that may amount to such violations and of the crimes perpetrated and - where possible - to identify those responsible, with a view to ensuring that the perpetrators of violations (including those that may constitute crimes against humanity) are held to account. The Human Rights Council has repeatedly extended the Commission's mandate since then, most recently until 31 March 2018.

So far, the Commission has produced over 20 reports, in addition to numerous periodic updates, exposing human rights violations committed throughout the country, based on interviews with over 6,000 witnesses and victims. The Commission reviewed photographs, video recordings, forensic and medical reports from governments and non-governmental sources, academic analyses and United Nations reports.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) eg see "Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Repub-

In August 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2235, providing for the establishment of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). The resolution adopted by the 15-member council called on the UN Secretary General and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to establish the JIM with a mandate to:

*“identify, to the greatest extent feasible, individuals, entities, groups or Governments who were perpetrators, organizers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical, in the Syrian Arab Republic.”*

In December 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 71/248, establishing the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM). The resolution was unprecedented and came in response to Russia’s constant use of its veto power at the UN Security Council against resolutions concerning violations in Syria. Since 2011, Moscow has used its veto six times to hinder efforts in this domain. Additionally, Russia has vetoed six other Security Council resolutions condemning the Syrian government for its use of chemical weapons. The stated mandate of the IIIM is *“to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses and to prepare files in order to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings.”* However, the UN General Assembly ruled that funding for the IIIM would be secured through voluntary contributions from UN member states. In December 2017, the General Assembly requested the UN Secretary General include funding for IIIM within the next annual budget. In 2018, EU governments and 38 other states pledged 11 million dollars in support for that year’s \$14 million budget. Moreover, in April 2018, 28 Syrian civil society organisations signed a cooperation protocol with the IIIM to help in such areas as data exchange, protection of victims and witnesses, and access and communication.

In September 2018, IIIM chief Catherine Marchi-Uhel stated that investigators had collected around 1 million documents pertaining to violations and crimes committed in Syria. Marchi-Uhel added that her team’s job was to collect evidence to be presented to a national or international court as soon as practically possible. However, she complained that the

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lic”, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IIICISyria/Pages/About-Col.aspx>

constant use of the veto by Russia and China had blocked chances of accountability and legal proceedings whether through the ICC or via an ad hoc tribunal. Although IIM does not have the power to summon suspects for trial, it does possess evidence and comprehensive lists of suspects, thought to include prominent Syrian government and military officials.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other international rights groups have also made serious efforts to document the violation of human rights and humanitarian laws in Syria.

On 22 January 2018, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced the establishment of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. Consisting of the EU and 38 states, the partnership was established after Russia wielded its veto power twice to block chemical weapons investigations in Syria.

The IPIUCW project includes the collection of information to support the prosecution of individuals and entities suspected of using chemical weapons. Through its website, the partnership aims to inform the international community and the wider public about data collected on those involved in chemical weapons use. The project also works with relevant mechanisms for imposing sanctions on perpetrators, such as visa bans and asset freezing.

Several other entities have made efforts to file lawsuits with the ICC for numerous violations committed in Syria. Since 2012, France has drafted a number of UN Security Council resolutions providing for the Syrian situation to be referred to the ICC, where the perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity can be brought to justice. In December 2012, the EU Foreign Affairs Council called upon the UN Security Council to refer the Syrian file to the ICC – a call which was echoed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

On 14 January 2013, Switzerland, acting on behalf of 57 states, sent a letter to the President of the UN Security Council urging the 15-nation body to refer the Syrian situation to the ICC. In March 2013, a total of 64 countries released a joint statement calling on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC. The statement was made during a session of the UN Human Rights Council.

As Russia and China continued their use of veto power to protect the

Syrian regime from accountability, several Chief Prosecutors of various international criminal tribunals convened in August 2013 at the Chautauqua Institution, and called for a mechanism to hold perpetrators of crimes committed in Syria to account. Participants prepared the “Chautauqua Blueprint” for a “Statute for a Syrian Extraordinary Tribunal to Prosecute Crimes of Atrocity,” which laid out a fair and effective accountability mechanism under the distinct circumstances of Syria. The blueprint also suggested the inclusion of Syrian judges, lawyers and activists as part of efforts to develop the tribunal. The project also collected a wealth of documents about grave violations committed in Syria, and worked with the United States and Turkey on 30 reports focusing on holding the Syrian government accountable, and proving its illegitimacy.

Despite these major efforts, the call for an extraordinary tribunal has failed to be realised. Therefore, the only realistic means to achieve justice in Syria remains to file criminal lawsuits with other national governments based on the concept of universal jurisdiction. In its February 2013 report, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry concluded that the ICC was the most competent legal body to address the crimes in Syria. The commission also explained why forming a special tribunal was not recommended and would hinder achieving accountability in Syria.

### **Cases filed against Syrian government officials**

Between 2012 and 2018, various lawsuits were filed against different bodies in Syria, including against the government, its intelligence services, the Islamic State organisation (ISIS), al-Nusra Front, and some factions of the Syrian Free Army. The cases were filed based on the concept of universal jurisdiction, which allows national judiciaries to rule on crimes that violate international law (like war crimes and torture), even when such crimes are committed outside the state’s territories, so long as the crimes are committed by or against the prosecuting state’s own subjects. Customary international law also allows perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity to be brought to justice regardless of where those crimes took place. Whether a crime falls within universal jurisdiction or not depends on the national judiciary and laws of the country in which a case is to be filed, and on available evidence.

Below is a list of countries in which lawsuits have been filed for violations committed in Syria based on the concept of universal jurisdiction:

## **1. France**

Six cases were filed between July 2012 and November 2016. In September 2015, the French foreign ministry requested the French Prosecutor General to order an investigation of crimes against humanity in Syria, based on the images in the Caesar Report; a cache of pictures leaked by a defector from the Syrian military police. Earlier, in June 2012, a lawsuit was filed against a French company for conducting business with the Syrian state. In September 2016, a lawsuit was filed against a Swiss-French company for supporting and financing the Syrian government.

## **2. Germany**

As one of the few nations to embrace international jurisdiction, Germany's prosecutors and courts can investigate international crimes, even in circumstances where Germany is not a party in a case. The lawsuits in Germany, against six senior Syrian security and military officials, were filed with the assistance of the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights in Berlin. The suspects are accused of using systematic torture in secret prisons inside Syria. Between September 2011 and March 2017, eight cases were filed, based on universal jurisdiction. Additionally, 27 investigations were conducted and two German citizens appeared in court over accusations of carrying out violations in Syria. The German prosecuting authority is currently reviewing 28,000 images from the Caesar Report, depicting detainees tortured to death in Syrian prisons. A copy of the document is now in the hands of the European Prosecutor General.

## **3. Spain**

In February 2018, a Spanish national filed a lawsuit in a Spanish court against employees of a Syrian institution. The court decided to accept the case and the plaintiff was represented by Guernica 37 International Justice Chambers. The litigant accused the Syrian government of killing her brother, after she recognised a picture of his body in the Caesar Report. However, the case was dropped after the Spanish Prosecutor General challenged the court's jurisdiction to investigate.

## **4. Sweden**

Between 2015 and 2016, three lawsuits were filed against Syrian citizens over their alleged role in carrying out crimes against humanity in

Syria. Swedish courts have opened another 13 investigations into violations in Syria.

## **5. The United States**

In July 2016, the Centre for Justice and Accountability filed a lawsuit against the Syrian government for the killing of American reporter Marie Colvin. Nine Syrian intelligence officers were named in the case including Ali Mamlouk, Rafik Shehadeh, and Issam Zahreddine. The family of journalist Steven Sotloff, who was killed by ISIS in 2016, also filed a lawsuit against the Syrian government in a US federal court. Sotloff's family accused the Syrian state of financially and militarily supporting ISIS, which they believe led to the killing of the journalist. In 2018, the family of American reporter James Foley, who was slaughtered by ISIS in 2014, filed a lawsuit in a federal court in Washington D.C. against the Syrian government for facilitating the emergence of ISIS. The case was filed under the terrorism exception from the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act. The exception allows for the filing of lawsuits against sponsors of terrorism who commit crimes of extrajudicial killing, torture, and hostage-taking.

The second half of 2018 witnessed major developments in holding perpetrators to account for their crimes in Syria, based on the principle of universal jurisdiction. In Austria, the judiciary authorised the investigation of crimes committed by the Syrian intelligence services, which are responsible for the bulk of systematic torture inside Syrian prisons. In May 2018, Austrian courts accepted 16 lawsuits filed by Syrians against 24 officials of the Syrian government. The cases were supported by legal experts from the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights in Berlin and the Centre for the Enforcement of International Human Rights in Vienna, in cooperation with the Syrian Centre for Legal Studies and Research and the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression. The Austrian Prosecutor General also agreed to investigate the case of a Syrian national residing in Austria suspected of committing crimes of torture in Syria.

In June 2018, four similar cases in Germany led to an arrest warrant being issued against the head of the Syrian Air Force Intelligence Directorate, Jamil Hassan. The decision was a major step in favour of the victims and their families. Twenty-six other senior officials in the Syrian intelligence services were also named in the case as being responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

By issuing the warrant, the German Prosecutor General expressed his country's willingness to conduct serious investigations into violations committed by security and military leaders in Syria. The list would likely include National Security Bureau chief Ali Mamlouk, whom the Lebanese judiciary subpoenaed back in 2013 over his attempt to assassinate Lebanese politicians, clergymen, parliament members, and private citizens, in addition to his possession of explosives with the intent to commit murder and acts of terrorism. In 2011, Mamlouk was sanctioned by the EU for his involvement in the use of violence against protesters. (Brussels also sanctioned Syrian Air Force Intelligence chief Jamil Hassan in 2011 for committing crimes of torture, murder and violence against protestors.)

On 8 October 2018, a number of French judges issued international arrest warrants against three senior Syrian government officials: Ali Mamlouk, Jamil Hassan, and the head of the Air Force Intelligence Interrogation Department (Mezzeh Branch), Abdel Salam Mahmoud. The three officials were accused of committing crimes against humanity. Mahmoud was also accused of committing war crimes related to the disappearance, torture and killing of two dual Syrian-French nationals, Mazen Dabbagh and Patrick Abdul-Qader Dabbagh. The two had been arrested by Syrian Air Force Intelligence officers in November 2013 and were held in the prison of Mezzeh Military Airbase. The lawsuit was filed in France in October 2016 by Obaida Dabbagh and the International Federation for Human Rights and the French Human Rights League (LDH), with support from the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression.

The warrant was based on an investigation of the Caesar Report, which contained the images of around 50,000 bodies of detainees in Syria's prisons between 2011 and 2013. Similar warrants are expected to be issued by the US judiciary, as a lawsuit has been filed by the families of French photographer Remi Ochlik and American reporter Marie Colvin, who were both killed in 2012 during the bombardment of the city of Homs by the Syrian government.

### **- Mechanisms available for accountability**

The legal track offers a promising approach to putting an end to a half-century of violations carried out by the Assad regime. Since it appears likely that the Syrian state will not lose in the military arena, and with positive developments on the political front essentially placed on

hold, many governments are leaning toward the Russian stance in favour of rehabilitating Bashar al-Assad, restoring his lost legitimacy, and normalising relations with his regime. UN mediation has been heading in this direction, preferring to steer away from contentious topics such as accountability and transitional justice. UN-appointed envoys have chosen to ignore issues of forcible population transfer, enforced disappearance and detainees, and have instead turned their focus to forming a constitutional committee. Since UN mediation does not seem capable of convincing the Syrian government to cooperate, other parties have begun developing alternative options to hold the Syrian government accountable for its crimes. These initiatives include the following:

## **Accountability at the national level**

### **1. Filing lawsuits with Syrian courts**

This option requires the existence of an impartial legal body with integrity. No such institution exists in Syria today, due to widespread corruption and nepotism, and the domination of the judiciary by executive authorities and the security services. Under the current national constitution, the Supreme Judicial Council is headed by the Syrian President while the Justice Minister simply acts on his behalf. Therefore, given all the powers the President enjoys under this constitution, it is unreasonable to assume the independence of the Syrian judicial system.

However, a considerable number of Syrian judges have defected from the al-Assad regime. If national courts were to be established in areas outside government control, many competent and experienced legal authorities could administer lawsuits against state officials in these courts. While sentences issued by these courts would be of little practical effect, they would carry major symbolic value. Furthermore, the rulings could eventually be made binding if major actors in the Syrian situation decide in the future to adopt them and make them a reality.

### **2. Establishing a joint national-international court**

A joint national-international court established on Syrian soil would bring together Syrian and foreign judges. Adopting international law with international expert staff, this court would specialise in prosecuting war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria over the past eight years.

The international expertise of its members would enhance such a court's credibility and capabilities. As a national-international joint effort, the court would be a major step toward trust-building, would be pre-disposed to rule with impartiality, and would be less prone to issuing judgments of retribution. A joint court of this sort would guarantee that accountability mechanisms would not discriminate against or be limited to certain religious and sectarian groups, but would reach all perpetrators, including senior officials. Members of the international community would be more likely to view such a system as credible and free from the politics of revenge.

The Arab League first proposed the concept of a joint court in 2012, however, the League failed to take measures to move forward with the project. Former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues David Scheffer had suggested establishing an Extraordinary Tribunal for Syria and Iraq through an agreement between the United Nations and a regional government that would be committed to serving justice. Scheffer explained that the tribunal would be established on the principals of both universal and extra-territorial jurisdictions. The United States, as well as many other countries, adopt the principle of extra-territorial jurisdiction. However, the proposition did not advance due to logistic, financial and political reasons, and the fact that no neighbouring Arab country would agree to assist in carrying out the plan.

### **3. Forming an alliance of Syrian organisations to support accountability**

In light of the special circumstances in Syria, legal and judicial efforts are possible only outside the official institutions. Syrian civil society groups and international actors need to form coordinating coalitions and mechanisms to legally document violations in order to present them to a future judiciary in Syria.

Such coordinating coalitions and mechanisms could work on a number of tracks, including:

- Establishing a special legal unit of independent legal experts, provided that concerned governments are willing to cooperate voluntarily or through bilateral or multilateral agreements. Although this unit would not have a legal impact on the ground, it would place pressure on the Syri-

an government. An increasing number of member states, including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Sweden have already begun to support this approach.

- Supporting international efforts to hold the Syrian government accountable for its use of chemical weapons, and providing witnesses, data and support to this project. Such efforts include the initiative of French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (22 January 2018), which includes 30 countries, and works to hold chemical weapons violators accountable for their crimes. The initiative includes preparing lists of suspects in this issue, and raising international awareness and informing public opinion about officials suspected to be involved in the use of chemical weapons. The initiative also includes establishing a special website and imposing sanctions on violators, such as denial of visas and the freezing of financial assets.

- Supporting legal efforts to file lawsuits against the Syrian government in Western countries, especially in Germany, France, Spain, Sweden, Austria and the United States; providing support and guidance to victims and their families in order to increase the effectiveness of these efforts; and launching initiatives in this regard.

- Forming a national fact-finding committee to produce forensic, documentary materials that would contribute to establishing the truth for the victims and their families. The committee would work on establishing how, when and where crimes and violations were committed, and by whom. It would also work to establish the location of buried bodies for the return of these victims to their families. It would conduct research and public hearings - in addition to employing all appropriate investigatory mechanisms to verify the facts - pertaining to previous violations of human rights and the international laws that govern them.

- Coordinating the campaign for restitution, by which governments would admit to the damages they caused and take steps to repair them. Such initiatives often include a financial element (e.g. cash payments and the provision of health services) as well as symbolic compensations, such as public apologies and commemorations. Financial reparations are only one aspect of compensation, but include payments made to widows and orphans, pensions, and scholarships, as well as support for mental health initiatives. The symbolic measures also include an official recognition and

apology from the future Syrian head of state, on behalf of the Syrian people, for all wrongdoings committed against victims, as well as initiatives to commemorate them.

- Developing national governance plans to reform the military, security, judicial, economic, educational and cultural institutions; taking appropriate measures to dismantle the government's current repressive structure; ensuring that major violations of human rights do not occur again in the future, and that perpetrators would not escape justice; and building institutions based on transparency and equal opportunity.

- Developing new legal frameworks for the transitional period, including introducing constitutional amendments, and joining international human rights conventions.

- Helping millions of victims obtain compensation, and conducting national consultations on how best to repair damage, and achieve accountability and reconciliation.

## **Accountability at the international level**

### **1. The International Criminal Court (ICC)**

The ICC is an international court based in The Hague in the Netherlands. The court has the power to try individuals for war crimes, crimes of genocide, and crimes against humanity. The purpose of the ICC is to complement national judiciaries present in each country. Hence, the ICC cannot exert its jurisdiction unless certain conditions are met, such as when a national judiciary is unwilling or unable to try criminals effectively. The ICC began to function in 2002, when the Rome Statute came into effect.<sup>(1)</sup>

Currently, the ICC is considered the only standing international judicial authority capable of bringing war criminals to justice. However, since the Syrian government is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, referring the Syrian issue to ICC may only happen by virtue of a UN Security Coun-

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(1) The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is a multilateral treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC). A state becomes a party to the Rome Statute by signing and ratifying the treaty, and thereby becomes a member of the ICC. As of March 2019, 124 states are party to the statute.

cil resolution – a requirement which Russia and China have consistently prevented by use of their veto power. In fact, as of the time of writing, it seems other permanent Security Council member states, including the US, are unwilling to refer the Syrian case to the ICC. Since the establishment of the ICC, the UN Security Council has referred only two cases, Libya and Darfur, to the Court.

This is not to say that the ICC route is blocked. There are four ways through which the ICC can acquire jurisdiction over the Syrian file:

1. The UN Security Council refers the case to the ICC;
2. Syria voluntarily grants the ICC the jurisdiction over certain cases;
3. Syria joins the ICC by signing the Rome Statute;
4. The ICC Prosecutor General launches an international investigation.

It is important to note that although Syria is not signatory to the Rome Statute, the ICC Prosecutor General can still investigate the situation in Syria if the decision is made to do so independently. Such a decision would carry a great importance if it were ever made.

### **1. Establishing an international extraordinary tribunal on Syria**

An extraordinary tribunal would guarantee that the major violators in Syria would be brought to actual justice. However, establishing a tribunal of this sort would be a complicated affair as it requires international political will, along with the willingness to fund high costs for limited prosecutions – as was the case with Yugoslavia. A number of governments have already called for a tribunal on Syria similar to the one established for the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. However, it seems that the international community has already lost much of its desire to establish an extraordinary tribunal. Indeed, establishing an extraordinary tribunal on Syria would require a UN Security Council resolution, which would likely face obstruction from a Russian-Chinese veto.

### **2. Bringing Syrian officials to trial based on universal jurisdiction<sup>(1)</sup>**

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(1) Universal jurisdiction is one of the main legal tools to discourage violations of International Humanitarian Law and to punish perpetrators of such violations. Stemming from the idea of defending worldwide values and interests, universal jurisdiction goes beyond the borders of national laws, granting judges of any nation the power to issue arrest warrants and prosecute

Universal jurisdiction offers great potential to file criminal complaints against Syrian officials in Western countries, where laws allow the suing of suspects for major violations of human rights, regardless of nationality and the location the violation was committed. In these cases, universal jurisdiction does not substitute national jurisdictions, but constitutes an extension to them, in order to ensure perpetrators are brought to justice. In this regard, universal jurisdiction enables the international community to examine major crimes, a role that stems from human solidarity in defending the universal rights of people, and preventing criminals from seeking asylum or immunity.

According to this doctrine, war criminals can be prosecuted in the courts of certain countries under the universal jurisdiction applied by those countries. This allows a state to prosecute perpetrators of certain crimes even without the involvement of that prosecuting state's citizens or territory. Universal jurisdiction can be used against current or former Syrian officials who visit or are now residing in Europe and the United States.

This option would be more feasible if senior regime officials decide to flee a post-Assad Syria to European countries, such as when France tried Rwandan leaders suspected of genocide. As noted earlier in this report, lawsuits have been filed against Syrian officials in Sweden, Germany, France, Spain and Austria based on the concept universal jurisdiction.

### **3. Bringing Syrian officials to trial based on local jurisdiction**

Lawsuits may be filed against war criminals in local legal jurisdictions on the basis of dual nationality. Accordingly, criminals who carry both Syrian and another citizenship can be tried by the states of their other citizenship, especially if that state is European. In France and Germany, local judiciaries have used their jurisdiction against alleged returning members of terrorist organisations such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida. Additionally, families of dual-nationality holders who have been abused by the Syrian government can seek redress through local courts in some foreign countries. For instance, the family of Stephen Sotloff (a US journalist killed by ISIS) has

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suspects for crimes in the four Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute and the Convention against Torture. These powers are effective regardless of where these crimes were committed and the nationality of the perpetrators and the victims. Universal jurisdiction is usually asserted when a state fails to live up to its responsibility of legally addressing serious violations of international law committed in its territories.

filed a lawsuit in a US federal court against the Syrian government accusing it of providing financial, material and military support for ISIS, resulting in the journalist's abduction and murder.

## **Possible avenues to support accountability efforts**

Despite many Syrian civil society organisations making efforts in the field of accountability, there is still much room to work with Western authorities to ensure that Syrian officials are held accountable and brought to justice. A cooperative relationship can be established with specialised War Crimes units within Western law enforcement and prosecution agencies, including the EU's Genocide Network and its judicial cooperation unit, Eurojust. The mission of this unit is to support and enhance cooperation among investigative and prosecutorial bodies within the EU in relation to serious crimes. The unit relies on a mechanism for coordination and data exchange called the "European Network of contact points in respect of persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes." The network holds biannual meetings during which participating prosecutors and investigators from member states exchange expertise and work methods. It also provides a forum to facilitate the cooperation and sharing of knowledge within the EU regarding serious international crimes.

Syrian organisations working on accountability in Syria should cooperate with these networks and provide them with access to their resources. At the same time, it is possible to work with specialised War Crimes units within prosecution and law enforcement agencies which aim to investigate crimes committed abroad. A good example of this is Germany, which witnessed its first conviction for the crime of committing genocide, using universal jurisdiction after establishing War Crimes units in 2009. The units enabled German prosecutors to investigate serious international crimes committed in Rwanda, eastern Congo and Iraq. In 2006, Swedish prosecutors were able to achieve the first War Crimes conviction in relation to the atrocities committed during the conflict in Yugoslavia in 1993. Since the establishment of the Swedish War Crimes unit, six more cases have been opened against individuals accused of committing serious international crimes during the conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Iraq.

The Swedish police force includes specialised War Crimes units tasked exclusively with investigating serious international crimes, while

the Swedish prosecutor's office includes a War Crimes team consisting of eight assistants to the Prosecutor General – four of whom work full time and lead investigations in serious international crimes. They work closely with the War Crimes agency, without the need for further authorisation from the Swedish judiciary to open official investigations. A number of other countries have also implemented similar measures.

In Germany, the Federal Police force includes a specialised unit called the Central Unit for the Fight against War Crimes and further Offences. The unit consists of 13 officers who work routinely with translators, researchers and technicians from the force, as well as with external consultants. Moreover, German law enforcement includes a War Crimes unit which is affiliated to the German Prosecutor General and works on investigating serious international crimes according to the Code of Crimes against International Law.

Further lawsuits should be filed in EU states against the Syrian government for the serious crimes it has committed. In June 2014, Sweden adopted a law on "Criminal responsibility for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes," the provisions of which stem from the Rome Statute, including the powers to prosecute crimes of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes. The law includes various types of criminal liability commonly used in international criminal law, including the "liability of the leadership."

The law also permits retroactive investigations of War Crimes committed before the legislation came into effect in 2014, described in the Swedish Penal Code as "crimes against international law." According to the Swedish Penal Code, Swedish courts have "special" universal jurisdiction over War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity and Genocide. This means that Sweden does not need to be directly linked to a crime in order to investigate it (even if the crime is committed outside Sweden and without the involvement of Swedish citizens). Moreover, while Swedish prosecutors have discretion in choosing whether to proceed with a case (based on the available evidence), the prosecution is obliged to investigate if sufficient evidence exists.

Germany has also incorporated the Rome Statute into its national laws through the Crimes against International Law Act of 2002. The law defines War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity and Genocide in conformity

with the ICC treaty. It also includes important texts on the responsibilities of leadership as a form of criminal responsibility. Under this law, German authorities are also entitled to investigate and prosecute serious international crimes committed abroad even if the offenses are unrelated to Germany.

This avenue would require detraumatizing and training those Syrian nationals who would be working with the War Crimes units. It would also require the right conditions to conduct fair trials, and exploring options for improving the measures to protect witnesses (and when necessary, protecting their families in other countries) in proceedings related to serious international crimes. It is also essential for victims and witnesses living in Western countries to be made aware of their right to inform the police of crimes, and their right to participate in criminal proceedings. This includes acquainting victims and witnesses with their right to access information about relevant procedures, electronic forms, and translated versions of major laws, decisions, statements, and websites where they can find information about the crimes committed in Syria. In addition, press conferences and similar activities should be held for War Crimes units to discuss their work in relation to Syria.

The chances of achieving accountability can be improved if cooperation can be established with Western legal and judicial authorities to create a central database, under Europol, of War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity and Genocide. This database needs to be supported in terms of analytical capacity.

There would be a need to foster cooperation with an impartial international mechanism on Syria. Roles need to be co-ordinated in an efficient way so that work in the two organisations does not overlap, nor are there gaps. Moreover, there is a need to overcome the difficulties of securing information from outside the country in which the work is done; documenting violations outside the borders of the European Union; providing evidence and witnesses; coordinating with Syrian communities in Europe to address problems of a lack of awareness; language barriers; a lack of asylum seekers' confidence in the authorities; and turning the collected information into robust evidence to prove that Syrian officials have violated International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights laws. Finally, legal files need to be prepared in order to facilitate and accelerate the launch-

ing of fair and independent criminal proceedings in line with international law standards in national, regional and international courts.

### **- Proceeding with the accountability process**

Since mid-2018, the Syrian political scene has witnessed a number of major changes. The political opposition is currently under great pressure to engage in a nominal constitutional reform process that includes the continuity of Bashar al-Assad as president and the acceptance of a national unity government under his rule.

It seems that the official positions of many Western countries and international mediators have begun to move towards the Russian position, which is pushing for a political solution based on stopping the fighting, providing humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and normalising relations with the Damascus regime. Russian diplomacy has been a complementary effort to its military operations which have helped the Syrian government reclaim control over large areas of the country.

While Moscow is facing difficulties in persuading the United States and the European Union to join its efforts in returning six million refugees to areas controlled by the Syrian government, Russian diplomacy is increasingly receiving support from Syria's neighbors. Many officials in neighboring countries have expressed their support for the Russian initiative on the return of Syrian refugees, despite the absence of minimum guarantees for their safe return.

A number of these countries have begun conducting undisclosed talks with Syrian officials, resulting in the reopening of border crossings which had remained closed for years; in August 2018, the Russian Defence Ministry announced the opening of seven crossings to enable the return of Syrian refugees. Moscow hopes to reach a joint plan with Washington for the return of the refugees to their homes prior to the conflict, with a special focus on displaced Syrians in Lebanon and Jordan. Their goal is to form a joint Russian-US-Jordanian working group under the auspices of the Amman Monitoring Center.

The main issue in this plan, however, is that Russia seeks to rehabilitate the Assad regime and to reintegrate it into the international community. Moscow intends to continue providing financial support despite Damascus's widespread human rights violations through its policies of

murder, detention, enforced disappearances, systematic torture, exclusion and sectarian discrimination.

Meanwhile, the reverses in the opposition's military position and the stagnation of the political situation, resulting largely from the intransigence of Damascus, coupled with the rush of some Arab and Western countries to normalise relations, has left the opposition alone with the task of seeking to enhance the justice and accountability track, and prevent impunity.

However, this track is bound to encounter many hurdles along the way. In addition to a shortage of funding, accountability efforts face other obstacles, such as the unwillingness of United Nations actors to raise issues of transitional justice, accountability and restitution so as not adversely to affect their efforts to reach understandings with Russia and Iran.

Given the absence of any precedent in international law to hold senior officials accountable for their crimes against humanity while they still occupy office, the willingness of supporting countries to pursue a legal path to rein in the Syrian government has continued to shrink. Moreover, many human rights organisations have shown little interest in this path at this time; perhaps as they remain unconvinced of its feasibility. Consequently, it is incumbent on Syrian organisations working in the field of accountability to unite their efforts in order to end the international trend towards rehabilitating the Syrian government and overlooking its crimes for such countries' own political ends.

Preventing this rehabilitation can be achieved only by shedding further light on the perpetrators and their crimes; and seeking to convict them and all those who deal with these culprits or attempt to re-legitimise them. It must be remembered that all the perpetrators, including Syrian state officials, are working to restore their legitimacy and retain power to thwart criminalisation and so ensure impunity. This has prompted Syrian accountability and human rights stakeholders to intensify their efforts in the field of documenting violations, identifying the perpetrators and ensuring accountability for them, so that their offences are not curtailed by a statute of limitations, or are pardoned under the pretext of reconciliation and a political solution.

On the political level, Syrian revolutionary and opposition forces must improve their negotiating position in light of international apathy and to

increase the pressure on international for a. They must continue to support the efforts of Syrian and international organisations to criminalise the Syrian government, to delegitimise it, and bring its officials to justice.

Success in these efforts would deter the Syrian government from pursuing its repressive policies and end the grave violations - including murder, enforced disappearances and systematic torture - it continues to commit while also adopting policies of discrimination on ethnic and sectarian grounds. The most effective way to halt these violations is to strengthen the effectiveness of the mechanisms of accountability, to achieve international recognition, to deepen the isolation of the Syrian government through legal tracks, and to highlight publically the widescale violations that it continues to carry out.

Extrapolating experiences from Rwanda, Yugoslavia and other states that have witnessed widespread violations proves that the sustained effort to restore the rights of millions of dead, wounded, detained, displaced and other affected persons will certainly be borne out by hard work, patience and professionalism. This has been reiterated by renowned Human Rights lawyer Anwar al-Bunni, who recently explained:

“The issue is beyond any case currently under trial ... as sustainable peace building needs Syrians to feel empowered by the tools of justice so that they can build it as an integrated system that protects their common living in Syria.”



# **Chapter 2**

**Major violations committed by the Assad regime  
and its allies (2011–2018)**



## **Chapter 2**

### **Major violations committed by the Assad regime and its allies (2011–2018)**

The delivery of justice is widely regarded as being a key foundation of post-conflict peacemaking, and is thus an essential component for building a new Syrian state based on the rule of law. The world witnessed the first successful application of justice based on international law at the Nuremburg Trials; an event that laid the foundations for a new era of accountability established on respect for human life and protection against violations and arbitrary policies. The prosecution of war criminals from Yugoslavia and Rwanda were further manifestations of justice for victims, once again bringing those accused of War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity to international and impartial accountability.

It is for these reasons that we call for justice to be handed to Bashar al-Assad - and the heads of Syria's security services and armed forces - on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of innocent victims who have died during eight years of revolution in Syria. Any successful peace process or political settlement must be based on certain legal principles, including those guaranteeing war criminals are held to account. Indeed, according to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2165, those who have violated International Humanitarian Law must be brought to justice.

Achieving justice of this sort requires international actors such as the UN to hold to account all War Criminals and perpetrators of Crimes against Humanity in Syria. Bashar Assad's regime, as well as foreign individuals and groups who have committed crimes against the Syrian people must also be brought to justice. This includes violations by Lebanese, Iraqi and Iranian paramilitary groups, as well as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which are documented to have carried out numerous crimes in violation of Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute. These armed actors

have contributed to the suffering of the Syrian people by committing the following crimes:

**- Premeditated murder and mass killing**

Since March 2011, Syrian government forces have carried out widespread, systematic and indiscriminate mass killings of civilians. They have used a wide variety of weaponry, including fighter ground attack aircraft, ballistic missiles, barrel bombs and Chemical Weapons.

These crimes have been documented by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry established by UN Human Rights Council Resolution S-17/1 of 23 August 2011.

From as early as March 2011, the Syrian government used violent suppression against unarmed protesters, with security forces firing live rounds directly at demonstrators. Officials, anticipating public backlash for their heavy-handed response, deliberately and falsely stated that victims were attacked by “armed groups.” Officials also forced families of victims to claim that “terrorist armed groups,” (rather than government security forces) were responsible for the death of their loved ones. Such actions by the Syrian government have been widely and credibly documented through testimonies from many former judges and forensic medical experts who defected from the Syrian regime.

As the popular anti-government movement intensified, security forces responded with an increase in the number of civilian arrests. The number of cases involving arbitrary detention and forced disappearance soon exceeded 800,000. Around 250,000 of these cases were documented, while hundreds of thousands of other cases remained unreported by victims’ families, often for fear of government retaliation against their imprisoned relatives. By not officially disclosing information about the arrest of their loved ones, families believed they were in fact helping them to stay alive in prison. Often, instead of following legal channels, families handed over large sums of money in bribes to government officials to have their relatives set free.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights has documented around 14,000 cases of extra-judicial killing by the Syrian government. Those cases do not include the names of 10,000 detainees known to have died in Syr-

ia's prisons; names which Damascus officials only began releasing to the public in early 2018. These lists included the identification of 1,300 missing people tortured to death inside these prisons. However, the Syrian authorities falsified medical certificates claiming victims had passed away by death from natural causes, such as heart attack, stroke, kidney failure or even asthma. Officials have not provided information about the place of death and have refused to return victims' bodies to their families.

Over the past eight years, sectarian militias recruited by the Syrian government have killed a recorded 3,028 Syrian civilians, including 531 children and 472 women. Those militias, nurtured by the authorities, perpetrated more than 50 sectarian massacres throughout different Syrian provinces. Homs has witnessed the brunt of this sectarian violence, serving as the stage for 22 massacres which left 1,040 civilians dead, including 209 children and 200 women. In Hamah, sectarian militias carried out eight massacres, killing 197 civilians, including 40 women and children. Seven other massacres took place in the provinces of Dara'a, Tartus, Idlib, and Dayr al-Zur – the collective death toll of which numbered 769 civilians.

Yahia al-Akash, an eye-witness from the village of Hula, in Homs province, described to Judge Khalid Shihabiddin what he witnessed on the day of the infamous Hula Massacre on 25 May 2012:<sup>(1)</sup>

“At 2:00 p.m., the Assayyed and Abdul-Razzak families from the Tal-Daw area had no idea of the horror awaiting them. On the Saad Road, the entire 83-member family of Abdul-Razzak was murdered. They were slaughtered with knives at the hands of Alawite and Shia residents from the areas of Western Ghor, Fulla, and al-Qabu, aided by the criminal security forces. Around the same time, on the Homs–Houla Highway, close to the Military Security branch, 50 members of the Assayyed family were slaughtered by the same criminals and with the same weapons. The only survivor was an infant girl from the Kurdi family; who remained on the chest of her slaughtered mother. That girl is still alive.”

Below are the most prominent massacres perpetrated by the Syrian government and its allied militias in 2011:

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(1) Yahia al-Akash, an eye-witness from the village of Hula, in Homs province, in an interview with Pro-Justice team.

- On 29 April 2011, government forces carried out a large-scale massacre of civilians in Dara'a, close to the military housing district. A large number of protesters were killed when armed forces personnel opened fire directly into the group. Later, survivors were tortured to death in detention facilities, including the well-known case of the child Hamza al-Khatib. The number of victims exceeded 300.

- On 4 August 2011, government forces laid siege to the city of Hamah, before storming its neighbourhoods and killing more than 200 civilians.

- On 9 March 2012, government forces killed 47 civilians as its troops raided the village of Karm al-Zaytun in the province of Homs.

- On 5 April 2012, government forces executed 62 civilians in the village of Taftanaz in the province of Idlib.

- On 6 June 2012, government forces stormed the village of al-Qubayr in the province of Hamah, killing 100 civilians, including 20 women and 20 children.

- On 12 July 2012, after heavily shelling the village of al-Traymsah in rural Hamah, government forces raided the residential area and perpetrated a massacre, killing more than 200 civilians. Many were burned to death or executed on the spot.

- Between 20 and 25 August 2012, government forces imposed a blockade around the city of Darayya in the Damascus environs. The forces bombarded the city and stormed its neighbourhoods, killing more than 500 civilians. Government forces also prevented ambulances from entering the city to assist victims.

- On 20 September 2012, the Syrian Air Force conducted an airstrike on a gas station in the town of Ain Issa in the province of Raqqa, killing 55 civilians.

- On 13 October 2012, government forces executed 65 civilians in the village of Maarrat al-Numan.

- Between 1 January and 14 March 2013, more than 230 bodies were found on the bank of the Quayk River in Aleppo. The victims were gagged and handcuffed and displayed signs of torture. All of them had been shot in the head.

- Between 16 and 21 April 2013, government forces carried out massacres in the towns of Judaidat al-Fadl and Judaidat Artuz in the Damascus environs, killing more than 500 people in indiscriminate shelling and field executions. Many of the bodies were burned or mutilated and were denied burial.

- Over 2 to 3 May 2013, government forces stormed the suburb of al-Bayda in the city of Baniyas, Tartus province, killing more than 72 civilians.

- On 21 August 2013, government forces deployed Chemical Weapons against the Ghuta region in the Damascus environs, killing around 1,600 people, mostly children.

Over the course of 2014, Syrian security forces, and allied local and foreign paramilitary groups, perpetrated the following massacres:

- January: 36 massacres killing 444 civilians, including 136 children and 62 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (28); Homs (4); Damascus environs (2); Dara'a (1); and Hamah (1).

- February: 42 massacres killing 646 civilians including 157 children and 94 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (32); Hamah (4); Idlib (3); and the Damascus environs (3).

- March: 20 massacres killing 171 civilians, including 39 children and 16 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (9); Damascus (4); Idlib (4); Damascus (1); Hamah (1); and Dara'a (1).

- April: 33 massacres killing 394 civilians, including 142 children and 61 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (20); Damascuse (7); Homs (3); Damascus (1); Idlib (1); and Dara'a (1).

- May: 32 massacres killing 317 civilians, including 96 children and 47 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (17); Dara'a (6); Idlib (4); Damascus environs (2); Hamah (2); and Homs (1).

- June: 32 massacres killing 368 civilians, including 98 children and 50 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (14); Damascus environs (8); Idlib (4); Dayr al-Zur (3); Damascus (1); Raqqa (1); and Dara'a (1).

- July: 25 massacres killing 217 civilians, including 64 children and 38 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (13); Dara'a (4); Damascus environs (3); Idlib (2); Raqqa (1); Dayr al-Zur (1); and Hamah (1).

- August: 39 massacres killing 438 civilians, including 126 children and 67 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (12); Idlib (7); Damascus environs (6); Dara'a (5); Hamah (4); Raqqa (2); Homs (2); and Dayr al-Zur (1).

- September: 25 massacres killing 504 civilians, including 109 children and 76 women. These massacres were distributed across the following provinces: Damascus environs (7); Aleppo (6); Dayr al-Zur (4); Idlib (3); Raqqa (2); Homs (2); and Hamah (1).

- October: 26 massacres killing 393 civilians, including 162 children and 50 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (7); Idlib (7); Dara'a (6); Homs (5); and Aleppo (1).

- November: 31 massacres killing 365 civilians, including 82 children and 48 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Raqqa (6); Aleppo (5); Dara'a (5); Hamah (4); Damascus environs (3); Idlib (3); Dayr al-Zur (2); Homs (2); and Damascus (1).

- December: 32 massacres killing 341 civilians, including 79 children and 40 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (8); Idlib (6); Aleppo (4); Dara'a (4); Raqqa (4); Dayr al-Zur (3); Homs (2); and Hamah (1).

Over the course of 2015, Syrian security forces, and allied local and foreign paramilitary groups, perpetrated the following massacres:

- January: 16 massacres killing 195 civilians, including 32 children and 21 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces:

Damascus environs (5); Aleppo (3); Homs (2); Dara'a (2); Dayr al-Zur (1); Idlib (1); Hasakah (1); and Hamah (1).

- February: 32 massacres killing 434 civilians, including 91 children and 73 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (17); Aleppo (5); Idlib (4); Dara'a (2); Dayr al-Zur (3); and Latakia (1).

- March: 32 massacres killing 340 civilians, including 102 children and 49 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (10); Damascus environs (9); Dara'a (6); Aleppo (3); Dayr al-Zur (3); and Homs (1).

- April: 50 massacres killing 492 civilians, including 108 children and 79 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (19); Aleppo (11); Dara'a (7); Damascus environs (4); Homs (3); Hamah (3); Dayr al-Zur (1); Hasakah (1); and Raqqa (1).

- May: 40 massacres killing 498 civilians, including 118 children and 70 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (14); Idlib (8); Dayr al-Zur (8); Damascus environs (3); Dara'a (3); Hamah (2); and Homs (2).

- June: 33 massacres killing 398 civilians, including 122 children and 77 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (14); Idlib (7); Homs (5); Damascus environs (3); Dara'a (2); Dayr al-Zur (1); and Hasakah (1).

- July: 52 massacres killing 476 civilians, including 121 children and 70 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (24); Idlib (9); Dara'a (7); Damascus environs (5); Hamah (3); Homs (2); and Dayr al-Zur (2).

- August: 43 massacres killing 582 civilians, including 112 children and 73 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (19); Idlib (13); Aleppo (4); Homs (3); Hamah (2); Dara'a (1); and Dayr al-Zur (1).

- September: 31 massacres killing 338 civilians, including 106 children and 51 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (7); Homs (7); Damascus environs (6); Idlib (5); Dayr al-Zur (4); and Dara'a (2).

- October: 29 massacres killing 372 civilians, including 97 children and 43 women. These massacres were distributed across the following provinces: Damascus environs (11); Aleppo (7); Homs (6); Idlib (3); Hamah (1); and Dayr al-Zur (1).

- November: 19 massacres killing 185 civilians, including 38 children and 32 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (6); Dara'a (5); Dayr al-Zur (3); Idlib (2); Homs (2); and Aleppo (1).

- December: 25 massacres killing 304 civilians including 96 children and 38 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (16); Idlib (4); Homs (2); Dayr al-Zur (1); Dara'a (1); and Hamah (1).

Over the course of 2016, Syrian security forces, and allied local and foreign paramilitary groups, perpetrated the following massacres:

- January: 22 massacres killing 172 civilians, including 44 children and 34 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (10); Idlib (6); Homs (3); Hamah (2); and Dayr al-Zur (1).

- February: 13 massacres killing 95 civilians, including 30 children and 23 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (5); Idlib (4); Dara'a (2); Homs (1); and Aleppo (1).

- March: 11 massacres killing 132 civilians, including 35 children and 25 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (3); Dayr al-Zur (2); Raqqa (2); Homs (2); Aleppo (1); and Idlib (1).

- April: 19 massacres killing 202 civilians, including 45 children and 20 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Raqqa (2); Dayr al-Zur (3); Damascus environs (3); Aleppo (6); Homs (2); Idlib (2), and Hamah (1).

- May: 16 massacres killing 137 civilians, including 46 children and 26 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib

(5); Homs (4); Damascus environs (2); Aleppo (2); Dayr al-Zur (2); and Raqqa (1).

- June: 24 massacres killing 315 civilians, including 112 children and 57 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (8); Raqqa (5); Dayr al-Zur (4); Damascus environs (3); Homs (2); Aleppo (1); and Hamah (1).

- July: 34 massacres killing 337 civilians, including 89 children and 57 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (9); Aleppo (7); Damascus environs (7); Homs (4); Dayr al-Zur (2); Hamah (2); and Dara'a (3).

- August: 32 massacres killing 263 civilians, including 73 children and 36 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (11); Aleppo (9); Damascus environs (6); Homs (2); Dayr al-Zur (1); Hassakah (1); Raqqa (1); and Hamah (1).

- September: 26 massacres killing 211 civilians, including 65 children and 25 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (8); Damascus environs (5); Dayr al-Zur (5); Idlib (3); Hamah (3); Dara'a (1); and Raqqa (1).

- October: 13 massacres killing 106 civilians, including 44 children and 19 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (6); Idlib (3); Homs (1); Hamah (1); Dara'a (1); and Dayr al-Zur (1).

- November: 26 massacres killing 254 civilians, including 102 children and 39 women. Damascus environs (8); Idlib (6); Aleppo (5); Dayr al-Zur (3); Dara'a (2); Hamah (1); and Homs (1).

- December: 18 massacres killing 215 civilians, including 78 children and 36 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (9); Damascus environs (3); Dayr al-Zur (2); Aleppo (1); Homs (1); Dara'a (1); and Hamah (1).

Over the course of 2017, Syrian security forces and allied local and foreign paramilitary groups perpetrated the following massacres (the most heinous of which was the chemical attack on 4 April in Khan Shaikhun, Idlib province):

- January: Six massacres killing 48 civilians, including 21 children and eight women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Dayr al-Zur (3); Damascus environs (1); Homs (1); and Hamah (1).

- February: 13 massacres killing 109 civilians, including 37 children and 13 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (3); Idlib (3); Homs (2); Dara'a (2); Raqqa (1); Damascus (1); and Hamah (1).

- March: 10 massacres killing 88 civilians, including 34 children and 19 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Idlib (4); Damascus environs (2); Hamah (2); and Dayr al-Zur (2).

- April: 11 massacres killing 184 civilians, including 64 children and 38 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (4); Idlib (2); Dara'a (2); Dayr al-Zur (1); Homs (1); and Aleppo (1).

- May: Nine massacres killing 85 civilians, including 36 children and 25 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Aleppo (3); Hamah (2); Dayr al-Zur (2); Damascus environs (1); and Homs (1).

- June: 10 massacres killing 88 civilians, including 41 children and 12 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Dayr al-Zur (6); Dara'a (3); and Hamah (1).

- July: 8 massacres killing 95 civilians, including 43 children and 19 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Dayr al-Zur (5); Damascus environs (1); Raqqa (1); and Suwayda (1).

- August: Five massacres killing 29 civilians, including 11 children and eight women. These massacres were took place the following provinces: Damascus environs (2); Dayr al-Zur (2); and Hamah (1).

- September: 17 massacres killing 177 civilians, including 53 children and 37 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Dayr al-Zur (11); Idlib (3); Damascus environs (2); Hamah (2); and Homs (1).

- October: 11 massacres killing 93 civilians, including 28 children and 20 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces:

Dayr al-Zur (6); Idlib (2); Damascus environs (2); and Hamah (1).

- November: 16 massacres killing 123 civilians, including 37 children and 18 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (6); Dayr al-Zur (10).

- December: Nine massacres killing 65 civilians, including 20 children and four women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (2); Dayr al-Zur (4); and Idlib (3).

Over the course of January to April 2018, Syrian security forces and allied local and foreign paramilitary groups perpetrated the following massacres:

- January: 11 massacres killing 94 civilians, including 36 children and 20 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus Environs (7); Idlib (2); and Aleppo (2).

- February: 53 massacres killing 563 civilians including 158 children and 122 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (46); Aleppo (4); Idlib (2); and Hamah (1).

- March: 40 massacres killing 620 civilians, including 142 children and 105 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (39); and Idlib (1).

- April: Six massacres killing 106 civilians including 22 children and 26 women. These massacres took place across the following provinces: Damascus environs (2); Homs (1); and Damascus (1); Hamah (1); Aleppo (1).

The above figures were collected from databases compiled by a number of human rights groups<sup>(1)</sup>.

The incidents laid out in this chapter provide only a few examples of the thousands of unlawful, premeditated crimes perpetrated by the Syrian government and its allied militias against Syrian civilians. These acts are classified as War Crimes and as such, they are not subject to a statute

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(1) Syrian human rights groups, including the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Legal Clinics initiative (a group of Syrian lawyers located in different provinces of Syria with their headquarters in Idlib province), and the Syrian Lawyers' Commission (a group of judges and lawyers monitoring legal affairs related to the situation in Syria, documenting crimes, reviewing ur-

of limitations. They are prosecutable under both Syrian and international law, in accordance with the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court.

### **- Use of Chemical Weapons against civilians**

In its assault on the citizens of Syria, the government of Bashar al-Assad has repeatedly carried out crimes in direct contravention of Article 8, paragraph 2, (b) (xvii) and (xviii) of the Rome Statute:

*“(xvii): Employing poison or poisoned weapons,” and “(xviii): “Employing asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and all analogous liquids, materials or devices.”*

The Syrian government has also violated UN Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013) which determined that *“the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic constitutes a threat to international peace and security,”* underscoring that *“Member States are obligated under Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations to accept and carry out the Council’s decisions.”*

In particular, the resolution condemned in the strongest terms the attack on 21 August 2013, in violation of international law. In Article 15, the resolution expressed its *“strong conviction that those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic should be held accountable.”* Article 21 of the resolution, decided, *“in the event of non-compliance with this resolution, including unauthorized transfer of chemical weapons, or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic, to impose measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.”*

In its report issued on 16 September 2013, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria described the chemical attack on the Ghuta area as a grave violation, stating that the attack was conducted with surface-to-surface rockets launched between 02:00 a.m. and 05:00

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gent legal developments, and providing analyses and legal documents for key developments). Pro-Justice retains copies of all the data documenting the above-mentioned massacres, including names of victims, and when and how the massacres were carried out. These documents were provided by the Syrian Network for Human Rights and the Legal Clinics.

a.m. local time. The report explained that the timing and weather conditions maximised the potential number of victims, given that the chemical payload did not make any noise and did not cause further damage to the surrounding area after the initial impact of the rocket. In response to the attack, the UN Security Council condemned the intensive and systematic use of poisonous gases in Syria. Article 15 of Resolution 2235 (2015) reaffirmed *“its decision in response to violations of resolution 2118 to impose measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.”*

Although all these resolutions have explicitly and clearly condemned the Syrian government for using banned weapons (including chemical weapons and chlorine gas) the Assad regime continued to use chemical weapons more than 300 times against approximately 166 civilian targets in various cities, towns, villages and neighbourhoods in different provinces. These attacks left more than 2,000 civilians dead (and many more casualties), as documented in investigative reports, the most detailed of which were prepared by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and the Legal Clinics located inside Syria.

These two rights groups, along with the Civil Defence, documented around 37 incidents where civilians in Syria were targeted with chemical weapons before the issuance of Resolution 2118 (2013):

- 23 December 2012: The first chemical attack took place in the areas of al-Bayadah and Dayr Baalba in Homs, killing six people and causing about 60 cases of asphyxiation, 10 of which were critical (four people were paralysed, and three lost vision).

- 25 December 2012: A chemical attack took place in the area of Zaa-faraneh in the northern environs of Homs, causing 35 cases of asphyxiation.

Over the course of 2013, Syrian security forces carried out 35 chemical attacks against civilian targets:

- January: One chemical attack on the al-Bayadah district in the city of Homs killed seven people and resulted in another 37 cases of asphyxiation.

- March: Five chemical attacks targeted the Damascus environs (4)

and Aleppo (1), the most serious attack took place in the area of Khan al-Assal, near the city of Aleppo, killing 22 people.

- April: Seven chemical attacks across the city of Damascus (2), the Damascus environs (2), Aleppo (2), Idlib (1), killed 17 people, including two children, and caused 96 cases of asphyxiation.

- May: 12 chemical attacks across the Damascus environs (11) and the city of Damascus (1) killed 48 people and caused 788 cases of asphyxiation.

- June: Five chemical attacks across the Damascus environs (3) and the city of Damascus (2) killed 11 people and caused 94 cases of asphyxiation.

- July: Three chemical attacks across Homs (1), the city of Damascus (1), and the Damascus environs (1) killed eight people and caused 33 cases of asphyxiation.

- August: Two chemical attacks killed more than 1,500 people, most of whom were children, and caused thousands of cases of asphyxiation.

After the heinous chemical attack on the Ghuta area on 21 August 2013, the Syrian government was forced to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 14 September 2013. Paragraph 1 of Article 1 of the Convention states that each state party undertakes never under any circumstances:

*a. To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone;*

*b. To use chemical weapons;*

*c. To engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons;*

Paragraph 2 also states that:

*Each State Party undertakes to destroy chemical weapons it owns or possesses, or that are located in any place under its jurisdiction or control, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention.*

Despite these binding UN resolutions and conventions, the Syrian government has not been deterred in its continued use of chemical and other internationally banned poisonous weapons. Syrian security forces

actually intensified their use of such weapons throughout the period between September 2013 and April 2018, including these attacks which the Syrian government conducted with banned weapons over that period:

- September: One chemical attack on the Jobar district in Damascus using sulphur mustard (gas) caused nine cases of asphyxiation.

- October: Five chemical attacks in the Damascus environs (3) and the city of Damascus (2) caused hundreds of cases of asphyxiation.

Over the course of 2014, Syrian security forces conducted 83 attacks with chemical weapons against civilians. All these attacks were documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Legal Clinics and the Civil Defence. The following is a summary of the information obtained from these bodies:

- January: One chemical attack in the city of Darayya in the Damascus environs killed four people and injured 14.

- February: One chemical attack in the town of Misraba in the Damascus environs caused 12 cases of asphyxiation.

- March: Five chemical attacks across the Damascus environs (2), the city of Damascus (2), and Dayr al-Zur (1) killed 10 people and caused 114 cases of asphyxiation.

- April: 17 chemical attacks across Hamah (6), Idlib (5), the Damascus environs (3), the city of Damascus (2), and Aleppo (1) killed 37 people and caused 430 cases of asphyxiation.

- May: Seven chemical attacks across Hamah (4) and Idlib (3) killed two people, one of whom was a child, and caused 102 cases of asphyxiation

- June: Five chemical attacks across Idlib (2), the Damascus environs (1), Dara'a (1), and Hamah (1) caused 78 cases of asphyxiation.

- July: Three chemical attacks across rural Hamah (2) and Aleppo (1) killed two people and caused 125 cases of asphyxiation.

- August: Eight chemical attacks across rural Hamah (3), the city of Damascus (2), the Damascus environs (2), and Dara'a (1) killed six people and caused 218 cases of asphyxiation.

- September: 18 chemical attacks across the Damascus environs (13), rural Hamah (4), the city of Damascus (1) killed 16 people and caused 140 cases of asphyxiation.

- October: Seven chemical attacks across rural Hamah (2), Aleppo (2), the Damascus environs (2), and Dara'a (1) killed two people and caused 74 cases of asphyxiation and napalm burns.

- November: One chemical attack in the Jobar district of Damascus caused 20 cases of asphyxiation.

- December: 10 chemical attacks across Homs (2), the Damascus environs (2), the city of Damascus (2), Aleppo (2), Hamah (1), and Dayr al-Zur (1) killed two people and caused 152 cases of asphyxiation.

Over the course of 2015, Syrian security forces conducted 74 chemical weapons attacks against civilians. All attacks were documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Legal Clinics, the Syrian Lawyers Commission, and the Civil Defence. The following is a summary of the information obtained from these bodies:

- January: Two chemical attacks targeting the districts of Shaikh Miskin and Ibtāa in rural Dara'a caused 32 cases of asphyxiation.

- February: One chemical attack in the Zabadani area in the Damascus environs caused 11 cases of asphyxiation.

- March: 10 chemical attacks across Damascus (3), Aleppo (2), and Idlib (5) killed 12 people and caused 191 cases of asphyxiation.

- April: 14 chemical attacks across Idlib (7), rural Hamah (4), the Damascus environs (2), and in rural Dara'a (1) caused 224 cases of asphyxiation.

- May: 21 chemical attacks across rural Idlib (16), Homs (2), and the Damascus environs (1) killed three people including one child and caused 285 cases of asphyxiation.

- June: 14 chemical attacks across Idlib (8) and the Damascus environs (6) killed two people and caused 157 cases of asphyxiation.

- July: Three chemical attacks across Dayr al-Zur (1), Aleppo (1), and the city of Damascus (1) killed five people and caused 59 cases of asphyxiation.

- August: Five chemical attacks across the Damascus environs (3), Homs (1), and the city of Damascus (1) killed seven people and caused 54 cases of asphyxiation.

- September: One chemical attack in Harasta in the Damascus environs caused eight cases of asphyxiation.

- October: Two chemical attacks across the city of Damascus (1) and Homs (1) killed three people and caused 36 cases of asphyxiation.

- December: One chemical attack in the Damascus environs killed five people and caused 15 cases of asphyxiation.

Over the course of 2016, Syrian security forces conducted 119 chemical weapons attacks against civilians. All attacks were documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Legal Clinics, the Syrian Lawyers Commission, and the Civil Defence. The following is a summary of the information obtained from these bodies:

- January: One chemical attack in Madhaya in the Damascus environs caused dozens of cases of asphyxiation.

- February: One chemical attack in the city of Irbin in the Damascus environs caused two cases of asphyxiation.

- April: Nine chemical attacks across Aleppo (3), Dayr al-Zur (2), Latakia (2), and Idlib (2) caused more than 100 cases of asphyxiation.

- May: Three chemical attacks across rural Hamah (2) and rural Idlib (1) killed 10 people and injured 50.

- June: 40 chemical attacks across Aleppo and its environs (35), Idlib (4), and Homs (1) killed more than 75 people and caused more than 1,200 cases of asphyxiation and dozens of cases involving burns.

- July: Three chemical attacks across Aleppo and its environs injured 37 people.

- August: 16 chemical attacks across Aleppo and its environs (6), the Damascus environs (5), Homs (2), Idlib (2), and Latakia (1) killed four people, including one child, and caused 247 cases of asphyxiation.

- September: 11 chemical attacks across rural Homs (6), Aleppo (3),

the city of Damascus (1), and Hamah (1) killed nine people and injured 230.

- October: 16 chemical attacks across rural Hamah (7), Aleppo (3), Idlib (3), Damascus and its environs (2), and rural Homs (1) killed seven people, including one woman, and caused 256 injuries and cases of asphyxiation.

- November: Seven chemical attacks in Aleppo killed 16 people and injured 103.

- December: 12 chemical attacks across Aleppo (7), Homs (2), and Damascus (3) killed 12 people, including one woman, and caused 252 cases of asphyxiation.

Over the course of 2017, Syrian security forces conducted 14 Chemical Weapons attacks against civilians. All these attacks were documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Legal Clinics, the Syrian Lawyers Commission, and the Civil Defence. The following is a summary of the information obtained from these bodies:

- 1 January – 4 April: More than nine chemical attacks across Idlib, Hamah, Damascus and its environs killed more than 100 people including 32 children and 23 women, and caused more than 700 injuries. The most heinous of these attacks was carried out on the city of Khan Sheikhoun on 4 April, killing 91 people, including 32 children and 23 women, and caused 520 cases of asphyxiation and fainting.

- 7 April: Two attacks on eastern Qabun in the city of Damascus with grenades carrying poisonous gas injured two people.

- June: One chemical attack in the district of Jobar in the Damascus environs caused six cases of asphyxiation.

- July: Three chemical attacks in the Damascus environs caused 21 cases of asphyxiation, nausea, and severe respiratory issues.

Over the course of 2018, Syrian security forces conducted four chemical weapons attacks against civilians. All these attacks were documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Legal Clinics, the Syrian Lawyers Commission, and the Civil Defence. The following is a summary of the information obtained from these bodies:

- February: One chemical attack in the town of Saraqib in rural Idlib caused 11 cases of asphyxiation.
- March: One chemical attack in the town of Hammuriyyah in the Damascus environs caused 25 cases of asphyxiation and nausea.
- April: Two chemical attacks against the city of Duma in the Damascus environs killed 55 people and causing 875 cases of asphyxiation and sever nausea.

These above attacks are defined as crimes of mass killing, War Crimes, and Crimes against Humanity under the Rome Statute. Their prosecution is not subject to a statute of limitations. These acts were aimed at eliminating and devastating large segments of the Syrian population, and will leave permanent, painful scars in the hearts of survivors. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as the senior-most official responsible for these attacks, must be held accountable along with other high-ranking officials in Syria's security services for the violation of international law and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 2118 (2013), 2209 (2015), and 2235 (2015), in addition to the continual violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

### **- Crimes Against Women**

Women and children pay the biggest price during times of war and armed conflict. They are subjected to various forms of injury, abuse, sexual violence and murder, because they are among the most vulnerable groups in society.

Accordingly, International Humanitarian Law grants immunity and protection to women and children, and while they are covered by the general protection that is accorded to civilians, they are also given special protection, commensurate with the characteristics that distinguish them from other civilians.

Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War states, "Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs. They shall at all times be humanely treated, and shall be

protected, especially against all acts of violence or threats thereof and against insults and public curiosity. Women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault.”

Article 51 of Protocol I of 1977, which is additional to the Geneva Conventions, as well as Article 13 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 on non-international armed conflicts, provides for the protection of the civilian population in general. “The civilian population and individual civilians shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations. To give effect to this protection, the following rules, which are additional to other applicable rules of international law, shall be observed in all circumstances.”

As regards special protection, the rules of International Humanitarian Law have adopted additional provisions to strengthen the protection of women and children, in particular: preventing the targeting of them during hostilities, killing or transporting them, deporting them from their territories, violating their honour and beliefs, humiliating them or subjecting them to torture or inhuman treatment, their human dignity, their use as human shields, or taking them hostage. Articles 16 and 17 of the same Convention stipulate that such groups are “the object of particular protection and respect.”

In 1974, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict, which states that:

1. Attacks and bombings on the civilian population, inflicting incalculable suffering, especially on women and children, who are the most vulnerable members of the population, shall be prohibited, and such acts shall be condemned.

2. The use of chemical and bacteriological weapons in the course of military operations constitutes one of the most flagrant violations of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the principles of international humanitarian law and inflicts heavy losses on civilian populations, including defenceless women and children, and shall be severely condemned.

3. All States shall abide fully by their obligations under the Geneva

Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, as well as other instruments of international law relative to respect for human rights in armed conflicts, which offer important guarantees for the protection of women and children.

4. All efforts shall be made by States involved in armed conflicts, military operations in foreign territories or military operations in territories still under colonial domination to spare women and children from the ravages of war. All the necessary steps shall be taken to ensure the prohibition of measures such as persecution, torture, punitive measures, degrading treatment and violence, particularly against that part of the civilian population that consists of women and children.

5. All forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children, including imprisonment, torture, shooting, mass arrests, collective punishment, destruction of dwellings and forcible eviction, committed by belligerents in the course of military operations or in occupied territories shall be considered criminal.

6. Women and children belonging to the civilian population and finding themselves in circumstances of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence, or who live in occupied territories, shall not be deprived of shelter, food, medical aid or other inalienable rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child or other instruments of international law.

The four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are the principal instruments for the protection of women in times of war, where women benefit from all the guarantees and protection of civilians as non-combatants and their rights during times of armed conflict, as well as a special protection report for them as they bear the brunt of war. Article 12 of the First Geneva Convention and Article 14 of the Third Geneva Convention states: "Women shall be treated with all the regard due to their sex and shall in all cases benefit by treatment as favorable as that granted to men."

Despite these laws, conventions and international instruments that

specifically protect women in armed conflict from murder, violence, torture, rape, abduction, displacement and other abuses, this has not deterred the regime of Bashar al-Assad and his security services from committing the most egregious violations against Syrian women. With these acts, the regime has shown a complete disregard for these laws and threatens international peace and security.

The most prominent violations committed by the regime’s forces are as follows:

## **Murder**

The regime’s armed forces and members of its security organisations have killed more than 22,000 women (from the onset of the Syrian revolution up to March 2018) including nearly 12,000 adult females and about 10,000 female minors.

Their methods of killing have varied and involved everything from indiscriminate bombardments using rockets, artillery, explosive barrels, cluster bombs and internationally banned chemical weapons, to slaughter with knives, including massacres such as al-Houleh, Bayda, Jadydet al-Fadl and other massacre sites. Regime snipers have killed many civilians, while many women have been tortured to death in the regime’s detention centers.

According to reliable sources, between March 2011 and 04 March 2013, the regime’s forces killed about 7,543 Syrian women, including 2,454 girls and 257 infants under the age of three. The victims were distributed by Syrian governorates as follows:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Casualties</b>
Homs	1,411
Damascus environs	1,397
Aleppo	1,289
Idlib	1,088
Dara’a	667

Location	Casualties
Dayr al-Zur	577
Hamah	483
Damascus	339
Raqqa	75
Latakia	74
Qunaytra	38
Hasakah	29
Tartus	16
Suwayda	5

By 10 June 2013, the death toll among females had risen to 8,012, including 2,654 girls and 259 infants.

By 21 August 2013, 9,910 women, including 3,399 girls had been killed by the regime. In August 2013, Regime forces carried out two massacres in Bayda and Ras al-Naba'a, killing 459, including 71 women (43 from Ras al-Naba'a and 28 from Bayda village.) They were killed with knives.

The number of deaths among women continued to rise steadily:

- By November 2013, the death toll was 10,853 females, including 3,614 girls.
- By November 2014, the death toll had risen to to 15,347 females, including 4,194 girls.
- By November 2015, the death toll had risen to 18,917 females, including 5,848 girls, at least 748 of whom were shot by regime snipers and about 50 women who were tortured to death.
- By November 2016, 20,228 women had been killed by the regime, including 9,425 girls.
- By November 2017, the death toll had risen to 20,919 females, including 9,627 girls.

- By August 2018, the total killed by the regime had reached 22,000, including 10,000 girls and female toddlers, of whom 310 were killed by internationally prohibited weapons.

## **Sexual Violence and Rape**

The regime's forces and its security services have conducted systematic sexual violence against Syrian women. Syrian women frequently experience rape during the following:

- Abduction
- Incursions and raids
- Inside prisons and security branches

Reliable sources have confirmed to Pro-Justice the occurrence of about 7,700 incidences of sexual violence against Syrian women between March 2011 and March 2018, including 864 incidences in detention centers and about 432 incidences of sexual violence against girls under the age of 18.

The most widespread incidents of rape occurred during incursion operations by regime forces in the Baba Amr neighbourhood in Homs in April 2012, as well as when storming the city of Jisr al-Shughour in Idlib province in September 2011.

More than 6,000 cases of rape were documented during the period between March 2011 and 25 April 2013, including the rape of 400 minors under the age of 18 in the Karam al-Zaytoun neighbourhood, al-Rifai district, Baba Amr district in Homs, as well as in Hamah, Jobar, Latakia, Damascus and Daraya. About 700 cases of rape took place inside the regime's prisons. The security forces demanded some female detainees to strip naked and walk around barefoot, serving tea and coffee to the officers. Many of these women were raped and forcibly impregnated.

- By August 2013, the number of women raped by the regime had increased to 7,000.

- By November 2013, the number of victims had risen to 7,500 incidents, with 850 incidents of rape taking place in detention centers.

- In November 2015, the number of documented rapes increased to 7,672, with 7,244 of those cases being the rape of adult females and 428 the rape of a female minor.

- By August 2018, 7,700 incidences of rape had been documented, with 864 cases of rape happening in detention.

In addition, 82 cases of forced marriage of women and girls to members of Assad's forces and militias have been documented. The parents of these women and girls were threatened if they refused.

## **Arbitrary Detention and Torture**

The regime is used to arresting and torturing Syrian women either because of their opposition attitude or simply because they come from certain areas that opposed the regime. Between March 2011 and August 2018, the regime arrested more than 8,113 females, including 417 girls under 18. It has been documented that 43 females died while being tortured.

Syrian documenting groups reported the following figures:

- From March 2011 to 30 April 2013, the regime arbitrarily arrested more than 4,500 Syrian women, 25 of whom died while being tortured.

- In November 2013, the number of Syrian women prisoners increased to 5,400, including 1,200 university students, and 29 of them were documented to have died under torture.

- In November 2014, the number of Syrian women detainees increased to 6,500, including 6,300 adult females and 200 girls under 18. It was documented that 32 of them had died under torture.

- In November 2015, the number of Syrian women detainees increased to 7,029 women, including 6,711 adult females, 318 children. Additionally, there was at least 1,115 enforced disappearances, and 38 female reported to have died under torture.

- By 25 November 2016, the number of Syrian women prisoners had increased to 8,413, including 8,111 adult females, 302 girls, and 2,418 cases of enforced disappearance.

Women were often arrested when neighbourhoods or areas were raided, as they tried to pass through checkpoints, or simply while walking in the streets. It is important to note that the documented figures for women detainees are far smaller than the actual cases of enforced disappearances. In these cases, the regime denies ever having them in custody.

## **Kidnapping**

Since March 2011, thousands of Syrian women have been victims of kidnapping, as regime officials have repeatedly abducted women in order to force their male relatives, who are wanted by the security services, to turn themselves in. The officials have threatened to rape or torture the women to death in cases of non-response.

As soon as they arrive at the detention centers, the torture, humiliation, insults and brutal torment begins; it could lead to rape and death. The largest number of women who have been kidnapped come from Homs and Damascus environs. In Homs, public agencies opened, whose role was to secure prisoner exchanges, but kidnappings often end in murder.

## **Women as Human Shields**

The forces of Bashar al-Assad used women as human shields during incursions, or as documented on several occasions, for the purpose of escaping or protecting themselves from fire. One of the worst examples was when soldiers shielded themselves behind women during the attempt to lift the siege on the al-Dahr checkpoint in Idlib on 6 October 2012, and also during the storming of the Asheera neighbourhood in Homs. On 12 January 2013, they used a woman as a shield from snipers in the Midan district of Aleppo.

In 2013, Human Rights Watch documented several cases in which women were used as human shields in the towns of Janjawiya, Kafr Nabal, Kafrumah and Ayn Laruz. Regime officials force the women to walk in front of them to reclaim areas held by rebels.

A wealth of documentation of the crimes committed against Syrian

women can be found in reports issued by international commissions of inquiry and human rights organisations, particularly Human Rights Watch, the Syrian Network for Human Rights etc that document how the regime has committed murder and sexual violence, abduction, torture, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances and other abuses against Syrian women, which can be classified as war crimes.

These violations constitute gross violations of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, which calls on, “all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict”. They also violate the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which condemns and prohibits, “rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilisation, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity”.

In addition to those international laws, the regime must be held accountable in accordance with the articles of the Syrian Penal Code on arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances in accordance with international law, which provide for the following penalties:

Article 555 states that: “a person who deprives another of their personal liberty by any means shall be liable to imprisonment for a period of six months to two years”.

Article 556 stipulates that: “the penalty shall be increased to temporary hard labor, if the deprivation of liberty exceeds one month, and (b) if the person deprived of his liberty is subjected to physical or mental torture.

Article 535 and Decree No. 39 of 2004 stipulate that: “the Syrian Arab Republic shall accede to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment” adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in resolution 39/46, 10 December 1984, which came into effect from 26 June 1987:

- Paragraph (7) of the Rome Statute considers enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture a crime against humanity.

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which underscores the individual right to recognition of the legal person-

ality, the right to liberty and security of persons and freedom from torture and physical integrity.

- The International Convention for the Protection of Persons from Forced Disappearance, the articles of which state that: “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.”

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states in its first article that, all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Bashar al-Assad, his armed and security forces are accountable, under national and international law, for the systematic violations they have committed over the past seven years against Syrian women, including murder, rape, abduction, arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance, and torture leading to death.

### **- Crimes and violations against Syrian children**

International Humanitarian Law grants children broad public protections, especially during emergencies and armed conflicts, whether international or non-international in nature. Under this range of laws, children benefit from the protections granted to civilian non-combatants. Because of their vulnerability, humanitarian law also grants children protections through the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which stress that children taking direct part in hostilities shall not be deprived of these special protections. In accordance with Articles 27–34 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relating to the status and treatment of protected persons, as well as the Additional Protocols, children shall be entitled to fundamental guarantees, especially respect for their safety and honour, and shall be protected against coercion, corporal punishment, torture, collective penalties, and reprisals.

In the case of non-international armed conflict, children have the right

to guarantees stated in Article 3 of the Geneva Convention and Article 4 of the Additional Protocol II. These stipulate that: “neither the civilian population nor the civilian persons shall be subject to any kind of attacks”.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Fourth Geneva Convention stipulates the provision of special protections for children. Additionally, the First Additional Protocol specifically affirms the principle of special protection for children, stating: “Children shall be the object of special respect and shall be protected against any form of indecent assault. The Parties to the conflict shall provide them with the care and aid they require, whether because of their age or for any other reason.”

The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which Syria has ratified, guarantees children protection from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. As per the convention, all signatories shall respect the rules of international humanitarian law applicable to children, and to take all feasible measures that ensure the protection and care of children affected by armed conflicts.

Within the framework of international human rights, perhaps the most important document relating to the protection of children is UN Resolution 3318 (29) of 14 December 1974, which calls for the protection of wom-

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- (1) Paragraph 3 of the Additional Protocol II states that “Children shall be provided with the care and aid they require, and in particular:
- (a) They shall receive an education, including religious and moral education, in keeping with the wishes of their parents, or in the absence of parents, of those responsible for their care;
  - (b) All appropriate steps shall be taken to facilitate the reunion of families temporarily separated;
  - (c) Children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities;
  - (d) The special protection provided by this Article to children who have not attained the age of fifteen years shall remain applicable to them if they take a direct part in hostilities despite the provisions of sub-paragraph (c) and are captured;
  - (e) Measures shall be taken, if necessary, and whenever possible with the consent of their parents or persons who by law or custom are primarily responsible for their care, to remove children temporarily from the area in which hostilities are taking place to a safer area within the country and ensure that they are accompanied by persons responsible for their safety and well-being.

en and children both in emergencies and armed conflicts. The document specifically:

- Prohibits attacks and bombings on the civilian population, especially on women and children.

- Prohibits the use of Chemical and Biological Weapons in the course of military conflict, which inflict heavy losses on civilian populations, including women and children.

- Calls for all states to fully abide by their obligations under the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, which offer important guarantees for the protection of women and children during armed conflict.

Despite ratifying these laws and conventions, the Syrian government, along with its armed forces and security services, have committed numerous war crimes violations against Syria's children. Thousands of these crimes have been documented by international investigators and human rights organisations.

These crimes fall within the following categories:

### **Category 1: Killing of children**

During the period 18 March 2011 – 20 October 2013, Syrian government forces are recorded to have killed over 12,000 Syrian children, at least 8,413 male and 3,614 female victims. Some 2,344 of these victims were under ten years of age, with 391 of them infants. Some 560 children were recorded to have been executed with bladed weapons, as was the case with massacres committed in Karm al-Zeitun and the Rifai districts of Homs city. Similarly, other atrocities included incidents in the Ras al-Nabaa district in Baniyas and in the nearby town of Baydah, Tartus. Other executions by shooting took place in other regions and governorates of Syria, according to detailed reports by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Syrian Legal Committee and Legal Clinics. Methods used to carry out the murder of children ranged from bombing to sniping, as well as field executions, siege and starvation.

The distribution of child killings in Syria during the period 18 March 2011 – 20 October 2013 among Syria's provinces was as follows:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Casualties</b>
Aleppo	2,252
Damascus environs	2,109
Homs	1,743
Idlib	1,435
Dara'a	999
Hamah	697
Dayr al-Zur	642
Damascus	493
Raqqa	176
Hasakah	70
Latakia	63
Tartus	46
Qunaytra	28
Suwayda	2

In the period between 18 March 2011 and 20 November 2018, Syrian government forces and its allies killed more than 21,631 children (including 12,004 males and 9,627 females.) Included in this figure are more than 400 children who were killed by the Syrian government's use of internationally banned weapons, such as chemical weapons, poisonous gases, cluster bombs, and improvised barrel bombs. Several massacres carried out with bladed weapons display characteristics of sectarian cleansing, especially in the Hula region (Homs), Baniyas (Tartus), Jidaidat al-Fadl and Qalamun (Damascus environs), as well as in the northern environs of Hamah and Aleppo.

During the period 2013 – 2015, some 518 children are documented to have been killed by snipers fighting on behalf of the Syrian government. Another 289 children are documented to have died due to a lack of ac-

cess to essentials (such as food and medicines) in areas besieged by the Syrian government.

### **Category 2: Causing harm and injury to children**

During the period from 18 March 2011 to 20 October 2013, operations carried out in populated areas by Syrian government forces resulted in injury to more than 300,000 Syrian children. Incidences of harm ranged in seriousness, with many facing life-altering or life-ending injury, including some 1,300 amputations and 800 cases of children succumbing to their wounds.

### **Category 3: Arrest, torture and subsequent murder of children**

During the period 18 March 2011 to 20 October 2013, Syrian security services arrested more than 11,700 Syrian children. Most of them were subjected to severe means of torture, with some 92 children documented to have died from injuries sustained during torture.

### **Category 4: Rape of children**

During the period 18 March 2011 to 20 October 2013, some 400 documented cases of rape were carried out by pro-government forces against children under the age of 18. Most cases occurred when the pro-government forces carried out incursions into residential areas. Because families are often reluctant to report rape violations of their children, the actual number of child rape cases certainly exceeds the documented number.

Despite this, some 516 cases of sexual violence against children were documented to have been carried out by Syrian military and security services. Acts of sexual violence include: rape or harassment during raids; forced marriages; sexual assaults; forced nudity and contact with children's bodies. According to documentation, cases of rape against children were carried out in Rifai, Karm al-Zaytoun, Baba Amro (Homs city), as well as in the Damascus environs, Jisr al-Shughour (Idlib), Dara'a, Hamah, Latakia and Aleppo.

### **Category 5: Recruitment of children in armed conflict**

Government forces are documented to have used children as checkpoint guards in a number of Damascus neighbourhoods. With the government's surge in demand for fighters, militias loyal to the Assad regime

increasingly relied on recruitment of children under the age of 18. In 2017 alone, some 349 children were documented to have been recruited.

### **Category 6: Forced displacement of children**

During the course of the war, Syrian armed and security services have used armed violence and indiscriminate shelling against large segments of Syrian society, abusing the dignity of civilians, including children, through degrading treatment such as torture, rape and forced recruitment. According to informed estimates, as of 20 October 2013, the number of displaced Syrian children amounted to approximately 1.6 million. By 2015, the number of children among Syrian refugees rose to nearly 3 million. This dramatic rise in the number of displaced persons demonstrates the brutality faced by children, overwhelmingly at the hand of pro-government forces, reflecting the Assad regime's involvement in serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

The crimes of the Syrian government were reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 2165 (2014), in which member states expressed “grave alarm in particular at the continuing indiscriminate attacks in populated areas, including the intensified campaign of aerial bombings and the use of barrel bombs in Aleppo and other areas, artillery, shelling and air strikes, and the widespread use of torture, ill-treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, as well as all grave violations and abuses committed against children.”

**In November 2018, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in his second report on children and conflict in Syria, which he submitted to the UN Security Council, confirmed that 3,891 children had been killed and 3,348 others had been maimed in Syria over the past five years.**

Guterres accused the Syrian government and armed groups of blatantly ignoring the lives and basic rights of children. Over the period 16 November 2013 – 30 June 2018, the UN verified more than 12,500 serious violations against children. It was confirmed that 3,891 children were killed and 3,448 others maimed, indicating a significant and sustained increase in the past five years. The UN acknowledged it believed the scale of casualties to be higher than the number able to be verified.

According to the UN report, some children were injured by “inherently

indiscriminate or disproportionate weapons or unlawful weapons, such as barrel bombs, cluster munitions and toxic chemical agents.” Other children also faced horrific deaths by stoning, crucifixion or other brutal tactics. Other children faced abductions (693 verified cases) and sexual violence (98 verified cases).

The report also mentioned attacks on schools and hospitals, the conversion of these facilities to military use, and the significant impact on the availability of basic medical and educational services as a result. The denial of access to humanitarian aid became a military tactic, especially during the siege of entire communities for months and sometimes years. More than 2,000 of the verified violations occurred in besieged areas.

These crimes, which offences were stipulated by the UN Security Council and documented by international investigators and human rights organisations, amount to Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes. In response to the crimes committed against Syria’s children, the international community must hold to account Bashar al-Assad, as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and all those responsible for ordering and carrying out these violations, including Syria’s military commanders and heads of security services.

### **- Crimes of the Sectarian Militias and Supporting Forces**

Over the past seven years, the regime in Syria has been facing a major shortage of troops. Many Syrian males of conscription age have managed to avoid serving in the regime’s military. In the meantime, a large number of the regime’s soldiers have either defected or deserted from the service, unwilling to be part of the regime’s atrocities. Moreover, the regime’s forces have lost a considerable number of troops fighting opposition forces. As its manpower depleted, the regime has resorted forming a number of militias, based on sectarian and ideological divides. These militias have enjoyed more power than Assad’s regular army leaders, while remaining completely independent from the State and the regular armed forces.

The regime opened its military facilities for these militias to train, and provided them with weapons, equipment and salaries. The regime also gave a green light for their members to loot public and private properties, and granted them immunity from prosecution for crimes including murder,

plunder and rape.

As the conflict spread across Syria, these militias transformed from a mere aid to the regime into powerful, influential players threatening state institutions. This stage marked Syria's transformation from a state ruled by one party into a land controlled by militias and mercenaries. Pro-Assad armed groups were formed along sectarian, ethnic and partisan lines, and were unleashed with unlimited power to crush the protests in Syria. The regime also ordered the National Progressive Front and other licensed political parties in Syria to form military wings to participate in the sectarian violence against the opposition.

## **The Legal Status of the Pro-Assad Militias**

The legal status of the militias is questionable on a number of grounds:

### **1. Constitutionally**

Forming these militias has been an ongoing violation of the Syrian Constitution, especially the following Articles:

#### **Article 11**

*The army and the armed forces shall be a national institution responsible for defending the security of the homeland and its territorial integrity. This institution shall be in the service of the people's interests and the protection of its objectives and national security.*

#### **Article 47**

*The state shall guarantee the protection of national unity, and the citizens' duty is to maintain it.*

#### **Article 50**

*The rule of law shall be the basis of governance in the state.*

### **2. Legally**

According to Article 5 of the Syrian Political Parties Law, No. 100 of 2011, licensed political parties are not to form military wings. Paragraph (f) of the above-mentioned law states that political parties are not to create any secret or public military or paramilitary wings, use any kind of violence, threaten to use violence, or instigate violence. Paragraph (g)

of the same law bans political parties from affiliating with any non-Syrian political party or organisation.

### 3. Under International Law

In addition to being a violation of the Syrian constitution and effective national laws, forming such militias also violates the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism of 1977. The Convention defines a mercenary as any person who:

*a) is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in armed conflicts;*

*b) does in fact take a direct part in the hostilities;*

*c) is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and in fact is promised by or on behalf of a party to the conflict material compensation;*

*d) is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflicts;*

*e) is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict; and*

*f) is not sent by a state other than a party to the conflict on official mission as a member of the armed forces of the said state.*

Numerous militias have been formed over the duration of the conflict, some small and temporary, some large and enduring. The most prominent militias are listed below.

## The Most Prominent Militias

Militia Name	Leader	Date Formed	No. of Troops	Areas of Operation
Usud al-Arin	Hilal al-Assad	2012	1,500	The coastal region, Homs, Palmyra Aleppo, Hamah, Dayr al-Zur
Suqur al-Sahraa	Ayman Jabir	2012	1,000	The coastal region, Homs, Palmyra Aleppo, Hamah, Dayr al-Zur
Maghawir al-Ba-har	Muhammad Jabr	2012	1,000	The coastal region, Homs, Palmyra Aleppo, Hamah, Dayr al-Zur
Syrian Hizballah	Hizballah	2012	1,500	Damascus environs, Homs, Aleppo, Hamah, Dayr al-Zur
Nusur al-Zawbaa	Ziad al-Ma'aluf	2012	7,000	The coastal region, Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, Hamah, Dara'a
al-Ba'ath Brigades	The Ba'ath Party National Leadership	pre-2011	10,000	All Syrian provinces
The National Defence	Multiple leaders	2012	100,000	All Syrian provinces
Shabibat Khalid Bakdash	The Communist Party	2012	500	Damascus, Damascus environs, Hamah
al-Salamah <i>shabiha</i>	Musib Salamah	2012	200	Homs, Hamah, Hamah environs, Salamiyyah, Aleppo's southern environs, Dayr al-Zur
Afifah <i>shabiha</i>	Mahmud Afifah	2012	150	Homs, Homs environs, Hamah, Hamah environs, Salamiyyah, Aleppo's southern environs
Tribal Fighters The Movement of Arab Socialists	Turki Albu Hamah	2012	500	Damascus, Damascus environs, Homs, Homs environs, Dayr al-Zur

<b>Militia Name</b>	<b>Leader</b>	<b>Date Formed</b>	<b>No. of Troops</b>	<b>Areas of Operation</b>
Usud al-Husayn	Hasan Tawfiq al-Assad	2012	700	The coastal region, Homs, Damascus environs, Hamah environs, Dayr al-Zur
Usud al-Jabal	Bassam Husam al-Din	2012	300	The coastal region, Homs, Damascus environs, Hamah environs, Dayr al-Zur
The National Resistance	Miraj Uraal	2012	600	The coastal region, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs,
al-Shawahin Militia		2012	300	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs
Al al-Khalil Militia		2012	200	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs
Saqr al-Jabal Militia	Ali al-Shila	2012	400	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs
al-Taramih Militia	Ahmad Nabhan	2012	250	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs
Sayghati Militia	Ahmad Sayghati	2012	200	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs
al-Gaulan Regiment Militia	-	2012	500	Hauran, Damascus environs
al-Darwish Militia	Ahmad Darwish	2012	500	Idlib's eastern environs, Aleppo's southern Eenvirons, Hamah, Hamah environs
al-Daqaq Militia	Talal al-Daqaq	2012	300	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Idlib
Saqlab Militia	Na'il al-Abdullah	2012	300	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs

Militia Name	Leader	Date Formed	No. of Troops	Areas of Operation
Mihardah Militia	Simon al-Wakil	2012	400	Hamah, Hamah environs, Aleppo's southern environs, Damascus environs
Suqur al-Zahir		2012	300	Idlib's eastern environs, Hamah

## Sources of financing for the militias

In order to operate, the militias required large amounts of financing. While some came from the state, much was the product of criminal activity:

- Salaries provided by the regime;
- Financial support provided by Iran and Russia;
- Financial support provided by chambers of commerce and industry, and by local businesses and businessmen;
- The al-Bustan Institute (one of Rami Makhlouf's financial organisations);
- "Protection" money extorted by the militias from local residents and businessmen;
- Ransoms received for returning people kidnapped by the militias;
- Looting and plundering properties in recaptured areas;
- Monopolising and profiteering from basic commodities;
- Charges imposed for crossing in and out of regime-controlled areas;
- Weapons and organ trafficking.

## Massacres with militia involvement

Either at regime direction, or of their own initiative, many of these militias committed numerous and brutal massacres of Syrian civilians. The most important massacres the militias perpetrated or contributed to are:

- The two massacres of Kfarzita in Hamah's northern environs in 2012. The first massacre saw militia members burn eight civilians alive, using wood and gasoline; the second saw militia members burn three other people using phosphorus;

- The two massacres of Allatamneh in Hamah's northern environs. The first massacre took place on 7 April 2014, when militia members slaughtered or shot dead 70 civilians, leaving hundreds of others injured. The second massacre happened on 9 April 2017, when militia members slaughtered 10 members of one family;

- The massacre of al-Qubayr in the Hamah environs in which militia members killed 100 women and children, ten of whom were slaughtered with knives, and their bodies burned;

- The massacre of al-Traymsah in the Hamah environs in which militia members killed 220 civilians;

- The massacre of Shaikh Hadid in the Hamah environs in which militia members slaughtered 26 civilians with knives;

- The massacre of al-Shanabra in the Hamah environs in which militia members killed 11 women, then burned their bodies;

- The massacre of Kawkab village in the Hamah environs in which militia members used knives to slaughter more than 15 civilians.

These massacres in Hamah were committed or supported by the militias of Na'il al-Abdullah, Simon Wakil, Adwan Mustafa, Ali al-Shali, Ahmad Saighati, Talal al-Daqaq, Ahmad al-Nabhan, al-Khalil, and Al al-Allush.

- The massacre of al-Hula in Homs in which militia members killed 110 civilians with knives and spears;

- The massacre of Baba Amr in Homs in which militia members slaughtered with swords and axes 19 civilians from two families;

- The massacre of Karam al-Zaytun and al-Adawiyyah in Homs in which militia members killed 100 civilians, most of whom were slaughtered with knives;

- The massacre of Abil Farms in the Homs environs in which militia members slaughtered with knives and spears 20 civilians from two families. Most of the victims were children, women and the elderly, and their bodies burned;

- The massacre of al-Sukhnah in the Homs environs in which militia members slaughtered with knives 22 civilians;

- The massacre of Wadi al-Muli village in the Homs environs in which militia members killed more than 40 civilians, mostly children and women;

The massacres in Homs and its environs were carried out with the participation of a number of loyalist sectarian militias, including the militias of al-Sahil and Misyaf, the militia of al-Salamah, the militia of Dayr Shimayl, the militia of Ali al-Shali, the militia of Bishr Yazaji from Wadi al-Nasara, Talkalakh and Qalaat al-Husun, the militia of Suqur al-Sahara, and the tribal fighters of the Movement of Arab Socialists.

- The massacre of Daraya in Damascus environs in which militia members killed 500 civilians, 132 of whom were killed in their homes;

- The massacre of Dayr al-Zur in which militia members killed 550 civilians, leaving an unknown number of missing people;

- The massacre of Diabyyah in Damascus environs in which militia members killed 70 civilians, slaughtering most of them with knives;

- The massacre of Sanamayn in Dara'a in which militia members killed 60 civilians;

- The massacre of Judaidet al-Fadl in Damascus environs in which militia members slaughtered with knives or burned to death 483 civilians;

- The massacre of al-Baidha in Banias in which militia members burned to death an entire 16-member family.

The massacres of the Coastal Region were carried out with the participation of the militias of Miraj Uraal, Ayman Jabr, Muhammad Jabr, Basam Husam al-Din, Hasan Tawfiq al-Assad, and Hilal al-Assad. The latter was killed later on.

- The massacre of Kfarzita in the Idlib environs in which militia members killed 24 civilians and burned their bodies;

The massacre of Rasm al-Nafil in Aleppo environs in which militia members slaughtered or burned to death 195 civilians and threw their bodies in water wells. This massacre was conducted by the militias from the town of Salamiyyah: al-Salamah, Mahmud Afifah, Nusr al-Zawbaa, and the Syrian Hizballah.

## **Legal Responsibility**

The leaders of pro-Assad militias have grown into warlords, with ambitions to be part of the ruling power in the country. Harming not only al-Assad's opposition, but also his loyalists, these leaders have been causing major disintegration in Syrian state structures and across society.

The person who holds most responsibility for the crimes committed by the militias is Bashar al-Assad, being the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces in Syria. Article 105 of the Syrian Constitution clearly states that: "The President of the Republic is the Commander in Chief of the army and armed forces; and he issues all the decisions necessary to exercise this authority. He might delegate some of these authorities." Consequently, he is legally the official responsible for unleashing these militias, and granting them immunity from prosecution for the crimes they have perpetrated or participated in; crimes that qualify as War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity. Therefore the perpetrators of these crimes – and their commanders - should be subject to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in particular Articles 5,6,7, and 8.

The regime's forces have intentionally worked to fuel sectarian and ethnic strife: they abducted and / or killed members of certain sects or ethnicities, and then accused people from other sects or ethnicities of the crimes. An example this was the assassination of the Kurdish anti-Assad activist Mashaal Tammu. Tammu was killed by regime forces, but anti-Assad fighters were blamed for his death.

The regime has also exploited sectarian and religious differences among Syrians. In April 2011, the regime's forces brought dozens of Sunni detainees to Alawite villages to be punished by Alawites for being "mem-

bers of Islamic radical groups.” The regime forces also circulated videos of Alawite women from the Alawite districts of al-Zahra and al-Nuzha in Homs expressing joy over the massacres the regime committed against protesters in the al-Sa’a Square in the city on 18 April 2011. Members of the regime’s intelligence also assassinated a Druze community leader, Shaikh Wahid al-Balous, in the Druze-majority province of Suwayda, and then accused anti-Assad fighters from Dara’a of killing him in order to instigate conflict between the Druze and the Sunnis in the Hauran region.

In particular, the regime’s Intelligence services fueled inter-ethnic differences in the multi-ethnic regions, mainly among the Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Syriac components of the populations in northeastern Syria. al-Assad’s secret agents also fueled conflict between Arabs and Kurds in the northern province of Raqqa and in Aleppo’s eastern and northern environs. The regime, through *agents provocateurs*, fueled the separatist Kurdish groups’ convictions that all the lands and homes owned by Arabs in the Kurdish-majority areas originally belonged to the Kurds, and provided these groups with material support to expel Arabs from their homes there. At the same time, the regime Intelligence agents provided support for the Arab tribes to retaliate against the Kurds.

The regime’s forces were the prime instigators of the hostilities in al-Qamishli between the Kurdish People’s Protection Units and the tribal Arab fighters of the National Defence, which were supported by the Syriac Sorto militia. al-Assad’s intelligence operatives was also behind the differences among the tribes, and the disintegration of the tribal community in eastern Syria. His government also fired more than 100,000 Sunni state employees and replaced them with employees from other sects.

Bashar al-Assad, his military leaders, his sectarian militias, and the heads of his security services, who have all used sectarian discrimination as a weapon, should be referred to the International Criminal Court to be tried for their War Crimes and their Crimes against Humanity. Those who have provided financial support, weapons, and training to the criminals must also be referred to the International Criminal Court as partners in the crimes of discrimination, fueling hostile sentiment, and committing massacres with purely sectarian motives.

## - Siege as a weapon against civilians

Siege warfare against civilian populations is a violation of international law. This forbids economic sanctions unless approved by the UN Security Council, in accordance with Article 41 of the UN Charter, and is only conducted with the purpose of maintaining or restoring international peace and security. UN approved sanctions must be accompanied by certain measures that guarantee collective security.

None of the above conditions apply to the sieges which the Syrian government has imposed on civilians throughout the country since the start of the revolution. When applied lawfully, an economic siege should be a sanction with limited restrictions. However, when a siege involves deliberately denying civilians the basic means of living, that action is considered a crime under international law. International law stipulates that the protection of civilians must be taken into consideration when implementing any siege, and forbids exposing civilians to starvation, deprivation of basic supplies, prevention from receiving humanitarian aid, blocking the flow of medical supplies, food and clothes, as well as necessities for the vulnerable, like children and pregnant women.

Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that *“in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.”*

The policy of laying siege to civilians, which the Syrian government has adopted in Syria over the past eight years, is considered as a measure of collective punishment and is forbidden under international law. Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly bans collective punishment, stating:

*“No protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation or of terrorism are prohibited. Pillage is prohibited. Reprisals against protected persons and their property are prohibited.”*

Article 54 of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions states:

*“It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs,*

*agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.”*

Under other international legal conventions, siege warfare against civilian populations is considered to be a Crime against Humanity and a War Crime, eg according to Article 6(c), Article 7, paragraph 1(b) and (k), and Article 8, paragraph 2(b) (XXV) of the Rome Statute. Articles 55 and 56 of the Fourth Geneva Convention provide for ensuring the flow of food, as well as medical and service supplies to the population. Explicitly, Rule 53 of the Customary IHL Database stipulates the *“prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare.”*

Furthermore, UN Security Council Resolution 2139 of 2014 demanded *“that all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners.”* Despite this resolution, the Syrian government intensified its crimes of siege, starvation, and denial of humanitarian aid to civilians as a strategy to force surrender.

The Syrian government has carried out similar violations against civilians in spite of the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 on 18 December 2015. In paragraph 12 of the resolution, member states called on warring parties *“to immediately allow humanitarian agencies rapid, safe and unhindered access throughout Syria by most direct routes, allow immediate, humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need, in particular in all besieged and hard-to-reach areas.”* Syrian forces, however, pressed on with their policy of siege warfare by starving hundreds of civilians to death and forcing hundreds of thousands to evacuate their homes to opposition-held northern Syria.

The following is a list of the most prominent siege crimes committed by Syrian security forces since the start of the revolution:

- Siege of Mu’adamiyat (Damascus environs)

On 18 November 2012, government forces besieged Muadamiyat denying more than 12,000 people including 7,000 women and children access to food, medicine, fuel, electricity and basic necessities. As a result

of the siege, 11 civilians including ten women starved to death. The siege ended with the forced displacement of the people of Muadamiyat to Idlib on 19 October 2016.

- Siege of al-Hajar al-Aswad (Damascus environs)

From 13 December 2012 to 8 June 2013, the siege on al-Hajar al-Aswad resulted in the death of 416 civilians. Government forces ended the siege by shelling the neighbourhood and then storming its homes, arresting around 27,000 civilians, dozens of whom later died under torture. Around 150 of those detained are still missing.

- Siege of Qudsaya (Damascus environs)

Between October 2013 and August 2016, around 400,000 civilians were besieged in the city of Qudsaya (half of whom were women and children, including 8,100 infants). During this time, government forces deployed snipers on rooftops to prevent any attempt at smuggling in food, medicine, baby formula, and fuel. In the end, remaining residents of Qudsaya and Hamah were forcibly displaced to northern Syria.

- Siege of Eastern Ghuta (Damascus environs)

On 19 November 2013, government forces surrounded the towns of Duma, Harasta, Zamalka, Irbin, Hammuriyyah, al-Taybah, Adra, Dhamair, Rihan, al-Abbadah, al-Ahmadiyyah, Harran al-Awamid, Milaiha, Shabaa, Dayr al-Asafir, Zibdin, Ain Tarma, al-Bahhariyyah, and al-Qayisa, setting up checkpoints on the three main entrances to the region: Milaiha, Jaramana, and Mukhayyam al-Wafidin. More than one million people were affected by the siege, including 350,000 children, 70,000 of whom were infants. The lack of food and medicine resulted in the death of more than 397 civilians, including 67 women and 206 children, most of whom were newborns. Seventy-four civilians trying to reach the market near Mukhayyam al-Wafidin were shot dead by government snipers for attempting to leave. Tens of thousands of civilians in these areas contracted typhoid fever and hepatitis from contaminated food and water. The Syrian government's use of Chemical and Biological Weapons against Eastern Ghuta led to the heightened risk of terminal illness among civilians. During the siege, 543 cases of cancer were recorded in the Eastern Ghuta area, many of whom died due to the lack of treatment. The blockade continued until February 2018, when the government's forces launched a wide-scale mil-

itary attack with air and ground forces. The attack included chemical attacks against the town of Duma and left more than 1,630 dead, including 330 children. Tens of thousands were also forced to leave their homes to northern Syria.

- Siege of Madaya (Damascus environs)

The blockade of Madaya lasted from late 2013 to 12 April 2017. Government forces surrounded the area and set up checkpoints on its main entrances (Nabaa Barada Gas Station, al-Wazir, and al-Matahanah). The siege ended with the forced displacement of the population of both Madhya and Zabadani to northern Syria.

- Siege of the Shubah Checkpoint

From July 2015 until January 2016, more than 43 civilians including 300 displaced families from Zabadani were besieged in the area near the Shubah Checkpoint. The siege led to the deaths of 29 civilians.

- Siege of the Wa'ir district (Homs)

Between 10 October 2013 and March 2017, more than 15,000 families were starved and denied access to medical supplies and fuel. The siege ended with the forced displacement of the neighbourhood's entire population.

- Siege of Aleppo

From the beginning until the end of 2016, around 300,000 civilians faced blockade by government forces in numerous districts of the city. The Syrian military set up checkpoints on the main entrances: Aleppo-Damascus Highway; al-Ramusah; al-Buhuth al-Ilmiyyah; al-Shaikh Sayid; Khanasir-Maamil al-Difaa Road; and Costello Road. The siege ended with the forced displacement of the population from the eastern districts of the city after a military campaign by Syrian government forces in collaboration with Russian and Iranian forces, alongside loyalist paramilitary groups. The advancing forces bombarded schools and hospitals, poisoned the main water sources, and prevented food and medicine from entering. About 170 civilians, including 26 women and 27 children, were killed in the attack. Following the siege and the bombing, Syrian authorities forced tens of thousands of residents to evacuate their homes to northern Syria.

- Siege of Daraya (Damascus environs)

Between 15 November 2012 and 26 August 2016, government forces imposed a tight blockade on civilians in Daraya, denying them access to food, medicine and fuel. Government forces simultaneously conducted daily air strikes on the city, using barrel bombs, napalm and Chemical Weapons. The purpose of the offensive was to break Daraya from Mu'adamiyat. During the course of the siege, 817 civilians were killed, including 98 women and 67 children, and at least nine civilians starved to death, while more than 4,311 civilians were forcibly disappeared. Government forces also attacked vital civilian facilities 56 times, dropped more than 7,846 barrel bombs, and conducted eight chemical attacks and three cluster bomb attacks. The siege ended with the forced displacement of Daraya's population to northern Syria.

- Siege of Rukban (Syrian-Jordanian border)

Beginning in early October 2018, more than 67,000 civilian refugees in the border camp of Rukban were besieged by government forces. Armed forces denied residents access to basic necessities such as food, water and medicine in an effort to force opposition members to turn themselves over to authorities. The siege led to the death of 14 civilians, including two women, four children and five elderly people.

While these sieges had numerous specific objectives, they all served the single major purpose of forcing Syria's civilian populations to capitulate to the Damascus authorities. Amnesty International has named this policy the "*surrender or starve strategy*." Likewise, the UN Security Council has criticised siege warfare calling it a brutal tactic. UN Security Council Resolution 2139 held the Syrian authorities responsible for the widespread violations of human rights and international law. Although Resolutions 2139, 2165, 2191, 2254 and 2258 were issued by the UN Security Council, all have been ineffective in forcing the al-Assad regime to comply with international law. Furthermore, the international community has made no major effort to prevent the Syrian government from continuing to violate international laws and conventions on human rights, or to stop their war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Syrian people. Since 2011, some 4.6 million Syrians have been subjected to siege warfare by Syrian government forces.

The violations that accompany these atrocities are categorised as Crimes against Humanity and are in breach of the UN Charter of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, the Fourth Geneva Conventions of 1949, the 1977 First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, general international law, and international humanitarian law. Therefore, according to Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, the perpetrators of these crimes must be tried in accordance with the provisions of international criminal law.

### **- The targeting of journalists**

Media workers in armed conflicts are often exposed to heightened risks of kidnap, detention, injury, and sometimes death. Media reports covering various conflict zones inside Syria have received global attention. As media plays an increasing strategic role in warfare, stories published on military developments inside Syria have significantly affected the outcomes of some key battles. Because of this, the Syrian government has adopted certain strategies to obstruct the work of civilian journalists to prevent them from reporting accurate information. Syria's security forces began targeting media workers with arrest and / or assassination, with no consideration for the protections that international law grants journalists as civilian non-combatants.

Violation of the protections offered to civilians and journalists is a violation of the Geneva Conventions and its Additional Protocols, particularly Article 4 (a) of the Third Geneva Convention, and Article 79 of the First Additional Protocol. Article 79 of the First Additional Protocol specifically states that "*journalists enjoy the rights to which they are entitled as civilians in all circumstances.*" Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, the Additional Protocols, and customary international law all guarantee journalists protection as civilians at times of war. Rule 34 of customary international law states that "*civilian journalists engaged in professional missions in areas of armed conflict must be respected and protected as long as they are not taking a direct part in hostilities.*" Any intentional attack against civilians is considered a war crime according to Article 8 (b), item 1 of the Rome Statute.

Moreover, journalists enjoy a wide range of legal protections in case of capture by warring parties, especially when media workers are not citizens of the country in which they are captured. In such cases, journalists are entitled to all rights and protection granted to them by the Fourth Geneva Convention. All persons working in the journalism and media sector are entitled to basic protections granted by Article 75 of the First Additional Protocol. The latter protects those who are captured by any warring party from violence, torture, insult, and being taken hostage.

The same article guarantees a fair trial to those accused of committing a crime, including journalists who are arrested for reasons related to an international or non-international armed conflict. Additionally, as civilians, journalists are also protected in times of non-international armed conflict by virtue of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention, its Additional Protocols and customary international law.

The abovementioned international conventions guarantee essential protections to journalists in international and non-international armed conflicts. Despite this, Syria's government has continued to violate these laws by carrying out systematic crimes against journalists over the last eight years. According to records obtained from the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the first year of the Syrian revolution saw the killing of 112 professional journalists, including four women, by government forces. These killings were carried out across Syria in the following provinces: Homs got the lion's share with 48 cases, while Aleppo came second with 12 cases, and Damascus environs third with nine cases.

By the end of 2012, government forces had arrested around 600 media activists, many of whom have since been recorded as cases of forced disappearance. According to investigative sources, media workers have been actively targeted by security and intelligence services and exposed to various forms of torture in Syrian detention facilities. By the end of April 2013, the number of journalists killed in Syria had increased to 162, many of whom were killed by government snipers or in systematic bombardment. Another seven journalists, three of whom were women, were killed in detention facilities. In the year 2013, around 1,400 journalists and media activists were detained by Syrian authorities.

The table below shows the increase in number of journalists killed by the Syrian government since the start of the revolution:

Date Point	Total Deaths
30 November 2013	261 (two of the victims were tortured to death in detention)
30 April 2014	328 (twelve of the victims were foreign correspondents, while three others were tortured to death in detention)
2 November 2018	543 (forty of the victims were tortured to death in detention, while the documented number of detained journalists was 833)

Analysis of the above numbers suggest the Syrian government has continued deliberately and systematically to target journalists since 2011. During this time, government forces have arrested, brutally tortured, and / or murdered journalists, often with the aim of preventing the accurate reporting of violations.

These violations are considered War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, and blatantly contravene international law, especially Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute. The violations carried out by the Syrian government have been documented by international investigation teams, the UN Human Rights Council, and various human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the Syrian Network for Human Rights. Bashar al-Assad, along with those who participated in the targeting of journalists, must be held accountable for these violations and be brought to trial.

### **- Systematic use of torture**

The Syrian government's policies of physical and psychological torture of civilians have resulted in tens of thousands of detainee deaths. Personal details of victims and images depicting the cruelties inflicted on some detainees have been leaked to the press. These terrifying images of mutilated bodies are evidence of the heinous violations against Syrian civilians committed by Syria's security services. A cache of files leaked by the Syrian whistleblower 'Caesar' in 2014 shook the world by exhibiting in detail for the first time the scale of violence inflicted on those inside government prisons. Through photo evidence, the 'Caesar Report' catalogued the fate of tens of thousands of civilians who had been tortured to death by Syrian authorities, and offered proof of crimes of torture as defined in Article 7, paragraph 2, (e) of the Rome Statute.

In August 2004, the Syrian government joined the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. As a signatory to the convention, Syria is obliged to abide by its provisions.

In its introduction, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 categorically states that *“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights;”* in Article 3, the Declaration states that *“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person;”* in Article 4, it states that *“no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms;”* in Article 5, it states that *“no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;”* in Article 9, it states that *“no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;”* and in Article 11, it states that *“everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty.”*

Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also states that *“no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”* Additionally, Article 3 of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment states that:

*“No State may permit or tolerate torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Exceptional circumstances such as a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency may not be invoked as a justification of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”*

Article 1 of the 1984 Convention against Torture defines torture as:

*“Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”*

In order to guarantee the commitment of all signatory states to the convention, Article 2 states: *“Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.”* Article 2 also added that *“no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.”* It further clarified that *“an order from a superior officer or a public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture.”*

Article 4 of the same Convention demands that *“each State Party shall ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law. The same shall apply to an attempt to commit torture and to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture;”* and that *“each State Party shall make these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature.”*

Moreover, Article 53 of the Syrian Constitution states that *“no one may be tortured or treated in a humiliating manner, and the law shall define the punishment for those who do so,”* while Article 54 warns that *“any assault on individual freedom, on the inviolability of private life or any other rights and public freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution shall be considered a punishable crime by the law.”*

Articles 391, 541, 542, and 543 of the Syrian Penal Code all provide for punishing anyone who intentionally inflicts harm on any other person. Article 535 of the same code states that the crime of intentionally killing another person is punishable by the death penalty.

As mentioned above, the Syrian government is signatory to a number of international conventions against torture, while its own Constitution and relevant laws also legislate the use of torture as a serious crime. Despite this, Syria’s security and military institutions have relentlessly practiced torture against civilians, with concerning regularity, in the last eight years. International investigation teams, the UN Committee against Torture, the UN Human Rights Council, Human Rights Watch, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and various rights groups have documented in detailed reports thousands of cases of torture which took place in Syria’s security detention facilities.

Within the first year and a half following the outbreak of the popular protests, Syrian government forces had arrested more than 195,000 civilians, resulting in more than 60,000 cases of enforced disappearance, 9,000 of which involved children under the age of 18. Around 4,500 women, about 1,200 of them college students, and some 35,000 male college students were also disappeared. Of those, more than 1,215 were tortured to death in detention by 31 December 2012. This number includes 34 children, 17 women, and 23 elderly persons from all over Syria.

Below is a list of methods recorded as having been used by Syrian authorities in the torture of detainees:

Torture positions:

- *al-Shabah*: the victim is suspended in one of several ways so that the feet hang just above the ground, or so the tips of the toes touch the floor. For example, from a raised hook or handle or door frame, or by manacled wrists.

- *al-Dulab* (the Wheel): the victim is fixed or tied onto a large wheel and tortured.

- *Bisat Arrih* (Flying Carpet): the victim is tied to a wooden board or frame and tortured.

- *al-Salb* (Crucifixion): the victim is tied or shackled to a door or a wooden frame in a crucifix position and then tortured.

- Electric chair

- *al-Kursi al-Almani* (the German Chair): the victim is tied by the arms and legs to a metal chair, the back of which is moved backwards, causing acute stress to the spine and severe pressure on the neck and limbs.

Torture methods:

- Beatings

- Denailing

- Hair pulling

- Breaking bones

- Flogging
- Rape
- Amputation
- Burning
- Exposure to extreme temperatures
- Denial of medical care
- Deprivation of toilet access
- Overcrowding of cells
- Cold water showers
- Breaking ribs
- Starvation and dehydration
- Extended periods of standing
- Boiling water or oil poured on the feet
- Cropping (severing ears)
- Electric shocks

Psychological torture:

- Forcing detainees to witness rape
- Forcing detainees to witness others tortured to death
- Threats of rape
- Threats of arrest toward a detainee's wife
- Stripping female relatives naked in front of a detainee
- Forcing a detainee into a confined space with a dying detainee
- Forcing a detainee into a confined space with a dead body
- Offending detainees' religious beliefs and cultural practices
- Verbal abuse (cursing and swearing)

- Forcing detainees to kneel before pictures of President Bashar al-Assad

- Falsely promising to release detainees for false confessions

According to documented evidence, even injured and sick detainees were not spared by guards and facility doctors. The most notorious security branches involved in the torture of detainees were:

- Military Intelligence – Branch 215
- Military Intelligence – Branch 227
- Military Intelligence – Homs Branch
- Air Force Intelligence – Mazzah Airbase Branch
- Air Force Intelligence – Hamah Branch
- Air Force Intelligence – Dara'a Branch
- Air Force Intelligence – Aleppo Branch
- Political Security – Aleppo Branch

It should be stressed that while these facilities are the most notorious for carrying out abuses, torture is a common practice in all Syria's prisons, detention centers, and security branches.

By the end of 2013, a recorded 2,305 civilian detainees had been tortured to death in Syria's detention facilities, including 80 children, 25 women, and 51 elderly persons. By the end of the following year, that number increased by 5,854 deaths, including 96 children and 34 women. Among the victims were journalists, engineers, lawyers, and college students. The year 2015 was no less bloody, as more than 1,546 civilians were tortured to death in Syria's detention facilities, including seven children and four women. In 2016, more than 476 civilians were tortured to death, including two children and seven women. The total recorded number of those tortured to death in Syria's detention facilities from the beginning of the Syrian revolution to June 2016 numbered 12,596, including 160 children and 69 women. The year 2017 saw more than 211 civilians tortured to death in government detention facilities, while in 2018, the number of deaths from torture totaled was 925, including one child and two women.

From March 2011 until October 2018, the total number of documented victims stands at more than 11,000, including 164 children and 70 women. These statistics are limited to civilians who were killed through torture. There is yet to be a comprehensive investigation into the total number of torture victims in Syria who have suffered physical and/or psychological abuse.

Inflicting torture and excessive harm on detainees violates all relevant Syrian laws, international conventions, and International Humanitarian Law. Reports published in the last seven years highlighting torture in Syria, and the nearly 50,000 leaked pictures as part of the Caesar Report provide a clear picture of the heinous methods of torture used against civilians by Syria's security agencies.

Survivors' testimonies, together with reports from international investigators and rights organisations, also confirm that Syria's security services have systematically carried out extrajudicial collective killings. Damascus officials are also known to have issued and carried out death sentences without trial, in the process rendering these sentences crimes of mass murder, Crimes against Humanity, and War Crimes.

Syria's ratification of the Convention against Torture places the prosecution of President Bashar al-Assad within the jurisdiction of international law. Article 4 of the convention states that:

*“Each State Party shall ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law. The same shall apply to an attempt to commit torture and to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture. Each State Party shall make these offences punishable by appropriate penalties which take into account their grave nature.”*

Article 5 further states that:

*“Each State Party shall take such measures as may be necessary to establish its jurisdiction over the offences referred to in article 4 in the following cases: (a) When the offences are committed in any territory under its jurisdiction or on board a ship or aircraft registered in that State; (b) When the alleged offender is a national of that State; (c) When the victim is a national of that State if that State considers it appropriate. 2. Each State Party shall likewise take such measures as may be necessary to establish its jurisdiction over such offences in cases where the alleged*

*offender is present in any territory under its jurisdiction and it does not extradite him pursuant to article 8 to any of the States mentioned in paragraph 1 of this article.”*

Based on the content of these two articles, many European courts, including those in Germany and France, have accepted law suits filed by their respective citizens against officials in the Syrian government. So far, only one French court has ruled to issue an arrest warrant against three high-ranking Syrian security officials over their involvement in the torture and murder of two French nationals inside a Syrian detention facility. We hereby call on all foreign governments to choose integrity over politics, and to work to bring the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to justice, including Bashar al-Assad and his security officials, with the goal of maintaining and re-enforcing international peace and security.

### **- Use of Biological Weapons against civilians**

Biological warfare, sometimes known as germ warfare, is defined as the use of biological disease-causing pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and toxins to injure or kill humans or livestock, or to damage food resources.

In certain cases, the lethality and contamination caused by Biological Weapons was no less than that caused by Chemical Weapons (for instance, just 10gm of Anthrax is capable of killing more people than half a ton of nerve gas). Humans, both military and civilian, are usually the main target of a biological attack, with the purpose of causing illness, death, mass panic and weakening social structures.

Syria is one of a number of states - alongside Iran, Cuba, Taiwan, China, Israel, North Korea, Russia, Japan, and the United States - suspected of developing and / or possessing military stockpiles of biological agents. The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention provides for the banning and destruction of such weapons, obliging state parties to *“exclude completely the possibility of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins being used as weapons.”*

Despite this major, binding convention, the Syrian government has continued its systematic use of biological agents to spread disease over

the last eight years. During its campaign against rebel areas of Syria, government forces targeted potable water sources and sewage systems in these districts with the aim of destroying these networks, leading to the cross-contamination of water sources. With no access to clean water, civilians have been forced to drink contaminated water, resulting in the spread of fatal water-borne diseases such as cholera. The harsh living conditions intentionally imposed by the government on a number of residential areas has led to the spread of epidemics and contagious diseases among civilians.

In order to maximise the number of victims, Syrian government forces have besieged opposition areas by preventing the entrance of medical supplies necessary to treat patients, including essentials like vaccinations, antibiotics, sanitisers, and bandages. Government forces have also intentionally targeted and destroyed hospitals, blood banks, and medical labs in the besieged areas, and have denied technicians access to damaged water networks in order to carry out repairs – sometimes going so far as to arrest engineers attempting to help.

Government forces have also targeted power stations and powerlines, and have prevented the moving and / or processing of waste from opposition districts with the aim of spreading bacteria and contagious diseases. At the same time, World Health Organisation (WHO) emergency teams were denied access into the besieged areas, and a ban was imposed on essential materials such as medical-waste bags, sanitised gloves and antibiotics.

UNICEF emergency teams were also denied access to besieged areas. In one instance, teams carrying enough medical supplies to treat 25,000 children suffering from respiratory ailments, streptococcal pharyngitis, diarrhoea, and kidney problems were refused entry to opposition districts. In another instance, government forces confiscated a Red Cross shipment of umbilical cord clamps meant to help pregnant women in the besieged area avoid post-birth infection.

Mediaevally, government forces disposed of hundreds of corpses into key water sources such as rivers, wells and canals. The decomposing bodies contaminated the water supplies and led to the spread of several diseases within besieged areas.

By besieging civilians in narrow geographical areas, contaminating water sources, encouraging the spread of disease, and preventing food, medical supplies, and other basic necessities from reaching residents, the Syrian government tried to force the surrender of these populations. Up until the writing of this report, government forces continue to violate human rights in the besieging of around 67,000 civilians in the Rukban refugee camp on the Syrian-Jordanian border. The camp's population is reliant on contaminated water resources as their only means for food and water, and a number of women, children and elderly have died as a result.

These violations carried out by the Syrian government on civilians are considered War Crimes according to all relevant international laws and conventions, including International Humanitarian Law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Biological Weapons Convention, customary international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute. Article 6 of the Rome Statute defines 'genocide' as "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." Article 7 of the Rome Statute states that the act of "*extermination*' includes the intentional infliction of conditions of life, *inter alia* the deprivation of access to food and medicine, calculated to bring about the destruction of part of a population." Article 8 states that "*grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949*" are war crimes, including "*willfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health*" and "*employing poison or poisoned weapons.*"

Based on evidence highlighting the Syrian government's use of Biological Warfare on opposition and civilian groups, Bashar al-Assad and other high-ranking security officials must be brought to justice for carrying out these crimes of mass killing, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes, and other grave violations of International Humanitarian Law.

### **- Bombardement of residential areas with barrel bombs**

Since July 2012, the Syrian government has dropped more than 100,000 highly destructive barrel bombs on civilian populated areas in different Syrian provinces. These strikes have resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians and the widespread destruction of residential buildings, infrastructure, hospitals, and other vital facilities in targeted areas.

International law forbids the use of disproportionate attacks and stresses the need to protect civilians from violence. Customary international law *“prohibits the use of weapons and the methods of warfare of a nature - to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering.”*

Meanwhile, International Humanitarian Law specifically differentiates between civilians and combatants. Rules 11 and 12 of the Red Cross Customary IHL database prohibit indiscriminate attacks which:

*“cannot be directed at a specific military objective; or which employ a method or means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by international humanitarian law; and consequently, in each such case, are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction.”*

These laws also restrict or prohibit the use of particular conventional weapons in order to protect civilians from indiscriminate violence and to spare combatants from severe injuries which serve no military objective. Weapons which are by nature indiscriminate are prohibited under Rule 71 of the Customary IHL corpus.

The Conventional Weapons Convention (1980) is one of the key international agreements prohibiting the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. Protocol 1 of the Convention prohibits the use of weapons that cause injuries undetectable with x-ray imaging. Protocol 2 (amended in 1996) regulates the use of landmines, booby traps and other types of explosive devices.

As for the use of barrel bombs in Syria, the Chairman of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, Paulo Pinheiro, voiced his opinion, stating: *“The use of barrel bombs has been indiscriminate. In populated areas, the (Syrian) state forces treated clearly distinct military objectives and high concentrations of civilians, as a single military objective.”*

Despite all international laws, conventions and rules which prohibit indiscriminate attacks against civilians, the Syrian government, over the past years, has continued to drop barrel bombs on vital civilian facilities, causing grave damage. These attacks have been documented by investigators from groups such as the Independent International Commission

of Inquiry on Syria, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch.

The Syrian government first used barrel bombs in July 2012 during their campaign on Homs. Government forces later carried out a massacre in the town of Silqeen (Idlib), dropping barrel bombs from a helicopter on two residential buildings, killing more than 32 civilians including seven children and seven women. The bodies of nine victims were completely incinerated in the attack.

Constructed from a cylindrical metal container such as an oil drum, a barrel bomb is usually filled with explosives and packed with shrapnel (nails, ball bearings, etc.) and sometimes incendiary or poisonous substances. In Syria, barrel bombs have been manufactured at factories run by the Defence Ministry and at military and civilian airports. The Syrian government has made wide use of the weapon due to their low production cost and high destructive capacity. Due to the crude nature of barrel bombs, no precision guidance devices are attached to the structure. The bombs are usually lobbed from aircraft at a high altitude, thus multiplying its random destructive power and increasing the chances of casualties.

In 2016, government forces introduced another highly-destructive and indiscriminate weapon to their arsenal: the explosive hose. Also packed with explosives and metal shrapnel like the barrel bomb, the explosive hose often extends as long as 80 meters in length. Government forces have dropped these deadly devices on residential areas with the aim of amassing as many civilian casualties as possible.

On 22 December 2013, Syrian military helicopters dropped eight barrel bombs on the Aleppo neighbourhoods of Hanano, Haidariyyeh, and Sakhour. The attacks killed more than 84 civilians including eight children and three women.

By March 2014, military helicopters had dropped more than 5,375 barrel bombs on various Syrian provinces, killing more than 6,493 civilians and destroying more than 5,840 buildings, including schools, mosques, and churches. On the Damascus district of Darayya alone, helicopters dropped more than 330 barrel bombs.

By February 2016, the number of dropped barrel bombs had risen to 19,947, killing more than 8,136 civilians including 2,274 children and

2,036 women across Syria. By 2017, around 70,000 barrel bombs had been dropped. Below is a list of recorded attacks by province:

<b>Province</b>	<b>Barrel bombs dropped</b>
Damascus and its environs	22,149
Aleppo	13,436
Dara'a	9,901
Hamah	8,482
Idlib	7,682
Homs	3,598
Latakia	2,017
Dayr al-Zur	355
Qunaytra	323
Raqqa	258
Hasakah	81
Suwayda	52

Government forces also dropped 87 barrel bombs packed with incendiary and poisonous materials in six attacks on other civilian areas. They were as follows:

<b>Province</b>	<b>Barrel Bombs: Poison</b>	<b>Barrel Bombs: Incendiary</b>
Idlib	42	-
Hamah	21	-
Aleppo	18	-
Dara'a	3	3
Damascus environs	1	3
Homs	2	-

By December 2017, in total these attacks had destroyed more than 565 vital civilian facilities including 140 schools and 76 medical centers, as well as 50 markets and 160 mosques.

Between January and September 2018, government forces dropped 3,503 barrel bombs throughout Syria, killing hundreds of civilians and destroying 32 vital civilian facilities, including a school, an educational institute, 16 medical centers, two civil defence centers and two bakeries, as well as nine mosques and one industrial facility.

The Syrian government's use of barrel bombs is classified as a War Crime and violates relevant international laws and conventions, including International Humanitarian Law, customary international law, and the Conventional Weapons Convention. Furthermore, the use of these weapons violates the Rome Statute, of which Article 8 (b) (xx) prohibits *“employing weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare which are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering or which are inherently indiscriminate in violation of the international law of armed conflict.”*

Furthermore, several international parties and UN resolutions have condemned the use of indiscriminate violence caused by weapons like barrel bombs. UN Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014) calls for the immediately end to *“all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardment, such as the use of barrel bombs;”* while Article 13 of Resolution 2254 (2015) *“demands that all parties immediately cease any attacks against civilians and civilian objects as such, including attacks against medical facilities and personnel, and any indiscriminate use of weapons.”*

Despite these efforts to curb indiscriminate violence, Bashar al-Assad and his security forces have continued to ignore all resolutions calling for an end to the use of barrel bombs, while continuing to manufacture numerous indiscriminate weapons for use against populated areas. It is for this reason that Bashar al-Assad and all individuals responsible for aiding the use of these weapons should be brought to justice for their crimes against the Syrian people.

## - Arbitrary arrest, detention and forced disappearance

Since the rule of the late President Hafiz al-Assad, Syria's security and intelligence services have been notorious for their systematic use of violence, repression, torture and humiliation against civilians.

When peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, Bashar al-Assad chose to ignore popular demands for reform and instead responded by deploying his military and security forces, granting them unlimited powers and immunity to carry out violent crackdowns, in violation of the Syrian Constitution and all relevant national and international laws and norms.

Over the last eight years, Syrian forces have apprehended hundreds of thousands of citizens, most of whom were arrested without legal basis or warrant. Security and intelligence services have also "disappeared" thousands of Syrians into government-run and unofficial detention centers, refusing to confirm or deny arrests had taken place or provide information on the location of detainees.

Numerous reliable sources have revealed that in 2011 Syrian intelligence services had compiled a list of the names of more than 1.5 million people wanted in connection to the protests. Within a few years, the Syrian government managed to arrest more than half of those named. Since the beginning of protests, around 750,000 Syrian have been detained and tens of thousands more have been forcibly disappeared. The families of many of those who have been disappeared have declined to notify rights groups for fear of the government's retaliation, whether against themselves or their relatives in prison.

Human Rights experts have pointed to the reluctance of families in reporting missing relatives as a major reason why the documented number of detainees in Syria is less than the actual number. A 2015 study by the Syrian Network for Human Rights titled "The Photographed Holocaust" stated:

*"Upon matching the 772 identities with SNHR archives, we found that only 123 victims were recorded in our database (16%); which means that there are 650 new cases that were not recorded (84%). It is a strong indicator that what we recorded is indeed the bare minimum of the torture and enforced disappearance cases."*

International law defines forced disappearance as *“the secret abduction or imprisonment of a person by a state or political organisation, or by a third party with the authorisation, support, or acquiescence of a state or political organisation”*. The abduction is then *“followed by a refusal to acknowledge the person’s fate and whereabouts, with the intent of placing the victim outside the protection of the law.”* Based on this definition, three conditions exist for a victim to be considered “disappeared”:

- The abduction/detention of individual;
- State / political organisation responsibility; and
- Refusal by culprit to acknowledge incident.

According to Syrian and international laws, the state is obliged to take into consideration certain standards when conducting arrests. These laws share the requirement that every crime and its punishment must be based on a legal text, and that every arrest must be conducted by virtue of a legal warrant, while respecting the accused’s safety and dignity.

The Syrian Constitution prohibits any type of arbitrary arrest, forced disappearance, or torture. Article 35 of the Constitution states: *“No one may be investigated or arrested, except under an order or decision issued by the competent judicial authority, or if he was arrested in the case of being caught in the act.”* Further, Article 51 states that *“every defendant shall be presumed innocent until convicted by a final court ruling in a fair trial,”* while Article 54 deems that *“any assault on individual freedom, on the inviolability of private life or any other rights and public freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution shall be considered a punishable crime by the law.”*

Article 555 of the Syrian Penal Code provides for a punishment of six months to two years in prison for those found guilty of depriving a person of their freedom. Article 556 of the Code adds that hard labour would be added to the sentence in cases where the victim is deprived of their freedom for more than one month, or if the victim is physically or psychologically tortured while being detained.

Arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance are also considered crimes according to international norms and conventions. The Rome Statute states that these acts are Crimes against Humanity with their prosecution

unaffected by a statute of limitations. It is also a right of families of victims to know the fate of their loved ones.

In its opening article, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance states that *“no one shall be subjected to enforced disappearance”* and that *“no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification for enforced disappearance.”* Furthermore, Article 5 of the Convention describes the *“systematic practice of enforced disappearance”* as a Crime against Humanity. Article 6 states that *“each State Party shall take the necessary measures to hold criminally responsible”* those who commit such a crime, while Article 17 states that *“no one shall be held in secret detention.”*

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that *“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,”* while Article 3 adds that *“everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”* Article 4 states that *“no one shall be held in slavery or servitude.”* Article 9 states that *“no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.”* Moreover, Article 11 states that *“everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty.”*

Many key international legal documents, including the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery (1956) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) also prohibit arbitrary detention and forced disappearance.

Despite the overwhelming condemnation of arbitrary detention and forced disappearance, the past eight years has seen the Syrian government systematically continue to carry out these very crimes against hundreds of thousands of its citizens. Investigative reports from the Syrian Network for Human Rights, the Syrian Lawyers' Commission, the Legal Clinics Initiative, and other rights groups have confirmed that the Syrian government has arbitrarily arrested more than 800,000 Syrians, only 250,000 of whom were actually documented (the Syrian Lawyers' Commission has documented about 123,000 detainees, while the Syrian Network for Human Rights has documented about 120,000 detainees), in addition to around 100,000 cases of forced disappearance, many of whom were documented in the Caesar Report or appeared in leaked lists

distributed by the Syrian government to civil affairs offices in 2018.

According to several sources including the Syrian Lawyers' Commission and the Syrian Network for Human Rights, Syrian security services specifically targeted workers from certain professions, such as doctors and aid workers. In 2012, security services arrested a number of medical practitioners; among the list were: Dr. Ghalib Walid Raslan from Homs; Dr. Muhammad Rafiq Adil Musa from Latakia; Dr. Samir Rumiyyah from the Damascus environs; and Dr. Haitham Sa'ad, Dr. Mai al-Jandali, and Dr. Aiham Ghazzul from Damascus. In September 2013 alone, Rights groups documented the arrest of 23 doctors, with a further three abductions recorded in October of the same year.

Following the chemical attack on the Ghuta district near Damascus, government forces ramped up their arrests of civilians, especially in the capital, Hamah and Latakia. In a single day, intelligence services arrested 150 civilians in Damascus, 90 of whom were abducted from the Salhiah marketplace and another 46 from al-Rifayah Square. Syrian intelligence forces launched a wave of arrests in the Hamah environs, notably in the town of Taybat al-Imam where more than 70 civilians were detained without charge. By September 2013, more than 4,600 prisoners in the Aleppo Central Prison had been arrested arbitrarily, including 150 women and around 250 protesters, and media and rights activists. A large number of prisoners at the Central Prison orchestrated a sit-in to protest the arbitrary detention, which was met with extreme violence from the guards, who executed 49 prisoners and ordered them to be buried in the eastern square of the facility. Around 200 prisoners also contracted tuberculosis while inside the prison, with many dying from the disease.

- by the end of 2014, 117,000 citizens had been arrested arbitrarily;
- in 2015, a further 6,909 Syrians were arrested including 643 women and 452 children;
- in 2016, 7,543 more Syrians were arrested, including 448 women and 251 children;
- in 2017, 4,796 were arrested, including 674 women and 303 children; and by Oct. 2018, 5,226 were arrested, including 586 women and 328 children.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Based on information obtained by Pro-Justice from the Syrian Lawyers' Commission, the Syrian Network for Human Rights, and the local councils.

The above data represents only documented cases, which constitute a small percentage of the actual number of arbitrary arrests in Syria.

As for forced disappearance in Syria, 71,533 cases were documented in the country between 2011 and 2016. By August 2017, this number grew to 76,656, including 4,219 women and 1,116 children. By August 2018, that same number rose to include 81,652, including 4,837 women and 1,546 children.

In addition, rights groups have documented more than 7,500 cases of sexual assault by guards against female detainees, including 52 cases of rape, where victims agreed to be interviewed about the incidents inside government detention facilities.

Victims of arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance are usually held inside government prisons and security branches, such as those belonging to the Air Force Intelligence, Military Security, Political Security, and the State Security. As the number of detainees inside official prisons and security branches reached maximum capacity, the government began utilizing military warehouses as temporary detention facilities for victims of arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance. The following is an incomplete list of key sites:

Province	Temporary Detention Facility Location
Damascus	Mazzah Military Airbase
	Ummayyad School
	al-Tajhiz School
	The Pakistani School
	The Tenth Division (Qatana)
	The Third Division (Qutaifah)
	al-Dhumayr Military Airbase
	The Fourth Division (al-Dimas)
	The Republican Guard (Najha)
	The First Division (Kiswah)

Province	Temporary Detention Facility Location
Homs	al-Hasan bin al-Haitham Camp
	Military Housing Factories
	The Air Defence Battalion (al-Ghantu)
	The Military Establishment for Vegetables and Fruits
	The Missile Factory
Aleppo	The Hananu Barracks
	Aleppo International Stadium
	al-Nayrab Military Airbase
Hamah	The Military Airbase
	47 <sup>th</sup> Brigade
	Dayr Shimayyal Camp
Latakia	The Castle
	Saladin Barracks
	The Yahudiyyah
	The Sports Town
	Jaul Jammal School
Dayr al-Zur	The Vanguard Camp (al-Jura)
	The Panorama Checkpoint building

Syrian authorities also established a system of trial by “kangaroo court”, trying hundreds of thousands of detainees, with their sentences often resulting in capital punishment. Such practices violate the most basic universal standards placed on fair trials. According to international conventions, a fair trial must meet certain conditions which must be enshrined in national laws. These include guarantees that:

- any arrest is conducted according to the relevant laws;

- investigation and questioning is conducted;
- legal detention and inspection is carried out;
- the trial is conducted by an independent and unbiased court. It is a violation of the Constitution to be tried by a court of exceptional, special or extraordinary jurisdiction;
- the trial and its hearings are held in public;
- all suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty;
- adequate time is taken to issue a judgement;
- defendants have the right to an attorney and to a defence; and
- defendants have the right to appeal to a higher court. A ruling from one unconstitutional court must not be final.

The above rights were adopted as part of the United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (1955), which enshrined the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Despite the adoption of these international guidelines, Syria's authorities have refused to apply any of the above-mentioned conditions to hundreds of thousands of its detainees.

In committing the crimes of arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance, Bashar al-Assad, his intelligence services and allied paramilitary forces have flagrantly violated all national and international laws prohibiting these punishable acts.

According to items (e) and (i) of Article 7, and item (a) VIII of Article 8 of the Rome Statute, these acts are considered War Crimes which violate the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Murder, torture, hostage-taking, forcible population transfer, violence against "life and person," in particular "murder of all kinds," and the willful deprivation of the right to a fair trial are all war crimes which the Syrian government has carried out in violation of the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages (1979).

These crimes also violate the Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism (1998). Article 1 (3) (e) of the Convention states that taking of

hostages is a terrorist offence. Additionally, customary International Humanitarian Law also prohibits the taking of hostages, forced disappearance, arbitrary deprivation of freedom, and convicting and / or sentencing a person without a fair trial that meets the basic legal guarantees.

The Syrian government's crimes in this regard also violate relevant UN Security Council resolutions, especially Resolutions 2042 and 2043 (2012), Resolutions 2139 and 2191 (2014), and Resolutions 2254, 2258 and 2268 (2015), in addition to UN General Assembly Resolutions 66/253, 67/262, 69/189 and 70/234.

The international community has stood silently by as these violations and atrocities have been carried out against the Syrian people by and on behalf of their government. So far, the international response to these crimes has been limited to mere statements of condemnation, which have failed to end these atrocities and save the lives of detainees. Indeed, as recently as 2018, Syrian authorities boldly sent out to its civil record offices the names of more than 10,000 detainees who had been tortured to death in its detention facilities. In doing so, the Syrian government has defied the international community, the United Nations, and all international laws and norms with utter disrespect. Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence connecting the government to these crimes, Bashar al-Assad and his aides remain to be brought to justice in order to face trial for the atrocious crimes they have committed.

### **- Enforced displacement**

According to international court rulings, the deportation or forcible transfer of population are defined as the *"forced displacement of the persons concerned by expulsion or other coercive acts from the area in which they are lawfully present, without grounds permitted under international law."* It is considered a War Crime and a Crime against Humanity under the Rome Statute forcibly to transfer civilian populations.

Article 7 (d) of the Rome Statute declares deportation or forcible transfer of population a crime against humanity when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population. Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) similarly prohibits individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of persons from

the areas in which they live to another area.

Prohibition of forcible transfer is considered one of the most important principles adopted by international law to protect civilians. It is a crime which often has deep psychological implications for civilians. Forcibly transferred persons usually face being moved to unsafe living conditions, as has been the case for millions of Syrians.

Over the last eight years, the Syrian government has systematically forced its citizens permanently to leave their homes for other areas. Notable instances include mass deportations in the city of Homs and its northern environs, al-Qusayr, Waer, Dara'a, the Hamah environs, Dayr al-Zur, Raqqa, and Zabadani in the Damascus environs. In these areas, among others, government forces adopted brutal strategies such as siege and continual bombardment to force local populations to leave their homes.

Strategies of forcible transfer have also served the expansionist ambitions of occupying forces, such as Iran. Tehran is documented to be carrying out a 'Shi'itisation' policy on Syrian land, converting Sunni-majority areas into Shi'a-majority areas through means of forcible transfer. Iranian forces have relocated the families of its Shi'ite militias into a number of former Sunni-populated areas after the removal of its residents. In doing so, Iran has actively altered Syria's demographic make-up in a way that mirrors its policy in Iraq in recent years. In 2017, the adoption of such policies by the Syrian government compelled UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to warn against the demographic transfer of civilians, stating: "*Forced displacement for any other reason relating to the conflict is prohibited and may constitute a war crime.*"

Among the strategies used by the Syrian government to achieve forcible population transfer and demographic change in Syria are:

- *Massacres against civilians*

Government forces, along with allied paramilitary groups, Iranian forces and Russian air power, have jointly carried out a numerous massacres on civilian targets in Syria. These grave violations were conducted simultaneously, alongside crimes of arbitrary arrest, forced disappearance, and siege. These strategies were employed in various locations over Syria, most notably in the old city of Homs, the Wa'ir district of Homs, eastern Aleppo, the Damascus Ghuta district, and Darayya. In these instances,

the civilian population was forced to choose between death – often by starvation and lack of access to medicine as a result of the siege or bombardment – and leaving their homes and livelihoods behind. The fear of death forced survivors to leave and make room for the Syrian government and its allies to house loyalists and sectarian paramilitary fighters.

- *Laying siege to civilian areas*

In recent years, the Syrian government and its allies laid limited sieges on several civilian areas in Syria known for their opposition to the al-As-sad government. As a form of collective punishment, government forces indiscriminately bombarded these areas while denying populations access to food, medical supplies or other basic necessities. Civilians in the besieged areas were eventually forced to surrender as part of the government’s “reconciliation agreements” or forcibly leave their homes to other regions of the country.

- *Manipulation of civil and real estate registries, and the naturalization of foreign sectarian fighters*

Syrian authorities have altered and destroyed real estate records in order to deprive numerous citizens of property registered in their names. In 2013, government forces set fire to civil and real estate records in Homs to eliminate evidence pertaining to the actual demographic makeup of the area, and to deprive original residents of proof of property ownership. Following the destruction of records, authorities issued documents to newly-naturalised foreign Shi’ite paramilitaries as proof of ownership for real estate properties. The process was carried out in the aftermath of major bombardments that destroyed critical infrastructure and forced the population to flee their homes.

In 2017, informed sources quoted senior Lebanese officials as saying that they were aware of a systematic operation to destroy civil and real estate registries in Syrian areas which the regime had recaptured from opposition groups. The purpose of the operation, they explained, was to prevent the original population of those areas from proving ownership of real estate. Areas where these operations took place include Zabadani, Madaya, al-Qusayr, Darayya, Homs, and in a number of suburbs of Aleppo and Damascus. Iranian paramilitary groups, in collaboration with Syr-

ian authorities, have also forged real estate documents indicating the transferal of ownership to certain properties.

The Interior Ministry has also taken the step of granting citizenship to members of the Iranian forces and foreign paramilitary groups. The Syrian government is housing these fighters in areas recaptured from the opposition with Russian and Iranian support, in order to guarantee these locations remain loyal in the future. On 26 March 2016, the al-Sharq al-Awsat newspaper<sup>(1)</sup> quoted informed sources that the Syrian government had naturalised hundreds of thousands of 'foreign fighters' with the intention of housing them in the recaptured Damascus environs.

- *Acquisition of real estate*

Iranian officials in Syria have for years persisted in their acquisition of residential and agricultural property throughout Syria, most notably in Damascus and its suburbs. To achieve this, Tehran's embassy in Syria, with support from the al-Assad government, has made use of private agents and entrepreneurs to buy large swathes of real estate. The Iranian government, through its embassy and other agents, has spent millions of dollars to acquire real estate property in strategically vital areas throughout Syria.

Many of these properties have been registered under individuals and organisations affiliated with Iranian government, including the Lebanese Hezbollah group. On 28 July 2015, the Alasouria.net website quoted a Damascus resident as saying that businessmen affiliated with Iran had bought several houses in the neighbourhood of al-Mazraa at high prices. The resident claimed to have sold one house at a price of SYP40 million to a businessman from an Arab Gulf state, who was later discovered to be working for an Iranian real estate company in Damascus. "I sold my house and moved to Turkey," said the man, adding:

"I was sure I wasn't coming back ever, because I wasn't the only one who sold his house to Iran. Many others did in the districts of Adawi, al-Mazraa, Baghdad St., Mzzeh, Salhyeh, and many other neighbourhoods of Damascus."

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(1) In cooperation with Assad, Tehran is working on a demographic change in the Levant, al-Sharq al-Awsat, 26 March 2016. Available at: <https://aawsat.com/home/article/600826/«نشاط-ايراني-في-سوق-العقارات-السورية-وتحذير-من-مشروع-«استيطاني»»>

- *Legislating to assist forcible transfer and demographic alteration*

In a speech on 26 July 2015, Bashar al-Assad announced: “This country is not for those who simply live in it or hold its citizenship and passport; in fact, it is for those who defend and protect it.” In that same speech, al-Assad praised Iran’s military, economic and political support for Syria. On 12 September 2016, following the forcible transfer of the population of Darayya in the Damascus environs, al-Assad attended the holy Eid prayer in the city which had recently been reduced to a ghost town. On that day, in response to a question from a correspondent with the state-run SANA, al-Assad said: “Practically, Syria is just like any other demographically diverse country, where demographics constantly change over generations due to the population’s economic interests and according to the social and political conditions.” His statements that day reflected the implied intent to systematically alter Syria’s demography and replace populations with loyalists.

In addition to his comments, al-Assad has recently issued several laws and decrees in relation to urban reorganisation, which aim to further plans of demographic alteration in the country. A number of these decrees provide for establishing new housing units in areas that had already been organised and populated for decades. The purpose of the legislation has been to tighten the Syrian government’s grip on the country. For instance, Legislative Decree 66/2012 provides for creating two new urban areas in Damascus (one in the southeast of Mazzah and one to the south of the Mutahallik Highway, including the districts of Kafar Susah, Qanawat, and the farms of Daraya and Qadam). Based on this decree, the government has granted construction contracts to Iranian companies to build “the Iranian Towers,” “Maruta City,” and “Basilia City,” close to the Iranian Embassy in Damascus.

Meanwhile, Law 10/2018, issued at the same time the civilian population of the Ghuta district was being forcibly transferred, constituted the cornerstone for al-Assad’s plan to seize the real estate there under the pretext of regional reconstruction. The building is planned to take place in the absence of the residents of Ghuta who are unable to return to defend their ownership rights.

The Syrian government has carried on with its forcible transfer and demographic alteration policies despite international condemnation. Several

UN resolutions have condemned the strategies adopted by the government to force civilians to leave their homes, including sieges and indiscriminate bombardments.

For instance, UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) demanded authorities allow immediate urgent humanitarian aid into the besieged areas. On 29 August 2016, the UK's Guardian newspaper published a report revealing that the UN had allowed millions of dollars' of aid to go to the Syrian government instead of the civilians affected by the siege. The newspaper said that the UN had awarded contracts worth tens of millions of dollars to people closely associated with Bashar al-Assad, as part of an aid program that critics fear is increasingly at the whim of the government in Damascus. It added that businessmen whose companies were under US and EU sanctions had been paid substantial sums by the UN mission, as had government departments and charities – including one set up by the president's wife, Asma al-Assad, and another by his cousin and closest associate, Rami Makhluf. The UN aid designated to help those starving in besieged areas was instead used to help Syrian authorities tighten the siege on civilians, thereby mounting pressure on them to accept leaving their homes.

Months later, on 28 October 2016, the Guardian published another report headlined "UN hires Assad's friends and relatives for Syria relief operation." The Guardian reported that it had seen documents outlining that almost two-thirds of the emergency health supplies needed in Syria had gone to government-held areas. "[The documents] show that 64% of the kits and medicines provided by the WHO since January [2016] have been delivered to areas held by or supporting Assad. Only 13% of WHO supplies have reached Syria's 'besieged' areas," it reported.

Russian forces, as of 2015, have also assisted Syrian authorities to carry out crimes of enforced displacement against millions of citizens. Russian air strikes on populated areas have forced civilians to vacate their homes which has helped Syrian authorities with their plans of demographic alteration. These plans, which Damascus has drawn up along with its allies in Tehran, have converted more than 11 million Syrians into refugees and displaced people from their homes.

As stated above, Russian airstrikes and military operations carried out

by the Syrian government and its Iranian allies have forced millions of citizens to flee their homes.

Below is a list of prominent incidents where such crimes took place:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Details of violation</b>
26 August 2016	Daraya	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.
26 November 2016	Khan al-Shih	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.
13 March 2017	Wa'ir	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.
14 April 2017	Barada Valley	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.
12 April 2017	Zabadani and Madaya	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement. The demographic transfer deal became known as the four-city agreement.
July 2017	Raqqa	Russian airstrikes on residential areas in eastern Raqqa forced the civilians out of the towns of Maadan and Sabkha.
August 2017	Dayr al-Zur	Russian airstrikes on the western and eastern Environs forced civilians to flee their homes for tents in the desert.
December 2017 – March 2018	Hamah (eastern environs), Idlib (eastern environs) and Aleppo (southern environs)	Airstrikes and shelling forced more than 450,000 civilians to flee their homes.
1 April 2018	Eastern Ghuta	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.
7 May 2018	Homs (northern environs)	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.
8 July 2018	Dara'a	Government forces besieged, starved and bombarded civilians, resulting in population displacement.

The Syrian government's crimes of bombardment, siege, starvation, arbitrary arrest, forced disappearance, and torture have resulted in more than 11 million civilians being internally displaced or forced to flee the

country as refugees. Today, around 4 million Syrians live as refugees in Turkey with another 1.5 million in Jordan, having fled the Syrian government's tyranny, barrel bombs and its notorious detention facilities. A further 1.5 million Syrians have been displaced to Lebanon with the help of Hezbollah, Iranian and loyalist Syrian paramilitary groups. Meanwhile, in Europe, more than 1 million Syrians live as refugees. Millions of internally displaced Syrians remain inside Syria, unable to flee violence and misery.

The regime of Bashar al-Assad and its allies must be brought to justice for the crimes committed against millions of Syrians. In particular, these individuals must be held accountable for the forcible transfer of populations which has been carried out in order to achieve demographic change in Syria. These are War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity that require their perpetrators to face justice for their actions.



# **Chapter 3**

## **The Blacklist**





**1. General Bashar Hafiz al-Assad**

**Current appointment:**

2000 - present President of the Republic

Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Services

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Damascus

Date of birth: 11 Sep 1965

Branch of service: Army (medical)

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
1999 – 2000	Colonel
1997 – 1999	Lieutenant Colonel
1995 – 1997	Major
1994 – 1995	Captain
1988 – 1994	First Lieutenant
1988	Ophthalmologist

Bashar al-Assad was born in the province of Damascus on September 11, 1965. He is the third son of Hafiz al-Assad, after Bushra and Basil. He studied at the College of Medicine at the University of Damascus, from which he graduated in 1988. On 9 January 1985, he volunteered for the army and the armed forces in administering medical services, and was commissioned with the acting rank of First Lieutenant on 8 June 1988. He then worked in ophthalmology in the Tishrin Military Hospital starting in 1992. After that, he travelled to London where he continued his specialisation until 1994.

After the death of his older brother, Bashar returned to Damascus to undergo a concentrated training course, after which he was appointed in 1994 as President of the Council of the Administration of the Syrian Scientific Information Organisation, which directs information activity in Syria. He was promoted to the rank of Captain in July 1994, then to Major in July 1995, then to Lieutenant Colonel in 1997, then to Colonel in January

1999. During this time he took up many files, the most prominent of which was Lebanon.

Upon the death of his father Hafiz al-Assad on 10 June 2000, ‘Abd al-Halim Khaddam, the Vice President of the Republic at the time, issued Legislative Decree No. 9, which promoted Bashar al-Assad – who was 34 years and 10 months old at the time – to the rank of Field Marshal, skipping over the ranks of Brigadier, Major General, and Lieutenant General. Likewise, he issued Decree No. 10, which appointed Bashar Hafiz al-Assad as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces, simultaneously with parliament’s amendment of the Syrian constitution, with the consensus of its members, to lower the minimum age of the president from 40 to 34 years, with the goal of enabling Bashar to take up the position of president upon his election by the regional leadership of the Arab Socialist Ba’th Party.

Bashar al-Assad became the first Arab president to succeed his father in ruling a state with a republican regime, and was elected as the Regional Secretary-General of the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party for the Syrian region in the ninth regional conference of the Arab Socialist Ba’th Party on 27 June 2000.

In December 2000, he married Asma’ al-Akhras, the daughter of a Sunni family from Homs, who had studied and was raised in Britain. Together, they had three children, Hafiz (3 December 2001), Zayn (5 November 2003), and Karim (15 December 2004).

In his first speech before the Syrian parliament on 17 July 2000, known as “the inauguration speech,”<sup>(1)</sup> Bashar al-Assad gave promises of reform, opening, and development, speaking about a new path of “development and modernisation.” But the security services quickly took the initiative, and aborted those aspects of opening that had become known as the “Damascus Spring”; the state continued on its repressive path domestically and abroad, as the Syrian intelligence services were accused of being behind many internal and external violations and acts of repression, perhaps the most prominent of which was the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, which forced the regime to withdraw its forces from Lebanon in April of 2005, and simultaneously generated tension in relations with other Arab states.

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(1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsNwHs9B6RI>

Upon the launch of peaceful protests in March 2011, the Assad regime followed a policy of repression and use of heavy weapons to face protesters; the security forces attacked the al-‘Umari mosque in the city of Dara’a in April, leading to the death of 31 civilians. Dozens of the inhabitants of Dara’a were arrested, followed by wide-ranging acts of repression in all of the cities that witnessed demonstrations against the regime, especially in Dara’a, Baniyas, Duma, Homs (where a massacre of around 500 victims took place in April 2001), Jisr al-Shughur, and the city of Hamah, which was stormed by the regime army<sup>(1)</sup> in August 2011, resulting in the deaths of around 100 civilians and the wounding of many more. This took place simultaneously with similar storming operations in Dayr al-Zur and al-Bu Kamal.

On 8 August 2011, Bashar al-Assad – as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Armed Forces and President of the Republic – removed Lieutenant General ‘Ali Habib from his position of Minister of Defence, and appointed Lieutenant General Da’ud Rajiha as Minister of Defence, because he was not satisfied with the way Lieutenant General ‘Ali Habib was managing the security and military file. This intervention demonstrates that Bashar al-Assad is personally responsible for the development of events toward military escalation; he said in his famous speech before the Syrian parliament on 30 April 2011, “If you want war, then it will be war,” and he described the demonstrators as “criminals” and “bacteria.”

As a result of the army becoming embroiled in the repression of demonstrators, and the use of brute force against civilians, the phenomenon of defection of officers began, starting with Lieutenant Colonel Hussain Harmoush, who announced his defection on 9 June 2011.<sup>(2)</sup> Then acts of defection increased until the establishment of the “Free Officers” was announced, and then the “Free Syrian Army” on 29 July 2011.

Bashar al-Assad recognised that the revolution had been peaceful until the month of Ramadan (August) of 2011,<sup>(3)</sup> when he actively affirmed his support for a policy of using force against civilians. Previously, there had not been a reason to kill demonstrators or cleanse prisoners over the period from April and September 2011; however, over the period extend-

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(1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZeJluGjEeY&feature=youtu.be>

(2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9z7nO8FiMEA&feature=youtu.be>

(3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LYLpZ-b501c&feature=youtu.be>

ing from March to November 2011, around 3500 people were killed, thousands wounded, and tens of thousands arrested. The number of deaths, by the end of April 2012, surpassed 13,000.

When the Free Syrian Army took wide areas of the country, regime armed forces targeted liberated regions first with artillery shells and rockets; and then with helicopters using the most vicious, indiscriminate weapon known so far to man: the barrel bomb. Subsequently, warplanes intervened against the Syrian people, leading to large-scale displacements in Dara'a, Damascus, Homs, Hamah, and Idlib; people fled from Syria to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and other states. In this fashion, regime military operations led to the destruction of Syrian cities and metropolitan areas, and the commission of some of the most egregious crimes in modern history against the Syrian people. It has ultimately led to more than 700,000 deaths among the Syrian people; tens of thousands of people imprisoned; and roughly 12 million displaced people, of whom about 6 million are internally displaced people, and 6 million refugees outside the country.

Due to his position as President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces, because the security services, militias, and National Defence Brigades follow his orders, and by dint of the wide authorities that he holds according to the Syrian Constitution, Bashar al-Assad is considered primarily and personally responsible for the violations of Syrian rights that have happened and are still happening.

The catalogue of accusations for which Bashar al-Assad must be held to account are as follows:

- Taking the lives of tens of thousands of Syrians, including civilians and opposition fighters, as well as members of the army and the armed forces who chose to defect, or were arrested and forcibly disappeared;
- Issuing the Republican Decrees that established field courts and terrorism courts, the judges of which were appointed by the President of the Republic, and which are responsible for issuing warrants for the execution of thousands of Syrians (because of the Syrian revolution) which were implemented in prisons and jails;
- Directly supervising security forces, and both local and foreign militias that have committed systematic acts of murder, destruction, torture,

rape, discrimination against women, crimes against children, policies of enforced starvation, siege, and displacement;

- Using Chemical Weapons against the Syrian people in a number of locations, including especially Eastern Ghuta, and the city of Khan Shaykhun;

- The displacement of at least 12 million internally displaced and international refugees;

- Destroying Syrian cities, metropolitan areas, towns, and villages, especially in the environs of Damascus, Homs, Aleppo, and other cities and metropolitan areas.

- Arresting hundreds of thousands of Syrians, their forcible disappearance in the prisons of the President's security services, and the conversion of these prisons into human slaughterhouses. The regime's acknowledgement of killing thousands of prisoners in prisons, not to mention the images published by the witness "Caesar", are evidence of those horrifying massacres.

- Introducing foreign sectarian militias, and the creation of local militias on sectarian, ethnic, and tribal bases, to commit the most egregious crimes and fan the flames of sectarian resentment, discrimination, and communal hatred. Foremost among these criminal sectarian militias are the Lebanese Hizballah, Abu Fadl al-'Abbas, Fatimiyyun, Zayniyyun, as well as others.

- Introducing Iranian forces, and encouraging them to commit crimes against Syrian civilians on a sectarian basis. Foremost among these forces are the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, units of Iranian Basij volunteers, and experts who have an essential role in repression, murder, and systematic destruction.

- Introducing Russian forces into Syria, and coordinating with them to commit systematic bombardment of inhabited areas and mass murder of civilians, and the use of internationally banned weapons against the Syrian people.

- Involvement in supporting extreme and radical organisations, foremost among them Kurdish separatist groups, radical Palestinian militias,

al-Qa'ida, and ISIS, which have demonstrated their collaboration with the regime from 2005 to 2018.

- Abandoning local and societal security, destroying the Syrian social fabric, kindling sectarian resentment, following policies of social discrimination and marginalisation, including granting nationality to members of foreign sects, expropriating real estate, property and land, granting them to the members of these militias, and issuing laws and presidential decrees to expropriate the private property of hundreds of thousands of Syrians;

- Converting portions of the military establishment into sectarian units, and using the army and armed forces as an instrument of repression against the Syrian people instead of protecting them, safeguarding the borders of the country, or preventing foreign aggression;

- Engaging in economic crimes, and financial and administrative corruption, including using the armed forces to farm hashish and sell drugs, money laundering, personal enrichment; and economic decline (as well as the fall in the value of the Syrian pound) rise in unemployment, destruction of infrastructure, capital flight, and the emergence of a class of families that have attained ill-gotten wealth at the expense of the rest of society, all of which has resulted from the mismanagement of public funds;

- Systematically targeting infrastructure and destroying the services, health, education, and agricultural sectors, oil and gas fields, and mineral and water resources, as well as airports and harbors.

Based on these horrific violations the likes of which have not been witnessed since the Second World War, Bashar al-Assad is primarily responsible because of the positions that he holds, the authority that he wields, and the responsibilities that he has held throughout his presidency from 2000 to 2018. The international community must cooperate with the efforts that Syrians have made to hold him accountable for these crimes, bring him to justice, and ensure that he does not escape accountability and punishment.



**2. Major General Mahir Hafiz al-Assad**

Background information:

Place of birth: Damascus

Date of birth: 8 December 1967

Branch of service: Army

**Previous appointments:**

2009	Officer of the Fourth Division
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**Current appointment:**

Commander, 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

Mahir al-Assad was born on 8 December 1967, and is the third son of Hafiz al-Assad.

He studied Mechanical Engineering at Damascus University, and after his graduation he joined the War College. He climbed the military ranks quickly, reaching the position of commanding 42 tanks in the Fourth Division, and was promoted in July of 2017 to the rank of Major General.

In April of 2018, he was appointed Commander of the Fourth Armoured Division of the Syrian Army.

Maher al-Assad had a bloody history even preceding the Revolution. He participated directly in the repression of the Kurdish uprising in 2004, in which members of the Fourth Division committed serious transgressions against the Kurds in the northeastern region, not to mention the Sidnaya massacre of 2008.

Upon the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution in 2011, the Fourth Division took up the primary role in the repression operations committed by regime forces for several reasons, the most important of which were that the Fourth Division descended from the defence units that had commit-

ted the massacres of the 1980s against Syrians, especially in the city of Hamah in 1982, and because most of the members of the Fourth Division are of the Alawite sect, to which Bashar and Maher al-Assad belong.

Although he was not officially commander of the division until April 2018, Major General Maher al-Assad is considered directly responsible for all the crimes committed by the Fourth Division from the beginning of the Revolution, because he has been its *de facto* leader since he reached the rank of Brigadier.

His long history of many and bloody crimes notwithstanding, the brutality of Major General Maher al-Assad was brought into the international spotlight in a report by Human Rights Watch, published on 15 December 2011 under the title "[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria.](#)" This quoted a fighter who had served in the 555<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) of the Fourth Division, before defecting from the Syrian Army. He stated that the Commander of the Regiment - Brigadier Jamal Yunis, who reported directly to Maher al-Assad – had given verbal orders to open fire on protestors during the deployment of forces in Mu'adamiyyat.

The HRW report also cited another soldier, who firmly asserts that the orders came from Maher al-Assad, and that "At the beginning, with the start of demonstrators, Brigadier Jamal Yunis said to us that we were not to open fire. But afterwards, it seemed that he received additional orders from Maher. It seems that he had a document that was distributed to officers, then the officers pointed their rifles at us and told us that we were to open fire directly on the demonstrators. Eventually they told us that the document had orders from Maher al-Assad to use all possible means."

In a [report](#) from 15 September 2013, the German newspaper *Die Welt* discussed the crimes of Maher al-Assad, describing him as brutal, and argued that he is a criminal who played a role in repressing the Syrian people.

As a result of his involvement in these horrifying violations and crimes against the Syrian people, Brigadier Maher al-Assad has been proscribed,

and entered on [British](#),<sup>(1)</sup> [European](#),<sup>(2)</sup> [Canadian](#),<sup>(3)</sup> and [American](#) sanctions lists. Among the most prominent of the crimes that the Fourth Division committed in the first stages of the Revolution were:

- Massacres against civilians in the cities of Dara'a and Nawa at the outbreak of the Revolution in April 2011;

- Massacres committed by the Fourth Division in the Damascus environs, and especially in Mu'adamiyyat al-Sham, Daraya, Qaboun, Zamalka, Dummar, Duma, 'Abbassiyya, Harasta, and the neighbourhoods of Jobar, Barzeh, and Tishrin;

- Massacres committed by the Fourth Division in the city of Homs, especially in the neighbourhoods of Baba 'Amru, Khalidiyya, and al-Bayada;

- Crimes committed by members of the Fourth Division in Hamah and its environs, especially in the storming of the city Hamah in August 2011, and subsequently the northern and southern environs of Hamah;

- Participation in battles that led to the expulsion of the inhabitants of Mu'adamiyyat al-Sham, Daraya, Wadi Barada, Eastern Ghuta, Dara'a, and Qunaytra. This resulted in the killing of tens of thousands and the displacement of hundreds of thousands;

- Random detention of tens of thousands of Syrians by members of the Fourth Division in Damascus and its environs; the killing of hundreds of these detainees under torture in the division's jail has been documented. Brigadier Ghassan Bilal, the director of the security office of the Fourth Division, is considered directly responsible for these violations.

It is worth noting that the Fourth Division formally incorporated the Liwa' al-Imam Hussayn militias into its ranks with effect from 2018.

To fund his crimes and the formation of sectarian auxiliary militias,

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(1) He is listed number 42 in British sanctions.

(2) He is listed number 2 in European sanctions.

(3) He is listed number 5 in Canadian sanctions.

Brigadier Maher al-Assad has dealt with businessmen who represent the public faces of large corporations that he owns in whole or in part. The most prominent of these are Muhammad Hamahshu and Samir Fawz, although there are others who manage the commercial interests of the al-Assad family, built with the money stolen from the Syrian people.

Likewise, Maher al-Assad has enjoyed the assistance of a group of officers of the Fourth Division. The most prominent of these are Aws Aslan, Major General Jamal Yunis, Brigadier Jawdat Ibrahim al-Safi, Brigadier Ghassan Bilal, Colonel Ghiyath Dalla. They, and other officers, must be held to account for the crimes that they have committed against the Syrian people.



**3. Major General Zuhayr Tawfik al-Assad**

**Current appointment:**

2016 – present Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Division

Major General Zuhayr Tawfik al-Assad is the brother-in-law of Hafiz al-Assad.

Upon his graduation from the Military Academy, he served in the Defence Companies led by Rif'at al-Assad, then rose in military ranks until he reached the rank of Major General of a division, and was appointed Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Division.

Upon the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian Revolution, he took up command of 90 Brigade in Qunaytra, with the rank of Brigadier. This brigade is also known by the name “The Wall” and “90 tanks.” It is independent of other military divisions and under the direct command of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Damascus.

Major General Zuhayr al-Assad is considered directly responsible for all of the crimes committed by members of 90 Brigade in the western Damascus environs, Qunaytra, and Dara'a, the most prominent of which are:

- The deaths that resulted from the bombardment of the region known as the “triangle of death” (where Qunaytra, Dara'a, and Damascus meet),

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Qardaha, Latakia

Branch of service: Defence companies of the Army and Armed Forces

**Previous appointments:**

2011 – 2016	Major General, 90 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade
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in addition to his responsibility for the destruction of property of the inhabitants and their forced displacement;

- The participation of members of the brigade security forces in the storming of Kanakar in the western Damascus environs in July 2011, which led to the killing of 11 people, the wounding of others, and the deaths of 300 civilians;

- The arbitrary arrest of a large number of the inhabitants of the region known as the “Triangle of Death,” and the trading of these prisoners for *shabiha* and regime forces POWs held by opposition fighters.

Upon his promotion to the rank of Major General and his appointment as the Commander of the First Armoured Division, Major General Zuhayr engaged in greater criminality, especially in the area of the western Damascus environs, where Major General Zuhayr imposed a strangling blockade on the areas under regime control, and prevented the entry of food supplies into it. His forces continued to randomly bombard and lay siege to these areas.

Likewise, Major General Zuhayr al-Assad supervised negotiations with representatives of the inhabitants of these areas, especially Zakiyya, Khan Shaykhun, and Dayr Khabiyya, in which he threatened them with more military operations if they did not submit or leave the area. This actually occurred when this region faced a violent attack by regime forces that led to the killing and wounding of dozens of the inhabitants of Palestinian refugees’s area, in addition to Syrians. As a result of these crimes, thousands of civilians were expelled.

Amidst his participation in operations in Palmyra and the Syrian Desert, Major General Zuhayr formed an oil-smuggling network, in cooperation with ISIS members, and came to own more than 10 fuel stations in Latakia province.

Karam al-Assad, the son of Major General Zuhayr al-Assad, exploited his father’s influence to engage in *shabiha* activity in Qardaha and Latakia in general, in which he armed fighters to commit his crimes, especially in the Druze Hadar region in the western Damascus environs. Likewise, Zuhayr embroiled Palestinian militias, including the Palestine Liberation

Army, in the battles that took place in the area. A close cooperation in committing crimes against civilians grew between Brigadier Mufid Wardah (former Director of Military Intelligence) and Major General Zuhayr al-Assad grew at the headquarters of Zuhayr's 1<sup>st</sup> Division, located in the city of al-Kiswah.





**4. Lieutenant General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj**

**Current appointment:**

Retired (Dismissed) 2018

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: al-Rahjan, Hamah

Date of Birth: 1950

Branch of service: Army - Armour

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
Jul 2012 - 2018	Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Minister of Defence
Aug 2011 - Jul 2012	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Armed Forces
Apr 2011 - Aug 2011	Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Armed Forces
1971 - 2011	Armoured roles

Lieutenant General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj was born in 1950 in the village of al-Rahjan in the eastern Hamah environs. He graduated from the War College with a specialisation in Armour in 1971, then rose in military rank until he was appointed Vice President of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2005. He was promoted to Lieutenant General in 2009.

Upon the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution, al-Fraj was Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Lieutenant General Dawood Rajha, then succeeded him as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when the latter took the position of Minister of Defence in May 2011, succeeding ‘Ali Habib.

Upon the killing of Lieutenant General Dawood Rajha in the Crisis Cell Explosion on 18 July 2012, Lieutenant General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj

was appointed Minister of Defence. He remained in his position until his dismissal on 1 January 2018. Until then, he executed all of the tasks that were delegated to him, including pursuing what he described as “The remainders of the terrorist gangs,” with the understanding that the country faced a “Zionist-American conspiracy” that aimed to undermine its stability.

Lieutenant General al-Fraj is considered directly responsible for all of the crimes committed by units of the Syrian Army, given his position as Deputy Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the Army and Armed Forces since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution on 15 March 2011, including August 2011, when the Special Forces committed horrifying crimes against civilians in Dara’a, Idlib, and Hamah under his command.

A Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled “[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria](#),” quoted the testimony of a defector from the Army under the pseudonym “Habib.” This testimony precisely records Lieutenant General al-Fraj during an operation that took place on 25 April 2011 in Dara’a, in which his unit followed orders from Brigadier Ramadan Mahmud Ramadan (Commander, 35<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment) to open fire on civilians.

The report also cited a person using the pseudonym “Salim,” (an officer who defected from the 46<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment), who stated that he witnessed the striking and insulting of detainees in the camp of the Idlib vanguard, which was used as a Centre and headquarters for the Special Forces. He confirmed that in the period between April and July 2011:

“Intelligence [forces] began to gather detainees in the camp, usually between 10 and 30 individuals, around 9 or 10 pm, after each protest (and this happened daily). The detainees lined up, blindfolded, and were forced to sit on their knees, and they were hit. The security forces cursed them and placed their feet on their heads. That happened outside of the building, in front of my office. The detainees were hit as they waited for Lieutenant General Fahd Jassim, who oversaw operations in Idlib, to prepare and examine them. Intelligence [forces] would gather some younger soldiers – including men from my unit – tell them that the detainees were terrorists, and force them to hit them. Lieutenant General al-Fraj would

curse the detainees because of their participation in the demonstrations, then take them to the nearby prison. The prison is under the guard of soldiers from my unit, and I would sometimes go there. They placed the detainees there at night, in a cell of six or seven meters, without food or water.”

Lieutenant General al-Frayj was also considered directly responsible for all of the crimes committed Syrian Army units, given his position as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Armed Forces, from August 2012 until he took the position of Minister of Defence on 18 July 2012.

He is considered directly responsible for all of the crimes committed against the Syrian people from July 2012 through the date of the end of his service on 1 January 2018, through his work as the Minister of Defence, when he took up the task of coordinating between the Supreme Command of the army and armed forces, and among the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Armed Forces, through his issuing of orders to deploy units and sections of the army, authenticated with his signature. He holds responsibility for all of the blood that has been spilled and all of the destruction that has befallen most of the cities and regions of Syria. His responsibility for these crimes is no less than that of Bashar al-Assad, or Lieutenant General ‘Ali Ayyub, who preceded him in his office. Lieutenant General Fahd Jassim al-Frayj is currently retired, but his crimes against the Syrian people remain.

During his service, Lieutenant General al-Frayj carried out the conscription of a large number of the al-Hdaydiyeen clan, to which he belongs, to help the Syrian regime repress the protests in the province of Hamah. Likewise, his relative Major General Juma’a al-Jassim, who worked in the position of Director of the Artillery and Rocket Administration, holds responsibility for a large number of massacres committed against the Syrian people.

Based upon this bloody record, Lieutenant General Fahd Jassim al-Frayj was placed on the [British](#),<sup>(1)</sup> [European](#),<sup>(2)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions

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(1) He is listed number 47 on the British sanctions list.

(2) He is listed number 57 on the European sanctions list.

(3) He is listed number 62 on the Canadian sanctions list.

lists because of his direct responsibility for repressing demonstrators, and the crimes that have been committed against civilians.

Sources indicate that his dismissal from the Army was due to Russian forces' urgent need [to deal with] corruption cases connected to him and his sons, as he benefitted from the presence of a loophole in the law concerning military service, paragraph F of Article 25 of the military service protocol which allows "Excluding those deemed suitable for exclusion from reserve service by the High Command". This paragraph, however, was fully withdrawn following a Russian request in July 2017.



**5. General Ali Abdullah Ayub**

**Current appointment:**

2018 – present Deputy Commander -in-Chief; Minister of Defence

**Background information**

Place of Birth: al-Bahluliyah, Latakia

Date of Birth: 1952

Branch of service: Army - Armoured Corps

<u>Former appointments:</u>	
July 2012 - 2018	Chief of the General Staff of the Army and Armed Forces
Jul 2012	Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Army and Armed Forces
Sep 2011	Commander, 1 <sup>st</sup> Division
Prior to Sept 2011	Commander, Fourth Division
	Commander; 103 <sup>rd</sup> Brigade, Republican Guards
Officer in the 1 <sup>st</sup> Division	

Ali Abdullah Ayub graduated from the Military Academy with a specialisation in Armoured warfare at the end of 1973 and rose through various military ranks and positions until he reached the rank of general and was appointed Minister of Defence in 2018.

Ayub served in the ranks of the First Division in Lebanon in 1982, and then joined the Republican Guard until he became command of Brigade 103. He was later appointed as commander of the Fourth Division and then was made head of the Syrian Army’s First Corps. In September 2011 he was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff and was promoted to the rank of general on 1 January 2012.

As a result of the bombing of the National Security Headquarters in 2012, Ayoub was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Army and Armed Forces, taking over from General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj, who became Minister of Defence. On 1 January 2018, Bashar al-Assad issued a decree to appoint General Ayub as Minister of Defence, succeeding General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj.

General Ayub is considered to be directly responsible for various crimes committed against Syrians, especially the violations committed by the Fifth, Seventh, Ninth and Fifteenth Special Forces Divisions — the groups comprising the First Corps, which was led by General Ayub from March to September 2011, before his promotion. In particular, these include the crimes committed by units of the Fifth, Seventh and Ninth divisions deployed in Dara'a, and the Fifteenth Division, which carried out widespread violations in both Suwayda and Jisr al-Shughur in the first months after peaceful protests broke out.

General Ali Abdullah Ayub is also considered to have been a major participant in all the crimes carried out by the Syrian Army, given his position as Deputy Chief of Staff for the Army and Armed Forces from September 2011 to July 2012.

When he held the position of Chief of Staff from July 2012 to the beginning of 2018, General Ayub was directly responsible for all crimes carried out by the Army's sections — especially the crimes which occurred in Eastern and Western Ghuta, Homs, Aleppo, Idlib, Hamah, Dara'a, Latakia, Dayr al-Zur, as well as other cities and towns throughout Syria.

Given the responsibilities that he assumed in his position as Chief of Staff from 2012 to 2018, General Ayub is considered to be directly responsible for the crimes committed by Syrian warplanes and helicopters, the crimes committed by members of the General Staff's Military Intelligence Division, and the crimes committed by members of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate of the Air Forces and Air Defence, which is under the authority of the General Staff. These crimes include the chemical attack on Eastern Ghuta; the crimes of the Fourth Assault Corps, the formation of which General Ayub announced on 8 October 2015; and the crimes committed by the Fifth Volunteer Corps on behalf of regime forces.

Ayub's bloody record also includes his direct responsibility for the dis-

placement of millions of civilians — either internally, or forced to flee outside the country — as well as the destruction of the infrastructure and buildings of a large number of cities, primarily Homs, Aleppo, Duma, and Daraya. They also include the crimes carried out by members of foreign militias, which have resulted in the destruction of Syria's social fabric.

Ayub is also considered one of the most prominent figures responsible for the crimes committed by Russian forces, as he has carried out a major role in coordinating Russian air bombardment operations, which have claimed thousands of civilian lives. Ayub enjoys warm relations with Russia<sup>(1)</sup>, speaks Russian, and has undergone a number of military training courses there. He has enjoyed favour within the Armed Forces as Russian influence has grown, which resulted in his appointment as Minister of Defence after al-Fraj in 2018. From his new position, he continues to follow up on his work as Chief of Staff, given that the position is still vacant. He therefore bears responsibility for the crimes committed in Eastern Ghuta, the second chemical attack on the Ghuta, and the displacement of the residents of Eastern Ghuta, al-Hajar al-Aswad, and Yarmuk Camp, as well as the forcible displacement of Dara'a's residents.



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(1) <https://sptnkne.ws/fXMd>







**6. Major General Muhammad Khalid Rahmun**

**Current appointment:**

2018 - present Minister of Interior

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Khan Shaykhun, Idlib

Date of birth: 1 April 1957

Branch of service: Air Force (Air Defence)

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2017 – 2018	Director, Political Security Branch
2016 – 2017	Assistant Director of the Political Security division
2011 – 2016	Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch for Southern Region (Harasta)
2004 – 2011	Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in Dara'a
Air Force Intelligence	

Muhammad Rahamun was born in Khan Shaykhun in the southern Idlib environs in 1957, and became involved in military life when he graduated from the War College with a specialisation in Air Defence. He was then transferred to the Air Force Intelligence administration.

In 2004, he became Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in Dara'a at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He then rose in military ranks and security positions until he became Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch for the southern region located in Harasta. This branch is responsible for

the provinces of the southern region (Damascus and its environs, Dara'a, al-Qunaytra, and al-Suwaida) at the rank of Brigadier in 2011. He oversaw arrests and storming operations in the regions of Harasta, 'Arbin, Duma, and the neighbourhoods of Barzah and al-Qabun, and oversaw investigations and tortures that took place in the branch, in which tens of thousands were detained and killed under torture. He forced those detainees who survived to "support the war effort" by forcing them to dig trenches and tunnels near the branch building. The Air Force Intelligence branch in Harasta is known as the [Branch of Death](#).

According to the testimony of five detainees who were able to flee from the Air Force Intelligence branch in Harasta, published by the Violation Documentation Centre in Syria in 2013 under the title [Escaping Hell](#), unprecedented violations took place while it was headed by Brigadier Muhammad Rahmun. Dr. Suhayl Nashawati, who was detained for two years, notes the dangerous violations that took place there:

"The area in which I lived was raided with the assistance of a guide, and the raid involved more than 100 soldiers, who thought that I was directing meetings with university students to assist those who were breaking the law. As for treatment, I did not arrive at the branch until all of the limbs of my body were covered with blood and a number of breaks, including a fractured skull. During interrogation and torture I lost consciousness and awoke with electric shocks under the personal supervision of the president of the branch, Brigadier Muhammad Rahmun, and when they rested while I was restrained, blindfolded, and totally naked, and they put out cigarettes on my rear-end as I sat on a wheel called the '*doulab*,' and I was not allowed to eat or drink at all."

In the testimony of the activist Hanadi Faysal al-Rifai about her experience of 7 months of detention in the Air Force Intelligence branch in Harasta:

"On March 15, 2012, and during my attempt to reassure one of the officers who had defected in the region of al-Nabak, a regime flying barricade stopped me and the people with me. The soldiers at the barricade knew the officer, so they removed him and others from the car, and began to strike them, and they left me in the car after they had taken the key.

But I had another copy of the key in my purse, and the area was empty of buildings and people, so I hurried to start the car and fled. They followed me in another car, opening fire, for almost 15 kilometers until I lost control and stopped. They grabbed me, and we were brought to the Air Force Intelligence branch in Harasta. There, they put us in the office of Brigadier Muhammad Rahmun on the third floor of the building, and we were struck on the *doulab* in his office, as our hands were bound behind us and we were blindfolded.”

The French Foreign Ministry issued a report titled [“Torture in Syrian Regime Detention Centres”](#) about the cruelty of torture that detainees faced in the Air Force Intelligence branch in Harasta, under the presidency of Brigadier Rahmun, who is accused of participation in the 2013 chemical massacre, which took the lives of around 1400 people, including women and children, in Eastern Ghuta. This report connects him to one of those overseeing Chemical Weapons tests in Unit 417 of Air Force Intelligence. According to confirmed data, Rahmun took up the Chemical Weapons role after Major General ‘Ali Mamluk gave it up, several years before the Revolution.

Major General Muhammad Rahmun has been subject to [U.S. Treasury Sanctions](#) since the beginning of 2017 - along with other 17 individuals and 6 entities involved - for their role in committing brutal crimes against the Syrian people.

In response to the U.S. sanctions, the regime took the initiative to facilitate Brigadier Muhammad’s commission of crimes. He was promoted to the rank of Major General, and was appointed Assistant Director of the Political Security Division under Major General Nazih Hassun at the beginning of 2017. He was then appointed Director of the division after the retirement of Hassun. He was allowed to participate in the Astana Conference that was held after the Russian-Turkish-Iranian agreement of 2017.

Major General Rahmun is considered directly responsible for the horrifying massacres and violations that were committed in Harasta, Duma, al-Qabun, Birzah, and Tishrin during his tenure in charge of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Southern Region, in addition to the arbitrary detention and forced disappearance of tens of thousands of youths, women, and children, many of whom were killed under torture.

Major General Rahmun is married to an Alawite woman from al-Qardahah, from where Hafiz al-Assad also came.



**7. Muhammad Ibrahim al-Sha'ar**

**Current appointment:**

Retired

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Date of birth: 1950

Branch of service: Army - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2018	Minster of the Interior
	Commander, Military Police
2006	Head of Branch 227, Damascus region
	Head of Military Security branch in Aleppo
	Head of Military Security branch in Tartus
	Officer, Military Intelligence Directorate, Lebanon

Muhammad al-Sha'ar was born in the town of al-Haffah in the Latakia environs in 1950. He joined the Army in 1971, where he rose through the ranks, taking a number of positions in the Military Intelligence Directorate. These included responsibility for security in Lebanon's Tripoli during the 1980s, as well as serving as head of Military Security in Tartous, and as head of the Military Security branch in Aleppo. He also served as head of the Area 277 Branch of the Military Intelligence Directorate, and then became head of Military Police. Despite reaching retirement age, he was appointed on April 14, 2011 as interior minister, where he served until November 2018.

Major General al-Sha'ar is considered to be one of the pillars of the

crimes committed in Lebanon in the era of Ghazi Kan'an, when Syrian forces under his supervision in Tripoli—in cooperation with Alawite militias in Jabal Muhsin—committed the Bab al-Tabbaneh massacre in December 1986, which killed 700 residents, some of them children. Since then, he has been called “the Butcher of Tripoli.” The following figures joined him in this crime: Ghazi Kan'an, Ali Haydar, Ali Ayid, and Tarik Fakhr al-Din.<sup>(1)</sup>

Given the criminal role he played in Lebanon, the regime relied on Major General al-Sha'ar in committing more violations in both Lebanon and Syria. He is considered one of those most involved in the massacre of Saydnaya Prison in 2008.

After he took over the Ministry of the Interior (about a month after the start of the peaceful protests in March 2011), al-Sha'ar began exercising his criminal role, fabricated acts of vandalism against some police and Political Security Directorate Centres, acts which were then blamed on the peaceful protesters. This was especially so in Hamah, where he coordinated these attacks with intelligence agencies, even causing the deaths of Internal Security Forces members with the aim of making it seem that the peaceful demonstrators were the killers.

Major General Muhammad al-Sha'ar was a member of the Crisis Cell (a command group responsible for crashing the uprising), and was the only one to survive the bombing of the National Security Office in Damascus on 18 July 2012, which killed General Dawoud Rajiha (the Minister of Defence); General Assef Shawkat (Deputy Minister of Defence); General Hasan Turkmani; and Major General Hisham Ikhtiyar (Director of the National Security Bureau.)

Major General Muhammad al-Sha'ar is considered to be responsible for a number of crimes and violations against the Syrian people, including:

- Operations to repress the Syrian revolution and protesters through the Interior Ministry agencies.
- All the crimes and violations carried out in Syria during the time he was a member of the Crisis Cell, from the time he took his position on 18 July 2012. (The Crisis Cell decided how to deal with the protesters and the Revolution, in consultation with Bashar al-Assad.)

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(1) <https://www.mettransparent.com/spip.php?article23591>

- All the crimes and violations carried out by Internal Security Forces while they assisted regime forces in rebellious areas.

- All the crimes and violations carried out by members of the Political Security Directorate in Syria, because the Directorate falls administratively under the authority of the Interior Ministry.

- All the crimes and violations carried out by forces, whose work was overseen by the Interior Ministry.

- All the crimes and violations carried out by members of the Special Missions Unit of the Interior Ministry.

- All the crimes and violations which occurred in the Interior Ministry prisons.

Given the crimes carried out by Major General al-Sha'ar against the Syrian people, he has been included on Western sanctions lists since mid-2011. He is subject to British<sup>(1)</sup>, European<sup>(2)</sup>, and Canadian<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions.

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(1) Included in British sanctions 74

(2) Included in European sanctions 82

(3) Included in Canadian sanctions 02





**8. Major General Wassil Khalid al-Samir al-Awayd**

**Current appointment:**

2018 – present Deputy Chief of Staff

**Background information**

Place of birth: Hayalin (northwestern Hamah environs)

Date of birth: 1958

Branch of service: Army - Infantry

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 – 2018	Commander, 5 <sup>th</sup> Division
2012 – 2015	Chief of Staff, 5 <sup>th</sup> Division
	Commander, 88 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, 7 <sup>th</sup> Division

Wassil al-Samir was born in the town of Hayalin in the northwestern Hamah environs in 1958. He graduated in Class 32 from the Military College with a specialisation in infantry. After his graduation, he worked as a military trainer in the College of Technical Affairs and then was transferred to the Seventh Division. He rose through the military ranks until becoming Commander of the 88<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the same division. He was later transferred to the Fifth Division in Dara'a, where he served as the division's Chief of Staff from 2012. He was appointed Division Commander in 2015, and continued to command it until 2018, when he was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff and tasked with conducting administrative affairs after Major General Ali Ayyub was made Minister of the Interior.

Since the peaceful protests broke out in 2011, Major General Wassil al-Samir has participated in oppressive measures in Dara'a, especially in the areas around the town of Izra, where the division's command Centre is located. He became involved in many violations through his command of offensive operations and in the planning of Fifth Division military operations. He is considered one of those most responsible for the Izra massacre of 2013, as well as for the bombing operations which the Fifth

Division carried out and which killed hundreds of civilians and destroyed their homes in the area around the Fifth Division brigades. These include the al-Hirak massacre in July 2012.

According to informed sources, Major General Wassil al-Samir took part in the siege imposed by regime forces on a number of towns in the Dara'a region, including Mahajjah. He coordinated with Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr in imposing reconciliations on these areas. During his time at the Fifth Division, he carried out a number of military operations which killed a large number of Syrians—in particular, the “Abandoned Brigade” operation east of Abtaa (31 October 2016), which killed more than 60 people and led to the arrests of an unknown number. Major General al-Samir is also accused of killing 40 civilians through field executions near the Khalkhala airport in 2014<sup>(1)</sup>.

Major General Wassil al-Samir is considered to be responsible for all the crimes committed by the Fifth Division from the time he took charge as its Chief of Staff in 2012 until he was transferred to the Army Staff in 2018. From that time, he is considered responsible for the operations carried out by the army since the start of 2018, since he conducts the General Staff's affairs in the Army and Armed Forces.



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(1) Zaman al-Wisl: زمان الوصل، <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/93148/>





**9. Major General Salim Harba**

**Current appointment:**

2018 – present Deputy Chief of Staff

Head of Security and Military Committee in Aleppo

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Qardaha, Latakia

Branch of service: Officer

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 - 2018	Commander, Regime Forces in Northern Region
2012 - 2015	“Civilian” political analyst
2011 - 2012	Director of Supreme Military College, Supreme Military Academy

Saleem Harba is from the al-Qardaha area in Latakia province. He obtained a doctorate in Military Science from Russia, and consistently appeared as a strategic analyst on satellite channels as well as in newspapers and news websites from 2012.

Before that, Harba had served as Director of the Supreme Military College, one of the colleges of the Supreme Military Academy, with the rank of Brigadier General. He was then instructed to appear as a civilian to defend the regime on satellite channels from 2012 to 2015, but at the same time he rose through the military ranks until reaching the rank of Major General in 2015.

At the start of the Russian intervention in September 2015, Major General Salim Harba appeared in his military uniform once again at the “Stronger Syria” festival organised by the regime’s Ministry of Culture, as well as in Jabal al-Nuba in the northern Latakia environs in December 2015. He then took over command of military operations in the northern

Latakia environs with Russian support. He was joined in these operations by the Suqur al-Sahara (the Desert Falcons) militia, whose commander Muhammad Jabr, appeared alongside Harba.

In May 2016, Harba was appointed commander of regime forces in the Northern Region. He was responsible for the Aleppo operations which led to the deaths and displacement of many Aleppo city residents and the destruction of a large number of homes in the eastern districts of the city.

In January 2017, Major General Harba participated in a regime delegation to Astana, along with a number of regime representatives, such as Major General Adnan Hilwah (who is accused of committing war crimes against the Syrian people), Colonel Samir Baridi, and the head of the delegation, Bashar al-Jaafari.

Major General Harba is considered to be directly responsible for the operations which resulted in the deaths and displacement of a large number of civilians in the northern Latakia environs and the areas east of the Hijaz Railway in the northeastern Hamah, eastern Idlib, and southern Aleppo environs at the end of 2017, where he fought alongside the commander of the Tiger Forces, Suhail al-Hassan.

In April 2018, Major General Harba was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff and took part in the battles for control of Eastern Ghuta during the same period, which killed more than a thousand civilians and displaced more than 100,000 people. He also participated in the battles for control over the Tadamon, Yarmuk and al-Qadam districts, and in September 2018 took part in the military and security meeting held in Baghdad with the participation of Iraq, Iran, Russia and Syria, as head of the Syrian delegation.

In December 2018, Major General Salim Harba was appointed head of the Military and Security Committee in Aleppo, succeeding Brigadier General Malik Alia, who was appointed Commander of the Republican Guard.







**10. General Ali Yunis Mamluk**

**Current appointment:**

2012 - present Director of National Security Bureau

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Damascus

Date of birth: 1949

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2005 - 2012	Director of General Security Directorate
2003 - 2005	Director of Air Force Intelligence
1970 - 2003	Head of Investigations Branch in Air Force Intelligence

Ali Mamluk was born in Damascus in 1949 to an Alawite family who had migrated from Alexandretta. He has a long history of helping establish Syria's pillars of oppression and its security institutions. He joined Muhammed al-Khuli in the Air Force Intelligence agency and was entrusted with the position of heading its Investigations Branch. He rose through the agency's offices until he became its Director between 2003 and 2005. Today, he is considered a black box of the Syrian regime's secrets.

Mamluk's criminal record dates back to the 1980s. The National Centre for Truth, Justice and Reconciliation in Syria published a list in 2002 which included the names of 76 officers, and called for them to be put on trial for committing crimes or for ordering them to be carried out. Mamluk was in a high position, as he was entrusted with the task of overseeing the regime's Chemical Weapons programme. He was one of the officers to supervise Chemical Weapons tests from 1985 to 1995 and their use against political prisoners in the Palmyra prison in "Unit 417," which was under the authority of the Air Force Intelligence, near the "al-Safa" rest stop in the Abu al-SHamaht area of the Syrian desert, where Chemical

Weapons were tested on prisoners, and then the remains of the crime were eliminated through aerial bombardment.

In 2005, Mamluk became head of the General Intelligence Directorate — “state security” — and worked to develop the administration and supply it with new monitoring methods and to repress public freedoms in Syria. Since then, he has been the face of the Syrian regime’s intelligence agencies, entrusted with the task of coordinating with international intelligence agencies, including American, European, Iranian, and some Arab agencies. This gave him space to hold on to a large number of regime portfolios from 2011 to 2018.

Following the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Bashar al-Assad entrusted Ali Mamluk with the task of repressing the demonstrations, given his long history with the technologies of repression. He also entrusted him with responsibility for the General Intelligence Directorate’s Operations Room, which had a meeting place dedicated to the Crisis Cell (which was in charge of addressing the uprising) to meet every Friday — the usual day for the popular protests to occur. Mamluk presented his reports to Bashar al-Assad directly, given that the state security agency is under the direct authority of the presidency.

In April 2012, the United States placed Ali Mamluk on the sanctions list for his activities in supervising communications surveillance programmes directed against opposition groups, which included technological and analytical support offered by the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security. According to a [statement](#) by the American Treasury Department, Ali Mamluk worked with the Iranians on securing technology and training for Syria, including internet surveillance technology. He also requested training from Iran for the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate regarding social media surveillance and other online tools. The statement said that the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate was complicit in serious violations against civilians, which included arbitrary arrests, ill-treatment of prisoners and deaths while detained by the General Intelligence Directorate.

After the assassination operation against the Crisis Cell in Syria, General Ali Mamluk was appointed Head of the National Security Bureau, succeeding Hisham Bakhtiar, who “died from his wounds” in July 2012. As Head of the National Security Bureau, Mamluk oversaw the work of all

intelligence agencies, giving them instructions with regards to the repression, violations and massacres which they carried out against Syrians in their prisons and torture chambers.

Ali Mamluk is considered to be directly responsible for the following crimes:

- The crimes committed by the General Intelligence Directorate from the beginning of the Syrian Revolution in 2011 until July 2012.

- The crimes carried out by the four main Syrian intelligence agencies (the General Intelligence Directorate, the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, the Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Political Security Directorate), as well as those carried out by the commanders of security agencies under his supervision, primarily: General Jamil al-Hassan, General Rafiq Shahadah, General Muhammad Rahmun, General Muhammad Mahala, General Nazih Hassun, General Muhammad Dib Zaytoun, General Adib Salamah, General Judat al-Ahmad, General Qusay Mihub, and General Wafiq Nasr.

General Ali Mamluk's violence has even extended outside Syria. He has been accused of supplying the former Lebanese minister Michel Samaha with explosives and funds to carry out a number of bombings and assassinations in Lebanon. Samaha was arrested, and confessed to Ali Mamluk's role in planning these terrorist operations.

In July 2016, the New York Times newspaper reported<sup>(1)</sup> that relatives of the American journalist Marie Colvin (a war correspondent for the British Sunday Times newspaper) blamed the Syrian regime for her death. On 9 July 2016, an official suit (Case 1:16-cv-01423) against the Syrian Arab Republic was brought before a federal court in Washington, DC in which the journalist's relatives accused ten Syrian officials — including Mahar al-Assad, Ali Mamluk and Rafiq Shahada — of killing Colvin in the Baba Amr district on 22 January 2012, in addition to killing the French photographer Remi Ochlik.

Based on this bloody record, General Ali Mamluk was included in the

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(1) <https://goo.gl/DWs>

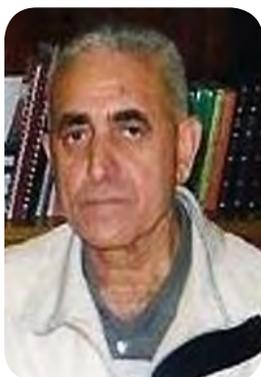
British<sup>(1)</sup>, European<sup>(2)</sup> and Canadian<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions lists, which assigned him shared blame for the crimes committed against the Syrian people.

Despite the accusations directed against Ali Mamluk on an international level, in recent years he has repeatedly made trips to Arab and international capitals, visiting Egypt, Russia, and Italy with mediation from the Lebanese General Security Director Abbas Ibrahim, where he met with the Italian Interior Minister and the Head of Italian Intelligence. He was not arrested, despite his name being included on the sanctions blacklist, which led to questions about how serious the European Union was about standing up against terrorist acts.



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- (1) British sanctions 195
  - (2) European sanctions 3
  - (3) Canadian sanctions 6





**11. Major General Jamil al-Hassan**

**Current appointment:**

Retired

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: al-Qarniyya, Homs

Date of birth: UKN 1952

Branch of service: Air Force Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2009 – 2019	Director of Administration, Air Force Intelligence
2009	Head of Air Force Intelligence branch in the Eastern Region
2007 – 2009	Commander, al-Mazzah Military Airbase
	Officer at the Air force Intelligence

Major General Jamil al-Hassan, the Director of Administration for the Air Force Intelligence, is one of the most serious war criminals in Syria. He is the originator of the famous quote, “I am ready to kill a million people, and afterward they can take me to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.”

He was born in the village of al-Qarniyya in the province of Homs in 1952. He entered the War College in 1972 with a specialisation in Air Defence, and rose through the ranks until he reached the rank of Major General on 1 January 2009. He was appointed Director of Administration for Air Force Intelligence on 1 July 2009, succeeding Major General ‘Abd al-Fattah Qadasiyya.

Notwithstanding his bloody record in the repression of the opposition,

Major General al-Hassan's tenure as Director of Administration for Air Force Intelligence has been extended seven times in a row between 2011 and 2018. The last extension was from 18 July 2017 to 18 July 2018, per a Legislative Decree issued by Bashar al-Asad that left him in place as Director of Administration for Air Force Intelligence (one of the worst and most criminal Syrian security services.) This contravenes all the regulations and ordinances that govern officers' service in the Syrian armed forces.

Major General Jamil served as Assistant Director of Administration for Air Force Intelligence under Major General 'Abd al-Fattah Qadasiyya, and worked before that as the Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Eastern Region of Dayr al-Zur in 2009, where he participated with Major General Jami' Jami' (then Director of the Military Intelligence branch in Dayr al-Zur) in committing offenses, violating the rights of civilians, intervening in public life and the purview of the state, extorting citizens, and proselytising (to Shi'ism) the provinces of Dayr al-Zur and Raqqa.

With the outbreak of peaceful demonstrations in 2011, Jamil al-Hassan emerged as one of those most embroiled in the random arrest, extortion, theft, torture, and murder of protesters, when he ordered the heads of his branches to kill and arrest protesters, and to break up the lines of protesters and then open fire on them. He was also involved in crimes such as the assassination of national figures like the Kurdish activist Mish'al Tamu, who was assassinated in al-Qamishli at the beginning of the Syrian Revolution; the cleansing of authorities who had fallen out of favour; and the fabrication of explosions against police units, state circles, and the patrols of pro-regime brigades loyal to the Interior Ministry, as happened in the Maydan neighbourhood in Damascus, Hamah, Aleppo, Dayr al-Zur, and elsewhere.

Amidst the political Revolution, Major General Jamil al-Hassan has pursued an abhorrent policy of sectarian discrimination, taking the initiative to remove most of Sunni soldiers and officers from Air Force Intelligence Administration, returning them to serve in the Army, and replacing them with officers from the Alawite sect. As a result, the proportion of Alawites in the Air Force Intelligence Administration has reached around 99%.

Likewise, Major General al-Hassan was granted absolute authority

over all military units, especially the air bases, air defence units, and air forces: to select these units' soldiers and officers and requisition their weapons, as well as authority over their air bases and license to use their aircraft in systematic repression missions.

In an interview with Russia's [Sputnik](#) service, Major General Jamil al-Hassan spoke about the necessity of military decisiveness on the model of what happened in Hamah in 1982, when he participated in the massacres committed by regime forces in the city as a Second Lieutenant. Documented testimonies have described the role played by al-Hassan in the killing, arrest, and torture of a large number of the inhabitants of Hamah, and participation in the rape of women during the assault on the city.

These are the same policies that have continued to be followed in the branches of the Air Force Intelligence Administration since. In 2011, Afaq Ahmad (a defector from the security forces) "claimed that he received direct orders from Jamil al-Hassan to kill all of the protesters coming to break the siege of Dara'a after it was encircled by regime forces". This event was eventually called the "Saida massacre," during which Hamzah al-Khatib and Tamir al-Shar'i were killed under ugliest forms of torture. Their situation was similar to that of tens of thousands of Syrians.

A Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled "[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria](#)," quoted a defector from Air Force Intelligence with the pseudonym of "Omar" who had been an assistant in the Director's office in the Special Operations unit of the Air Force Intelligence branch in Damascus. He stated that the Saida massacre took place on the direct orders of Major General Jamil al-Hassan. The Centre for the Documentation of Violations was able to document 98 deaths in Dara'a on April 29, 2011, whereas Omar counted 120 dead. As Omar said:

"My director, Colonel Suhayl Hassan in the Special Operations unit, took the advice of his second-in-command, Fawaz Qabir, and agreed to organise an ambush for protesters close to the military residence in Saida. The discussion took place in the office where he worked. They also discussed what would be said to the media, and they agreed that they would say that Islamists joined the marches in Dara'a to kidnap women and children from majority-Christian regions. Then I saw Suhayl call Major

General Jamil al-Hassan on a direct line that [al-Hassan] used. I was not able to hear what Major General Jamil al-Hassan said, but I supposed that he agreed to the mission because soon afterward, troops began to leave the base in al-Mazzeah for Dara’a. When they returned in the evening, they brought with them the corpses of 120 murdered protesters and placed them in the base, alongside 160 detainees. I saw troops lower the bodies from transports and asked one of the soldiers how many there were. Suhayl al-Hassan assigned me to get the caravan in order to accompany the trucks that would return the corpses to Dara’a.”

Those directly responsible for this and other massacres in Damascus, the Damascus environs, and Aleppo were:

Major General Jamil al-Hassan	Director of Administration for Air Force Intelligence
Major General Adib Salamah	Director of Administration for Air Force Intelligence; ex-Head of the Air Force Intelligence Branch for the Northern Region
Major General ‘Abd al-Salam Fajr Mahmud	Deputy Director of Air Force Intelligence; ex-Head of the Special Forces Branch in the Air Force Intelligence Administration
Colonel Suhayl Hassan	President of the Operations Branch in the Air Force Intelligence Administration; later Head of the Air Force Intelligence Branch for the Northern Region
Colonel Qasi Mayhub	Officer from the Administration; sent to Dara’a at the beginning of the demonstrations to oversee operations

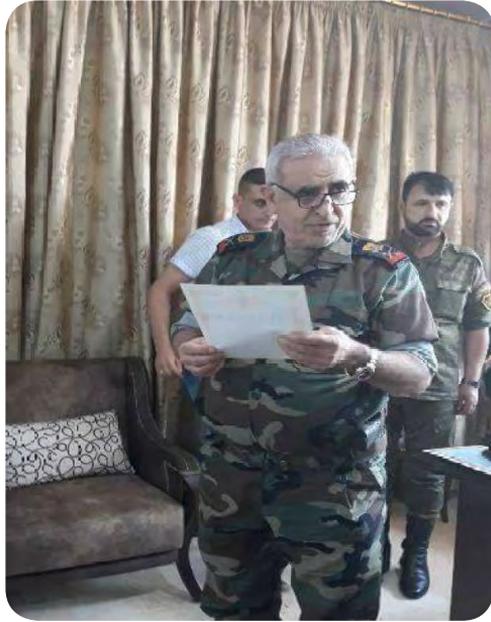
The name of Major General Jamil al-Assad also appeared on pages 49 and 50 of a Human Rights Watch report published in 2012 entitled [“Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011.”](#)

It notes that Major General Jamil al-Hassan has been subject to [European](#) and [British](#) sanctions since 2011 because of his direct supervision of violence performed by members of the Air Force Intelligence Administration against Syrians.

Samantha Power, the former Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations Security Council, also mentioned Major General Jamil al-Hassan on a list that includes the names of regime military officials in 2016, affirming the presence of documented reports that confirm their commission of a wide variety of war crimes against Syrian civilians, and threatened them with prosecution.

The truth is that Major General Jamil al-Hassan has exceeded all of his peers among the leadership of the security services, as his administration has issued around 33,000 arrest warrants, alongside tens of thousands of forcibly disappeared, and those who have died under systematic torture. An Amnesty International Report entitled [“It Breaks the Human: Torture, Disease and Death in Syria’s Prisons”](#) discusses the types of torture practiced by the security services. A report published in 2015 entitled [“If the Dead Could Speak: Mass Deaths and Torture in Syrian Prisons”](#) documents the many murders committed by those services under the leadership of Major General al-Hassan.

It is worth noting that Major General Jamil al-Hassan is regarded by many as the patron of Brigadier Suhayl al-Hassan and his militias, and he has an excellent relationship with Russia. He has three Russian flags in his office alongside the regime flag, and he has bestowed honours upon many of those enrolled in the “Tiger” forces. He has also given them Russian certificates of honour issued by the leader of Russian forces in Syria. In July 2019, he was dismissed from the Air Force Intelligence.









**12. Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun**

**Current appointment:**

Retired

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Jabbah, al-Qalamun

Date of birth: 20 May 1951

Branch of service: General Intelligence Directorate

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2012 – 2019	Director of Administration for State Security
(General Intelligence Service)	
2009 – 2012	Chief of the Political Security Branch, State Security

In the years preceding the Revolution, Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun worked in the Directorate of the Political Security Department. On 18 July 2012, he was appointed Director of Administration for State Security (usually known as “General Intelligence Service”) succeeding Major General ‘Ali Mamluk, who was appointed Director of the National Security Office.

Muhammad Zaytun has a long record of repression. He was in charge of investigating the “Damascus Declaration” group in 2007. Since then, Zaytun has been considered one of the people closest to Bashar al-Asad in matters of political repression, especially because the Political Security Department takes orders directly from the Presidency.

The most serious of the violations in which Major General Zaytun is embroiled are as follows:

- All of the crimes and violations committed by members of the Political Security Department during his tenure as its Director from the beginning of the Syrian Revolution in 2011 to July 2012. He heads a list of 77 security officials involved in the commission of grave violations of civilians’ rights. A Human Rights Watch report published on December 15, 2011

entitled [“By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria”](#) confirms the leadership of the Political Security Department in the scene of repression in the city of Dara’a, and its involvement in the commission of a large number of massacres and arrests against civilians, including the detention of children; and opening fire on and killing protesters in a number of events that took place between March and April 2011. This pushed the European Union to impose travel restrictions and freeze the accounts of Major General Muhammad Dib on 9 May 2011, amidst his participation in “acts of violence against civilians.”

- In interviews with four torture victims, Human Rights Watch confirmed the involvement of Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun, alongside a number of Political Security officers in the commission of systematic torture, documented in an HRW report in 2012 called [“Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011.”](#) On pages 55-59 of the report, witnesses discussed how they were subjected to torture by soldiers of the Political Security administration, and in the Political Security branches of Idlib, Homs, Latakia, and Dara’a.

- Major General Zaytun is considered directly responsible for all of the crimes committed by members of the State Security Administration from when he first took up his position there in July 2012 until the present day. Zaytun has followed the criminal trail blazed by Major General ‘Ali Mamluk, and the branches of the General Intelligence Administration has practiced – under Zaytun’s authority – the worst forms of torture and human degradation in its prisons, in addition to the crimes committed by [Zaytun and Mamluk] outside of these prisons. One can find precise documentation of some of these violations in an Amnesty International report published in 2015 entitled [“Death Everywhere”](#)<sup>(1)</sup> about war crimes and human rights violations in Aleppo, and especially the crimes committed by the State Security branch in Aleppo.

- Major General Zaytun was likewise involved in acts of repression, siege, and collective punishment against civilians in Homs, and especially

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(1) For more, see page 44 of the report.

in the neighbourhood of al-Wa'r, which resulted in the enforced displacement of its inhabitants.

As a result of his crimes against the Syrian people, Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun has been placed on the [British](#),<sup>(1)</sup> [European](#),<sup>(2)</sup> [Canadian](#),<sup>(3)</sup> and American sanctions lists, as he has participated in a large number of criminal acts with Major General 'Ali Mamluk and similar acts in highly sensitive matters, especially as concerns creating relationships and engaging in communications with foreign intelligence services. The two have traveled to many countries, the most important of which is Italy, which they visited in the middle of 2016 in a private airplane to meet an Italian foreign intelligence officer.

Zaytun has not appeared in the media, no picture of him has been published in social media, and no photo has been found except that included in this report.

In July 2019 Zaytun was dismissed as head of General Intelligence Service and was succeeded by General Hussam Luka.



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- (1) He is listed number 258 on the British sanctions list.
  - (2) He is listed number 6 on the European sanctions list.
  - (3) He is listed number 10 on the Canadian sanctions list.



**13. Major General Hussam Muhammad Luka**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the General Intelligence Services

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Khanasir, Aleppo

Branch of service: Security

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018-2019	Head of the Political Security Department
2016-2018	Assistant Head of the General Intelligence Services
2011-2016	Head of the Homs Political Security Branch
2011	Head of the Hama Political Security Branch

Major General Hussam Muhammad Nuri Anyah Luka is a Circassian from the town of Khanasir in Aleppo’s eastern environs. He graduated from the Military Academy in 1984, and was sent in 1987 to serve at the Ministry of Interior as a lieutenant.

His first posting there was the al-Sha’aar Police Station in Aleppo. Later on, he became the head of that station in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and then was sent to serve at the Political Security Services. After that, he was appointed at the Aleppo Political Security Department, where he became in charge of the Police Security. Later on, he was moved to the Afriin Political Security Branch and then to Damascus where he headed the Background Check Office. Shortly after, he was appointed at the Damascus Environs Security Department to head the Qatana Branch before he was sent back to the Damascus Political Security where he served under Major General Rafiq Shahadeh. Luka was then appointed Assistant Head of the Homs Political Security Department, where he served until he became the head of that Department in 2004. In 2009, Luka was

removed from his position and was investigated over of accusations of embezzlement and wasting government money. Luka had built a Branch Head Residence that cost the government dozens of millions of Syrian Pounds. However, Luka was reinstated in his position due to his good ties with the then head of the Political Security Services Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in March 2011, Luka was appointed as the head of the Hama Political Security Department. During his service there, many massacres were committed against the people of Hama as the city was stormed by the Army and the *shabiha*. On 29 December 2011, Luka was moved to head the Homs Political Security Department and was appointed at the same time as the Deputy Chairman of the city's Defence and Security Committee. In Homs too, Luka committed a number of massacres and oversaw systematic torture of detainees in his department. He also recruited a large number of the people of his hometown, Khanasir, into the pro-Assad militias and played a major role in sending reinforcements to Aleppo from Khanasir when the opposition fighters had managed to block the Damascus-Aleppo Highway.

In May 2014, Luka was on the regime's committee for negotiating the opposition fighters' withdrawal from the Old City of Homs. In 2011, Luka was appointed Assistant Head of the General Intelligence Services under Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun. When the regime restored control of the al-Wa'ir district in Homs after displacing its people, Luka was the one to raise the regime's flag in that district in which many massacres were committed by the regime over the course of a few years. And when the regime recaptured Dara'a, Luka played a major role in recruiting men there for the Republican Guard, telling community leaders that Russia was not going to stay long in Syria and that the only defender of the country was the Syrian regime.

On 29 November 2018, Luka was appointed as the Head of the Political Security Services, replacing Major General Muhammad Rahmun who was appointed as the Minister of Interior. Then, on 7 July 2019, Luka was appointed as the Head of the General Intelligence Services, replacing Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun, to be later replaced by Major General Nasir al-Ali.

Major General Hussam Luka is on the British, European and Canadian sanction lists of regime officials due to his responsibility of a number of crimes against Syrians.



**14. Major General Nasr al-Ali**

**Current appointment:**

2019 – present Head of the Political Security Branch

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Maqtaa Hajar, Manbij, Aleppo

Branch of service: Political Security Officer

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2014-2019	Head of the Damascus Political Security Branch
2013-2014	Head of the Tartus Political Security Branch
2012-2013	Head of the Aleppo Political Security Branch (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)
2011-2012	Head of the Dara'a Political Security Branch (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)
	Head of the Aleppo Political Security Branch
Head of the Dara'a Political Security Branch	

Major General Nasr al-Ali is a Sunni from the village of Maqtaa Hajar in the Manbij District in Aleppo's eastern environs. He is a member of the al-Hudaydin tribe and is a relative of the former Defence Minister Fahd al-Jasim al-Fraj.

al-Ali joined the police academy in the 1980s. Right after his graduation as a lieutenant, he was appointed at Aleppo's Political Security Department. During his service there, al-Ali was stationed in several offices and branches including the Office of Background Check, the Office of Students, the Office of Parties, and the Iفرin Political Security Branch. He was later promoted to the rank of Major and moved to the Dayr al-Zur Political Security Department, and then became a Lieutenant Colonel at

the Political Security Interrogation Branch of Damascus. After that he was moved to the Dara'a Political Security Department, where he was promoted to the rank of Colonel and was appointed the head of that Department.

During the early months of the Syrian revolution, al-Ali was appointed as the head of the Aleppo Political Security Department, then the Tartous one and finally the Damascus one.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, al-Ali was a Colonel heading the Political Security Department of Aleppo. At the time, the Political Security Department of Dara'a was headed by Bashar al-Assad's cousin Brigadier General Atif Najib, whose crimes at the beginning of the unrest led to aggravating the situation in the province, and made it spill over to other provinces. Trying to contain the situation, the regime sent al-Ali, again, to Dara'a to replace Najib.

In Dara'a, al-Ali was part of the regime's efforts to oppress the protests, and was one of the officers who led the operations in the province, especially in its capital. He is accused of having detained civilians in terrible conditions and torturing them systematically, many of them to death.

During the revolution, al-Ali also formed pro-Assad militias from the people of his village, Maqtaa Hajar, and members of his tribe, the al-Hudaydin, with help from his cousin Lieutenant General Fahd Jasim al-Fraj.

In August 2012, the opposition fighters entered the city of Aleppo and the regime's losses started growing the city. During that time, al-Ali was sent back to Aleppo as the head of the Aleppo Political Security Department. In that capacity, al-Ali continued his criminal record against Syrians. Even his own hometown, Manbij, did not survive his bloodiness, as he did not hesitate to bomb it while serving in Aleppo. According to defected Captain Abd al-Rahman al-Tajir, "Brigadier General Nasser Al-Ali, head of the Political Security Department in Aleppo, is the one responsible for bombing the town of Manbij where he comes from. He received coordinates from people he knew inside the town." In the al-Zahraa town in Aleppo, where he lives, al-Ali turned the rooftop of his house into a station for the regime's snipers.

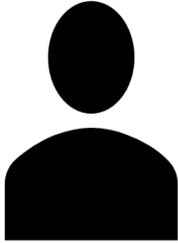
Later on, al-Ali was appointed as the head of the Political Security in Tartus, where he stayed only for a few months before he was moved in mid-2013 to head the Damascus Political Security Department. On 7

July 2019, al-Ali was appointed Head of the Political Security Services by Presidential decree, replacing Major General Hussam Luka, who became the head of the General Intelligence Services.

Before al-Ali was appointed as the head of the Political Security Services, the regime moved Major General Nasr Dib from that bureau (where he was the Assistant Head of the bureau) to the Criminal Security. That was so Dib would not to impese the appointment of al-Ali, since the former was senior to the latter.

Nasr aL-Ali has been on the British, European and Canadian lists of sanctioned regime's officials for several years due to his responsibility for a number of crimes against Syrians.





**15. Major General Abd al-Fatah Sulayman Qudsiyyah**

**Current appointment:**

Deputy-Director of the National Security Office

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Hamah

Date of birth: 1953

Branch of service: Army - Special Forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
July 2012	Director of the Department of State Security
	Head of Political Security Division
	State Security Department
2005	Head of Air Force Intelligence Administration
	Special Forces

Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyyah served in the Special Forces and in the Republican Guard, where he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier and became one of those closest to Basil al-Assad. He then moved to the Air Force Intelligence Administration, where he rose in military ranks to become the Head of the Air Force Intelligence Administration in 2005.

He was in charge of investigating the assassination of Lebanese Hizballah leader 'Imad Mughniyya in Damascus in 2008, during which he was appointed Director of the Military Intelligence branch in 2009. He remained in that position until July of 2012, when he was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the National Security Office of Major General Ali al-Mamluk and Major General Rafiq Shahadah was appointed as his successor.

Major General Qudsiyyah is known for his harsh dealings with opposition members and his sectarian inclination. He has many enemies in the

security community, the most important of whom is Major General Jamil al-Hassan, toward whom he has great enmity.

Upon the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Major General Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyyah was Director of the Military Intelligence branch. It played an essential role in repression operations, as it was the largest of the regime's four intelligence services. Major General Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyyah was one of the members of the Crisis Cell whose headquarters were targeted with explosives in July 2012.

Qudsiyyah is considered one of the most important officers responsible for the crimes and violations committed by Military Intelligence forces especially, and by the rest of the members of the security services in Syria. The most important of the accusations directed against him are as follows:

- Direct responsibility for all of the crimes and violations committed by members of the Military Intelligence branch in the period extending between March 2011 and July 2012, ie when he was Director of the division, since he had an essential role in the repression operations and arbitrary detentions in Dara'a, Damascus, and the Damascus environs. He is also considered responsible for all of the crimes and violations committed in Hamah before the regime took it over entirely, and likewise the crimes and violations in Homs, its environs, and the city of al-Nabk.

- Direct responsibility for all of the crimes and violations that were committed in the branches and divisions of the Military Intelligence branch, both central and local, while he was Director. The most important of these are Palestine branch<sup>(1)</sup>, the Military Investigation branch<sup>(2)</sup>, the Regional branch<sup>(3)</sup>, and the Patrol branch<sup>(4)</sup>, and for the crimes of the officers of these branches and divisions, the most important of which are Major

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(1) Martyrs of torture in Palestine branch 235: <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=7>

(2) Martyrs of torture in Military Investigation branch 248: <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=5>

(3) Martyrs of torture in the Regional branch 227: <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=4>

(4) Martyrs of torture in Patrol branch 216: <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=3>

General Wafiq Shahadah, Brigadier Yasin Dahi, Brigadier Mufid Wardah, and others.

As a result of his criminal record, the name of Major General Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyyah has appeared in a number of international reports that have document the crimes and violations in Syria, including a Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled “[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria](#)”; the report “[Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011](#)”, which documented arbitrary detention, torture, and enforced disappearance in Syrian detention Centres, as well as the report, “[We’ve Never Seen Such Horror,](#)”\_which documents Syrian security forces’ commission of crimes against humanity in Dara’a. Other reports include “[If the Dead Could Speak: Mass Deaths and Torture in Syrian Prisons,](#)” which documents murders committed by Syrian intelligence services, and “[It Breaks the Human: Torture, Disease and Death in Syria’s Prisons,](#)” which documents the modes of systematic torture conducted by the Syrian intelligence services in the repression of the Syrian people.

Likewise, Major General Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyyah has been placed on the [British](#),<sup>(1)</sup> [European](#),<sup>(2)</sup> [Canadian](#),<sup>(3)</sup> and [American](#) sanctions\_lists because of his responsibility for a large number of crimes and violations committed against civilians.

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(1) He is ranked 218 on the British sanctions list.

(2) He is ranked 9 on the European sanctions list.

(3) He is ranked 13 on the Canadian sanctions list.



**16. Major General Nasr Dib**

**Current appointment:**

July 2019 Head of Criminal Security Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jablah, Latakia

Date of birth: UKN

Sectarian / ethnic identity: UKN

Branch of service: Military; Police – Political Security

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018 – 2019	Head of Political Security Directorate
2017 - 2018	Assistant Head of Political Security in Damascus
2011 - 2017	Head of Financial branch of Political Security in Damascus
2009 – 2011	Head of Political Security branch in Hamah
2004 – 2009	Head of Political Security branch in Latakia
1995 - 2004	Officer in Political Security

Major General Nasr Dib was born in the area of Jablah in the Latakia province to an Alawite family. He joined the Military Academy in the 1980s and graduated at the rank of lieutenant with a specialisation in administrative affairs. In 1987, he was seconded to the Interior Ministry, where he worked in a number of police commands in Syrian provinces as an officer in financial divisions as well as in machinery and vehicle divisions.

In 1995, he was assigned to the Political Security Directorate, where he worked as an officer in the Latakia, Aleppo, Dara'a and Hamah branches. In 2004, he was appointed to be head of the Political Security branch in Latakia. He continued there until 2009, and then was transferred to Hamah as head of the Political Security branch there until August 2011. During this period, he caused the killings of civilians participating in peaceful demonstrations.

In the same year, Nasr Dib claimed that he suffered from a heart ailment and obtained forged medical reports to prove this. He was transferred to the Political Security Directorate in Damascus with assistance from the head of the directorate at that time, Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun. He was made head of the economic branch and served there until 2017.

When Major General Muhammad Rahmun took over as head of the Political Security Directorate in 2017, he asked for Nasr Dib to be appointed his deputy because of their friendship. He served in this position until 26 November 2018, when a Presidential Decree was issued naming him head of the Political Security Directorate succeeding Muhammad Rahmun.

Major General Nasr Dib is reported to have garnered millions of dollars through taking bribes, corruption and embezzlement. He owns a number of boats.





**17. General Talal Shafiq MakhluF**

Background information:

Place of birth: al-Qardaha, Latakia

Date of birth: 1 December 1958

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guard

<u>Former appointment:</u>	
2015 - 2016	Deputy Commander of Republican Guard
2011 - 2015	Commander, 105 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, Republican Guard

Current appointment:

2016 – present Commander of the Republican Guard

Talal MakhluF joined the Syrian army at an early stage and rose very quickly through its ranks due to his membership in the MakhluF family, of which Bashar al-Assad’s mother, Anisa MakhluF, was a member. He was also close to Bassil al-Assad, with whom he took the engineering commanders course.

With the outbreak of the Syrian revolution in 2011, Talal MakhluF commanded the Republican Guard’s 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade at the rank of brigadier general. This was an assault brigade which had a prominent role in the repression and killing of the unarmed protesters taking part in peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins in Duma and Harasta in the Damascus environs as well as in Nawa in Dara’a province.

As a result of his criminal record, Talal MakhluF’s name was included in a report by the Human Rights Watch organisation released on 15 December 2011 titled, “By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria.” According to testimonies of fighters from the 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which Talal MakhluF had commanded, he had ordered firing on protesters. The examples of the orders to kill documented by Human Rights Watch included:

- “Ahmad,” a soldier with the Republican Guard, who was deployed

in Duma in April 2011, said that Brigadier General Talal Makhluḥ gave his unit verbal orders to “suppress the protest and shoot if people refuse to disperse.”

- “Jamal,” another soldier from the 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade, also said that Brigadier General Talal Makhluḥ gave verbal orders to “shoot at protesters.” He said:

“On August 27 we were near a police hospital in Harasta. About 1,500 protesters came there. They requested the release of an injured protester who was inside the hospital. They held olive branches. They had no arms. There were 35 army soldiers and about 50 *mukhabarat* personnel at the checkpoint. We also had a jeep with a mounted machine-gun. When the protesters were less than 100 meters away, we opened fire. We had previously received the orders to do so from the Brigadier General. Five protesters were hit, and I believe two of them died.”

In the sanctions list published by Switzerland at the end of 2011, Talal Makhluḥ was among 19 military and civilian figures listed, and was also subject to punitive sanctions by the European Union as a result of the crimes he carried out or participated in against civilians.

General Talal Makhluḥ has also been subject to sanctions by the British government since 2015, as well as American Treasury Department sanctions<sup>(1)</sup> since the start of 2017 and was included on a list published by the Department listing 17 Syrian regime officials and six other entities under the regime’s authority for their role in the Syrian regime’s monstrous crimes against the Syrian people.

Sources indicate that the warehouses of the 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade, led by Talal Makhluḥ, were used to store chemical materials from “Institute 1000”, affiliated with the Scientific Research Centre. The chemical materials were transported over the course of the week before international inspectors arrived to Syria to carry out Security Council Resolution 2118 in April 2013.

Talal Makhluḥ had a prominent role in concluding the deals for the weapons which were used against unarmed civilians. Military sources revealed that he had signed a deal for American-made arms from Ukraine at the end of 2014 through an officer at the Ukrainian Defence Minis-

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(1) <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20170112.aspx>

try, Peter Mehed. These weapons were transported to Syria through the Odessa port. The full report<sup>(1)</sup> can be viewed (in Ukrainian), with the relevant documents included at the end of this report.

At the start of January 2016, Brigadier General Talal Makhlef was appointed Commander of the Republican Guard, succeeding General Badi'a Hassan Ali, under whom General Talal had previously served as Deputy Commander. Under his command, the Republican Guard played a major role in the massacres in Eastern Aleppo, and after regime control was imposed on the area, he gave every soldier who participated a reward of 50,000 Syria lira — especially in the areas of Bani Zaid, al-Lirmun, and al-Kastil — as well as to the soldiers who fought in Madaya and Haush al-Fara in the Ghuta.

Under his command, Republican Guard forces also participated in crimes and violations which occurred during the regime's campaign to take control of Wadi Barada and Eastern Ghuta. General Talal bears responsibility for all the crimes committed by 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade in particular, and the Republican Guard in general through the period of his command, when thousands of residents of Aleppo, Homs, Damascus and the Damascus environs, in eastern Ghuta, Western Ghuta and Wadi Barada were killed, and hundreds of thousands of others displaced.

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(1) <https://life.ru/t/%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8/149465>





## MINISTRY OF DEFENCE OF UKRAINE

Ukraine, Kyiv, 03168, 6 Povilroflots'kyi Ave. phone: +380 (044) 2357218 email: admou@mll.gov.ua

2 December 2014

To: Talal Makhoulouf  
Brig. Gen.

This is to inform you that the first batch of equipment is formed in entire accordance with all of your latest suggestions and includes the following items:

assault rifle 5.45 mm AK-74 x 600 pcs  
battle rifle 7.62 mm SCAR-H x 725 pcs  
sniper rifle 8,58 mm APR 338 x 62 pcs  
mortar 60 mm M224A1, LM-60K Commando x 16 pcs  
mortar 81 mm M252 x 95 pcs  
mortar 120 mm M120 x 8 pcs  
man-portable air-defense system SA-18 Grouse x 75 pcs  
individual field medical kit MOJO123 IFAK Aid Bag x 12000 pcs  
thermal goggle binocular NO/TG7 x 340 pcs  
thermal eye L-3 Renegade 320 x 340 pcs

The shipment is to be effected strictly within the time limits of the schedule approved as part of the agreement.

Thank you for being so attentive to details. Hope we can continue to have opportunities to work together.

Sincerely

Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Defence of Ukraine  
Colonel

P. Mehed

ЭКСКЛЮЗИВ

Игорь Б   
Получатель: evgen kriz

10 декабря 2014 г., 11:51  
[Скрыть детали](#)

**LIFE NEWS**

Приветствую.

Дали добро на отправку груза. Можете приступать, корабль готов к погрузке. Еще раз сверьте все по согласованному перечню заявки сирийцев.

LIFE NEWS

This is to inform you that we have accepted  
all of your latest suggestions and includes the following items:

assault rifle 5.45 mm AK-74 x 600 pcs  
battle rifle 7.62 mm SCAR-H x 725 pcs  
sniper rifle 8,58 mm APR 338 x 62 pcs  
mortar 60 mm M224A1, LM-60K Commando x 16 pcs  
mortar 81 mm M252 x 95 pcs  
mortar 120 mm M120 x 8 pcs  
man-portable air-defense system SA-18 Grouse x 75 pcs  
individual field medical kit MOJO123 IFAK Aid Bag x 12000 pcs  
thermal goggle binocular NO/TG7 x 340 pcs  
thermal eye L-3 Renegade 320 x 340 pcs

The shipment is to be effected strictly within the time limits of the schedule approved as part of the agreement.

Thank you for being so attentive to details. Hope we can continue to have opportunities to work together.

С уважением,

**ЭКСКЛЮЗИВ**

**Игорь Б**  
Получатель: evgen krtz  
Ответ:

9 декабря 2014 г., 10:07  
[Скрыть детали](#)

Хорошо. Скажи своим, чтобы обязательно перепроверили количество и комплектность.

Наименование	Ед. измерения	Количество
штурмовая винтовка калибра 5.56 мм SCAR-L	Шт.	725
штурмовая винтовка калибра 7.62 мм SCAR-H	Шт.	725
		
снайперская винтовка APR 338 калибра 8,58 мм	Шт.	62
60 мм миномет типа M224A1, LM-60K Commando	Шт.	16
81 мм миномет типа M252	Шт.	95
120 мм миномет типа M120	Шт.	8
ПЗРК типа Stinger	Шт.	75
Аптечка индивидуальная MOJO132 IFAK Aid Bag	Шт.	12000
Цифровой бинокль-тепловизором NO-TG7	Шт.	725
Цифровой прицел-тепловизор Renegade 320	Шт.	725

  
8 декабря 2014 г., 16:56 пользователь evgen krtz [evgenkrtz@com.ru](#) написал:  
Привет. С 72 и 92 бригад сняли по две машины, сейчас меняют номера и тенты, к вечеру закончат. Завтра Камазы будут готовы к отправке из Белой Церкви.  
Детали маршрута: E95/M05; далее съезд на трассу E50/M12 после Умани; поворот на T0202; поворот на T0207; поворот на P71; поворот на P54/P71; поворот на P71; поворот на P75 (Балта); выезд на T1603; поворот на T1603; P33; T1614; поворот на T1616/T1634; поворот на E95/M05.  
Схема маршрута.  
Ориентировочное время в пути 7ч.30 мин.  
Отправка запланирована на 22:00. Прибытие в 5:30.



Щодо  
пріоритетних потреб матеріально-технічної допомоги Збройним Силам України

Летальне ОВТ		
№	Найменування	Кількість
1.	Стрілецьке озброєння сил спеціальних операцій і боеприпаси до нього:	
	a. Гвинтівка снайперська калібру 7,62*51 мм типу APR 308, SAKO TRG AX	120
	b. Гвинтівка снайперська напівавтоматична калібр 308 Win (7,62x51 мм) типу Heckler&Koch, M110.	30
	c. снайперська гвинтівка APR 338 калібру 8,58*70 мм	100
	d. штурмова гвинтівка калібру 5,56 мм SCAR-L	1000
	e. штурмова гвинтівка калібру 7,62 мм SCAR-H	1000
	f. крупнокаліберні снайперські гвинтівки калібру 12.7 та 14.5 типу Barrett M107(M82) з причітом AN/PVS-10	150
	g. набої калібр 5,56x45mm	200000
	h. 308 набої калібр 7,62x51мм NATO	150000
	i. 338 набої калібр 8,58x70 мм NATO	100000
	j. 50 набої калібр 12,7x99 мм NATO	80000
2.	60 мм міномет типу M224A1, LM-60K Commando	40
3.	Міни до 60 мм міномету M224A1	20000
4.	81 мм міномет типу M252	145
5.	Міни до 80 мм міномету M252	43500
6.	120мм міномет типу M120	40
7.	Міни до 120мм міномету типу M120	16000
8.	Ручні гранатомети типу MGL-140	720
9.	Постріли до ручного гранатомету типу MGL-140	72000
10.	Пускові пристрої для переносних протитанкових ракетних комплексів типу Javelin (TOW II)	80
11.	Ракети до ПТРК Javelin (TOW II)	420
12.	Переносні зенітно-ракетні типу Stinger	150
13.	Бронетранспортери типу MRAP	280
14.	Автомобілі типу HUMMER для комплектування 4 легких маневрених бригад	4x328= 1312
15.	Сигнальні міни натяжного принципу дії типу M-49 (49A), МК-2, МІЕ.МІе50(56)	20000
16.	Радіопристрій з можливістю передачі сигналу від 2 до 10 км. типу "1670 remote firing device"	40 к-тів
Не летальне ОВТ		
1.	Радіолокаційні станції контр-батареійної боротьби типу:	
	a. AN/TPQ-49 (V)	24
	b. AN/TPQ-36 (V)	8
	c. AN/TPQ-37 (V)	4
	d. EO-36 (AN/TPS-53)	5
2.	Безпilotні літальні апарати (для ведення тактичної розвідки і	15
забезпечення вогневого ураження)		
	a. Радіус дії до 2 км.	80
	b. Радіус дії до 25 км.	20
	c. Радіус дії до 50 км.	15
	d. Радіус дії до 100 км.	5
3.	Радіостанції типу:	
	a. RF-7800V-HH 10 Вт	320
	b. RF-7800M-DS001	32
	c. RF-7800H-MP 150 Вт	90
	d. RF-7800M-HH001 50 Вт	90
	e. RF-7800H-MP 20 Вт	94
	f. RF-7800H-MP 400 Вт	6
	g. RF-7800W-OU	48
4.	Медицинське обладнання та засоби евакуації	
	a. вертольоти медичної евакуації типу UH-1	4
	b. мобільний медичний госпіталь з медичним устаткуванням	4 к-ти
	c. броньований санітарний транспорт	20
	d. санітарні автомобілі типу HUMMER	32
	e. медичні комплекти типу S.T.O.M.P.	261
	f. аптечка індивідуальна MOJOT132 IFAK Aid Bag	52000
	g. джгут кровоостанковий (турнікет)	14500
5.	Тактичне та стрілецьке обладнання:	
	a. окуляри нічного бачення (AN/PVS-15 + L4 NVG HEAD MOUNT);	1500
	b. цифрові тепловізійні приціли (Renegade – 320)	1500
	c. цифровий тепловізійний бінокляр (NO-TG7)	1500
	d. кольматорні тактичні приціли (MICRO T-1 2 MOA (СотрМ4с)	3000
	e. лазерні цілепоказчики (BOB Laser BOB-26-III 50mW (532nm, 1xCR23A)	500
	f. голографічні приціли (EOTECH EXPS2 65 MOA)	100
	g. окуляри нічного бачення для німотис вертольотів	50
6.	Системи раннього попередження нападу та охорони периметру	100
7.	Акустичні системи виявлення пострілів зі стрілецької зброї (мобільні)	100



**18. Major General Jamal Mahmud Yunis**

**Current appointment:**

2018 - present Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Eastern Region

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Qardaha region, Latakia

Branch of service: Army

<u>Former appointment:</u>	
2017 - 2018	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Zamalka
2016 - 2017	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs
2014 - 2015	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Hamah
2011 - 2013	555 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, 4 <sup>th</sup> Division

Major General Jamal Yunis is one of the most prominent figures who has committed Crimes against Humanity and wide-ranging violations against the Syrian people. At the beginning of the peaceful protests in 2011, Yunis was the Commander of 555<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Fourth Division with the rank of Staff Brigadier. He had a close relationship with Mahir al-Assad, who entrusted him with the mission of repressing protestors in the Damascus environs. He had a bloody record of violations in Ma'dimiyyat al-Sham, Daraya, al-Qabun, and Zamalka in the Damascus environs, in addition to the operations that took place under his leadership in the city of Nawa in the northern Dara'a environs, where he issued direct orders to open fire on demonstrators and arbitrarily detain youths of those regions.

Yunis does not hold back his strong sectarian inclinations, nor hide his disdain for those members of other sects who oppose him. He claims that his father is an Alawite shaykh, that he is a member of the Alawite council, and that he considers Sunnis the enemies of his sect. This has led him to commit wide-ranging crimes and violations on a blatantly sectarian basis; he participated – while deploying to the province of Homs with his military unit (555<sup>th</sup> Brigade) in late 2011 – in murderous acts in the neighbourhoods of Baba ‘Amru, al-Khalidiyya, and al-Bayada. Further, he was involved in the killing of hundreds of civilians as the result of ordering his officers and soldiers to use all weapons available to his unit - including BMP armoured personnel carriers, heavy machine guns, mortars, and Korean rocket batteries - against civilians.

In addition to his bloody record in Dara’a, Homs, and the Damascus environs, Major General Jamal Yunis is considered directly responsible for the destruction, murder, and expulsion that took place in the city of Hamah and its southeastern and northern environs, and the southern Idlib environs, between 2012 and 2013, where the 555<sup>th</sup> Brigade committed wide-ranging crimes under his orders, for which he was honored in the Shi’ite Imam al-Mahdi centre.

During his service in the eastern Hamah environs, Jamal Yunis was involved in the oil trade with ISIS before he was withdrawn from the eastern Hamah environs. His name was mentioned in a leaked cable on this subject, number 4211 of 22 January 2015, issued by Branch 219 of the Military Intelligence Division.

Likewise, his name came up in a Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled “[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria.](#)” According to “Osama,” a fighter who defected from 555<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Jamal Yunis – as Brigade Commander – gave verbal orders to open fire on demonstrators during the deployment of its forces in Ma’damiyya in the Damascus suburbs.

Another soldier defector, known as “‘Umran”, stated that Jamal Yunis issued officers under his command with orders from Mahir al-Assad that included instructions to use “all possible means” to repress protestors: “the officers pointed their rifles at us and threatened to kill us if we did not open fire directly on protestors.”

The accumulation of documented evidence against Jamal Yunis in the European Council pushed him to be included in the sanctions list that was published in 2012. That did not prevent him from continuing his criminal conduct; in 2014, Major General Jamal Yunis was appointed as Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Hamah, succeeding Shawqi Yusif, in addition to his work as Commander of 555<sup>th</sup> Brigade. In this period, the province witnessed the commission of unprecedented crimes against civilians, in addition to the beginning of recruiting fighters into the Fifth Corps. Likewise, Yunis was appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs from 2016 to 2017. On 21 February 2018, Bashar al-Assad appointing him Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Eastern Province to become the Centre of his work in the province of Dayr al-Zur, succeeding Major General Shawqi Yusif.

During his service in Hamah between 2012 and 2014, Major General Jamal Yunis had a close relationship with Suhayl al-Hasan, when they both worked under the Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee for Hamah, Major General Wajih Yahya al-Mahmud, in committing wide-ranging violations against civilians from the province of Hamah, and with mass murder and burying the dead in mass graves, which they counted on to hide the evidence of their crimes. Likewise, they committed wide-ranging violations against detainees in the Dayr SHamahyl prison, which was run by retired Colonel Fadl Mikhayil from the village of al-Rabi'a in Hamah province, in which torture, murder, and material extortion took place against detainees.

Given his involvement in a large number of crimes in various provinces, Jamal Yunis fears revenge, and he does not move except with a personal security detachment of 50 soldiers. The soldiers of this detachment were also involved in the looting of civilians' houses and shops in the provinces in which Yunis operated. The valuable stolen goods were moved to the province of Latakia, where they gathered tens of millions of dollars.

Among the crimes that Jamal Yunis has committed are the massacre committed by the forces of 555<sup>th</sup> Brigade against civilians in revenge for the killing of two soldiers from the brigade. On 24 April 2012, in which the Musha' al-Arba'in neighbourhood in the city of Hamah was encircled with a large number of soldiers, two BMP cars, troop carriers, and pick-up-mounted machine guns. These forces opened fire randomly, leading

to the deaths of 18 civilians and the wounding of dozens with grave injuries. Among the known victims of the massacre are:

Fadi Nasif, 'Umar Tarabulsiyyah (25 years old), 'Azzam Zaynu, Ahmad Qassas, Mahmud al-Tabal (18 years old), 'Abd al-Samad al-Dabburi (17 years old), Musa al-Juma'a (50 years old), Riyad al-Dahna (25 years old), Ibrahim al-Dahna (17 years old), Walid al-'Ali (55 years old), Turki al-Barghash (27 years old), 'Asif Ahmad al-Qasqas (30 years old), Ni'san 'Ali Qasqas (60 years old), 'Ali Hussayn Zaynu (40 years old), 'Assam 'Urman (25 years old), Malik bin Nayif al-Masri (40 years old), Muhammad 'Awad al-Miznir (38 years old), and Anis bin Hassan Mu'atti (30 years old). Those known to have been wounded in this event include Mahmud bin Mahmud al-'Abid (born in 1988), Haytham Ni'san Qasqas (born in 1960), 'Ala 'Abd al-Mu'ayyan (27 years old), Muhammad Fa'iz al-Sha'ar (born in 1989), and the child Sanad Talal al-Muhammad (born in 2008).

This massacre was documented by the delegation of international observers who came to Syria in this period, and under the authority of the Hamah police in the al-Hamidiyya police department, and with the general representative in Hamah, without the al-Hamidiyya police department and general representative in Hamah being so bold as to identify those responsible for committing this massacre.



**19. Major General Rafiq Mahmud Shahadah**

**Current appointment:**

2017 - present Under command of Commander-in-Chief of Army and Armed Forces

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Sharashir, Jablah, Latakia

Date of birth: 1954

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guard

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2017	Head of Security Committee in Eastern Region
2016 - 2017	Training Agency in Defence Ministry
2012 - 2015	Head of Military Security Directorate
2011 - 2012	Deputy Head of Military Security Directorate
2011 - 2012	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Homs
2010 - 2011	Head of Branch 293 – Officers’ Affairs
2004 – 2010	Military Security branch in Tartous
2000 - 2004	Hafez al-Assad Guard Brigade
1999	Republican Guard officer

Major General Rafiq Shahadah is an old guard officer, and has been one of the most prominent of their number in Syria’s new phase. He commanded Hafiz al-Assad’s Guard Brigade with the rank of Brigadier General until 2000. As a result of a dispute with Major General Dhu al-Himma Shalish, Rafiq was transferred to Political Security, where he headed the branch in the al-Maysat area of Damascus. He then returned to the Republican Guard for a period and was appointed head of the Military Security branch in Tartous. He was then appointed Head of “Branch 293,” concerned with Officers’ Affairs (under Military Intelligence Directorate) based in Damascus.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, Rafiq Shahadah was working as head of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs, and served as Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence Directorate, headed by Major General Ali Mamluk.

Major General Rafiq Shahadah is considered to be directly responsible for the Clock Square Massacre in Homs, which killed and wounded hundreds of the city's residents. He was also responsible for the violations committed by security forces in Homs province, especially in Baba Amr, Talbisa, and al-Rastan.

As a result of the "Crisis Cell" bombing in 2012, Major General Rafiq Shahadah was appointed Head of the Military Intelligence Directorate succeeding Major General Ali Mamluk (who became head of the National Security Bureau.)

While Rafiq Shahadah headed this agency — which is considered one of the strongest and most numerous of the regime's security agencies — Shahadah and his men carried out various violations and criminal acts against Syrians. He has been implicated in the killing, arrest and disappearance of tens of thousands of Syrians, as well as the rapes of hundreds of women in the Military Intelligence Directorate's dungeons, and the deaths and arrests of hundreds of officers and soldiers on the charge of opposing the regime, or on suspicion of defection.

In March 2015, Major General Rafiq Shahadah was placed "under the command of" the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces (Bashar al-Assad) as a result of Shahadah's role in the death of Major General Rustum Ghazalah<sup>(1)</sup>, head of the Political Security Directorate at that time, who was beaten up by Shahadah's men, allegedly over a corruption-related dispute. (Major General Muhammad Mahala was appointed Head of the Military Intelligence Directorate in his Shahdah's place.)

In July 2016, the New York Times reported<sup>(2)</sup> on a suit (Case 1:16-cv-

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(1) Major General Rustum Ghazalah was one of the figures accused of assassinating former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri in 2005. Major General Ghazi Kan'an 'happened' to commit suicide in his office while Major General Jamih Jamih who was killed in Dayr al-Zur in 2013, which raised suspicion that figures related to al-Hariri's assassination were being liquidated.

(2) [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/world/middleeast/marie-colvin-family-sues-syria.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/world/middleeast/marie-colvin-family-sues-syria.html?_r=0)

01423<sup>(1)</sup>) brought by the family of the journalist Marie Colvin before a federal court in Washington, D.C., against the Syrian Arab Republic on 9 July 2016. The journalist's relatives accused ten Syrian officials (most prominently Mahir al-Assad, Ali Mamluk, and Rafiq al-Shahadah) of killing Colvin (with the French photographer Rémi Ochlik) in the Baba Amr district on 22 January 2012, when regime forces bombarded a building which the correspondents were using as a media centre.

The family submitted a number of official papers proving the Syrian regime had targeted the media centre with artillery shells with the intent to kill after Major General Ali Mamluk and his deputy Rafiq Shahadah came to learn of the journalists' arrival in the Baba Amr district of Homs through intelligence agencies in Lebanon in February 2012. On 21 February 2012, the Military Intelligence Directorate intercepted phone calls from the journalists, and one of the Directorate's informants in Baba Amr contacted Khalid Faris (a leader of the local regime loyalist "death squad") and specified the media Centre's location. Based on this, the centre was targeted on the morning of 22 February 2012 with artillery shells which killed Colvin and Ochlik and wounded the French journalist Edith Bouvier, who was able to cross into Lebanon with her colleague, William Daniels.

In June 2017, Bashar al-Assad issued a decision to appoint Major General Rafiq Shahadah as Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Eastern Region, succeeding Major General Muwaffaq Asa'ad, Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Shahadah carried out widespread violations during his time as Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Eastern Region, especially in Dayr al-Zur.

Rafiq Shahadah is considered one of the most controversial officers in the regime's ranks, as he has been deeply involved in corruption and has exploited his position to serve his personal interests. His son, Mudar - despite his education not exceeding a high school diploma - was appointed to the Syrian Foreign Ministry and was made a diplomat working in the Syrian embassy in London. When this embassy was later closed, he was transferred to the embassy in Ukraine. Mudar has two brothers, the "journalist" Sharif Shahadah and another serving as an officer in the Syrian army.

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(1) <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/2972708/Complaint.pdf>

According to reliable information, Rafiq Shahadah had a role in liquidating a number of regime officers who had sensitive information that could compromise the regime in the international community and, in the case of Rafiq al-Hariri's death, most prominently:

- Major General Ghazi Kan'an, who was killed in 2005, when Rafiq Shahadah was head of the Political Security branch in Damascus. Ghazi Kan'aan was Minister of the Interior at that time and before that head of the Political Security Directorate.

- Major General Jamih Jamih, who was killed in Dayr al-Zur in 2013. Rafiq Shahadah was head of the Military Intelligence Directorate and Major General Jamih Jamih was Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Dayr al-Zur. Reports indicate that Major General Rafiq al-Shahadah leaked Major General Jamih Jamih's position to opposition groups to get rid of him.

- Major General Rustum Ghazalah, who was killed in 2015. Major General al-Shahadah was head of the Military Intelligence Directorate while Major General Rustum Ghazalah was head of the Political Security Directorate.

- Brigadier General Issam Zahr al-Din, who was killed in Dayr al-Zur in 2017 when Major General Rafiq Shahadah was Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Eastern Region and there was a major dispute between the two men. Further, Brigader General Jamal Razuq, who was Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Dayr al-Zur at that time, was killed at the start of 2018.

In addition to his role in liquidating regime officers, Major General Rafiq Shahadah is considered to be one of the regime's most prominent officials in committing crimes against Syrians throughout the positions and responsibilities he has held. During his time as head of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs province, he issued orders to kill civilians, and was implicated in crimes committed systematically against women and children. He has been quoted as saying that civilians from these areas are "the popular base and incubator for terrorists."

During the time he headed the Military Intelligence Directorate, Shahadah issued orders to the heads of the branches in the provinces to use heavy weapons against civilians and to strike populated areas, taking

advantage of his proximity to the Syrian High Command and his influence over the army and security forces.

He is also considered to be responsible for the detention without legal justification of hundreds of thousands of Syrian citizens in Military Intelligence branches across various provinces. He is likewise responsible for the massacres carried out in the military prisons and hospitals as these are considered to be under his authority.

As a result of his criminal record, Major General Rafiq Shahadah has been subject to American Treasury Department sanctions<sup>(1)</sup> since 2017, along with 17 officials in the Syrian regime and six other entities under regime authority for their role in the regime carrying out monstrous crimes against the Syrian people.

The table below summarises much of the published events:

Year	Event	Link
2016	New York Times report regarding the death of journalist Marie Colvin and accusations against Major General Rafiq Shahadah	<a href="https://goo.gl/DWskM3">https://goo.gl/DWskM3</a>
2016	Official case file for Case 1:16-cv-01423 33 pages in English in which Major General Rafiq Shahadah's name occurs seven times	<a href="https://goo.gl/XSFSLi">https://goo.gl/XSFSLi</a>
2017	American Treasury Department sanctions against six institutions and 18 Syrian regime figures including Major General Rafiq Shahadah	<a href="https://goo.gl/EuPwLP">https://goo.gl/EuPwLP</a>
2017	Major General Rafiq Shahadah – al-Manar channel	<a href="https://goo.gl/hn83YZ">https://goo.gl/hn83YZ</a>
2017	Major General Rafiq Shahadah congratulates regime forces on breaking siege on Dayr Al-Zur	<a href="https://goo.gl/RgKdgE">https://goo.gl/RgKdgE</a>

(1) <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20170112.aspx>

2017	Visit by General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj to Dayr Al-Zur in which Major General Rafiq Shahadah appears alongside him	<a href="https://goo.gl/9aBX4G">https://goo.gl/9aBX4G</a>
2017	Visit by General Ali Abdullah Ayyub to Dayr al-Zur in which Rafiq Shahadah appears alongside him	<a href="https://goo.gl/36t2nM">https://goo.gl/36t2nM</a>
2017	Interview with Russian Sputnik agency	<a href="https://goo.gl/E6qMyd">https://goo.gl/E6qMyd</a>



**20. Major General Wajih  
Yahya Mahmud**

**Current appointment:**

Dismissed (2018)

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Tartus

Branch of service: Army - Special  
Forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2013	Chairman of Defence and Security Committee in Latakia
2012 - 2013	Commander 3 <sup>rd</sup> Corps
2012 – 2013	Chairman of Defence and Security Committee in Hamah
2011 – 2013	Commander, 18 <sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

Major General Wajih Mahmud is among the oldest of those accused of committing crimes and violations against the Syrian people, and since the 1980s. He was a participant in the Hamah massacre in 1982, which left tens of thousands of people from Hamah dead. At the time, he was at the rank of First Lieutenant in the officer corps of the 47<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade, which assaulted the city with the Defence Squads and the Republican Guard.

From that time, Wajih Mahmud rose until he was appointed Commander of 18<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division in the city of Homs, where he was given the task of deploying his division's forces and heavy weapons in April 2011.

With his previous criminal history, Major General Wajih was entrusted (as leader of the 18<sup>th</sup> Division) with storming the city again on 31 July 2011, after it was besieged for a full month. Those military operations killed about 95 civilians, and injured many of the town's inhabitants.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division then participated in the battles of the Baba ‘Amru neighbourhood in Homs, where Major General Wajih Mahmud is considered directly responsible for the acts of killing and expulsion that the division committed. He was among those responsible for the killing of the American journalist Marie Colvin and the French photojournalist Rémi Ochlik in July 2016. The official suit, [Case 1:16-cv-01423](#) filed on 9 July 2016, discussed the role of the 18<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division in the commission of the crime (at paragraphs 33 and 34.)

According to testimony published in a Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled “[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria](#)”, confirmed by a soldier who had defected from the regime both 134<sup>th</sup> Brigade and the 18<sup>th</sup> Division participated in the crimes and violations committed, with a cover-up, at the beginning of April 2011. At that time, soldiers of the two divisions launched daily raids, arresting any person over the age of 14, and looting and burning commercial properties.

Likewise, the 18<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division deployed military checkpoints in the city of Homs and its environs, and committed numerous massacres of civilians, on the direct instructions of Major General Wajih, who ordered his officers and soldiers to use heavy weapons to bombard inhabited locations.

The brutality of Wajih Mahmud increased when he became Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the province of Hamah from the end of 2011 to 2012, when he coordinated his criminal acts with Brigadier Suhayl al-Hassan and Major General Jamal Yunis. He was known for his policy of planting explosives in rebel areas of the city of Hamah, and blaming it on the opposition.

He is considered primarily responsible for all of the murders and massacres committed in the province of Hamah in the period in which he worked there, including the al-Qabir massacre in the western Hamah environs, the Musha’ al-Arba’in massacre in the city of Hamah, burning all of the village of al-Tamani’ah in Sahl al-Ghab in the western Hamah environs, and killing dozens of its inhabitants and displacing the rest of them.

Major General Mahmud is also considered directly responsible for committing other massacres, the most important of which were the mas-

sacre in the city of Suran on 25 May 2012. As Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee, he issued orders to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade to storm the city with their armoured personnel carriers and tanks, and to open fire randomly on civilians. This led to the killing and wounding of many the inhabitants of the city, of whom the known victims are:

'Abd al-Karim Ahmad Kurush (born in 1973), Bilal Muhammad Juma'a al-'Isa (born in 1979), 'Abd al-Rahman Ahmad Kurush (born in 1993), Muhammad Ahmad Kurush (born in 1987), Hassan Khalid Baluth (born in 1964), 'Abd Allah 'Abd al-Jabbar Hussani (born in 1970), Hussayn Mustafa al-Nasir (born in 1993), 'Ala' Mahmud al-A'raj (born in 1985), Khalid Mustafa al-Shaykh (born in 1969), Tahir 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jirban (born in 1970), Mus'af Najib Nasr al-Shaykh (born in 1983), Ahmad bin Khalid As'ad al-Yasin (born in 1995), Iyman Yousef al-As'ad (born in 1985), Dayya Faysal al-Shaykh (born in 2000), Ahmad Mahmud al-Mahmud (60 years old), Osama Ahmad al-Mahmud (30 years old), Mu'taz Mustafa al-Musaytaf, 'Abd al-Rahman 'Awad al-Jirban, Mustafa 'Abd al-Ru'uf al-Kurush, Khalid al-Sulayman, Sa'do Khalil al-'Abd Allah (50 years old), 'Abd al-Fattah Muhammad al-Muhammad 'Ali (40 years old), MuHamahd Khalid al-Sulayman, 'Abd Allah Kurush, Yousef 'Abdo al-Jirban, Hikmat Muhammad Ahmad al-Mansour, 'Abad Ahmad Mahmud al-Kurush, Ahmad Muhammad al-'Aid al-Harj, Khalid 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Sulayman, Ahmad 'Abd al-Karim al-'Issa, Muhammad 'Abd al-Rahman Kurush, 'Abd al-Rahman Mustafa Kurush, and 'Abd Allah Mustafa Kurush.

Similarly, 18<sup>th</sup> Division troops, under the command of Major General Wajih Mahmud, were in the Maqbarat Bab al-Nasr neighbourhood of the city of Homs on 5 June 2011. There was an altercation between two funeral processions and soldiers of 18<sup>th</sup> Division at one of the city's checkpoints. Major General Mahmud ordered the checkpoint's soldiers to use automatic fire on the processions, killing 30 civilians.

These same forces committed another massacre in the neighbourhood of Karam al-Zaytun in the city of Homs on 4 December 2011. This left 25 victims during the division's bombardment and armoured assault of the neighbourhood. The forces of Major General Wajih Mahmud also participated, with 555<sup>th</sup> Brigade of 4<sup>th</sup> Division, in a massacre in the neighbourhood of Musha' al-Arba'in in the city of Hamah on 24 April 2012.

Likewise, Mahmud resorted to the assassination of prominent figures

and opposition members involved in governance, including Doctor Anis al-Na'im, Governor of Hamah. Mahumud tried to kidnap citizens by accusing them of being opponents of the regime, and charging them large sums to release them. He continued in this role until he was dismissed from service in 2018.

As a result of his criminal record in Hamah and Homs, Major General Wajih Mahmud has been subject to European Union sanctions since January 2011. He is also subject to British sanctions that resulted in the freezing of his accounts.



**21. Major General Zaid Salih**

**Current appointment:**

2018 – present Commander, 5<sup>th</sup> Corps

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Qutailibiyah, Jablah, Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guards

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2017	Deputy Commander <sup>(1)</sup> , Republican Guards
2017	Commander, 30th Division, Republican Guards
2016 – 2017	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo
	Republican Guards
2011	62 <sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 10 <sup>th</sup> Division

When the protest movement broke out in Syria in March 2011, Zaid Salah was leading the 62<sup>nd</sup> Mechanised Brigade as a Brigadier General. He commanded a number of military operations in areas close to Qatana in the Damascus environs, which led to the deaths of dozens of civilians and the arrest of an unknown number. This fighting resulted in regime forces taking control of the city of al-Shaykh Maskin in the northwestern Dara'a environs.

Zaid Salah was rewarded for this achievement by being transferred to the Republican Guard, promotion to the rank of Major General and appointed Chief of Staff of the Republican Guard.

He was also appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Com-

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(1) NB: He maintained his position as Deputy Chief of Staff concurrently with his other positions.

mittee in Aleppo in August 2016, succeeding Major General Adib Muhammad. He commanded Republican Guard formations in the city and played a major role in taking control of Aleppo's eastern districts with help from Russian forces at the end of 2016.

Major General Salah is considered to be directly responsible for the operations which killed about 1,370 civilians during the military campaign against Aleppo's eastern districts between 15 November 2016 and 23 December 2016, in addition to the hundreds of civilians killed during the period he served as Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo city, in addition to the expulsion of tens of thousands of the city's residents.

In late December 2017, Bashar al-Assad issued a decree establishing 30<sup>th</sup> Division of the Republican Guard, which brought together all forces operating in Aleppo. Major General Zaid Salah was appointed Commander, and continued in his position until the end of October 2017. He was then appointed Deputy Commander of the Republican Guard, under Major General Talal Makhlef. At the start of 2018, Major General Zaid Salah was appointed Commander, 5<sup>th</sup> Assault Corps, which was overseen directly by Russia.

Major General Salah has played a major role in expulsions, as he has overseen the conclusion of a number of agreements that resulted in civilians departing the eastern areas of Aleppo.



**22. Major General Ghassan Isma'il**

**Current appointment:**

July 2019 Director of the Air Force Intelligence

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Junaynat Ruslan, Darkush, Tartus environs

Date of birth: UKN 1960

Sectarian / ethnic identity: UKN

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018 – 2019	Deputy Director of the Air Force Intelligence
2016 – 2018	State security branch in Suwayda
2011 – 2016	Head of Special Missions branch

Ghassan Ismail came to prominence while he was serving as a Brigadier General in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate's Special Missions branch, as members of this force joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Division in operations to repress protesters in the cities of Daraya and al-Muadamiyah in July 2011.

According to the testimony of a defector from the Special Operations branch, published in a report by Human Rights Watch on 15 December 2011 titled, "By All Means Necessary!: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria<sup>(1)</sup>": "Colonel Ghassan Isma'il, commander of the Special Operations unit, gave verbal orders to shoot at the protesters when his unit was sent to suppress a protest in Daraya neighbourhood during another operation in June, together with the 4th Division. According to Hani, his orders were 'Don't fire in the air; fire directly [at the protesters].'"

Ghassan Isma'il is also considered to be directly responsible for the forcible disappearance of thousands of civilians and for the liquidation

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary/individual-and-command-responsibility-crimes-against-humanity>

of a large number of prisoners in the al-Mezzah Military Prison, pushing the European Union in July 2012 to include his name in package 17 of its sanctions against the regime in a list including 27 regime officials.

In 2015, the United Kingdom froze Ghassan Isma'il's assets as part of measures taken against a group of regime officers responsible for committing violations against Syrians.

Despite repeated condemnations, Bashar al-Assad appointed Ghassan Ismail as head of the State Security branch in Suwayda on 10 December 2016, succeeding Brigadier General Muhammad Makhluף. There, Salamah was complicit with Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr, the former head of the Military Security branch for the Southern Region (later Head of the Military Security branch in Hamah) in the repeated kidnappings which occurred in Suwayda.

At the start of 2018, Ghassan was promoted to Major General and was appointed Deputy Director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate in March 2018.

Major General Ghassan has several brothers, some of whom have died in regime military operations, including Colonel Ammar Ghassan, who was killed after he was captured by opposition fighters in September 2012; and his brother Ziad Ghassan who was fighting in the ranks of the *shabiha* and was also killed in 2012. He has another brother, Brigadier General Samir Isma'il, who works as a judge in the Court of Terrorism.





**23. Major General Ramadan al-Ramadan**

**Current appointment:**

2017 – present Commander, 9<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Mahrusa, Hamah environs

Branch of service: Army - Special Forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2012 – 2017	Deputy Commander, 15 <sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division
2011 – 2012	Commander, 35 <sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment

When Syria’s peaceful protest movement erupted in March 2011, Ramdan al-Ramadan was a commander in the 35<sup>th</sup> Brigade Special Forces under the authority of the 15<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division with the rank of Staff Brigadier General.

His star rose to prominence in this period as a result of his abhorrent sectarian statements (in addition to the repression in which he was complicit): he threatened to wipe out Dara’a and Idlib in response to the peaceful protests against the regime.

Major General Ramadan’s name was mentioned in a report by Human Rights Watch published on 15 December 2011 titled, “By All Means Necessary!: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria”, in which “Amjad” (a soldier who defected from the 35<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment) stated that he received direct verbal orders from his commander to open fire at the protesters on 25 April. In his testimony Amjad said:

“The commander of our regiment, Brigadier General Ramadan Mah-

mud Ramadan, usually stayed behind the lines. But this time he stood in front of the whole brigade. He said, 'Use heavy shooting. Nobody will ask you to explain.' Normally we are supposed to save bullets, but this time he said, 'Use as many bullets as you want.' And when somebody asked what we were supposed to shoot at, he said, 'At anything in front of you.' About 40 protesters were killed that day."

That day was the start of the regime army's storming of the city of Dara'a, employing heavy weapons, in an operation which killed about two hundred citizens and wounded hundreds more.

"Habib" (an officer who had defected) made a corroborating witness statement (published in the Human Rights Watch report of 1 June 2011, titled, "We've Never Seen Such Horror,") that his unit in Dara'a received orders from Brigadier General Ramadan, commander of the 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment Special Forces on 25 April to open fire on protesters.

Despite Ramadan being added to the European sanctions list in mid-2012 after it was shown that he issued orders to soldiers to fire on protesters in Banyas and Dara'a, he was appointed Acting Commander of 9<sup>th</sup> Division still in the rank of Staff Brigadier General; he was subsequently promoted to the rank of Major General and his command of 9<sup>th</sup> Division - which participated under his command in the battles of Harasta – was confirmed.

At the end of January 2018, Major General Ramadan was subject to an assassination attempt, after which he intimidated the 60,000 civilian residents of al-Sanamayn into leaving the city for the town of Jabab.

Major General Ramadan played a prominent role in supporting suspicious figures who claimed to join the opposition and then soon returned to the regime, including the so-called Antar al-Labad, known for his suspicious connections with arms and ammunition sales to the Khalid bin al-Walid Army, which pledged loyalty to the ISIS organisation and was deployed in the Yarmuk basin in the western Dara'a environs.





**24. Major General Muwaffaq  
Muhammad Asa'ad**

**Current appointment:**

2019 Advisor in Defence Ministry

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Madaya, Damascus environs

Date of birth: 1953

Branch of service: Air Force

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2012 –2019 <sup>(1)</sup>	Deputy to the Chief of Staff
2017 – 2018	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Eastern Region
2015 – 2017	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Hamah

As a result of his appointment as Deputy Chief of Staff on 1 January 2012, the name General Muwaffaq Muhammad Asa'ad began to appear publicly. He became prominent in the regime's operations against regions of western Qalamun in the cities of Zabadani, Madaya and Bloudan in February 2012, in which a large number of civilians were killed. Major General Asa'ad was the commander of this campaign.

Two reports by the Syrian Human Rights Committee (of 10 December 2013 and 11 December 2013) revealed the extent of the brutality of the forces which were under the command of Major General Asa'ad while storming the town of al-Nabik and its environs, as well as the campaigns which he led in both Aleppo and Latakia in 2013 and 2014, during which thousands of Syrians were killed, arrested or displaced.

As a result of his brutality in dealing with the opposition, the regime leadership rewarded Major General Asa'ad by appointing him as Head of the Defence and Security Committee in Hamah, succeeding Major Gen-

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(1) NB Throughout, he maintained his position as Deputy to the Chief of Staff concurrent to his other positions

eral Jamal Yunis, in 2015. He directed a number of campaigns against the northern and eastern Hamah environs, relying on a number of local Alawite militias. He employed them in commerce as well as repression, with Major General Yunis also being implicated in selling smuggled fuel from areas held by the ISIS organisation in the eastern Hamah environs to regime areas. His forces were also involved in kidnapping and in terrorising civilians.

Subsequently, Asa'ad was moved to Dayr al-Zur in 2017 to take over as head of the Defence and Security Committee there, replacing Major General Muhammad Hassan. Asa'ad continued to engage in corruption and profiteering from the siege of Dayr al-Zur by misappropriating half the food stocks sent by the United Nations for civilians, and selling the other half at increased prices. He also monopolised the trade in food and medical items coming into Dayr al-Zur through military helicopters.

Due to his failure to break the siege on Dayr al-Zur airport during the six months he spent as Head of the Defence and Security Committee for the Eastern Region, he was dismissed from his post and Major General Rafiq Shahadah was appointed in his place. He was placed at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces, and then appointed advisor to the Defence Ministry, after General Abdullah Ayyub was appointed Minister of Defence at the start of 2018.







**25. Major General Adib Nimr Salamah**

**Current appointment:**

2016 – present Assistant Director of Air Force Intelligence Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Dahr al-Maghar, al-Salamiyah, Hamah

Date of birth: 1953

Branch of service: Air Force - Air Defence / Intelligence

**Previous appointments:**

2006 - 2016	Head of Air Force Intelligence branch in Northern Region (Aleppo)
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Adib Salamah comes from the village of Dahr al-Maghar, which is part of the city of al-Salamiyah in the eastern Hamah environs.

He graduated from the Military Academy with a specialisation in Air Defence. He rose through the ranks until he reached Brigadier General. He was on the verge of retiring at the end of 2010, but the eruption of the Syrian revolution in 2011 led him to extend his service like many other officers, such as Major General Jamil Hassan.

During his time as Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Northern Region in Aleppo from 2006 - 2016, Brigadier General Adib Salamah oversaw the killings, arbitrary arrests and systematic torture carried out daily in the Air Force Intelligence branch, as well as a false-flag explosion carried out by the regime to make it appear to be the victim of terrorism. (Brigadier General Salamah's subordinates placed the bodies of prisoners on the road near the branch.)

Brigadier General Salamah extorted families of prisoners directly, not through his men.

A 2012 report by Human Rights Watch called "Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Un-

derground Prisons since March”<sup>(1)</sup>, described the torture to which Syrians were subjected in security offices. The crimes to which the people of Aleppo were subjected at the hands of Brigadier General Adib Salamah were described in particular in a report titled, “Death Everywhere: War crimes and human rights abuses in Aleppo, Syria”<sup>(2)</sup>, which discussed the crimes committed by the security offices in Aleppo directly under his supervision.

As a result of these horrific violations, Adib Salamah’s name was included in European<sup>(3)</sup> and British<sup>(4)</sup> sanctions lists, as well as Canadian sanctions, as he has directly overseen killings, arbitrary arrests, and the torture which was carried out by members of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Northern Region (Aleppo and Idlib) against Syrians.

In 2016, Samantha Power, the former United States’ Permanent Representative to the United Nations, announced the names of regime military officials whom, she said reliable reports had confirmed, had carried out war crimes against Syrian civilians, and threatened them with prosecution. Power reported the names of 12 Syrian officers said to have ordered attacks on civilian targets and the torture of opposition members, including Major General Adib Salamah. She said:

“The United States will not let those who have commanded units involved in these actions hide anonymously behind the facade of the Assad regime ... Those behind such attacks must know that we and the international community are watching their actions, documenting their abuses, and one day, they will be held accountable.”

She stressed that the United States would hold to account units responsible for killing civilians.

The most prominent crimes linked to Adib Salamah during his service in Aleppo included:

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- (1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias>
  - (2) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/1370/2015/en/>
  - (3) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21509/list-persons-entities-eu-restrictive-measures-syria-30052017.pdf>
  - (4) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6915](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6915)

- The massacre of the Salah al-Din district in Aleppo (22 June 2012) in which security forces opened fire on protesters at the direct order of Major General Adib Salamah.

- The massacre of the al-Sha'ir district in Aleppo (20 July 2012) in which security forces under Salamah's authority fired on worshippers at the Nur al-Shuhada mosque, killing about 26 civilians.

- The massacre of the al-Khalidiyah district in Aleppo (5 August 2016), when members of the Air Force Intelligence forces carried out field executions by shooting a number of civilians at the direct order of Major General Adib Salamah.

- The al-Umariyyah district in Aleppo (2 November 2012) when security forces stormed the district, kidnapped a number of civilians, executed them, and then placed their bodies in a cellar of a local building. It has been confirmed that their killings were carried out under the direct order of Major General Adib Salamah.

- The massacre of the Quwaiq River in Aleppo (29 January 2013) in which 128 civilians were killed when Air Force Intelligence members shot them in the head and placed their bodies in the Quaiq River in Aleppo, which at that time flowed from regime-controlled areas to opposition-held areas. This was considered one of the most heinous crimes in Aleppo at that time, with witnesses saying that a number of those who were killed had been prisoners held by Air Force Intelligence, headed by Adib Salamah (video 1<sup>(1)</sup>, video 2<sup>(2)</sup>). Many videos and testimonies have documented this massacre.

- The massacre of al-Malakiyyah village in Aleppo (27 February 2013), in which regime forces accompanied by Shi'a militiamen carried out a massacre in the Aleppo environs town, killing 70 children and elderly people by shooting them dead, and then burning their houses under the direct orders of Major General Adib Salamah.

- The Aziza village massacre (4 April 2013) in which security forces stormed the village and arrested 22 young men from the village and then executed them.

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(1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnfiORZtnes>

(2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AECdhhbFdU9c&feature=youtu.be>

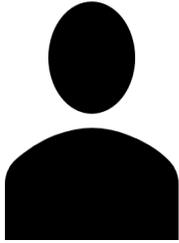
- The massacre of the al-Dakhur district in Aleppo (16 April 2013), which killed 33 civilians, their bodies thrown in an area between the al-Shaikh Khadr and the al-Midan in the al-Dakhur district.

Air Force Intelligence also participated in carrying out a number of massacres along with Iranian militias in the eastern districts of Aleppo — particularly in the period before the area was invaded. Major General Adib Salamah, Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan, Major General Zaid Salih, and the “al-Quds Brigade” (a Palestinian militia established by Muhammad Sa’id with direct support from Major General Adib Salamah, who has excellent relations with the businessman Hussam al-Qatirji) all played a role in these horrific violations.

A large number of other violations which occurred under Major General Adib Salamah’s supervision have also been documented, including managing a network to steal houses and ownership documents after directing false accusations at civilians in Aleppo city in order to force them to give up their homes. In September 2016, Major General Adib Salamah was appointed to the position of Assistant Director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate.

Major General Adib Salamah has a number of siblings, including Masib Salamah, who leads a local Alawite militia operating in the al-Salamiyyah area in the eastern Hamah environs. This militia has been behind hundreds of killings, kidnappings and executions.





**26. Major General Aws Ali Aslan**

**Current appointment:**

2016 – present Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Date of birth: 1958

Branch of service: Army

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 - 2016	Deputy Commander, 4 <sup>th</sup> Division
2011 - 2014	Commander, 40 <sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade in 4 <sup>th</sup> Division

Aws Aslan enjoys influence in Syria's military institutions as the son of the retired general Ali Aslan, who served as Chief of Staff in the Army and Armed Forces. The Aslan family belongs to the same clan to which Hafiz al-Assad belonged.

Ali Aslan was one of the main figures to secure Bashar al-Assad's transition to power after Hafiz al-Assad's death in the year 2000. Aws graduated from the Military Academy along with Bassil al-Assad at the rank of First Engineering Lieutenant.

In 2011, Aws Aslan was Commander of 40<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade, part of 4<sup>th</sup> Division, with the rank of Brigadier General. His forces participated in the storming of the cities of Muadamiyat al-Sham and Daraya and carried out violations during these invasions — in particular in Muadamiyat al-Sham, which fell victim to the harshest campaigns of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division and Air Force Intelligence (9 May 2011). Security forces surrounded the town and blockaded it for two weeks, and then assaulted it using heavy military equipment and tanks. The operation resulted in the arrest of about 2,000 of the city's residents. The city was then stormed another time in March 2013, during which operation about 2,000 civilians were killed (including more than 60 women and 100 children) and more than 3,000 people were

wounded, including a large number who received permanent disabilities.

Aws Aslan bears responsibility (along with Major General Jamal Yunis and Brigadier General Jawdat al-Safi and Mahir al-Assad, who was leader of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps) for the massacres committed at that time. The 15 December 2011 Human Rights Watch report “‘By All Means Necessary!’ Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria”<sup>(1)</sup>, reported the practices of the regime forces under Aslan’s command. Among these was imposing a long siege on Mu’adamiyat al-Sham which led its residents to eat tree leaves and whatever else they could find, while his forces used snipers to shoot all those who tried to enter or leave. A massacre was also carried out in the city on 1 August 2012 in which 86 people were killed. They carried out another massacre<sup>(2)</sup> in September 2012, in which about 80 people were killed, as well as what is known as the “Great Daraya Massacre”<sup>(3)</sup> in August 2012, which killed more than 700 people, including children, women, and entire families.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Division’s men also had a major role in displacing and killing residents of the al-Qabun district, which was surrounded and then assaulted with heavy armour in July 2011, with about 1,500 district residents arrested.

The violations were repeated in another operation in 2012, when the district witnessed indiscriminate bombardment by the 4<sup>th</sup> Division’s tanks, with the campaign lasting about five days and leading to the displacement of more than 80 percent of its people, the razing of an entire quarter, as well as at least 100 deaths and the arrests of hundreds — all in addition to the theft, looting and the total destruction of the district’s industry and infrastructure.

In July 2012, members of the 40<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade stormed the Nahr Aysha district after bombarding it with tank shells and heavy machine guns, which killed and wounded a large number of district residents.

The 40<sup>th</sup> Tank Brigade under the command of Aws Aslan participated in the assaults on Dara’a, Banyas, and al-Zabadani, which resulted in

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary/individual-and-command-responsibility-crimes-against-humanity>

(2) [http://sn4hr.org/public\\_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/moadamia.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/moadamia.pdf)

(3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dFlmXV9fpQ>

the deaths of thousands of civilians, as well as the invasions of the Barzah and Tishrin districts, Damascus environs cities such as Harasta and Saqba, and the suburbs of Qadisiya, al-Hima, and Wadi Barada at the beginning of 2017.

As a result of his major role in these horrific violations against civilians, Major General Aws Aslan has been subject to American<sup>(1)</sup>, European<sup>(2)</sup> and British<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions.

Despite this, in 2015 he was appointed Deputy Commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division to continue his criminal operations in various areas in which the division's units were deployed. At the end of 2016, he was appointed Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corps.

He enjoys major support from Russia. It was rumoured that Bashar al-Assad wanted to remove him from the Corps command, but Russia ordered that he be returned immediately — all of which occurred in light of rumours that Russia was preparing Major General Aslan to succeed Bashar al-Assad.

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(1) <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1373.aspx>

(2) <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1373.aspx>

(3) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/730120/syria.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730120/syria.pdf)



**27. Major General Shawqi Yusuf**

**Current appointment:**

Commander, Eastern Region

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jablah

Branch of service: Army

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018	Head of Defence and Security Committee for the Eastern Region
2016	Deputy Head of Operations Authority
2015 – 2016	Commander 4 <sup>th</sup> Corps - Storm
2013 - 2015	Head of Defence and Security Committee on the Coast
2012 - 2013	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Hamah

Major General Shawqi Yusuf is from the Jablah area of Latakia province. He is considered one of the main officers upon whom the regime has depended in leading its security committees in Hamah, the Coast, and the Eastern Region. He also serves as the Deputy Head of the Operations Authority in the Army and Armed Forces, which is the authority responsible for carrying out all the army's military operations. Before this, he had served as Commander of 4<sup>th</sup> (Storm) Corps at the beginning of the Russian military intervention.

After he was appointed head of the Military and Security Committee in Hamah in 2012, Major General Shawki was involved in widespread crimes and violations against civilians. He oversaw raids which resulted in the deaths and arrests of dozens of Hamah province residents, especially in the northern Hamah environs.

To this end, Shawki worked to recruit a large number of young men from regime loyalist villages into the National Defence militias, especially those who came from the western Hamah environs. He is also considered to be directly responsible for the displacement of residents of the northern Hamah environs from their villages and towns, as well as the destruction which has occurred in these villages and towns.

When he was appointed Commander of the Coastal Region and Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee for the Coast in 2013, Major General Shawki continued to carry out widespread violations in the northern Latakia environs, which led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians and the destruction of a large number of villages and towns, and displacement of residents from the area.

During this period, he coordinated with a number of Iranian officers and members of the Lebanese Hizballah group, creating plans in intensive meetings held in the Officers' Club in Latakia in February 2015. The following figures participated in these: Major General Adib Salamah, Major General Shawki Yusuf, Major General Zuhayr Hamid, the Iranian Brigadier General Haydar Akbar Shamakhli, as well as a number of Hizballah commanders. Plans were also made to compensate the regime for losses on the Aleppo front through a mobilisation of additional forces from the militias, placing them in the Aleppo Military Academy, the Armament and Artillery College, and the Nayrab Airbase. They would then be sent toward Nubal and al-Zahra, as well as the Costello Road with the aim of cutting off supply routes to Aleppo and encircling them — something that was accomplished about a year and a half later.

As a result of the Russian military intervention in September 2015, 4<sup>th</sup> (Storm) Corps was established and Major General Shawki Yusuf was appointed Commander. He continued in this position until June 2016, and is considered to be directly responsible in this period for all the violations which occurred during the operations carried out by the 4<sup>th</sup> Corps in the northern Latakia and northern Hamah environs.

In 2016, Major General Shawki Yusuf was transferred to the General Staff and appointed Deputy Head of the Operations Authority. His successor in command of 4<sup>th</sup> Corps was Major General Hassan Mirhaj.

At the start of 2018, Major General Shawki was appointed Commander of the Eastern Region while maintaining his position in the Operations Authority.

Major General Shawki Yusuf was a signatory on behalf of the Syrian regime in the first Astana agreement at the end of December 2016<sup>(1)</sup>, but the regime did not abide by this deal.

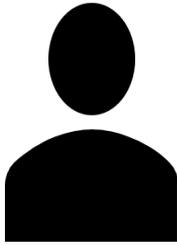
Major General Shawki Yusuf is still continuing to carry out his actions in the Eastern Region as military commander. He works closely with the Iranians and Russians in the Eastern Region, as well as with fighters from the militias which are fighting alongside the regime forces, most prominently the Forces of the Fighters of the Tribes, headed by Turki Abu Hamad. He also facilitates Iranian forces in carrying out their Shi'ification activities and putting pressure on local residents in their worship in Dayr al-Zur.



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(1) Al-Hurra: Copy of the truce deal in Syria and the signatory parties <https://www.alhurra.com/a/syrian-crisis-truce/341663.html>





**28. Major General Jawdat Salibi Mawas**

**Current appointment:**

Officer in the Artillery and Missiles Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Rabah village, western Homs environs

Date of birth: 1954

Branch of service: Army - Artillery

**Previous appointments:**

2011	155 <sup>th</sup> Brigade
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Jawdat Salibi Mawas was born in the village of Rabah in the western Homs environs in 1954. He joined the military, and rose through its ranks, joining the Artillery and Missiles Directorate. He was then transferred in 2011 to the 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade equipped with SCUD missiles, located near al-Qutaifa in the Damascus environs.

In 2013, Major General Jawdat's name became prominent when the regime launched a number of SCUD missiles at Aleppo and its environs, which destroyed populated districts and killed hundreds during the bombardment, as well as increasing the waves of displacement from the city and its environs.

In the same year, Major General Jawdat oversaw the chemical attack on Eastern Ghuta, which killed 1,127 people, including 201 women and 107 children, according to a report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights<sup>(1)</sup>. Opposition sources submitted estimated death tolls of up to 1,400 people, which was corroborated by American intelligence reports, which for their part confirmed that Major General Jawdat personally oversaw the launching of 16 surface-to-surface (ie SCUD) missiles at 2:30am on 21 August 2013.

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(1) [sn4hr.org/public\\_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/Statement%20First%20year%20ar.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/Statement%20First%20year%20ar.pdf)

Brigadier General Jawdat is considered to be the liaison between the Syrian Ministry of Defence and the General Institution for Technological Production, which a United Nations report<sup>(1)</sup> confirmed was involved in Chemical Weapons development for regime forces.

In 2016, the American Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Samantha Power, included Brigadier General Jawdat's name in a list which included the most prominent regime leaders involved in carrying out wide-scale violations, which she described as "Assad's criminals" and vowed to hold them to account, saying:

"Today, I would like to specify some of the names of those involved since 2011 in killing and injuring civilians by conducting air and ground-based Syrian government military assaults on cities, residential areas, and civilian infrastructure. The United States will not let those who have commanded units involved in these actions hide anonymously behind the façade of the Assad regime. We know who some of these commanders are ... Now, I know right now, today, with wind at their backs, these individuals feel impunity. So, though, did Slobodan Milosevic, Charles Taylor, and countless war criminals before them. Today's atrocities are well-documented, and the civilised world's memories are long."

Major General Jawdat Salibi Mawas is subject to Canadian<sup>(2)</sup>, British<sup>(3)</sup>, and European<sup>(4)</sup> sanctions as a result of his major role in crimes against the Syrian people.

What follows is list of a number of the massacres committed by Major General Jawdat Salibi Mawas during his time at 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade:

- The massacre of the Tariq al-Bab and Ard Hamra districts (Aleppo, 22 February 2013) in which the two districts were bombarded with ballistic SCUD missiles and surface-to-surface rockets, killing 93 people.
- The massacre of Hreitan (Aleppo, 29 March 2013), which was subjected to rocket bombardment which killed 12 people and wounded a large number.

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(1) [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/861103/files/S\\_2017\\_172-AR.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/861103/files/S_2017_172-AR.pdf)

(2) Canadian sanctions 193

(3) British sanctions 199

(4) European sanctions 209

- The massacre of Kafr Hamra (Aleppo, 2 June 2013), which was subjected to SCUD missile bombardment which killed 40 people and wounded more than 100.

- The massacre of Marih (Aleppo, 20 May 2014), which was subjected to SCUD missile bombardment, which killed 14 people, including 11 children and two women, and wounded 21 others.

- The massacre of the al-Sukkari district (Aleppo, 17 May 2016), which was bombarded by five ballistic missiles which killed five people and wounded 50 other civilians.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights in a report<sup>(1)</sup> issued on 2 March 2013 documented the launching of 61 SCUD missiles from the 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which struck 59 populated locations. It also published another report on 9 June 2013 in which the same Brigade was documented as launching 131 rockets, distributed as follows:

- Aleppo province: 71 rockets, killing 214 people and wounding more than 580 others.

- Raqqa province: 10 rockets, killing 14 people and wounding 92 others.

- Idlib province: 19 rockets, killing three people and wounding 29 others.

- Dayr al-Zur province: 15 rockets, wounding three people.

- Damascus environs province: 11 rockets causing 23 deaths and wounding more than 33 others.

- Hamah province: five rockets causing three deaths and wounding more than 33 others.

- Homs province: An unspecified number of surface-to-surface, long-range missiles struck the al-Qusair area, with the number of deaths difficult to quantify given the siege on the area and the loss of communications.

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(1) <http://www.sn4hr.org/public.htm>

The report included a list<sup>(1)</sup> of the names of 257 civilians who were killed, including 84 women and 54 children (and those of about 1,000 who were wounded) as a result of this rocket bombardment.

In addition to this list are the 1,127 killed by the chemical bombardment on Eastern Ghuta in August 2013, and the deaths of the second chemical bombardment, which killed 80 people, including women and children in April 2018.

Major General Jawdat has been documented as being involved in the execution of rocket and chemical bombardments. These include the chemical attack on Khan Shaykhun (4 April 2017) which killed about 90 people, including women and children, as well as the hundreds who were killed and wounded and the thousands who were displaced in the subsequent period as a result of the Syrian regime's use of ballistic missiles against populated areas. The following figures bear direct responsibility for this: Major General Jawdat Salibi Mawas, Major General Adnan Halwah, and Major General Jumaa al-Jassim, the head of the Artillery and Missiles Directorate.

Major General Jawdat Salibi's Mawas's wife, Ghana Issa Mawas, was killed in April 2015 in Damascus in mysterious circumstances. Jawdat also has a twin brother named Maurice who is also a Major General and is Director of the Medical Services Directorate in the Defence Ministry.

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(1) <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B9Bj18tIYYKBeV9XdEdUV3dPM0U/edit>



**29. Major General Muhammad Ibrahim Khaddur**

**Current appointment:**

Commander of the Third Corps

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guard

<u>Previous appointments:</u>	
2018	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs and its environs
2018	Commander of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Brigade

2017 – 2018	“Assigned” <sup>(1)</sup> Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Eastern Region
2017 – 2018	“Assigned” Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Brigade
Late 2017	“Assigned” Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo
Early 2017	“Assigned” Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs
2015 - 2017	Commander, 17 <sup>th</sup> Division
2014 - 2015	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Eastern Region;
	Deputy-Commander of 17 <sup>th</sup> Division
2013	Commander of operations in al-Qalamun and Yabrud
2013	Commander of operations in Barzah and al-Qabun
2012 – 2013	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo
2011 – 2012	Commander of 106 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, Republican Guards

(1) ‘Assignment’ in the Syrian Arab Army differs from ‘appointment’, in that ‘assignment’ is a local measure by the commander of the military sector or institution; whereas ‘appointment’ is a substantive measure, may be for the assigned person (but not inevitably), and is effected by a decree of the Commander-in-Chief, Bashar al-Assad.

Upon the outbreak of peaceful demonstrations in April 2011, Muhammad Khaddur was Commander 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Republican Guard with the rank of Brigadier. He was charged with operations in Eastern Ghuta, where he participated in storming Duma on 25 April 2011, and he issued orders to his soldiers to hit protestors, breaking their limbs, and arresting a great number of them.

According to the testimony of Lieutenant Colonel “Ghassan” (an officer who defected from 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade), Brigadier Muhammad Khaddur ordered that protestors be struck with clubs and then arrested. Detainees were held in the council hall of Duma. Upon the growth in the number of protestors killed, Brigadier Muhammad Khaddur issued orders not to hit people hard on the head, and instead to break their limbs until they could no longer protest. He ensured that they be beaten and tortured in security trucks rather than public places.

Lieutenant Colonel “Ghassan” affirmed that executions and cleansings in Eastern Ghuta took place within sight and hearing of Brigadiers Muhammad Khaddur and ‘Assam Zahr (then Deputy Commander of 104<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Republican Guard.) The city of Duma suffered from mass arrests (from which more than 5,000 people were disappeared) and the deaths of around 100 people from immediate executions at checkpoints or under torture. This was in addition to campaigns of raids, arrests, the destruction of public and private property, the theft of gold and from commercial establishments, both in the city and in the farmlands surrounding it.

In mid-2012, Brigadier Muhammad Khaddour was sent with 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Republican Guards, to the city of Aleppo. He was appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo on 29 November 2012. In this period, Khaddour was involved in the commission of widespread crimes of killing, arrest, and looting. He also followed a policy of sectarian discrimination, targeting Sunnis with violations, as [emerged](#) in one of the regime campaigns to break the siege of Minaq Airbase. He addressed a group of youths from the Shi’i towns of Nubal and al-Zahra, affirming that he will fight under the banner of Husayn, and that he will raise the banner of Hussayn in Minaq, declaring “For you, Hussayn!”

As a result of being accused of corruption and weakness, Khaddur was relieved of command of operations in Aleppo, and transferred to command of military operations in the neighbourhoods of Birzah and Qa-

bun in Damascus, where he engaged in indiscriminate bombardment in the region, leading to the killing and expulsion of thousands of civilians.

As a result of his brutal policy, Khaddur was transferred at the end of November 2013 to command of military operations in the areas of Western and Eastern Qalamun in the Damascus environs, where he led the storming of the regions of Bayrud, Rankus, Qarah, Mazari' Rima, al-Nabak, and other areas in al-Qalamun. He accomplished this with the assistance of Lebanese Hizballah, Iraqi militias, and especially Liwa' Dhu al-Fiqar. Several mass killings occurred as a result of random bombardment, since regime forces dropped around 30 barrel bombs per day, and launched around 20 raids daily, not to mention the launching of around 30 surface – to-surface rockets, BURKAN (Volcano) rockets, and short-range rockets to force civilians to flee.

After driving out the civilians, Khaddur and his forces were involved in theft, looting, and the destruction of houses, as well as clearing civilians who had chosen to remain in the city. Brigadier Muhammad Khaddur, alongside Major General Salim Burkan (who had taken command of 3<sup>rd</sup> Division at the time) engaged in the ugliest forms of systematic killing and expulsion. He was likewise involved in smuggling antiquities and artifacts from the areas of Yabrud, Ma'lulah, and especially from historical Christian churches present in the region, and framing opposition brigades and Kabhat al-Nusra.

At the end of 2014, Muhammad Khaddur was promoted to Major General and sent to al-Hasakah, where he was charged with launching a military operation to gain control over the Ghuiran neighbourhood that had been totally destroyed. This led to the killing of more than 25 civilians and the wounding of numerous others, not to mention the displacement of thousands from the “Arab” neighbourhood of the city, and the arrest of all those who left the neighbourhood despite their signing of a safe-passage agreement with the regime.

In 2015, Major General Muhammad Khaddur established – during his presence in al-Hasakah – the al-Maghawir militia, the training of which was overseen by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Lebanese Hizballah, and the forces of this militia were employed to engage in terror operations, with the aim of expelling the largest number of the inhabitants of al-Hasakah in 2015.

In 2015, Major General Khaddur was appointed Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Division, and continued in this role until July 2016. While in situ, he participated in increasing the suffering of the people of Dayr al-Zawr; he also became deeply involved in corruption, as he was involved in moving families by helicopter from Dayr al-Zawr to al-Hasakah at extraordinary prices; he traded in the aid that was turned away from besieged areas; and he eased the transportation of large merchants in the eastern region to Damascus, using military transport planes to ship goods and food, and sell them in the neighbourhoods of the city of Dayr al-Zur, which was besieged by ISIS. He also worked to privatise armed escorts for some merchants in the Damascus markets for extortionate fees, and imposed “protection” on many merchants in exchange for extraordinary charges. His most prominent partners in this period were Muhammad Sa’id al-Ashram (Abu Sa’id), Salih al-Khirfan, and Dhib al-Muhaymad.

Major General Khaddur made even more millions in corrupt profits from civilians fleeing the ISIS siege of Dayr al-Zur, to whom he sold passage on military transport planes to the city of Damascus. In early 2017, Khaddur was assigned Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee of Homs.

At the end of 2017, Khaddur was “assigned” Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo, succeeding Major General Zayd Salih. During this time, Khaddur launched operations against ISIS in Dayr al-Zur, for which he was rewarded with an appointment as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade. He also oversaw regime operations to gain control over the Abu al-Duhur airport, which resulted in the expulsion of around 150,000 people and the killing of a large number of civilians in bombardment operations - not to mention his involvement in the looting of the entire region. He was rewarded at the beginning of 2018 with an appointment as Commander 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade.

Major General Muhammad Khaddur appeared in a Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled [“By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria,”](#) which held him directly responsible for killings in the city of Duma in Eastern Ghuta. Major General Khaddur is subject to European and British sanctions because of his direct oversight over killings, arbitrary detentions, and torture.

What follows are a number of massacres that regime forces committed under his command:

- The Furn al-Walid massacre in the al-Haydariyyah neighbourhood (Aleppo, 2 December 2012), which left 9 dead and dozens wounded as a result of a mortar bombardment of the neighbourhood.

- The Furn al-Idlibi massacre in the neighbourhood of Bustan al-Qasr (Aleppo, 3 December 2012), which left 20 dead and more than 100 wounded, alongside great material damage as a result of artillery bombardment of the inhabitants who had gathered in front of Furn al-Idlibi.

- The Jab al-Qubbah massacre (Aleppo, 9 January 2013), which left 27 dead as the result of rocket bombardment by regime forces of the neighbourhoods of the city.

- The massacre of the neighbourhood of Jabal Badarro (Aleppo, 29 January 2013), which resulted in 128 detentions whose bodies were found in the Quwaiq river.

- The massacre of the village of al-Malikiyyah (Aleppo, 27 February 2013), which left 70 dead as the result of regime forces and Iraqi Shi'i militias shooting the inhabitants, including children and the elderly, not to mention the burning of houses and the torture of inhabitants.

- The massacre of Tal al-Shughayab village, which was committed by Hizballah forces against the inhabitants of the village of Tal al-Shughayab in the eastern Aleppo environs, which left 6 dead whose corpses were burned.

- The massacre of 'Azizah village (4 April 2013), which left 22 dead as the result of regime forces storming the village and arresting a large number of youths, and then executing them and desecrating their corpses.

- The massacre of al-Sakhur neighbourhood (Aleppo, 16 April 2013), which left 33 civilians dead, whose corpses were found in the surrounding area between signs of Shaykh Khudur and the square in al-Sakhur neighbourhood.





**30. Major General Kifah al-Milhim**

**Current appointment:**

2019 Director of the Military Intelligence Department

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Tartus

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guard / Military Intelligence

<u>Former appointment:</u>	
2018	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee for the Southern Region
2015	Head of the Information Branch at the Military Intelligence Department
2014	Deputy Chief of the Military Intelligence Department
2012	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch in Latakia
2012	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch in Aleppo
2008	Head of the Military Investigation Branch
2006	Military Intelligence Department
	Republican Guard

Major-General Kifah al-Milhim was born in Junaynat Raslan, Tartus, into an Alawite family. He was recruited into the Republican Guard where he served under Bassil al-Assad, serving as a channel of communication between him and former Prime Minister Mahmud al-Zaubi. When Bassil Assad was killed in a car accident, Milhim was transferred to the Military Intelligence Directorate where he became the head of the Military Investigation Branch (Branch 248).

In March 2011, Milhim participated in the suppression of peaceful demonstrations in Damascus and its environs, commandeering the forces of Branch 248 as it carried out a series of human rights violations against civilians. Branch 248 became renowned within the Syrian security apparatus for its brutality. Military Intelligence directorates in other prov-

inces were known to regularly transfer their detainees to Branch 248 for investigation.

Milhim is the prime individual responsible for the violations committed in Branch 248 in 2011 and 2012.

As Aleppo's security situation deteriorated in 2012, Milhim, then a Brigadier General, was appointed to head the city's Military Security Branch where he continued to carry out criminal violations. During this time, Milhim was one of the senior-most supervisors of the local *Shabiha* paramilitaries. He was directly involved in recruitment operations, and ordered units to carry out kidnappings and the subsequent extortion of victims' families for ransom money. The kidnappings proved a lucrative source of revenue that was shared between Milhim and the *Shabiha* thugs.

Milhim also supervised the killings and tortures carried out at the Aleppo Military Intelligence branch (Branch 290), where personnel are reported to have committed serious violations on detainees. A July 2012 report<sup>(1)</sup> by Human Rights Watch documented the testimonies of detainees who were subjected to Human Rights violations in Military Intelligence branches, including in facilities commanded at the time by Brigadier General Milhim.

At the end of 2012, Milhim was transferred to the coastal city of Latakia to serve as head of the local Military Intelligence branch. Here, he was involved in the recruitment of *Shabiha* personnel and ordering the militias to carry out crimes on behalf of the Military Intelligence Directorate, including kidnapping in collaboration with the late Hilal al-Assad, who is said to have held detainees in the Latakia Sports City complex. Milhim also took part in the al-Assad regime's military operations in the northern environs of Latakia, where he and other regime officers were responsible for the violations and crimes committed in the Kurd Mountains and Turkmen Mountain in the northern Latakia environs.

Milhim was appointed Head of the Information Branch in the Military Intelligence Directorate in 2014. In July of the following year, he was promoted to the rank of Major General and appointed Deputy Chief of the Military Intelligence Directorate, serving under Major General Muhammad Mahmud Mahalla. In this capacity, Milhim oversaw a number of military

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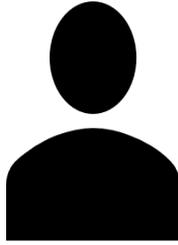
(1) Solvang, O., & Neistat, A. (2012). Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons Since March 2011. Human Rights Watch.

operations in the villages of Hamah, Homs and Aleppo. Along with Major General Mahalla, Milhim is responsible for violations committed by the Military Intelligence Directorate during his tenure. In July 2018, he was appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee for the Southern Region, which includes the provinces of Dara'a, Qunaytra and Suwayda.

Milhim appears on [British](#)<sup>(1)</sup>, [EU](#)<sup>(2)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions lists for his role in numerous criminal violations against the Syrian people.



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- (1) He ranked 204 in the British sanctions list.
  - (2) He ranked 66 in the EU sanctions list.
  - (3) He ranked 73 in the Canadian sanctions list.



### 31. Major General Nazih Hassun

#### Present appointment:

Dismissed (2017)

#### Background information:

Place of birth: al-Qaryya, Suwayda

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence; later State Security and Political Security

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 – 2017	Director of the Political Security Division
2003 – 2015	Deputy Chief of the Air Force Intelligence Administration
1990	Damascus International Airport
1985	Air Force Intelligence Administration, Department of Investigations

Nazih Hassun served in Air Force Intelligence in the 1980s, and rose to reach the rank of Major. He was Deputy Chief of the Investigations Branch of the Air Force Intelligence located in the al-Mazzah Airbase. The Chief of the Investigations Branch at that time was (then) Brigadier 'Ali Mamluk; both Hassun and Mamluk were accused of testing Chemical Weapons on political prisoners.

Since he performed a prominent position in running Unit 417, Nazih Hassun is considered directly responsible for the killing of one to three thousand detainees throughout his work in the programme, which continued from 1985 to 1990, then he rose in security ranks until he was appointed Deputy Chief of Administration for General Intelligence in 2003.

Over the course of 2011, Major General Nazih Hassun was responsible for military operations on the Syrian Coast, where he oversaw the repression of peaceful protests in the cities of Latakia and Homs, and their environs. At that time, he formed a strategic cell in Lebanon to follow the

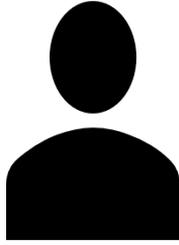
movements of Syrian opposition members in Beirut, and to monitor the movements of Arab diplomats in Lebanon.

Given his direct involvement in the repression and violence against protestors, Major General Hassun was placed on the list of [European](#), [British](#), and Swiss sanctions.

In December 2012, Nazih Hassun was appointed Deputy Director under Political Security Director Rustum Ghazali, and - upon the killing of Ghazali in 2015 - Hassun became Director of the branch. He continued this work until the beginning of 2017, when Major General Muhammad Rahmun was appointed as his successor.

Given his oversight of all of the activities of the Political Security Division's branches, Major General Hassun is considered directly responsible for all of the crimes that were committed by the forces of these branches, especially the central Investigations branch based in Damascus in the al-Fayha' area, in which crimes of cleansing, torture, and field executions took place.

Under Major General Hassun, in agreement with the judges responsible for the terrorism and field courts, the Investigations branches fabricated evidence to support accusations against detainees, including that they had opened fire on the Army and the security services. They contrived corroborating evidence, and forced detainees to sign forms in order to issue execution warrants against them.



**32. Major General Tawfik Yunis**

**Current appointment:**

Retired

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Tartus

Branch of service: Intelligence - Administration

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2016	General Security (Branch 251)
Head of General Security branch In Hama	

Major General Tawfik Yunis was Head of Internal Branch 251 in the General Intelligence Administration, known as the al-Khatib Branch<sup>(1)</sup>.

During this period, under the administration of Yunis the branch gained a fearful reputation in Damascus and its environs, as its prison filled with detainees, against whom the worst forms of torture were practiced.

Likewise, members of the al-Khatib branch participated in the repression of protestors in Eastern Ghuta and the cities of Duma and Harasta, where hundreds of the inhabitants of those regions were arrested after the regions were stormed, or through the branch's checkpoints which were deployed in many locations in Damascus, even after he retired.<sup>(2)</sup>

Major General Tawfik Yunis is considered responsible for all of the crimes and violations, especially cases of enforced disappearance that took place during his leadership of the al-Khatib branch. The testimony of survivors of the branch state that horrifying crimes were committed against detainees, especially in the women's cells, including systematic rape by the members of the branch.

One former detainee described the situation in al-Khatib branch by

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(1) After the street in Damascus on which the headquarters of the branch was from 2011 to 2016.

(2) Crimes against humanity do not have a statute of limitations.

saying that “The al-Khatib Internal Security branch, or Branch 251, is reputed to be one of the most squalid Syrian military branches, and it is a living example of all of those practices in prisons, in this branch – as liberated detainees have related – you cannot see its floor, because it was covered in a layer of blood, and flesh was falling from detainees from each torture session.”

A 2012 Human Rights Watch report entitled [“Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011”](#) discussed horrifying violations in al-Khatib branch, quoting a former detainee called “Bassam,” who said:

“I was subjected to interrogation twice. The interrogation cell was on the second floor. We would be hit by everyone while we were on the way to it, and we were still blindfolded, and during the interrogation I sat on my knees. They punched and kicked me, and it was more of an accusation than a questioning, in the legal way of ascending, since the detainee who could climb the steps fell down them and was cast on the ground.”

The report quotes another former detainee, “Marwa,” who said:

“We heard night and day the voices of men being tortured, there is a person who assisted with organising protests whom they forced to stand on his knees while being held in the cell, and during the interrogation they would threaten me with having my clothes taken and torture on the *dwlab*. We didn’t know what time it was, so we didn’t know the time of prayer, we weren’t able to sleep because of the sounds of torture. The other woman with us in the cell told me that they struck her multiple times and kicked her in the stomach. I saw security forces striking an adolescent who seemed to be 12 years old in the hall. They also coaxed him into saying that he saw us in a protest, and I swore that he had never seen us before, but they believed him. The cells were close to one another and there were holes in the door that I would use to see what was happening outside.”

A [report](#) from the Centre for Documenting Violations in Syria on the violations committed in the al-Khatib branch quotes a former detainee called Samir ‘Abd al-Samad Husayn Karami. He testifies to the tribulations of detention and the kinds of torture faced by prisoners, and their deprivation of the most basic necessities of life, life which some [detainees lost under torture \(dozens of photos leaked by Caesar\)](#)<sup>(1)</sup> in Department

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(1) Photos (18+) of a number of detainees who met their deaths in Branch 251 under the leadership of Major General Tawfiq Yunes.

40 of al-Khatib Branch at the hands of its members. The CDVS report records that Bassam was later transferred from Department 40 to the al-Khatib branch, and witnessed the practices of both the department and the branch.

A Human Rights Watch report published on 15 December 2011 entitled "[By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria](#)" discussed Internal Security branch 251 of the General Intelligence Administration, relaying testimony by Fahd al-Hamid (a security agent who defected at the beginning of the Revolution) that talked about the styles of torture followed at the branch, saying:

"The means of torture displayed at the beginning of the Revolution between shocks with electricity, enforced starvation, pumping cold water, located in the clinics close to places specialised in dealing with the dead bodies of detainees, as licensed doctors were providing medical reports based on the instructions of the security forces, suggesting that generally the detainee faced a critical heart attack and was given an electric shock to save him that cost him his life."

According to Fahd al-Hamid, torture, interrogation, and killing was entrusted to members of the Alawite sect because the [regime] had lost interest in Sunnis, clarifying that he had personally faced prison for two months under the accusation of empathising with detainees. He described the torture as being extremely harsh, and the instructions to interrogators was to get information from the detainee by any means possible, including through the "flying carpet," electric shocks, beatings, and starvation. al-Hamid confirmed that the accusations directed at children were always related to joining rebels, and the goal of torturing them was to extract confessions from them.

As a result of these horrifying violations that took place under his direct supervision, Major General Tawfik Yunis was placed under [European](#),<sup>(1)</sup> [British](#),<sup>(2)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions because of the convincing evidence of his criminal practices against Syrians.

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(1) He is ranked 31 on the European sanctions list.

(2) He is ranked 255 on the British sanctions list.

(3) He is ranked 27 on the Canadian sanctions list.



**33. Major General Muhammad Mahmud Mahla**

**Current appointment:**

President's Advisor for Security Affairs

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Jablah

Date of birth: 4 January 1959

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guard; later Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 – 2019	Director of the Military Intelligence Department
2015 – 2015	Deputy Head of Military Intelligence Department
2009 – 2015	Deputy Head of Political Security Division
Head of Information Branch, Political Security Division	
Republican Guard	

Major General Muhammad Mahla served in the ranks of the Republican Guard, and rose up the ranks until he reached Brigadier General.

In 2009, Mahla was posted to the Political Security Division where he joined the command of the Information Branch. He was later appointed Deputy Director of the Political Security Division with the rank of Major General. In 2015, he was moved to the Military Intelligence Department and became Deputy Director of the Department under then-Director Major General Rafiq Shahadah. In April 2015, Mahla was appointed Director of the Department when Shahadah was accused of murdering Rustum Ghazalah. Major General Mahla continues as Director of the Military Intelligence Department until today.

Major General Muhammad Mahla is one of the most prominent officials responsible for the violations committed by the forces of the Political Security Division in the period from 2011 to March 2015, when he was Deputy Director of the Division.

Major General Muhammad Mahla is also considered directly responsible for all of the crimes committed by the Military Intelligence Branch since he was appointed Director of the Department in April 2015 until today. He is particularly responsible for the crimes committed in two branches: Palestine "Branch 235" and the Military Investigation "Branch 248," where thousands were detained and endured torture; their death certificates were falsified to show the cause of death as "an acute heart attack", before being sent to personal status offices.

Among the crimes that were committed under the leadership of Mahla are:

- Issuing orders stipulating a reduction in the number of people in Damascus who came from the environs or outside of Damascus, in 2016; and preventing them from getting the necessary security permission to buy, sell, own, or rent homes.
- Making deals with opposition-held regions, and ordering forces from the 4<sup>th</sup> Division to break these agreements with the goal of expelling and torturing their inhabitants.
- The participation of forces from the Military Intelligence Department in military operations in Eastern Ghuta and southern Damascus, which operations Major General Muhammad Mahla oversaw - and the horrifying massacres that took place against civilians during them.
- His participation in the conscription of a large number of *shabiha* for the Military Intelligence Department; he included many fighters from the Palestine Liberation Army in military operations in collaboration with the Military Intelligence Department.

Based on his horrifying criminal record, Major General Muhammad Mahla has been placed on the [British](#),<sup>(1)</sup> [European](#),<sup>(2)</sup> [Canadian](#),<sup>(3)</sup> and

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(1) He is ranked number 182 on the British sanctions list.

(2) He is ranked number 206 on the European sanctions list.

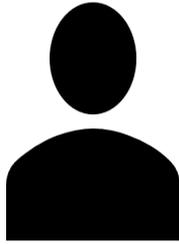
(3) He is ranked number 230 on the British sanctions list.

[American](#) sanctions lists as the result of the proving of his direct responsibility for a large number of crimes committed against the Syrian people.

Major General Muhammad Mahla is one of the most prominent of those reckoned to be loyal to Iran, as opposed to the rival Russian current in the Intelligence community, he was dismissed from the military intelligence and appointed as president's advisor for security affairs in March 2019.







**34. Major General Bassam Haydar**

**Current appointment:**

2016 – present Commander, 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Branch of service: Air Force

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 - 2016	Officer in 20 <sup>th</sup> Division
2011 - 2015	Commander, 24 <sup>th</sup> Independent Brigade (includes Dayr al-Zur and Raqqa airbases)

When the peaceful protest movement broke out in March 2011, Brigadier General Bassam Haydar was Commander of the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade Air Forces (an independent brigade under the direct authority of the Air Force command overseeing the Dayr al-Zur and al-Tabqa military airbases) in Dayr al-Zur.

Haydar's abhorrent sectarianism was known from his dealings with residents of Dayr al-Zur, where he participated - along with Jameh Jameh's brigade - in managing security affairs in the city. He personally participated in carrying out air raids against areas which had fallen outside regime control. He was assisted in carrying out widespread violations by his deputies, Brigadier General Sirhan al-Ali and Brigadier General Mahmud Yusuf. Brigadier General Bassam Haydar is considered to be a loyalist of Major General Jamil Hassan, the manager of the province's Air Force Directorate.

Bassam Haydar is considered to be primarily responsible for all the air raids and the crimes which were carried out by the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade from 2011 to 2015, during which period the brigade's squadrons were launched from

the Dayr al-Zur and Tabqa bases. As a result of the large number of such operations, all training flights were halted and flight hours were harnessed to bomb rebellious areas, especially those in the Dayr al-Zur environs and the Raqqa, Hasakah and Aleppo environs.

Given the deterioration of the regime fighter planes' condition, and the continuous flights by technically rickety aircraft which resulted in many technical failures, Brigadier General Bassam Haydar ordered that more aircraft be sent to the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Four MiG-23 fighters were sent from the al-Sin airbase to the Dayr al-Zur airbase, as well as four Sukhoi-22 fighters from the al-Shayrat airbase to the Tabqa airbase. These fighters (in addition to the warplanes which were already present at the 24<sup>th</sup> Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Bassam Haydar) have carried out thousands of sorties, which have cost the lives of thousands of civilians and displaced tens of thousands in the eastern regions.

It is reported that Brigadier General Bassam Haydar was the senior commander for military control over the skies of the North Eastern Region, and issued continuous instructions to pilots to bombard any gathering of people within the range of the brigade's activity. A large number of massacres were carried out in Dayr al-Zur's eastern environs, especially in Abu Kamal and al-Muhasan, as well as in Raqqa, Ain Issa, and the Hasakah environs. The most prominent were as follows:

- The Ain Issa massacre<sup>(1)</sup> in the northern Raqqa environs (20 September 2012) which killed more than 30 people and wounded 150 as a result of a bombardment by MiG fighters with a number of rockets, which struck a fuel station crowded with civilians.

- The Dayr al-Zur<sup>(2)</sup> city massacre (3 September 2012) which led to the deaths of a number of civilians and wounded others and destroyed buildings.

- The massacre of the civil registry office in Dayr al-Zur (26 September 2012), which killed 15 people and wounded others.

- The al-Jura<sup>(3)</sup> district massacre in Dayr al-Zur (27 September 2012)

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(1) Ain Issa massacre: <https://youtu.be/fQOwAJW8A84>

(2) Dayr al-Zur massacre: <https://youtu.be/AujOsHyspfE>

(3) Dayr al-Zur: <https://youtu.be/BguBLSkNB1c>

which killed 27 people as a result of the bombardment of civilian homes.

- The al-Basirah village massacre in Dayr al-Zur (25 December 2012), which killed 22 people as a result of the bombardment of the village.

- The massacre of al-Shaikh Yassin<sup>(1)</sup> in Dayr al-Zur city (25 October 2013).

- A massacre in the fuel oil market<sup>(2)</sup> in the village of Abriha (13 April 2014).

- A massacre in the al-Hamidiyyah district in Dayr al-Zur city (2 June 2014), which killed six civilians as a result of aerial bombardment.

- A massacre in the al-Muhasan<sup>(3)</sup> district in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (21 June 2014), which killed 18 civilian victims.

- A massacre in Raqqa city (25 June 2014) which killed 14 civilians.

- A massacre in the town of Jadid Ikidat in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (30 June 2014), which killed 10 civilians.

- A massacre in the 1<sup>st</sup> District in Raqqa city (15 July 2014) which killed a woman and four children from a single family.

- A massacre at the National Hospital in Raqqa city (23 August 2014) which killed 10 people, including a child and four medical staff members.

- A massacre in al-Na'im Square in Raqqa city (24 August 2014) which killed 10 people, including a child and two women.

- A massacre in the al-Shulah area on the Dayr al-Zur to Damascus road (3 September 2014) which killed 14 people, including eight women.

- A massacre in al-Ashara town in the Dayr al-Zur environs (4 September 2014), which killed eight people, including two children and five women.

- A massacre on Tal Abyad Street in front of the al-Andalus bakery and in the al-Bayatara district in Raqqa city (6 September 2014) which killed

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(1) al-Shaikh Yassin massacre: <https://youtu.be/pchDHst8GAc>

(2) Fuel oil market: <https://youtu.be/E-CfPB7jTOI>

(3) al-Muhasan massacre: <https://youtu.be/ezD69ziQE7M> - <https://youtu.be/9UGQ-DaZ1njw>

54 people and wounded 40 during a bombardment by warplanes with vacuum missiles.

- A massacre in the town of al-Dabikhan in the Dayr al-Zur environs (7 September 2014), which killed 11 people, including five children and three women during a bombardment of a school inhabited by displaced people from other towns.

- A massacre in the al-Ardi district in Dayr al-Zur city (10 September 2014) which killed eight people, including two children and three women.

- A massacre in the al-Hisaywa village in the Raqqa environs (16 September 2014), which killed nine people, including a child, during a bombardment by regime warplanes on a residential building.

- A massacre in Raqqa city (11 November 2014) which killed 14 people, including two children and five women.

- A massacre in Raqqa city (19 November 2014) which killed nine people, including two children and a woman, and wounded 16 others.

- A massacre at the water crossing between the cities of al-Bolil and al-Sabha in the Dayr al-Zur environs (28 November 2014), which killed five people and wounded six others.

- A massacre in Raqqa city (25 November 2014) which killed 73 people, including seven children and three women, and inflicted major damage to facilities when it was struck by warplanes on nine successive raids.

- A massacre in Raqqa city (27 November 2014) which killed seven people, including a child and two women.

- A massacre in Raqqa city near the al-Sharaksa mosque (28 November 2014) which killed six people, including four children.

- A massacre in the village of Hatla in the Dayr al-Zur environs (29 November 2014) which killed 12 people, including five children and four women.

- A massacre in the town of al-Muhasan in the Dayr al-Zur environs (15 December 2014) which killed five people, including two children.

- A massacre in the town of Khasham in the Dayr al-Zur environs (15

December 2014), which killed six people including three children and two women.

- A massacre in the town of al-Mayadin in the Dayr al-Zur environs (16 December 2014) which killed 10 people, including four children and one woman, when the Modern Medicine Hospital in the city was struck by two rockets fired from warplanes.

- A massacre in the town of al-Muhasan in the Dayr al-Zur environs (18 January 2015) which killed 12 people, including four children and three women.

- A massacre in the village of Albu Amr in the Dayr al-Zur environs (10/2/2015) which killed five people, including a child and a woman.

- A massacre in the al-Siyassiyah Bridge area (23 February 2015) which killed five people, including a child and two women.

- A massacre in al-Mayadin city in the Dayr al-Zur environs (5 March 2015) which killed five people, including a child and two women.

- A massacre in al-Mayadin city in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (7 March 2015) which killed nine people and wounded 35.

- A massacre in the al-Hamidiyah district of Dayr al-Zur city (24 March 2015) which killed seven people, including three children.

- A massacre in the Old Airport district of Dayr al-Zur city (2 May 2015) which killed eight civilians.

- A massacre in the village of al-Boleel in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (8 May 2015) which killed seven civilians.

- A massacre in the Albu Amr village in the Dayr al-Zur environs (8 May 2015) which killed eight civilians.

- A massacre in the town of al-Bolil in Dayr al-Zur (4 June 2015) which killed seven people and wounded ten.

- A massacre in the town of al-Salahiyah in the Dayr al-Zur environs (29 July 2015) which killed ten people, including two children, and wounded 15.

- A massacre at the Modern Medicine Hospital in al-Mayadin (10 Au-

gust 2015) which killed eight people, including a child and five women.

- A massacre in the village of Jadid Ikidat in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (16 September 2015) which killed six people, including three children and a woman.

- A massacre in the town of Kharita in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (16 September 2015) which killed five people, including three children and a woman, and wounded more than 10 civilians when warplanes struck the town's field hospital.

- A massacre in the town of Marrat in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (21 September 2015) which killed 13 people, including seven children and two women, and wounded more than 30 civilians, when warplanes struck the town's field hospital.

- A massacre in the city of al-Mayadin (28 September 2015) which killed 25 people, including 11 children and five women.

- A massacre in the al-Ardi district of Dayr al-Zur city (19 October 2015) which killed five civilians.

- A massacre in the city of al-Muhasan in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (17 November 2015) which killed nine civilians.

- A massacre in the town of al-Bolil in the eastern Dayr al-Zur environs (20 November 2015) which killed five civilians.

- A massacre in the town of al-Susa in Dayr al-Zur (12 December 2015) which killed 15 people, including seven children and seven women, in addition to wounding 13 others.

Despite / because of his bloody record - in which thousands of lives have been lost during aerial bombardments of populated areas - Bassam Haydar was promoted to Major General and transferred at the end of December 2015 to the al-Damir Military Base. He took command of the 20<sup>th</sup> Division, which is composed of three brigades and four airbases as follows:

- 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade: deployed at the al-Sin Airbase.
- 30<sup>th</sup> Brigade: deployed in the al-Damir Airbase and al-Nassiriyah Airbase.

- 73<sup>rd</sup> Brigade: deployed in the Khalkhala Airbase.

Over the period from 2015 to 2018, Major General Bassam Haydar was responsible for all the crimes committed by the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division, particularly the massacres which resulted from the aerial bombardment of the eastern Ghuta, where most of the al-Damir Airbase flights occurred, dropping cluster bombs, incendiary explosives, and white phosphorous bombs, as well as bombs and incendiary tanks filled with napalm, vacuum missiles, and unmarked bombs which were believed to contain poison gas. The division was supplied by Russian forces.

According to a military source, internationally-banned munitions were placed in the al-Damir and al-Sin airbases in special warehouses under the supervision of a special technical team responsible for receiving, storing, and loading them onto aircraft, under the direct authority of the division command. The source said that the officer directly responsible for their use was the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division commander at the al-Damir Airbase: Major General Bassam Haydar. The source added that:

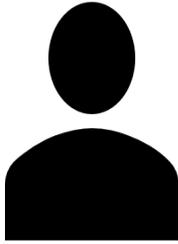
“These munitions were used under orders from the Russian command which came to the division commander through the director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, Major General Jameel al-Hassan, and the Air Forces commander, Major General, Ahmad Balul, whereby the division commander Bassam Haydar would specify the planes to use these munitions and assign missions to them directly in the al-Dameer Airbase, and indirectly from the al-Seen Airbase through 17<sup>th</sup> Division commander Brigadier General Muhammad Dibou.”

According to intelligence reports, an MI-8 helicopter took off from the al-Damir military airbase on 7 April 2018, and on the city of Duma dropped barrel bombs which contained poison materials subsequently identified as sarin gas<sup>(1)</sup>. The attack led to the deaths of 80 civilians who were hiding in cellars which they had used as shelters out of fear of the indiscriminate bombardment which regime forces had been carrying out on the city. This subsequently led to the displacement of more than 100,000 civilians to northern Syria.

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(1) Chemical massacre in Duma 7 April 2018: <https://youtu.be/BI6h6fd0EKg> - [https://youtu.be/PeiA\\_mrdqzY](https://youtu.be/PeiA_mrdqzY) - <https://youtu.be/BV2rHo3roSM>

Based on this documented information, Major General Bassam Haydar should be considered a war criminal. Syrian air forces under his command have carried out thousands of air raids in various Syrian provinces which have led to the deaths of thousands and displaced and expelled hundreds of thousands of Syrians, as well as destroying villages, towns and cities above the heads of their residents.



### Background information

Place of birth: Safita, Tartus

Date of birth: 1964

Branch of service: Army- Military Intelligence Directorate

### **35. Major General Ali Wannus**

#### **Current appointment:**

2016 – present Commander, Unit 450 (Liaison between Military Intelligence and Scientific Research Centre)

#### **Previous appointments:**

2011 - 2016	Commander, Unit 417
	Officer in the General Intelligence Directorate

When the peaceful protest movement broke out in March 2011, Ali Wannus was a Colonel serving in the Military Intelligence Directorate. There, he took part in the oppression carried out by the Military Intelligence Directorate against civilians, and was then promoted to Brigadier General in mid-2011.

Wannus took on dangerous and sensitive missions, most prominently heading Unit 417. (This unit links the Military Intelligence Directorate and the Scientific Research Centre. One of the unit's responsibilities was testing Chemical Weapons on people, in particular prisoners from the Muslim Brotherhood movement, in the 1980s and 1990s.)

Wannus was later made head of Unit 450, where he became the connection point between the unit and the 105<sup>th</sup> Republican Guard Brigade, which had been led by Talal Makhluף before he took over command of the entire Republican Guard.

Unit 450 was responsible for filling warheads with chemical agents to prepare them for military use. Since September 2013, storehouses of the 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade have been used to store chemical materials from Facility 1000 under the Scientific Research Centre. The Chemical Weapons

were moved in the weeks before international observers arrived in Syria to carry out UN Security Council Resolution 2118. These two units are assessed to be the regime's key units for Chemical Weapons use.

Ali Wannus is one of the most prominent officials responsible for the chemical attacks on Eastern Ghuta in 2013, which killed at least 1,127 people, including 201 women and 107 children, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights<sup>(1)</sup>. The opposition assesses that the number of dead exceeded 1,400.

Major General Ali Wannus has been subject to American sanctions<sup>(2)</sup> since December 2017, along with a number of other officers, including: Colonel Suhayl al-Hassan (Director of Air Force Intelligence); Colonel Muhammad Nafaa Bilal; Major General Muhammad Khalid Rahmun (Director of the Political Security Department); and Brigadier General Ghasan Abbas<sup>(3)</sup>.

Major General Ali Wannus is also subject to European<sup>(4)</sup>, Canadian<sup>(5)</sup> and British<sup>(6)</sup> sanctions, given his activities related to Chemical Weapons, whereby he transported a portion of Chemical Weapons to the Syrian coastal areas, and areas controlled by Lebanese Hizballah.

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(1) [http://sn4hr.org/public\\_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/Statement%20First%20year%20ar.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/Statement%20First%20year%20ar.pdf)

(2) <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20170112.aspx?src=ilaw>

(3) Brigadier General Ghasan Abbas also bears part responsibility for all the crimes committed by Brigadier General Ali Wannus

(4) His number in the European sanctions annex is 243

(5) His number in the Canadian sanctions is 234

(6) His number in the British sanctions is 254



**36. Major General Riad Habib Abbas**

**Current appointment:**

Mar 2018 – present Military Police Commander

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Ain Qaita, Jablih, Latakia

Branch of service: Army – Military Police

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
May 2013 – Mar 2018	Head of Political Security Branch in Aleppo city
2010 – May 2013	Commander of Military Police Branch in Aleppo city
2001 – 2010	Military Police
2000	Aide-de-Camp to Hafiz al-Assad
Convoy company	

Major General Riad Habib Kharfan Abbas comes from the village of Ain Qaita of the Bayt Yashut area of Jablih in Latakia province. He began his professional life as a military officer in the Convoy Company under the command of Major General Dhu al-Himma Shalish. He was then promoted to become the Aide-de-Camp of Hafiz al-Assad during the last period of his life.

After Hafiz al-Assad’s death in 2000, Riad Abbas was transferred to the Military Police and ascended the military ranks until he occupied the position of Military Police commander in Aleppo in 2010.

In mid-2013, he was appointed Head of the Political Security branch in Aleppo city, where he was implicated in widespread violations against civilians.

In March 2018, he was appointed Commander of the Military Police. He was promoted to Major General on 1 August 2018, while remaining Commander of the Military Police. In this position, Abbas was responsible

for administering Syria's most notorious prisons, including Palmyra, Sidnaya, al-Baluna, al-Qabun, and other prisons in which many Syrians have suffered the worst forms of torment, often resulting in death from torture, beating and starvation.

During his work as commander of the Military Police branch in Aleppo (2010 - 2013), Riad Abbas committed crimes including indiscriminate arrest, forcible disappearance, and torture against all those who appeared to have a connection to the peaceful protest movement. He was chiefly responsible for the administration of the Aleppo Central Prison, where many violations were carried out against Syrian citizens. He was also responsible for the violations which were carried out by members of the Military Police in the city and at the checkpoints<sup>(1)</sup> which proliferated in 2012, and which became a source of terror for residents, due to the snipers under Abbas's authority who were placed in the city's sensitive locations.

Riad Abbas's crimes increased after he took over command of the Political Security branch in Aleppo city in 2013. Prisoners held with him suffered from the most severe forms of torment and mistreatment, to the extent that a close associate of Abbas remarked: "Even supporters who were arrested by the Political Security branch by accident came out and joined ISIS immediately!"

Major General Riad Abbas is considered to be directly responsible for all the crimes and violations committed in the Political Security branch from May 2013. The deaths of dozens of Aleppo residents under torture<sup>(2)</sup> inside the Political Security branch has been documented. In one testimony about the torture in the Aleppo branch, "Majd," who was arrested in Aleppo, stated:

"There was an 18-year-old Syrian Palestinian boy in the cell with us. He had some kind of liver problem; around 15 detainees had it there. They gave them paracetamol, which is what they gave us for everything... One morning he fell over and started bleeding from the rectum. We knocked on the door for the doctor but he didn't come. They said he would come in 15 minutes. We knocked from 7am until 11am. The boy kept bleeding. The doctor didn't come. We kept knocking. The guard only insulted us.

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(1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIRnRlwAYGA>

(2) [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/\\_cle4cea92.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/_cle4cea92.pdf)

The guards saw the blood but they did nothing. At 11am, they told us we had to bring him to treatment and clean the blood. We had to force him to stand so we could take him. When he stood up, we realised that his flesh was coming out of his rectum... They took him out of the cell but we saw that after just a few metres he dropped on the floor and he died.”<sup>(1)</sup>

In addition, Riad Abbas is also considered to be one of the most prominent officials responsible for the violations carried out against civilians in Aleppo, given his membership of the Defence and Security Committee during the period from March 2011 to March 2018. He is held particularly responsible for that period when regime forces took control of the eastern districts of Aleppo city at the end of 2016, which resulted in the expulsion of more than 100,000 residents and the deaths of more than 1,400 civilians.

He is also responsible for all the crimes and violations which have occurred (and continue to occur) under the supervision of the Military Police since his appointment as their Commander in March 2018. Of these, he is especially responsible for the horrific crimes which have occurred in the Sidnaya and al-Baluna prisons, and the creation of mass graves for prisoners (which regime forces carried out under the supervision of the Military Police.)

Major General Riad Abbas belongs to a family known for its regimeloyalism. His brother is Colonel Fadi Abbas, who has headed the Air Force Intelligence station in the Aleppo airport. He has another brother, Colonel Fawaz Abbas, who also works for the regime forces.

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(1) Interview with Amnesty International researcher, Feb. 19, 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE2445082016ENGLISH.PDF> page 40





**37. Major General Ahmad Muhammad Balul**

**Current appointment:**

2012 – present Commander of Air Force and Air Defence

**Background information:**

Place of birth: UKN

Date of birth: 10 October 1954

Branch of service: Air Force - Air Force and Air Defence

**Previous appointments:**

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2012	Pilot in Air Force

In October 2012, Bashar al-Assad appointed Major General Ahmad Balul to be Commander of the Air Force and Air Defence, succeeding Major General Issam Hallaq. This was due to Balul’s known criminal tendencies and absolute loyalty to the regime (which at that time was carrying out an aerial bombardment campaign with warplanes and helicopters against rebellious cities, towns and villages.)

Despite Balul reaching the legal retirement age in 2012, Bashar al-Assad has consistently renewed his service since then, due to the major role he has played in carrying out the aerial bombardment campaign and displacing millions of Syrians—especially given that air forces have been the biggest culprit in causing forcible displacement and destroying the infrastructure of liberated areas.

Major General Ahmad Balul is considered to be chiefly responsible—along with the pilots, crew and technicians of the Air Force—for killing hundreds of thousands of civilians, displacing millions, and inflicting destruction in populated areas. He has also taken part in the responsibility for Chemical Weapons attacks which were carried out with warplanes, the most recent of which was the Ghuta massacre in April 2018.

Major General Balul is also responsible for all the crimes carried out by the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division, particularly the crimes committed in Eastern Ghuta, in part by warplanes launched from the al-Damir Airbase loaded with incendiary, cluster and bombs; shells and incendiary containers packed with napalm; vacuum bombs; and shells loaded with poison gas.

He is also considered one of the main figures responsible for facilitating the Russian Air Forces and coordinating its fighters' bombardment operations on populated areas, as well as supplying the internationally-banned weaponry stored at the al-Damir and al-Sin Airbases in storehouses overseen by a technical group responsible for their receipt, storage and loading onto aircraft, under the authority of the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division commander in the al-Damir airbase (Major General Bassam Haydar), who was implementing orders issued to him from the Director of the Air Force Intelligence (Major General Jamil al-Hassan), and Air Force commander (Major General Ahmad Balul.) These orders included specifying the aircraft and assigning them the bombardment missions directly in the al-Damir Airbase and indirectly from the al-Sin Airbase through the Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Brigadier General Muhammad Dibu.)

Major General Ahmad Balul is subject to British<sup>(1)</sup>, Canadian<sup>(2)</sup> and American<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions due to his responsibility for many crimes and violations committed against the Syrian people. The following table lists the massacres committed by the aircraft under his command:

Location	Date	Province	Details
al-Atarib <sup>(4)</sup>	01 November 2012	Damascus environs	Air bombardment of bakery, killing 18 people and wounding about 35
al-Shifuniyah <sup>(5)</sup>	2 November 2012	Idlib	Air bombardment, killing 16 people

(1) British sanctions 218

(2) Canadian sanctions 220

(3) <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0701.aspx>

(4) Al-Atarib: <https://youtu.be/h0-Qn4IHucw>

(5) al-Shifuniyah: [https://youtu.be/jQUGFFqcS\\_o](https://youtu.be/jQUGFFqcS_o)

Harim <sup>(1)</sup>	13 November 2012	Damascus environs	Air bombardment of Harem in Idlib environs, killing 70 people
Utaya <sup>(2)</sup>	23 December 2012	Hamah	Air bombardment in eastern Ghuta, killing 26 people
Halfaya <sup>(3)</sup>	2 January 2013	Damascus environs	Air bombardment of bakery in Halfaya in Hamah environs, killing 93 people
al-Maliha <sup>(4)</sup>	4 April 2017	Idlib	Air bombardment of the al-Nurus fuel station in al-Maliha in the Damascus environs, killing 75 people
Khan Shaikhun <sup>(5)</sup>	7 April 2018	Damascus environs	Rocket attack with poison materials, killing around 90 people
Duma <sup>(6)</sup>	31 October 2012	Aleppo	MI-8 helicopters dropped barrel bombs of sarin gas, killing 80 people, including women and children sheltering in cellars.

To this list should be added hundreds of killings from bombing operations carried out by the Air Forces, all documented through video clips, text files, with established facts and details.

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(1) Harim: <https://youtu.be/kcepYxzwukl>

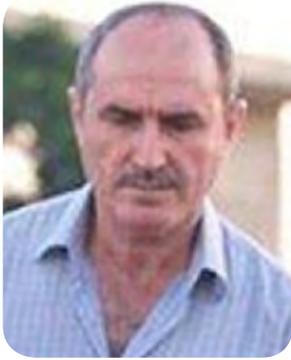
(2) Utaya: <https://youtu.be/AE7KHStszo0>

(3) Halfaya: <https://youtu.be/Doge0NaS9Fc>

(4) al-Maliha <https://youtu.be/9FgVjb9V3UI>

(5) Khan Shaikhun: <https://youtu.be/0bJw84eXALs>

(6) Duma: [https://youtu.be/ffVsYYl\\_r7U](https://youtu.be/ffVsYYl_r7U)



**38. Major General Bassam  
Mirhaj al-Hassan**

**Current appointment:**

2008 – present Head of Security and Military office in Republican Palace

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Shin, Homs

Date of birth: 1961

Branch of service: Army – Republican Guard

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2008	Overseeing Unit 450, Scientific Research
	Director of Inquiry Office at Republican Palace
	Convoy Company
	Guard Company

Bassam al-Hassan was born in the town of Shin in the western Homs environs in 1961. He began his professional life in the military, where he was appointed as an officer in the Republican Guard in the Special Security (Guard) Company in the presidency. He was then moved to work in the Convoy Company. He enrolled in the Staff College and graduated with the rank of Staff Major. He was then appointed Director of the Inquiry Office at the Republican Palace.

After obtaining a Doctorate in Sociology from Damascus University, al-Hassan began to oversee Unit 450 under the Scientific Research Institute, where he was responsible for protecting Chemical Weapons in Syria.

As a result of the 2008 assassination of Brigadier General Muhammad Sulayman (Head of the Security and Military Office in the Republican Palace, and a special strategic military adviser to Bashar al-Assad), Major General Bassam al-Hassan was promoted in his place.

During his work at the Republican Palace, Bassam al-Hassan was implicated in many crimes against the Syrian people, especially those

related to his handling of sensitive matters related to the use of Chemical Weapons. He was one of the most prominent officials directly responsible for the chemical crimes committed by the regime, as he was responsible for passing military orders from the Republican Palace to the units and sectors specialised in their use.

There have been 221 documented uses of Chemical Weapons<sup>(1)</sup> since the first attack (recorded on 23 December 2012 against residents of the al-Bayada district) to 7 April 2018, when the chemical attack occurred against the city of Duma in the eastern Ghuta. These attacks have killed 1,461 named people as follows:

- 1,397 civilians, including 185 children and 252 women.
- 57 opposition forces.
- Seven regime forces members held prisoner by the opposition.

In addition, at least 9,753 people have been wounded in these attacks.

In addition, Major General Bassam al-Hassan is Chief of Staff of the National Defence Forces, militias which were established by the *shabiha* of the Popular Committees and which have proliferated in pro-regime areas under the pretext of defending them. They enjoy generous support and financing from Rami Makhluf's Bustan Association and weapons from Army storehouses.

Major General Bassam is known by the nickname, "Uncle," among the members of the National Defence Forces because he is the uncle of the criminal Saqr Rustam, General Secretary of the National Defence Forces. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps helped establish and train this militia, and as a result Major General Bassam has established close ties with Qassim Soleimani, head of the Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force.

Major General Bassam is considered to be directly responsible for the crimes committed by the militias operating under the National Defence banner, which have killed a large number of Syrians as well as expelling tens of thousands from their homes. The most prominent crimes committed by these militias include:

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(1) [http://sn4hr.org/public\\_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/The\\_Syrian\\_regime\\_launched\\_216\\_chemical\\_attacks\\_including\\_183\\_additional\\_attacks\\_after\\_its\\_attack\\_on\\_al\\_Ghuta.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/The_Syrian_regime_launched_216_chemical_attacks_including_183_additional_attacks_after_its_attack_on_al_Ghuta.pdf)

- Ram al-Anz — Homs (February 2012): More than 150 civilians were killed, some of them 15 years old.

- Karam al-Zaytoun — Homs (March 2012): About 40 civilians were killed, including children and women, with some burned.

- al-Hula Plains — Homs (May 2012): National Defence groups, with cover from Brigadier General Hawash Muhammad (Commander of the Homs operations room), stormed the area south of the village Taldaw, in an operation that lasted more than three hours and killed 106 civilians, including 50 children and a number of women, some of them slaughtered with knives.

- al-Qabir — Hamah (June 2012): Army and National Defence forces stormed the village and fired indiscriminately on its residents, and then took a number of men out of their homes and slaughtered them with knives. They also burned about ten corpses. The deaths of 78 civilians were documented in this massacre, noting that the militias took 37 corpses with them and many of the corpses which were burned were not identified. There are also still 15 village residents missing. As a result of this heinous massacre, the judge Tala Hushan<sup>(1)</sup>, head of the Public Prosecution in Mahardah after he was forced to blame the opposition for this crime.

- al-Sanamayn — Dara'a (April 2013): Regime forces backed by the National Defence militias stormed the town of al-Sanamayn and killed about 60 civilians, slaughtering some with knives.

Major General Bassam is also considered to be directly responsible for a number of killings and assassinations, most prominently the assassination of religious figure Shaikh Ahmad Abd al-Wahid in Tripoli (May 2012). Bassam appointed one of his agents to head to Lebanon and kill Shaikh Ahmad. A document marked with Major General Bassam's stamp and signature ordering the killing of Syrian military and civilian opposition members abroad has been circulated. These included the defected Brigadier General Zahir al-Sakit, defected Colonel Tha'ir Mudallal, and defected Captain Alaa al-Basha. Other individuals were also listed in the document, which was marked with the stamp of the President's Office dated 4 August 2013.

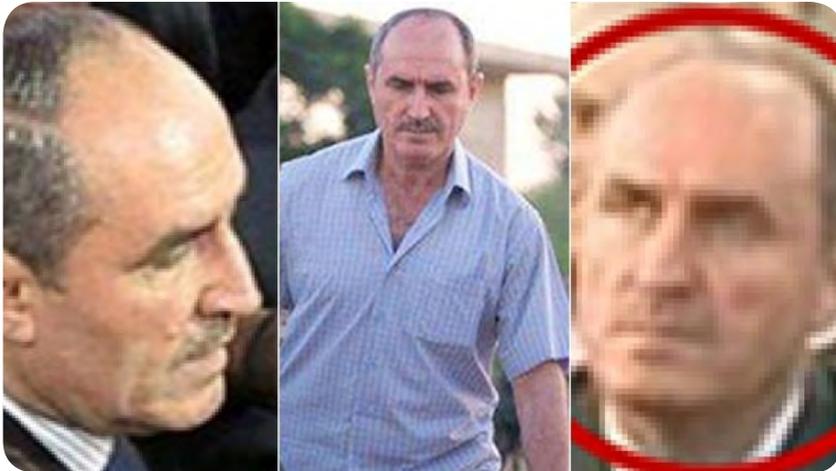
Given the crimes and violations committed by Bassam al-Hassan,

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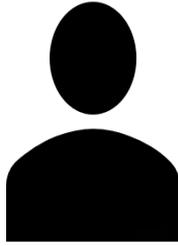
(1) He was a judge heading the Public Prosecution in Mahardah who investigated this crime. He now lives in Sweden after migrating there.

he was included in the British<sup>(1)</sup>, European<sup>(2)</sup>, Canadian<sup>(3)</sup> and American<sup>(4)</sup> sanctions lists, especially given his involvement in chemical weapons attacks.

Major General Bassam was promoted to Major General in 2016. He enjoys strong relations with Russian and Iranian officers alike.



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- (1) British sanctions 18
  - (2) European sanctions 20
  - (3) Canadian sanctions 23
  - (4) <https://www.treasury.gov/resou>



**39. Major General Ghassan Khalil**

**Current appointment:**

2017 – present Assistant Director,  
State Security Directorate

**Background information**

Branch of service: Army; later  
Intelligence

<u>Previous appointment:</u>	
2013 - 2017	Head of Foreign Branch 279
2010 - 2013	Head of Information Branch 255
	Assistant Head of Information Branch 255
	Presidential Protection

Major General Ghassan Khalil enjoys strong relations with Bashar al-Assad, as he had been part of the team appointed to protect him. He was later promoted within the Security ranks, becoming head of Information Branch 255 in the State Security Directorate from 2010 to 2013.<sup>(1)</sup>

When the peaceful protest movement broke out in March 2011, Ghassan Khalil, through his position as Head of the Information Branch in the State Security Directorate, worked to suppress and pursue journalists, penetrating social media sites with the aim of arresting them and throwing them in prison, the foremost of whom was the Syrian blogger Tal al-Malulhi.

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(1) This branch collects Background Information for the Directorate and the studies presented to it. It includes a number of important sectors, such as: religion, political parties, monitoring local and international media and website. It also administers many pro-regime websites or suspicious sites which claim to be opposition. It also carries out propaganda activities by writing comments and sending posts online, and overseeing the so-called “Syrian Electronic Army.”

The violations Khalil has committed included making a deal with BBC Arabic after releasing two of the channel's correspondents who had been arrested by regime forces in Idlib province. The deal led to the arrests of a number of members of the opposition's Barzah Coordination Committee, after the channel's correspondent Muhammad Ballout led members of the Committee to believe he would make a documentary about them.

Based on these violations, Brigadier General Ghassan Khalil's name was listed in Human Rights Watch's report issued on 15 December 2011 under the title, "By All Means Necessary!" Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria."<sup>(1)</sup>

In 2013, Ghassan Khalil was appointed Head of the Foreign Branch (Branch 279), on the recommendation of Major General Ali Mamluk, who was then heading the State Security Directorate before being made Director of National Security Office. Some sources say that Khalil having this post was at the recommendation of the Iranian command, due to the major services that Ghassan Khalil had provided to Iranian forces to ease their operations in Syria, and in particular after Iranian intelligence supplied the Information Branch with signals intelligence equipment which has contributed to committing widespread violations against Syrians.

Based on this cooperation, Iranian authorities wanted to give Ghassan Khalil greater authority through getting the Branch 279 position. This gave Khalil greater freedom of movement, as when he traveled to Italy with Major General Ali Mamluk and Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun to strengthen cooperation with Italian intelligence. Iranian intelligence had wanted to achieve a new penetration into the European intelligence agencies by bolstering Ghassan Khalil's position and enabling him to establish relations with a number of international intelligence agencies, which is what he has done.

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary/individual-and-command-responsibility-crimes-against-humanity>

At the start of 2017, Ghassan Khalil was promoted to Major General and appointed be Assistant to the Director of the State Security Directorate, Major General Muhammad Dib Zaytun.

Given his major role in violations which have occurred against millions of Syrians, Ghassan Khalil was included in British<sup>(1)</sup>, European<sup>(2)</sup> and Canadian<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions lists.

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(1) British sanctions 170  
(2) European sanctions 46  
(3) European sanctions 45



**40. Major General Jumaa  
Muhammad al-Jassim**

**Current appointment:**

Retired (August 2018)

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Siraa, Idlib

Date of birth: 1954

Branch of service: Army - Artillery

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2018	Director of Artillery and Rockets Directorate (extended for 4 years as Director of the Artillery and Rockets Directorate)
2011	Officer in Artillery and Rockets Directorate

Jumaa al-Jassim was born in the village of Siraa in the eastern Idlib environs in 1954 and belongs to the al-Haddadin tribe known for its loyalty to the regime. This is the same tribe to which former Defence Minister Brigadier General Fahd Jassim al-Fraj also belongs.

Major General Jumaa al-Jassim is considered to be responsible for crimes, violations, and destruction affecting the houses and homes of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Syria, in addition to the destruction of infrastructure in populated areas as a result of the use of artillery and rockets, considered to be among the deadliest weapons, as well as warplanes and helicopters.

The regime had begun to use artillery and rockets against opposition areas in 2011, and when the conflict developed, it began to use surface-to-surface SCUD missiles against populated cities and districts, killing hundreds and displacing thousands of Syrians. The regime tasked Major General Jumaa with implementing a number of artillery and rocket bombardment operations in Homs city, in particular the Baba Amr district. He also led battles in the eastern Hamah environs and the northern

Hamah environs. His responsibility for a number of battles was documented<sup>(1)</sup>, especially the violations which occurred during his command of the battles around the al-Sin Airbase and the city of Palmyra in 2016.

Major General Jumaa al-Jassim also participated in military operations in the eastern Idlib environs, and was rewarded for this with the appointment of one brother, Abd al-Aziz al-Jassim as the mayor of Sinjar, and his other brother as Secretary of the Ba’ath Party group in the town (he had previously been working as a fuel oil seller). These appointments came as an answer to Major General Jumaa’s repeated requests to the members his tribe to join the army to compensate for the numerical shortage in the regime forces.

Major General Jumaa al-Jassim is directly responsible for all the crimes which carried out with rockets and artillery, especially those by the 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade. A report<sup>(2)</sup> issued by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (2 March 2013) documented members of the 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade firing 61 SCUD missiles on 59 populated civilian locations and just two rockets on Free Syrian Army positions.

The network also issued a report<sup>(3)</sup> (9 June 2013) in which it documented regime forces launching 131 rockets in the following areas:

- Aleppo province: 71 rockets, killing 214 people and wounding more than 580.
- Raqqa province: 10 rockets, killing 14 people and wounding 92 others.
- Idlib province: 19 rockets, killing three people and wounding 29 others.
- Dayr al-Zur province: 15 rockets, wounding three people.
- Damascus environs province: 11 rockets, killing 23 people and wounding more than 103 others.

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(1) Major General Jumaa al-Jassim visiting Sixth Border Guard Regiment: <https://youtu.be/HoMLEJWMLqI>

(2) <http://sn4hr.org/publ>

(3) [http://sn4hr.org/public\\_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/Research\\_about\\_using\\_Syrian\\_Government\\_for\\_more\\_than\\_131\\_long.pdf](http://sn4hr.org/public_html/wp-content/pdf/arabic/Research_about_using_Syrian_Government_for_more_than_131_long.pdf)

- Hamah province: Five rockets, killing three people and wounding more than 33 others.

- Homs province: Struck by an unspecified number of surface-to-surface long-range missiles in the al-Qusair area, killing and wounding a large number of people which remains undocumented because of the area being blockaded and communications being cut off.

A list<sup>(1)</sup> of casualties has been documented, naming 257 people killed during rocket bombardments, including 84 children and 54 women. About 1,000 were also wounded, in addition to 1,127 people killed in the eastern Ghuta during the chemical attacks (August 2013), an attack which was conducted with rockets loaded with chemical materials.

The following list includes some of the massacres committed with artillery weapons under the command of Major General Jumaa al-Jassim<sup>(2)</sup>:

Location	Number killed	Date	Province	Details
Dayr al-Zur	90	07 August 2011	Dayr al-Zur	regime bombed the city with heavy artillery and tank shells.
Baba Amr	100	8 February 2012	Homs	heavy artillery, rocket and mortar bombardment, missile and ZSU-23-4 Shilka bullets; more than 80 percent of the district destroyed.
al-Rastan	106	9 February 2012	Homs	bombardment with heavy artillery and mortars.

(1) <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B9Bj18tIYYKBeV9XdEdUV3dPM0U/edit>

(2) Hundreds of massacres have been documented resulting from artillery and rocket strikes on areas rebelling against the regime of Assad family rule.

Location	Number killed	Date	Province	Details
Automated Bakery in Qadi Askar District	41	16 August 2012	Aleppo	artillery bombardment; the bakery was bombed again on 19 August 2012, killing many (25 documented)
al-Wa'ir District	28	11 January 2014	Homs	including a child and two women; regime struck the district with artillery.
Taybat al-Imam City	8	6 May 2014	Hamah environs	including a child and a woman; struck the city with artillery shells.

In addition to this list, thousands of people have been killed or wounded, and hundreds of thousands displaced, as a result of the regime using artillery and rockets against populated civilian areas. Major General Jumaa al-Jassim bears direct responsibility for these crimes, given his role as Director of the Rockets and Artillery Directorate.

Major General Jumaa al-Jassim retired in August 2018, and replaced as Commander of the Rockets and Artillery Directorate by Major General Akram Tajjur. Bashar al-Assad had extended Major General Jumaa's work by four additional years: he had been scheduled to retire in 2014, but al-Assad had retained him to ensure his loyalty and the loyalty of his tribe's members in the regime forces.

Major General Jumaa is closely related to the former Member of Parliament, Shaikh Ahmad Darwish. Juma's son serves in the regime forces at the rank of First Lieutenant.



**41. Major General Hassan  
Mirhaj Mirhaj**

**Current appointment:**

2015 – present Commander, 4<sup>th</sup> Assault Corps

**Background information**

Place of birth: Jablah, Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Armour

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Coastal Region
2015 - 2015	Commander, 8 <sup>th</sup> Division
2011 - 2015	Commander, 33 <sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade, 9 <sup>th</sup> Division

When the peaceful protest movement erupted in March 2011, Hassan Mirhaj was Commander, 33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade under 9<sup>th</sup> Division, deployed near the city of al-Sanamayn in the northwestern Dara’a environs.

His brigade participated in military actions carried out by the 9<sup>th</sup> Division in Dara’a, with members of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade and their leader - Hassan Mirhaj - carrying out a number of massacres in the province.

On 11 May 2011, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade, along with brigades from the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, 7<sup>th</sup> Division, the Special Forces, and the Republican Guard, stormed the town of Jassim. The operation killed 31 civilians, including six who were killed directly by 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade fighters. Fighters from the same brigade, under the command of Hassan Mirhaj, also occupied the city hospital and converted it into a military barracks and temporary prison, which resulted in the deaths of a number of wounded and ill people due to medical neglect.

33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade continued to participate in storming many cities and towns in Dara’a throughout 2011 under the command of Hassan Mirhaj.

In July, members of the brigade stormed the town of al-Sanamayn. They also stormed the city of Jassim again on 20 October 2011, during which more than 150 civilians of the city's residents were killed and wounded. A number of the brigade's fighters were also dispatched to storm the Baba Amr district at the end of 2011, which destroyed the district and killed and displaced its residents.

On 18 February 2012, 33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade moved to the central region (Homs and Hamah) in accordance with the Movement Order No. 6359/502; they did so in a military convoy of 63 armoured / tracked vehicles and 35 wheeled vehicles, as well as light and heavy weapon ammunition. Once Hassan Mirhaj arrived in the Central Region, a new series of horrifying violations began against civilians. He stationed the 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade near the town of Kafr al-Tun in the northern Hamah environs, and began to attack the province's villages with his tanks.

Hassan Mirhaj – then a Brigadier General - participated in a number of massacres, most prominently the al-Qubayr massacre in June 2012, when the village was stormed by the following forces: 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 555<sup>th</sup> Regiment of 4<sup>th</sup> Division, Air Force Intelligence, and the National Defence Forces. Men, women and children were fired upon indiscriminately, including a number of men were brought outside their homes and slaughtered with knives and bladed weapons. Ten bodies were burned and 37 other bodies were removed. They killed everyone they laid eyes on, with no one surviving the massacre except two women, three men, and a two-year-old child. The number of dead whose names were documented was 78, including 22 children, as well as about 10 dead whose corpses were burned and could not be identified. About 15 also went missing, and their fate is unknown, including women and children.

Hassan Mirhaj also participated in military operations which resulted in the al-Tramsah massacre in the northern Hamah environs on 12 July 2012, which killed 305 people and wounded more than 300 people. Members of 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade opened fired with ZSU-23-4 Shilka vehicles, tank main armaments, and heavy machine guns on the town of Tramsah, striking its school and its homes. Regime *shabiha* from the adjacent Alawite villages also carried out massacres by surrounding the civilians who tried

to flee toward the farmlands and killing them in cold blood. Militias led by Colonel Suhayl al-Hassan stormed the town to finish off the wounded and arrest those residents who remained.

While commanding 33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade in the Central Region in 2012, Hassan Mirhaj also carried out a number of other massacres in the following areas: Murak, Suran, Taybat al-Imam, al-Tamanah, Tal Malah and the surrounding villages and farmlands. These killed hundreds and forced tens of thousands to flee their homes.

Perhaps the worst of these operations was the al-Lataminah massacre (7 April 2012), when the town was surrounded and bombarded and then stormed with armoured vehicles and military engineering equipment, killing about 70 civilians. Of these, 51 were documented, while 20 corpses could not be identified because they had been burned. There was also the Suran massacre (20 May 2012) when the city was stormed under the command of Hassan Mirhaj and Major General Wajih al-Mahmud, Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Hamah. 34 civilians were killed by soldiers from 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, firing indiscriminately with their tanks.

In 2014, Hassan Mirhaj participated in the massacre of Maarzaf in the Hamah environs, which killed 10 people, including three women and six children, as the result of the town being struck with artillery and tanks.

As a result of his bloody record in the regime's service, Brigadier General Hassan Mirhaj was promoted to the rank of major general in 2015, and he was given command of 8<sup>th</sup> Division (of which 33<sup>rd</sup> Tank Brigade is one of its subordinate brigades.) At the end of July 2016, Major General Hassan Mirhaj was promoted to be Commander 4th (Assault) Corps succeeding Major General Shawki Yusuf. Mirhaj was also appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in coastal Syria and participated heavily in the violations committed in battles in the Latakia environs and Aleppo in the second half of 2016, which resulted in the regime taking full control of the city. Major General Hassan Mirhaj is considered to be a partner in these crimes. He also participated in the battles which occurred in the northern Hamah environs in the months of March and April in 2017.





**42. Major General Ali Ahmad As'ad**

**Current appointment:**

2013 – present Commander, 15<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division

**Background information**

Place of birth: Tartus

Branch of service: Army - Special Forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016	Head of Defence and Security Committee in Suwayda Governorate
2013 – 2016	Commander, 15 <sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division
2011 - 2013	Commanding Officer in 15 <sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division

Major General Ali Asa'ad is considered one of the most prominent officers to enjoy the trust of Bashar al-Assad, due to his relations with the High Alawite Council.

When the peaceful protest movement broke out in March 2011, Ali Asa'ad was serving as a Commanding Officer of a regiment in the 15<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division, deployed in Suwayda and commanded by Major General Muhi al-Din Mansur.<sup>(1)</sup>

Given his sectarian background<sup>(2)</sup>, Ali Asa'ad has committed widespread violations against civilians in Dara'a province, where he participated in storming the Lajat area in the northeastern Dara'a environs with groups from 9<sup>th</sup> Division and 5<sup>th</sup> Division. He also oversaw the military operations carried out by 127<sup>th</sup> Regiment of 15<sup>th</sup> Division in Dara'a, whose fighters fired directly on civilians.

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(1) He was later killed in battles for Jisr al-Shughur.

(2) Major General Ali Asa'ad discusses his religious beliefs: <https://youtu.be/i4ZHVut8L-gA>

Human Rights Watch issued a report on 15 December 2011 entitled, “By All Means Necessary!: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria”<sup>(1)</sup>, in which it quoted the testimony of a fighter serving with 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 127<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 15<sup>th</sup> Division as saying:

“I was ordered to shoot at protesters many times, but I shot in the air since I knew these were ordinary people and not terrorists. Those who directly ordered us to shoot were Colonel Imad Abass and Major Ziyad Abdel Shaddoud. They said that we were fighting terrorist groups and that we had to get rid of them. They told us to kill anybody who was outside in the street without asking who they were.”

This testimony was confirmed by First Lieutenant Ahmad al-Khalaf, who in a statement after his defection from 127<sup>th</sup> Regiment<sup>(2)</sup> spoke about the criminal practices employed by members of the regiment in Dara’a.

In 2013, Major General Ali Asa’ad was appointed Commander 15<sup>th</sup> Division, where he added to his crimes in the Suwayda and Dara’a provinces. He is considered directly responsible for all the crimes committed by members of 15<sup>th</sup> Division, especially those violations carried out by members of the Hamida al-Tahir checkpoint in Dara’a al-Mahata. Due to his criminal role in serving the regime, in 2016, he was appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Suwayda province, succeeding the governor, Atif al-Nadaf.

In 2017, 15<sup>th</sup> Division, under the command of Major General Ali Asa’ad, participated in the battles of the al-Manshiyah district, alongside the forces of Lebanese Hizballah, and 4<sup>th</sup> Division. A major dispute occurred between him and Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr, in which Major General Asa’ad demanded to lead the operation (rather than Hizballah), and threatened to withdraw from the fighting. Wafiq Nasr threatened to kill him if he pulled his forces from the area.

In 2018, 15<sup>th</sup> Division participated in military operations in Dara’a which killed and wounded a number of the province’s residents and ended with the signing of reconciliation agreements with regime forces.

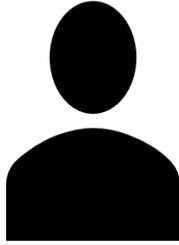
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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary/individual-and-command-responsibility-crimes-against-humanity>

(2) [https://youtu.be/x9vo\\_kplaGI](https://youtu.be/x9vo_kplaGI)

Major General Ali Asa'ad is considered to be directly responsible for crimes which the ISIS organisation carried out in collusion with him in Suwayda province on 25 July 2018. This is because, in his role as Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Suwayda, he withdrew weapons from the residents of the eastern Suwayda environs without justification a number of days before the ISIS attack, which allowed the group to commit a massacre in the city and its eastern environs in a collective killing which took the lives of about 215 people and wounded more than 300, with about 40 people kidnapped, including women and children.

Major General Ali Asa'ad was not content merely to withdraw arms from the area's residents, but was also complicit in carrying out the crime through preventing support being sent from regime forces to the villages stormed by ISIS members until late on 25 July 2018.



**43. Major-General Muhammad Kanju Hassan**

**Current appointment:**

2013 – present Head of the Military Judiciary

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Draykish, Tartus

Date of birth: 1960

Branch of service: Army - Military judiciary

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2013	Head of the Field Court-Martial
	Military Attorney General

Muhammad Kanju Hasan was born in the Draykish district of the coastal Tartus Province. After graduating from law school, Hasan enrolled in the Syrian Army, where he joined the military judiciary, climbing the ranks until he was appointed as a prosecutor for the field court-martial.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Kanju Hasan, then ranked a Brigadier General, served as Prosecutor for the field court-martial in Damascus, where he tried a large number of detained civilians. In this capacity, Kanju Hasan was also in charge of prosecuting a large number of officers and soldiers for attempting to desert from the Syrian Army.

In his role as prosecutor for the military courts, Kanju Hasan is responsible for issuing thousands of death sentences, life sentences and prolonged prison sentences. According to a testimony from one officer who defected, Kanju Hasan, along with the heads of various Syrian security branches, forced detainees being held for questioning to admit to firing on military personnel. According to the account, detainees were forced to add to their official statement the clause: "I participated with others in attacks against checkpoints or (military) Centres with firearms, which resulted in the killing of a number of soldiers and wounding of others."<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Al-Araby al-Jadeed (Arabic), "The field courts of the Syrian regime ... Another arm to

The inclusion of this statement allowed Kanju Hasan to pursue death a sentence against detainees.

Unlike other court sentences, field court-martial sentences are not subject to appeal. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (who is the President) or the Defence Minister confirms the sentences issued by this court. Field courts-martial are usually formed by a decree from the Defence Minister, in accordance with Article 3 of Legislative Decree 109.

Victims' testimonies confirm that trials usually last no more than three minutes, during which the detainee is not permitted to speak and there are no rights to representation by legal counsel. Detainees are marched into the courtroom where they are read their sentence and are then immediately marched out. It is not the judge, but prosecutors who have most decision-making power in the field courts-martial. Kanju Hasan carried out his role as prosecutor until his promotion to the rank of Major-General, when he became head of the court.

According to testimony from one witness<sup>(1)</sup>:

“When the detainees enter the room where the judge is, there is no trial in the real sense. The hearing is only a quick confirmation of the charges that are in the file prepared by the security branches. Muhammad Kanju Hasan began to read the charges against us. We realized then that he was our opponent and not an impartial referee. He knows well what the security agents are doing outside the court, but he explicitly denies it. A friend of mine was bleeding because he was beaten outside the court. Kanju Hasan asked him about that. ‘Ask your friends outside,’ my friend answered him. ‘You are in the court now,’ Kanju Hasan responded, ‘this cannot happen here.’ My friend replied, ‘I am not sure if I am in a court or a security facility.’ He was later executed.”

Lt. Col. Abd al-Salam al-Mizaa<sup>(2)</sup> also reported he was sentenced by Kanju Hasan to 15 years' imprisonment during a trial which lasted no longer than one minute.

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kill”: <https://goo.gl/Mg1fbq>

(1) Muhammad's Testimony is documented by Jeiroon's Website: see “Military Field Court - Live Testimony”, by Kassem Zoubi: <https://geiroon.net/archives/67203>

(2) A defecting Army officer who was detained for 3 years.

According to another witness testimony, Kanju Hasan would amend charges set out against the defendants following the issuance of a presidential amnesty, so that the amnesty would not apply to them nor affect their sentence. According to the amended charges, defendants are subject to Article 300 of the Penal Code, which sets out a penalty of hard labour for members of armed gangs. In the ruling for Case no: 6045 (the mass trial of 116 defendants arrested trying to lift the siege on Dara'a in 2011), Kanju Hasan amended their charges to be tried under Article 300, deliberately in order to exclude them from the amnesty decrees issued at the time.<sup>(1)</sup>

A report issued by the Violations Documentation Centre in Syria (VDC)<sup>(2)</sup> listed the name of Kanju Hasan as one of the most prominent judges who is known to have dealt with detainees inhumanely.

During his tenure in the field courts-martial, Kanju Hasan is accused of extorting detainees' families in order to obtain money from them, amassing a small fortune in the process.

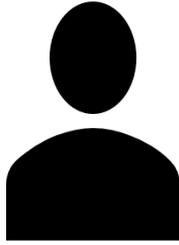
Because of his absolute loyalty to the regime, Kanju Hassan was promoted to Major General and appointed Director of the Military Justice Department, which is under the purview of the Ministry of Defence.

Kanju Hasan is directly responsible for all death sentences issued against detainees as well as thousands of other sentences that were issued unjustly against those in custody.

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(1) The testimony (in Arabic) is at: <https://introac.wordpress.com/2011/07/11/-القضاء-العسكري-قد-تحول-الى-فرع-امن-مع>

(2) See report in Arabic at: <http://www.vdc-sy.info/pdf/reports/1430186775-Arabic.pdf>



#### 44. Major General Malik Hassan

##### **Current appointment:**

2018 – present Staff Officer in Air Force Headquarters

##### **Background information:**

Place of birth: Masyaf

Branch of service: Air Force - Pilot

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016 - 2018	Commander, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Division, Air Forces
2013 - 2016	Deputy Commander, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Division, Air Forces
2011 - 2013	Flight Commander, Sukhoi squadron, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Division

Major General Malik Hassan is from the Masyaf area of Hamah province, and is considered one of the most prominent officers in the Air Force guilty of crimes against the Syrian people, and a direct participant in the killing of hundreds of people and the destruction of infrastructure over recent years.

When the peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, Malik Hassan was a Brigadier General commanding a fighter squadron in 22<sup>nd</sup> Division. He participated in the air raids carried out by this division on populated areas, particularly in the Homs, Hamah, Idlib, Dara'a and Aleppo provinces.

The headquarters of 22<sup>nd</sup> Division are located at the al-Shairat Airbase in the southeastern Homs environs, and the division is composed of three air brigades:

- 70<sup>th</sup> Brigade at al-Tayfur Airbase (the biggest Syrian airbase).
- 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade in al-Shairat Airbase.
- 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Hamah Airbase.

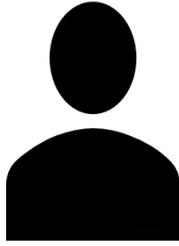
Malik Hassan was rewarded for his crimes by being promoted to Major General and appointed Deputy Commander of 22<sup>nd</sup> Division, previously led by the Major General Sajih Darwish, in 2013. He remained in this post until mid-2016, when he was appointed to command the division.

Major General Malik Hassan is considered to be responsible for the crimes which were committed by 22<sup>nd</sup> Division and the brigades which comprise it (14<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, and 70<sup>th</sup>). Under his direct supervision, they carried out thousands of raids on various Syrian areas, in particular the Homs, Hamah, Aleppo, Idlib and Dara'a provinces.

He is also considered to be directly responsible for all the air raids which launched from the al-Tayfur, al-Shairat and Hamah airbases, which killed and displaced people from entire cities, towns and villages. It also destroyed tens of thousands of homes, as well as service buildings and other infrastructure.

The most prominent crimes committed by 22<sup>nd</sup> Division include the chemical massacre in Khan Shaikhun in 2017, carried out by the pilot Brigadier General Muhammad al-Hasuri.

As a result of the horrific violations and crimes which Major General Malik Hassan committed, he was included on British and European sanctions lists in 2017. However, the regime rewarded him in mid-2018 by transferring him to the command of the Air Force and appointing the Major General Hassan Ali in his place.



**45. Major General Fu'ad Ahmad Hamudah**

**Current appointment:**

Chairman of Defence and Security Committee, Homs

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Qalayah village, Jablah, Latakia

Branch of service: Army – Special Forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2014	Commander, Special Forces
2012 - 2014	Military Operations Commander in Idlib
2011 - 2012	Deputy Commander, Special Forces

Fu'ad Hamudah is from the village of al-Qalayah in Jableh. After his graduation, he served in the Special Forces eventually becoming its commander.

Fu'ad Hamudah began his career in the Special Forces in the 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment. With them, he participated in crimes and violations against civilians during the 1980s under the command of Major General Hashim Mualla.

When 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment was transferred to Lebanon, Fu'ad Hamudah became Chief of Staff of 82<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. As such, he participated in military operations during which the Special Forces carried out widespread violations against the Lebanese and Palestinian people.

When Syrian forces returned from Lebanon in 2005, Major General Fu'ad Hamudah was transferred to Special Forces command, becoming Deputy to its Commander, Major General Jumaa al-Ahmad.

When the peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, Major General Fu'ad Hamudah was appointed Commander of military operations in Idlib, where he participated in raids and in carrying out horrific crimes against civilians. He ordered his soldiers to fire directly on protesters, and his

name appeared in the Human Right Watch report: “By All Means Necessary!” Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria.”<sup>(1)</sup> According to “Salim”, an officer in 46<sup>th</sup> Regiment who defected, Major General Fu’ad Hamudah, who had assumed command of the Idlib operation, told the forces to “stop the protesters at any cost” in the beginning of September 2011.

Hamudah is also considered to be one of the most prominent officials responsible for the crimes carried out in Jisr al-Shughur in the same year. In televised testimony, Yunis Youssef, a photographer for al-Dunya TV channel who defected, said:

“We arrived to where we met Major General Fu’ad Hamudah, who told us to relax today and not to film anything (and) that tomorrow we will see something to film with Russian and Turkish media.

Where were the people? Everyone had disappeared. It looked normal, no destruction or fires or vandalism. But after two days of waiting, we returned to Jisr al-Shughour and it was a complete tragedy—fires and destruction and corpses everywhere. I asked myself, how did this happen? We had entered the city with the army and it was quiet, empty, with no fires, destruction or vandalism. How did all this happen?

It was Assad’s Syrian army who entered the city after the people fled and destroyed, bombed, burned and vandalized everything for us to film all this and present it on al-Dunya so Bashar could tell the world that the protests were led by vandals. Assad’s army brought Russian and Turkish cinematographers to present the destruction they had caused as protesters’ vandalism.

I was shocked, and so I asked Brigadier General Ali Rida what had happened, we had been here two days ago and there hadn’t been any destruction except at the security station. He answered scornfully: ‘We were attacked by some armed men and repulsed them, and what you see happened.’ ... After that I started to calm down from my impulsiveness. Where was the conspiracy?

Things got even stranger when Jisr al-Shughour became full of people

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary/individual-and-command-responsibility-crimes-against-humanity>

the next day after the destruction. Where did they all come from? They were all from outside Jisr al-Shughour. I know the town people, because my mother's family comes from there. (The people who were there were not the town people); they were people from the Alawite, pro-government villages around Jisr al-Shughour. They went and chanted, 'God protect the army'. These were the vandals. Security, in agreement with al-Dunya, was a major participant in managing the conspiracy against the Syrian people.

Many residents were sent to refugee camps in Turkey in a double-goaled mission: to get information from refugees there, and then back to Syria to pretend that they are refugees who decided to return to their homes in the country."<sup>(1)</sup>

Major General Hamudah is also considered to be directly responsible for the al-Bashiriyyah massacre<sup>(2)</sup> in the western Idlib environs (9 April 2012 - in which ten unarmed people from the town were killed), as well as the Sanqara massacre in the al-Ruj plains (16 February 2012), which killed and wounded dozens. He shares responsibility with Brigadier General Marwan al-Shibl, Brigadier General Ahmad Awad, and Brigadier General Ghassan Afif (later killed), among others.

During this period, Major General Hamudah was mostly stationed in the al-Mastuma base, which has become a centre for operations that killed and wounded civilians, as well as displacing tens of thousands of people fleeing the indiscriminate bombardment of Idlib's villages and cities.

Major General Hamudah also contributed to the crimes carried out in the western Aleppo environs in May, and what followed in 2012, after gathering a large number of regime forces in 46<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment near the city of al-Atarib.

As a result of the violations and crimes he has carried out, the regime rewarded Major General Fu'ad Hamudah by appointing him Commander, Special Forces succeeding Major General Jumaa al-Ahmad later in 2012. Hamudah then continued to carry out his crimes by overseeing Special Forces operations, as well as the crimes which had been carried out after

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(1) <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2012/02/27/253194.html>

(2) Al-Bashiriyyeh massacre: <https://youtu.be/k7f0bOBVkgk>

his appointment as head of the Military and Security Committee in Homs in October 2014, succeeding Major General Ahmad Jamil.

This period coincided with the appointment of Brigadier General Yassin Dahi as head of the Military Security branch in Homs, when operations targeting the al-Wa'ir district increased, killing and wounding many in a number of massacres, most prominently the following two:

- A massacre on 15 October 2014 which killed 10 people (including two children and two women) during a bombardment of the district with barrel bombs.

- A massacre on 25 October 2014 which killed seven people, including a child, during a bombardment of the district with gas canisters.

As a result of the crimes which Major General Hamudah was involved in carrying out while in command of the Special Forces and while Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Homs, he was included on [British](#)<sup>(1)</sup>, [European](#)<sup>(2)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions lists.

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(1) He ranked 128 in British sanctions.

(2) He ranked 91 in European sanctions.

(3) He ranked 96 in Canadian sanctions 96.



**46. Major General Adnan Jamil Isma'il**

**Current appointment:**

2015 - present Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Division

**Background information**

Place of birth: Bayt Kammunah, Tartus

Branch of service: Army - Armour

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015	Deputy Commander, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Division
	Deputy Chief of staff, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Division
2011	Security officer, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Division

Adnan Jamil Isma'il is from the village of Bayt Kammunah in the south-eastern Tartus environs.

When the peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, Adnan was serving as a security officer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division with the rank of Brigadier General. He had a prominent role in the repression carried out by members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division in the Damascus environs, especially the areas of Qalamun near the division's headquarters near the village of al-Qutayfah. Brigadier General Isma'il played a major role in the systematic torture and killing of protesters there, as well as the execution of several of the Division's soldiers who refused to fire on demonstrators. He is also considered to be directly responsible for the execution of a large number of protesters in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division's prisons.

As a result of the crimes he committed, the regime rewarded him by appointing him Deputy Chief of Staff, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. He was later appointed to serve as Deputy Commander of the Division, until 2015, when he was

promoted to Major General and appointed Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Division's, replacing Major General Lu'ai Mualla.

Major General Adnan is considered to be one of the most prominent faces of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division's crimes, as he oversaw the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division's operations in the battles to take control over al-Nubk, Dayr Atiyah, Malulah, Rankus, Flayta, Hush al-Arab, and Hafir, up to the al-Zabadani plains. He was also responsible for the operations carried out in Qara and Yabrud, and the battle for al-Qaryatayn in the eastern Homs environs and around the city of al-Damir and the al-Sin airbase.

Under his command, the division's units also participated in striking and cutting off the road between the eastern Ghuta and Adra al-Ummaliyah to the Syrian desert, as well as in blockading these areas and attacking their inhabitants with artillery, tanks and all types of weapons.

Sources confirm that Major General Adnan Isma'il had a major role in establishing the mass graves for prisoners who were killed under torture or who were executed in security branches or in the Saydnaya Prison. According to a report published by the Zaman al-Wisl<sup>(1)</sup> website, a number of mass graves were set up near the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Headquarters. The area was put under heavy guard to prevent anyone from approaching. The burials were carried out at night, and included the remains of civilians who died in various areas, especially the following:

- Saydnaya Prison: This was the primary source. The bodies of the dead who tortured to death in this prison were transported to this mass grave following direct coordination with Major General Adnan Isma'il.

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division prison: Hundreds of prisoners were killed under torture here, mostly residents of the areas where they were arrested at the division's checkpoints deployed in the Qalamun region. Testimonies confirmed that the criminal Firas al-Jazaa carried out their executions inside the prison.

- The division's checkpoints: Here, soldiers carried out field executions of civilians or activists. In some cases, the family name for someone crossing these checkpoints was enough for them to be executed immediately.

- Dead from raids and battles: A large number of civilians were execut-

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(1) <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/99837/>

ed during raids by the division of villages and towns, with the worst being the massacres of Rankus and Asal al-Warad.

- Other sources: The graves also included bodies of those killed under torture in security branches, such as the al-Qutayfah security branches.

Major General Adnan Isma'il's role has not been limited to killings, executions, displacement and abuses. He also has clear sectarian tendencies, which appear clearly in his dealings with civilians and his behavior toward them.

Major General Adnan Isma'il has also attacked district residents through their livelihoods, by imposing sieges on cities and towns that rebelled against the regime. He blocked them from obtaining the necessities of life, in order to impose his settlements on the residents of these areas. He threatened any town or city with raids if they rejected his settlements, which was later extended to include the all areas of Qalamun, where Major General Adnan ordered the closure of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division checkpoints deployed throughout Qalamun's cities, and blocked the entry of medical and food supplies. These goods were later brought in by brokers and smugglers to be sold on the black market, earning millions of lira. Major General Adnan is himself considered to be the absolute military ruler of the Qalamun area, particularly since he later became Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee there.

Major General Adnan Isma'il is considered to be responsible, in cooperation with the security agencies, for carrying out hundreds of arrests in the Qalamun areas in order to pressgang detainees into national or reserve service in the regime's forces. He also assisted and provided all the services he had available to the Lebanese Hizballah militia and participated alongside them in the battles of al-Nabk, Wadi Barada and other parts of Qalamun.

Major General Adnan Isma'il is considered to be one of the most prominent participants in the establishment of the National Defence militias and the Qalamun Shield commanded by Colonel Firas al-Jazaa, and has supported him with weapons and equipment. He is considered to be directly responsible for all the crimes carried out by the Qalamun Shield militia.

3<sup>rd</sup> Division, under his command, provided missiles to 155<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which resulted in the deaths and displacement of thousands of Syrians. He targeted various rebellious areas, destroying infrastructure and displacing a large number of Syrians from these areas. In addition, he was involved in the Chemical Weapons attack on Ghuta in August 2013. As a result of the crimes he carried out, the regime appointed him Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Division.





**47. Major General Hikmat Musa Salman**

**Current appointment:**

Commander, 7<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Division

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Tartus environs

Branch of service: Army - Infantry

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2014	Head of Military and Security Committee in Qunaytra
	Commander, regime forces in Idlib
2011	Chairman of Defence and Security Committee in Idlib
	Deputy Commander, 10 <sup>th</sup> Division
	Chief of Staff, 10 <sup>th</sup> Division
	Commander, 68 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, 7 <sup>th</sup> Division
	Officer, 7 <sup>th</sup> Division

Hikmat Salman was born in the Tartus environs. When he graduated from the Military College with the rank of lieutenant, he was assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, where he served in 68<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Brigade and ascended the ranks from platoon commander to company commander, to become the 68<sup>th</sup> Brigade’s Security Officer.

After that he became an instructor in the Higher Military Academy for two years. Returning to 7<sup>th</sup> Division, he was appointed Chief of Staff of 121<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade. He was then appointed Commander, 68<sup>th</sup> Brigade, and later transferred to 10<sup>th</sup> Division, where he served as the division’s Chief of Staff, then Deputy Commander, and finally Commander of the forces operating in Idlib. He was also Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee there.

In October 2014, a week after being appointed Deputy Commander of 10<sup>th</sup> Division, he was appointed Commander, 7<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Division and Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee for Qunaytra Province. Major General Hikmat Salman is still serving as Commander 7<sup>th</sup> Division and Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Qunaytra.

When the peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, Hikmat Salman was assigned to accompany 10<sup>th</sup> Division to Idlib to suppress its residents. He was appointed Commander of the ground force and Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Idlib. As a result, he is regarded to be responsible for all the arrests, killings and displacements carried out by regime forces in Idlib province up to the end of 2014, in addition to the bombardments carried out from the regime forward operating bases deployed in Idlib at that time. These include:

- al-Hamahdiyah, south of the city of Maarat al-Numan.
- Wadi al-Dayf, east of the city of Maarat al-Numan.
- al-Qarmid, south of the city of Ariha.
- al-Taba'a, south of the city of Idlib.
- al-Khazanat, Khan al-Shaykhun city.
- al-Shabiba on the Latakia-Aleppo highway between Ariha and Saraqib.
- al-Mastumah, south of Idlib, a base commanded by Major General Hikmat personally.

These camps have inflicted death and destruction on the towns and cities of Idlib province. They have contributed to the displacement of tens of thousands of the province's residents and caused the deaths of thousands, as well as permanently disabling hundreds of people. They have also destroyed thousands of homes in Idlib province. Hundreds of massacres have been documented that were carried out by regime forces under the command of Major General Hikmat Salman.

At the end of 2014, Major General Hikmat Salman was transferred from 10<sup>th</sup> Division in Idlib to become Deputy Commander, 7<sup>th</sup> Mechanised Division in the Damascus environs. A week after that, a decision was

issued by Bashar al-Assad to appoint him Commander, 7<sup>th</sup> Division. He was also appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Qunaytrah.

Since that time, Major General Hikmat has been considered responsible for military actions carried out by 7<sup>th</sup> Division's forces in the Damascus environs, Dara'a, and Qunaytrah. The division's soldiers have participated in battles to take control over the following areas: Zakiyah, Khan al-Shaikh, Shaikh Maskin, al-Habiriyah, Dayr al-Adas, Jabal al-Shaikh, Bayt Jinn, Maghar al-Mir and other areas in what is known as the "Triangle of Death" (the area where the Damascus environs, Dara'a and Qunaytrah provinces meet). These areas have seen heavy fighting and bombardment by regime forces, especially 7<sup>th</sup> Division, which fought in the battles for the eastern Ghuta.

When it took control of the Ghuta, 7<sup>th</sup> Division participated in the battles for al-Hajjar al-Aswad, as well as in the campaign in southern Syria. It took control over the Qunaytrah province and assisted Iranian militias and Hizballah fighters, as well as some Druze militias, in penetrating the southern region.

Major General Hikmat Salman is considered to be directly responsible for the crimes and violations carried out against civilians in the areas extending from Idlib to Qunaytrah, which have caused the loss of thousands of civilian lives, the displacement of tens of thousands, and the destruction of houses and infrastructure.





**48. Major General Hassan Muhammad Muhammad**

**Current appointment:**

2018 – present Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps; Chairman of Defence and Security Committee in Homs

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Ain Shaqaq, Jablah, Latakia

Date of birth: 1957

Branch of service: Army - Armour

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018	Chief of Staff, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Corps; Chairmain of Defence and Security Committee in Al bu Kamal
2017 - 2018	Commander, 17 <sup>th</sup> Division
2016 – 2017	Chairman of Defence and Security Committee in Eastern Region
2015 - 2016	Deputy Ccommander, 17 <sup>th</sup> Division,
	Regimental Commanding Officer, in 91 <sup>st</sup> Brigade, 1 <sup>st</sup> Division

Hassan Muhammad Muhammad was born in the village of Ain Shaqaq in the Jablah area of Latakia province in 1957. He graduated from the Military College with a specialisation in Armour in 1979, and then rose through the ranks until he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Army’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps. He is considered to be one of the most prominent officers involved in the widespread crimes and violations against civilians in the Damascus environs, Dayr al-Zur, Raqqa and Hasakah, where he moved through various ranks. He is infamous for his command of 17<sup>th</sup> Division, the only division which was completely overrun and had most of its brigades destroyed.

When the peaceful protests began in March 2011, Hassan Muham-

mad was a Brigadier General commanding 91<sup>st</sup> Brigade (part of 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Division.) He participated in the repression across various parts of the Damascus environs, both in Western Ghuta and Eastern Ghuta. In an interview, he said: “I fought on the western Ghuta front in Damascus, and al-Kaswa, al-Taybah, al-Qadam, Nahr Aisha, al-Dahadil, Sabinah, al-Buwaydah, al-Hajirah, Daraya, the airport road, and al-Maliha in the Damascus environs when I was Commander of the 91<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division.”

By this account, Hassan Muhammad, along with soldiers from the 91<sup>st</sup> Brigade, carried out a number of massacres and violations against the Syrian people, killing and wounding thousands of civilians and displaced a large number of residents from these areas and destroyed their property.

As a result of his copious crimes, the regime rewarded him by promoting him to Major General and appointing him Deputy Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Division in the Eastern Region. In July 2016, he was further promoted, to Commander of the same division and Chirman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Eastern Region. He participated in the siege imposed on the residents of Dayr al-Zur city, and exploited his position to bolster his finances by selling food to residents at inflated prices, although these foodstuffs had been sent by the United Nations. He is considered to be directly responsible for all the killings of civilians that occurred as a result of the artillery, rocket and mortar bombardment in the area, as well as aerial bombardment. He was joined in that by a number of officers, including Brigadier General Issam Zahar, who was killed at the end of 2017.

Major General Hassan Muhammad remained Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Division until the beginning of 2018, when Major General Ghassan Muhammad was appointed to replace him; Hassan Muhammad was appointed Chief of Staff, 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps under the command of Major General Muhammad Khaddur. Hassan Muhammad was also appointed Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Abu Kamal, and in this respect participated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Hizballah in the demographic change they carried out in the city by supporting the Shi'a presence in the Abu Kamal area.

On 27 January 2019, Major General Hassan Muhammad was appointed Commander, 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps and Chairman of the Defence and Security

Committee in Homs, succeeding Major General Muhammad Khaddur, who retired after reaching the legal age (Major General Hassan Muhammad has had his term extended multiple times by Bashar al-Assad.) Major General Hassan also met the Russian President Putin in the Humaymim military base when he visited.





**49. Major General Akram Muhammad**

**Current appointment:**

2016 - present Head of State Security branch in Tartus, General Intelligence Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Homs  
Branch of service: Intelligence - General Intelligence Directorate

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2013 - 2016	Head of Information Branch 255, General Intelligence Directorate
2009 - 2013	Head State Security branch in Aleppo, General Intelligence Directorate

Major General Akram Muhammad is from Homs province. He is considered to be one of the most prominent officers in the General Intelligence Directorate, known as the State Security Directorate. In 2009, he was appointed Head of the State Security branch in Aleppo at the rank of Brigadier General. He stayed in this position until the end of 2013.

When the peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, he was given the responsibility of repressing these demonstrations. He arrested and killed protesters, and his forces killed prisoners under torture early on in the protests in Aleppo. Brigadier General Akram, along with Major General Adib Salamah (head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Northern Region) together with a number of officers from various security branches, carried out killings and crimes.

The 2012 Human Rights Watch Report, "Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground

Prisons since March 2011<sup>(1)</sup>,” quoted the testimony of a Aleppo University student, “Sulayman,” who had been arrested in August 2011, regarding the torture to which the Syrian people were subjected in the State Security branch. He said:

“They took me to the State Security branch where they took my clothes off. My hands were tied with plastic cuffs behind my back. I was naked sitting on my knees. We were underground. They were beating me with their hands, and batons, and kicks. There were also people next to me being beaten. There was one child who was eight years old who was with us and he was being beaten. I heard the soldiers asking each other, “Where is the kid?” He was in the mosque with us when we were picked up. As they were putting us in the van one of the security officers said to the driver [talking about the boy], “This one is a gift for you today.” I don’t know what happened to him. They separated us by neighbourhood. Those from Hamah and Homs got the worst treatment. There was no food there. The next day they took me to [another facility].”

Other testimony corroborates. Nidal, who was arrested in July 2011, said:

“The interrogator accused me of being associated with “terrorists.” I denied it. He also wanted me to confess to being the organiser of demonstrations. I refused. Then another person entered the room and started beating me with a whip. A third person joined. They pushed me on the floor, made me raise my feet, and started beating me on the soles of my feet. After half an hour they took me back to the cell, saying I should think about what to say. They beat me like this two more times before they put me in a car and took me to the Air Force Intelligence branch.”

This testimony is a simple example of the brutal practices carried out by members of the State Security branch in Aleppo under Brigadier General Akram Muhammad. Many similar cases have been documented.

When the eastern districts of Aleppo fell into opposition hands, Brigadier General Hafiz Makhlef issued a decision to transfer Brigadier General Akram Muhammad from Aleppo to Damascus in January 2013. There

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias>

he became Head of Branch 255 in the General Intelligence Directorate, succeeding Brigadier General Ghassan Khalil. (This branch is concerned with background information, including all security reports, and handles monitoring media and internet activities, as well as overseeing the work of the “Syrian Electronic Army”.)

Brigadier General Akram continued his crimes after he was appointed Head of the State Security branch in Tartus in 2016, and then promoted at the beginning of 2019 to the rank of Major General. It is expected that he will be appointed to a new position in the General Intelligence Directorate in Damascus.





**50. Major General Ali Muhammad Ghanim**

**Current appointment:**

2013 – present Chief of Staff, (Air Force) 22<sup>nd</sup> Division

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: al-Krayyim, Banyas, Tartus

Branch of service: Air Force - Pilot

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2013	Commander, 699 <sup>th</sup> Air Squadron, 20 <sup>th</sup> Division

Major General Muhammad Ghanim is from the al-Krayyem village in Banyas in the province of Tartous. He is currently the Chief of Staff of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division, and is considered directly responsible for all the criminal acts committed by the commanders and pilots of that division since he took over that position. Before that, he was also responsible for airstrikes against anti-Assad areas, in addition to his heading the 699<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade in the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division.

In 2011, when the Syrian revolution broke out, Ghanim was still a Brigadier General heading 699<sup>th</sup> Squadron of 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade in 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division. At the time, he - along with other pilots from that squadron - was responsible for numerous airstrikes launched from Palmyra Airbase, which airstrikes were the cause of dozens of massacres. More than 15,000 airstrikes were launched from that airbase, in which Ghanim was the third most senior officer, after Brigadier General Mayzar Sawwan and Brigadier General Imad Naffuri. (These two were later promoted to the rank of Major General and were given command positions.)<sup>(1)</sup>

Major General Ghanim was one a large group of Air Force officers sent to Moscow for training in 2012. The group included a number of senior military pilots from 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade, the Air Force College, and the helicopter

(1) <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/uploads/alsiiin.pdf>

force of 64<sup>th</sup> Brigade. Members of the group were trained how to fly the aircraft which Russia was selling to the Syrian government. In addition to Ghanim, the group included Colonel Kamal Sumaya. During the training, these two conducted flights with MIG-29UB along with Russian mentors in a Russian airbase. The rest of the Syrian pilots in the group conducted flights with YK-130 and MI-28 aircrafts<sup>(1)</sup>.

In 2013, Brigadier General Ghanim was posted to 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division, to give him the opportunity for promotion and command. This happened when he was promoted to Major General and appointed Chief of Staff of 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division. Ghanim, along with Major Generals Saji Darwish, Malik Hassan and Hassan Ali, are directly responsible for the crimes committed by the pilots of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division which controls 70<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Brigades, from which dozens of airstrikes were launched against such areas as Homs, Hamah, Aleppo, Idlib and Dara'a. They were responsible also for the airstrikes launched from the T4, Shayrat and Hamah airbases which killed thousands of people and left many others homeless, in addition to destroying the infrastructure of many areas.

As Chief of Staff of 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division, Ghanim is also responsible, among others, for the Chemical Weapons massacre in Khan Shaikhun. That attack was launched from the Shayrat airbase by the criminal Brigadier General Muhammad Hasuri of 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade in April 2017. Around 90 people, including children and women, were killed in the attack. 22<sup>nd</sup> Division was responsible for the airstrikes that targeted Eastern Ghuta in April 2018, killing and injuring hundreds of people and forcing the majority of the population there to leave their homes for northern Syria.

Major General Muhammad Ghanim is still in his position as the Chief of Staff of 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division which is commanded by Major General Hassan Ali. Ghanim continues the crimes his Division has been committing, in particular since the regime regained control of the city of Aleppo.

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(1) <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/103812/>





**51. Major General Muhammad Ali Subuh**

**Current appointment:**

2016 – present Commander, 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Division

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Hiyalin, Misyaf, Hamah

Branch of service: Army – Special Forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016	Commanding Officer of the Chemical Regiment
2011 - 2016	Officer, 14 <sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division

Major General Muhammad Subuh is an Alawite from the village of Hiyalin in the region of Misyaf in Hamah’s western environs.

Subuh is considered one of the regime’s war criminals who took part in a large number of attacks against the Syrian people. For the past 6 years, his criminal acts focused on the region of Eastern Ghuta when he was still a Brigadier General in 14<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Division. Currently, he leads 18<sup>th</sup> Tank Division, in the province of Homs.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, and after the intervention of the Syrian Army to repress the Syrian people, Brigadier General Subuh was sent with others from 14<sup>th</sup> Division to the Eastern Ghuta. There, Subuh committed many violations and massacres against the people of Ghuta. Brigadier General Subuh also participated in numerous of the massacres in Eastern Ghuta from 2012 until the regime forces restored control of that region and forced its people out of their homes in April 2018.

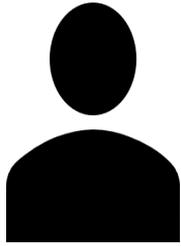
In April 2016, Brigadier General Muhammad Subuh was appointed Commanding Officer of the Chemical Regiment in Eastern Ghuta, re-

placing Brigadier General Yusuf Ahmad. In that capacity, Subuh played a major role in all the chemical attacks on Eastern Ghuta. He also grew more involved in field military missions and personally participated in the regime's invasions of that region.

Having recaptured Eastern Ghuta and forced the majority of its population to leave their homes for northern Syria, the regime rewarded Subuh by promoting him to Major General. He was also appointed Commander of the Syrian Army Division in Homs environs and the Syrian Desert. Subuh is considered responsible for all the criminal acts committed by that division since he took charge of it.







**52. Major General Badi'  
Sulayman Mu'alla**

**Current appointment:**

2018 – present Commander,  
Coastal Combined Headquarters

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Bistuwayr, Jablah,  
Latakia

Date of Birth: 1961

Branch of service: Air Force - Pilot

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
	Commander, Humaymim Air Base
	Commander, 63 <sup>rd</sup> Brigade
2011	Squadron Commander, 618 <sup>th</sup> Heli- copter Squadron (Navy)
	Squadron Commander

Major General Badi' Sulayman Mualla is an Alawite from the village of Bistuwayr in the environs of Jablah in the province of Latakia.

He is one of the most ruthless war criminals of the Syrian helicopter force. Mualla is responsible for killing a large number of Syrians, destroying their houses, and forcing large numbers more to leave their homes.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, Mualla was a Brigadier General, leading the 618<sup>th</sup> helicopter squadron of the Syrian Navy. In December 2018, Zaman al-Wasl website published a report entitled "After his devilish services, the man behind the idea of using mnaval mines [on land] gets rewarded by Assad's regime." The regime had asked Mualla to consider loading navy helicopters with barrel bombs. Mualla then suggested to the Air Force Commander and the Head of Air Force Intelligence to use naval mines as bombs, since - unlike using barrels – this would not require any adjustments to the naval helicopters. At the time, the 618<sup>th</sup> Helicopter Squadron had more 3,500 naval mines in its warehouses.

Mualla's suggestion won the approval of the Head of the Air Force Intelligence (Major General Jamil Hassan), and that of the commander of Air Force and Air Defence (Major General Ahmad Ballul.) According to

well-informed sources, Mualla himself was the first pilot in 618<sup>th</sup> Squadron to drop a naval mine from a naval helicopter onto a land target, in the environs of Latakia late in 2014. That strike marked the beginning of a long series of similar attacks, which intensified between 2015 and 2016 (when the regime's warehouses ran out of naval mines.)

Later on, the Assad regime rewarded Mualla by appointing him Commander of the Air Force's 63<sup>rd</sup> Air Brigade (helicopters) at Hamah Airport; this unit was responsible for killing thousands of Syrians in Hamah, Aleppo, Idlib and Latakia. Moreover, Mualla was one of the officers in charge of the Chemical Weapons attacks carried out by the Air Force's 63<sup>rd</sup> Air Brigade, especially the Chemical Weapons attack on Talmaynis. Mualla's name was mentioned in the UN Security Council report of February 28, 2017 (S/2017/172) as one of the persons responsible for that attack. According to the report:

“BG BADI’ MUALLA. Description: BG Badi’ Mualla was the commander of the Syrian Air Force’s 63rd Air Brigade during the period investigated by the JIM. By nature of his position, he would have allowed chlorine use in his area of responsibility, including the attack on Talmenes that the Joint Investigative Mechanism reported was conducted by Hamah Airfield-based helicopters.”

In January 2017, the US Department of the Treasury imposed sanctions on a number of officials of the Syrian Air Force, Air Defence, Army, Navy, Republican Guard, and the Establishment of Technical Industries. The US Department of the Treasury said the sanctions were in relation to the findings of UN teams which had confirmed the Syrian regime's use of chlorine as a weapon against civilians. Those sanctions included a number of other officials including Major General Saji Darwish and Major General Talal Makhluaf.

In 2016, Brigadier General Mualla was appointed Commander of Humaymim Air Base which has been operated by the Russian military since its active intervention in Syria in 2015. Taking up that position, Mualla became a partner in all the criminal attacks launched from that air base. In March 2016, the Russian military leadership in Syria honored Mualla for the services he provided to them as Commander of Humaymim Air Base.

In 2017, Brigadier General Mualla headed the Syrian military delega-

tion which visited Moscow to request military helicopter spare parts. (The helicopter parts had started wearing out from bombing the Syrian people.)



Early in July 2018, Mualla was promoted to the rank of Major General as a reward for the criminal services he offered to the regime. Later on, he was appointed Commander of the Coastal Combined Headquarters, based in Baniyas in the province of Tartus.

Photo caption: Major General Mualla while being honored by the Russian military command in Syria in March 2016.



**53. Major General Saji' Darwish**

**Current appointment:**

2016 – present Chief of Staff of the Air Force

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Qirdaha, Latakia

Branch of service: Air Force - Pilot

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2013 - 2016	Commander, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division
2012 - 2013	Chief of Staff, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Division
2011 - 2012	Chief of Staff, 20 <sup>th</sup> Division
UKN – UKN	Commander, 17 <sup>th</sup> Brigade
	Commander, 699 <sup>th</sup> Squadron
	Pilot, 17 <sup>th</sup> Squadron, 20 <sup>th</sup> Division

Major General Saji' Darwish is an Alawite from the city of Qirdaha in the environs of Latakia. He is known to be one of the bloodiest and most sectarian officers of the Air Force.

Darwish climbed the ladder of military ranks within 20<sup>th</sup> Division, occupying a number of positions in 699<sup>th</sup> Squadron of 17<sup>th</sup> Air Force Brigade. One post was as the Brigade's Security Officer when he was a colonel, during which time, Darwish became infamous for his corruption, stealing fuel and supplies from the brigade. Later on, he became Chief of Staff of 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division as a Brigadier General. Darwish was very close to members of Air Force Intelligence, who helped him advance his career, reaching Major General.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, Darwish was the Chief of Staff of the 20<sup>th</sup> Division. He is responsible for the crimes committed by that division's troops during the early days of the revolution. He is also responsible for the crimes committed by the division's aircraft against Syrians until he was transferred from that position.

In mid-2012, Darwish was moved from the 20<sup>th</sup> Division and appointed Chief of Staff of 22<sup>nd</sup> Division where he remained until mid-2016. Based in the Shayrat Air Base in Homs' southeastern environs, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Division commands three main brigades:

1. 70<sup>th</sup> Brigade, at the T-4 Air Base

More than 30 airstrikes were launched from this airbase against areas in the Central, Northern and Coastal Regions of Syria. Those airstrikes used various kinds of bombs, including internationally prohibited ones;

2. 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade, at the Shayrat Air Base

More than 40 airstrikes were launched from this airbase, using various kinds of bombs, including internationally prohibited bombs such as Chemical Weapons. Military aircraft flying from this air base committed many massacres in the Central, Northern and Coastal Regions of Syria.

3. 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade, at Hamah Air Base

More than 20 airstrikes were launched from this airbase against several rebelling areas of Syria.

When Brigadier General Darwish was Chief of Staff, 22<sup>nd</sup> Division, the Syrian regime had already involved its air force in repressing the areas opposing its rule, to commit hideous atrocities against Syrians. With Commander 22<sup>nd</sup> Division (Major General Ali Shalish), Major General Darwish is considered directly responsible for the crimes committed between July 2012 and the beginning of 2013. In particular, Darwish is considered responsible for the following crimes:

- The crimes committed by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Division's airstrikes against Syrians between early 2013 and July 2016. Darwish shares the responsibility for these crimes with Major General Malik Hasan.

- The crimes committed by the Syrian aircraft in general after he was

appointed Head of Syrian Airforce and became the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He shares the responsibility for these crimes with the Commander of the Air Force (Major General Ahmad Ballul), including the chemical attacks on Khan Shaikhun and using barrel bombs and other bombs to destroy Syrians' houses and force them out of their homes. The reason Major General Darwish was posted to 22<sup>nd</sup> Division was to open his previous position up for another criminal, Major General Bassam Haydar, who subsequently became Commander, 20<sup>th</sup> Division.

Below is a number of the massacres committed by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division under the command of Major General Saji' Darwish between 2013 and mid-2016:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Injured</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Province</b>	<b>Details</b>
Kafr Nabl	18		28 August 2012	Idlib environs	Airstrikes
Marrat al-Numan	40		18 October 2012	Idlib	Airstrikes
Talbisah	15		24 December 2012	Homs	An airstrike targeted a bakery with 6 missiles
Izzaz	33		13 January 2013	Aleppo	Airstrikes on the city's central market
al-Qaryatayn	24		7 February 2013	Homs environs	Airstrikes
Hananu district	25	15	1 March 2013	Aleppo	Airstrikes with cluster bombs

Location	Killed	Injured	Date	Province	Details
al-Marijh district	42	100	18 March 2013	Aleppo	Airstrikes targeted the district with 6 thermobaric bombs
Saraqib	26		13 April 2013	Idlib	Airstrikes
Bustan al-Qasr district	65	200	16 August 2013	Aleppo	Airstrikes and indiscriminate shelling
Urum	35	70	26 August 2013	Aleppo	Airstrikes on Iqraa college with a phosphorous bomb. Victims were students.
Suran	6		11 January 2014	Hamah	Airstrikes Victims included one woman
Um al-Rish village	5		21 February 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes on civilian houses. Victims were all children.
Kafr Takharim	16		1 March 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes
Maarrat Masrin	9		15 March 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes

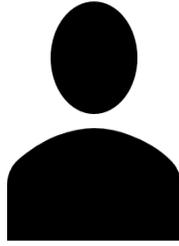
Location	Killed	Injured	Date	Province	Details
Ram Hamdan	8		20 March 2014	Idlib environs	An airstrike on a civilian bus at the town's roundabout
Armanaz	720		5 May 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes
Kafr Battikh	9		14 June 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes
Binnash	6		27 June 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes
al-Atamanah	6		July 20, 2014	Hamah	Aircrafts used machineguns against the town's vegetable market. Victims included 2 women and a child.
Shanan	7		29 July 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrikes Victims included 5 children and 2 women
Kafr Takhrim	9		11 August 2014	Idlib environs	Airstrike Victims included a child
Andan	11		30 November 2014	Aleppo environs	Airstrike Victims included a child

Location	Killed	Injured	Date	Province	Details
Idlib city	32		31 March 2015	Idlib	Airstrikes Victims included 13 children and 7 women
Jarjanaz	11		24 June 2015	Idlib environs	Airstrikes Victims included 5 children and 5 women
Khwayn village	8		16 July 2015	Idlib environs	Airstrikes Victims included 7 children
Idlib city	21		11 August 2015	Idlib environs	An aircraft crashed on the city's farmers' market Victims included 3 children and 4 women
Idlib city	17		18 September 2015	Idlib	Airstrikes Victims included 4 women
al-Zafaranah	6		30 September 2015	Homs environs	Airstrikes All victims were from the same family and included one child and 2 women
Sarmin	12		20 October 2015	Idlib environs	Airstrikes

Location	Killed	Injured	Date	Province	Details
Abu al-Duhur	19		7 March 2016	Idlib environs	Airstrikes Victims included 3 women
al-Sukhnah	8		12 March 2016	Homs environs	Airstrikes Victims included 3 children and a woman
Taldaw	5	13	18 April 2016	Homs environs	Airstrikes Victims included a child and a woman
Maarrat al-Numan	41		19 April 2016	Idlib environs	Airstrikes Victims included 4 children and 4 women
Talbisah	5		22 April 2016	Homs environs	Airstrikes Victims included a child and a woman
Maarrat Masrin	13	30	13 May 2016	Idlib environs	Airstrikes with ther-mobaric bombs
Rastan	13	dozens	18 May 2016	Homs environs	Airstrikes All victims were from the same family
Khan al-Sabl	9		20 May 2016	Idlib environs	Airstrikes All victims were from the same family

Location	Killed	Injured	Date	Province	Details
Sayjar	15	dozens	1 June 2016	Idlib	Two airstrikes on a civilian gathering close to a gas station

In addition to the above-mentioned crimes, Major General Saji' Darwish is responsible for dozens of other massacres committed by the Syrian Air Force aircrafts to repress the areas rebelling against the Assad regime. The crimes laid out above are only a small part of the crimes committed via airstrikes.



#### 54. Major General Hassan Ali

##### Current appointment:

2018 – present Commander, 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division

##### Background information:

Place of Birth: al-Haffah environs, Latakia

Date of Birth: 1961

Branch of service: Air Force - Pilot

##### Previous appointments:

2015 - 2018	Commander of the Northern Standard Headquarters
2011 - 2015	Commander, 14 <sup>th</sup> Brigade

Major General Hassan Ali is an Alawite from the environs of al-Haffah city in the province of Latakia. Ali is known for being very sectarian and very bloody. He is one of the pilots of batch 29 and leads the 22<sup>nd</sup> Division in the Air Force which is located at the Shayrat Air Base that includes the 70<sup>th</sup>, the 50<sup>th</sup>, and the 14<sup>th</sup> Brigades.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, Major General Ali was a Brigadier General leading 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade of Hamah Air Base, which includes Abu al-Zuhur Air Base. He remained in that position until 2015. During that period, Ali committed hundreds of massacres against Syrians. He was part of destroying their houses and forcing them out of their homes. He is directly responsible for all the air strikes launched from the 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade between 2011 and 2015 against the provinces close to the two air bases, especially Hamah, Aleppo, Idlib and Latakia. The 14<sup>th</sup> Brigade is also responsible for more than 20,000 air strikes since the beginning of the Syrian revolution. Below is a list of a number of the massacres committed by those airstrikes:

- On 28 August 2012, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Kafranbel in Idlib environs killing 18 people with airstrikes;
- On 18 October 2012, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Maarrat al-Numan in Idlib, killing 40 people with airstrikes;

- On 13 April 2013, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Saraqib killing 26 people with airstrikes;
- On 11 January 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Suran (north of Hamah) killing 6 people including one woman with airstrikes;
- On 21 February 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the village of Um al-Rish in Idlib environs killing 5 children with airstrikes;
- On 1 March 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Kafr Takharim in Idlib environs killing 16 people with airstrikes;
- On 15 March 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Maarrat Masrin in Idlib environs killing 9 people with airstrikes;
- On 20 March 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Ram Hamdan in Idlib environs killing 8 people with an airstrike on a civilian bus at the town's roundabout;
- On 5 May 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Armanaz in Idlib environs killing 7 people and injuring 20 with airstrikes;
- On 14 June 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre at the village of Kafr Battikh in Idlib's eastern environs killing 9 people with airstrikes;
- On 27 June 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the village of Bansh in Idlib's eastern environs killing 6 people with airstrikes;
- On 29 July 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Shanan in Idlib environs killing 5 children and 2 women with airstrikes;
- On 20 July 2014 regime forces committed a massacre in the town of al-Latamnah in Hamah's northern environs killing 6 people including one child and 2 women with fighter ground (machinegun) attack on the town's farmer's market;
- On 11 August, 2014, the regime forces committed a massacre in the town of Kafr Takharim in Idlib Environs killing 9 people including one child with airstrikes;

Dozens of other massacres were committed by the regime forces with attacks launched from Hamah Air Base.

On 15 December 2015, Brigadier General Ali was appointed Commander of the Northern Combined Command, and was promoted to the rank of Major General early in 2016. He remained in that position until mid-2018, when he was tasked with leading 22<sup>nd</sup> Air Force Division, succeeding the criminal Major General Malik Hassan. Ali is considered responsible for all the crimes committed by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Division's aircraft since he took over its command.



**55. Major General Imad Naffuri**

**Current appointment:**

2017 – present Staff Officer at the Air Force Headquarters

**Background information**

Place of birth: al-Nabik

Branch of service: Air Force - Pilot

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015	Chief of Staff, (Air Force) 20 <sup>th</sup> Division
2012	Commander, 17 <sup>th</sup> Brigade
2011	Deputy Commander, 17 <sup>th</sup> Brigade

Major General Imad Naffuri is a Sunni from the city of al-Nabik in the Damascus environs. Naffuri started his military career as a Pilot Officer at the 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division. Later on, and after a number of promotions, Naffuri was appointed Chief of Staff, 20<sup>th</sup> Division. In mid-2018, he was moved to the Air Force Headquarters.

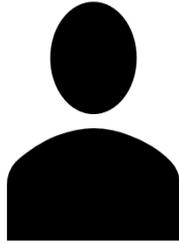
When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, Naffuri was a Brigadier General and Deputy Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade of 20<sup>th</sup> Air Force Division; the Division Commander at the time was Brigadier General Mayzar Sawwan). In mid-2012, Naffuri was appointed Commander, 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade, where he waged hundreds of airstrikes against anti-Assad areas from Palmyra Airbase. 17<sup>th</sup> Brigade has a number of squadrons under command - including 696, 697 and 699 - which have committed dozens of massacres (more than 15,000 airstrikes against anti-Assad areas since the beginning of the revolution.)

Naffuri's airstrikes did not exclude his own home-town, al-Nabik. In November 2013, he himself supervised the airstrikes against the Eastern Qalamun region that includes al-Nabik. Those airstrikes killed many people, including six of his own relatives, and injured many others.

In mid-2015, Naffuri was appointed Chief of Staff, 20<sup>th</sup> Division. He is responsible, along with the Division's Commanders (first, Major General Mayzar Sawwan, and later on Major General Bassam Haydar) for hundreds of massacres committed by the pilots of 20<sup>th</sup> Division against Syrians, especially in Qalamun and Eastern Ghuta. These two areas have been subjected to the regime's fiercest air campaigns, including the Chemical Weapons attacks of April 2018 in Eastern Ghuta. According to intelligence reports, the Chemical Weapons attacks were conducted using MI-8 helicopters which flew from al-Dhamir Airbase and dropped barrel bombs including noxious substances on the city of Duma. The substances were later on determined to be sarin. The attack claimed the lives of at least 80 people who suffocated in underground shelters. When the attack happened, the victims were hiding from the regime's indiscriminate bombings which forced more than 100,000 people out of Ghuta to northern Syria.

On 01 July 2018, Naffuri was promoted to Major General. Two weeks later, he was posted to Air Force Headquarters, and was replaced by Brigadier General Adil al-Ratib from the Air Force Headquarters.

As a staff officer at Air Force Headquarters, Major General Imad Naffuri is complicit in all the crimes committed by the regime's various aircraft against Syrians since he was moved to the Air Force Headquarters.



**56. Brigadier-General Jawdat Ibrahim Safi**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the Political Security Branch, Damascus environs

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Branch of service: Army  
- Republican Guards

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016	Head of the Political Security Branch, Damascus environs
2015 - 2016	Head of the Political Security Branch, Suwayda
2011	154 <sup>th</sup> Regiment, 4 <sup>th</sup> Division

Jawdat Ibrahim Safi is the son of retired Lieutenant-General Ibrahim Safi. In 2011, he was serving with 154<sup>th</sup> Regiment, part of 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division under the supervision of Mahir al-Assad (the president's brother and Commander of the Republican Guard.)

Safi is renowned for his absolute loyalty to the Assad regime. He played a key role in the suppression of peaceful demonstrations in the Damascus environs, specifically in the neighbourhoods of Mu'adamiyat al-Sham, Dummar, Duma and Abbasiya, and directly ordered a large number of arbitrary arrests at checkpoints staffed by 154<sup>th</sup> Regiment personnel.

According to an eyewitness account obtained by Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Abdullah" (a soldier who defected from a battalion directly under Safi's command) testified that both Brigadier General Jawdat Safi and Major General Muhammad Ali Dirgham ordered troops to open fire on demonstrators in and around the capital Damascus.<sup>(1)</sup> The witness told HRW:

"We were told to shoot if civilians gathered in groups of more than sev-

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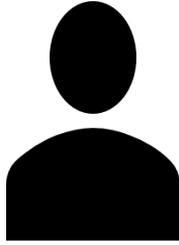
(1) Neisfat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). "[By All Means Necessary: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria](#)". Human Rights Watch.

en or eight people. Commander of the 154<sup>th</sup> Regiment Brigadier-General Jawbat Ibrahim Safi and divisional commander Major-General Muhammad Ali Durgham gave us the orders before we went out. The orders were to shoot at gatherings of protesters as well as defectors, and to storm houses and arrest people.”

For his role in these crimes, Brigadier General Safi was subject to [European](#) and [British](#) sanctions in 2012 and 2013, respectively.

Despite this, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad continued to see value in Safi’s experience, appointing him in February 2015 to head the Political Security Branch in Suwayda. He replaced Brigadier General Muhammad Hikmat Ibrahim who was sacked for praising the late Druze shaikh Wahid al-Balus, who had been assassinated in September 2015. Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr, who headed the Military Intelligence branch in the Southern Region, was accused of ordering the killing of Shaikh al-Balus.

In 2016, Safi worked with Colonel Qais Farwa of the Republican Guard to impose an agreement to “resettle” opposition fighters from Aleppo and displace those who refused to comply. In April 2018, Safi was appointed to command 154<sup>th</sup> Regiment.



**57. Brigadier-General Jawdat al-Ahmad**

**Current appointment:**

Air Force Intelligence Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Qardaha, Latakia province

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011	Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Central Region (Homs)
2009 - 2011	Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Eastern Region (Dayr al-Zur)
2003 - 2009	Head, Investigations Branch, Air Force Intelligence
	Headquarters Air Force Intelligence
1985 - 1995	Unit 417, Air Force Intelligence

Jawdat al-Ahmad began his career as an officer in the powerful Air Force Intelligence Directorate (AFI), serving as a supervisor for Syria's burgeoning Chemical Weapons programme from 1985 to 1995. It was during this time that a series of Chemical Weapons tests were conducted by the regime on political prisoners detained at the notorious Palmyra (Tadmur) Prison.

Under the guidance of General Ali Mamluk, testing took place at Unit 417, which is affiliated with the AFI, situated off the Palmyra Highway in the Syrian Desert. The experiments were initially carried out in confined experimental conditions, but were eventually tested in the open on victims through aerial bombardment. Regime pilots may have used this experience as training, which would explain their recent effectiveness at using Chemical Weapons for hitting targets from the air. It has been estimated that thousands of civilians were exposed to Chemical Weapons during this period of testing.

In 2003, after his promotion to the rank of Brigadier General, al-Ahmad was appointed to head the AFI's Investigation Branch, where he served until in 2009. In that year, he was tasked with leading the AFI's Eastern Region branch in Dayr al-Zur. At this time, al-Ahmad is suspected to have fostered relationships with various criminal groups.

In late 2010, al-Ahmad was transferred to Homs to oversee the AFI's Central Region branch. When the revolution broke out the following year, he played a key role in the ordering of civilian massacres, kidnappings and forced disappearances. He is believed to have co-opted *shabiha* gangs into kidnapping and murdering detainees after their release from AFI custody.

al-Ahmad also directly oversaw the regime's response during the infamous Clock Square Massacre in the city of Homs. In 2011, security forces stationed in the vicinity and on nearby rooftops opened fire on a crowd of peaceful protestors, killing and wounding a large number of civilians.

Human Rights Watch named Brigadier-General al-Ahmad as a Human Rights violator in an extensive 2012 report on torture carried by regime security services.<sup>(1)</sup> He has also been [placed](#) on British and EU sanctions lists for his involvement in human rights violations, which has resulted in the freezing of his UK-based assets.

In July 2012, Warrant Officer Ibrahim Farzat of the AFI Homs branch defected in protest against violations carried out by his peers, accusing three officers of "committing crimes against humanity, acts of violence, rape and murder." The three officers were named as Warrant Officers Abd al-Karim Tarsha and Hassan Ali, and Brigadier General Jawdat al-Ahmad.

Former US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power also mentioned al-Ahmad as part of a group of officers accused of torturing opponents and carrying out attacks on civilian targets. "The United States will not let those who have commanded units involved in these actions hide anonymously behind the facade of the Assad regime," Power told the UN Security Council. "Those behind such attacks must know that we and the international community are watching their actions,

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(1) Solvang, O., & Neistat, A. (2012). [Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons Since March 2011](#). Human Rights Watch.

documenting their abuses, and one day, they will be held accountable," she said.

According to information obtained by Pro-Justice, Brigadier-General Jawdat al-Ahmad bears direct responsibility for the following massacres:

- The Clock Square Massacre (Homs, 17 April 2011), which led to the killing of some 500 people after security services opened fire on a mass sit-in in the city's main square. Around 100,000 protesters had gathered in the area before vehicles carrying armed forces arrived and fired on the demonstrators for 30-40 minutes. Syrian authorities removed the dead and wounded from the site by bulldozer and are believed to have buried them in mass graves.

- The Bab Drayb massacre (Homs, 7 September 2011), in which 26 people were killed when tanks shelled the neighbourhood.

- The al-Khalidiya neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 4 February 2012), in which 342 people were killed when security forces shelled the neighbourhood with tanks and mortars.

- The Karam al-Zaytun neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 4 December 2011), in which 25 people were killed when regime forces stormed the district.

- The al-Liwaa Bakery massacre (Homs, 16 January 2012), in which 60 people were killed in the Ashira neighbourhood when shooters targeted civilians in breadlines.

- The Baba Amr neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 8 February 2012), which resulted in the death of more than 100 people and the destruction of around 80 percent of the district when regime forces shelled the area with artillery and other munitions.

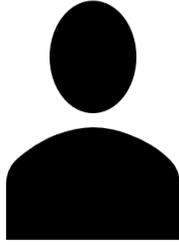
- The al-Bayadah neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 10 February 2012), in which security forces slaughtered 30 people, mostly women and children.

- A second massacre in the Baba Amr neighbourhood (Homs, 7 March 2012), which resulted in the deaths of 20 people, including 13 members of one family, five of whom were children, after security forces stormed the district.

- A second massacre in the Ashira neighbourhood (Homs, 9 March 2012), in which 224 people were killed after the district was shelled for 18 hours continuously. Days later, on 11 March 2012, hundreds of *shabiha* thugs stormed the district, carrying out field executions, arresting dozens of local children, raping girls, and slaughtering many of their victims.

- The massacres in the neighbourhoods of Karam al-Zaytun, al-Adawiya and al-Rifa'i (Homs, 12 March 2012), which resulted in the deaths of 144 people, including 28 children and 23 women, when the areas were bombarded with mortar and artillery shelling. Security forces later stormed the quarter and arrested dozens of locals, separating men from women, raping women and girls, and slaughtering children.

Brigadier General al-Ahmad bears direct responsibility for these horrific crimes, having ordered and supervised these violations, and co-opted *shabiha* thugs to abuse and carry out the killing of the people of Homs on a sectarian basis.



**58. Brigadier General Hafiz  
Muhammad Makhluf**

**Current appointment:**

Senior officer, General Intelligence Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Damascus

Date of birth: 4 February 1971

Branch of service: Security - General Intelligence Directorate

**Previous appointments:**

2014 – 2018	General Intelligence Directorate Headquarters
2009 – 2014	Director, Section 40 (General Intelligence Directorate's Internal Branch)

Son of long-time presidential advisor Muhammad Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup>, brother to business tycoon Rami Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup>, and maternal cousin to President Bashar al-Assad, Brigadier General Hafiz Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup> is an Intelligence officer who headed Section 40 of the General Intelligence Directorate's (GID)<sup>(2)</sup> Internal Branch (Branch 251).

Throughout his time in this role, Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup>'s powers often exceeded their official mandate, eventually seeing him dominate the security apparatus of Damascus and its environs. During this period, the Colonel was known for his arrogance, sectarian attitude, impulsiveness and recklessness.

Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup> is a prominent advocate of the militarised solution to the current crisis. According to testimony by the dissident Brigadier General Manaf Tlass<sup>(3)</sup>, Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup> thwarted efforts to resolve tensions between the

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(1) Mohammed Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup> is a brother of Anisa Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup>, the wife of the late Hafiz al-Assad, who had business with him, taking advantage of his relationship with Hafiz and his son Bashar. Makhlu<sup>(1)</sup> was nicknamed the "oil leader".

(2) Formerly known as "The State Security Directorate".

(3) Brigadier General Manaf Tlass, the son of former Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass, was commander of the 104<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Republican Guard before breaking away from the regime with the help of French intelligence.

regime and demonstrators in city of Dara'a in 2011, personally supervising the storming of the city's Umari Mosque by government forces.

He is considered directly responsible for the deaths of demonstrators in the city of Duma in April 2011, and the shooting of mourners the following day, which saw more than 20 people killed.

He continued his heavy-handed approach toward the unrest in Damascus and its environs, notably in Duma, Qatana and Jidaydat al-Fadl, where more than 120 people were killed when security forces opened fire on protesters in the towns, with one such incident involving a massacre near the military police headquarters at the entrance to Qatana.

To assist in carrying out his orders, Makhluf established his own paramilitary force led by Mujahid Isma'il, the son of an officer involved in the 1982 Hamah massacre. Makhluf tasked Isma'il with recruiting large numbers of Alawites, many of whom were wanted for criminal offenses, in order to form an armed force to respond to demonstrations in the neighbourhoods of the capital.

Among the most infamous crimes Isma'il has been linked to were:

- the 2011 storming of the al-Rifai mosque in Damascus on the holy night of the 27<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan;
- the storming of Zaid ibn Thabit mosque; and
- the carrying out of a large number of raids resulting in the mass-arrests of civilians, including women and children.

Civilians detained at Section 40 were exposed to extreme torture and abuse at the order of Hafiz Makhluf. In a [report](#) by monitoring group the Violations Documentation Centre in Syria, former detainee Yasr Abd al-Samad Husayn Karami described the various abuses and torture techniques carried out within Section 40. The report also describes the existence of a cell for women and girls who have been subjected to severe forms of torture, including rape. A report by Human Rights Watch named Hafiz Makhluf as being directly responsible for the violations and abuses that took place inside the Internal Branch of the GID.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Neistat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). "[By All Means Necessary](#)": Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria. Human Rights Watch.

Makhluf is also believed to be behind the 2013 explosion in the al-Jisr al-Abiyad area in the vicinity of Section 40 headquarters, killing four civilians and injuring 17 others. As the area is heavily monitored by security it would have been difficult for an opposition group to carry out such an attack.

As Makhluf's actions and those of his subordinates were brought to light, smearing his public reputation, President Bashar al-Assad ordered him to be removed from his duties as Head of Section 40 and transferred instead to GID Headquarters. However, Assad also issued a decree in January 2017 promoting Makhluf to the rank of Brigadier General. At the beginning of 2018, reports suggested that Brigadier General Makhluf had returned to a role at the GID, and is overseeing the import of arms to Syria from Russia and Belarus.

Samantha Power, former US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Security Council, named Makhluf among a list of regime military officials documented to have committed prosecutable war crimes against Syrian civilians. Makhluf has also faced [US](#)<sup>(1)</sup>, [EU](#)<sup>(2)</sup>, [UK](#)<sup>(3)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(4)</sup> sanctions since 2011, and his assets have been frozen by the Swiss government, which has since refused to grant Makhluf a visa to enter the country to pursue the issue.

Brigadier General Makhluf also has strong ties to the Iranian intelligence services and Lebanese Hizballah. According to Arab media sources, Makhluf also met with Egyptian President Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi in Cairo in November 2014. Makhluf is also believed to have offshore assets tied up in the British Virgin Islands, as was discovered with the release of the Panama Papers.

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(1) Subject to the US sanctions since 2007; sanctions renewed in 2011.

(2) He ranks 5th on the EU list.

(3) He ranks 188<sup>th</sup> on the UK list.

(4) He ranks 9<sup>th</sup> on the Canadian list.



**59. Brigadier General Qusay Ibrahim Mihub**

**Current appointment:**

Senior officer, Air Force Intelligence

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Dirghamo village, Jablah, Latakia

Date of birth: 1961

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2017	General Intelligence Directorate: Badia Sector & Damascus International Airport
	Air Force Intelligence branch in Dara'a.
	Deputy Head, Air Force Intelligence branch in the Southern Region (Harasta)

Qusay Ibrahim Mihoub, a relative of Syrian military spokesman General Ali Mihub, attended military school at Air Force College. He was later assigned to the Air Force Intelligence Directorate (AFI) after failing to graduate as a military pilot. He is well known for his sectarian attitude toward security issues since commencing his service in the AFI.

At the start of 2011, then-Colonel Mihoub served as Military Assistant to the Chief of the AFI Southern Region branch in the city of Harasta, which is responsible for all security in the southern governorates of Damascus and its environs, Dara'a, Qunaytra and Suwayda.

As popular anti-government demonstrations became widespread, Mihub was deployed to Dara'a to command the AFI troops responsible for suppressing the protests in the Southern Region. He served in a security team headed by the late Major General Hisham Bakhtiar (Director of National Security Bureau), Brigadier General Zuhair Hamahd (Deputy Director of the General Intelligence Directorate), and Rustum Ghazali of the Military Intelligence Directorate.

Mihub was a prominent supporter of the military intervention to dis-

mantle the sit-in at al-Umari Mosque in Dara'a in March 2011, ordering security forces to shoot at demonstrators, which resulted in the death of 31 people and the arrest of dozens more. Mihub is also accused of planning a lethal ambush on civilians on route to Dara'a to participate in the protests, which killed 60 people and injured around 300 others.

During this time, he also oversaw the arrests of hundreds of Dara'a residents while working at the AFI Southern Region branch, where heinous violations including torture and murder were carried out against detainees under his watch.

Human Rights Watch's report "By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria" documented that the then-Colonel Qusay Mihub himself gave orders to the Air Force Intelligence personnel to open fire and repress protesters by any mean. The reported quoted Mansur, a defector who served in Air Force Intelligence in Dara'a, as saying that:

"Colonel Qusay Mihoub, gave his unit orders to stop the protesters by all possible means, which included the use of lethal force".

"The orders we were given were to force the demonstrators to retreat Method, including shooting them. It was too broad to allow the shooting. During the presence of the officers, they decided when to shoot and who, if there was someone with a microphone or a sign, or if the demonstrators refused to retreat, we would shoot. We had Kalashnikovs and automatic rifles with us, and there were snipers on the roofs."

The Violations Documentation Centre in Syria published an eye-witness testimony of the detainee "Ahmad Abu Ali", in which he spoke about the circumstances of his detention at the AFI headquarters in Dara'a and the methods of torture he and the detainees were subjected to. Dozens of detainees were tortured to death under Mihub's direct supervision.

Human Rights Watch published (July 2012) testimony by one of the detainees in a report entitled, "Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons since March 2011", in which he said:

"I went to the funeral at the cemetery. After the security forces let us out of the cemetery, they opened fire. I just laid down. The shooting con-

tinued for 10 to 15 minutes. Afterwards, when I stood up somebody hit me in the back of my head with a stick. I fell down, but they continued to beat me. They hit me over the eye with a stick. When I woke up I was in the Air-force Intelligence branch. There were four people in the cell. I was then taken out of the cell and beaten in the corridor. They then took me to an open yard outside where they beat me for two hours before they brought me back to the cell and then transferred me to another branch.

It was a room underground. There was a chair where the interrogator sat, and a table. Two people in the room were beating me with a one-meter long cable with metal wire inside and plastic on the outside, accusing me of taking part in the protests and of carrying weapons. I was on my knees with hands behind my back. The other one was using his boot to beat me on the mouth. I was bleeding. They showed me a picture of Bashar Assad and asked who it was? I said, "The president." They said, "No, it is God." One of them put a boot on my neck and the other shoved the photo under my nose. This lasted for about an hour. Then they took me back to the cell where there were about 130 people. The cell measured four by four meters. People were on top of each other, standing, lying, etc. About 10 of the 130 were not severely beaten. Clearly one of them was a spy, but we didn't know which one. They told us, "Welcome to the Air Force Intelligence. Here you will lose your faith in God."

Mihub bears joint responsibility for all crimes committed in the AFI Southern Region Branch, which was headed by Major General Muhammad Rahmun, including the killing of detainees under torture. Hundreds of these cases were brought to light in revelations by the whistleblower codenamed "Caesar".

Mihub is one of a number of officials responsible for imposing the siege on the city of Dara'a from 25 April to 5 May 2011. He later took part in the storming of the city, ordering raids and arrests on civilians. Large-scale sweep operations also took place, resulting in the detention of around 2,000 people in the municipal stadium of Dara'a where witnesses reported cases of mass-executions.

The crimes perpetrated by Mihub were not limited to the city of Dara'a, but also spread to its villages, including those of al-Sanamayn, Shaykh Miskin, Da'il, Kafr Shams, and Saida, where 120 people were killed and 160 were arrested. These violations were carried out in collaboration with

Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan, Major General Jamil al-Hassan, Brigadier General Abd al-Salam Fajr Mahmud, Brigadier General Luay al-Ali, and Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr.

Mihoub's crimes also include ordering the assassination of regime opponents. This was exposed by the recorded confessions of one captured assassin involved in the killings.

In 2014, the US Treasury Department announced the imposition of sanctions on Mihub for ordering lethal force to stop the protests in 2011. "Under Mihub's command, the [AFI] Dara'a Branch was responsible for human rights abuses and the deaths of hundreds of civilians, including targeted assassinations. These abuses included the shooting, beating, detainment, and burning alive of civilians, as well as the use of torture against detainees, including beatings and electric shock," the Treasury announced in a statement.

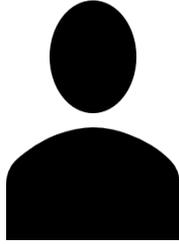
Mihub is also subject to UK, EU and Canadian sanctions. He was also named by former US Permanent Representative to the United Nations Samantha Power at the UN Security Council in 2016, in which she listed Syrian officials confirmed to have committed prosecutable war crimes against civilians.

Along with Major General Ali Mamluk, Mihub was also linked to a failed 2012 bombing campaign by former Lebanese MP Michel Samaha. This allegedly involved a series of attacks designed to target Lebanese political, military and civilian figures.

Mihub is also accused of arresting the regime loyalist who launched the "*Waynun?*<sup>(1)</sup>" campaign to determine the fate of pro-government fighters at al-Tabqa Military Airbase, which was overrun by the Islamic State group in 2014. At a later stage, Mihub was transferred to the AFI Directorate in Damascus, where he served as the right-hand man to AFI Chief Major General Jamil Hassan. While stationed there, Mihub was assigned to oversee security in the Badia region and the area surrounding the Damascus International Airport.

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(1) Tr: "Where Are They?"



**60. Brigadier General Sayil  
Asa'ad Da'ud**

**Current appointment:**

in charge of the National Defence Force in Homs

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Rabah, Homs Province

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2012	Office for Recruitment and Armament in the Ba'ath Party's National Security Bureau in Homs
2011 - 2012	Deputy Head of Air Force Intelligence branch, Central Region

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Brigadier General Sayil Da'ud was the Deputy Head of the Air Force Intelligence (AFI) branch in the Central Region. He was assigned the task of leading most of the incursions it carried out into the neighbourhoods of Homs and its environs, including the cities of Rastan, Talkalakh, al-Hulah, and al-Qusayr.

Da'ud is directly responsible for the arrest and subsequent torture of a large number of people in the province of Homs, as well as the fabrication of false charges against a number of detainees, charging them with illegal demonstration or offending the country leaders.

Towards the end of 2011, he was tasked with forming the National Defence Forces (NDF) militia and overseeing the Office for Recruitment and Armament in the Baath Party's National Security Bureau in Homs. During his time there, Da'ud supervised the formation and arming of militias, and established coordination between the security services and the army for deploying civilian volunteers into combat.

According to information obtained by Pro-Justice, Da'ud is known to have helped orchestrate a number of high-profile massacres, including:

- The Clock Square Massacre (Homs, 17 April 2011), which led to the killing of some 500 people after security services opened fire on a mass sit-in in the city's main square. Around 100,000 protesters had gathered in the area before vehicles carrying armed forces arrived and fired on the demonstrators for 30-40 minutes. Syrian authorities removed the dead and wounded from the site by bulldozer and are believed to have buried them in mass graves.

- The Bab Drayb massacre (Homs, 7 September 2011), in which 26 people were killed when tanks shelled the neighbourhood.

- The al-Khalidiya neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 4 February 2012), in which 342 people were killed when security forces shelled the neighbourhood with tanks and mortars.

- The Karam al-Zaytun neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 4 December 2011), in which 25 people were killed when regime forces stormed the district.

- The al-Liwaa Bakery massacre (Homs, 16 January 2012), in which 60 people were killed in the Ashira neighbourhood when shooters targeted civilians in breadlines.

- The Baba Amr neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 8 February 2012), which resulted in the death of more than 100 people and the destruction of around 80 percent of the district when regime forces shelled the area with artillery and other munitions.

- The al-Bayadah neighbourhood massacre (Homs, 10 February 2012), in which security forces slaughtered 30 people, mostly women and children.

- A second massacre in the Baba Amr neighbourhood (Homs, 7 March 2012), which resulted in the deaths of 20 people, including 13 members of one family, five of which were children, after security forces stormed the district.

- A second massacre in the Ashira neighbourhood (Homs, 9 March 2012), in which 224 people were killed after the district was shelled for 18 hours continuously. Days later, on 11 March 2012, hundreds of *shabiha* thugs stormed the district, carrying out field executions, arresting dozens of local children, raping girls, and slaughtering many of their victims.

- The massacres in the neighbourhoods of Karam al-Zaytun, al-Adawiya and al-Rifa'i (Homs, 12 March 2012), which resulted in the deaths of 144 people, including 28 children and 23 women, when the areas were bombarded with mortar and artillery shelling. Security forces later stormed the quarter and arrested dozens of locals, separating men from women, raping women and girls, and slaughtering children.



**61. Brigadier General Lu'ay al-Ali**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the Military Security branch in Suwayda

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Safita, Tartus

Branch of service: Army - Military Intelligence

**Previous appointments:**

2018	Head of the Military Security branch in Suwayda (Branch 217)
2011	Head of the Military Security branch in Dar'a (Branch 245)
	Officer at the Military Security branch in Suwayda

Brigadier General Lu'ay al-Ali began his military career working within Syria's Intelligence agencies, serving early on as a second lieutenant for the Military Security Section in the village of Nawa (Southern Syria), an affiliate of the Suwayda Military Security Branch. He was later promoted to the rank of Captain and transferred to the Military Security Section in Irza, where he served until being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and transferred to al-Sanamayn.

In 2011, al-Ali was awarded the rank of Colonel and appointed to head of the Dara'a Military Security Branch after undertaking military training in Sudan. He is known for his sectarian fanaticism and his brutal methods for dealing with the people of Dara'a province, where the regime charged him with suppressing the peaceful protests which took place in the governorate. He was one of the orchestrators of the fatal storming of the Umari mosque in the city of Dara'a, which killed 30 people.

Along with Brigadier General Wafiq Nasr and Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan, al-Ali was part of the brutal response toward demonstrators who tried to break the siege of the city of Dara'a on 29 April 2011, killing 120 people and arresting hundreds more. He participated in the

subsequent raids and attacks on the city, as well as its siege from 25 April to 5 May 2011. Large-scale sweep operations also took place, resulting in the detention of around 2,000 people in the municipal stadium of Dara'a where witnesses reported cases of mass-executions.

According to the testimony of one dissident officer, Salim Abu Umar:

“The biggest role in the military operation was the role of Colonel Louay Ali, head of military security in Dara'a. But what I was surprised at that time was the participation of dozens of volunteers in military security in operations, covering their faces with masks.”

A 2011 report<sup>(1)</sup> by Human Rights Watch (HRW) names al-Ali as a key perpetrator of War Crimes in the ongoing conflict, accusing al-Ali of complicity in Crimes against Humanity, systematic killings, and torture carried out by the forces that stormed Dara'a. al-Ali supervised the operations carried out by the forces of the Military Intelligence section in Dara'a.

In another HRW report<sup>(2)</sup>, “Afif”, a former career officer in the Presidential Guard who defected, told the rights monitor that he was arrested and tortured by Military Intelligence agents first in Dara'a, and then in Damascus, for his role as a protest organiser in Dara'a. He said that the people who arrested him in Dara'a included Colonel Wafiq Nasr, Colonel Lu'ay al-Ali, Colonel Usama Hadj, and Colonel Nadal Abdallah, “all of whom he knew personally.”

HRW reported that “after strip-searching and beating him in the Military Intelligence facility in Dara'a, intelligence agents transferred him to Branch 291 in Damascus where, for eight days, they brutally tortured him with electric shock and prolonged beatings. Afif said that although he was blindfolded all the time he was held at Branch 291, he recognised (by their voices and by asking them directly) two of the interrogators who tortured him as Brigadier General Salah Hamud and Colonel Asif Dakkar, both of whom he knew from the time he served in the Presidential Guard. Afif said that toward the end of his detention Abd al-Fatah Qudsiyah, the Director

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(1) Human Rights Watch (2011). “We've Never Seen Such Horror”: Crimes against Humanity by Syrian Security Forces.

(2) Neistat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). “By All Means Necessary”: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria. Human Rights Watch.

of Military Intelligence, interrogated him and, unsuccessfully, tried to get him to cooperate with the authorities.”

In 2011, according to testimony from the people of Dara’a, then-Colonel al-Ali issued his orders to shoot directly at the demonstrators, firing first from his personal weapon in order to encourage the rest of his forces to follow suit. On one occasion, in August 2011, bullets from his own gun struck and killed one of the demonstrators. While the demonstrator was already wounded, Colonel al-Ali shot him twice more in the mouth to ensure his death. When the demonstrators tried to retrieve the body of the dead, Colonel al-Ali ordered his troops to shoot them, killing three and injuring several others.

Due to his criminal actions, Lu’ay al-Ali was named in a Human Rights Watch report issued in July 2012, entitled, “[Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011](#)”.<sup>(1)</sup>

An investigation conducted by the EuroMed Rights group, entitled “[Detention of Women in Syria: A weapon of war and terror](#),” reported that women were tortured, raped and endured other violations in various security branches. It documents a number of eyewitness testimonies related to the military intelligence branch in Dara’a, which was headed by then-Colonel Lu’ay al-Ali.

In one piece of testimony, Ali al-Masalama, a resident of Dara’a and former detainee,<sup>(2)</sup> stated that the security forces tried to force him to disavow God. He said that Colonel al-Ali oversaw his torture and forced him to recount: “There is no God but Bashar (al-Assad).” According to the witness, all the detainees in the security branch chanted: “There is no god but Allah... There is no god but Allah... There is no god but Allah.”

Lu’ay al-Ali is directly responsible for numerous violations carried out within the Military Security branches which he oversaw, including the rape of women and children. In an investigative report by French website [Mediapart](#), Colonel al-Ali was reported to have permitted the unrestricted violation of detainees by his subordinates.

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(1) See pages 38 & 39.

(2) He was later killed by a sniper during the storming of al-Sadd neighborhood on 23 February 2012

Furthermore, Lu'ay al-Ali is responsible for issuing orders to target the liberated neighbourhoods of Dara'a with mortar fire, and then blaming the rebels for that. He is also responsible for launching raids on a number of towns and villages in Dara'a governorate. Some of these campaigns are laid out below:

- The storming of the town of Saida (May 2012).
- The storming of the western town of Gharya (June 2012).
- The storming of the town of Karak al-Sharqi (October 2012). This was the last of his atrocities before his convoy was ambushed by opposition factions near the town of Khirbat Ghazala. He was wounded in the incident, but then recovered only to continue carrying out criminal violations.

Brigadier General al-Ali is subject to [Canadian](#)<sup>(1)</sup>, [British](#)<sup>(2)</sup> and [European](#)<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions as a result of his violations against the Syrian people. Despite his criminal conduct, the regime promoted him to the rank of Brigadier General and appointed him as Head of the Military Security Branch in Suwayda, succeeding Brigadier-General Wafiq Nasr in early 2018.

During his time serving as Head of the Military Security branch in Suwayda, al-Ali has been accused - alongside Major-General Ramadan Ramadan (Commander, 9<sup>th</sup> Division) and Colonel Nizar Fandi (Commander of the Assault Battalion) - of kidnapping and extortion in the province of Suwayda, as well as setting up networks to infiltrate the ranks of the opposition. The three officers were also accused of imposing "reconciliations" on the cities and towns of Dara'a and forcibly displacing residents, as well as other major violations committed in the southern province.

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(1) He ranked 61 in the Canadian sanctions list.

(2) He ranked 36 in the UK sanctions list.

(3) He ranked 55 in the EU sanctions list.



**62. Brigadier General Mazin  
Hawash al-Kinj**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the Military Intelligence  
Branch in Aleppo

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Military  
intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 - 2018	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch in Hamah
2014 - 2015	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch in Homs
2010 - 2014	Head of the Military Intelligence Section in al-Nabik

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Mazin al-Kinj was Head of the Military Security branch in the city of al-Nabik, in the Damascus environs, with the rank of colonel. He was involved in committing crimes and widespread violations against civilians, prompting the al-Faruq Brigades to target him in an assassination attempt, which failed. In revenge, he led the massacres of al-Nabik and the al-Tuffah neighbourhood on the road to Dayr Attiyah (2013), which killed hundreds of Syrians who were either slaughtered or burned, including a large number of women and children.

According to two reports by the Syrian Human Rights Committee, on [10 December 2013](#) and [11 December 2013](#), Mazin al-Kinj secured the military and intelligence coverage of the regime's forces and the supporting Iraqi militias, most notably the Zulfiqar Brigade, to break into the city of al-Nabik after 13 days of siege. There, al-Kinj supervised the bombing of the area, and the deployment of snipers from Military Intelligence and Shiite militias, and then carrying out field execution operations which resulted in the killing of 399 civilians, including 98 children.

al-Kinj also extorted hundreds of families in order to release their detained children, who were arrested under his direct supervision of all the campaigns in the eastern region of Qalamun. He received protection money from businessmen in the region to ensure that they were not targeted or charged. In addition, he imposed taxes on all food and medical items, and forced the owners of enterprises to pay a monthly charge. He also trafficked Christian antiquities, which his people stole from the Dayr Attiyah Museum, blaming the looting on the opposition.

Brigadier General al-Kinj is responsible for the killing of five passengers and injuring twenty others who were traveling in a civilian bus from Hasakah to Damascus. The coach was bombed under al-Nabik bridge when it had to stop to fix a problem with the engine. Five passengers were killed: Pierre Joseph Rashu, Naruta Jamil Ushana, Muhammad al-Muhammad, and Abd al-Rahman Salih al-Khalaf.

In April 2014, Brigadier General al-Kinj was appointed Head of the Military Security branch in Dayr al-Zur, replacing Yassin Dhahi, who was transferred to Damascus to head the Palestine Branch. In Dayr al-Zur, Mazin al-Kinj was engaged in smuggling foodstuffs with ISIS. He was also accused of assassinating opposition figures and even regime supporters. One example of this was Abd al-Basit Hamida (the leader of the pro-regime al-Sha'itat militia), who was assassinated in Dayr al-Zur in 2015, a few days after he had been beaten up by Brigadier General al-Kinj's men. One of his assistants - Warrant Officer Wajih - was accused of boobytrapping Abd al-Basit's car.

In August 2015, Mazin al-Kinj was appointed Head of the Military Security branch in Hamah, where he was assigned the task of supporting Russian intervention through the Military Security branch and coordinating with the Chairman of the Defence and Security Committees in Hamah to equip the headquarters and premises of the Russian forces throughout the province. As a result of his role in supporting the Russian intervention, he was awarded the Order of Courage by the Russian Forces.

In early 2018, Mazin al-Kinj was appointed Head of the Military Security branch in Aleppo. He was also honoured again by the Russian forces in March 2018.





**63. Brigadier General  
Malik Alya**

**Current appointment:**

Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee of Aleppo  
Commander, 30<sup>th</sup> Division, Republican Guards

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Tartus  
Branch of service: Army - Republican Guard

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch, Suwayda (Branch 217)
2017 - 2018	Chief of Staff, 30 <sup>th</sup> Division, Republican Guards
2016 - 2017	Commander, ground forces in Aleppo
2012 - 2016	Commander of 106 <sup>th</sup> Regiment, Republican Guards
2011 - 2012	Deputy Commander, 106 <sup>th</sup> Regiment, Republican Guards

Brigadier General Malik Alya is a pre-eminent officer of Syria's Republican Guard forces, where he served as Chief of Staff in the 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade under the command of Brigadier General Muhammad Khaddur in 2011.

With the emergence of peaceful protests across Syria in 2011, Alya participated in the invasion of the eastern cities of the Ghuta region, most notably in the city of Duma in April of the same year. He oversaw the operations of the 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which stormed Duma after a siege that lasted for several months. The storming led to the killing of 100 people and the arrest of more than 5,000 others.

Under the command of Brigadier General Alya, the Republican Guard carried out field executions at a number of checkpoints, in addition to conducting raids and arrests, the destruction of public and private property,

the theft of gold, and the looting of shops within the city and the farms in the surrounding area.

In mid-2012, Brigadier General Alya was among a number of 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade officers dispatched to the city of Aleppo, under the command of Brigadier General Muhammad Khaddur. Alya was Deputy Commander of the regiment and bears direct responsibility for the crimes committed by its personnel in Aleppo.

In February 2013, Alya was appointed Commander, 106<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which was stationed mainly near the Hindirat and Lirmun camps. He remained in this position until the end of 2016. During this time, he led the Republican Guard forces in Aleppo in its attacks on the eastern neighbourhoods of the city, which resulted in the displacement of residents from the eastern neighbourhoods, and the deaths of about 1,370 civilians during the period between 15 November and 13 December 2016.

In late January 2017, President Bashar al-Assad issued a decree to establish 30<sup>th</sup> Division, Republican Guards, which included all its forces operating in Aleppo. Major General Zayd Salih was appointed its commander and Brigadier General Alya was to serve as its Chief of Staff.

In October 2017, Alya was appointed commander of the 30<sup>th</sup> Republican Guard, replacing Salih, and at the end of the same year was appointed to be Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in Aleppo.

Below is a list of the most prominent massacres committed by the Republican Guard forces under the supervision of Brigadier General Malik Alya:

- The al-Walid Bakery massacre in al-Haydariyah district (Aleppo, 2 December 2012), which killed nine and wounded dozens more.
- The al-Idlbi Bakery massacre in the al-Bustan neighbourhood (Aleppo, 3 December 2012), which killed 20 people and wounded more than 100 others.
- The Jab al-Qubba neighbourhood massacre (Aleppo, 9 January 2013), which killed 27 people as a result of shelling by rocket fire.
- The Jabal Badru neighbourhood massacre (Aleppo, 18 February

2013), which killed 45 people as a result of rocket attacks on the neighbourhood.

- The Malikya village massacre (Aleppo, 27 March 2013), which killed 70 women and children when troops set fire to their homes.

- The Aziza village massacre (Aleppo, 4 April 2013), which saw 22 youths executed.

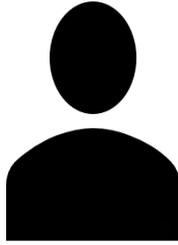
- The al-Sakhur neighbourhood massacre (Aleppo, 16 April 2013), which claimed the lives of 33 young men.

- The Rasm al-Nafl village massacre (Aleppo, 21 June 2013), which killed 192 people, mostly women, children and elderly people who were executed by troops.

- Massacre of the village of the farm (Aleppo, 22 June 2013). More than 70 young men were executed and their bodies were thrown into wells.

- The al-Fardus district massacre (Aleppo, 7 January 2014), which killed 28 people, including three children and five women.





**64. Brigadier General  
Muhammad Zamrini**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the Patrols Branch, Military Intelligence

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Safit, Tartus

Branch of service: Army - Military Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2012 - 2015	Head of the Training Branch at Military Intelligence Directorate
2011 - 2012	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch in Homs
2010 - 2011	Head of the Military Intelligence Branch in Qunaytra

Prior to the Syrian crisis, in 2010, Muhammad Zamrini served as an Intelligence officer in the Military Intelligence Directorate in Qunaytra, better known as “Saasa Branch”. It was during his time here that he garnered a reputation for trafficking and smuggling drugs across the Israeli border through the cease-fire lines in the occupied Golan Heights. Zamrini was able to circumvent authorities and evade criminal charges with the help of Lieutenant Colonel Samir al-Husayn, an officer in the Military Investigation Branch at the Military Intelligence.

Alongside his trafficking operations, Zamrini is reported to have accumulated a small fortune trading in real estate and land in the southern suburbs of Damascus.

When anti-government protests broke out in 2011, Zamrini was appointed Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Homs, where he engaged in financial and administrative corruption and played a prominent role in suppressing the peaceful protests. In May 2011, he is reported to

have given direct orders to Military Intelligence personnel based in Rastan to fire on protestors in and around the city, which resulted in the deaths of 18 unarmed civilians.

Under his command, Military Intelligence personnel also carried out arbitrarily arrests at checkpoints, and extorted families of detainees of the Military Intelligence branch in Homs in return for their release.

Zamrini also participated in the Clock Square Massacre (Homs, 17 April 2011), which led to the killing of some 500 people after security services opened fire on a mass sit-in in the city's main square. Around 100,000 protesters had gathered in the area before vehicles carrying armed forces arrived and fired on the demonstrators for 30-40 minutes. Syrian authorities removed the dead and wounded from the site by bulldozer and are believed to have buried them in mass graves.

Due to his involvement in the government's violent response to civilian protests in Homs, Brigadier General Zamrini was named on [United Kingdom](#) and [European Union](#) sanctions lists in 2011. The British government has since blocked all his assets in the UK.

Zamrini was also named in a 2012 Human Rights Watch report<sup>(1)</sup> as being directly responsible for violations against detainees. He is documented as Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Homs, which is reported to have carried out various methods of torture, including beatings and electrocutions.

Zamrini stirred controversy when he was briefly detained by the Air Force Intelligence Directorate in Homs on accusations of releasing detainees for money. He was eventually freed on orders from the Presidency and was appointed to head the Training Branch of the Military Intelligence Directorate. When he was appointed to head the Patrols Branch in Damascus in 2015, Zamrini is suspected to have fostered a relationship with the Islamic State (ISIS) organisation, which at the time controlled the Yarmuk Refugee Camp south of Damascus. Here he was accused of facilitating the entry of food aid to ISIS and securing treatment for the group's operatives in Damascus hospitals.

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(1) Solvang, O., & Neistat, A. (2012). Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons Since March 2011. Human Rights Watch.

As Head of the Patrols Branch, Zamrini is responsible for a raft of Human Rights violations in Damascus and its environs since 2015, and is one of the most prominent figures involved in the campaigns of assassination and arbitrary arrest that took place around the capital.

In July 2016, the New York Times published a [report](#) explaining that the family of the slain American war correspondent Marie Colvin would be suing the Syrian government for her death. A [lawsuit was subsequently filed](#) on July 9, 2016, naming Brigadier General Zamrini as one of a number of high-ranking individuals responsible for the 2012 murder of Colvin in Baba Amr, Homs, together with French photographer Remi Ochlik.



**65. Brigadier General  
Wafiq Nasr**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Branch 219, Military Intelligence Directorate, Hamah

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jablih, Latakia environs

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guards; Military Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016 - 2018	Head of Branch 217, Military Intelligence Directorate, Suwayda
2014 - 2016	Officer, Republican Guards
2012 – 2017	Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Southern Region

Born into an Alawite family, Wafiq Nasr hails from the environs of Jablih in the coastal province of Latakia. In October 2011, Nasr gained notoriety after he took over the Military Intelligence Directorate branch in Suwayda, where he became known as the “Suwayda Governor.” During this time, he was associated with numerous kidnappings, intimidations, murders, and assassinations

In the early months of the revolution, Nasr served as a Colonel in the Republican Guard forces where he participated in the first raids on Dara’a, committing widespread abuses against the people of the province.

A 2011 Human Rights Watch (HRW) investigation<sup>(1)</sup> accused Colonel Nasr of arresting and torturing dissident officers of the Republican Guard, including an officer named “Afif,” who confirmed that Nasr played a prominent role in his arrest and torture in Dara’a. Another earlier HRW report<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) Neistat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). “By All Means Necessary”: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria. Human Rights Watch.  
 (2) Report, Human Rights Watch. (2011). “We’ve Never Seen Such Horror”: Crimes against Humanity by Syrian Security Forces.

also documented violations carried out by Republican Guard forces in Dara'a where Nasr was an officer.

On 23 August 2011, Brigadier-General Nasr was placed on [European Union sanctions](#) for his direct involvement in the repression and violence directed against demonstrators in Dara'a.

In the same year, Nasr was appointed head of the Military Intelligence branch in Suwayda, replacing General Suhayl Ramadan, to begin a new phase in his criminal record while overseeing a large number of violations carried out within the branch. Nasr also approved the release of convicted criminals in order to form private militias allied to him, coopting these gangs to carry out acts of oppression on the people of Suwayda and the surrounding areas. In 2012, Nasr was appointed to replace Major General Zuhair Hamahd as Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the Southern Region, a position he occupied until 2017.

Brigadier General Nasr has managed to build a number of close relationships with important figures within the military and civil service, as well as some Druze dignitaries, with whom he worked to fuel sectarian strife between the Druze and Bedouin communities, as well as the residents of Suwayda and Dara'a provinces.

Nasr is also known to have established smuggling networks for drugs, foodstuffs and human organs, while also playing a prominent role in trade deals with the Islamic State group (ISIS), which at the time controlled the Badia region near Suwayda.

The province of Suwayda has witnessed hundreds of cases involving kidnapping and extortion, most notably the kidnapping of a young woman, Catherine Mezher, who was abducted by militants linked to al-Bustan Association militias, established by businessman Rami Makhluuf and supervised by Nasr. Nasr also established the all-female "Lionesses" militias which operates in the southern province of Suwayda.

Nasr is widely known to be behind numerous assassination operations and bombings designed to terrorise the people of Suwayda. The most prominent of these was the assassination of Druze Shaykh Wahid al-Balus, leader of the Rijal al-Karama movement, who was targeted by a car bomb in 2015. Eight other people were killed and 20 more were injured in

the blast. Nasr has also been accused to orchestrating the assassination of Shibli Janud, secretary of the Suwayda Ba'ath Party branch.

In early 2018, after Nasr was transferred to head the Military Security Branch in Hamah, the criminal networks he established in Suwayda began to disintegrate. A large number of civilian contractors with the local Military Security branch and a number of Military Security recruits who formed the nucleus of these networks have since been arrested. Among these were:

- Imran and Rashad Shalghin: From the village of Majadil in western Suwayda, the two men were arrested by Lebanese security forces in 2018 after illegally entering Lebanon. Investigations revealed their role in blockading the road into Suwayda in 2017, and the kidnapping of dozens of citizens of Dara'a who resided in Suwayda. They were also charged with the killing of a Suwayda elder, Anad al-Misbah.

- Warrant Officer Mahir Haydar: A member of the Military Intelligence branch in Suwayda. He oversaw the kidnappings planned by Imran and Rashad Shalghin, as well as the kidnappings carried out by paramilitaries in the cities of Suwayda and Shahba, and the village of Majdal.

- William al-Khatib and associates: Contractors with the Military Intelligence branch in Suwayda, where they committed several murders since 2015, including an attack on the government compound in the city of Shahba, Suwayda province, which resulted in the death of one woman. The al-Khatib group was also involved in the killing of three civilians, including a child, in Shahba where they carried out a large number of armed robberies and kidnappings while serving Brigadier General Nasr.

- Assam Abu Zaki: Contractor with the Military Security branch in Suwayda and a member of the William al-Khatib group.

- Warrant Officer Imad Isma'il: Member of the Military Intelligence branch in Suwayda. He was arrested for questioning on charges of kidnapping, armed robbery and drug trafficking.

- Zahir Jaafar: Member of a paramilitary group under the command of Brigadier General Nasr. Accused of taking part in drug trafficking operations into Jordan through Lebanon under the supervision of assistant Imad Isma'il.

- Warrant Officer Shadi Sulayman: Member of the Military Intelligence branch in Suwayda. Was arrested for questioning on charges of abduction, armed robbery and drug trafficking.

- Warrant Officer Ahmad Mualla: Member of the Military Intelligence branch in Suwayda. Was arrested for questioning on charges of abduction, armed robbery and drug trafficking.

- Warrant Officer Mahir Khaddam: Member of the military intelligence branch in Suwayda. Was arrested for questioning on charges of abduction, armed robbery and drug trafficking.

- Siraj Gharz al-Din. Contractor for the Military Security branch in Suwayda. Founded a group to carry out robberies and kidnappings for Brigadier General Nasr.

After being transferred to head the Military Security branch in Hamah in early 2018, and despite his reputation for abuses and deep criminal ties, Brigadier General Nasr has continued to carry out violations against civilians. Meanwhile, in Hamah, Nasr has established new kidnapping networks which operate unchecked by the Assad regime.





**66. Brigadier General Mufid Wardah**

Branch of service: Army - Military Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016 - 2017	Head of the Military Intelligence Section in al-Kiswah
2014 - 2016	Head of the Military Intelligence Section in al-Nabk
2011 – 2014	Head of the Military Intelligence Detachment in Talkalakh

**Current appointments:**

Deputy Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Homs

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Mufid Wardah was the Head of a Military Security unit in the city of Talkalakh in the western environs of Homs.

Talkalakh's population is characterised by its diversity, with a population of about 60,000 people, mostly Sunni Muslims, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens. The city is surrounded by some 45 villages, mostly populated by Alawites, prompting the Assad regime to use its allied *Shabiha* gangs from nearby villages to suppress the peaceful demonstrations in Talkalakh when they broke out in March 2011.

In mid-May 2011, the city of Talkalakh was shelled and then invaded by the Syrian Army and security forces. A number of people were killed and wounded as a result of reprisals against the residents, in addition to the displacement of hundreds of locals who were forced to flee the city to Lebanon.

In the following days, the security forces arrested all men between the ages of 18 and 60. No family was spared from losing at least one male member to detention. In the meantime, incursions continued by the re-

gime's forces, and violence increased as Hizballah militias intervened, increasing the level of sectarian killing and compounding civilian casualties.

Mufid Wardah is one of the foremost officials responsible for the crimes committed in the Talkalakh area, among which was the storming of the Burj neighbourhood by security forces in late-March 2013, which saw the mass killing of civilians, including cold-blooded slaughter by edged weapons. An eyewitness described the incident in detail:

“The houses of peaceful civilians were broken into. Entire families were slaughtered with knives. Some were shot and their bodies were mutilated. The bodies of 15 people, eight women and three men, one of whom is nearly 70 years old, and a 3-year-old girl were found after the massacre.”

According to other eyewitnesses, the bodies were mutilated and then locked away in the Talkalakh National Hospital. Security forces coerced families of the dead to appear on satellite television and blame the opposition forces for committing the massacre in return for handing over the bodies of their relatives. The families did what they were ordered so that they could bury their loved ones. Upon retrieving the relatives, most of the bodies were disfigured and mutilated, with some victims' parts separated from their body entirely.

In an investigation into the atrocities at Talkalakh, a 2011 Amnesty International [report](#) confirmed Colonel Wardah's connection to the crimes in Talkalakh, al-Hosn (Krak des Chevaliers), and Zara. Militias formed in the Wadi al-Nassara area, which are known to have carried out numerous atrocities, including one that took place in al-Ha'un (in which 72 people were killed, including entire families), were directly under Wardah's authority. The paramilitary groups set fire to the Saladin Mosque and the southern entrance to the fort while reportedly shouting sectarian chants.

A report by the [Syrian Network for Human Rights](#) (SNHR) documented the massacre at al-Husn, stating that Colonel Wardah commissioned the poisoning of foodstuffs designated for residents of the city, leading to [several deaths](#). Major Adil Wahbi, a witness to the invasion of al-Husn, told SNHR:

“Soon the city was besieged and suffocating from all sides, which led to the death of many people by starvation and forced many others to flee to different countries. The rebels eventually withdrew on March 20, 2014,

but before the withdrawal, civilians and children were secured and taken out through various routes, but not without great losses. 120 people, mostly women and children, reportedly went missing. When the rebels withdrew, regular and paramilitary forces stormed into the city: the pro-regime SSNP (Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party) militia known as Al-Zobaha (The Whirlwind) from the town of Hwash and led by Saed Othman; the National Defence Forces militia from Marmarita led by Bishr Yazigi; and the government forces led by Colonel Wardah. What resulted was the destruction of the city of al-Hosn by fire, the looting of its property, the logging of forests, the killing of livestock and the reinforcement of barriers at the city entrances to prevent the return of the city's original inhabitants. The Assad regime let only a group of some 500 people return to the devastated city out of the city's 25,000-large population. The people who were allowed to return were reportedly those whose sons accepted to fight alongside the regime's forces."

Alongside commissioning extra-judicial killings, torture and mass-arrests, Wardah's criminal actions extend to trading detainees for thousands of dollars. Furthermore, Wardah was known to have engaged in currency exchange businesses, starting an office both in Syria and Lebanon for laundering the hundreds of thousands of dollars he had illegally acquired during his service in the Military Security Directorate in Talkalakh.

In April 2014, Wardah was transferred to head the Military Security branch in Nabik, replacing then-Colonel Mazin al-Kanj, where Wardah continued his kidnapping and extortion operations with the help of members of Lebanese Hizballah. Reports suggest Wardah would provide Hizballah militants with information about wealthy families in the city for abductions and lucrative ransoms, which were reportedly shared with Wardah. He is also known to have sanctioned and taken part in extortions of residents from the neighboring city of Yabrud.

In 2016, Wardah was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General and transferred to the city of al-Kiswah in the Damascus environs, where he headed the local Military Security branch. Here he took part in negotiations with the rebels of Daraya to forcibly relocate them from the city. He also supervised the regime-run shelters provided to Daraya's residents who refused to go relocate to rebel-held Idlib.

Brigadier General Wardah also cooperated with Major General Zu-

hayr al-Assad on various military and security operations in the area. The headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division, commanded by Major General Zuhayr al-Assad, is located in the city of al-Kiswah. The two continued their cooperation until Wardah was appointed Deputy Head of the Military Security branch in Homs in 2017.





**67. Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Air Force Intelligence branch in Northern Region

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Bayt Ghana, Latakia

Year of birth: 1970

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2017	Head of the Special Operations Division at the AFI
1991 – 2011	Air Force Intelligence

Graduating from the Air Force College in 1991, Suhayl al-Hassan climbed the ranks to become a Lieutenant Colonel at the Air Force Intelligence Directorate (AFI).

When protests broke out in 2011, the head of the AFI, Major General Jamil al-Hassan, tasked Suhayl al-Hassan with suppressing the peaceful demonstrations in the Damascus districts of Mazzah, al-Midan, Qabun and Barzah. The deference with which Suhayl al-Hassan carried out his orders, employing brute force against locals, swayed his superiors to assign him as Head of AFI's Special Operations Division, turning his organisation into the main force in suppressing demonstrations in Damascus and its environs.

Under his command, Hassan's forces committed numerous massacres against civilians in the neighbourhoods of al-Ikhlās, Shaikh Saad, Mazzah, al-Maidan, al-Zahira and the Yarmuk Refugee Camp. His brutal methods were later employed in campaigns in the Damascus environs (Duma, Harasta, Jadaydat al-Fadl, Qatana, Zabadani, and Madaya). Hassan also ordered his forces to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and crack-downs on public gathering of protesters.

In a 2011 [Human Rights Watch report](#)<sup>(1)</sup>, Hani, a defector from the Special Operations Branch of the AFI, was quoted as saying that Colonel Suhayl al-Hassan gave orders to shoot directly at demonstrators on 15 April during a protest in the Mu'adamiyah neighbourhood in Damascus. Hani said:

“We were all armed, with Kalashnikovs and machine guns. There were thousands of protesters. We started firing in the air, but the protesters wouldn't disperse. Then Colonel Suhayl Hassan gave orders to shoot directly at the protesters. He said, “So, they are challenging us?! Shoot them!” There were people injured and killed.

He added that Colonel Ghassan Isma'il, commander of the Special Operations unit, gave verbal orders to shoot at the protesters when his unit was sent to suppress a protest in Daraya neighbourhood during another operation in June, together with the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. According to Hani, his orders were “Don't fire in the air; fire directly [at the protesters].”

“One of the largest massacres since the demonstrations began, where the Documentation Centre for Violations documented about 120 people,” said a dissident named Umar, who served as an assistant in the office of Director, Special Operations Branch, Branch 136 in Damascus.] He confirmed that the instructions came from Major General Jamil Hassan and Colonel Suhayl al-Hassan.

Omar, another Air Force Intelligence Special Operations branch in Damascus defector, told Human Rights Watch in the same [report](#) that on April 29, 2011, his office received a call from Dara'a saying that thousands of people were moving toward the city to break the siege. Umar said:

‘ “Colonel Suhayl Hassan, my boss at the Special Operations unit consulted with his deputy, Fawaz Qubair, and they agreed to organise a “trap” for the protesters near the military housing in Saida. The conversation took place in the office where I worked. They also discussed their line with the media: that people marching to Dara'a were Islamists coming to kidnap women and children in predominantly Christian areas.’

‘I then saw Suhayl call Major General Jamil Hassan, the director of Air

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(1) Neistat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). “By All Means Necessary”: Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria. Human Rights Watch.

Force Intelligence, to get his approval for the mission. He has a designated line to Hassan, and he used that phone. I couldn't hear what Hassan said, but I assume he approved the mission, because shortly thereafter, troops started leaving our base in Mezzeh for Dara'a." Omar explained.'

Omar added that when the troops returned that evening, they brought 120 bodies of killed protesters back to the base, as well as 160 detainees. He said that he saw the troops unloading the bodies from the buses and asked one of the soldiers how many they were. Suhayl al-Hassan, he said, later told him to arrange a convoy to accompany the trucks with the bodies back to Dara'a.

In 2012, following a visit by the US ambassador to the city of Hamah, al-Hassan was dispatched to suppress the demonstrations in the governorate. Due to a history of anti-government protest which resulted in regime-led massacres during 1979 to 1982, the Assad government feared the break out of a mass demonstrations that could result in chaos. Hamah is strategically significant as its western environs is directly connected to the Syrian Coastal Region, which is predominantly inhabited by the Alawite sect, of which (like President al-Assad), al-Hassan is a member.

Due to his criminal conduct in violently suppressing civilian protests, Hassan was subjected to [US](#), [European](#), and [British sanctions](#).

It was around this time, in 2013, that al-Hassan formed the so-called Tiger Forces; a unit of Special Forces troops that achieved a number of key battlefield victories (al-Hassan was dubbed "The Tiger" for his enthusiasm for a scorched earth policy and the violence he employed against protesters). With these new fighters, al-Hassan launched large-scale military operations in the northern villages of Hamah and the southern environs of Idlib, laying siege to the eastern neighbourhoods of Aleppo, resulting in the killing of thousands and the displacement of hundreds of thousands at the end of 2016.

Al-Hassan is the officer foremost responsible for the violations carried out in eastern Aleppo, which claimed the lives of about 1,370 civilians. He is also known to have ordered the dropping of barrel bombs (crude blast explosives), which have claimed the lives of thousands of civilians.

In early 2017, the regime rewarded al-Hassan for his loyal service, promoting him to head the Air Force Intelligence Branch in the Northern

Region. This area includes the provinces of Aleppo and Idlib, although the scope of his operations often extended beyond the borders of this area. In his newly assigned capacity, al-Hassan was tasked with launching a campaign in the region between the eastern environs of Aleppo and Raqqa province, successfully overwhelming many areas in Hamah and Idlib by the end of 2017.

It was at this time that he was ordered to lead the forces in the government siege on the Eastern Ghuta in March and April of 2018. The operation displaced a large number of residents from Eastern Ghuta and the eastern Qalamun regions to the rebel-held north of Syria. Thousands of people were killed in the operation, some by internationally-banned weapons including Chemical Weapons. During the siege of the Eastern Ghuta and its environs, the al-Assad regime provided Brigadier General al-Hassan with unrestricted access to operational infrastructure, including three military airbases which he used to execute his campaign.

Al-Hassan also leads a highly-secretive unit of elite fighters who have not revealed their identities. Often masked, they receive orders only from Hassan himself. After military operations, members of the unit are known to collect civilian victims and transport them by truck to unknown places to be buried in mass graves.

He has been repeatedly honoured by Moscow for his role in serving Russia's goals in Syria, and was the only Syrian officer permitted to accompany Bashar al-Assad to a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on his visit to the Russian air base in Humaymim.

The following are a list of some of the violations conducted by Suhayl al-Hassan and his forces:

- al-Arba'in neighbourhood massacre (Hamah, 24 April 2012), which killed 26 people as security forces swarmed the area and carried out field executions against civilians. Victims' bodies were then burned.
- al-Qubayr massaccree (Hamah, 6 June 2012), which killed 100 people.
- al-Tirmisa massacre (Hamah, 12 July 2012), which claimed the lives of 305 and wounded more than 300 others after the village was targeted by rockets, tank shells and heavy machine guns. The village was then

stormed from all sides, with militants killing, injuring, or arresting those who remained in the village.

- al-Hamidiya neighbourhood massacre (Hamah, 16 July 2012), killing 51 people as a result of bombing and field executions.

- Zur al-Haysa massacre (Hamah, 5 August 2012), killing ten people after troops opened fire on the town.

- al-Fan al-SHamahli village massacre (Hamah, 2 September 2012), which killed 31 people after security forces and *shabiha* gangs entered the village, arresting and executing a number of young people on the ground.

- al-Ziyarah massacre (Hamah, 28 April 2015), in which six people were executed by firing squad.

- al-Tamanha neighbourhood massacre (Idlib, 2012), which claimed the lives of some 500 civilians. Al-Hassan was summoned to Idlib to lift the siege imposed by the opposition factions on the areas of Wadi al-Dhayf and Hamidiyain. When his forces arrived to the village of al-Tamanha, he ordered troops to fire on residents and neighboring villages to weaken the morale of the opposition factions.

- Eastern Ghuta Massacre of 2018 (Damascus environs), which claimed the lives of 1,500 and injured more than 3,000, displacing 100,000 civilians as a result of the campaign led by al-Hassan during the months of March and April. Forces used a number of prohibited weapons, including Chemical Weapons on 7 April, killing 80 people, mostly women and children.



**68. Brigadier General Yassin Ahmad Dahi**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Military Intelligence branch in Dayr al-Zur

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Khariba village, Tartus

Date of birth: 1960

Branch of service: Army - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016 - 2018	Military Intelligence branch
2014 - 2016	Head of Military Intelligence branch in Homs
2014 - 2016	Head of Branch 235 (Palestine Branch)
2013 - 2014	Head of Military Intelligence Branch in Dayr al-Zur
2012 – 2013	Deputy Head of Palestine Branch
2011 - 2012	Officer in Palestine Branch

Yassin Dahi headed one of the most infamous security branches in Syria, Branch 235 of the Military Intelligence Directorate — known as the “Palestine Branch”—from 2014-2016.

At the start of the revolution, he was serving as a Palestine Branch officer at the rank of Colonel. He was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General in May of 2011, when he participated in the operations of suppression, arbitrary arrest and killing which occurred in Eastern Ghuta. He also oversaw the torture of prisoners inside the branch, which claimed hundreds of prisoners as victims.

In 2012, he was appointed Deputy Head of the Palestine Branch, under Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf. With Khaluf, Dahi participated in committing various acts of killing and torture from 2011 to October 2013.

During this period, Brigadier General Yassin Dahi participated in the storming of the city of Saqaba in eastern Ghuta on 16 June 2012, which claimed the lives of 19 people - nine of them slaughtered with knives - in addition to the arrests of dozens of city residents.

He also participated in the Masraba massacre of 4 July 2012, which killed about 30 people, most of them slaughtered, in addition to the arrests of a number of the city's residents.

He also participated in the storming of Kafr Batna on 29 August 2012, when regime forces and military security deployed at the al-Fatih Hospital and the al-Shalati Gas Station and began to indiscriminately bombard the city, destroying the al-Rida Mosque. They then stormed the al-Fatih Hospital and executed patients, doctors and nurses there, including the nurse Qutaiba Barhamji, who had been overseeing in the unit, and whose body was mutilated. The security forces then began a campaign to comb the city's houses and to execute the residents indiscriminately. An image of one of those killed in the massacre showed him with hands bound and a bullet hole in his head. They also executed Wissam Muhammad Ali in front of his family and wrote on his head, "Assad or no one." Most of the corpses were found with marks of torture. The security forces then withdrew after three days of killing, burning, looting and theft.

Brigadier General Yassin Dahi is one of the most prominent officials responsible for the violations carried out by the Palestine Branch, where hundreds of prisoners<sup>(1)</sup> have been killed under torture. Yassin also participated in the field operations in eastern Ghuta, to the extent that regime loyalists have called him "the beast of Ghuta" due to the violations he carried out there, most prominently his participation in the Chemical Weapons attack which killed about 1,500 people.

After the death of Major General Jamih Jamih in Dayr asl-Zur, Brigadier General Yassin Dahi was appointed Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Dayr al-Zur (from October 2013 to April 2014.) He returned to

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(1) <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=7>

Damascus to become head of the Palestine Branch succeeding Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf.

In October 2014, Dahi was made Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Homs, where he participated in horrific massacres in the al-Wa'ir district, which was under siege at that time. After becoming Head of the branch, the bombardment against the district increased greatly, which led to a number of massacres, the most prominent of which were as follows:

- A massacre on 15 October 2014 which killed 10 people, including two children and two women during the bombardment of the district with explosive canisters.

- A massacre on 25 October 2014 which killed seven people, including a child, during the bombardment of the district with explosive gas canisters.

- A massacre on 4 June 2015 which killed eight people from a single family, including four women, during the bombardment of the district with artillery and surface-to-surface missiles.

- A massacre on 26 September 2015 which killed 18 people, including 14 children, and wounded more than 100 people. Brigadier General Yassin Dahi had specified the targets and provided missiles and signed the order to bring them out of the storehouses.

- A massacre on 18 May 2016 in which regime snipers in the al-Wa'ir district, which was under siege in Homs, stationed in the top floor of the district's major hospital, shot civilians while they went to the bakeries controlled by regime forces, which led to deaths, injuries, and the arrest of a number of those who were wounded.

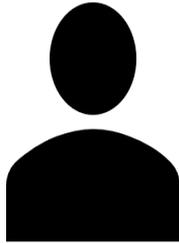
In addition to these, the residents of loyalist districts in Homs city blame Brigadier General Yassin Dahi for the car bombings which occurred in these districts while he was Head of the branch, as he colluded with local militias such as the Saqr Rustum militia and others to bring in car bombs. Popular discontent reached such a level that it pushed residents of the area to go out in protest against Brigadier General Yassin to pressure the

regime leadership to transfer him. This pushed the regime to transfer him to the Military Intelligence Directorate in February 2016.

Brigadier General Yassin Dahi has been under American sanctions<sup>(1)</sup> since the beginning of 2017. He was also included by the European Union in July 2017 in the list of those covered by sanctions over charges of their participation in the development of Chemical Weapons and their use against civilians. Despite that, a decision was issued in October 2018 to appoint Brigadier General Yassin Dahi as Head of the Military Intelligence branch in Dayr al-Zur.

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(1) <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0701.aspx>



**69. Brigadier General Abd al-Salam Fajr Mahmud**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Interrogation Section at the Air Force Intelligence

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Fu'a, Idlib

Date of birth: 1959

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<u>Previous appointments</u>	
2011	Head of Investigations Branch, Air Force Intelligence Directorate
2010 - 2011	Head of Air Force Intelligence branch in Southern Region (al-Harasta)

Earlier in his career, Jurist Colonel Abd al-Salam Fajr Mahmud was Director of the office of Major General Muhammad al-Khuli, then Director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate. In 2010, Abd al-Salam Mahmud was Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Southern Region. He then obtained a master's degree from a Lebanese university, and afterward was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General and made Head of the Investigations Branch in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, based in the al-Mazzah Airbase.

When the peaceful protests broke out in March 2011, Brigadier General Abd al-Salam and his deputy, Brigadier General Nazih Mulham, took responsibility for investigating prisoners in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, whose staff numbered around 388 members at that time. The two Brigadier Generals, Abd al-Salam and Nazih, oversaw torture and executions of the prisoners, who were sent from all Syrian provinces to the Investigations Branch. Brigadier General Salam Daghistani, Major Suhayl al-Zamam, Major Tariq Sulayman, and Captain Bassim Muhammad also participated in the violations.

This group comprised one of the worst interrogation teams, to the ex-

tent that the Air Force Intelligence Investigations Branch in al-Mazzah (led by Brigadier General Abd al-Salam Mahmud) gained a wide reputation for torture and executions, with its most prominent victims being two children under the age of three years old, Hamza al-Khatib and Tamir al-Shara'i, according to the testimony of Afaq Ahmad, a member of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate who defected.

The Human Rights Watch report issued on 15 December 2011 under the title, "By All Means Necessary! Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes against Humanity in Syria"<sup>(1)</sup>, carried details of the violations committed by the Special Operations branch in the al-Mazzah Airbase. According to the testimony of an Air Force Intelligence defector called Umar, after the Saida operation<sup>(2)</sup>, Air Force Intelligence officers brought back 160 detainees. Umar was responsible for organizing their transfer to the Investigative Branch of the Air Force Intelligence and thus had access to the list of names. He said that the detainees were held at the detention facility at al-Mazzah airport. Eventually all but two of them were released after the crime of torturing and killing the child Hamza al-Khatib was revealed. Umar said these and other detainees whom he saw both during his service and during his detention were repeatedly tortured in detention at the al-Mazzah facility and in two other detention facilities run by Air Force Intelligence, in each of which he spent time. He said that the methods of torture that he observed used by interrogators at the Mazzah facility included prolonged beatings with sticks and lashing with whips; suspension of detainees by their hands from the ceiling, at times for hours or even days; use of electric cattle prods and an electroshock machine with wires attached to different parts of detainees' bodies; as well as food, water, and sleep deprivation. According to Umar, Brigadier General Abd al-Salam Fajr Mahmud, as the Head of the Investigations Branch of Air Force Intelligence, was in charge of all three detention facilities.

Brigadier General Abd al-Salam Mahmud's name appeared a number of times in the Human Rights Watch report issued in 2012 under the title,

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/12/15/all-means-necessary/individual-and-command-responsibility-crimes-against-humanity#>

(2) An ambush by regime forces in which a number from the security branches and military units participated under the command of Air Force Intelligence, which led to the deaths and arrest of a large number of residents of Deraa province who had gone to break the siege imposed on the city on 29/4/2011.

“Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011”<sup>(1)</sup>. On pages 49 and 50 of the report, Rami, an officer who defected from the Air Force Intelligence and was detained there, said:

“I saw people being tortured there both when I was detained and when I worked there. The mildest form of torture is hitting people with batons on their arms and legs and not giving them anything to eat or drink. Then they would hang the detainees from the ceiling by their hands, sometimes for hours or days. I saw it while I was talking to the interrogators. They used electric stun-guns and an electroshock machine, an electric current transformer. It is a small machine with two wires with clips that they attach to nipples and a knob that regulates the current. In addition, they put people in coffins and threatened to kill them and close the coffin. People were wearing underwear. They pour hot water on people and then whip them. I’ve also seen drills there, but I’ve never seen them being used. I’ve also seen them using martial arts moves, like breaking ribs with a knee kick. They put pins under your feet and hit you so that you step on them. I also heard them threatening to cut off the detainees’ penises.”

There is a large amount of evidence indicating Brigadier General Abd al-Salam Fajr’s involvement in the “Caesar<sup>(2)</sup>” case, which documented cases of killing under torture in the Investigations Branch, which was headed by Brigadier General Abd al-Salam, as well as in the Human Rights Watch report, “If the Dead Could Speak: Mass Deaths and Torture in Syria’s Detention Facilities”<sup>(3)</sup>, which documented killings carried out by Syrian Intelligence agencies, and in the Amnesty International report, “It Breaks the Human: Torture, Disease and Death in Syria’s Prisons”<sup>(4)</sup>, which addressed the systematic means of torture, as well as the cases of rape which were carried out in the branch, and the blackmail carried out by arresting women and girls in order to press them to admit anything related to their family or to put pressure on their families to hand themselves

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias#>

(2) A photographer in the regime forces who defected and fled with about 55,000 photos of the victims of torture in prisons and torture centers of Syrian intelligence.

(3) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/12/16/if-dead-could-speak/mass-deaths-and-torture-syrias-detention-facilities#>

(4) <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE2445082016ENGLISH.PDF>

in, in exchange for releasing these women and girls. There have been several accounts of “prisoner exchange” with the regime forces in which women and girls are given in exchange for regime officers and soldiers.

One former prisoner in the Investigations Branch in al-Mazzah in 2013 spoke, in a testimony obtained by Pro-Justice, of the violations carried out there:

“I spent 51 days in this prison moving between three solitary cell and one bigger cell. We were 26 prisoners in the individual cells which are fashioned for one prisoner and had an area of 2 x 2.5 meters. We were in just two classes. Half of this number slept standing and the other half slept squatting. In this cell there was a father and his son, and in the neighboring cell there were his other sons. That morning we woke to the death of the father, and after two nights of the brutality his son lived in the same cell, he died as well! ... There were also children imprisoned, 18 years old, 13, and 14. We were always waking up to their hysterical screams at night, “I want my mother!” In this prison there were women suffering from all forms of torture and sexual assault. In this prison, brothers were forced to sodomize brothers. In this prison, there were no prisoners who were not deformed... Due to the dirt and the filth, and the lack of cleanliness and water, the wound would be infected and fester alarmingly. In this prison, the prisoner wanted to die a thousand times inside this place, and not be taken to the Hospital 601 in Mezzeh, which was a total slaughterhouse. In this prison, we were allowed to go to the bathroom twice a day and in the few seconds; otherwise we got a devil’s wrath. They violated our privacy and we were there with our own waste in the bathrooms. In one body, there were 130 wounds which we saw with our own eyes when he showed it to us. These wounds were not due to the beatings but the filth inside the prison.”

Brigadier General Abd al-Salam has been subject to European<sup>(1)</sup> sanctions<sup>(2)</sup> and British<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions<sup>(4)</sup> since 2011, due to his direct oversight of

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(1) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21509/list-persons-entities-eu-restrictive-measures-syria-30052017.pdf>

(2) Included in European sanctions 132

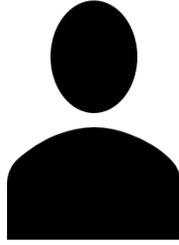
(3) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/730120/syria.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730120/syria.pdf)

(4) Included in British sanctions 184

the violent operations which were carried out by members of the Air Force Intelligence against members of the Syrian people. Samantha Power, the former United States Permanent Representative to the Security Council, also noted his name on a list of the military officials in the regime forces which she said reliable reports had confirmed had carried out war crimes against Syrian civilians in various forms, and whom she promised would be prosecuted in 2016, adding that:

“The United States will not let those who have commanded units involved in these actions hide anonymously behind the facade of the Assad regime ... Those behind such attacks must know that we and the international community are watching their actions, documenting their abuses, and one day, they will be held accountable.”

By April 2016, Air Force Intelligence had issued about 20,000 arrest warrants against Syrians.



**70. Brigadier General  
Ghassan Bilal**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the Security Department at  
4<sup>th</sup> Division

**Background information:**

Branch of service: Army

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2013	Commanding Officer, 555 <sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment
	Officer, 4 <sup>th</sup> Division

As the son of a prominent Army brigadier, Ghassan Bilal began his military service training alongside a select group of Syrian figures, including Mahir al-Assad, who were instructed by the late Bassil al-Assad to serve as part of the regime's Special Task Force.

Bilal rose through the ranks of the Army's 4<sup>th</sup> Division to oversee the Security Office and become the henchman of his peer, Mahir. He was the confidant and business broker for the president's son; for instance, Bilal is known to have played a major role in fabricating criminal charges against Mahir al-Assad's business rivals. He also played a key role in introducing Mahir to businessman Muhammad Hamshu, fostering a strong business relationship between the two, worth of hundreds of millions of dollars. Bilal also oversaw the business of Ayman Jabir, who made his fortune through his relationship with the al-Assad family.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Bilal was a top aide of Mahir al-Assad while heading the Security Office in the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. As such, he ran his own prison housed inside a four-floor underground complex. Detainees here were both military personnel and civilian inmates. Most detainees were civilians arrested by the 4<sup>th</sup> Division at their checkpoints or during military incursions, especially in Daraya and Mu'adamiyat al-Sham.

During this time, Bilal oversaw the systematic torture of detainees,

which led to the death of a large number of inmates. During negotiations with the opposition in the cities of Darya and Mu'adamiyat al-Sham, Bilal refused to address the issue of the detainees, knowing that many of them had been transferred to other prisons or had been killed.

Due to the brutal force with which the Syrian government responded to civilian demonstrators, Brigadier General Bilal was placed on [British](#), [European](#) and [Canadian](#) sanctions lists.

Bilal played a key role in imposing brutal sieges on these areas, which led to the starvation of many locals by depriving them of basic necessities of life. Bilal is also the main official responsible for operations to displace residents from the areas of Daraya and Mu'adamiyat al-Sham, during which a large number of people were driven out toward the opposition-held north of Syria.

In late 2013, while serving in his position as head of the Security Office, Bilal was assigned to lead the 555<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Regiment (Airborne) of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. In this capacity, he supervised the military operations carried out by the regiment in areas of the Damascus environs as well as in Dara'a and Hamah. A large number of civilians were killed in these operations.

An officer who defected from 4<sup>th</sup> Division testified that:

“I saw people in this prison whose pallor showed that they had not seen the sun for years. Their utmost hope was to die (from the torture they had been subjected to) under the supervision of Lt. Col. Hussain Mreishah, Director of the Office of Brigadier General Ghassan Bilal, and Staff Warrant Officer, Abu Joshua.”

Bilal has also developed close relationships with both Russia and Iran, the latter centralised largely on business and military / security interests.



**71. Brigadier General Ghassan Haddad**

**Current appointment:**

Director of the Yusuf al-Azmih Military Hospital

Branch of service: Army - Medical services

A trained medical practitioner and Director of the infamous Yusuf al-Azmih Military Hospital in al-Mazzah (also known as Military Hospital 601), Brigadier General (Dr) Ghassan Haddad is a key perpetrator of Crimes against Humanity on behalf of the regime. Together with Colonel Taha al-Asad, Colonel Husayn Malluk, and Warrant Officer Muhammad Dayub, Dr Haddad and his medical staff aided the transformation of the military hospital into a facility for the widespread abuse of opposition members and civilians. This team oversaw the torture and killing of activists and protesters who were taken to the facility for medical treatment or during times of emergency.

Haddad and his team also supervised the transfer of activists back to regime Security branches for torture and / or execution. Haddad played a further role in covering up the crimes of the Security branches by fabricating causes of death, often falsely stating that torture victims had died of “heart attacks.” This was highlighted recently when the regime began informing families of the deaths via the civil registry.

The crimes of Dr. Haddad have been documented through video interviews<sup>(1)</sup> or written testimonies from defectors and victims who survived their experiences at the hospital. In one testimony, “Abu Sakhr” (a former hospital employee), said:

“The *shabiha* brought detainees from different branches. Most of them (the detainees) were shabby. In the first year (of the revolution) detainees were brought to certain rooms in the hospital before they were designated a separate building later on. Doctors, nurses, soldiers, and even cleaners contributed to the torture continuously. One of the nurses’ additional tasks

(1) Video interview with a survivor of the Hospital 601: <https://youtu.be/mvLMh7meYfY>

was to move the detainees who died under torture to the morgue. They were forbidden to give the detainees any medication, food, or water.”

“Nurses were constantly busy moving about 30 bodies (a day) to the morgue.” He added, “We would move a body to the morgue and return only to find out that a new detainee had died.” According to the witness, “90 percent of these detainees would die mostly from kidney failure resulting from the beating on the kidney area.”

Abu Sakhr revealed that there was a tunnel in the military hospital that connected the main centre with a newly constructed building where the morgues were located. Victims would be transported through these tunnels. “The detainees would be kept naked throughout their stay in the hospital,” according to Abu Sakhr. “The men were chained to the beds and blindfolded.<sup>(1)</sup> The detainees were placed in rooms on the third, fourth and fifth floors, which means that there were at least 150 to 200 of them at a time,” he added.

In a separate testimony obtained by Pro-Justice, Mahmud al-Nasr,<sup>(2)</sup> a survivor of the 601 Military Hospital, recalled:

“In the car that took us to the hospital, torture never stopped until we arrived at the emergency section. They moved me on a wheelchair to a room that looked calm and quiet but was full of detainees who were heavily injured. They tied my left hand and right leg to a bed which I shared with another detainee, although it was merely 80 cm wide. On the first day, my body was swollen and my eyes closed. I did not know what was around me ... The following day, the head of the detainees ward at the hospital came and started hitting me with a baton on my head because I was talking to the doctor. I learned then my first lesson: I was not allowed to talk to the doctor. I stayed in that room for about a week. I refused to eat hoping that I would die. However, I tried to inspect the food with my hand (as I could not see). It was given to the two of us but was barely enough for one. The yelling of the *shabiha*, Security agents, doctors, nurses, food distributors and cleaning workers broke the room’s silence as they insulted and beat us right on our wounds. We tried not to scream or even moan

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(1) Leaked video from Hospital 601 corroborates this story. Vide <https://youtu.be/mvLMh7meYfY>

(2) Mahmud al-Nasr was arrested after a battle with the Syrian army and was taken to Hospital 601.

because this would provoke the shabiha to hit us more. One of them broke the forefinger on my left hand thinking it was my right one, claiming that I used it to fire a gun.”

After a while, the detainees, including Mahmud, were transferred to the bandage ward. Here they were laid out on the beds and chained. Mahmud’s bed was next to the window, where he heard the sounds of detainees being tortured in the other parts of the hospital. He claimed that he and his fellow detainees were subjected to torture daily.

The torture process began when detainees were brought to a long corridor where they were forced to lie down on the ground. Mahmud said that *shabiha* members then started a “torture party,” the duration of which varied according to the political and military conditions outside the hospital / prison. “They called this round of torture ‘hospitality,’ where the *shabiha* came to those who remained alive and targeted their wounds, leaving them with fractures or failing kidneys. Or a hurt eye or psychological trauma which made them lose sense of their surroundings. In most cases detainees would not return to the Security agencies that they were transferred from; instead they would die in the hospital,” Mahmud explained.

Mahmud confirmed in his testimony that torture was not limited to a certain time of the night or day, but - more often than not - Security personnel would come at night for prisoners, taking them outside to entertain themselves by torturing them, sometimes to death. “The majority of detainees were young and some we even children under the age of 15, and a good number of elders over the age of 80, and those among them who died were stacked in the toilets of the hospital while workers waited for a car to take them to where they were buried,” Mahmud added.

Another defector, known as “Sulayman,” said that the hospital’s transformation into a “slaughterhouse” had begun in the early days of the peaceful protests in March 2011. At that time, the hospital had a heavy Security presence because the bodies of more than 45 demonstrators killed by security forces and militias were transferred there. Some of the bodies were placed in hospital morgues while dozens of other bodies remained dumped in other rooms for lack of available space. The bodies

were then transported to an unknown location. The hospital has since converted one of the sections of the abandoned old wing into a prison, dividing it into several cells.

Sulayman explained that hospital management would assign one bed for every two prisoners. The injured were badly treated by medical staff and cleaners who also contributed to beatings and torture.

Sulayman noted how the bodies of those who died under torture were stacked in the hospital yard inside the hospital yard. A forensic doctor would then pass them quickly and draft a report saying that the deceased had died of a stroke, a heart attack, or a brain clot, ignoring all signs of torture on their bodies. The doctor would then mark the body with a serial number<sup>(1)</sup> and draft a report that would include personal information about the deceased, including their full names and the Security branch in which they died or were brought from. These reports were then submitted to Lieutenant Colonel Shadi Rizk Zawdah, the officer in charge of archiving the names of the deceased. Then hospital management, in coordination with the Intelligence agencies, transported the bodies, wrapping them in plastic and loading them inside a small truck, stacking the bodies on top of one another. The vehicle left only when it was fully stuffed with some 300 bodies. One truck would leave the hospital once every other day, which gives an idea of the number of prisoners who were killed inside the hospital.

A report by the UK Channel 4<sup>(2)</sup> broadcaster aired in early August of 2018, documenting victims at Hospital 601. Most of their deaths resulted from physical and psychological torture, either in a detention facility or in Hospital 601, which was overseen by Dr. Haddad. (NB: Military Hospital 601 is not the only facility where similar abuses were conducted; another such Centre is the Tishrin Military Hospital in Damascus.)

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(1) This was corroborated by revelations obtained by the whistleblower "Caesar."

(2) Report is available here (NB Minute 7:29 et esq): <https://youtu.be/4jJBtFrTqcg>.





**72. Brigadier General Salih al-Abdullah**

**Current appointment:**

Operations Officer, Tiger Forces

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Safita, Tartus

Date of birth: 1967

Branch of service: Army

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2015 - present	Assistant to General Suhayl al-Hassan
2012 - 2015	Head of the Defence and Security Committee in Mahardah
2011 - 2012	Commander, 244 <sup>th</sup> Battalion, 121 <sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade, 7 <sup>th</sup> Division

Salih al-Abdullah attended Military College in 1985, and upon graduation was assigned to the Syrian Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Division, which was stationed in the environs of Damascus. At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, al-Abdullah was the Commander of 244<sup>th</sup> Battalion of 121<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Brigade, part of 7<sup>th</sup> Division.

With a record of loyalty toward the Assad regime and ruthlessness toward his opponents, al-Abdullah was one of the officers tasked with the storming of the Umari Mosque in Dara'a, which led to mass killings and arrests of those in the vicinity. The General also took part in a number of major military incursions into the southern province of Dara'a. But in July 2011, al-Abdullah was transferred north with his battalion to Hamah, where they took part in the storming of the city, killing 95 civilians and brutally injuring many local residents.

Following the storming of Hamah, al-Abdullah was appointed to chair the Defence and Security Committee of the Mahardah area in the province's environs. During this time, he was based west of the town of Mahardah in the Saint George Monastery (which the regime converted into a military base), overseeing shelling operations on the entire northern the

province. The shelling campaigns planned from Saint George Monastery resulted in the killing of hundreds and the displacement of tens of thousands of people from these areas.

General al-Abdullah also took part in the incursions of Halfaya, Kfar Nabuda, Karnaz, al-Lataminah, Kafr Zita, Suran and the surrounding villages and towns. As a ranking officer, he is directly responsible for the massacres committed by regime combatants in these areas, in particular the massacre of al-Ataminah on 7 April 2012, which killed 51 civilians, all of whom were documented by monitors. It was impossible to identify another 20 bodies.

Alongside the abovementioned crimes, General Abdullah is directly responsible for a number of massacres under his command, most notably:

- al-Qubayr massacre (6 June 2012), which resulted in the killing of 78 people and the disappearance of another 15.

- al-Tirmisa massacre (12 July 2012), which claimed the lives of 305 civilians and wounded more than 300 more after regime forces used tanks and heavy weapons to open fire on the area before storming the town.

- Halafiyya massacre (16 December 2012), which resulted in the deaths of 25 people when civilian houses were targeted with heavy shelling from artillery. The operation was carried out jointly with the local National Defence Forces in Mahardah, under the command of Simon Wakil.

- Jalmih massacre (9 February 2014), which killed 17 people, including four children and seven women, when allied militias stormed the checkpoints surrounding the town and opened fire on civilians.

- Mirzaf massacre (1 August 2014), which killed 10 people, including three women and six children, after forces targeted the town with artillery shells and tank fire.

- al-Ataminah massacre (14 January 2016) in which six people were killed and dozens of civilians were injured by artillery shelling on the city,

- Ka'irzayta massacre (14 January 2016), where five civilians from the one family, including three women, were killed in the shelling of the town.

General al-Abdullah also took part in the military operations to take

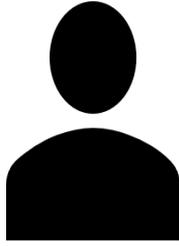
control of the areas of Zara and Krak des Chevaliers in the western environs of Homs, as well as the assault on Aleppo. The campaigns led to the death and displacement of countless locals, many of whom fled toward Syria's borders.

In reward for carrying out the brutal operations, the then-colonel was appointed as Assistant to the infamous General Suhayl al-Hassan, head of the Tiger Forces, for which al-Abdullah became the Operations Officer.

Al-Abdullah was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General on 1 January 2016. Following his promotion, the Brigadier General took part in the decisive battles for Aleppo in the second half of 2016, and its eastern environs in 2017. He also participated in the battles of the northern environs of Latakia, as well as major campaigns in Raqqa, Dayr al-Zur, Eastern Ghuta, and the operation to take Dara'a in 2018.

Brigadier-General al-Abdullah and Brigadier Suhayl al-Hassan are directly responsible for all crimes committed by the Syrian Army's Tiger Forces. This includes a number of crimes committed in Hamah and its northern environs prior to the formal establishment of the forces.





**73. Brigadier General Fayiz Baddur**

**Current appointment:**

Officer at the Special Units Force

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Special Units

**Previous appointments:**

Battalion Commander at the Special Units Force.

Officer, Special Units Force

Brigadier General Fayiz Baddur comes from the province of Latakia, and was destined for the Syrian Armed Forces from an early stage. He graduated from the Military Academy and was assigned to the Special Units.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Brigadier General Fayiz was dispatched with his battalion to the governorate of Hamah. He was located in a government building that overlooked the road to Salamiyyah, where he installed his first checkpoint. Baddur had very good relationship with the infamous Suhayl al-Hassan (who was then Head of the Special Operations department at the Air Force Intelligence Directorate.) They both collaborated in attacking towns and villages in Hamah governorate. The Chairman of the Hamah Defence and Security Committee, Wajih al-Mahmud<sup>(1)</sup>, had given them full authority to operate their military offenses against the Syrian people in the city of Hamah and its environs.

Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan, Major General Wajih al-Mahmud, Brigadier General Hassan Mirhaj (Commander of 33<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Division), Colonel Jamal Yunis (Commander of 555<sup>th</sup> Battalion), and Colonel Salih al-Abdullah (Commander of 244<sup>th</sup> Battalion), took part in all crimes

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(1) Major General Wajih Yahya al-Mahmud, was Commander, 18<sup>th</sup> (Armoured) Division and the longtime Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee in the province of Hamah.

and violations that took place in Hamah and its environs during the period 2011 to 2016.

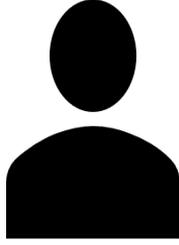
Some of these crimes committed by Brigadier General Fayiz Baddur are:

- The massacre of the al-Arba'in neighbourhood (24 April 2012): in revenge for the killing of two officers of the regime's army, Baddur ordered a massacre that killed 18 civilians and wounded dozens. This massacre was committed in collaboration with 555<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Special Operations and Air Force Intelligence - Military Security Branch.

- The Suran City massacre (20 May 2012), which claimed the lives of 34 people from the city.

- Massacre of Qubayr (6 June 2012), which claimed the lives of 78; and many went missing including women and children.

- The massacre of Traymsah (12 July 2012), which killed 305 people, and wounded more than 300 by bombing of the city with heavy weapons.



**74. Brigadier General  
Muhammad Khaluf**

Background information:

Place of birth: Asal al-Ward,  
Damascus environs

Branch of service: Army - Military  
Intelligence

<u>Previous appointments:</u>	
2009 - 2014	Head of Palestine Branch
2007 – 2009	Commander, Border Guard, al-Tanf area
2004	Beirut, Lebanon branch, Military Intelligence Directorate

Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf<sup>(1)</sup> served in the Military Intelligence Directorate, where he was deputy to Major General Jamih Jamih in the Directorate's branch in the Lebanese capital Beirut. Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf is one of the most prominent figures charged in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. His name appeared in the lists of Syrian figures implicated in the crime, and was also noted by witnesses in the al-Hariri investigation.

When he returned to Syria, Brigadier General Khaluf was appointed Commander of the Border Guard in the al-Tanf area in 2007 for two years. He then became Head of Branch 235 (known as the Palestine Branch), within the Military Intelligence Directorate in 2009.

When the popular protests broke out in March 2011, Brigadier General Khaluf became one of the most prominent criminals in the Security establishment, as from 2011 to 2014, the Palestine Branch committed some of

(1) NB There are two senior Syrian officers with similar names: Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf, Head of the Palestine Branch; and Major General Muhammad Khaluf, Head of the Logistics and Supply Authority, who defected from the regime in 2013.

the worst violations carried out by members of Military Intelligence in Syria, including killings under torture, violations of human dignity, and other shameful practices. Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf is directly responsible for the crimes committed by members of the branch during his tenure until he was transferred to Latakia and Brigadier General Yassin Dahi was appointed in his place in April 2014.

A report issued by the Human Rights Watch organisation in 2012 titled, “Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria’s Underground Prisons since March 2011<sup>(1)</sup>,” documented violations carried out by members of the branch against prisoners under the supervision of Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf, including both men and women. This included arbitrary beatings, systematic torture, starvation, deprivation from medical care, and arrest in terrible conditions. One of the survivors, Ali Bassam Arafat, described<sup>(2)</sup> what he witnessed:

“Almost every day, I heard from the solitary confinement next to mine that six detainees died, as one of the detainees who was nick-named *al-Shawish*<sup>(3)</sup> called the jailer more than once saying: ‘Sir; someone returns the plate,’ an expression used when someone dies or about to die either because of the torture he exposed to by the interrogators or by one of the detainees among us whom are nick-named *al-Shawish* [those who received orders to kill some detainees and were given more food as a reward, but in case they disobey orders, their lives became at stake.] They were spreading horror in our hearts more than the jailers themselves because they were living among us ... During my detention period in the two branches (Branch 227, and the Palestine Branch / Branch 235) in Damascus, I was a witness to more than 500 bodies belonging to detainees who had died under torture. Besides I was subjected to various forms of torture, beginning from beating my whole body even the genitals with sticks, and ending with electrocution and hearing the laughter of the jailers overseeing my torture.”

Another former prisoner of the Palestine Branch said that some prisoners had gone insane and has lost their memory and concentration during the torture, and that members of the branch would tie some people up

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/ar/report/2012/07/03/256336>

(2) Available at Syrians for Truth and Justice: <https://www.stj-sy.com/en/view/270>

(3) Literally “sergeant”, but more accurately “stool-pigeon”

with plastic bags like skullcaps and then tie the bags around their heads until they died, without giving them any treatment.

The deaths of a large number of prisoners under torture have also been documented in the Palestine Branch by the witness Caesar, who took photos which showed the horrific effects of torture on the dead<sup>(1)</sup>.

The torture methods for which the branch is known include:

- Sexual harassment and rape, and inserting glass bottles in the anuses of prisoners.

- The administration of electric shocks to sensitive parts of the body.

- Deprivation from sleep for three continuous days.

- “The Ghost” - tying the hands of prisoners and hanging him from the ceiling and leaving him for a number of days.

- “The Wheel” - putting the prisoner inside a car wheel with his back against the wheel, and then tying his hands and placing them behind his head, with his head and his feet in the wheel, and then beaten until he is bloody.

- Hypothermia, by sleeping in a room full of water for several nights in bitterly cold weather.

- “The German Chair” - tying the prisoner’s back to a metal chair and putting severe pressure on his spinal cord and limbs, which breaks the spine and causes temporary paralysis in the limbs and raises blood pressure.

The deaths of a large number of Palestinians under torture have also been documented in the same branch, with the records showing 520 Palestinians dead under torture in the Palestine Branch from March 2011 to July 2018.

In addition to the crimes which occurred under his supervision in the Palestine Branch, Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf is also one of the most prominent officials responsible for the bombing of the al-Qazaz district in Damascus, where two car bombs containing more than a thousand

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(1) The images can be found at: <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=7>

kilograms of explosives went off on the morning of Thursday 10 May 2012 in front of the Patrols Branch in Damascus. After accusations were leveled against the al-Nusra Front, leaked documents revealed the regime's involvement in this blast, which killed more than 70 civilians, wounded hundreds, and inflicted major damage on the residences, stores, schools, academies, and university faculties in the area around the branch.

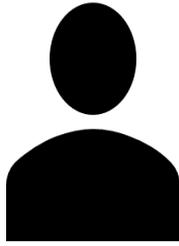
As a result of the crimes which he has been documented carrying out against civilians, Brigadier General Muhammad Khaluf was included in the British<sup>(1)</sup>, European<sup>(2)</sup>, and Canadian<sup>(3)</sup> sanctions list during the time he headed the Palestine Branch from 2009 to 2014.

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(1) Included in British sanctions 173

(2) Included in European sanctions 130

(3) Included in Canadian sanctions 137



**75. Brigadier General  
Shafik Massa**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Branch 215, Military Intelligence Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Zara, Hamah Province

Year of birth: 1956

Branch of service: Army - Intelligence

**Previous appointments:**

2011

Head of Branch 215,  
Military Intelligence  
Directorate

Shafik Massa was born in 1956 in Zara, a predominantly Alawite village in the southern suburbs of Hamah. He joined the Security services at an early age, rising rapidly through the ranks to become Head of the Branch 215 (“Raid Brigade”) of the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID), headed at the time by the late Assif Shawkat.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Massa was a key orchestrator of the violent crackdowns on demonstrations taking place across Syria. From his office in the Kafr Sussah district in the capital Damascus, he oversaw raids and incursions by security forces in the neighbourhoods of Damascus and authorised the indiscriminate arrest of civilians.

Under Massa’s command, personnel carried out the systematic torture of detainees, which led to the death of a large number of civilians within Branch 215, as a result of which Branch 215 became known by many as the “Branch of Death.”

Residents of the capital’s Dummar district faced a particularly heavy response by Massa’s forces; more than 1,200 detainees from the area are documented to have been killed in his custody. Thousands more have also faced detention, torture, and forced disappearance. The crimes of

Branch 215 were not limited to the neighbourhoods of Damascus alone, but extend to other provinces such as Dara'a, Aleppo, Homs, and areas east of the Euphrates, where residents were arrested for investigation and subsequently brutally abused – sometimes executed – by Massa's forces.

According to witness testimony obtained from a survivor of Branch 215, around 25 detainees were died every day from injuries obtained through torture, and their bodies were dumped in a section of the facility known as the "Death Ward."

A report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights monitoring group quoted the experiences of 65 detainees who had been arrested and transferred to Branch 215. The victims described in detail the conditions of suffering and inhumane treatment carried out by Branch 215 personnel, which are believed to have claimed the lives of thousands of detainees. Referring to one mass execution, survivors claimed that Massa had issued direct orders to kill all detainees in an entire dormitory in response to the reported spread of a plague.

Violations taking place at Branch 215 were explicitly mentioned in a 2012 report<sup>(1)</sup> by Human Rights Watch, which highlighted cases of torture and abuse in the first months of the crisis.

Former US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Samantha Power, issued a statement on human rights abuses in Syria carried out by the Assad regime, including inside Branch 215. "Those behind such attacks must know that we and the international community are watching their actions, documenting their abuses, and one day they will be held accountable," Power said, adding: "Today's atrocities are well documented, and the civilized world's memories are long." She cited Branch 215 under Brigadier-General Massa as one of the facilities in which civilians were tortured to death.

Photographic evidence documented by the Syrian whistleblower "Cae-

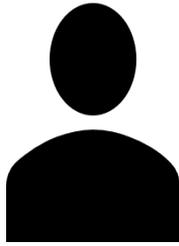
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(1) Solvang, O., & Neistat, A. (2012). Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons Since March 2011. Human Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias>

sar”<sup>(1)</sup> provided a cache of files pertaining to the three and a half thousand victims identified from Branch 215. The vast majority of victims recorded by Caesar were located within Branch 215.

Due to his role in the violent crackdown on civilian demonstrations and the abuses that ensued, Brigadier General Massa was designated a sanctioned individual on [British](#),<sup>(2)</sup> [European](#)<sup>(3)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(4)</sup> lists.

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- (1) Photographic evidence of Branch 215’s victims can be found at: <https://www.safmcd.com/martyr/index.php?id=2>
  - (2) He is ranked 197 on the UK sanctions list
  - (3) He is ranked 127 on the EU sanctions list
  - (4) He is ranked 134 on the Canadian sanctions list



**76. Brigadier General Naufal al-Husayn**

**Current appointment:**

Retired

**Background information:**

Place of birth: al-Bayadah, Homs

Branch of service: Army - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2010 – 2015	Head of Military Intelligence Branch in Idlib
2007 - 2010	Head of Counter-Terrorism in Military Intelligence Branch in Idlib
1980s - 2007	Officer at the Military Intelligence Branch in Idlib

Naufal al-Husayn was born in al-Bayadah in the eastern environs of Homs, and graduated as an Lieutenant in the early 1980s, joining the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) and taking part in the government's brutal crackdown operations in Idlib and Jisr al-Shughur at the time.

Over the following decades, al-Husayn rose through the ranks in the MID branch in Idlib, where he headed the Counter-Terrorism and Raids departments before eventually taking over as Head of the provincial branch.

At the outbreak of protests in March 2011, al-Husayn was among a number of high-ranking officers responsible for ordering the brutal response toward demonstrators in the city of Idlib and its environs. According to the testimony of the defector Yusuf Mustafa al-Tahir<sup>(1)</sup>, al-Husayn also gave orders to his subordinates to open fire on demonstrators.

According to reports, the Brigadier General could be spotted roaming

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(1) See the announcement of Tahir's defection here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVGkbr-GIso&feature=youtu.be>

from checkpoint to checkpoint throughout the province by motorcycle to oversee the arbitrary arrest of demonstrators. Along with Security personnel under his authority, al-Husayn is known to have carried out torture on civilians inside Idlib detentions centres.

Brigadier General al-Husayn is also reportedly linked to two bus bombings which targeted factory workers in Idlib, resulting in the death and injury of a number of civilians.

A 2012 report<sup>(1)</sup> by Human Rights Watch documented the abusive and criminal practices of the MID branch in Idlib, which was headed at the time by Brigadier General al-Husayn. The report details the testimonies of seven former detainees who claimed some prisoners were kept underground, with one former detainee estimating that around 200-300 prisoners were kept in the detention facility at one time. Witnesses also testified that al-Husayn had personally carried out torture on victims.

Civilian testimonies obtained by Pro-Justice also confirm the participation of Brigadier General al-Husayn in the storming of Jisr al-Shughur, Jericho and Maarat al-Numan in 2012. He has also been accused of participating in the military campaign which led to the abduction of Syrian Army defector Lieutenant Colonel Husayn al-Harmush from Turkish soil. In addition, al-Husayn has been accused (together with General Ibrahim al-Ghubn) of committing the massacre at Taftanaz in 2012, which killed about 60 civilians, in addition to the destruction of about 170 houses inside the town.

In a 2015 incident, security personnel at the MID branch in Idlib, under the command of Brigadier General al-Husayn, were accused of massacring 12 detainees. Seven other inmates managed to survive the atrocity, according to eyewitness testimony.<sup>(2)</sup> Security forces from the same branch also committed another massacre in the city of Jisr al-Shughur, where 23 detainees were executed.

al-Husayn is also accused of ordering the execution of a number of

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(1) Solvang, O., & Neistat, A. (2012). Torture Archipelago: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture, and Enforced Disappearances in Syria's Underground Prisons since March 2011. Human Rights Watch.

(2) See video testimony at: <https://youtu.be/4JgzFg6zOSA>

detainees<sup>(1)</sup> and MID defectors who were arrested during military campaigns on the opposition areas of Idlib. Following the expulsion of regime military forces from the rebel-held province, Brigadier General al-Husayn was tasked with supervising the MID training of graduates at the Hamah branch.

For his role in violently suppressing civilian protests, Brigadier General al-Husayn was included in [British](#)<sup>(2)</sup>, [European](#)<sup>(3)</sup> and [Canadian](#)<sup>(4)</sup> sanctions lists. He retired after reaching the statutory age in 2015.

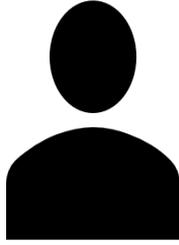
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(1) The testimony of a wife of a detainee, available at: <http://jfl.ngo/?p=4794>

(2) He ranked 55 in the UK sanctions.

(3) He ranked 42 in the EU sanctions.

(4) He ranked 41 in the Canadian sanctions.



**77. Colonel Salih Saqr**

**Current appointment:**

Head of the National Defence Forces in Homs and Hamah

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia environs

Branch of service: Army - Infantry

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2014 - 2015	Tiger Forces
2014	7 <sup>th</sup> Division

At the beginning of 2011, Colonel Salih Saqr, then a battalion commander in 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, was assigned to the city of Homs to supervise checkpoints in the opposition neighbourhood of Baba Amr. There, he played a key role in fueling tensions and exacerbating violence in the area, sanctioning the use of tanks and live rounds against local protesters, and ordering government forces to fire on funeral processions of civilians mourning the fallen.

In the months following his deployment, Colonel Salih Saqr ordered indiscriminate arrests at checkpoints and handed over detainees to Syria's ruthless Intelligence branches. He is also accused of ordering forces to open fire on random passing cars. In one case in August 2011, the Colonel ordered troops to shoot at the occupants of one car, killing a family of five, including three children. Three other shootings were carried out at checkpoints overseen by Saqr, killing 39 people in total.

Colonel Saqr was injured twice while stationed in Babr Amr; once receiving shrapnel in the eye while tracking a vehicle. He was injured a second time in 2012 after he was removed from the Baba Amr checkpoints, on the orders of the late General Assif Shawkat. His removal was a key demand from locals in order for them to accept a truce deal.

After his removal from Baba Amr, Colonel Saqr joined the ranks of the infamous Tiger Forces, under the command of General Suhayl al-Hassan.

In 2014, Saqr took command of the military forces stationed in the town of Murik in the northern environs of Hamah after the Tiger Forces had seized control of the city. There, he helped to establish the local National Defence Forces (NDF) branch in the al-Ghab Plain area, and still commands the paramilitary force in the Central Region.

Saqr is known to have gathered abductees and prisoners in detention camps in Dayr Shimayl and other areas loyal to the regime, often extorting family members in return for false promises of the release of their loved ones.

In his capacity as commander of the NDF paramilitary forces, Colonel Saqr is responsible for all human rights violations, including murder and kidnapping, carried out by NDF militants in the region.



**78. Brigadier General Aktham Mahmud**

**Current appointment:**

Chief of Staff, Special Task Force, 5<sup>th</sup> Corps

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jablah, Latakia Province

Branch of service: Army

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2017	Chief of Staff, Special Task Force, 5 <sup>th</sup> Corps
2015	Supervisor of the “Desert Falcons” and ComMandu Forces

Brigadier General Aktham Mahmud comes from the city of Jablah, Latakia.

In 2015, he was appointed to help oversee the militias of the regime, where he served as Deputy to Brigadier General Samir Udish, Commander of the “Desert Falcons” militia. This militia spread across many provinces: Palmyra in the eastern Homs environs, Salamiyah in eastern Hamah, and in the environs of Latakia and Aleppo.

Subsequently, he was assigned the task of supervising the “Sea Commandus”, a militia funded by Ayman Jabr, a businessman and a relative by marriage of the Assad family. Brigadier General Mahmud professionalised the militia by bringing in experienced combatants from his previous position. The militia group was active in the coastal area, and comprised some 1000 fighters.

After the disbandment of these militias and the redeployment of their members into 5<sup>th</sup> Division under Russian supervision in 2017; the then-Colonel Aktham Mahmud was appointed Chief of Staff of 1<sup>st</sup> (Special Tasks)

Regiment in the same 5<sup>th</sup> Division. This regiment was mostly formed of former “Sea ComMandus” fighters. He was promoted to Brigadier General on 1 July 2018.

Aktham Mahmud oversaw a large number of operations carried out by his militias against civilians in the villages and towns of the northern Latakia province and in the city of Aleppo, as well as in the operations that took place on the Khanasir-Athriya road (linking the cities of Hamah and Aleppo) in 2018. Elements of these militias committed extensive violations against civilians, especially in the environs of Latakia and Aleppo. Some of the most infamous massacres in which Brigadier General Aktham Mahmud participated were:

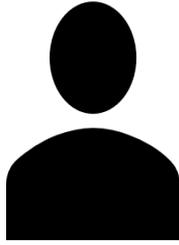
- Battles of the northern Latakia environs in the Kurds Mountain and Turkmen Mountain, which led to the deaths of hundreds of people in the region and the displacement of the entire population from the region to other areas.
- The battles of the Athriya-Khanazir road in the eastern Hamah environs, which resulted in the deaths of dozens of unarmed civilians.
- Battles of the eastern neighbourhoods of Aleppo under the supervision of Russian forces in 2016, which claimed the lives of about 1370 civilians during the military campaign on the eastern neighbourhoods of Aleppo.
- The battles of rural Idlib East at the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, which led to the deaths of dozens of civilians, in addition to the displacement of more than 150 thousand civilians.
- The battles of eastern Ghuta in April 2018, which led to the deaths of about 1000 civilians, and the displacement of about 140 thousand residents of the region.
- The battles of Dara’a in 2018, in the region of al-Lajat in the north-east of Dara’a.

Upon his appointment as Chief of Staff in 5<sup>th</sup> Corps (2017) Aktham Mahmud participated in the extensive violations committed by the Tiger Forces in the eastern environs of Idlib under Brigadier Suhayl al-Hassan.

Brigadier General Aktham Mahmud has strong relations and direct

contact with Russian officers at the Hamahymim Airbase. The Russians gave his soldiers an immunity from questioning and prosecution by the Russian Military Police.





**79. Brigadier General  
Ibrahim al-Wa'ri**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Military Security branch  
(Branch 261), Homs

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Abu Hukfah village,  
Homs

Branch of service: Army -  
Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2016 - 2017	Head of Regional branch (Branch 227), Military Intelligence Directorate
	Branch 221, Military Intelligence Directorate
	Officer in Military Intelligence Directorate

Ibrahim al-Wa'iri is from the village of Abu Hukfah in the eastern Homs environs. He works in the Military Intelligence Directorate and has held a variety of positions there.

When the peaceful protests broke out in 2011, Ibrahim al-Wa'iri was working in the regional branch in Damascus known as Branch 221 under the Military Intelligence Directorate. He participated in the repression of the protests and is considered to be one of the most prominent officials responsible for the crimes and violations which occurred in the branch, which included arbitrary arrests and killings under torture.

Due to his role in the crimes which occurred in Branch 227, the regime rewarded him in June 2016 by appointing him head of the branch, where he continued to carry out more horrific violations against civilians. (It is reported that this Damascus branch is only given to figures trusted by regime leadership because of the secrets it contains.)

In February 2017, al-Wa'iri was appointed Head of the Military Intelli-

gence branch in Homs to replace Brigadier General Hassan Dabul, who had been killed during operation. Since being appointed to his new position, Brigadier General al-Wa'iri has tightened the stranglehold on villages in the northern Homs environs and the southern Hamah environs by preventing the entry of food and medical supplies, thereby increasing the suffering of the area's residents.

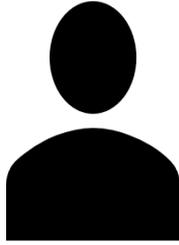
Brigadier General Ibrahim al-Wa'iri also participated directly in the displacement of two thirds of the al-Wa'ir district in Homs to northern Syria after tightening the siege imposed on the district. He broke the truce agreement repeatedly, killing a number of civilians and wounding others.

In the presence of Russian officers from the Hamahymim base, al-Wa'iri also participated in negotiations with the opposition in the northern Homs and southern Hamah environs, which ended with a portion of residents leaving for northern Syria. After this agreement, the Military Security branch in Homs carried out a campaign of arrests which included the remaining defected officers and civilians who preferred to make settlements with regime forces. They were then sent to the "Investigations Branch" (Branch 293) of the Military Intelligence Directorate in Damascus. Their fates are still unknown.

According to the Enab Baladi<sup>(1)</sup> website, Brigadier General Ibrahim al-Wa'iri was arrested by Branch 293 on 11 October 2018 because of his involvement in corruption, including kidnap for ransom in Homs city.

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(1) <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/258032>



**80. Brigadier General Iyad Iskandar Mandu**

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Ram al-Anz, Homs

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<u>Previous appointments or roles:</u>	
2018 - 2018	Head of Branch 227 (Damascus Region), Military Intelligence Directorate

2016 - 2018	Assigned as Head of Northern Region branch, Air Force Intelligence Directorate
2010	Head of Aviation Security and Defence Brigade, Air Force Intelligence Directorate
2010	Head, Latakia Division, Air Force Intelligence Directorate
	Air Force Intelligence Directorate

Iyad Mandu is from the village of Ram al-Anz in the western Homs environs. He served in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, where he rose through the ranks until he reached the position of Brigadier General. He was then appointed to a number of important and highly sensitive positions during his service period. In 2010, he was appointed Head of the Air Force Intelligence sector in Latakia city at the rank of Colonel. After this, he was transferred to the Aviation Security and Defence Brigade.

When the peaceful protests erupted in 2011, Iyad Mandu was serving as Head of the Aviation Security and Defence Brigade located at Damascus International Airport. He was responsible for securing and defending Damascus International Airport, as well as handling security responsibilities in the area and in all the villages surrounding the airport. He partic-

ipated in the campaigns carried out by regime forces around the airport, which resulted in widespread violations and crimes against civilians, most prominently the massacre in al-Abbadah town east of eastern Ghuta and near the Damascus International Airport. Mandu issued direct orders to his forces to open fire on the town's residents, killing seven people<sup>(1)</sup> and wounding others. This occurred in August 2011. He also participated in a large number of raids in Hiran al-Awamid, al-Nashabiyah and other villages near the airport.

As the officer in charge of airport security and protection, Iyad Mandu helped bring in thousands of members of Iranian, Afghan, Pakistani, and Iraqi Shi'a militias into Syria through Damascus International Airport. In coordination with Iranian officers in the "glass building" near the airport, Mandu was responsible for arranging the Shi'a militiamen's arrival and keeping their names and identities off of the airport's official civil registries, before sending them to the Sayida Zaynab area in southern Damascus

Based on that, Iyad Mandu is considered to be one of those most responsible for the crimes and violations carried out by the Shi'a militias who arrived by air from Iran and Iraq to Syria by way of Damascus International Airport, which was under his command.

Due to his role in acts of repression, the regime rewarded him by promoting him to Brigadier General. In September 2016, he was appointed Head of the Northern Region branch (Aleppo and Idlib) of Air Force Intelligence in Aleppo, succeeding Major General Adib Salamah, who was transferred to Damascus as Deputy Director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, under Jamil Hassan.

Over this period, Brigadier General Iyad Mandu participated in military operations against the residents of eastern Aleppo, which the regime captured in December 2016. He is considered to be directly responsible for all the crimes and violations carried out by Air Force Intelligence forces, Russian and Iranian forces, and their affiliated militias, over the period from September to December 2016, which resulted in the deaths of more than 2,000 civilians and wounded and displaced tens of thousands.

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(1) al-Abbadah massacre: <https://youtu.be/x-jWcX2RVuU> - <https://youtu.be/RRIKHRqX4o> - <https://youtu.be/SRF198Ljojc> - <https://youtu.be/4CbNfHI0WzM>

Although Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan was appointed Head of the Northern Region branch in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate at the start of 2017, Brigadier General Iyad Mandu continued his work at the branch, because Brigadier General al-Hassan was taken up with other missions. Mandu is considered to be directly responsible for the looting carried out by Air Force Intelligence forces and militia fighters in the eastern districts of Aleppo.

In July 2018, Brigadier General Mandu was posted from the Air Force Intelligence branch in Aleppo to be Head of Branch 227 (Damascus regional branch) of the Military Intelligence Directorate. He remained Head of the branch for just three months before he was replaced by Brigadier General Imad Muhammad.



**81. Brigadier General  
Sulayman al-Tinawi**

**Current appointment:**

Head of Information Branch,  
Air Force Intelligence Directorate

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jayrud, Damascus environs

Branch of service: Air Force - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2018	Director of Major General Jamil al-Hassan's office
	Head of Central Administration Office, Air Force Intelligence Directorate
	Air Force Intelligence Directorate

Brigadier General Engineer Sulayman al-Tinawi is from the city of Jayrud in the Damascus environs. He has served in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate for many years, including a period (in the rank of Colonel Engineer) as Head of the Central Administration Office. Later, he ran the office of the Director, Air Force Intelligence, Major General Jamil al-Hassan. In July 2018, al-Tinawi was promoted to Brigadier General and appointed Head of the Information Branch in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate.

When the peaceful protests broke out in 2011, Sulayman al-Tinawi participated in the repression through his position in the Central Administration Office. He was the right hand of Major General Jamil al-Hassan, who assigned him the task of coordinating with Lebanese Hizballah's commanders, primarily Dr. Hassan Hamahdah. al-Tinawi was also responsible for communicating with Shi'a groups in Bahrain and providing them with support.

During his work as Head of the Central Administration Office, al-Tinawi

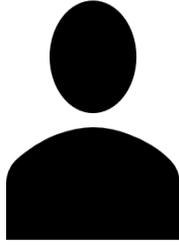
was responsible for maintaining and archiving documents pertaining to the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, especially those related to its Director. He had access to all the orders, instructions, decisions, and reports that were issued, which confirms that he was familiar with all crimes and violations carried out by the Air Force Intelligence Directorate and was involved in facilitating their operations.

al-Tinawi was given the task of overseeing the Air Force Intelligence Directorate's work in the city of Jayrud in eastern Qalamun due to the fact that he was from there. He participated in raids carried out by Air Force Intelligence forces with the assistance of Army forces and the Military Intelligence Directorate. He had a prominent role in planting spies in the city, and also undertook negotiations with eastern Qalamun residents and played a role in helping to infiltrate area residents through his relatives and acquaintances.

Brigadier General Sulayman al-Tinawi is considered to be one of the most prominent officials responsible for carrying out the Jayrud massacre in July 2016, which killed about 70 civilians and wounded a large number during bombardment operations. These were carried out by the regime in revenge for the death of the pilot Nawras Hassan, who had been taken prisoner after his plane crashed while bombing civilian areas in eastern Qalamun. Air Force Intelligence took on the mission of recovering the pilot's body. Later that year, al-Tinawi was given a large role in imposing a settlement with regime forces on the city of Jayrud.

Given the loyalty he has shown to the regime, he was promoted in July 2018 to Brigadier General and appointed Head of the Information Branch in the Air Force Intelligence Directorate. The Information Branch is responsible for all information pertaining to the Air Force Intelligence Directorate, whether related to workers there, civilians, or to military operations or intelligence information.





**82. Brigadier General  
Adnan al-Ahmad**

**Current appointment:**

Head, Patrols Branch (Branch 216),  
Military Intelligence Division

**Background information:**

Branch of service: Army -  
Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2018 - 2018	Head of Military Security branch in Tartus, Military Intelligence Directorate
2011 – 2015	Head, Military Security branch in Latakia, Military Intelligence Directorate

Brigadier General Adnan al-Ahmad is considered one of the criminal pillars of the Military Intelligence Directorate, carrying out the most severe forms of torture against prisoners during the positions he has held in the directorate.

Brigadier General Adnan al-Ahmad was Head of the Military Security branch in Latakia when the peaceful protests erupted in March 2011. He carried out many violations against civilian residents of Latakia province, as the Military Security branch in Latakia was one of the deadliest branches in the province. Many prisoners were killed under the torture carried out by the branch's forces.

Brigadier General al-Ahmad was also tasked with arming the pro-regime "Popular Committees" militias.

Human Rights Watch published testimonies of the types of crimes and violations carried out against prisoners in the branch, which was run by Brigadier General al-Ahmad, in the "Torture Archipelago"<sup>(1)</sup> report in July 2012. The report quoted "Kamal," who was arrested in Latakia on 22 April:

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(1) <https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/07/03/torture-archipelago/arbitrary-arrests-torture-and-enforced-disappearances-syrias>

“An hour after I arrived they took me to the interrogation room. The room had just a lamp. They told me not to move and that if I moved they would hit me. My hands were tied and I was blindfolded. I just stood straight. This lasted for about eight hours. I was ready to say anything to get me out of there, but they wouldn’t listen and told me to shut up. Eventually I fell over. Then they tied my hands and feet to a wooden stick. They put a tire around my knees and flipped me over so that my face was on the floor and two of them stepped on the stick on both sides. They beat me with a cable. They released the handcuffs twice to make the blood flow back in my legs and then they put me back. They didn’t ask any questions for about four hours. Afterwards I couldn’t stand on my feet so they dragged me back to the cell. I can’t say how many days I was in that cell. I could hear the voices of other detainees, but I couldn’t talk to them. At some point they took me to the major general who was in charge of the branch. He wanted me to work for them, but I refused.”

HRW also published the testimony of “Nabih,” a former prisoner in Latakia arrested in June 2011:

“[After arriving at the facility] they told me to call my dad and to tell him to pick me up from a particular location. I called my dad and told him I was detained and then they started beating me. They beat me with an electrical cable on my kidneys, chest, and feet. They put me on the flying carpet. They had a wooden stick. They put it in the rear, but they didn’t use it with me. The officer wouldn’t let them. I stayed there for six days and still have back pain. I was in a single cell. They left me for three days with no food. Finally, they gave me a piece of bread, that’s it. There was water from a faucet that hits your knee when you are sitting in the cell. It was a low ceiling, you can’t stand. You have to sit with your knees to your chest. The bathroom was outside. You knock on the door to ask them to take you to the bathroom and they beat you. There was no light inside.”

Brigadier General Adnan al-Ahmad continued to carry out systematic crimes and violations against prisoners in the Military Security branch in Latakia until the criminal Brigadier General Imad Mahub was appointed to replace him, and al-Ahmad was transferred to other positions in the Military Intelligence Directorate, such as in January 2018 as Head of the

Military Security branch in Tartus (which was part of a number of changes in positions of the heads of Military Intelligence Directorate branches.) al-Ahmad remained in this position until October 2018, when he was made Head of the Patrols Branch (Branch 216) of the Military Intelligence Directorate, succeeding Brigadier General Muhammad Zamrini.



**83. Brigadier General  
Muhammad Yusuf al-Hasuri**

**Current appointment:**

Deputy Commander, 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade,  
22<sup>nd</sup> Division

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Talkalakh, Homs

Branch of service: Air Force – Pilot  
(Sukhoi)

<u>Previous appointments:</u>	
2016 - 2016	Chief of Staff, 50 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Division
2016	Commander 685 <sup>th</sup> Squadron, 50 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Division
2011	Pilot, 827 <sup>th</sup> Squadron, 70 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, 20 <sup>th</sup> Division

Muhammad Yusuf al-Hasuri is from the city of Talkalakh in the western Homs environs. He graduated from Class 33 in the Military College and rose through various military ranks and positions until he was appointed Deputy Commander, 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade (part of 22<sup>nd</sup> Division) in the al-Shairat airbase in the eastern Homs environs with the rank of Brigadier General.

When the peaceful protests broke out in 2011, Brigadier General al-Hasuri participated in the systematic bombardment of populated residential areas through his command of a Sukhoi-827 fighter squadron (part of 70<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 20<sup>th</sup> Air Forces Division) stationed in the al-Tayfur Airbase in the eastern Homs environs. Al-Hasuri participated in a large number of air raids which led to the deaths and displacement of thousands of Syrians and the destruction of their property—especially in the northern and western Homs environs.

At a later stage, Hasuri was posted to the al-Shairat Airbase as Commander, 685<sup>th</sup> Squadron (part of 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 22<sup>nd</sup> Division.) He contributed to hundreds of air raids and the bombardment of civilians in Homs,

Hamah and Idlib provinces, since the al-Shairat base occupied a strategic location in central Syria.

Brigadier General al-Hasuri has experience commanding Sukhoi-22 aircraft (which are a fighter ground attack aircraft.) His name appeared among the participants in the bombardment carried out by the regime on al-Qusayr in the western Homs environs, alongside Colonel Malik Abbas, Colonel Ahad Qassim, Colonel Faysal Himma, Colonel Umran Mirai, and others.

He also participated in providing air support for Lebanese Hizballah's operations in taking control of Qusayr and expelling its residents. 685<sup>th</sup> Squadron in particular - and 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade in general - are considered to be among the air formations to have inflicted heavy damage on various populated areas.

For the crimes al-Hasuri carried out against civilians, the regime rewarded him by promoting him to Brigadier General on 1 January 2015. On 1 January 2016, he was appointed Chief of Staff, 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade (to which 685<sup>th</sup> Squadron belongs.)

In July 2016, he was appointed Deputy Commander, 50<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which was described in a report by the Zaman al-Wasl<sup>(1)</sup> site as "one of the biggest war criminals in Syria." More than 3,500 sorties were carried out, mostly on eastern Aleppo, which continued until the end of 2016 and killed hundreds and displaced more than 100,000 people after the destruction of large segments of the eastern Aleppo district<sup>(2)</sup>, with thousands of civilians killed or wounded.

An account of the massacre in Khan Shaikhun<sup>(3)</sup> was given as follows:

"On Tuesday, 7 April 2017, the people of Khan Shaikhun in the southern Idlib environs woke to a morning air raid with rockets equipped with sarin gas. Some 100 victims, including entire families, didn't manage to get up, while dozens were asphyxiated, choking on the poison gas de-

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(1) War criminal pilots, Zaman al-Wasl: <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/78008/>

(2) Many buildings in eastern Aleppo are still collapsing after the heavy bombardment, from 2016 to this day.

(3) Al-Jazeera, film "Awaited Justice"... the Khan Shaikhun chemical massacre: <https://youtu.be/J5ob4mfPLYc>

livered by a Sukhoi fighter bearing the symbol Quds-1, commanded by Brigadier General Muhammad al-Hasuri. Opposition observers were able to identify it and specify its launching point as the Shairat airbase, where al-Hasuri's planes took off. As a result of this heinous crime, the United States struck the Shairat airbase with 59 Tomahawk missiles, without causing any notable impact in putting the airbase out of service. Two days after the incident, Brigadier General Muhammad al-Hasuri appeared with General Ali Abdallah Ayyub while he made an inspection visit to the base following the American strike.”

al-Hasuri carried out a raid in March 2017 on the city of al-Atamanah in the northern Hamah environs with shells containing poison gas, which resulted in a number of asphyxiations.





**84. Brigadier General Malik  
Ali Habib**

**Current appointment:**

2012 - present Head of the Military Intelligence Branch (Tadmur)

**Background information:**

Place of Birth: Jablah, Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Republican Guards; Intelligence

**Previous appointments:**

2012	Officer, 105 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, Republican Guard
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Brigadier General Malik Ali Habib is an Alawite from the city of Jablah in the province of Latakia. He has been the head of the Military Intelligence Branch in the Syrian Desert (the Tadmur Branch) since September 2012. Habib played a major role in the crimes and violations committed by the Tadmur Branch in the regions of Tadmur and Sukhnah and nearby areas. He is also responsible for murdering detainees in that facility.

When the Syrian revolution broke out in 2011, Habib was a Republican Guard officer at 105<sup>th</sup> Brigade. At the time, he participated in the criminal military operations against the Syrian people in Damascus Environs, especially in Eastern Ghuta including the cities of Duma and Harasta.

In September 2012, Habib was transferred to the Military Intelligence Services, and was appointed Head of the Syrian Desert branch, replacing Brigadier General Abd al-Karim al-Sallum who had been appointed Head of the Military Security branch in Homs.

Since his appointment as Head of the Military Intelligence branch, Brigadier General Habib and his men there have committed a large number of crimes against Syrians. In February 2016, Habib's name was mentioned several times in the Anadolu News Agency's interview with Attorney General of Tadmur, Judge Muhammad Qassim, who had defected from the regime in 2015.

According to the interview, Qassim's job included examining the bodies of political prisoners who had been tortured to death in the regime's detention facilities in Tadmur. The news agency quoted Qassim:

"I examined dozens of bodies of detainees who had been held in the basements of the Desert Branch. They were from various Syrian provinces, and their only crime was to have peacefully opposed the Assad regime and demanded freedom. At the time, we did not have any proof they had carried weapons. What happened in the prisons of that branch was beyond imagination, but it actually did happen... The prison guards used to beat, burn, torture and crucify political prisoners to death. The smell of blood, rotten flesh and sickness was everywhere in those filthy prisons. In the end, detainees often died of brutal torture, and I was summoned, along with the medical examiner, to examine the body, and we were forced to write reports that they died of natural causes such as strokes and kidney failure. Then, the guards would secretly bury the bodies at night in the Tadmur's cemetery. Most of the time, the bodies were buried in mass graves."

Muhammad Qassim also stated that the Assad regime had ties with ISIS. "Between 2013 and 2015, while I was Attorney General, commercial relations between the ISIS-controlled areas and the regime flourished in the fields of oil, gas, wheat, livestock, food products, medicine and other commodities," he said. Qassim explained how the regime paved the way for ISIS to capture the cities of Tadmur and Sukhnah through Brigadier General Malik Habib. Explaining the reason why the regime would do that, Qassim said:

"Around a month before the fall of Tadmur in the hands of ISIS, we, in the Tadmur [Defence and] Security Committee, had received intel that ISIS was intending to attack the two cities of Tadmur and Sukhnah on May 12, 2015. We informed Bashar al-Assad personally of that. However, instead of preparing a defence plan for the two cities and sending reinforcement, the regime's military leadership withdrew its troops from Sukhnah to tempt ISIS to invade it and then continue towards Tadmur."

According to Qassim, Assad's purpose was to open the way for ISIS to get in direct contact geographically with its enemy Jaysh al-Islam, the Islamic opposition faction which was controlling Ghuta and laying a siege on Damascus. Qassim said Assad wanted the two groups to destroy each other.

“Before ISIS invaded Tadmur, people were circulating news about ISIS’ intent to attack the city. When I asked Brigadier General Habib about the news, he asserted that Assad had summoned and asked him to prepare a plan for a safe withdrawal from Tadmur as soon as ISIS gets there. He said that the regime forces were going to recapture the city a few months after ISIS takes control of it.”

Two months after Anadolu’s interview with Qassim, Habib told the Iranian Tasnim News Agency that the purpose of ISIS’ invasion of Tadmur was to get to the region of Qalamun through the town of al-Qaryatayn and then Hasiyya. He added that ISIS was planning to eventually cross the Syrian-Lebanese border and capture the Lebanese region of Tripoli and get to the Mediterranean. This way, he explained, ISIS would narrow the siege on Damascus and its environs and separate central Syria from the south.

When the Syrian and Russian forces eventually recaptured the cities of Tadmur and Sukhnah, they committed massacres against the people of those areas, accusing them of working with ISIS.

According to a witness from Tadmur’s museum, Brigadier General Habib had also participated in smuggling historical artifacts from the city of Tadmur. According to the witness;

“the regime forces and ISIS declared a sudden ceasefire on May 20 last year which lasted for a few hours only. During the ceasefire, Brigadier General Habib and a number of his men came to the museum and took 250 random artifacts to the nearby military airport. No one knows where those rare artifacts ended up. Habib left the rest of the artifacts in the museum to be destroyed by ISIS, including the only historical mummies that ever exist in Syria.”

In addition to murdering Syrians, destroying their aspiration for freedom and decent life, and killing their future; Habib contributed to burying Syria’s history. When he helped ISIS invade Tadmur, he allowed the latter to destroy the city’s historical monuments which are on the UNESCO World Heritage list. ISIS also destroyed the Tadmur Prison, within the walls of which thousands of Syrians had been killed in the 1980s. The destruction of that prison would help wiping away the atrocities which took place in it.



**85. Colonel Nizar Ali Fandi**

**Current appointment:**

Commander, 109<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jablah, Latakia

Date of birth: 1967

Branch of service: Army - Infantry

**Previous appointments:**

9<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

Born in the village of Dwayr Baabda in the coastal province of Latakia, Nizar Ali Fandi graduated from the infantry school of the Syrian Military Academy where he undertook reconnaissance and staff officer training, equipping him with the skills to become Commander, 109<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division of the Syrian Army.

Fandi, who hails from a largely-Alawite region, was a controversial figure from early in his career, renowned for his sectarian leanings and his extortion of military conscripts. Under his command, the reconnaissance battalion was transformed into a shock troop unit, notorious for its widespread suppression of civilian demonstrations, arbitrary detention policy and systematic torture of protestors.

Fandi also led the battalion during its incursions into the towns of Shaikh Miskin and Ghagb in the southern province of Dara'a. In his role of commander, he is jointly responsible for the [first massacre to take place in Sanamayn](#) (on 25 March 2011), during which Security forces and 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion personnel opened fire on protesters, killing ten and wounding around 40 others. The 9<sup>th</sup> Division and other Security forces later launched raids on these towns and detained civilians, systematically torturing victims, some to death. This took place under the supervision of Colonel Fandi, who is reported to have personally taken part in the torture of detainees.

9<sup>th</sup> Division personnel staffing checkpoints in Dara'a continued to detain large numbers of civilians over the coming years – many of whom were executed at these road blocks; as was the case in September 2012 when 13 civilians were killed at one checkpoint.<sup>(1)</sup>

On 7 July 2012, 9<sup>th</sup> Division forces under the command of Colonel Fandi, as well as 5<sup>th</sup> Division soldiers, Syrian Security forces, and *shabiha* thugs carried out a massacre in the city of Shaikh Miskin in the environs of Dara'a. Around 25 people were killed as a result of indiscriminate shelling by the tanks of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division, and executions carried out by these forces after they stormed the town.

In April 2013, Colonel Fandi directed the 9<sup>th</sup> Division's incursion into the city of al-Sanamayn, where forces under his command committed another massacre in which at least 57 civilians, including six children and seven women, were slaughtered.<sup>(2)</sup>

The following year, in October 2014, Colonel Fandi ordered the execution of 14 Syrian Army soldiers on accusations of “treason,” after the troops deserted their posts in the face of advancing opposition forces during fighting in the village of Zamrin.

In December 2014, Fandi returned to the city of Shaikh Miskin where he directed yet another massacre. The incident saw forces from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions shell and storm the town, which resulted in the deaths of dozens of residents, including women and children.<sup>(3)</sup> Foreign militia forces are also known to have taken part in the operation.

Colonel Fandi also took part in the campaign to retake the Yarmuk Refugee Camp and the al-Hajar al-Aswad district near Damascus from the Islamic State organisation (ISIS). The campaign ended when Syrian security forces permitted ISIS fighters to exit in an undisclosed secret

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(1) Testimony of a defected soldier on the incident (Arabic): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0QnlW\\_G8-Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0QnlW_G8-Y)

(2) More information in Arabic is available at: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news-reportsandinterviews/2013/4/23/%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D9%86%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%86>

(3) More information in Arabic is available at: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news-reportsandinterviews/2014/12/2/عن-مجازر-في-الشيخ-مسكين-بدر-ع/أخبار-عن-مجازر-في-الشيخ-مسكين-بدر-ع>

deal. The neighbourhoods were subjected to mass looting by pro-Assad forces after the departure of ISIS militants.

It was reported that Colonel Fandi had aspired to form an elite forces group comparable to the infamous Tiger Forces, under General Suhayl al-Hassan, or the Ghaith Forces of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, led by Colonel Ghaith Dalla. The effort was never successful, and in early 2018, Fandi and his troops were sent to break the opposition's siege of the city of Harasta. His battalion suffered heavy losses and was forced to withdraw.

In 2018, Fandi's forces also participated in the battles of the Eastern Ghuta district near the capital Damascus, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 civilians and the displacement of more than a 100 thousand others.

The colonel has also appeared on video accusing opposition forces of acquiring a Chemical Weapons factory in the Ghuta area. Russia's delegate to the United Nations pointed to Fandi's comments as evidence of crimes. However, the opposition has since disproved these claims.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) For more information, see: <https://www.watanserb.com/2018/05/02/زاهر-الساكت-يفند-فيديو-لر-وسنيا-اليوم/>







**86. Colonel Ghayath Dalla**

**Current appointment:**

Commander of al-Ghayath Forces,  
4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Jablah, Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Armoured

**Previous appointments:**

42<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Division

Hailing from the village of Bayt Yashut in the coastal province of Latakia, Ghayath Dalla was born into a family known for its unquestioning loyalty to the al-Assad regime. As a young man during military service, Dalla was assigned to 42<sup>nd</sup> Brigade (within 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division), the very unit Mahir al-Assad had led before commanding 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Colonel Dalla took part in all operations carried out by the 42<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, particularly storming Daraya and Mu'adamiyat al-Sham near the capital Damascus.

On 9 May 2011, members of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division - backed by soldiers from Air Force Intelligence (AFI) - surrounded the town of Mu'adamiyat al-Sham, besieging it for two weeks. The Army and Security forces later stormed the residential area with armoured vehicles and deployed snipers on rooftops, arresting more than 2,000 civilians.

Colonel Dalla, Major General Jamal Yunis, Brigadier General Jawdat al-Ahmad and General Aws Aslan, led by Mahir al-Assad, bear joint responsibility for the crimes carried out by the 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. A 2011 Human Rights Watch report<sup>(1)</sup> investigated the al-Assad regime's brutal response to Syria's early protests (including the War Crimes of the 4<sup>th</sup>

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(1) Neistat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). "By All Means Necessary": Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria. Human Rights Watch

Division) which included firing on unarmed civilians and refusing passage into and out of the areas, resulting in severe shortages of basic supplies. Some opposition sources also reported that some of Mu'adamiyat al-Sham's residents resorted to eating tree leaves for lack of available food.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Division was also chiefly responsible for the displacement and killing of dozens of residents from the Damascus suburb of Qabun in July 2011, after forces surrounded the neighbourhood and targeted it with heavy weapons. Around 1,500 civilians were also arrested.

The operation on Qabun was repeated in 2012 when the neighbourhood witnessed systematic shelling carried out by forces of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division. The campaign lasted five days and killed at least 100 people, displaced more than 90 percent of the residents, and saw the bulldozing of an entire section of the neighbourhood. Hundreds of others were also arrested in the campaign, while forces carried out looting and the destruction of vital infrastructure in the neighbourhood.

On 8 January 2012, Dalla commanded his forces to continue in their operations against the people of Mu'adamiyat al-Sham, where 4<sup>th</sup> Division troops carried out a massacre killing 86 people. A later campaign by the 4<sup>th</sup> Division resulted in another massacre in September 2012, in which around 80 civilians were killed.<sup>(1)</sup> A month earlier in August, forces had attacked the nearby town of Daraya, in what was labeled the "[Grand Daraya massacre](#)", killing more than 700 people, including children, women and entire families.

In March 2013, the 4<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division returned to Mu'adamiyat al-Sham to launch yet another campaign against the town, killing some 2,000 civilians, including over 60 women and 100 children, while wounding more than 3,000 more.

The scale of Dalla's brutal tactics were on full display during the battle for al-Milayha in 2014, which lasted for more than 40 days and ended in the destruction of the town after regime forces took control of the area.

With the formation of the elite "al-Ghayath Forces," Colonel Dalla

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(1) Neistat, A., & Solvang, O. (2011). "By All Means Necessary": Individual and Command Responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity in Syria. Human Rights Watch

stormed the embattled town of Daraya yet again, carrying out the same barbaric practices in nearby areas, such as Hititiyat Jarash, Dukhaniyyah, Kabbas, Zabadin, Dayr al-Asafir, Zabadani, Khan al-Shih, Bayt Jinn, Qabun, Tishrin, Barzah and Jubbar in the environs of Damascus. The unit also took part in the decisive battles for the Wadi Barada region in early 2017.

In 2017, Dalla turned his efforts to Harasta, where his forces participated in the destruction of the city and the displacement of more than 150,000 civilians. Government forces are known to have shelled areas with obsolete “Golan” rockets, known for their inaccuracy, causing indiscriminate loss of life and destruction. In contravention of a ceasefire treaty, Dalla ordered his fighters to ignore agreements reached with rebels and to continue firing on populated areas.<sup>(1)</sup> According to one source, Colonel Dalla ordered a

“barbaric bombardment of dozens of highly destructive missiles on the Qabun district and launched intensive air raids from warplanes targeting the neighbourhood and the wounded civilians, leaving extensive destruction.”

Colonel Dalla is among the al-Assad regime’s most loyal supporters of the Iran-Syria relationship. He has closely coordinated his operations with Iranian militias in past battles for al-Milayha, Zabadani and the Damascus neighbourhoods. In 2018, he was picked to control the Operations Room for the battle for Eastern Ghuta (but was replaced by Suhayl al-Hassan at Russian request.)

In mid-2018, Colonel Dalla was sent to the southern front in the region of Qunaytra, the so-called “Triangle of Death,” in a campaign for control of the province’s liberated areas. During this time he commanded a number of Iranian-backed paramilitary groups and Lebanese Hizballah fighters. Among the most notable of these militias was the Imam Husayn Brigade, closely linked with the Iraq-based Sadrist Movement, as well as Iranian and Afghan units.

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(1) This podcast in Arabic shows how Dalla’s soldiers ignored the agreements: <https://soundcloud.com/in-dimashq/wht5ufjwyts>







**87. Colonel Saqr Rustum**

**Current appointment:**

Secretary General of the National Defence Forces

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Homs province

Branch of service: Paramilitary forces

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2013	Commander of the National Defence Forces in Homs

Saqr Rustum is an engineer by training, but worked as investment manager and chairman of a procurement committee in the industrial area of Hasiyya (Homs). After a corruption scandal in 2009, he was dismissed from his job and sent to work in technical services for the province.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in March 2011, Rustum joined the al-Bustan Association (ABA), an organisation owned and run by Rami Makhluf, a business tycoon and President al-Assad’s cousin. Rustum joined the ABA on the recommendation of his uncle, General Bassam Hassan, an advisor to al-Assad.

As the momentum of the protests continued to build, Rustum was tasked with mobilising pro-Assad youths, especially among Alawite the community, to participate alongside the Security services in quelling the demonstrations. In mid-2011, Rustum worked to establish the “Popular Committees” – the nucleus for what would become the National Defence Forces (NDF) – which was primarily designed to protect pro-Assad neighbourhoods in Homs. These armed civilians groups soon formed paramilitary combat units in support of raids carried out by Syrian government forces in the neighbourhoods of the city of Homs.

These volunteer units worked unpaid, although in return for aid provided by the ABA. As a result of the increase in the number of its members, the regime allocated salaries, resources and logistic and technical

support, including integrating veteran soldiers and Security personnel, especially those who had been discharged for misconduct. Popular Committees were also backed by civil servants, armed by the ABA, who were reassigned to serve under the paramilitary formations.

The Syrian Army later took over ammunition supply, using materiel designated for the People's Army (a reserve component of the Syrian Armed Forces.) To store supplies, special warehouses were established inside the Homs Sports City (an incomplete project along the Homs-Damascus road between the districts of Akrama and Wadi al-Dhahab.)

By 2012, members serving in the "Popular Committees" units numbered 2,500 and were stationed in three separate bases inside loyalist neighbourhoods of Homs. The paramilitaries were known to loot valuables from abandoned houses, deserted by their owners out of fear of being bombed. Furniture and valuables stolen by militants were often pawned by the side of the roads.

During this time, Rustum oversaw a number of detention facilities and private prisons in the Wadi al-Dhahab district and in the northern environs of Homs, in villages such as Qabu and Ram al-Anz. Many detainees were civilians kidnapped by militants on public roads, often under the pretext of backing the opposition. Prisoners' families were often extorted for the release of their loved ones; a profitable means of income for armed groups.

With Rustum's forces facing strong backlash for corruption and their alleged involvement in bombings targeting pro-regime neighbourhoods in Homs, armed clashes broke out between NDF forces and factions formally loyal to Rustum. The tensions resulted in the reassignment of Rustum to Damascus where he was appointed as Secretary General of the NDF in 2013.

As commander of the Homs NDF, Saqr Rustum and his paramilitary forces bear responsibility for a number of massacres, including:

- The Ram al-Anz massacre (February 2012), where more than 50 unidentified bodies were discovered in the village inside Homs province, with victims of varying ages bearing signs of torture and shooting. Victims were later identified as a group kidnapped and killed for sectarian reasons.

- The Jubbar massacre (February 2012), in which Republican Guard forces, together with the NDF, drove male civilians (including youths and the elderly) from their homes and gathered them in two schools. Ahmad al-Sayis, the leader of a group under the command of Rustum, ordered his forces to open fire on the civilians in the schoolyard; more than 150 people were murdered in the incident.

- The Karm al-Zaytun neighbourhood massacre (March 2012), in which NDF members under the command of Rustum intercepted and shot two civilian vehicles. The armed groups then swept into the Rifai neighbourhood and collected the remaining members of the families in one house, killing them all and setting fire to the house. The death toll is estimated at around 40 civilians, including women and children.

- Massacre of Sahl al-Hulah (May 2012), in which NDF militants, backed by the forces of General Hawash Muhammad, stormed the village of Taldaw, killing a child and a number of women.



**88. Lieutenant Colonel Duraid Isma'il Awad**

**Current appointment:**

Commander, Artillery, Tiger Forces

**Background informationU**

Place of birth: Rabiah, Hamah

Date of birth: 1982

Branch of service: Army - Republican guard / Engineering

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2013	104 <sup>th</sup> Brigade, Republican Guards
2004 – 2013	Republican Guards
2004	al-Assad Military Academy

Duraid Awad was born in the town of Rabiah, western Hamah, a loyalist village with many residents serving in the Syrian armed forces and local paramilitary units.

Upon graduating from the Assad Military Academy (Academy of Military Engineering) in 2004, Awad was posted as a First Lieutenant to the Republican Guard, where he continued to receive swift promotion to the rank of Major. Awad also holds a Master's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Damascus.

At the outbreak of peaceful protests in 2011, Awad was serving in the 104<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Republican Guard under the late Brigadier General Issam Zahr al-Din (who was killed in Dayr-al-Zur in 2017). From 2011 to 2013, Awad participated in all 104<sup>th</sup> Brigade operations against civilian populations in Damascus and its environs, and (along with Zahr al-Din) was partner to all crimes and violations committed by members of the brigade, especially in the cities of Duma, Harasta and Irbin in Eastern Ghuta.

With the establishment of the elite Tiger Forces in 2013, Awad was

given command of the formation's artillery and missile regiment. During this time, Awad personally supervised the concentrated shelling of civilian areas, which saw the killing, injury and displacement of thousands of Syrian people across the country. Awad also supervised the development and use of primitive "Elephant" missiles, also known as "lob bombs", which were used to inflict indiscriminate destruction by Syrian government forces during various campaigns.

Along with General Suhayl al-Hassan and General Salih al-Abdullah, Awad is directly responsible for the deaths, injuries and destruction to infrastructure resulting from the disastrous incursions carried out by the Tiger Forces. The most prominent of these campaigns are listed below:

- Damascus environs (2011–2013)
- The northern mountains of Hamah (sporadic fighting since 2014)
- The siege of Aleppo Central Prison (2014)
- Idlib battles (2015)
- Eastern Aleppo environs (2016-2017)
- Aleppo, al-Mallah and Costello Highway (2016)
- Eastern Qalamun
- Southern Raqqa environs (2017)
- Dayr-al-Zur (2017)
- Eastern Idlib environs (2017-2018)
- Eastern Ghuta (2018)
- Dara'a and Qunaytra (2018)

These campaigns resulted in the killing of thousands, and the displacement of hundreds of thousands more, especially in Aleppo, the Eastern Ghuta, the northern regions of Hamah and the eastern environs of Idlib. Awad has overseen the fulfilment of General al-Hassan's scorched earth policy, which has seen the shelling of populated areas with the aim of tightening blockades and cutting supply lines to civilians.

During the course of these incursions on populated areas, Awad au-

thorised the use of various artillery and rocket-propelled grenades, including the RBG-60, M40 recoilless rifles, and KORNET and KONKURS anti-tank missiles to provide an umbrella of protection for advancing government forces.

Awad was promoted early to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel during a recent spate of endorsements in August 2018, and has also been honoured with an award from the Russian military command at Humaymim airbase in Latakia.







**89. Colonel Firas Ghassan Jaza'a**

**Current appointment:**

Commander, Qalamun Shield Forces

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Latakia

Branch of service: Army - Intelligence

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011 - 2015	Military Intelligence Directorate

Colonel Firas Jazaa was born in the al-Datur area in the city of Latakia to an Alawite family. His father was the historian Ghassan Jazaa. He enjoys the support of businessman George Haswani, who is from the city of Yabrud, and who played an important role in the infamous Malula nuns deal, as well as in funding the Qalamun Shield militia.

When the peaceful protest movement broke out in March 2011, Firas was working in the Military Intelligence Directorate, where he participated in the repression of the demonstrations. The regime rewarded him for this by appointing him Commander of the Qalamun Shield militia, which was formed at the beginning of 2014 and was linked to 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and the Republican Guard. Its members were recruited from National Defence militias in al-Nabik, Yabrud, Flitah, al-Hima, Rankus, and al-Qutayfah. On a security level, it was also tied to the Military Intelligence Directorate, and was raised in co-operation with Lebanese Hizballah. Russian forces oversaw the Qalamun Shield Forces' training in special Russian training centres.

Colonel Firas Jazaa shares responsibility with the commanders and members of the Qalamun Shield Forces for all the violations and crimes committed by members of this division in al-Nabik, Yabrud and other areas. The most prominent battles in which the division participated and carried out wide-scale violations were as follows:

- The battles of western Qalamun (July-August 2014), which resulted

in control over some villages, towns and hills in the western Qalamun area and in tightening the screws on civilians in the border areas with Lebanon.

- The battles of western Qalamun (May-June 2015), which resulted in the displacement of this area's residents to the outskirts of the Lebanese town of Aarsal.

- The battles of Aleppo (second half of 2016), which resulted in the expulsion of civilians from the eastern districts toward Idlib and the northern Aleppo environs.

- The battles of northern Hamah (August-November 2016), which occurred in the Halfayyah, Suran, Maardus and Ma'an areas, as well as a number of other hills, and killed an unknown number of civilians.

- The battles of Wadi Barada (December 2016-February 2017), which resulted in the deaths of civilians and in which violations were carried out against area residents. A large number of the area's residents were expelled to northern Syria.

- The battles of the northern Hamah environs (March-April 2017), which resulted in the deaths of a large number of civilians. The operations were carried out by the division against the following towns: Suran, Maardus, Taybat al-Imam, Halfayah, Khatab, al-Majdal, and Maarzaf.

- The battles of western Qalamun (July-August 2017), which led to the forcible displacement of about 7,000 civilians to Idlib.

- The battles east of the railway in the Aleppo, Idlib and Hamah environs (December 2017-February 2018), which killed and wounded a number of civilians and displaced more than 150,000 civilians.

- The battles of the eastern Ghuta (March-April 2018), which killed and wounded a large number of civilians and included the bombardment of the city with Chemical Weapons and the displacement of a large number of Ghuta residents to northern Syria.

Qalamun Shield Forces have conscripted opposition fighters who carried out reconciliations with regime forces from various parts of western and eastern Qalamun and parts of Damascus and its environs. They added to their ranks reconciliation members who helped cause breaches on the fronts, and involved the Military Intelligence Directorate in the violations against civilians.



**90. Engineer Muhammad Ahmad al-Sa'id**

**Current appointment:**

Commander, *Liwa al-Quds* (Palestinian militia)

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Bab al-Nayrab Camp, Aleppo

Branch of service: Militia commander

<b><u>Previous appointments:</u></b>	
2011	(Civilian) construction company

Muhammad Ahmad al-Sa'id was born and raised in the al-Nayrab Palestinian refugee camp in Aleppo. He worked initially as a civil engineer in the construction and building sector, and built a network of relations with regime officials, especially with the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Northern Region.

When the Syrian revolution erupted in 2011, the regime sent residents of the Palestinian camps into the heart of the crisis. They tried to use corrupted people to repress the demonstrations. In the beginning, they formed gangs from among the residents of the al-Nayrab and Handrat camps in Aleppo.

Muhammad al-Sa'id was tasked with funding these groups through his friend Adnan al-Sayyid, and attracting people with criminal records and unemployed people to help repress the demonstrations near the camp, as well as the protests which started at Aleppo University and in its environs. They were also used to carry out arbitrary arrests in Aleppo, and to arrest more than 500 university students.

Given its need for more fighters, the regime proceeded to arm a large number of the camp's residents and to issue them with Security identity cards from Air Force Intelligence. The killing of 17 soldiers<sup>(1)</sup>, and the dis-

(1) [archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?secti](http://archive.aawsat.com/details.asp?secti)

play of their bodies by the pro-regime Palestinian Liberation Army in 2012 had a very large influence in the conscription of the al-Nayrab camp's residents in Aleppo into pro-regime militias. Suspicions have persisted that Muhammad al-Sa'id and Major General Adib Salamah (then Head of the Air Force Intelligence branch in Aleppo) were involved in carrying out this crime, where those who were killed were abducted from the pro-regime town of Masyaf and their bodies were discovered near Idlib province.

In October 2013, Muhammad al-Sa'id established the Palestinian *Liwa al-Quds*<sup>(1)</sup> with the support of the Air Force Intelligence branch in the Northern Region, which encouraged broad-scale conscription operations among Palestinians. When Iranian forces were stationed near the al-Nayrab airport, *Liwa al-Quds* began receiving material and logistical support from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps - Quds Force. *Liwa al-Quds* later moved from repressing demonstrations into fully armed action. Its signs proliferated in the camp, and it participated in a large share of the military operations carried out by the regime in Aleppo, as well as other areas.

It is worth noting that *Liwa al-Quds* was implicated in crimes and violations against Syrians as it received orders from its commanders, Engineer Muhammad al-Sa'id and Adnan al-Sayyid, as well as Major General Adib Salamah to carry out kidnappings for ransom, killings, torture, and displacement. *Liwa al-Quds* set up checkpoints in the areas it controlled and carried out arbitrary arrests through them. It established its own prisons inside the al-Nayrab camp. It also participated in the looting that took place in Aleppo's eastern districts, in particular in Jamiyat al-Zahraa, al-Rashidin, Karam al-Tarab, al-Brayj, and Saifat, as well as the villages of al-Aziza, al-Shaikh Lutfi, Haylan, west of the Aleppo Central Prison, and the area around the Handran camp and al-Ramusa. On its own, *Liwa al-Quds* registered more than 4,000 arrests of Syrians, in addition to imprisoning more than 400 Palestinians.

In 2014, Muhammad al-Sa'id's influence expanded as he conscripted men from the al-Raml Palestinian camp in Latakia city, and pushed them to fight on the Aleppo fronts. His forces included a number of children under the age of 18, adding to the list of his crimes committed against

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(1) ie the Jerusalem Brigade

Syrians and Palestinians. Along with Major General Adib Salamah, he also formed a gang to loot and steal real estate property from residents of Aleppo city. *Liwa al-Quds* also has more than 20 offices to administer a prostitution network in the Jamiayat al-Zahraa, al-Ashrafiyah, and other districts in Aleppo.

In 2015, *Liwa al-Quds* joined regime forces, Lebanese Hizballah and Iranian forces in the fighting in the northern Aleppo environs. A terrible massacre was carried out in the town of Ratyan on 18 February 2015 which killed 47 civilians, including 10 children and five women, when the village was stormed and held for three days, and field executions were carried out against civilians.

The Palestinian *Liwa al-Quds* brigade also participated in military operations around the al-Nayrab airbase and in the military operations which led to breaking the siege on the Aleppo Central Prison, as well as the al-Lirmun area, al-Shaikh Najjar, al-Ramusa, the Handrat camp, and in operations which broke the siege on the towns of Nubl and al-Zahraa at the start of 2016. It also participated in blocking the Costello Road, which was the only supply route to the eastern districts of Aleppo at the end of 2016. They participated in the storming of eastern Aleppo from 15 November 2016 to 23 December 2016, an operation which killed 1,370 civilians and wounded thousands more.

Muhammad al-Sa'id is considered to have been a primary participant in all of the violations, crimes, and acts of blockade, killing, forcible displacement and looting carried out during this period. He also contributed to other crimes in Dayr al-Zur, with *Liwa al-Quds* members under his command killing 17 civilians with knives in the village of al-Shimaitiyah in the western Dayr al-Zur environs.

The crimes of *Liwa al-Quds* extended into the eastern Ghuta, with its fighters participating alongside the Tiger Forces and other regime units in operations against eastern Ghuta in April 2018, which killed about 1,500 civilians and wounded 3,000 others, and displaced more than 100,000 civilians. The group also participated in the fighting in Yarmuk camp, which is the biggest Palestinian camp in Syria, and was totally devastated by the military operations which lasted about a month.

A large number of *Liwa al-Quds* fighters embraced the Shi'a faith as a result of receiving support and funding from the IRGC Quds Brigade and their participation with sectarian militias in killing on the basis on sectarian identity and affiliation. Engineer Muhammad al-Sa'id has also been honoured by Russian forces multiple times, most recently in May 2018.









**91. Fadi al-Mallah**

**Current appointment:**

2012 – present Leader of al-Jalil Forces (pro-regime Palestinian militia)

2011 - present Secretary General of the Palestinian “Youth of Return” movement

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Khan Danun Refugee Camp, Damascus environs.

Date of birth: 1984

Branch of service: Militia commander

Fadi al-Mallah is from a Palestinian refugee family in Syria. He was born in 1984 and grew up in Khan Danun Camp close to the al-Kiswah District in Damascus environs. al-Mallah is the Secretary General of the Palestinian “Youth of Return” movement which was established in May 2011. He is also the commander of the military wing of that movement which is called the al-Jalil<sup>(1)</sup> Forces and was established in 2012.

Mallah started his military activities aiding the regime publicly back in 2014. He recruited young men from the Khan Danun Camp and other Palestinian camps to join the al-Jalil Forces, bringing the number of fighters in those forces up to around 5,000 fighters. They were trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Lebanese Hizballah.

Mallah is considered directly responsible for the violations of al-Jalil Forces committed while aiding the regime’s forces and Hizballah in the following operations:

- The battles of Western Qalamun (July to August 2014) which led the regime’s capturing a number of towns, villages and hills in that region and its surrounding civilians in the areas on the Lebanese border;
- The battles of Western Qalamun (May to June 2015) which led to

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(1) Galilee

displacing the residents of that region to the Lebanese region of Irsal;

- The battles of Aleppo (during the second half of 2016) which led to displacing civilians of Eastern Aleppo to Idlib and Aleppo's northern environs;

- The battles of Hamah's north environs (August to November 2016) which took place in the areas of Hilfaya, Suran, Muardas and Ma'an and claimed the lives of an unknown number of civilians;

- The battle of Barada Valley (December 2016 to February 2017) which claimed the lives of a number of civilians and displaced a number of the valley's civilians to northern Syria. The battle witnessed violations against civilians of the region;

- The battles of Hamah's northern environs (March to April 2017) which claimed the lives of a large number of civilians during the operations against the towns of Suran, Muardas, Tibat al-Imam, Hilfaya, Khat-tab, al-Majdal, and Maarzaf;

- The battles of Western Qalamun (July to August 2017) which led to displacing around 7,000 civilians to Idlib;

- The battles of the environs of Aleppo, Idlib and Hamah (known as the battles East of the Railways) (October 2017 to February 2018) which claimed the lives of a number of civilians and displaced more than 150,000 others;

- The battles of Eastern Ghuta (March – April 2018) which claimed the lives of a large number of civilians, a chemical attack, and displacing a large number of civilians there to northern Syria,

- The battles of Yarmuk Camp and al-Hajar al-Aswad (April to May 2018) which forced the people of the camp to lose their homes after the camp was completely destroyed and looted.

Later in 2018, al-Jalil Forces were sent to participate in the operations against Dayr al-Zur and Raqqa environs under the supervision of Lebanese Hizballah. While there, al-Jalil forces lost around 80 members in an airstrike by the Coalition Forces against their camps in Dayr al-Zur.



**92. Ali al-Shali**

**Current appointment:**

2011- present Leader, al-Saqr Group, Tiger<sup>(1)</sup> Forces

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Ain al-Krum, al-Ghab, Hamah

Branch of service: *Shabiha* (pro-regime thugs)

Before the outbreak of the Syrian revolution, Ali al-Shali's job was to sell ready made coffee off his bicycle in his Alawite village of Ain al-Krum in al-Ghab region in the Hamah Province.

When the Syrian revolution started in March 2011, Shali joined the civilian groups which the regime was forming to help oppressing the protests. He gathered around him many criminals and felons, with support from his former Member of Parliament (and relative) Fu'ad al-Shali, and a number of the regime's officers from the same family, including his own brother Colonel Wa'il al-Shali, who is the Security Officer for Hamah's Military Airbase.

Shali started his involvement in the regime's crimes with being a *shabih* (regime thug) in the area of al-Ghab. He participated in attacks against Sunni villages and in the raids of the regime's forces against the anti-Assad areas. He started kidnapping citizens to release them for large ransoms; he imposed monthly "taxes" of up to 200,000 Syrian Pounds on car dealers and other businesses in his area; and he also got into the business of selling stolen cars whose owners were killed. Shali then widened his area of criminal activity in Hamah's western environs, and his men started kidnapping girls to force them to work in prostitution and in the nightclubs controlled by Shali and his men.

By 2012, Shali had become known as Saqr al-Jabal<sup>(2)</sup> following two

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(1) al-Nimr is used for Tiger

(2) Arabic for the Mountain Hawk

massacres in the village of al-Shariyya in Hamah's western environs (on 24 July 2012 and 27 August 2012) when he was involved in killing a large number of people and injuring many others.

Shali's reputation of ruthless brutality reached Colonel Suhayl al-Hasan, to whom he was introduced. al-Hasan decided he would adopt Shali's *shabibha* group by arming it and putting under the umbrella of his forces. Shali's ties to Suhayl al-Hasan gave the Shali political cover to conduct more kidnapping, blackmail, and seizing commercial trucks and fuel tankers. Shali's partners in this brigandage were Talal al-Daqqaq and Musib Salamah who each had their turfs and groups of *shabiha*. The three of them spread fear throughout the province of Hamah and its environs.

In the meantime, Shali and al-Daqqaq jointly seized all the gas stations in Hamah and its western environs. He also controlled the Hamah-Aleppo highway (also known as Khanasir Streets), where he imposed "tolls" on all pedestrians and vehicles that went through his checkpoints. Shali also established business relations with ISIS, including trading arms and ammunition to them in exchange for fuel. These Shali-ISIS business relations expanded to include smuggling people, grains and vegetables between the regime's areas and ISIS areas.

One time, a number of Shali's men were caught while in possession of a large quantity of arms hidden under big bags of wheat. They were trying to smuggle them to ISIS. The incident resulted in armed clashes between Shali's men and members of the State Security, and in Shali's getting arrested for a few days before Suhayl al-Hasan intervened to have him released.

When he moved to Aleppo, Colonel Suhayl al-Hasan took Shali with him to continue with his crimes there. He took part in storming eastern Aleppo late in 2016, where his theft and looting in the city made him even wealthier, to the point where the pro-Assad Phoenix website published a story about him celebrating his first billion Syrian Pounds:

"It is being said that the famous Ali Al-Shali celebrated his first billion SYP two years ago, and that all the security services in the country, especially the police in his city don't dare to mess with him or his around 2,000 men".

In 2016, at one of his checkpoints on the Aleppo-Afrin road, Shali's

men seized a truck carrying 3,000 olive oil containers. The driver showed the necessary papers proving that the merchandise was meant to be sold in the markets of Aleppo. However, Shali falsely accused him of attempting to smuggle 100 mortar shells, 10,000 DShK rounds, two boxes of grenades, and two kilograms of Captagon pills. Faced with all these fake accusations, the driver chose to surrender the olive oil shipment to Shali, who sold it to a trader named Ahmad Umar Balhus al-Baradi in the al-Jamiliyyah district of Aleppo. Shali also captured a checkpoint close to Safayrah town, and started charging a “toll” from any vehicles passing through the checkpoint.

Later on, Shali participated in the military operations in Harasta and Eastern Ghuta, which led to the killing, injuring and displacing of large numbers of people of Ghuta. He is considered a partner with his groups in the crimes against the people of Ghuta.

Early in June 2018, the Russian forces froze the operations of Shali’s group due to its atrocious actions. They forced him to surrender his group’s heavy weaponry. There are rumours that he was arrested, but this news was never confirmed since Shali had been arrested several times and then released with the help of Suhayl al-Hassan.





**93. Musib Nimr Salamah**

**Current appointment:**

2011 – present Leader of a *shabiha* group in al-Salamiyyah

**Background information:**

Place of birth: Tal al-Tut, al-Salamiyyah, Hamah

Date of birth: 1955

Branch of service: *Shabiha* (pro-regime thugs)

Salamah was born in the village of Tal al-Tout of the al-Salamiyyah district in Hamah's eastern environs. He is the brother of Major General Adib Salamah, Assistant Director of the Air Force Intelligence Directorate.

In 2011, when the regime was working on forming its groups of *shabiha*, Musib Salamah volunteered to form one to lead himself. He used the group to oppress the protests in the city of al-Salamiyyah, which did not last long due the violence and arrests they faced.

Shortly afterwards, Musib started receiving attention from the regime, and his group started growing with the support of his brother Major General Adib Salamah. The group operated in the area of Hamah's eastern environs, where it conducted kidnappings and killings based on sect and place of origin of the victims. Musib's *shabiha* had no fear of committing their crimes due to the protection they received from the Air Force Intelligence officers including Brigadier General Muhsin Abbas and Captain Ayham Salamah.

Musib Salamah managed to establish a network of *shabiha* groups, liaising with other leaders, including his son Firas, Talal al-Daqqaq, Ibrahim al-Salih, Issa Da'ud al-Assas, Zuhayr al-Assas, Alaa' Salim, Zahir Bashur, Muhammad Mansur, Iyad Taiyshur, Walid Dib, Ali Hamdan Mah-

mud Afifah, and Talaib Bashur<sup>(1)</sup>. Musib Salamah used his network to further avoid accountability for the crimes he committed. He is known for his stating that:

“the alleged revolution is in fact nothing but moving capitals from the hands of the Sunni to the hands of the Alawite. This move is not finished yet, and it will take a long time. Therefore, this crisis will take a very long time.”

On that basis, Salamah committed abduction and blackmail. He seized trucks carrying merchandise for ransom, seized livestock, and extorted money from families to release their sons from his own unofficial prison in the village of Taqsis. In several cases, his men killed the detainees after receiving the ransom without returning the bodies to their families. They either burned the bodies or dumped them in the sewers.

Testimonies from victims and families show that Salamah’s men executed hostages or sold them to other groups. According to testimonies of victims, Salamah has committed the following crimes:

- Ali Hamdan, a prominent aide of Musib, on the direct orders from Musib himself, killed two Alawite men and a woman from the village of Abu Hakfah in Homs environs and burned their bodies;

- Ali Hamdan killed two shoe sellers from Idlib, on orders from Salamah, and took the money they were carrying before burning their bodies;

- Mahmud Afifah, leader of one of Salamah’s *shabiha* groups, kidnapped four Idlibis in a Kia taxi near Khnayfis. The four were taken to Musib and were killed later.

- A group of Salamah’s kidnapped a woman, her daughter and a driver who are from Aleppo while in a silver Kia Cerato. Musib’s men killed the three after raping the woman and her daughter, although Musib received large amounts of ransom money.

- A group of Musib’s kidnapped two people from Hamah. Although

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(1) Known as *Abu Ali al-Lubnani* because he is from the Alawite area of Jabal Muhsin in Lebanon

Musib received a ransom of 11,500,000 Syrian pounds to release them, the two men were later killed.

- One of Salamah's groups kidnapped eight people from the village of Okayrbat and other nearby villages. The victims are still missing and their families were not informed of their whereabouts.

- Mahmud Afifah's group (affiliated to Musib Salamah) kidnapped Hatim Marzuq al-Ibrahim and Ujil Khadr al-Haddad, from Raqqa while the two were carrying 6,000,000 Syrian Pounds to deliver to the government-owned SADCOB company. The victims are still missing.

- One Salamah's groups kidnapped Tariq Hasan al-Najman, Husayn Muhammad Khalid Muhammadiyyah, Muhammad Ahmad al-Hajji, Ali Ahmad al-Hajji, and Muhammad Khalid al-Husayn from Idlib. They were detained in a house owned by Mahmud Afifah, and were brutally tortured.

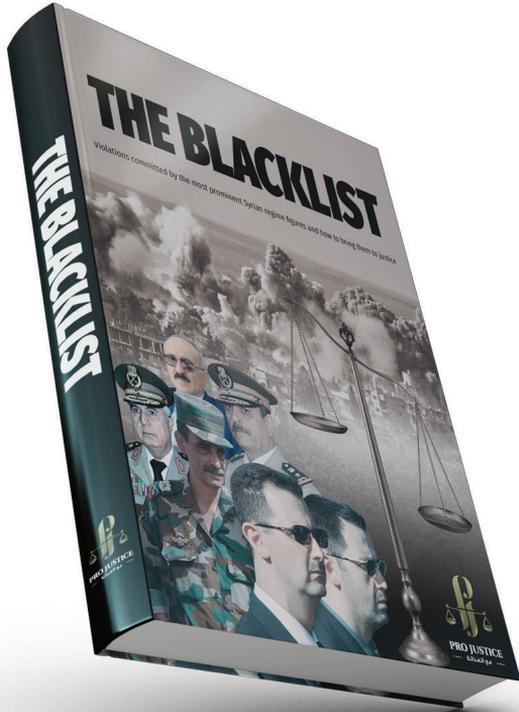
- One Salamah's groups incited the people of al-Salamiyyah against Internally Displaced Syrian Persons by kidnapping girls and women from al-Salamiyyah and accusing the IDPs of doing that.

This kidnapping and killing soon spread to other groups of *shabiha* which resulted in a state of chaos: conflicts broke out between the different groups of *shabiha*. In one instance, a group of Salamah's killed 3 people and injured 2 others from the families of al-Sankari and Qassim; in response, the al-Sankari and Qassim families closed the Hamah highway and refused to bury their sons before they dealt with the perpetrators and before Salamah's actions were stopped in the city of al-Salamiyyah. The rest of the families of al-Salamiyyah showed much empathy with the victims, since they were all fed up with the crimes of Salamah's *shabiha* gangs. Since the victims were members of the Awad family, one of the largest families of al-Salamiyyah, the situation became aggravated to the point where the Interior Minister, the Minister of Reconciliation and the Governor had to intervene on the direct orders from Bashar al-Assad. As a result, the Salamah family was ordered to leave al-Salamiyyah and move to Dhahr al-Mir village, where Salamah's family is originally from.

In addition to their crimes in al-Salamiyya, Musib Salamah and his *shabiha* (with support from Air Force Intelligence), set up a checkpoint close to the Taqsis village where they charged those who wished to pass

through large amounts of money. Therefore, the checkpoint became later known as the “millions checkpoint.” The money charged at that checkpoint sometimes led to clashes between the regime’s forces and the *shabiha*, due also to the atrocious actions the checkpoint’s thugs committed.

Among the crimes of Salamah was also exchanging hostages with the *shabiha* leader Talal al-Daqqaq who maintains close ties with Brigadier General Suhayl al-Hassan. Salamah also “enjoyed” feeding his victims to the lions he kept on his farm. It is worth mentioning that Salamah enjoys effective legal immunity due to the support of his brother Major General Adib Salamah, and thus he still considers himself above the law.



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